

**HOMELAND, DIASPORAS AND LABOUR NETWORKS: THE CASE OF
KRU WORKERS, 1792-1900**

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Abstract

By the late eighteenth century, the ever-increasing British need for local labour in West Africa based on malarial, climatic, and manpower concerns led to a willingness of the British and Kru to experiment with free wage labour contracts. The Kru's familiarity with European trade on the Kru Coast (modern Liberia) from at least the sixteenth century played a fundamental role in their decision to expand their wage earning opportunities under contract with the British. The establishment of Freetown in 1792 enabled the Kru to engage in systematized work for British merchants, ship captains, and British naval officers. Kru workers increased their migration to Freetown establishing what appears to be their first permanent labouring community beyond their homeland on the Kru Coast. Their community in Freetown known as Kroo Town (later Krutown) ensured their regular employment on board British commercial ships and Royal Navy vessels circumnavigating the Atlantic and beyond. In the process, the Kru established a network of Krutowns and community settlements in many Atlantic ports including Fernando Po, Ascension Island, and the Cape of Good Hope, and in the British Caribbean in British Guiana and Trinidad.

This dissertation structures the fragmented history of Kru workers into a coherent framework. In this study, I argue that the migration of Kru workers in the Atlantic, and even to the Indian and Pacific Oceans, represents a movement of free wage labour that transformed the Kru Coast into a homeland that nurtured diasporas and staffed a vast network of workplaces. As the Kru formed permanent and transient working communities, they underwent several phases of social, political, and economic innovation, which ultimately overcame a decline in employment in their homeland on the Kru Coast by the end of the nineteenth century by increasing employment in their diaspora.

At a time when slavery was widespread and the slave trade was subjected to the abolition campaign of the British Navy, Kru workers were free with an expertise in manning seaborne craft. The Kru thereby stand out as an anomaly in the history of Atlantic trade when compared with the much larger diasporas of enslaved Africans.

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Dedication

I dedicate my Ph.D. dissertation to my family: Saowakhon Pansri, Sandra and David Gunn, Julie, Frank, Logan, Blake and Hailey Rozsas.

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Introduction

Between 1792 and 1900, tens of thousands of Kru workers from the Kru Coast in West Africa completed British free wage labour contracts.¹ Primarily serving as crew on British commercial and Royal Navy vessels, the Kru established a network of permanent communities beyond their homeland that eventually included various ports as they worked on ships in the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans. Taking advantage of international forces, the Kru successfully inserted themselves into the commercial world of the Atlantic at a time when the French Revolutionary Wars compelled the British to increase their naval and commercial presence in strategic ports along the West African coast. Freetown became Britain's most significant commercial and military port in Africa north of Cape Town. Freetown was also the focus of abolitionist aspirations to create a utopian free society for formerly enslaved Africans. In that context, Kru proved their value to the British because of their willingness to be hired as a local African labour force for construction projects, shoreside labour and sea-borne trade. For their part, the Kru benefitted from their own trade and wage earning opportunities, which had prevailed on the Kru Coast with European traders since at least the sixteenth century. A mutually beneficial, albeit uneven, socio-economic partnership evolved out of long standing interaction between Kru and European shipping that helped shape British activities along the African coast and transformed Kru society.

¹ References to the Kru between the eighteenth and twentieth century use various spellings, which will be discussed in Chapter One. Throughout this dissertation, I will use the spelling "Kru" when discussing members of their community and "Krutown" when referring to their district in diaspora communities. "Kru" became the dominant spelling that has been most commonly used since the later nineteenth century. The decision has been made for the sake of consistency.

In this study, I argue that the migration of Kru labourers in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans represents a movement of free wage labour that turned the Kru homeland into the centre of diasporas and a broad network of workplaces. Theoretical concepts that inform my analysis of Kru labour include diaspora, free wage labour, homeland, ethnicity and creolization.

This study frames Kru free wage labour diasporas within the concept of an “African diaspora.” Alusine Jalloh proposes the following model:

The African diaspora was born out of the voluntary and involuntary movement of Africans to various areas of the world since ancient times, but involuntary migration through the trans-Saharan, trans-Atlantic, and Indian Ocean slave trades accounts for most of the black presence outside of Africa today. The concept of the African diaspora has also come to include the psychological and physical return of people of African descent to their homeland, Africa.²

² Alusine Jalloh, “Introduction,” in *The African Diaspora*, eds. Alusine Jalloh and Stephen E Maizlish (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1996): 3. For a discussion about the history of the term “diaspora” and its application with regards to the migration of African peoples see Edward A. Alpers, “Defining the African Diaspora” (paper presented to the Center for Comparative Social Analysis Workshop, University of California, Los Angeles, October 25, 2001), 1-28; Michael J.C. Echeruo, “An African Diaspora: The Ontological Project,” in *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, eds. Isidore Ekpewho, Carole Boyce Davies, and Ali A. Mazrui (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 3-18; George Shepperson, “The African Abroad or the African Diaspora,” in *Emerging Themes of African History*, ed. T.O. Ranger (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1968), 152-176; Colin Palmer, “Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora,” *Perspectives: American Historical Association Newsletter* 36, no. 6 (1988): 1, 22-25; Kristin Mann and Edna G. Bay, eds. *Rethinking the African Diaspora: the Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil* (New York: Psychology Press, 2001), 1-21; Patrick Manning, “Review: Africa and the African Diaspora, New Directions of Study,” review of *Rethinking the African Diaspora: the Making of a Black Atlantic World in the Bight of Benin and Brazil*, by Kristin Mann, Edna G. Bay, and *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, by Isidore Okpewho, Carole Boyce Davies and Ali A. Mazrui, *The Journal of African History* 44, no. 3 (2003): 487-506; Melville J. Herskovits, *Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1941), 1-32; Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 1-7, 74-178; Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, “Africa and Africans in the African Diaspora: The Uses of Relational Databases,” *The American Historical Review* 115, no.1 (2010): 136-150; Michael Gomez, *Reversing Sail: A History of the African Diaspora: New Approaches to African History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 7-80; Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976), 7-22; Toyin Falola and Matt D. Childs, eds., *The Yoruba Diaspora in the Atlantic World* (Bloomington: Indiana

Jalloh's emphasis on the "voluntary" movement of Africans and both the "physical" and "psychological" return to a homeland resonates with the Kru who routinely circulated between diaspora communities and their homeland on the Kru Coast in time frames dictated by the terms of their contracts. Their diasporas were unique from the larger enslaved populations in the Americas, which derived its number from an estimated 12.8 million Africans who were sent from Africa.³

I qualify their diasporas as free wage labour diasporas based on several factors, which include that the Kru were paid for their labour (whether in kind or in cash), they served on limited term contracts, they had the power and choice to continue to labour or terminate a contract, and headmen carried reference letters known as "books" that ensured future employment. Wage labour historians Peter Scholliers and Leonard Schwarz have defined wage labour as "(legally) free labour done by a person for another person or an institution"⁴ And, the editorial board of the *International Review of Social History* suggests that a primary feature of

University Press, 2005), 15-39; Paul Lovejoy, "The African Diaspora: Revisionist Interpretations of Ethnicity, Culture and Religion Under Slavery," *Studies in the World History of Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation* 2, no. 1 (1997): 1-23; Paul Lovejoy, "Ethnicity and the African Diaspora," in *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of the Ethnicity in the African Diaspora*, eds. Paul E. Lovejoy and David V. Trotman (London: Continuum, 2003), 1-8; Paul Lovejoy, "Ethnic Designations of the Slave Trade and the Reconstruction of the History of Trans-Atlantic Slavery," in *Trans-Atlantic Dimensions of Ethnicity in the African Diaspora*, eds. Paul Lovejoy and David V. Trotman (London: Continuum, 2003), 9-42.

³ Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database www.slavevoyages.org. The estimated figure of 12.8 million refers to the number of Africans who left Africa. The third edition of Paul Lovejoy's *Transformations in Slavery* (2011) shows that the number of enslaved Africans who left has risen from 12.5 million to 12.8 million, according to Lovejoy's calculations.

⁴ Peter Scholliers and Leonard Schwarz, "The Wage in Europe Since the Sixteenth Century," in *Experiencing Wages: Social and Cultural Aspects of Wage Forms in Europe since 1500*, eds. Peter Scholliers and Leonard Schwarz (New York, Berghahn Books, 2004), 7.

free wage labour is that the worker is “free of non-economic compulsions to work.”⁵ Kru were engaged in voluntary diasporas both during and after the trans-Atlantic slave trade era in which they worked for a wage and were not enslaved.

The power dynamics between Kru and the British differed from enslaved populations in that they could terminate their contracts, at least in theory, if mistreated or if obligations agreed upon at the outset of the contract were not realized. Kru labour relations with the British were defined by contracts that were between three months and five years in length, which was important for the maintenance of mobility as Kru free wage workers migrated among diaspora communities and their homeland on the Kru Coast. Kru harnessed the opportunity to work for British employers in order to improve their personal and communal economic conditions while averting the risk of enslavement and the subordination that resulted from the imposition of the colonial state, whether British or Liberian.

Regardless of where Kru worked, the British considered them as “free labourers” or “free agents” and they thus had a large degree of self-determination.⁶ Unlike indentured workers who were tied to estates in the British Caribbean with the threat of punishment for breaking contractual obligations, Kru always had mobility and the choice of working on contracts.⁷ In

⁵ Editorial Committee, “Free and Unfree Labour,” *International Review of Social History* 35, no. 1 (1990): 1-2.

⁶ H. Barkly, “Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on Sugar and Coffee Planting,” Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Sugar and Coffee Planting Together with Minutes of Evidence, And Appendix, March 18 1848 (1848), 24; Despatches from the Right Honourable Earl Grey to Governor Barkly, Enclosure in no. 19, July 5, 1850, Accounts and Papers, Sugar Growing Colonies, vol. 9, Session February 4-August 8 1851 (1851), 402; Robert Gordon Latham, *The Ethnology of British Colonies and Dependencies* (London: J. Van Voorst, 1851), 38.; J.G. Cruickshank, “African Immigrants After Freedom,” *Timehri: The Journal of the Royal Agricultural and Commercial Society of British Guiana* 6, Third Series (1919): 81.

⁷ For a discussion on the differences between free wage labour and indentured labour in the British Caribbean See David Northrup, *Indentured Labor in the Age of Imperialism, 1834-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 4-9, 16-50; Tayyab Mahmud, “Cheaper than a

Trinidad and British Guiana, Parliamentary Papers show that they had mobility to move between jobs and that they were “unindentured” meaning not tied to any single estate.⁸ I refer to scholarship by Tayyub Muhmud and Alessandro Stanziani, who distinguish free labour from indentured labour in terms of consequences and the connections between labourer and specific estate.⁹ Therefore, the power dynamics governing their labour differed from indentured servitude and slavery.

A major component of Kru free wage labour diasporas was that Kru workers continually cycled between their diaspora communities and their homeland. Colin Palmer has suggested: “Members of diasporic communities also tend to possess a sense of ‘racial’, ethnic, or religious identity that transcends geographical boundaries, share broad cultural similarities, and sometimes articulate a desire to return to their original homeland.”¹⁰ The Kru homeland refers to the original five settlements between the Sinoe River and Dubo River, which according to primary published documents and Kru oral tradition first recorded in the nineteenth century included Nana Kru, Little Kru, Krobah, Settra Kru, and King Williams’ Town (King Weah’s Town) on the Kru Coast.¹¹ Palmer further emphasized a shared “emotional bond with their ancestral

Slave: Indentured Labor, Colonialism and Capitalism,” Seattle University School of Law Paper Series, *Whittier Law Review* 34, no. 215 (2013): 215-243.

⁸ Accounts and Papers, Emigration, Session 3 February to 12 August 1842, vol. 21, Correspondence Relative to Emigration, 1842, Extract Minute from the Proceedings of the Immigration Committee, Tuesday the 25th May 1841, James Hackett, Agent-General (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1842), 368.

⁹ Mahmud, “Cheaper than a Slave,” 215-243; Alessandro Stanziani, *Sailors, Slaves and Immigrants: Bondage in the Indian Ocean World, 1750-1914* (New York City: Springer: 2014), 63.

¹⁰ Colin Palmer, “Defining and Studying the Modern African Diaspora,” *The Journal of Negro History* 85, no. 1/2 (2000): 27-32, 29.

¹¹ John Leighton Wilson, *Western Africa: Its History, Conditions and Prospects: With Numerous Engravings* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1856), 101; Reverend Connelly, “Report of the Kroo People,” *American Colonization 39th Annual Report* (1856): 38-40; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 73.

homelands and with their dispersed kin.”¹² The Kru homeland, the Kru Coast, was not static, but evolved over time as evident with the application of the term “Kru” to peoples living beyond the geographical boundaries of the five villages. These villages included Grand Cess, Picaninny Cess and Kabor. The designation of “Proper Kru” referring to Kru in the original five settlements is found in nineteenth century primary published documents and oral tradition and continues to be recognized by the Kru to this day.

Analyzing Kru free wage labour diasporas requires an understanding of Kru ethnicity. Crawford Young suggests that the three cornerstones of ethnicity include “shared cultural properties, consciousness, and boundaries.”¹³ All three aspects are relevant to Kru identity. Their designation in the category of “Kroomen” in official documents including shipping records, ordinances, estate registers, and ship captain accounts points towards a unique Kru identity that differentiated them from other categories such as “Africans.”

Lovejoy’s theory of analyzing African diaspora communities through an “ethnic lens” is crucial to my exploration of how the Kru came to rely on ethnic networks in order to establish communities in the Atlantic.¹⁴ I will show how Kru ethnicity was reconceptualized in the context of their diaspora as they established cultural spaces in the form of Krutowns in West Africa and Krooman’s Village in Trinidad where they could speak their language, bring their wives (in some cases), raise their families, and earn wages on labour contracts, all while interacting with other ethnic labour communities.

¹² Colin Palmer, “The African Diaspora,” *The Black Scholar* 30, no.3/4 (2000): 58.

¹³ Crawford Young, *Ethnicity and Politics in Africa* (Boston: Boston University, 2002), 3.

¹⁴ Paul E. Lovejoy, “Methodology through the Ethnic Lens: The Study of Atlantic Africa,” in *Sources and Methods in African History: Spoken, Written, Unearthed*, eds. Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003), 105-117.

African revisionist models presented by Lovejoy, Michael Gomez, Kristin Mann and Edna Bay, Audra Diptee and David Trotman stress the importance of beginning investigations of trans-Atlantic diasporas in Africa before examining the back and forth trajectory of ideas and cultural practices which continued to reverberate across the Atlantic.¹⁵ As such, the socio-economic structures informing the Kru homeland between the sixteenth and nineteenth century will first be analyzed in order to understand cultural continuities and alterations in their diasporas and workplaces.

