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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

# THE INDIAN OCEAN JOURNEY OF RWANDAN COFFEE TO JOHANNESBURG

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# Chapter One:

## Introduction:

The intention of this research paper is to properly locate the Indian Ocean in the narrative of African coffee and its continental consumption. The reader would not be out of place to assume that coffee picked in the hills of Rwanda is trucked or railed down the continent to Johannesburg. Looking at a map of the African continent, the reader would draw a line between landlocked Kigali and landlocked Johannesburg and picture an on-land coffee transport route. I discovered, through the ethnographic account and analysis below, that coffee produced in central Africa goes through various entry and exit points and is transported through and across our continent to certain port cities and from these port cities, onto the Indian Ocean and down to South Africa. The trade of African coffee is cross continental and is defined by the Indian Ocean.

I am interested in the notion of containerisation of African coffee for African consumption on the Indian Ocean. Through my literature review and discussion on containers in chapters two and four, a brief history of containers and maritime trade across the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean through time will be discussed.

It has been close to four years since I immersed myself within the South African coffee industry. It was not until 2012 when I researched the relationship between coffee consumers in South Africa and coffee producers in East Africa focusing on a specific coffee company in Johannesburg who imported coffee from East Africa, did I begin to think about coffee in its different forms. The bean itself has many multifaceted positions within our society, and through my research did I begin to find these positions interesting. The report was in partial fulfilment of an Honours degree in Anthropology of that year. Having had that ethnographic encounter with the coffee world, I spent three years working for a coffee trading company in Johannesburg which allowed me to understand more about the supposed relationships, connections and disconnections that people have with this commodity. In 2014, I began to travel extensively through East and Central Africa understanding the role coffee farmers, traders and shippers have on our coffee supply chain.

Working as a coffee trader, I experienced a situation where Ethiopian grown coffee was to be shipped from Djibouti to Durban over three weeks but the shipment took eight weeks to arrive.

Working in the coffee industry, I asked questions about certain activities that happen along the supply chain, some were easily answered while others were not. I wanted to understand the various actors and events that were involved in this tumultuous process.

This study is therefore motivated in part by the realisation that the journey of coffee produced on our African continent takes on specific characteristics, actors and activities, and goes through various different points until it reaches the cup we drink from in Johannesburg. Through the paper I aimed to seek out the various actors who contribute to this journey and highlight this often forgotten tale, one which highlights the end of the coffee commodity chain focusing on the café life rather than the life of the coffee bean before it was processed and sent on its journey.

This paper is also motivated by the desire to understand the pivotal role the Indian Ocean has with our continent. Because it is almost counter-intuitive, many do not appreciate that for trade to pass through the continent it has to travel on the Indian Ocean first. The Indian Ocean in some regard has become a forgotten actor in this relationship of trade on the African continent. It is because of this that I aim to explore the role that the Indian Ocean plays through an ethnographic tale of Rwandan coffees journey on the Indian Ocean.

For this research project, coffee specific to the landlocked country of Rwanda would be the 'thing' that would be looked at through the various entry and exit points, different cities and within its different spaces. The specific choice of Rwandan coffee was as a result of my previous knowledge of the space that coffee occupies within the country as well as within the East African region. Through previous knowledge of the production and processing of coffee in the country through travels around the specific coffee producing regions as well as having the contacts which I had made throughout that time granted me a unique amount of information and personal experience on the ground in the country. I aimed to fundamentally understand how a landlocked country would be able to export coffee out through its own borders and through to a neighbouring country which had a port city. Through previous knowledge from work, my travel and coffee connections, I knew that Rwandan coffee made its way from various mountain regions across the coffee hills into Kigali to different cooperative warehousing and mill factories. From there, containers would be stacked with sixty-kilogram hessian bags with custom papers and sent on its way to Tanzania, the nearest point of departure with a port city.

The port city of Dar es Salaam is one which always excites me and allows me to experience a combination of its rich culture and historical background. This research took me to Dar es Salaam for the third time in two years. However, this time I aimed to seek a better understanding of the port city itself, its life, harbor life and the accounts of what actually happens to coffee containers once they enter port and once they are ready to leave. The latter would be imperative and significant to discover as this information is often not known to traders and other individuals who are part of the coffee world, not because people are uninformed or uninterested, but because there are not many people who have the opportunity to visit port and see what happens to coffee containers. By looking at this specific port city a discussion on the Indian Ocean and its importance within African coffee trade can be dealt with. While much academic literature is placed on exploring the past narrative of the Indian Ocean through the port city of Dar es Salaam, I aim to create a different type of narrative, one which explores a commodity through looking at its production to its consumption with the help of this body of water. This new type of narrative would enable academics, Indian Ocean enthusiasts, coffee professionals, maritime scholars as well as African scholars to understand that despite the Indian Ocean exhibiting maritime trade and economic values, also creates a social personified value for the transport of commodities, specifically coffee, on the African continent.

The last leg of the journey the container ship would go on would be in South Africa. It is important to note here, like many research misfortunes my time at the port of Durban to meet the container ship once it landed was thwarted, after it proved impossible for me to have access to the port after countless emails and unanswered phone calls to the customs official I was put in touch with from contacts based in Johannesburg. This supposed research in Durban which will be explored through the data chapters to follow, will be based on the many discussions with shipping agents in South Africa, predominantly based in Johannesburg, our trading partner and their experience, as well as my own knowledge accumulated while working at the trading company for three years. Despite this fallback it is significant to note that knowledge gained through conversations and interviews, as well as my own experience within the industry, together with people along this trade chain enabled a good understanding of the specific happenings which occur at ‘pier two’ when coffee containers on shipping vessels dock in at the port of Durban. The inaccessibility of the port in Durban to outsiders, in comparison to the Dar

es Salaam port is an indictment of the state of affairs of the tribulations which take place with regards to trade in South Africa.

The ethnographic data of this research report is divided into three chapters, each with their own sub-sections. These chapters fundamentally deal with the journey the container of coffee embarks on from the landlocked country of Rwanda, through to the port city of Dar es Salaam, across the Indian Ocean and its final destination as it docks in South Africa and eventually landing up in Johannesburg.

The first chapter is dedicated to the commodity, this being coffee. It is the 'thing' which is being transported in the container, which is another 'thing' of interest in this research paper. It is important to fully comprehend the significant contextual, historical and social background to this commodity as it forms the fundamental inspiration for me wanting to understand and research coffee. A discussion deals fundamentally with the production site of the commodity in specific areas in the landlocked country of Rwanda, in East Africa. From here a discussion on the journey this commodity goes on begins. The reader is able to follow this journey from production until it is placed into containers and trucked through to a port city along the East African coast line into Tanzania.

The second data chapter deals with the fieldwork I embarked on which was conducted in the port city of Dar es Salaam in September and October 2015. This chapter gives a detailed account of life within the port city, my experience in the city, my interactions with the spaces in which I conducted research as well as my time spent with my three key informants who each played a hugely significant role in my research process. Through them I was able to gain access to various areas which are usually inaccessible to the public and also to people within the coffee industry. This chapter draws on thick ethnographic analysis of activities which happen at the port city, with informants and actors at the port. This ethnography also explores the intricacies of how coffee is transported in containers, placed onto shipping vessels and sent on its journey on the Indian Ocean.

Chapter three deals with the final stages the journey of the container ship embarks on once it leaves the port of Dar es Salaam. This chapter is based on the minimal information which I was able to access through ethnographic means via not being able to gain access to the port of Durban and not being able to speak directly to my one contact who had let me down. Despite this

limitation this chapter is based on various conversations as well as the information I gained through my own experience being submerged in the coffee trading world. This chapter also discusses the ways in which new satellite technology are enabling containers and shipping vessels to be tracked along their oceanic journey. It finally will briefly engage with the last leg of the containers journey from Durban to Johannesburg on information gained through semi-structured interviews as well as discussions had with people along the commodity chain and those involved in the coffee industry and customs services.

I then come to a conclusion on this ethnographic content about the journey a container has travelled on via the Indian Ocean.

# Chapter Two:

# Literature Review

On compilation of this literature review a few things became apparent. Firstly, there had been previous academic work done on aspects of my research focus. Second, the literature which was accessed throughout the research time period can be divided into the following three categories: historical, contextual and ethnographic. And third, the literature for which I am situating this paper will be based on exploring container or shipping vessels and ideas of oceanic trade, the Indian Ocean and lastly on coffee production on the African continent specifically and how this commodity is traded.

Drawing on this, my literature review has three parts, the first larger part explaining historically how shipping containers, vessels and oceanic trade developed, predominantly situating this body of literature within a North American and European context as there was not much information found to have explored historical analysis done on this historical narrative around the African continent. The second section will fundamentally situate the reader within the Indian Ocean narrative, exploring historical and social narratives of this body of water which makes up three-quarters of East and Southern Africa's littoral. The third aspect of this literature review will take the reader on a journey of coffee production on the African continent through various texts which have been written about African coffee production.

The author asks the reader to keep in mind, that although this research paper fundamentally regards the journey of African coffee onto the Indian Ocean down to South Africa, much of the literature which is available and which has been accessed for this research paper, is predominantly based on research which has been done across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and not the Indian Ocean, and nor on a soft commodity item like coffee. In spite of this, much of the information presented through this literature speaks to the global industry of the trade of commodities, shipping containers, oceanic trade and container vessels across oceans around the world.

Further to this, the author asks the reader to remember that there has not been ethnographic research conducted on the trade of commodities from East or Central Africa through to port

cities and down to South Africa. With this, it is important to note that the literature which is available speaks to the greater concept of the importance of trade, and speaks to understand the Indian Ocean with regards to intra-African trade.

The author asks the reader to also bear in mind that there is a vast amount of literature available on understanding the Indian Ocean through its own historical and social narrative, but for this specific research paper, the author has decided to not solely focus on these narratives in depth.

There are different kinds of literature on the historical development of containers, shipping vessels and containerisation. Drawing on the literature by Levinson (2006) and Klose (1969) we are able to understand the development and the start of the container ship with reference to and analysis of how and why the container began. Containers were first seen as a mere "box" which was used as a medium for 'things' to be put inside and for it to be moved from one place to another. Levinson (2006) begins his analysis of the phenomenon of the container by exploring the lack of knowledge or understanding about this 'thing' meant for holding and encasing products in. Both Levinson (2006) and Klose (1969) make up the bulk of the historical literature based on understanding how the container developed. Levinson (2006) allows us to follow the development of maritime history at different port cities around the world. He speaks to the long hard life of the longshoreman as well as the various dockworkers in both American and British port towns. When he explores the tiresome laborious work that dockworkers would go through which took place during the first half of the twentieth century, here you cannot help but realise the same hardships which are echoed through container shipping today. Both authors discuss the American businessman Malcolm McLean, considered to have pioneered containerisation in the 1950s. McLean was the first to develop the intermodal container which now forms the basis of the international supply chain. The authors explore how he changed the face of maritime trade and shipping. McLean is said, through their work, to have understood that freight companies across the United States needed to be more efficient, with minimum costs on moving freight without any complication or calamity.

We understand that the development of the container, first as the "soulless aluminum or steel box held together with weld and rivets, with a wooden floor and two enormous doors at one end: the standard container has all the romance of a tin can", to one which "would reshape the world economy" (1: 247). The development of the container is seen throughout the progress and

efficiency of maritime trade. Levinson (2006) explores the progress by looking at the development of the shipping lines around the world.

Klose (1969) explores notions of the development of the container through history by looking at the way in which the thought process behind the container developed and changed over time. Together with understanding the mind shift of McLean and his desire to want to move more towards making freight more accessible across America via road and rail, he explores the way in which new ideas and thought processes about the container developed. Klose (1969:4) begins his book by exploring how the actual aspect of the container has reshaped "the harbor, which [was one which] had endured for thousands of years". Thus recognizing the social life of the container through a historical narrative. Through time, Klose writes (1969:5), McLean foresaw that it was possible to "transform the world into a moving warehouse", and we are able to see this through Klose and Levinson's (2006) exploration of the history of the container. We can further understand the importance of the development of the container through other authors who have briefly written about the container through their own research of trade and maritime exploration (Cudahy, 2006; Sharpsteen, 2011; George, 2013).

