northeastern shore of Lake Tanganyika where Stanley famously encountered Dr. Livingstone, was 700 miles from the coast, but the trek was often even longer than that.

The horrors of the ivory trade were not the temporary depredations of war or civil strife but were part of an ongoing system, one that lasted for at least 80 years and used black human beings as commercial currency.

Echoing accounts of the 1830s and '40s, a Scottish theologian who had followed in Livingstone's footsteps wrote in 1888, "The slaves are needed to buy the ivory with; then more slaves must be stolen to carry it … Like a river, a slave caravan has to be fed by innumerable tributaries along its course — at first in order to gather a sufficient volume of human bodies for the start, and afterwards to replace the frightful loss by desertion, disablement and death."

Some of the most sustained and harrowing descriptions of the ivory trade come from a Connecticut man who was an ivory trader himself, and a very good one.

Ernst D. Moore was 23 when his uncle brought him into the family ivory business. From 1907 to 1911, Moore was based primarily in Zanzibar, buying elephant tusks in the market and traveling to the interior of Africa, where he bought directly from great hunters of the day for Arnold Cheney & Co., which supplied both Pratt, Read and Comstock, Cheney.

He lived in a house with carved teakwood gates, entertained Teddy Roosevelt at the Mombasa Club, bought hundreds of tons of ivory, and then came home to marry a woman in Chester and work for Pratt, Read as an executive in the company's player piano division. An able pianist, he loved to play Liszt, recalls his son Richard, now in his 80s.

Ernst Moore wrote a book called "Ivory, Scourge of Africa." Published in 1931, it is a history of the ivory trade and a cult classic. The original cover for the book — an account The New York Herald called "magnificent" and "hair-raising" — shows the slave coffle, the term for a line of ivory-bearing black people linked together by roughly carved wooden forks, the "V" of the fork enclosing the neck of each.

Fluent in Swahili and the argot that grew out of African and Arab trade, Moore interviewed former slaves to build his story about the ivory trade, which he called "a terrible vocation."

During the second half of the 19th century, the height of the ivory trade, Moore wrote, "the dhows that lay at anchor off the town were packed with slaves awaiting transport to Arabia and the Gulf. Slaves lay on the sloping beach, dead slaves, not worth the burying, thrown there to rot until the tide carried their bloated bodies out to sea."

Moore described the ivory gathering of the 19th century as carnage. Contemporary historian Malcarne, who is careful about what he calls "cultural relevancy" and the dangers inherent in judging the past by standards of the present, uses the same word.

Although slavery was outlawed in East Africa in the decade before Moore began his career, and the railroads built by England and Germany carried ivory directly from the interior to the coast, human porterage and oppression continued.

Photograph by Brad Clift

UConn history Professor G. Ugo Nwokeji is not surprised that Connecticut's ivory entrepreneurs insulated themselves from the suffering they brought to East Africa. He asks, "Who even dared to suggest that Africans had rights?"

A world campaign against slavery in Africa had been mounted during the decades after the American Civil War, "But that indignation did not always extend to *centers* of slavery," says a Nigerian history professor who is assembling a database on captives rescued from slave ships from West Africa. Traders did not want to let go of a lucrative system that had worked for so long, and the priority of the West was to maintain the flow of ivory. Tens of thousands of Americans were buying pianos every year, and pianos required ivory.

"The 19th century was the high point of racist thought," says G. Ugo Nwokeji, a history professor at the University of Connecticut. "Africa was seen as an unredeemable backwater, a primitive place, its cultures stagnant."

The social chaos and enslavement that followed the ivory trade was, for the West, the cost of doing business.

"Hey, 'Darkest Africa,' " Nwokeji says, shaking his head.

"When [the slaves] arrive in Zanzibar they are discharged in the same manner as a load of sheep would be, the dead ones thrown overboard to drift down with the tide and if in their course they strike the beach and ground, the natives come with pole and push them from the beach …"

— Michael W. Shepard, 1844

From "New England Merchants in Africa"

A measure of the inseparability of the ivory trade and the slave trade is contained in the way the human deaths are counted. It was an equation first formulated by Livingstone, and one modern historians use as well: Five black people were killed or forced into slavery for each elephant tusk that reached the coast. Henry Stanley's number is higher: He says that for each pound of ivory, someone died.

Malcarne looks bleak when these figures come up.

Working from the company records, he estimates that between 1870 and 1900, at least 200,000 tusks were used by Comstock, Cheney. If every tusk represents the death or enslavement of five people, then the Ivoryton company affected 1 million Africans. Bring Pratt, Read into the equation — and during the last decade of the 19th century the Deep River company actually handled more ivory than Comstock, Cheney — and the estimate becomes 2 million lives affected.

These numbers lead historians to the lives of Connecticut's ivory entrepreneurs. What did they know and when did they know it? "George Cheney was in Zanzibar for 10 years," Malcarne says, covering the sides of his eyes as if to suggest blinders.

Even Nile explorer Richard Burton, who was notorious for his prejudices against Africans, describes the market — the same marketplace Cheney would have seen — in terms of dread: "Lines of negroes stood like beasts … all were horribly thin, with ribs protruding like the circles of a cask, and not a few were sick on the ground …" Men and