Earl Lewis' concept of "overlapping diasporas" is extremely important for my analysis of Kru free wage labour diasporas.¹⁶ His emphasis on the central role of African Americans in the development of American culture resonates with the Kru who I contend should not be seen as simply the "other" or passive players in the development of British capitalist processes in the Atlantic, but rather active participants with agency in that process. After all, by the mid-nineteenth century the Kru were widely recognized by Europeans as an "enterprising race" who were "free labourers."¹⁷ Secondly, the notion of multiple diasporas occurring simultaneously

¹⁵ Lovejoy, "Methodology through the Ethnic Lens," 105-117; Michael Gomez, *Exchanging Our Country Marks: The Transformation of African Identities in the Colonial and Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 1-37; Kristin Mann and Edna Bay, eds., *Rethinking the African Diaspora*, 1-30; Patrick Manning, *The African Diaspora: A History Through Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 1-34; Audra Diptee and David V. Trotman, eds., *Remembering Africa and its Diasporas: Memory, Public History and Representations of the Past* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2012), 1-12.

¹⁶ Earl Lewis, "To Turn as on a Pivot: Writing African Americans into a History of Overlapping Diasporas," *American Historical Review* 100, no. 3 (1995): 765-787.

¹⁷ "Sierra Leone," Commissioner's Report, Appendix no. 15, Report on the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Together with Minutes of Evidence Appendix and Index, Part 2, Aug 5 1842, vol. 12 (1842), 247, 592; H. Barkly, "Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Select Committee on Sugar and Coffee Planting," Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Sugar and Coffee Planting Together with Minutes of Evidence, And Appendix, March 18 1848 (1848), 24; Despatches from the Right Honourable Earl Grey to Governor Barkly, Enclosure in no. 19, July 5, 1850, Accounts and Papers, Sugar Growing Colonies, vol. 9, Session February 4-August 8 1851 (1851), 402.

resonates with the Kru who were engaged in several distinct diasporas in West Africa, the Atlantic and Caribbean under British contract, while also serving on French contracts with their own diaspora itineraries. Moreover, Kru served on board Cuban slave ships, while simultaneously expanding their labour network with the British in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

The term “creolization” is important for investigating the changes that occurred among Kru in British Guiana and Trinidad. In the British Caribbean, Kru worked alongside indentured workers from India, former enslaved populations, and descendants of slaves. Kru became members of multi-ethnic communities that Stuart Hall has characterized as being structured by cultural “hybridity.”¹⁸ In the Caribbean, increasingly, they stopped returning to the homeland and through co-habitation with other Africans and their descendants fostered a new generation of Kru with mixed African ancestry that led to their disappearance as a distinct ethnic group by the close of the nineteenth century. Kamau Braithwaite and Édouard Glissant have emphasized the significance of social and cultural influences affecting identity in the Caribbean as being as much if not more of a factor in the creolization process as European and African influences.¹⁹ Intermarriage with African descendants and Yoruba workers in the Canal No. 1 District resulted in the Kru’s amalgamation into the wider Creole community as reflected in the lack of Kru categories in official documents by the close of the nineteenth century. Their experience in the

¹⁸ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 235.

¹⁹ Kamau Brathwaite, *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica, 1770-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 1-30; Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, Trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), xi-xx, 5-37. Also see Verene A. Shepherd, “Belonging and Unbelonging: The Impact of Migration on Discourses of Identity in Jamaican History,” *The Journal of Caribbean History* 39, no. 1 (2005): 1-12; Verene Shepherd and Glen L. Richards, eds., *Questioning Creole: Creolisation Discourses in Caribbean Culture: In Honour of Kamau Brathwaite* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2002), 1-13, 47-66.

British Caribbean differed from their earlier experiences in West African ports where they maintained their distinct ethnic identity in diaspora communities well into the twentieth century.

In contrast to their experiences on the Kru Coast, around the Atlantic, and in the British Caribbean, Kru employment in the Indian and Pacific Oceans was based on a labour network rather than the presence of diaspora communities or semi-permanent settlement. Workers circulated among ports while living and working only on Royal Navy ships and never formed shoreside communities. While they were periodically required to serve shoreside in naval brigades engaged in British military campaigns in Africa and Asia, their community was always linked to a specific HMS ship.

Dissertation Chapters

The first chapter discusses the origins of the five towns between Sinoe River and Dubo River, which formed the homeland of the Kru. These towns included Nana Kru, Little Kru, Krubah, Settra Kru and King William's Town. Linguistic evidence for the Kru language suggests connections with the neighbouring Bassa, Grebo, Krahn, Noyo and Alladians. The chapter explores social organization and economy of the towns as fishing communities where women apparently grew rice, and fisherman sold dried fish into the interior. Kru became involved in Atlantic trade early on, selling produce, ivory, water, wood, and fish to passing ships as early as 1555 and probably earlier. At some point Kru men began working on European ships as members of the crew, beginning as early as 1645. Hence, Kru worked as free labourers and independent traders during this period, not as slaves. While they may have been involved in selling some slaves, the statistics suggest that the numbers could not have been very large. Their employment on European ships was organized under the leadership of headmen who had

previous experience in such work, a practice that characterized the organization of work thereafter. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Kru service on slave ships that continued well into the nineteenth century and led them to circulate between West Africa and Cuba.

The second chapter traces the presence of Kru in Freetown, Sierra Leone after 1792 and especially after the foundation of Krutown in 1816. The establishment of Krutown in 1816 effectively became the first community in what can be described as a diaspora. The nature of Kru work activities in Freetown both as crew members and shoreside labourers including their roles as porters, boat-pullers, lightermen, longshoreman and stevedores, in households as domestic servants, and woodcutters and transporters in the timber trade are examined. The chapter analyzes the development of the Kru community in Freetown by considering population statistics between 1792 and 1905. The importance of the Kru facial mark and the role of women in the maintenance of their diaspora community are examined. Beyond commercial labour, Freetown also served as the base for Kru service in the Royal Navy after the British abolition in 1807. Muster lists allow an assessment of the number of Kru serving on Royal Navy ships and enable a discussion of their pay rates. Despite the establishment of a permanent community in Freetown, Kru maintained a close relationship with the Kru Coast, especially the five towns. Kru tended to work for specific periods of time under headmen, depending upon their contracts, and returned to their communities with the intention of marrying and establishing kinship networks. The organization of work continued to rely on headmen who usually possessed a written document attesting to their experience. The headmen recruited workers based on the age-grade system of the Kru Coast and were responsible for supervising work teams and distributing wages. By the late 1820s, at least, Freetown became the main hub of Kru

employment as some Kru remained in Freetown permanently while others circulated between Krutown and the Kru Coast.

The third chapter investigates the extension of Kru labour along the West African coast to such ports as Monrovia, Cape Coast, and Lagos. Monrovia was the earliest diaspora community to be established following Freetown. While some Kru continued to work on slave ships in the Cuban slave trade in the nineteenth century, increasingly, Kru labour was instrumental in the suppression of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in pursuit of Cuban, French and Brazilian slaving ships. The chapter examines Kru diaspora communities that developed in Cape Coast, Ascension Island, Fernando Po and Simon's Town, South Africa, and Lagos as a result of their service in the Royal Navy. Population figures are examined in order to reveal the size of Kru communities in Ascension Island and Fernando Po. Kru gravestones enable an analysis of the demographics of their community in Simon's Town. Photographs demonstrate that a unique Kru settlement developed in Lagos. The foundation of their communities in Bonny and Calabar was connected with the growth of the British palm oil industry in the 1840s and 1850s. The creation of new diaspora communities along the African coast was a testament to the increased reliance of the British on Kru labour. The chapter closes by reflecting on the socio-economic relationship between the diaspora communities and homeland on the Kru Coast as traditional power structures between *krogba* ("father of the town"), headmen and women increasingly adjusted in response to migrant labour.