There has been ethnographic work done on containerisation around the world, specifically based in North American cities. It is interesting to understand the way in which containers have developed and therefore changed the face of certain port cities within America and Europe. Despite there not being as much information based on containerization on the African continent, it is important to acknowledge the works which do explore this, (Chalfin, 2010; Sharpsteen, 2011; George, 2013).

Together with the idea of containerisation, shipping vessels and maritime trade, the concept of trade logistics began to form a major part of understanding the bigger picture of containerisation and maritime trade. An influential author, Deborah Cowen, who, from a theoretical and contextual point of view, created a greater understanding of the life and times of containers within the world of logistics. She speaks broadly about the way in which logistics have created a game changer for oceanic trade, war and governance in our world. Containers are ubiquitous from the toy making industry to the global arms trade. Cowen (2014), discusses the logistics of containerisation and through armed militarization during World War II and the Vietnam War. Shipping vessels and containers were used to bring about effective war machinery. Cowen also

takes the link of containerisation and warfare further by exploring another historical narrative which forms part of containers and shipping vessels, this being piracy. She adds to the idea of piracy being one which is rooted in maritime tradition. The concept of the container being a 'global moving warehouse' following the large increase in ships moving through the Suez Canal and areas around the Gulf of Aden over the last few decades shows its importance within global trade. She highlights the importance of safety of the world trade industry, understanding the influence of piracy on economic instability of commodities being stolen and social influences of maritime life. Her work has also focused, as stated above, on containerisation as bounty in the new age of piracy.

The second strand of literature which I found to be important within this research was that on the Indian Ocean. Since this research is fundamentally situated on the African littoral at a port city on the Indian Ocean it was significant for myself to understand that specific port city with reference to the Indian Ocean. This port city, Dar es Salaam, is part of the history which speaks directly to trade, containerization and the social life of the Indian Ocean.

The author asks the reader to bear in mind, that despite the multitude of literature available on the Indian Ocean, the literature predominantly deals with the historical life of the Indian Ocean, how it has influenced cultural, religious and historical relationships to develop through the interaction of peoples coming into contact with one another through the ocean, (Bose, 2006; Khalid, 2007; Makundan, 2007; McMaster, 1966; Pearson, 2007; Pepper & Everhart, 1963; Sakhuju, 2015; Subramanian, 2009). We are able to understand these authors through their various scopes of historical, contextual and social explorations of the Indian Ocean. Of importance to this research is the relationship between the Indian Ocean and the port city of Dar es Salaam. The author has chosen to focus on recent literature on the Indian Ocean to situate this paper.

There are articles which were sourced from online references, mostly online news reports and reports submitted by the World Bank, which speak directly to Dar es Salaam and its relationship with the ocean, specifically its important connection and direct link to the ocean, (Bateta, 2016; du Venage, 2016; Karuhanga, 2016; Mrindoko, 2015; Odishe Sun Times, 2015; Sturgis, 2015; World Bank, 2015). These articles all engage with the importance of the port of Dar es Salaam within the Indian Ocean. The themes which are dealt with throughout are issues of the growth of

trade through the port, the use of this port city and how quickly and sufficiently are the various containers and shipping vessels moving once they come into port and once they leave. The Bateta (2016) and the du Venage (2016) pieces deal most importantly with the concern of African trade on the continent but following the unreliable method of trucking or rail, and how this insufficient use of freight logistics has led to the development and need to use the port of Dar es Salaam on the Indian Ocean. Bateta (2016) engages directly with logistical concerns coming from landlocked countries specifically Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is important to acknowledge through the above mentioned online reports, that there is a direct need for the Indian Ocean for intra-African trade which is significant for these countries to grow economically.

The last section of the literature review forms the basis for understanding the role of coffee in relation to this research report. The author asks the reader to consider that most of the literature used throughout this paper is literature and knowledge based on an accumulation of the past three years of being involved in the coffee industry within South Africa. There are different strands of coffee literature which I have found to be useful in understanding this commodity. Firstly, the idea that coffee is, in essence, a commodity is dealt with by many authors (Barrat-Brown, 2007; Fridell, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2014; Gereffi, 1999; Lewin et al, 2002; Lyon, 2006). Coffee is the second most traded commodity in the world and is the world's most agriculturally traded commodity (Fridell 2014). The trade of coffee on the continent is important for the coffee producing economy of a country to grow and sustain itself. Through the production of coffee on the continent we are able to see the direct results which farmers reap from coffee farming. Weiss (2003), reiterates the important that this cash crop has on African coffee farmers. And throughout my own travels across East Africa and within coffee producing countries, there is a definite influence, socially and economically to families yields as well as their own livelihoods when given the amount of money they receive for selling their coffee at cooperatives or processing factories.

The aspect of coffee research which fascinates me relates to Marx's work on the fetishisation of the commodity. Coffee has become a fetishised product in society today. Marx (1867), and his ideas of the 'commodity' as well as the concept of products as 'exchange and use value' can be assessed to understand coffee production and its use value within trade and specifically within

trade on the continent. The commodification of this product, coffee, today is seen importantly with issues that relate specifically to those of Fairtrade, direct trade and the ethical trade between trading companies and coffee importers and including traders who are involved in the coffee commodity chain (Gereffi, 1999; Giovannuci et al, 2008; Lewin et al, 2002; Lyon, 2006; Talbot, 2011). The previously mentioned authors are able to explore aspects of coffee trade through contextualizing the literature within different fields across the coffee production region which is known as the 'Bean Belt'. The term 'Bean Belt' is one which is frequently used among coffee professionals in the industry to describe the region where coffee is produced; inherently between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. Specifically, for this research, the coffee production site is situated in Rwanda. This central African country has been producing coffee since colonial missionaries arrived with coffee trees from Germany in 1904 (Bourdreaux, 2011). Friedberg's (2004) ethnography of green beans would be an added piece of literature to look at with regards to commodities. Freidberg (2004) speaks about the long distance relationship which commodities had with the actors involved in their journey and grasped the complexities of having to export commodities to various areas around the world through the African continent.

Coffee is transported across the continent through containers which are bound for port cities around East Africa. For this research, specific literature was based on understanding another coffee producing country which is also an important port city with regards to coffee trade, that being Tanzania (Parish et al, 2005; Pirotte et al, 2006; Ponte, 2004; Talbot, 2011; Weiss, 2003). Coffee production in Tanzania as well as coffee grown in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda is exported from the port of Dar es Salaam on the Indian Ocean through the assistance of the 'moving warehouse' all over the world. This aspect of transporting this commodity around the continent through the help of a container was what fascinated me and intrigued me.

# Chapter Three:

## Methodology and Field Sites

I knew when I embarked on research for this research report that I wanted to focus on some type of ethnographic tale of African trade, but specifically African coffee trade. Working for a coffee trading company in Johannesburg which exported coffee exclusively from Central and East Africa allowed me to understand certain complexities, issues, regulations, the dos and do nots of trade as well as the mishaps, confusions and lack of information which was very apparent in different areas in this regard. The unanswered questions about coffee trade on the African continent specifically allowed my interest to grow.

I used the contacts I had developed in the South African coffee industry to get into various spaces and be able to talk with people on both an informal and formal basis. I had expected these contacts to be beneficial to me. Despite the many contacts I had made and those with whom I had spoken to and interviewed, gaining access to the port of Durban deemed hopeful, however even with contacts at times they do not help. Many of the conversations I had with key role players in the industry formed the basis for being able to share contacts and information with me and from this I became connected to various other role players locally and in coffee producing countries. These key role players became informants for my field research both locally in South Africa as well as in East Africa. The field research I undertook was multi-dimensional. I conducted fieldwork research in two different countries on the continent, in Tanzania and in South Africa (before and after my trip to Tanzania). I discuss below that I also drew on ethnographic accounts of my time in Rwanda over the last few years working in the coffee industry, which formed a bedrock for the fieldwork in this paper.

I knew after being involved in the industry and working closely with shippers, trade companies, freight forwarders and aligned individuals that I would need to go to a trading port to see everything as it was. The idea of visiting a port city had always intrigued me especially because most people in the industry do not have the access or the ability to do so. This is because they either do not have the contacts to get into the port or they see it as completely inaccessible.

Through my research funds provided to me by CISA, the Center for Indian Studies in Africa, I was able to think about looking at trade differently and I was privileged to have the opportunity to go into my field of interest, this being a port city. The ability to travel to my field site in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania allowed me to experience a site of coffee trade that few have been lucky enough to engage with and one which has not been documented. Being able to travel to Dar es Salaam allowed me to be in touch with people on the ground at the port where shipping vessels would dock, coffee containers were offloaded or loaded onto vessels and be able to experience the exchange of this commodity with dock workers, and understand the relationship these containers filled with coffee have with actors who are involved in this journey as well as the most pivotal of all; the Indian Ocean.

It was important for me to understand how the trade of coffee on the continent travelled from the point of origin to the departure point in a port city. Before we continue, the term 'origin' will be discussed briefly. This term is affectionately known to coffee professionals and people in the industry as the specific place where coffee is farmed, produced or grown. Origin also refers to the exact location pinpointing to a certain hilltop where coffee trees are grown, a washing station where coffee is processed and the region where it collectively comes from within one single coffee producing country. I gained insight into understanding how important it would be to have a better understanding of a specific landlocked country which needed coffee to be transported out of the country for export. From here, the coffee would then have to travel via road to a specific port city in another country (usually a neighbouring country) which was not landlocked and had access to the ocean for shipping, and most importantly one which had sufficient port access to the world coffee market.

After previous experience traveling East Africa for work as well as for my interest in exploring our continent and coffee production I knew that there were certain times of the year that the harvest season of coffee would take place. After a few weeks of harvest season, the coffee would be processed through various systems at a washing station and then be loaded into containers destined to various ports on the continent bound for countries around the world. It is from this understanding that my first point of departure for this paper is rooted in my fieldwork done in Rwanda. I decided to specifically choose Rwanda as the landlocked country for this research because through working for the trading company I had spent time with local coffee

communities understanding production as well as meeting with different coffee cooperatives who dealt with the export of Rwandan coffee through the continent as well as to the rest of the world. I found Rwanda an exciting place to conduct research in, as well as conduct research on coffee. It also became and inherently an interesting field site to see how the processing of coffee within this country was finalised before containers filled with coffee left the country and the procedures that followed this. This part of research which will form part of my paper is an accumulation of a few weeks of field research which developed from a work and business trip which I went on during 2014 in Rwanda. I had experienced so much during the few weeks in Rwanda that I had kept a journal which I knew one day would be used for some type of ethnographic fieldwork research paper. It is also based on informal conversations and interviews conducted over the last few months during my field research for this paper. The informal interviews which were done via phone as well as via email correspond to connections which were made during my trip to Rwanda during 2014 and specifically when I was in Kigali at a coffee farmers support center as well as a processing warehouse in 2014. With this in mind, it is important to make clear to the reader that I did not specifically visit Rwanda for the intended fieldwork which would be conducted for this specific research paper. I decided not to make another trip to Rwanda because with the information that I already have from my previous visits as well as knowledge within the field, I assumed that this step along the trade journey, as well as contacts on the ground in Rwanda would be sufficient and beneficial to me.

I traveled to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in September and October 2015. It would be my third time visiting this country, the second time being fully immersed in some type of fieldwork on the ground in Dar es Salaam, and my first time conducting fieldwork at a port itself. As I had previously visited the country I was aware of the way things took place within the country with regards to cultural dress, religious respect and the historical atmosphere, specifically on this visit with me still being present in Tanzania with just weeks before the presidential elections on 25 October 2015. During my time in Dar es Salaam I stayed in an area called Oyster Bay which was synonymous with a European and American expatriate community. This area is one which I was familiar with as on my previous visits I stayed with a British family in a neighbouring suburb. Oyster Bay is also a region within Dar es Salaam which is connected to various main streets and regions. I had to take a twenty-minute taxi ride to an area by the port where fisherman would bring in their daily catch. This part of the port was a local hangout for smaller boats and local

shipping vessels which did not have access to the main port entrance of Dar es Salaam, it was one place where I spent most of my free time if I was not at the port. I had made friends with three local ladies who worked for the fisheries who made sure fisherman paid tax for their space at the harbor when they bought their fish to sell. Oyster Bay was also the place where my informant Mr. Walter, the head of the freight forwarding company with whom I spent a significant amount of time with understanding his and their role within the port and trade of coffee from Tanzania, lived in a compound predominantly occupied by Belgium and French expats. I was picked up from my residence everyday by Mr. Walter who would take me to his freight forwarding company's headquarters off Bandari Road in Dar es Salaam, a good forty-five-minute drive to the service road entrance of Port of Dar es Salaam. I spent days shadowing him and a few of his employees understanding their role within this trade game. Here I spent time in the container yard. This included observing containers enter and exit the yard, stacked on top of each other, loaded and offloaded with different commodities like cocoa and cotton, spoke informally to yard workers and officials who were checking documents and signing papers and followed various containers from specific sections in the yard to other areas and sometimes to other container yards in different designated areas. At times it was difficult for me to conduct formalised interviews with time constraints as well as coming from a coffee trader background. A lot of the time people who I wanted to speak to about trade and the activities they did on a daily basis, because of my background assumed I already knew about it all and would therefore not divulge as much information as I had wanted or expected, without me probing further. Some of the people I interacted with knew that I worked for a coffee trading company as it was often how I was introduced to them by Mr. Walters. This did seem to be a bit of a detriment specifically when as a researcher you are wanting to undercover certain information which often at times is not revealed to you because of your place within the space you are researching. However, with this being said, most of the people who I had met with and had conversations with about trade, containers and the coffee sitting in containers which were destined to other countries around the world, were most appreciative for me being able to come to their space and engage with them, interact in their work space and hear about their lives within the world of freight forwarding and logistics.

The port of Dar es Salaam was where I spent most of my time conducting fieldwork for this research report. This fieldwork at the port comprised of initial introductions by one of my closest

informant, Grace. Grace introduced me to different port officials whom I managed to meet with. These port officials then introduced me to various dock workers and longshoreman who worked at the specific terminal entrance at the port for coffee containers to enter as well as the export terminal for coffee. My days when I conducted research were spent observing the activities which took place at and around the port.

At times there were a lot of people just waiting around and passing time. This made for interesting conversations and observations at the terminal. I conducted informal meetings and interviews with the only two women who worked for the Tanzanian Port Authority, the other meetings and interviews were done with men who worked for the Tanzanian Port Authority. At times it was difficult to engage with officials because they did not have much time to spare to discuss port happenings and the concept of trade, or the importance of the Port of Dar es Salaam, so most of the information gathered through this part of research is therefore based on the minimal interview exchanges and most on the observations and ethnography conducted here and around the port. My time spent in Dar es Salaam at the port and with the freight forwarders was dedicated to observing as much as I could through ethnographic observations, allowing my dictaphone to document every willing and knowable conversation had with dock workers and port authority staff as well as my confidants at the freight forwarding company. After returning to my residence after each fieldwork day, with a cup of coffee, my fieldwork journal became the space where research field notes were kept. When I was unable to record conversations or have my fieldwork journal with me, I tried to remember as much as possible for the afternoon or evening writing sessions which followed. Even though there were people who were more than willing to speak with me, some of the informants were skeptical when they saw me with a pen and paper. The assumptions of things being ‘procedural’ and for ‘research’ created some uneasiness and would later leave me with stories to put together later that evening. By being in my field for a good few weeks I was truly able to embrace the culture, history and the life of a port city openly.

Being based in Johannesburg and not in Durban where the coffee containers would end up docking on their final stages of their journey created a need to visit Durban as well. However, after many follow-up conversations and emails and unanswered phone calls, I realised my contacts in Durban with custom services as well as traders where I needed to visit were

unrequited. To this day I am yet to hear from my contact again, and unfortunately was unable to visit the port and see the happenings of container vessels coming in at pier two and specifically the coffee container which I was meant to meet with at pier two. With this in mind, the reader is asked to remember that the information which will be discussed in this section of the paper is based on research with had been conducted through formal and informal conversations and interviews with some shipping agents based in Johannesburg who spent time working at the port in Durban and dealt directly with custom officials and authorities at the port when bringing coffee containers into South Africa.

I knew when I embarked on my research that I needed to in some ways allow myself to inherently leave my work persona behind and fundamentally be an inquisitive researcher who 'did not know anything'. Taking myself out of the work environment to research something of interest to me was both a challenge and something which I greatly enjoyed. I used this as a launch pad to allow myself to use my background to gain access to the people I needed to be in touch with for research but also to allow myself to feel privy to people who wanted to tell me everything about trade and not what they thought I wanted to hear coming from a coffee traders background. I think I was naïve to think the latter would not be as forthcoming as throughout my research in Tanzania I was overwhelmed by my informants who thought I would be able to assist them in some type of new information or quick fix with my trade background. Despite this being a bit of a concern at times and something which did at times hold me back, I none the less allowed myself to be able to be as open as possible in the circumstances even if it meant not reciprocating sufficient information that my informants expected from me.

Chapter Four:

Data Chapters:

Chapter 4.1

## ***The Commodity and The Container***

> *"We have to try get our coffee out, even if it means that it will take some time, and no one knows how long that some time is, but for you to get our coffee, that would be something great, even if it takes some time"*

- *Rwandan Coffee farmer called Joseph at Dukunde Kawa Cooperative, February 2014*

This chapter deals with an analysis of the production of coffee in the central African landlocked country of Rwanda. It will explore the journey of coffee from production to exportation. Most of this chapter is based on fieldwork which was done during February of 2014 when I visited various coffee cooperatives for business in search of new coffee cooperatives to work with. This chapter will discuss the beginning stages of coffee farming done on small holder farms across Rwanda. From there the coffee is taken to mills around the area where it is further processed, packed and loaded into containers placed onto trucks to be taken to warehouses for exportation out the country. During my time in Rwanda I realised that there was a type of connection which was created between coffee and containers. This type of connection, through research and time spent in other coffee producing countries, was replicated and similar relationships were created. I will explore the ways in which coffee is placed in containers in an exporting country like Rwanda, the procedures which take place with the specific paper work and what happens from the moment coffee leaves a specific area bound for a port city in a container. Most of the data which will make up this chapter is based on fieldwork done previously and on conversations which were had between myself and informants during this research time period.

I stood on the top of the one hill station overlooking the Dukunde Kawa Coffee Cooperative processing station and was overwhelmed by the beauty of the Land of a Thousand Hills. It had taken a good few hours to make it up the mountains from hot and humid Kigali to the processing station. This journey would be my first to a coffee processing station. It was something I had only ever read about over the previous years. Walking down a slope along the path, we got greeted by an infamous old man named Bonaventure. Bona, as he became known to us as, wore a grey suit with a blue tie and a straw hat. The straw hat, he said, was given to him by some coffee professionals who came from Guatemala to buy Rwandan coffee from him and other farmers who work with him. I see a mural painted on the wall of the warehouse. It depicts a coffee washing station against a mountainous backdrop, akin to the one we are standing in. There are farmers with baskets of coffee. They are smiling towards a sun painted on the top right hand corner. Sprawled across in big letters are the words 'Dukunde Kawa'. Kawa, I learnt from my time spent in East Africa, is the word for coffee. I turn to Bona and ask him what the slogan means. He smiles and looks to me and says, "lets love coffee". This resonated within me. The word love resembles a relationship, one which creates a bond and connection. The type of relationship which is created between commodities and people who interact with those commodities: the coffee farmers, shippers, traders and coffee consumers.

Those first few days spent in Rwanda at the Dukunde Kawa cooperative made me realise the relationship that coffee has with people who are involved along the chain of its production is an important one and one which is also between the other various actors and 'things' which aid it on its journey throughout the world.

Coffee is the second most traded commodity in the world, second to oil. It is the first agriculturally traded commodity and is produced, within the southern hemisphere and is consumed mainly in the northern hemisphere (Jaffe, 2007; Lyon, 2011). It is important to understand for our scope that coffee is transported halfway around the world from producing countries on the African continent to various countries around the world specifically in North America but also to areas in the South, for example into South Africa.

Coffee is fundamentally a fruit and begins as a seed. It is planted in fertile areas in different producing regions around the world. This producing region is referred to as the 'Bean Belt', a term which people in the coffee industry refer to as the region between the tropics, just above and below the equator which has the most optimal climate for coffee production. The coffee fruit is encased in a smooth rubbery casing and inside are two small seeds or beans. The word 'cherry' is also used to describe the fruit which coffee trees produce. These cherries develop from white blossoms which flower during coffee season. They smell like sweet jasmine and honey. The coffee season is not as frequent as some other fruits. Once these white blossoms develop it takes a few days for them to fall off trees and for cherries to develop from the blossoms. These cherries then turn from a yellow, to a green to cherry which is red in colour. Once the cherries are 'ox blood' in colour they are ready to be picked from the coffee tree. Inside the red ripe cherry are two coffee seeds. The cherry picking is done laboriously multiple times a day in harvest season and generally by women rather than men, based on the perception that women are better suited at gently picking the berries off the trees without doing any harm to the cherries. Men in the community have a perceived reputation for being rough when handling this precious fruit and are often not involved in this particular stage of the coffee production process (Lyon 2008). This act of cherry picking is usually a task which is done on 'small holder' farmers. The word small holder refers to the small farm space which is on the private piece of land that a farmer will own, usually within his or her own household. Coffee farmers specifically across Africa each have their own piece of land with a specific amount of coffee trees on their land. They produce however much coffee cherries per season from their own coffee trees instead of on big cooperative run farms where a farmer will have only a certain number of trees to look after. By farmers having their own small holder farms, they are responsible for growing and farming their own amount of coffee in their own time to sell to cooperatives, private washing or processing stations. This idea of the small holder farm allows farmers to have control over their own crop and enable them to be empowered to systematically grown their own coffee.

Coffee cherries are taken in baskets to different hill stations or hill tops around their production region. At these hill stations coffee is sorted and packed into heavy duty plastic bags. Coffee is sorted to ensure only the best coffee cherries are picked for selling as some of the coffee cherries could still be under ripe and would not be bought my washing and processing stations. They are then taken either by the farmers themselves or a middle man to a coffee washing station. A

coffee washing station or as some also refer to it as a processing station, is where coffee cherries are processed. These initial stages of processing happen along mountain sides with sufficient weather conditions. The activities that take place at a coffee washing station in essence prepares the coffee for its departure out the country.

Coffee is processed ordinarily through a method called the washed process. Most coffee traders or coffee professionals will spend more money on importing and buying coffee which is washed as opposed to the other method called, sun drying. This sun drying or naturally processed coffee is very inconsistent with flavours, time consuming and is often a processing method which carries a lot of risk. Coffee is left out to dry in their cherry casing and is further processed by allowing their own sugars to emulsify together and create an almost fermented acquired coffee taste. Most of the coffee which I have experienced and come into contact with throughout my time in East Africa has been washed processed coffee.

At the washing station coffee begins its journey of processing. Coffee cherries are graded by their feel, colour and look. They should feel ripe, not too soft or too hard, be blood-red in colour and should look appealing. The cherries are put into a tank which is flushed through with purified water and flows into a machine which removes the skin of the coffee cherry. The red coffee cherry casing is now discarded and placed on the side to be reused as compost around the coffee hill stations. After this, the coffee is flushed through with water again. Naturally coffee has sugars which are in a type of mucous slime covered inside the cherry, once the cherry is removed that slime which still covers the beans are broken down. The water in the tank allows this process to take place. Throughout this fourteen-hour time period, the coffee which is now called parchment is swept through with wooden panels. Men are often the driving force at the washing station. They will paddle through the parchment mixing water and the parchment to allow the mucous sugary layer to be dissolved. After a fourteen-hour water immersion, the coffee parchment is flushed with water once again and this flow allows the parchment to travel into grading channels. These channels allow the heavy dense beans to pass through to higher grades and allows the smaller lighter beans, which are called floaters, to pass through to the lower grade channels. From here the parchment is taken to drying beds, which are typical of African coffee farms and are often called ‘African’ drying beds. It was African coffee farmers who perfected the meter length off the ground height level for these drying beds to be created. These drying bed are

made from wood and mesh wire which are wound and nailed together to create a surface for a tarpaulin to fit on top of it. The meter length height is said to be sufficient for coffee to dry in the sun not too low as to attract moisture from the grass or too high to be burnt by the sun during the day. The beds are also called African drying beds because of this ancient method originating in Africa where coffee was first discovered in Ethiopia (Burhardt 2011).