The fourth chapter analyzes Kru employment in the British Caribbean from the early 1840s through the 1890s. In this period, British colonial efforts were directed at finding new sources of labour for the plantations of the Caribbean. The Emancipation of slaves in 1834 ushered in a period of apprenticeship that lasted until 1838. However, after 1838, British

colonies experienced a labour shortage, which the British attempted to eliminate in some places through indentured labour, the significance of which is discussed more fully below. While most indentured workers came from the Indian sub-continent, there were efforts to require Liberated Africans taken off slave ships to serve as indentures in the Caribbean. The Kru willingly signed free labour contracts and went to the Caribbean, although their numbers were not sufficient to meet the labour needs of the British colonies. The nature of Kru contracts and their labouring activities on estates, wharves and canals in Jamaica, Trinidad and British Guiana are examined. The socio-economic impact of purchasing land, the decline of headmen and traditional channels of gift-giving, the establishment of Krooman's Village in Trinidad and the Kru community in Canal No. 1 in British Guiana, and intermarriage with Creoles is analyzed. These factors prevented the regular return to the Kru Coast and limited the development of diaspora communities in the Caribbean between 1841 and 1900, thereby altering the pattern of Kru diaspora formation.

The fifth chapter examines Kru labour in the consolidation of the British Empire in various parts of Africa. In their role as agents of British imperialism, the Kru were less interested in establishing diaspora communities than in profiting from the trust they had acquired in their relationship with the British. During this period between the 1820s through the 1890s, Kru served in British expeditions of exploration and diplomacy, slave trade suppression in the Indian Ocean as well as the Atlantic, and military campaigns in several parts of Africa. The British depended on the Kru as boatmen, pilots, porters, and collectors of water and wood. Kru service in various expeditions is analyzed including Hugh Clapperton's second expedition to the Sokoto Caliphate (1825-1827), the series of Niger River expeditions led by Richard and John Lander (1830), Macgregor Laird, Richard Lander and R.A.K. Oldfield (1832-1833), William

Allen, Henry Dundas Trotter and Bird Allen (1841-1842), and William Balfour Baikie (1854). They also played a role in David Livingstone's Zambezi Expedition (1858-1864). As in the Atlantic, Kru were hired on Royal Navy ships in the Indian Ocean to assist in the suppression of the slave trade, particularly between 1862 and 1881 in intercepting slave *dhow*s (ships). Kru operated out of Simon's Town in South Africa, Zanzibar, the Seychelles, Aden, Basra, Bombay, and Trincomalee. Their duties in the Royal Navy were extended to include service in military campaigns in Asia and Africa, including the First Opium War (1839-1842), the occupation of Lagos (1851), the campaign against Asante (1873-1874), the Anglo-Zulu War (1879), the Sudan Campaign (1884-1885), and the exile of Jaja of Opobo in the British Oil Rivers Protectorate (1887). Rather than continuing the development of a diaspora through their involvement in these expeditions, Kru expanded their labour network as they sailed between ports and enlisted for specific campaigns without further establishing settlements. Royal Navy ships became the cultural spaces where Kru were able to evolve their seaborne practices first developed in their homeland on the Kru Coast.

The sixth chapter examines the social, economic and political relationship between the Kru and the colony of Liberia between 1822 and 1846, and the Liberian state between 1847 and 1900. The relationship between the Kru and Liberia was a determining factor in the pattern of Kru migration from the middle of the nineteenth century onward. Following statehood, Port of Entry Laws were legislated, which imposed a tax on Kru labour. In attempting to evade taxation, Kru migration to their diaspora communities in West Africa increased. The chapter investigates Liberian state measures that fostered competition between the British and French. As a result, some Kru were inclined to accept French contracts in Grand Bassam, Grand Lahou and Libreville beyond the reach of Liberian authorities. Kru who remained in their communities on

the Kru Coast were subjected to state-sanctioned land acquisition. Legislation impeded the authority of the *krogha* and headmen, and by the 1870s, led to a shift in the Kru economy away from shipping contracts towards palm oil production. Equally disruptive was the state strategy to support Christian missions on the Kru Coast, which resulted in increased conversion to Christianity amongst the Kru. The chapter closes by suggesting Liberian policies created a labour drain on the Kru Coast while increasing economic opportunities in Kru diaspora communities in the later decades of the nineteenth century.

Overview of the Literature

The Kru have stood out as an anomaly in the social and economic history of West Africa. As far as is known, very few Kru were enslaved; rather their participation in trans-Atlantic commerce from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries was as free labourers who worked for wages. The most thorough examination of their history has undoubtedly been the work of George Brooks, who has examined the social, economic and political nature of the Kru Coast with particular attention to the nineteenth century.²⁰ His comprehensive investigation of Kru labour activities in commercial and Royal Navy contexts in West Africa provides the foundation for this study. Brooks' exploration of Kru socio-political structures in their homeland and

²⁰ Fraenkel, "Social Change on the Kru Coast of Liberia," *Africa* 36, no. 2 (1966): 154-156; George E. Brooks, *The Kru Mariner in the 19th Century: A Historical Compendium* (Newark, Delaware: Liberian Studies Monologue Series no.1, 1972), 50; Ronald W. Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies on the Kru Coast* (Newark: Liberian Studies Monograph Series 5, 1976), 31-35; Andreas Massing, *The Economic Anthropology of the Kru* (Wisbaden: Steiner, 1980), 10-21; Jane Martin, "Krumen 'Down the Coast': Liberian Migrants on the West Africa Coast in the 19th and early 20th century," *The International Journal of Historical Studies* 18, no. 3 (1985): 401; Elizabeth Tonkin, "Creating Kroomen: Ethnic Diversity, Economic Specialism and Changing Demand," in *Africa and the Sea*, ed. J. Stone (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University African Studies Group, 1985), 32.

headmen structures in their workplaces led him to conclude that the origins of headmen required further investigation.²¹ My study examines the evolution of the headman along with the Kru mark and age-grade system as they were affected by British wage labour contracts.

Scholars who have examined Kru diaspora communities include Diane Frost and Jane Martin. Frost has demonstrated that the Kru diaspora stretched from Freetown to Liverpool and depended on a regular supply of labourers based in Krutown.²² Similarly, Martin focused on the Kru community that developed in the Bight of Biafra and has shown that workers circulated between Bonny, Calabar, Lagos and the Kru Coast.²³ In these cases, Kru labourers established unique communities beyond their homeland. However, these communities have been analyzed in relative isolation from one another. I will examine these communities in relation to the Kru Coast and each other in order to show that the Kru circulated between multiple ports and were engaged in a larger Atlantic diaspora.

The Kru's role on Royal Navy ships in the Atlantic Ocean was fundamental in the nineteenth century, as observed by Christopher Lloyd in his discussion of anti-slave trading patrols.²⁴ William Ward discusses Kru service on Royal Navy ships in Lagos and Fernando Po in pursuit of Spanish slave ships.²⁵ And, the Kru are allotted special mention in a chapter of Mary Wills' Ph.D. thesis where she provides a description of the Kru's jobs on naval ships.²⁶ This

²¹ Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 9.

²² Diane Frost, *Work and Community Among West African Migrant Workers Since the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 15-48, 120-122; Diane Frost, "West African Communities: The Kru in Freetown & Liverpool," *Review of African Political Economy* 29, no. 92 (Jun 2002): 285-300.

²³ Martin, "Krumen," 405, 407-408.

²⁴ Christopher Lloyd, *The Navy and the Slave Trade* (London: Longmans, 1949), 280-282.

²⁵ William Ernst Ward, *The Royal Navy and the Slavers: The Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (London: Allen & Unwin 1969), 210-215.