The tale of the discovery of coffee begins by describing a goat herder called Kaldi who was walking with his goats. Kaldi is fabled to have seen them eating some berries from a tree and then becoming increasingly anxious, excited and jumping a lot. He went to this tree, picked berries and did not understand what it was with them that excited his goats so much. He tried to eat them and cook them but it was only until out of frustration one night that he threw the berries into a fire did he realise their worth. He heard some crackles and a smell began to float from the fire. The coffee berry had now left its casing behind and left two seeds. Those seeds changed colour over time and once they were much darker in colour, he ate them and realised there was something unique about these berries. From there, coffee is said to have spread all over the world. Coffee traveled from various spaces in Africa to the Mediterranean with merchants and religious leaders. Pendergrast (2010) explores more of the history of coffee as it arrived in Yemen. History tells of an Yemenite priest who had thought that the crackles of the beans while they were roasting, was some type of devil worship. Coffee was banned in some parts and began to travel with merchants across rivers and into the Suez Canal through to various areas around the Middle East. After that coffee seemed to spread all over the world through various maritime channels. It arrived in South and Central America through colonists, they brought small coffee trees with them as gifts for rulers. We are able to see that even at the time when coffee was discovered it has been a commodity which has traveled around the world.

While on these African drying beds, coffee parchment is mounted and placed in wave-like shapes along the bed. The women who work at the washing station create these mounds to allow air to pass through the coffee parchment to ensure that sufficient wind is drying them. Once this process is complete, coffee parchment is now close to one-hundred-percent moisture free. At this stage along the chain, the dried coffee parchment is packed into heavy duty plastic bags or hessian sacks, loaded onto a truck and is taken to a milling facility nearby. At the milling facility, coffee is taken out of bags and placed in different machines. Each lot bag, which could be from

one single hill station or a specifically processed coffee, enters the machines individually. This ensures that the coffee does not get mixed with any others. From here, coffee parchment goes through a stage called hulling. This process allows the outer dried layer of skin which surrounds the coffee bean to be taken off. The coffee parchment as it was once called is now called green coffee. The colour green is in reference to what the bean looks like. Here the coffee is weighed into separate bags. These bags are called 'grainpro' and are much thicker and are able to withstand the heavy lugging and movement of the coffee once it is inside. The green grainpro bags are then placed into hessian sacks. These hessian sacks will each hold sixty kilograms of green unroasted coffee. An iron rod and some paint is kept in the milling warehouse by the door. As one bag goes out the door and is placed into the truck each bag gets marked. The markings are specific to the specific place of origin, country of origin as well as the harvest season. There is also a lot number which is placed on the bag which resembles the specific lot the bags of coffee belong to. Once these are loaded onto a truck, they are taken to an area where a container is waiting for them. In this case, the coffee is trucked to a deportation ground in Kigali. The container travels along a rocky road from the hills surrounding Kigali. The coffee is taken off the truck and is loaded into the container, a big rectangular 'metal box' is responsible for carrying the coffee onto its next destination.

The container, as Levinson (2006:29) discusses, had in essence been a very large box shipping freight across land which "had been around for decades". McLean who sought after making sure that the true test of containerisation was about moving freight effectively across land and over sea cost efficiently, securely and in a timely manner, allowed for development and engagement of new freight ideas to begin. Using a container began to "lower[ed] freight bills [and] it saved time" (2006:10). When containerisation began, commodities of all sorts were put into containers, they were "mixed", "an arriving ship might be carrying 100 kilo bags of sugar or 20 pound cheeses nestled next to 2-ton steel coils", (2006:16&18). There were no separate containers for certain things, however goods which were perishable were placed into containers, heavily secured and placed on a shipping vessel which would not be harmed by the weather elements. Over time, shippers realised how much time was spent loading and offloading the containers especially with the 'soft commodities'. Levinson (2006:18) relates the tiresome stories of how longshoreman at docks used to have to handle containers filled with bananas when they arrived

at the dock, these longshoremen would have to “walk down a gangplank carrying 80-pound stems of hard fruit on their shoulders”.

As shipping routes, trade lines to and from ports developed, so too did the container. The new development within trade and shipping came from understanding that the concept of storing and moving cargo and packaged items in containers would need to be changed. The container itself needed to undergo a change and specifically for freight companies, shippers and traders, the container needed to become “cheaper” (2006:33). Through this development the emphasis on moving freight cheaper and more efficiently also included allowing the process of receiving and trucking containers to and from a specific point more efficient and easier than before. This inefficient system still enabled the trade of goods to travel across the world through both sea and rail.

The paperwork which would aid in the travel of containers became an ‘issue’ since certain regulations were implemented creating huge inefficiency between certain towns in North America between “Nashville and Philadelphia” (2006:43). Despite the inefficiency of paperwork during previous trade exchanges, the paperwork now for containerisation of commodities is more or less efficient. From my fieldwork, I think that much depends on the freight forwarding company as well as the inspectors who fill out these papers once containers leave countries of origin. Through my own experience as well, it is the responsibility of those who want to actually get the container to a specific port and those that want to receive said container who create urgency and importance when papers need to be lodged, signed and issued

At the specific site in Kigali, the container waits for the truck to arrive. From here there is an inspector on site. The inspector makes sure that everything that was transported in the truck to the deportation site is all sufficient and ready to be loaded into the container. Here the inspector armed with his clipboard begins to fill out two very important documents. These documents are used in securing the adequate trade of the commodity through to the exporting country, through to a port city and onto its final destination. The inspector who is connected to the ministry of agriculture in Rwanda will fill out what is known as a Phytosanitary Certificate. This ‘phyto’ document which is what coffee professionals call it, and which I will refer to it as from now on in this paper, is issued by the inspector almost immediately. The truck is no longer part of this trade transaction and once there are no hessian sacks left inside, it leaves the deportation ground.

This inspector walks among the hessian sacks opening the bags and inspecting them, individually, not missing one bag. He has to make sure that the bags do not contain any harmful substance which could be of detriment to the health and safety of the many people who will come into contact with the hessian sacks as well as the container and eventually the green coffee when it reaches a roastery in the destination country. The phyto includes information about where the hessian sacks are coming from, which agricultural product the product inside is most related to and if there was anything found to be of harm, to which country this container of hessian sacks will be going to, and specific weight amounts of the contents within the container. This phyto is one of the most important documents. This is the specific signed declaration which would allow the container to enter into the destined port for exportation.

There are two other documents which are effectively 'started' once the phyto certificate is complete. They are 'started' by shipping agents or freight forwarders who are in direct contact with coffee traders on a continuous basis. They gather information from coffee traders on the ground in Rwanda and notify coffee traders and buyers in different countries when the coffee container is set to leave the country. The agents themselves also have the responsibility of choosing a specific shipping vessel line to ship the container on. Hennie, who was my contact in Johannesburg at a trading company spoke to me one day in August when I went to visit him and speak to him about coffee containerisation and other specifics about my research. He told me this about shipping lines:

> "So there are basically two lines. The only way I could make you realise the difference is if you think about a bus and a minibus taxi. The bus has a specific route which it follows every single day without fail. The minibus taxi has a route, but would change its route if they see opportunity rising up elsewhere. These are the two lines in ocean shipping. There is something we call 'conference' line, now this is the line which follows the bus analogy. The shipping vessel will have a specific route from a port city which it will follow systematically until it reaches the destination port. This line is often more expensive because it could sometimes take longer and also because a lot more needs to be organized and formalized there is also less space for certain containers. So certain decks will be specifically for certain goods which are being exported. We don't allow the coffee containers on the top deck, nor would we want our container of coffee next to a container which could be of harm to the coffee inside, which often doesn't happen. The minibus

> taxi line is called ‘non-conference’. This line is very erratic and will leave a port city and go anywhere around, basically to any port that has containers which are able to fit onto the shipping vessel if it has space. This isn’t the most ideal because you never know when your container could be arriving. It may just veer off route and land up somewhere else picking up other containers”.

The one document which is filled out at the same time as the phyto is the International Coffee Organisation’s Certificate of Origin. This document is accredited to the international Coffee Organisation and fundamentally issues the information on the coffee specific to this container which is transporting the commodity from one country of production to a country of consumption. The International Coffee Organisation’s Certificate of Origin (also referred to many coffee professionals plainly as the ICO) is in essence a document which specifically ‘allows’ the transport of the coffee on the specific shipping vessel to a destination port. Without it, the shipping vessel would not be able to leave the port with the container. This could almost be seen as the ‘visa’ of the coffee trading world, without it coffee would not be allowed to exit or leave certain countries. This document has information which the shipping agent or freight forwarding company is responsible for, the information they gather in booking spaces and for reserving sections for many containers on shipping vessels for coffee containers is imperative to being able to transport coffee. Without it, the port in which the container is entering is allowed to deny it entry. This document is processed immediately after the inspector places his signature on the document in three different areas. Once he has done this, a copy goes with another truck driver with another chassis connected to it, which drives the container to the destined port city. Another copy is kept in the phytosanitary book, and one goes to the shipping and trade agents who are responsible for arranging the specific shipping vessel company which will be responsible for exporting the coffee in the container on the sea, this would be either on a conference or ‘non-conference’ line.

Once these documents are filled out, the shipping agent who has someone on the ground in Rwanda would send all this information to the specific shipping agent in Zurich or wherever their home base would be. In our case it was Zurich and the shipping agent for this container specifically used the shipping logistics company called Ignazio Messina & Company. This logistics company would be responsible for specifically ensuring that all the information that was documented would be sent through to the right people in Zurich, in the destined port city in Dar

es Salaam as well as at the final destination of the container in Durban as well as the final destination of the actual coffee in Johannesburg. All of this information would be placed into the third and final document called the Bill of Lading. This document is one of the most important ones. This document according to Hennie effectively,

> "Gets the coffee into the actual container".

This document has all the information which is needed for the coffee to be transported through borders to the port city onto a shipping vessel and into a destined port city. With this Bill of Lading comes the booking number which your container is booked under. This would be your reference when you are tracking or wanting to find out any information on the shipping vessel, when it is destined to arrive or if it has stopped pre-emptily elsewhere. Once the Bill of Lading is filled out with all the required information it is stamped by officials on the ground, the logistics company who is responsible for shipping the container as well as a bank. This bank stamp is only specific for containers which are being taken out on loans by traders. This document with the bank stamp ensures that money received once the container enters the destined port will be repaid at a specific time or over a specific time period.

Once all these documents are finalised the container is packed with the coffee. In one container there are three-hundred-and-twenty bags which are made up of sixty kilograms each. These hessian sacks are placed on top of one another and stacked high into the container. Once the doors are closed, colourful padlock type locks are used to lock and secure the container. At different exit points in different countries there are different coloured locks which are specific for certain containers which are being transported through borders to a port city or a specific colour for a container which is being loaded at the port and then being placed onto the shipping vessel at the port. I learnt that containers which travel through their own borders to enter a new country to get to a specific port city are not opened until they reach their final destination. The colour coded locks enable the information from a specific exit point to an entry point to be identified even if papers are missing. For example, the container leaving Rwanda would have a yellow lock for the accredited phyto certificate, and then a blue lock to ensure the container is not opened until it reaches its final destination in Johannesburg. So even though this container would pass through two different port cities, the blue lock would not be broken and the container opened. This ensures the quality of the commodity inside, and specifically saves on time. It also ensures the

security and assurance that whatever commodity or product which is in the container has been looked at and signed off on and is safely able to be placed onto a shipping vessel and ready for exportation.

The container leaves Rwanda destined for the port city of Dar es Salaam. In toe are three-hundred-and-twenty bags of coffee, which amounts to 19200 kilograms of coffee and two responsible drivers with the three hugely significant documents, who will be on the road for approximately four to six days driving from Kigali through to Dar es Salaam.