²⁶ Mary Wills, "The Royal Navy and the Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade, c. 1807-1867: Anti-Slavery, Empire and Identity" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Hull, 2014), 202, 215-217.

thesis provides greater detail on the role of the Kru in British suppression policies, describes the number of Kru involved, their wage rates, and the diverse roles performed by the Kru on ships in the Atlantic.

In the British Caribbean, Monica Schuler examined Kru workers who completed contracts in British Guiana between 1841 and 1853.²⁷ Schuler used shipping records to show the proportionate numbers of Kru arriving in British Guiana compared to other African ethnicities. She also suggested that one of greatest pull factors for Kru migration to British Guiana was the opportunity to earn higher wages.²⁸ Similarly, Donald Wood's study of the Kru in the Caribbean attempted to measure the number of Kru who went to various British workplaces in the Caribbean between 1840 and 1860 concluding approximately 150 who went to Trinidad, 950 to British Guiana with several hundred recruited for plantations in Jamaica.²⁹ Their figures inspire an investigation of the specific estates upon which the Kru worked, the diverse duties they performed and the names of individual labourers. The diaspora community known as Krooman's Village in Trinidad will be analyzed in order to demonstrate that it provided an important cultural space for both the continuity and transformation of Kru traditions.³⁰ Furthermore, Canal No.1 district in British Guiana will be explored, a quarter inhabited by Kru in the later decades of the nineteenth century. The district will be included within a wider Kru

²⁷ Monica Schuler, "Kru Emigration to British and French Guiana, 1841-1857," in *Africans in Bondage: Studies in Slavery and the Slave Trade*, ed. Paul E. Lovejoy (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 155-202.

²⁸ Ibid, 157-173.

²⁹ Donald Wood, "Kru Migration to the West Indies," *Journal of Caribbean Studies* 2, no. 2-3 (1981): 266-282.

³⁰ Ibid, 282; Donald Wood, *Trinidad in Transition: The Years After Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 68.

diaspora framework. Collectively, these sites formed an integral part of the Kru free wage labour diaspora in the British Caribbean.

Kru service in diplomatic expeditions in Africa has been discussed by Jamie Bruce Lockhart and Paul Lovejoy.³¹ Their publication of Hugh Clapperton's second expedition (1825-1827) to the Sokoto Caliphate not only highlighted the duties performed by Kru seamen who were hired in Freetown, but added a valuable source for understanding government, religious and gender structures that informed Kru society in the early nineteenth century. My study builds on Bruce Lockhart and Lovejoy and examines Kru labour in the Niger expeditions by Richard and John Lander (1830), Macgregor Laird, Richard Lander and R.A.K. Oldfield (1832-1833), William Allen, Henry Dundas Trotter and Bird Allen (1841-1842), William Balfour Baikie (1854), and David Livingstone's Zambezi Expedition (1857-1864).

Kru participation in British military campaigns holds great significance towards contemplating the nature of their labour network. C.P. Stacey acknowledged Kru participation in the Sudan Campaign (1884-1885).³² I will explore Kru service in naval brigades engaged in British military campaigns including the occupation of Lagos (1851), the campaign against Asante (1873-1874), the Anglo-Zulu War (1879), the Sudan Campaign (1884-1885), and the exile of Jaja of Opobo in the British Oil Rivers Protectorate (1887). Their service in these campaigns provides a crucial military dimension in the Kru labour network. Moreover, it reveals the evolution of their traditional duties manning boats to include their role as gunners and Gatling gun operators on the front lines.

³¹ Jamie Bruce Lockhart and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Hugh Clapperton into the Interior of Africa: Records of the Second Expedition 1825-1827*, in *Sources for African History*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1, 12, 82-83.

³² C.P. Stacey, *Records of the Nile Voyageurs, 1884-1885: The Canadian Voyageur Contingent in the Gordon Relief Expedition* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1949), 5, 220.

Christine Behrens' study of the Kru remains an important contribution in the literature. She demonstrated that Kru identity grew from its origins on the Kru Coast to encompass a range of peoples between Cape Mesurado and Sassandra including the Bassa, Grebo, Krahn, and Noyo, all of whom spoke Kru.³³ The main focus of her research was on the Kru communities that developed between the Cavalla River and Sassandra River in Côte d'Ivoire, which included Tabou, Grand Bereby, and Sassandra. Known as Kroumen, they were primarily hired by French merchants who formed diaspora and labour communities in Gabon, Cameroon and the Congo. When her study is read in conjunction with Brooks, the full scope of Kru labour in West Africa and West-Central Africa is evident. My analysis of the Kru builds on Behrens' research and examines diaspora and labour communities that developed in Libreville, Grand Bassam and Grand Lahou. While Kru service on French contracts shared some similar features with the British in terms of employing headmen in shipboard and shoreside labour, differences in pay scale and the size of their labour force reveal a stark contrast. Moreover, I demonstrate that the Kru Coast played an important role in negotiations between the Liberian and French governments as they delineated the western border of Côte d'Ivoire in 1892.

Scholars focused on the social, economic and political relations between the Kru and the Liberian state include Ronald Davis, Schuler, and Yekutieli Gershoni.³⁴ Their publications demonstrate that the tense relationship that existed between the Kru and the Liberian government developed from the state decision to implement the regulation and taxation of Kru labour in their

³³ Christine Behrens, *Les Kroumen de la Côte Occidentale d'Afrique* (Bordeaux: Centre d'études de Géographie Tropicale, 1974), 27-28.

³⁴ Ronald W. Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies on the Kru Coast* (Newark: Liberian Studies Monograph Series 5, 1976) 43, 46-47; Schuler, "Kru Emigration," 172; Yekutieli Gershoni, *Black Colonialism: The Americo-Liberian Scramble for the Hinterland* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 1-10.

homeland beginning in the 1840s. This dissertation will build on these sources and suggest that in response to state measures the Kru migrated to their diaspora communities in British ports and to the French territory of Côte d'Ivoire in search of contracts. Richard Harding Davis, Bruce Whitehouse and Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch mention the presence of Kru workers engaged in seaborne and shoreside activity in French ports in West Africa.³⁵ Increased competition between the French and British will be shown to have compelled some Kru to form diaspora communities in the French territory that became Côte d'Ivoire and in Gabon. I will distinguish the nature of their labour in French and British workplaces.

Sources

My analysis of Kru free wage labour diasporas and labour networks relies on primary published sources including explorer, traveler and ship captain accounts produced by William Bosman, Edward Bold, Francis Bacon, Adolphe Burdo along with numerous others.³⁶ These sources mention Kru villages and Kru socio-economic activities on the Kru Coast and various ports in West Africa and West Central Africa.

³⁵ Richard Harding Davis, *The Congo and the Coasts of Africa* (London: Bexley Publications, [1907] 2006), 18, 48-50, 94-96, 101, 111; Bruce Whitehouse, *Migrants and Strangers in an African City: Exile, Dignity, Belonging* (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 2012), 32; Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Brazza et la Prise de Possession du Congo, La Mission de l'Ouest Africain, 1883-1885* (Paris: Mouton, 1969), 1-30.

³⁶ Levinus Hulsius (1606), in *Liberia*, 1, ed. Harry H. Johnston (London: Hutchinson, [1606] 1906), 88; Olfert Dapper (1686), in *Liberia*, I, ed. Harry H. Johnston (London: Hutchinson, [1686] 1906), 88; William Bosman, *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* (London: J. Knapton, 1705), 486; Edward Bold, *The Merchant's and Mariner's African Guide* (Salem: Cushing and Appleton, 1823), 35, 40, 49; Richard Lander, *Records of Captain Clapperton's Last Expedition to Africa*, 2 vols. (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1830), 1: 20-25; Charles H. Bell, "Letter from Captain Bell [Monrovia, April 3, 1840]," *African Repository* 16, no. 19 (1840): 289-296; Bacon, "Cape Palmas," 196-202; Adolphe Burdo, *The Niger and the Benueh; Travels in Central Africa*, trans. Mrs. George Sturge (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1880), 188.

Sources necessary for analysing Kru workers in Freetown during the 1790s include diary entries by John Clarkson, Zachary Macaulay, and Thomas Winterbottom's account, which provide a description of the Kru in Freetown between 1792 and 1796.³⁷ Governor Thomas Ludlam's account describes Kru labouring activities in Freetown beginning in 1797.³⁸ He describes their character, duties and the establishment of the Kru Reservation in 1816, which are fundamental for understanding the formation of the Kru free wage labour diaspora in West Africa and the Atlantic.

I rely on the Clarkson Papers held at the British Library, which will be used to understand the development of the Kru town in Freetown. Government documents including Colonial Office Governor Despatches to the Secretary of State, Secretary of State Despatches, and Parliamentary Papers contain information on labour policy and descriptions of the Kru community in Freetown. Early twentieth-century postcards photographed by the Lisk-Carew Brothers provide valuable images of Kru town and Kru workers in Freetown. The postcards belong to the Gary Schulze Collection and will be used to reconstruct the Kru free wage labour diaspora in Sierra Leone.

Primary published sources by Peter Leonard, William Henry Bayley Webster, and Isobel Black Gill are used in conjunction with Foreign Office 84 documents held at The National Archives in the United Kingdom in order to examine Kru service on Royal Navy ships engaged

³⁷ See Governor Clarkson's Diary, "November 6, 1792," in *Sierra Leone After A Hundred Years*, ed. Ernest Graham Ingham (London: Seeley, 1894), 146; Suzanne Schwarz, "Zachary Macaulay and the Development of the Sierra Leone Company, 1793-4, Part 1: Journal, June-October 1793," *History and Culture* 4 (Leipzig: University of Leipzig, 2000), 67; Thomas Winterbottom, *An Account of the Native Africans in the Neighbourhood of Sierra Leone* (London: C. Whittingham, 1803), 8-9.

³⁸ Thomas Ludlam, "An Account of the Kroomen on the Coast of Africa," *The African Repository and Colonial Journal* 1, no. 2 (1825): 44-45.

in the suppression of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.³⁹ Kru Royal Navy service in the Indian and Pacific Oceans will be investigated by analysing primary published source by Captain G.W. Sullivan as well as Parliamentary Papers and Admiralty Records held at The National Archives in the United Kingdom.⁴⁰ The Admiralty Records provide information on Kru serving on Royal Navy ships beginning in 1819.⁴¹ The most valuable source used for analyzing the nature of Kru service in the Royal Navy is ADM 30/26, which reveals the muster lists and wage rates for Kru serving on Royal Navy Ships between 1819 and 1820.

In order to accurately understand the nature and scale of Kru free wage labour diasporas and labour networks it is essential to probe a range of physical and documental sources. The Kru community in Ascension Island is examined using the *London Illustrated News*, published primary sources including Isobel Black Gill's account, and William Webster.⁴² Parliamentary Papers and an account by Élisée Reclus are used to reconstruct the Kru community in Fernando Po.⁴³ The biographical information and figures offered by Lynn Harris' study of Kru gravestones

³⁹ Surgeon Peter Leonard, *Records of a Voyage to the Western Coast of Africa in His Majesty's Ship Dryad, And of the Service on that Station for the Suppression of the Slave Trade, in the Years 1830, 1831, and 1832* (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1833), 56; William Henry Bayley Webster, *Narrative of the Voyage to the Southern Atlantic Ocean in the Years 1828, 29, 30 Performed in H.M. Sloop Chanticleer, Under the Command of the Late Captain Henry Foster, F.R.S. & c. By Order of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. From the Private Journal of W.H.B. Webster, Surgeon of the Sloop. In Two Volumes*, vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), 384; Isobel Black Gill, *Six Months in Ascension: An Unscientific Account of a Scientific Expedition By Mrs. Gill* (London: John Murray, 1878), 134.

⁴⁰ Captain G.L. Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing in Zanzibar Waters: And on the Eastern Coast of Africa* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1873), 344.

⁴¹ ADM 8/140-143, ADM 101/145, and ADM 127/40

⁴² Gill, *Six Months*, 134; Webster, *Narrative of the Voyage*, 384.

⁴³ Élisée Reclus, *Africa and Its Inhabitants*, vol. 2, ed. A.H. Keane (London: Virtue and Company, 1899), 118.

are utilized for observing the number of Kru who served in Simon's Town, South Africa, and in the Royal Navy throughout the British Empire.⁴⁴

An analysis of Kru labour in British expeditions in Africa relies on various primary published sources including Hugh Clapperton's account of his second expedition to Sokoto (1825-1827) in the Lovejoy and Jamie Bruce Lockhart edition.⁴⁵ Their service in a series of Niger River expeditions is examined based on accounts by Richard and John Lander (1830), Macgregor Laird, Richard Lander and R.A.K. Oldfield (1832-1833), William Allen, Henry Dundas Trotter and Bird Allen (1841-1842) and William Balfour Baikie (1854).⁴⁶ Kru service in David Livingstone's Zambezi Expedition (1858-1864) is investigated using Livingstone's private journals and his published account.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Lynn Harris, "'A Gulf Between the Mountains': Slavers, Whalers, and Fishers in False Bay, Cape Colony," in *Sea Ports and Sea Power: African Maritime Cultural Landscapes*, ed. Lynn Harris (Greenville, NC: Springer, 2016), 27-42.

⁴⁵ Jamie Bruce Lockhart and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Hugh Clapperton into the Interior of Africa Records of the Second Expedition 1825-1827*, in *Sources for African History*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1, 12, 82-83.

⁴⁶ Richard and John Lander, *Journal of an Expedition to Explore the Course and Termination of the Niger, with a Narrative of the Voyage down that River to its Termination*, vol. 1-3 (London: John Murray, 1832), 1: 41, 3: 283, 284; Macgregor Laird and R.A.K. Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa: By the River Niger, in the Steam-Vessels Quorra and Alburkah, in 1832, 1833, and 1834*, vol. 2 (London: Richard Bentley, 1837), 302-303; William Allen and T.R.H. Thomson, *A Narrative of the Expedition sent by Her Majesty's Government to the Niger River in 1841*, vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley, 1848), 491, 494, 495, 497; James Frederick Schön and Samuel Crowther, *Journals of the Rev. James Frederick Schön and Mr. Samuel Crowther: Who, Accompanied the Expedition Up the Niger, in 1841, in Behalf of the Church Missionary Society* (London: Hatchard and Son, 1842), 150, 154; John Becroft, "On Benin and the Upper Course of the River Quorra, or Niger," by Captain Becroft, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, vol. 11 (1841): 184, 189; William Balfour Baikie, *Narrative of an Exploring Voyage Up to the Rivers Kuora and Binue Commonly Known as the Niger and Tsadda in 1854* (London: Psychology Press, 1966), 18, 366.