Chapter 4.2

## ***Port City Life***

> *"You see there is an empty container just sitting there, that one with its doors wide open. You will see just now the stuffing. Do you know the stuffing? The stuffing is the fun part, well for the strong men it is the fun part, not for the weak ones."*

- *George, my confidant at the coffee container yard at the port of Dar es Salaam, October 2015*

This chapter deals with my time spent in Tanzania at the port of Dar es Salaam during the months of September and October in 2015 where most of my fieldwork was conducted. A discussion will deal with my arrival into the city and how I managed to become acquainted with my informants at the freight forwarding company as well as my multiple entrance ordeals into the Port. An ethnographic account of a typical day at the port, where the coffee container yard is found, the occurrences at the port and the other activities which take place at the port will be explored. Through this ethnographic account, one would be able to understand the life of dock workers, longshoremen and coffee container helpers who wait for coffee containers to come into port. A further discussion will deal with the influential actors who I came across throughout my time in Dar es Salaam. I will explore their individual roles. There are three individuals who I will discuss through this and will inherently form the basis of this chapter. These three informants created space for me to engage, understand and live port life with them while I was in town. My three informants who I will bring forth are Mr. Walters, Grace and George. These three all systematically created an ease of access for me at port and whom I am internally grateful for their assistance and creation of this important chapter which explores the direct link between containerisation, the Indian Ocean and the commodity of African coffee.

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It had been my third visit to Tanzania in the past two years. On previous occasions I had only spent a small amount of time in the frenetic city of Dar es Salaam. I made my way through the

hustle and bustle of the late afternoon traffic in a taxi cab that I shared with a friend called Mette who happened to be on my flight in. I met Mette, who is originally from Denmark, on my second visit to Tanzania. She lives in Dar, as the locals like to call it, and works at the Dar es Salaam Yacht club as a diving instructor. We shared a taxi which took us both to the area called Oyster Bay. We would be staying a few streets apart and organised to meet whenever we were both able to.

I woke up the next morning to a hot and humid exciting day ahead of me. My clearance to enter the port of Dar es Salaam had been processed by my contact a few weeks prior to my arrival but would only allow me two days of port access. Those specified days for my port visits would be for Thursday and Friday, and the day today was Tuesday. I spent most of the day wandering around Oyster Bay and driving around Dar with my local taxi driver Ephrim. I remember how Dar always excited me. It is known to be one of the busiest cities on the continent and without a doubt at certain times of the day, you are able to sit in traffic for hours. It has always marveled me; there are traffic lights which work, they change from green to red, yet most of the time no one uses them. I sat in a taxi that afternoon and forgot about how the system works. Ephrim had just fetched me from the fishing market, which I enjoyed visiting whenever I was in town. We were at a well-known intersection which was very busy. It was only 3pm but there seemed to be hundreds of cars waiting to pass. I looked left and right, cars and motorbikes and even bicycles everywhere. We waited. I saw the lights change at least four times until it was our time to be at the front of the line. I see standing in the middle of the road in his pristinely starched white uniform, with a little whistle and his white officer hat, the traffic controller. He is an infamous character on the streets of Dar for still having a spotless white uniform while standing in the middle of traffic with the dust and exhaust fumes suffocating the air around him. I had missed the chaos and playfulness of Dar traffic.

I woke early the next morning to meet one of my informants. His name was Mr. Walters. I had been put in touch with him and his company through the trading company partnership I was connected to. It had been easy and efficient for Mr. Walters and his team to help me gain access. It seemed as their position as one of the leading shipping and logistics companies in Tanzania paid off.

I waited outside my little apartment on the road for Mr. Walters to pick me up. It had rained the night before so the humidity was unbearable. He arrived in a Land Rover which clunked as it stopped to pick me up. I jumped in and introduced myself to him as it was our first official meeting, besides for the multiple emails that we had exchanged. It was 6am and traffic had already begun. We spoke about my research, interest in coffee and why of all things was the shipping logistics of coffee something that interested me. The traffic worked in our favour, we spoke about a lot on the way to work. I found out his Belgium heritage has caused a sense of African cultural and historical interest and concern. He is interested in my travels across Burundi and Rwanda and says to me that he thinks the trouble that is currently happening in Burundi still stems from the problems that the Belgium colonists created. I learnt from him that he has been in Tanzania since 2011 and has worked for the shipping and logistics company for many years.

We discussed the upcoming elections which would take place in Tanzania while I was still there. The political situation concerned him and while on our drive discussing the newest presidential candidate Edward Lowassa, there was a crowd of protestors forming outside the one parliamentary building which is no longer in use. The crowds gathered as we waited in traffic. About twenty minutes lapsed and we arrived at two big white gates with a huge map of Africa which is painted across the two doors. As the one door opened half of the continent splits in two. Signing the visitor's book through my passenger side window and climbing out the Land Rover I realised this was the procedural 'stuff' that I had only heard about when entering the I followed Mr. Walters into the office building and am greeted by a few young men who were dressed in white pressed shirts and bright yellow reflector vests. I found out they were on their way to the port to inspect some containers which had come into port and were being shipped the next day. It was 7:30am and there was so much activity already in the office. We walked up two flights of stairs and I met with three ladies who worked in the accounts division of the company. Towards the end of the corridor was another doorway, we walked through that to be greeted with an open planned office set-up. There were heads buried in paperwork, people on the phone and one young man hustling with a tray full of cups and a carton of milk. I followed behind Mr. Walter and we walked into what was his office. A room with glass windows which was able to see out onto the open-planned office space. He chuckled at me and said when he closed to door,

"As the boss, it is important to see what all my people are doing."

We sit down in his office. I seem to have created a bit of a stir as there is murmuring going on around in the office which we can hear. I look out the window behind me to distract me from the phone call conversation Mr. Walters is having, I look and see there is a container yard below me.

I speak with Mr. Walters for a few hours, we discuss as much as we can about logistics and the shipping of commodities and different freight. We looked through various documents and papers which are sent to them by other traders and lines which use them as the middle men to transport the containers to various countries around the world. We specifically discuss containers which have left neighbouring countries and have entered into Tanzania to be exported to other ports around the world. I learn from Mr. Walter that Dar es Salaam is used as a transit city. In logistics specifically on the African continent when containers are transported from one landlocked country to a non-landlocked country, these containers are referred to as being "in transit". This basically means that the containers are being shuffled through Dar es Salaam without properly staying in the city. They are being moved and are theoretically 'in transit', on the way to their final destination. It is therefore important to understand that logistics and shipping companies have a huge responsibility to ensure that the right containers will go to the right ports for their final destinations. The container which I would have left in Kigali would have specifically arrived in Dar es Salaam and traveled to the container yard here under the authority of Mr. Walters and his company. Just like the multitude of containers I passed on the way into work that day with Mr. Walters so to would that container from Rwanda have had to wait in line to gain access into the company's container yard. This line is synonymous with the many containers waiting to get into different container yards around Dar es Salaam to then enter the port for export. Before initial entrance, a security guard would check under the container with a reflective mirror. He would not be responsible for checking any of the documents which would have traveled with the container from the originating country. The truck would then be allowed into the yard, inspected to make sure there are no dents to the container, or discrepancies with any of the documents, but most importantly the container will be checked to ensure that the locks which are still on the container are still sealed and not broken.

Mr. Walters tells me there have been a few incidents when containers have arrived with broken seals and locks,

> "Once we were waiting for coffee from the DR Congo. It is one of the countries that we receive transit coffee from. That and Burundi and Rwanda. We had been in touch with our contacts on the ground in Kivu where the coffee comes from. He had told us that the phyto and ICO had all been processed and were waiting for the Bill of Lading to be processed and the invoice. We get sent all these documents as soon as the container leaves. It would take about eight days for the coffee to arrive here in Dar. When it arrived we were all in such a state. The driver of the truck told us that he didn't know but the locks had been broken. He only realised this when we walked around the container to check it when it came into the container yard. He said he had taken rest one night near the border by Burundi and he had heard some noises from the outside but thought nothing of it. What seemed to have happened was a rebel group had broken the seal and stolen some bags of coffee which were in the container. These things happen all the time, especially from Congo. It is such a risk we take when we say yes to ship these containers. Because now with all the paperwork you have to fill out for the loss of the coffee bags and the broken seals and also dented container, it is a lot. But this is a risk we take all the time. It is like a risk you take when you live in a city you don't know. In life you have to take risks".

Through my time spent with Mr. Walters I learn that logistics and especially shipping coffee containers across the continent to port cities and then to various areas around the world is a risk and one which is politically motivated and often a risk which cannot be taken. Coffee is high on the commodities list. People in producing countries know that they are able to sell coffee either through legitimate means or via black markets where prices of coffee fluctuate and whoever bids the highest is able to claim their prize. Fridell (2014) discusses the way in which coffee as a commodity has a specific price which is controlled and is set on the New York Stock Exchange. Coffee is therefore a risky business in every respect. It takes five years for a coffee tree to be 'fully grown' and produce fruit, there is a high chance as a result of weather, coffee cherries may not be 'ox-blood' in colour and undoubtedly there is a risk during the transportation of coffee through different landlocked bordering countries.

Cowen (2014) explores how the cost of logistics, shipping and trucking containers and freight around the world has both a massive economic cost but also specifically a social one. The social cost would be an inclusivity of the various channels the container is mixing with and who would be involved in this transaction. If we think about the container being broken into coming from

the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the truck driver could have been entirely unaware of what he was transporting, but the thieves knew which container and which truck to target. The social cost of commodities being high jacked in producing countries as well as bordering exporting countries is high. The economic loss would never be able to be recovered, but the social risk of being afraid to transport containers which held so much claim to those who highjack those trucks would prevent drives from being involved in this interaction. The risk of having the containers full of coffee stolen for ransom which does happen often in coffee trading and is what happened with the container that Mr. Walter told me about is akin to the Somali pirates which Cowen speaks about. Cowen (2014) explores how significant this regime has impacted trade in the region. There are effectively one route ships would pass through to get to North America and Europe that being the Gulf of Aden and the Suez Canal, both have seen piracy. Cowen also discusses that there is a link between the increase of economic growth and trade on the continent which would increase the activities of piracy. She reiterates the jump in attacks on shipping vessels which went up "200 percent… in the corridor linking the Suez Canal and the Indian Ocean" (2014:143), from this we are able to gauge that oceanic trade is a risky and unsettling space for all actors involved in trade, shipping and maritime affairs. This is the same idea that Mr. Walters discussed with me the day we sat in his office, he as well as other logistics, trade and freight companies have grave concerns of hijacking containers on specific road routes leading to Dar es Salaam where containers can be further exported onto the ocean for their final destinations, and this would inevitably impact trade and the economy. This concern is the very same concern that Cowen speaks of, as it "disrupts the circulation of goods and capital, but it is also a rapidly growing direct cost for the global shipping industry" (2014:143-144).

Myself and Mr. Walters gently move on from the discussion of the broken seals and he shows me that the containers which are about to enter the yard are new containers which will stay in their container yard for the next few days until they are taken to port. He gets up from his table, hands me a bright yellow reflector vest and leads me out his office. We move along the narrow corridor, down the stairs, past the accountants on the first floor and walk outside back into the humid air of Dar.

He shows me around the container yard. I am given a tour of the various stacked containers and shown which containers are from which shipping line company and where they have arrived

from. There are many Maersk containers stacked high on top of one another. Klose (2009) explores various developments of shipping lines which are mainly all here in the container yard. The Maersk Line which is one of the most influential and most popular lines around the world was first started in 1975 and has since made the list "of the world's largest shipping container line" (2009:193). There are three Evergreen Marine containers and many mustard coloured "1970 founded Mediterranean Shipping Company" containers (2009:193). We walk around for another forty minutes. I am taken into warehouses which are stocked with cocoa beans which have been shipped in to the port of Dar es Salaam from the Ghanaian port of Tema and are awaiting further instructions on where to be taken to and on which freight and shipping lines to be sent on. The cocoa pods, I am told, are taken out of their container because the shipping companies do not want to pay overstay charges. The cocoa pods which are in cotton wraps are placed into a warehouse which is used to only house cocoa, there is a guard on duty 24 hours a day I am told. This cocoa is of very high quality and if they were to have stayed in the container in the container yard in the humidity and sun, the cocoa pods would have sweated and decreased in quality. We walk inside the warehouse to see if the casings are still intact, the guard on duty greets us and speaks to Mr. Walters in Swahili. I wonder around the warehouse and walk towards the big iron doors as I see Mr. Walters waving at me.