⁴⁷ David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London: John Murray, 1857), 92; 95-96; David Livingstone and Charles Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and Its Tributaries: And of the Discovery of the Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa, 1858-1864* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1866) 96-103; John W. Davies, "On the

British military campaigns including the First Opium War (1839-1842), occupation of Lagos (1851), Asante Campaign (1873-1874), Anglo-Zulu Conflict (1879), Sudan Campaign (1884-1885), and the detention and exile of Opobo (1887) are examined using a range of newspapers and primary published narratives. Published primary sources describing Kru activity in the First Opium War include an account by William Dallas Bernard and William Hutcheon Hall, and features in American newspaper *The Monthly Chronicle Boston* and *The Mariner's Church Gospel Temperance Soldiers' and Sailor's Magazine*.⁴⁸ Information on Kru participation in the British attack on Lagos is derived from William Ward's study on the Royal Navy.⁴⁹ In order to describe Kru involvement in the Asante Campaign, this dissertation relies on primary published sources by Henry Brackenbury, Charles Rathbone Low and George Armand Furse.⁵⁰ Kru participation in the Anglo-Zulu conflict is analyzed using primary published sources by Sir Henry Hallam Parr, and a series of letters by Henry F. Norbury and Commander Campbell.⁵¹ Kru who served in the Sudan Campaign are examined using primary published sources by J.

Fever in the Zambesi: A Note from Dr. Livingstone to Dr. M'William June 3rd 1861," *Transactions of the Epidemiological Society of London* 1 (1863): 239.

⁴⁸ William Dallas Bernard and Sir William Hutcheon Hall, *Narrative of the Voyages and Services of the Nemesis, from 1840-1843; And of the Combined Naval and Military Operations in China: Comprising a Complete Account of The Colony of Hong Kong, And Remarks on The Character and Habits of the Chinese from Notes of Commander W.H. Hall, R.N. by W.D. Bernard, ESQ, A.M. Oxon, In Two Volumes*, vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1844), 26; "A New Temperance Sailors' Home Wanted," *The Mariner's Church Gospel Temperance Soldiers' and Sailor's Magazine* 30, no. 3093 (1843): 40.

⁴⁹ Ward, *Royal Navy*, 212, 215.

⁵⁰ Henry Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War: A Narration Prepared from the Official Documents by Permission of Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley By Henry Brackenbury*, I (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874), 164; Charles Rathbone Low, *A Memoir of Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet J. Wolseley. By Charles Rathbone Low* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1878), 95, 146; George Armand Furse, *Military Transport: H.M. Stationary Office, 1882* (London: W. Clowers & Sons, 1882), 45.

⁵¹ Sir Henry Hallam Parr, *A Sketch of the Kafir and Zulu Wars: Guadana to Isandhlwana* (London: C. Kegan & Co., 1880), 36.

Murray (F.R.G.S.) and Charles George Gordon, and Emilius Albert De Cosson (F.R.G.S.).

Articles in the British newspaper *The Graphic* were valuable for providing illustrations and information of Kru activity on the Nile.⁵² The Kru's role in the detention of Opobo is analyzed based on sources by Sir William M.N. Geary, Tosin Funmi Abiodun and Sylvanus Cookey.⁵³

The Special Collections at the University of Indiana in Bloomington, Indiana, houses portions of the Liberian National Archives (which were saved during the Liberian Civil War). American Colonization records housed at the University of Indiana Library including the entire *African Repository* newspaper collection between 1825 and 1886 are used to examine the socio-economic structure of Kru villages and the political relationship between the Kru, Americo-Liberians and the Liberian government. The *African Observer* newspaper, the entire "Holsoe Collection" and "Liberia Accounts 1841-1848" in the *Monrovia Journal*, will provide the basis of understanding the Kru homeland in their free wage labour diasporas and labour networks.

I also use the published primary accounts by William Burnley, John Brummell, Louis De Verteuil, Henry Kirke and C.B. Franklin, which provide valuable information on Kru living conditions and their duties.⁵⁴ When examined in conjunction with Colonial Office records held

⁵² Alex MacDonald, *Too Late for Gordon and Khartoum: the Testimony of an independent Eye-Witness of the Heroic Efforts for the Rescue and Relief. With Maps and Plans and Several Unpublished Letters of the Late General Gordon* (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1887), 45-46; Emilius Albert De Cosson (F.R.G.S.), *Days and Nights of Service with Sir Gerald Graham's Field Force at Suakin* (London: John Murray, 1886), 327; "Kroomen Disembarking From the 'Michalla' at Wady Halfa," *The Graphic* 30 (December 6, 1884), 597.

⁵³ Sir William M.N. Geary, *Nigeria Under British Rule* (London: Routledge, 1927), 89, 114, 282; Tosin Funmi Abiodun, "A Historical Study on Penal Confinement and Institutional Life in Southern Nigeria, 1860-1956" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 2013), 126-127; John Holland Rose, ed., *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 75; Sylvanus Cookey, *King Jaja of the Niger Delta: His Life and Times, 1821-1891* (New York: Nok, 1974), 118-135.

⁵⁴ William Hardin Burnley, *Observations on the Present Condition of the Island of Trinidad and the Actual State of the Experiment of Negro Emancipation* (London: Longman, 1842), 71;

at the Trinidad and Tobago National Archives in Port of Spain and the Special Collections at the West Indiana Special Collections Library at the University of the West Indies (St. Augustine Campus), evidence for a Kru free wage labour diaspora in the region is strengthened. The focus of my analysis will be on documents concerned with immigration policies and Kru labourers who worked in Jamaica, Trinidad and British Guiana in the 1840s and 1850s. Colonial Office Governor Despatch Records and *Trinidad Royal Gazette* both housed at the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago provide information on immigration policy. Newspapers and Parliamentary Papers are crucial for my project as Krooman's Village and other Kru settlements are mentioned and support this dissertation's position that a Kru free wage labour diaspora occurred in the British Caribbean. West India Company Committee Minute Records and Colonial Office Records held at the West Indiana Special Collections Library reveal British policy informing Kru recruitment and the Kru's role in an evolving culturally diverse Trinidadian society in the mid-nineteenth century.

Official correspondence documents accessed at the Walter Rodney National Archives in Georgetown, Guyana are important for analyzing British policy affecting Kru workers. Specifically, this study utilizes documents focused on Kru labourers who immigrated to British Guiana between 1841 and 1853. Documents examined include: Secretary of State Despatches Records, Blue Books, Colonial Policy Minute Papers, and *The British Guiana Official Gazette*.

John Brummell, *British Guiana: Demerara after Fifteen Years of Freedom, by a Landowner*. By John Brummell (London: T. Bosworth, 1853), 78; Louis De Verteuil, *Trinidad: Its Geography, Natural Resources, Administration, Present Condition, and Prospects* 1855 (London: Cassel and Company, 1884), 313; Henry Kirke, *Twenty-Five Years in British Guiana* (London: S. Low, Marsten, 1898), 171-172; C.B. Franklin, *After Many Days: A Memoir. Being a Sketch of the Life and Labours of Rev. Alexander Kennedy, First Presbyterian Missionary to Trinidad, Founder of Greyfriars Church, and its Pastor for Fourteen Years: January 1836 - December 1849. With an Introduction by Rev R.E. Welsh* (Port of Spain: Franklin's Electric Printery, 1910), 76.

These sources provide information concerning the Kru and immigration policies. All of these sources will be analysed in conjunction with the sources in Trinidad and Tobago in order to reconstruct Kru employment in the British Caribbean.

Shipping records published by Monica Schuler, which detail the number of Kru entering British Guiana and Trinidad between 1841 and 1853, reveal the scope of Kru migration.⁵⁵ Since the publication of her chapter “Kru Emigration to British and French Guiana, 1841-1857,” she has provided a detailed analysis on Kru activity in British Guiana. She provides all known shipping records that focus on Kru departures directly from Freetown and the Kru Coast to British Guiana, some of which include the following ships: *Superior I* (1841), *Superior II* (1842), *Arabian II* (1843), *Arabian III* (1844), *Louisa Baille I* (1845), *Margaret* (1846), *Louise Baille II* (1847), *Prince Regent* (1850), *Clarendon* (1850), *Julindur* (1852), *Elphinstone I* (1853), *Elphinstone II* (1853).⁵⁶ I use Schuler’s shipping records to situate Kru migration within the socio-political setting of the Kru Coast and their free wage labour diasporas in the Atlantic and British Caribbean.