Mr. Walters leaves me in the container yard. I am left alone and begin to make my way to a container whose metal doors hung open. I had seen a few men walk over to this container when we first arrived. There were three men who were working on this container. There was a distinct glue smell coming from the space they occupied. I began to speak with the one man who I had met inside. Jotham told me that he and two others were cleaning this container which would be filled with coffee from the other warehouse area in another yard. This coffee was grown and processed near Arusha on the other side of Kilimanjaro in North Tanzania and then trucked down to Dar es Salaam to be exported. The men were applying glue to the walls of the container which were then being plastered by a heavy duty brown paper. This would be done twice. Jotham had said that this container was going on top of the vessel, and the shipping agent wanted to make sure that the moisture from the air on the ship wouldn't influence the coffee bags inside the container. He said that the reason they do the double paper around the inside of the container is so if air gets inside the container, the air would not be able to go straight through to the coffee sacks inside. The risk the shipping agent take by placing this container on the vessel instead of

inside a hold where weather elements would not influence the commodity reminds me of the conference and non-conference line which Hennie had spoken to me about. With the multitude of shipping agents and lines around the world, these middle men freight forwarders, are not able to make decisions on the quality control of the commodity they are shipping. Despite the work of laying multiple sheets of heavy duty brown paper inside the container, it would seem futile if the container became drenched and somehow water seeped through. It is the people on the ground here who seem to want to protect and ensure that their job and duty as freight forwarders are able to ensure the product to a certain degree without it being destroyed or threatened. As the men applied glue to the walls and tore small sheets of paper to get into the corners of the container, they hummed a special tune which I remembered from my time spent in North Tanzania on coffee farms in Kilimanjaro, the circle somehow came full circle for me.

I leave Jotham and his friends and wonder around and watch a few more containers coming into the container yard. The scenes are all the same: the truck drivers come out of their trucks, clenching some papers that are crumpled between their fingers they are greeted by men and women in white starched outfits and the papers are exchanged. The truck and container are left in the yard, the drivers, men and women in their white starched outfits move from the space and walk towards the edge near where the entrance to the yard is. It stays calm for about ten minutes. It is all quiet until a big machine, I've never seen before, motions towards the truck and container. With its claws stretched out and a loud beeping sound, the claws stretch out more and are placed onto both edges of the container. The chassis which had the container locked to it moved upwards as the crane began to lift the container. The hooks which were placed into the open rims of the container allowed the container to be lift from the chassis and be placed elsewhere around the container yard. Levinson (2006) explored how the container had developed over time and through the history of maritime trade. This exact instance allows one to fully appreciate this development. Throughout his discussion of the development the addition of the "twist lock" onto containers enabled the move of access when connected to the crane to be easier and more efficient for containers to be shifted from one area to another (2006:56). This container with the letters PIL branded on the side was shifted and slotted into the cranes metal hooks, pulled up and speedily shifted from the truck chassis it came from and was placed on top of another container with the word Triton sprawled on its one side. I saw Mr. Walters reenter the counter yard with some papers and the same truck driver who had previously driven the now

bare backed truck chassis. The driver walked over to his truck, revved and drove out the container yard.

I realised from my time spent in the container yard that this place represents a space where the container is in limbo. It is neither just staying in the port where it is, nor is it already on its new journey. It is interesting to think of this, as there is always the issue of time when it comes to the trade of coffee on the African continent. Time is an element which not many people could control, and it seemed here on this part of the commodity chain, a lot could indeed be controlled. Instead of leaving the container in the yard for the next few days, which happened so often, it could have been placed on a container ship to the destination it was heading for almost immediately. After much curiosity about one container which I had seen arrive on my first day with Mr. Walters and which by the end of my time spent with him and his company, I learnt that that specific container had to wait in their yard as certain paper work which were meant to be submitted for this specific container had not been completed yet and were not sent to them for further shipping responsibilities. He remarked how sometimes this is just one thing that being in the logistics business you are unable to change;

> "Time. It is either able to help you; you can be ahead of time or behind time, but you are always somehow able to make up time when it comes to shipping. If the papers are delayed coming to us, the container just sits. If we already have the papers but not the container, we sit. The time comes when the buyer at the final end of the chain is waiting, all he can do is wait, and then there are times when there is only waiting to be done and this is done when the container is on the ocean".

I spent the next few days with the many people who are the ones responsible for all the paper work, phone calls and emails between different traders, shipping lines, logistic and freight companies all around the world. It was these people on the ground here who were the one's responsible in making the container move. Move to and from port, while also intercepting and solving freight problems and signing many documents to ensure containers were leaving from the port on different shipping vessels on different days.

The day my port visit was scheduled I decided to try make my own way to Mr. Walters' company. It took much longer than if I had gone with Mr. Walters because Ephrim my taxi

driver decided to take me along the scenic route and try ‘avoid’ the impending traffic jams all over the city at 7am.

As soon as I arrive my yellow reflector vest is waiting for me at reception with a little nametag. The nametag has the Tanzanian Port Authority badge attached, I had been officially signed in to visit the port. My access, even though it came through weeks prior to my arrival in Dar es Salaam, was now in my hands and what made it even more official was my security pass for the port via the accreditation of the ‘master’ at the Tanzanian Port Authority. I walk up the stairs down the long corridor to greet Mr. Walters and my informant for the day. Grace, who I had been in contact with for several weeks now prior to my arrival in Tanzania. It was through her invaluable efforts and constant push that I was granted access and accepted into the port for this research. She is a petite lady with a baby blue skirt on and white shirt who stands to the side of the office as I walk in. She is excited and begins to hug me. She says she is excited to show me around the port for the next few days. We discuss how the day is going to flow and I find out that she will drive me in her car and with her own access card get us through the gates and into the port where the coffee terminal is. Grace told me she would be by my side for the time I would be at the port, and would be able to help me engage with and speak with the port workers as well as some of the officials.

After some time spent with Grace and a few of the other ladies in the one corner of the open plan office, we decide that it is time to go to port. We walk down the long corridor, down the stairs and out the door. Her small dark grey Toyota is waiting in the parking lot for us. There is not much traffic as we have chosen to leave in the middle of the morning, when morning rush hour traffic has subsided. Grace sits on top of the steering wheel as she maneuvers her way through the traffic. There are no traffic lights. We pass over three massive circles which allows traffic to flow well as Grace tells me we are driving against traffic and towards the port. Grace’s mobile phone rings, she begins to answer it but throws the phone into her lap. She shouts at the other person on the phone while the bus in front of her makes a stop to collect some new passengers. She continues to shout at the phone as she revs and changes lanes. Their conversation ends and the beeping from the dialing tone soon stops on its own. Grace tells me she is scared of driving in this city of Dar. She tells me she came from Mbeya in the south of Tanzania and driving there is very different to driving in Dar,

> "It is so hard to answer the phone when I am driving and wanting to concentrate on the road. Just the other day I saw such a tragedy in the road here. I was coming this same road and someone fell off their bicycle because the traffic was so bad and they were crushed by the one car, these people in their cars are dangerous. This big city is not like my old small city."

It was about thirty-five minutes from the start of our drive until we arrived at the port. We proceed through a security check point. The security guards began to check my backpack and my passport. My letter for access as well as my name badge at first did not seem sufficient. The guard would come back and forth from the car to his little wooden house inside the premises. He waved at Grace and smiled. Grace moved into Drive and we sped off down the windy road which led to various terminals at the port.

We drove for about ten minutes until we got to the coffee terminal area. The Toyota was parked around the corner, which I later learned used to be the original coffee terminal before all the development and change happened at the port. The port needed to be built up, Grace begins to tell me that over time there was a very big fire which destroyed a few of the warehouses which housed certain products. Over time new warehouses were built to withstand the amount of trade that is being pushed through the port, but also for the number of goods which are being stored at the port until ships are ready to transport them. Warehouse terminals also hold containers which have yet to be claimed. When we parked the car and walked over to the one area near the new coffee warehouse terminal, Grace showed me that behind us was a restricted area which housed hundreds of containers which had not been collected or opened for many years. The Tanzanian Port Authority inspected them and because the shipping lines have control over the containers in essence until the importer 'accepts' the container it is in their control.

I walk further out towards where I can hear a bit of commotion and marvel at what I see in front of me. There are shipping vessels at almost every embankment. These vessels are gigantic and one with a red rear is currently offloading containers, with the biggest crane I have ever seen, in the terminal over on the right. A car drives past us and slows down to talk to Grace. It seems as if she knows everyone here. I learn from Grace that she used to work for DHL until she realised that she wanted to be challenged in life more and wanted to understand how "bigger things were transported across the world", but more importantly "on the ocean".

I am in awe of the container to my left. As I walk past I try not to stare or look too enchanted in what I see. A few months prior to this day, I sat in the office at work searching online for some sort of information which would tell us where the container of coffee which we had ordered was. I looked and underneath the information category for the shipping vessel our coffee was on, something read 'stuffing'. I had never heard this word before let alone seen it happen in real life. I turned to a work colleague and proceeded to ask what 'stuffing' meant. She looked at me a bit perplexed. It was only after a few minutes did she realise what this term meant. This term which is familiar with some coffee professionals is the act which is done only at port before the container is put onto a ship to be exported out to a destination city. This term refers to the act of taking coffee off the wooden pallets, usually one sixty-kilogram bag per person, these bags being placed strategically on their backs and walking into the container and placing the bags one on top of another. These bags would then fill the container. The act of stuffing is only done when coffee is sorted at the port terminal and not done for containers which are transporting coffee for 'in-transit coffee'. It is remarkable and exciting to see a container being stuffed. Each port worker arrives at the pallet, another man picks up the hessian sack with a pick, and he digs it into the sack and pulls it up to place it on the shoulders of the worker. His back is towards him, he vigorously places the bag on his back. He turns out and walks towards the container. Every single step is followed by every other worker. They wear brown overalls, a few with orange headbands. There are handkerchiefs hanging out their pants pockets and are used to wipe the sweat off their foreheads. Each man carries a bag with such ease and no contention. The methodological way they flow with ease in and out of the container, carefully not bumping into anyone and aligning each bag on top of one another is mesmerizing.

This stuffing takes a few hours, this activity seems monotonous but it is the only way to get coffee inside; one by one. The container I see is lined with brown paper, the same as what I had seen in the container yard. The one section is sliding off a bit, a dock worker goes to find some glue and takes his paint brush, smothers some glue on the brush and meagerly applies the glue to the piece of brown paper that was coming off. There is a man who seems to be in charge; flaunting his authority with his clipboard and his orange reflector vest which all the Tanzanian Port Authority officials seem to be wearing. I motion towards him, flashing my badge making sure he knows that I am allowed to be inside the port. He greets me and happily explains to me as if I did not know already that the brown paper is double lined on the inside of the container to

protect from the moisture which could set in while on the shipping vessel. His name is Adam. Adam begins to tell me that sometimes when they receive information as port officials for coffee to be stuffed into containers and placed onto vessels, he comes to the coffee terminal area to make sure the workers are doing their job. He tells me that sometimes the containers are just about ready to be closed but then a new order comes through and they have to take the coffee out and reline the inside of the container with the brown paper, he says this usually happens with certain shipping lines, the ones which are from,

> "Those famous and very rich coffee people from the continent above us, they make sure that we line the container three, sometimes four times".

I learn from Adam that this specific container is traveling to Norway. Norway is known for its specialty coffee culture and the purchase rate of only the most expensive and highest quality coffee from the continent. Another official with the letters HS painted on the back of his shirt arrives, I assume it has something to do with health and sanitation because the official is wearing gloves and a mask covering his mouth. The inspector is here at the port to ensure every bag of coffee; he checks if any are wet or moldy, if they were smelling or had some other fault with them. There is another man in a blue reflector vest with the initials TPA, (Tanzanian Port Authority) etched on his chest. These officials wait until the stuffing is finished. They sign and document a few things on their paper and step to the side of the container. A woman comes to them with a few padlock ties and a small blue cable tie. This heavy duty cable tie means that both the health and sanitation regulators and the port authority have had a successful visit and are able to now place this container onto the vessel. At this point I realise that Grace had left me. I stand on the sidelines and watch this courageous dance between the dock workers, coffee sacks and port officials. The way these dock workers move gracefully while carrying the coffee load and shift between containers without dropping the bags on their backs left me wondering how long these men and women have been part of this routinely organised task.

I meet Grace at the bottom of a rickety staircase. It is rusted and not sturdy but is the only access we have to the top deck of the coffee terminal. This terminal I am told by my new informant called George was recently built when the old terminal building was destroyed in a fire.

George is a round tubby man who liked to laugh a lot and his excitement to show me around his space was evident in the manner he carried himself. He manages this area of the port and has

been involved with coffee for many years. He tells me how he has seen a lot of the growth and change at the port and is able to understand why there is so much building taking place now. George took me around to the top deck of the terminal building. We walked around the top deck for close to two hours. I walked next to George as we climbed the rickety staircase and onto the patio which overlooked the port. There was a pallet of coffee sitting in front of us with two long metal pieces which came from the crane above us. The two metal rods were held together by a rubber band connected to another metal something which is connected to the crane. As it sunk down, the two rods were attached to the sides of the pallets by three dock workers. As soon as the rods plonked to the floor, two quickly assembled the pallet and the rod, a sign was given to the man inside managing the crane. I stand back as the crane lifts the rods up, they are tied together but sway back and forth as they are lifted above our heads, over the tarmac beneath it and onto a loading zone near a new container. The crane I see as I make my way inside the top deck of the terminal is one which is connected to the shipping vessel docked right by the coffee terminal. This type of movement for coffee from the top to the ground for stuffing was only made possible by the crane. It would be impossible for the coffee sacks on the pallets to be taken down the rickety staircase to the containers. This happens every few minutes, the process is quick and it seems to have been perfected by the workers who maneuver the metal rods into the pallet so proficiently.

I walk around the top deck with George for a few more hours. Through this time, we watch pallets of coffee leave the deck, there are many women who work on the top deck. They are wearing dresses, legs are semi folded as they sit on the floor on mats, sorting coffee and going through which coffee is of good quality and which is bad. I am told about the huge amounts of coffee which come into Tanzania from neighbouring countries, he shows me with his finger pointing to an area in the warehouse which he says is all the coffee they have received from a specific region in Rwanda. Together we sit on a pallet of coffee sacks and look at all the bags separated into countries of origin. All I smell is coffee.

He begins to talk about the coffee from Tanzania. Coffee that is exported out the country from areas which produce coffee locally across Tanzania are brought here to the port. They are placed in regional areas and number codes and specific to whoever ordered what coffee from where

would be taken down from the top level where we are to the ground level to where all the containers are. George turns to me and says;

> "Sometimes it is so hard for us to go up and down to understand what coffee we have in the top deck especially with those stairs. It is hard and time consuming. There are guys who do this, and they are great with it. But at times it is too much for them. It is so great how we have got the crane to help us load and offload, it is important that the big boss understands that with this our lives are much easier. And things are a lot less slow."

He gets up from the sacks, we walk to the entrance of the top deck. He takes out his handkerchief, wipes his forehead and as it changes colour and comes away from his face, he turns to me and motions me to the staircase.

We are in limbo again, just as we walk outside the crane has arrived to pick up another pallet. There is a young man behind the forklift inside the top deck. He drives the pallet to the edge of the top deck balcony and abruptly drops the pallet to the floor. The pallet edge snaps a bit and as the metal rods are inserted into the sides, the other side crumbles. The urgency to replace the pallet is there. The men inside the top deck hustle to find a new pallet. This means having to take the coffee sacks off the pallet and repackage and replace the one broken pallet stock with a new one so the crane can take something down to be loaded into a container. Coffee had been ordered and because of the vast amount of coffee upstairs in the top deck which is coffee that is brought in from all over the country to be exported is properly packaged onto pallets, wrapped and taken to a container for it to be exported. Throughout this time, the amount of time it takes for these activities to happen seems tedious. Women especially sit and wait for things to happen. However, through all the monotony and grievances it seems that this is the only way. Port life on the top deck is slow.

When we arrive at the bottom, George and Grace walk towards a new truck that has pulled up to the side of the terminal. At the one side is a new vessel which has just arrived. The horns announce her arrival, Lady Elana in big bold yellow writing on the front of the ship. The truck I learn has come from Rwanda. There is quite a bit of commotion as a lot of the men who were working on the stuffing of the container when I first arrived, have come to work on this container now. A few port officials are staggering in with their colourful reflector vests and clipboards. There is one man who sat on the ground floor level of the coffee warehouse with a whistle, a pen

and an old Nikon camera hanging around his neck. He walks towards us as we wait to see what happens. He begins to take photos of the container and bends down and moves sideways to ensure he gets a photo at every angle. The one official jumps onto the chassis, with a wrench in hand and begins to smash the padlocks on the doors of the container. He is successful, slowly turns the handle down and to the right, and opens the door slightly and out rushes bags of coffee. The man with the Nikon quickly takes photos of the bags of coffee falling out the container. I go find Grace who is talking among the men, I ask her why the man is taking photos of the container. She says that his name is Joseph and he works for Tanzanian Port Authority. It is his duty to record every single container that comes into the port, and once an inspection is complete a form has to be filled out with certain information and sometimes photos are required. This bureaucracy of paperwork seems tedious specially if this coffee which has arrived from Rwanda will wait and sit until someone urges the papers to be processed on either end of the chain which seems to be the case more often than not.

I notice, once the doors fly open that this container is not lined with any brown paper inside. During all of this, we are all standing next to the chassis waiting to see what happens next. The same dock workers arrive with a very large scale. The pallet is placed on the large scale and just like that the assembly line begins. An old man on the end of the chassis opens the doors of the container. He takes his pitchfork and begins to snatch the bags away. Some of the hessian bags that he is taking out get torn. The bags are placed on the back of dock workers backs, they bend down to catch their breath and up they come. They walk a short distance and throw the bag of coffee over the scale. Coffee is weighed out and a certain amount of coffee bags are placed on each pallet. The dust settles in the air, I had wondered why the men who came to help offload the coffee bags were wearing face masks. I realised as I coughed few times that I was envious of their wit. There are a few bags which have been completely torn from the pitchfork being used by the old man. Once the bag of coffee is taken out onto the chassis, it is gently passed onto the back of one of the dock workers, who then gently places it on the ground and one of the women who were previously waiting for something to happen, comes running with a big needle and thread to start stitching up the hessian sack. The inspectors from Testing Inspection and Certificate, which is a third party auditing part of the Tanzanian Port Authority come to the container to inspect it to see if everything is okay, this is done specifically with certain agricultural commodities.

This task of ‘unstuffing’ the container seems to take more time than stuffing. A lot of the coffee bags are broken and torn. There does not seem to have been a lot of care placed into placing these bags into the container when it left Rwanda. However, here now at the port, the dockworkers and women are creating a new environment for the coffee to be further exported in. One which involves care and consideration and time. There is a lot of effort and time dedicated to this container.

My time spent at both the container yard at Mr. Walters’ company as well as at the port showed a very similar pattern. The issue of time seemed to be one which in most cases was an important factor when it came to the transport, forwarding and shipping of containers. However, this was juxtaposed with the people pushing papers who seemed to have none if any urgency. More often than not shippers and freight forwarders, including port officials had to wait for those papers to be sorted and pushed to be approved. It seemed strange to think that which was delaying this process had been something which could have so easily been dealt with through the internet or via email messaging, instead of being the container ship delaying things, which was the case during the development of the container. During my time at port I did however see how much wasted time occurred here, especially when containers were waiting to be offloaded from vessels which weren’t given clearance yet or had even come into port. Time most definitely lapsed when people did nothing. There was no stuffing, or hessian bag re-stitching, no sorting coffee or even many Tanzanian Port Authority visits. This is somewhat the way coffee trade is. It is sporadic. It is most definitely dependent on the amount of coffee that leaves certain producing countries which are then bound for port cities and placed onto shipping vessels which are able to transport coffee onto their final destination.

Chapter 4.3

## ***Pushing Papers***

> *"So when you launch a bill of lading, that's when you are meant to start getting all the papers ready. And if you don't, your vessel is already on the way, then by time the vessel arrives at pier two, and there's no bill of lading, or original phyto, or invoice, well then the container just waits, and waits and that's when you pay overstay charges".*

- *Hennie, my informant from Seven Oaks Trading in Johannesburg, September 8 2015*

This chapter deals directly with encounters with my informants based in Johannesburg and in Zurich. These informants of mine were fundamental in piecing together some of the blank accounts which took place during research and which occurred when I came back to Johannesburg after my time in Tanzania. With the information gathered through multiple conversations with my informants at different trading companies based in Johannesburg as well as conversations regarding container tracking systems which was had with the trading partner we worked with in Zurich I was able to learn more about shipping vessels once they arrived at a port. This chapter ideally was meant to incorporate the research which was supposed to be carried out at the port of Durban but through contacts who deemed unreliable I was unable to gain access and visit the port to meet a container coming into pier two from Tanzania. This chapter therefore incorporates my three years of working in a coffee trading business where I dealt with understanding the intricacies of what happened and the procedures that needed to be met when coffee entered the port in Durban and how they were allowed through customs and how the container would be trucked from Durban up to Johannesburg in a timely and cost effective manner. The information which will be explored will therefore incorporate data which was accessed through my own documentation during work from the company as well as various informants and with other coffee professionals in the coffee and trading industry. Despite my fall back in not being able to meet the container in Durban because I was denied access, this chapter will finalise the coffee container journey from my own experience being involved in following containers through paper trails, email and phone call conversations and through one-on-one

discussions with informants. This chapter will bring full circle the journey of the coffee container.

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When I left the port in Tanzania after my time spent with my informants and arrived back home I realised I had a few unanswered questions. I came back to Johannesburg and wanted to understand how containers which I had left in Tanzania at the port in Dar es Salaam would make it to different ports around the world in a timely manner. Another main concern was how we would know where the container was during its journey into South Africa.

I had learnt by working in the trading company that over the last few years' satellite tracking companies had created specialised methods for containers to be tracked through various electromagnetic sensors and technology placed onto containers and vessels as well as through specific shipping tracking systems. It was hard for me to understand how there were at certain times such little information available for us to access as traders receiving coffee, the information which was missing most of the time had been understanding where exactly in the Indian Ocean the actual location of the vessel was and how long it would take to arrive in South Africa. After a conversation with our trading partner in Zurich did I understand that even though it would seem easy to track with all the online systems as well as the satellite technologies, some shipping lines would go off the radar in certain areas across the ocean with the impending threat of piracy and container hijackings. This threat is apparent and often makes tracking container ships hard and tiresome. I made a point in being in touch with our trading partner in Zurich to track a specific container coming in from Tanzania. Mila who was my contact spoke with me many times to discuss the container tracking. One mishap took place and this conversation which happened between the two of us sounded all too familiar to the one we had a few months before when our container from Djibouti had not arrived after several weeks roaming the Indian Ocean,

> "I'm not too sure why the container has not arrived yet. Have you received no previous information from Customs Services? Why have they not contacted you? If you can't get hold of them, you know you can just sign in with a log in pass code and see online where Jolly Perla is. I'm going to send you my log in details so you can do that. Good luck."

After a few weeks and being able to sign in online to the shipping lines website via a special username and passcode which Mila had given me was I able to properly track its progress. The shipping vessel had been on quite a journey, the container on the Jolly Perla had first spent two and a half weeks around the coast of Saudi Arabia and the Suez Canal, and it then docked near the Seychelles and landed up going to Port Louis in Mauritius before it docked in Durban at its final destination. The container of coffee stayed afloat on the Indian Ocean for a few weeks too many before it was able to arrive in Durban.

I learnt during this time that throughout the Indian Ocean there are buoys which are equipped with solar paneled satellites which record any specific shipping vessels which pass them over a specific time period. Once certain vessels pass along a course, the shipping line who is operating the vessels then sends various messages to the agent who is then in contact with different traders. The Broadband terminals which are also located on some of the container vessels enable tracking to be done efficiently and timeously.

During this time the important activity of organising all the paperwork for the importation of the coffee container into its destined city is done. Custom reports and all the documents need to be signed and waiting at the customs bureau in Durban for the arrival of the container. This is usually done as soon as the container leaves on the vessel from the port. It is also usually done with most if not all of the actors who are involved along the chain to ensure the container arrives at the desired location, this being Durban.

It was a warm spring day when I went to meet with Hennie at another trading company based in Kya Sands in Johannesburg. I had worked closely with this trading company and had dealt with Hennie a few times with regards to containers of coffee coming up to Johannesburg from Durban. We had a cup of coffee together and discussed issues of coffee trading and what he had experienced over the years working for custom services in South Africa.

It was interesting to hear from his own experience about a minimal type of change which took place with the development of trade, import and exporting duties in and out of South Africa. These years of experience which Hennie spoke of accumulated an abundance of knowledge on the trade industry within Southern Africa. He spoke of different commodities which are no longer being traded as a result of bad economic times, specifically the coffee trade in Zimbabwe. Hennie first worked as a border control customs guard at the Beit Bridge border post and used to

experience a lot of issues with officials as well as different concerns with forged paper work, custom documents and hijacked containers. He became interested in the trade of coffee when he was responsible for certain paper work which happened to arrive at Beit Bridge from a coffee company based in Malawi which was transporting coffee in a container through to South Africa. The document seemed interesting to him and one which he had not yet dealt with before. He tells me it seems like "the rest is history". This intrigue and inquisitive initiative led him to want to learn about the coffee trade on the continent. He started working for Seven Oaks trading almost immediately and has become one of the most experienced trading officials and informants in the industry.

I learn from Hennie that once containers leave the country of origin with the commodity locked inside and is on its way to a port for export, this exact moment is when certain papers are meant to be sent to the correct personnel. Hennie tells me that from when the first document is released and the container is on route to port in Tanzania, it should take the container approximately three weeks to arrive in Durban, four at maximum. Every single coffee container that enters South Africa enters through the port of Durban. It is the easiest and most efficient and one which is connected to many African port cities as well as other international harbour inlets and ports.

Once the container reaches the ocean and is placed onto a container vessel you are able to track the container the commodity is in. This is done in order to ensure the security of the products and to enable shippers, traders and custom officials to know where their goods are and when they are destined to arrive in a port city. Vessels need to be tracked for security reasons today and to ensure the efficiency and speedy service of freight forwarding companies. I was intrigued by this ability to track the container on the vessel and the moment I got back to our office after meeting with Hennie, I went to email our trading partner in Zurich to ask for the details in order to track the container of coffee which we had ordered. Coincidently the conversation I had with the trading partner about requesting information on a container which I wanted to track reminded me of one I had had a few weeks prior to knowing we were able to track the containers. Mila who works in the same office in Zurich had always been aware of what was going on and it seemed like she was accustomed to the delays which often took place when exporting coffee from the African continent elsewhere. Mila discussed a few times how it is a bit of a miracle that we are able to track the vessel while on the ocean, because through her own experience there is often no

mobile or any technological satellite service across certain areas around East and Central Africa when containers are traveling to port cities. So containers almost fall ‘off the grid’. This seemed understandable because while traveling in Ethiopia one year and arriving in the rich coffee producing region of Sidamo, mobile phone reception went down from 3G to 2G and then to ‘no service’ at all. I happened to be in this state for a few days while in Sidamo. It would seem almost impossible for containers to not have the ability to be tracked, and it is the one reason why trucking containers down the continent seems and is deemed unsatisfactory and unmanageable. The way in which maritime tracking has advanced is due to the increase in shipping around the world since containerisation began.

With my research fall back and not being able to meet a container at the port of Durban after multiple emails, phone calls and potential follow ups with my contact Leon at Custom Services at the port in Durban, I decided to use the knowledge I have gained from the last three years as well as conversations which were had with Hennie about containers entering Durban.

Hennie begins to tell me about the urgent way in which all the documents have to be collected by certain individuals along the chain and once they have been collected they are sent to an individual who is either part of the trading company, a third party official who is acting on behalf of either trading company, a bank who is loaning money to the trader to finance the container or even the shipping line agent. Once the documents are all together, they should automatically be sent to custom services where the desired port of entry will be, in this case Durban. From here and while the container is on its journey from a producing country to a port city to Durban, the actors make sure that everything is ready for when the time comes for the container to be trucked up to Johannesburg. Leon, who is the customs official would receive some type of communication from the shipping vessel, notifying the port that their shipping vessel is approximately three days away from entering into the port of Durban. It is from here that there should be a bit of panic in the air if there are no documents which are stipulated for the release of the container from the port once it arrives. Once the container is at the port, Leon will receive another phone call and will be notified of its arrival and how many days that specific container has without paying over stay charges, which happens when containers are not automatically collected by third party traders, shippers or freight forwarders.

Once the container of coffee arrives at pier two at the port of Durban, the shipping vessel docks and the officials have to wait for confirmation on which containers are allowed to be offloaded first. This relates to if the documents are all ready and signed off properly by whoever has been involved in the transaction and dealings. With the number of containers being offloaded at the port in Durban it would seem insufficient to offload all at the same time and especially if they were not going to a specific place which would be the case. The Economic Footprint report which explores the maritime history of the port of Durban stated that the port has grown steadily, her traffic base grew from the time when its base commodity export of "coal and later sugar formed much of the bulk trade" through this port city. It has most definitely been seen, in recent years as Jones (2003:7) discusses in the International Transport Forum on Durban, as the "regions 'hub port' with excellent road and rail linkages into the hinterland as well as along the coast". We are most definitely aware of this as the coffee containers which come into the port of Durban are all trucked up to Johannesburg. This journey up to Johannesburg in my own experience is one which has been efficient and timely.

When I spoke to my informant Hennie about the activities which take place in Durban and how we are then able to get coffee up to Johannesburg, he mentioned to me that the actions of receiving containers at customs at the pier and then sending them off around the country is most efficient. The Transet National Ports Authority in 2014 remarked Durban as having "65% of the South African container traffic and [it being] the principle port serving the Southern African hinterland". It is important to note how significant this port is in accessing containers of coffee from East Africa into South Africa. Being able to have a port which is able to bring containers into the country and then an accessible road for the containers to be trucked elsewhere around South Africa is a great benefit and one which are fortunate in comparison to different East African countries whose road system lacks infrastructure for this to be an efficient form of transport.

The customs officials who are connected to the trading companies in Johannesburg and who have direct links with people on the ground at pier two are the actors who infiltrate the system to ensure there are no overstay charges on containers which have not yet been released or sent through. It is important to understand that through this chain the connections which are made

through the various actors effectively allow coffee in containers to be transported through borders, along oceanic channels and into new port cities.

Once containers are at the port of Durban and they have been taken off the container ship, customs inspect the documents which are attached to each of the containers, the necessary papers are signed for clarity for South African purposes and the container is placed onto a chassis will take it along its final route. Documents are passed through from custom officials, police and necessary security agents, to different agents who have been involved in the transaction and Hennie would then be called to be notified that the container has left Durban and would be arriving in Kya Sands within the next few days, and its journey through various borders, port cities and onto its final destination would now be complete. This coffee would be taken out its container, weighed and inspected, one or two bags used for sample roasting and the rest would be roasted when necessary to be use in different coffee shops around Johannesburg. It is important to acknowledge how this last leg of the journey allows us to see how fortunate we are in South Africa to have sufficient road access as well as direct access to various ports around the country which aid in the transport of goods from all over the African continent.

# Chapter Five:

# Conclusion

This research paper has presented a novel way of looking at the Indian Ocean with specific regards to the trade of African coffee produced on the African continent and later consumed on the continent. It draws attention to the relationship that develops between the body of water and the commodity. This paper creates new connections with the 'thing', the container, the shipping vessels, the people involved along this chain, but most importantly the commodity of coffee.

The concept of looking at the Indian Ocean in this new light explores another way of looking at the long history that coffee has had with the littoral. It was imperative to understand fundamentally how coffee was produced and how it was understood when it came to trade on the continent. It is fair to say that trucking coffee in containers down through the continent via road or rail is almost impossible. In order to fully understand the true benefit and efficiency of transporting goods via ship time was spent at the port interacting and understanding daily activities. It is important to contextually understand the role of coffee on the chain, its production route as well as the ways in which coffee enters containers.

The way in which coffee is produced on the continent in a landlocked country and then transported to another country which has a port city for export seems timely and inefficient. However, through looking at this paper it is deemed the only possible route. The risks which are discussed in chapter one and two of my data chapters at a production level with farmers producing coffee and then going through the process of getting the coffee into containers and trucking them through road infrastructure that is almost non-existent shows the massive importance of this commodity for both producers on the continent and consumers. These containers are trucked through border towns which could fall privy to hijackers who would hold containers ransom, bad infrastructure which would delay the transport and also the inability to produce the right documents. There is a lot at risk and a lot of mishaps which could easily go wrong while trucking containers via road, however the aim to be able to deliver containers to port cities is one which is embedded in truck drivers as well as with freight forwarders.

The dedication of the various actors along the coffee commodity chain which are discussed through chapters two and three are able to showcase the amount of time and effort that goes into transporting coffee and what is involved in the trade of African coffee. It is important to understand by looking closely at the second chapter on my ethnography in Tanzania that it is through the hard work of all men and women at the port of Dar es Salaam that coffee finally makes its way on the Indian Ocean and to us here in South Africa. Without their work at the port of stuffing, weighing out coffee and ensuring proper documents are signed coffee would not land up in South Africa. It is important to note however, that even though it is the Indian Ocean that effectively carries the container to its desired destination here in South Africa, it is without the dedication of the actors along the paper trail, those like Mila and Hennie, who ensure that all the documents are signed which need to be signed for the release of the container to be.

There is much to be said about the access I was granted at the port in Dar es Salaam in comparison to the access I was denied at the port in Durban. Containerisation of coffee from a landlocked coffee in Africa through the Indian Ocean is still a bit of a mystery, despite through my research I did discover much information that had not been previously known. It is interesting that there is full disclosure at the country of origin and no disclosure at the country of import, which is my home country. I had better experiences in the frenetic Dar es Salaam which is reputed to be a difficult port city to navigate and gain access to than the port of Durban in a country in which I am a citizen. South Africa is also said to be more economically developed than Tanzania. It is interesting to see the difference between economic development and secrecy at port.

I set out to look at the route that coffee takes from landlocked Rwanda to Johannesburg. The reader should see the Indian Ocean as the surprise element to this paper as it is not intuitive to the outsider that the Indian Ocean plays such a critical role in the difficult journey that coffee takes, a journey to which I was not even granted full access to in my own country, South Africa.

The argument that I wish to make through this paper is that coffee from landlocked Rwanda takes on a very different journey than one might expect, but on closer inspection, it takes the only journey that this coffee could ever take, especially in light of the difficulties encountered on road. I want to highlight that this journey, even though it is in the only one available, is still a bit of a mystery. This is emphasised by the fact that I was denied access to the port in Durban. I

want to show that there is still much to understand about containerisation of African commodities on the Indian Ocean, especially trade of commodities between African countries.

More research should be undertaken on the topic of the Indian Ocean as a key contributor within African trade. Transparency and accountability in port cities is an issue that is crucial to improving trade and development. I note with interest again how the port in Dar es Salam was more accessible than the port in Durban. For the trade of African coffee across African cities through the Indian Ocean to become more efficient, there needs to be more transparency especially at the port in Durban.

As a final thought, I pause to give moment to the Indian Ocean itself which has for long been the myth of many other stories other than this one, and this being one in which it plays the crucial role. There is much more to be discovered about the Indian Ocean through research. I hope that the reader gained a new perspective on the Indian Ocean and the trade of African coffee between African cities through the Indian Ocean.

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