Analysis of Kru labour requires a range of sources. French sources that provide information on Kru workers on the Kru Coast, Côte d’Ivoire and Gabon include accounts by Édouard Bouët-Willaumez, Jules De Clerq, Jacques Savary Des Bruslons, Antoine Augustin Bruzen de La Martinière, Adolphe Burdo, Henri-Marie-Gustave d’Ollonne, Gabriel Louis Angoulvant, and Herr Marc Allegret’s film *Voyage au Congo*.⁵⁷ French journal, *Société de*

⁵⁵ Schuler, “Kru Emigration,” 155-202.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 155-202.

⁵⁷ Édouard Bouët-Willaumez, *Commerce et Traite des Noirs aux Côtes Occidentales D’Afrique* (Paris: Imprimerie, 1848), 85; Jules De Clerq, *Recueil des Traites de la France*, vol. 4 (Paris: Amyot, 1880), 445, 610-612; Jacques Savary Des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce* (Paris: Jacques Estienne, 1723), 1059; Antoine Augustin Bruzen de La Martinière, *Le Grand Dictionnaire Géographique et Critique*, vol. 5 (Paris: Gosse, 1735), 72; Burdo, *Niger and*

Géographie de Rocheforte provided information regarding Kru labour-relations with the French. Secondary sources used to analyze Kru labour with the French include studies by Jeremy Rich, Jonas Ibo and Monica Blackmun Visona.⁵⁸ Valuable German sources which also detail Kru employment in Monrovia, Gabon and on steamships in West Africa include accounts by Johann Büttikofer, Oskar Lenz, Hugo Zöller, Richard Oberlander and Heinrich Klose.⁵⁹ Spanish accounts by Gerónimo M. Usera y Alarcón, Don Joaquin Navarro and Manuel De Teran provide information on Kru labour in Fernando Po.⁶⁰

An important aspect of this dissertation is the argument that several overlapping Kru diasporas occurred simultaneously. Significantly, Foreign Office 84 records held at The National Archives in the United Kingdom show that Kru labourers worked on Cuban slaving

the Benueh, 82-83; Henri-Marie-Gustave d'Ollonne, "Femmes Krous," *Le Tour du Monde* (La Mission Hostains- d' Ollonne, 1901), accessed on June 2, 2017, <http://www.wobebli.net/histoire/krous.htm>; Gabriel Louis Angoulvant, *La Pacification de la Côte d'Ivoire, 1908-1915* (Paris: Lacroze, 1916), 1-30; *Voyage au Congo*, directed by Herr Marc Allegret, based on journal by Andre Gide. Paris. 1927.

⁵⁸ Jeremy Rich, "Rough Sailing: Risks and Opportunity for Immigrant African Maritime Workers in Gabon, ca. 1860-1917," in *Navigating African Maritime History*, eds. Carina E. Ray and Jeremy Rich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 126; Jonas Ibo, "Le phénomène "Krouman" à Sassandra: la marque d'une institution séculaire," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 32 Issue I (1998):65-94; Monica Blackmun Visona, *Constructing African Art Histories for the Lagoons of Côte d'Ivoire* (London: Routledge, 2017), 51, 121.

⁵⁹ Johann Büttikofer, *Travel Sketches from Liberia: Johann Büttikofer's 19th Century*, ed. Henk Dop and Phillip Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 49; Oskar Lenz, *Skizzen aus West-Africa* (Berlin: A. Hoffman, 1878), 281; Hugo Zöller, *Das Togoland und die Sklavenküste* (Berlin: Verlag von. W. Spemann, 1885), 56; Richard Oberlander, *Deutsch-Afrika, Land und Leute, Handel und Wandel in Unseren Kolonien* (Leipzig: Verlag von Wilhem Friedrich, 1885), 20; Heinrich Klose, *Togo unter Deutscher Flagge, reisebilder und Betrachtungen* (Berlin: D. Reimer, 1899), 10-11.

⁶⁰ Gerónimo M. Usera y Alarcón, *Observaciones al Ilamado Opúsculo sobre la Colonizacion de Fernando Póo* (Madrid: Aguado, 1852), 26-27; ; Gerónimo M. Usera y Alarcón, *Memoria de la isla de Fernando Póo* (Madrid: T. Aguado, 1848), 13; Don Joaquin J. Navarro, *Apuntes Sobre El Estado de la Costa Occidental de Africa Y Principalmente de las Possessions Españoles en Golfo de Guinea* (Madrid: Imprenta Nacional, 1859), 159-160; Manuel De Teran, *Síntesis Geográfica de Fernando Póo* (Madrid: Institut d'Estudes Africains, 1962), 85.

ships in the 1830s. My study analyzes the following ships: *Planeta* (1832) and *Preciosa* (1836). Another source that revealed Kru service on slave ships was found in Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, which showed a number of Kru working on board the *Lady Sale* slave ship in 1845.⁶¹ These documents and others will be analyzed in collaboration with Theodore Canot's account of Kru service on slave ships.⁶² The significance of these official documents and Canot's account is that the Kru simultaneously worked on slave ships and West Africa Squadron ships engaged in anti-slavery activity. Their contradictory labour activities reveal the Kru's complex entrepreneurial nature.

Methodology

The first methodological step was to transcribe official correspondence, newspaper articles, diaries, muster lists and pay lists from various National Archives and university special collection libraries in Sierra Leone, Liberia, United Kingdom, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana and the United States. Previously unpublished muster lists and pay lists proved to be the most significant sources that were used to identify wage rates and the volume of Kru serving in the Royal Navy. Newspaper articles and primary published accounts were used to reveal the geographic scope of Kru diasporas and labour networks.

⁶¹ FO 84/197, no. 72-3 "Havana: Commissioners Schenley and Madden. Dispatches," July-December 1836, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom; Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons and Command, "Havana", vol. 50 (1896), 88; Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, vol. 6, "Minutes of Evidence taken Before the Duke de Broglie," Enclosure 1 in no. 149 (1847), 249; Parliamentary Papers, Correspondence with the British Commissioners, "Her Majesty's Commissioners to Viscount, 23 September 1837," vol. 50, no. 9 (1838), 5-6.

⁶² Theodore Canot, *Captain Canot; or, Twenty Years an African Slaver: Being an Account of the Career and Adventures on the Coast, in the Interior, on Shipboard, and in the West Indies*, ed. Brantz Mayer (New York: Appleton, 1864), 188.

Based on documental evidence, I then considered Kru communities in the Atlantic Ocean. Permanent labouring communities developed in Freetown, Monrovia, Cape Coast, Lagos, Ascension Island, Fernando Po, Cape of Good Hope, British Guiana and Trinidad, while the Kru only transited through ports in Zanzibar, Bombay, Singapore and Hong Kong. The Kru's diverse working experiences are explored through the production of maps, illustrations, postcards, gravestones, figures and tables.

One methodological problem was identifying women in the sources. Kru women are only mentioned in passing in published primary accounts and official documents. Any attempt to understand how they contributed to the development of Kru diasporas and wage labour networks relies on postcards and illustrations. In general, it is also important to recognize that historical descriptions of the Kru were written from the perspective of European captains, travelers, governors, and military personnel. Therefore, an inherent bias towards male Kru workers will inevitably be present.

Recovering the Kru voice required the use of primary and secondary sources which contained oral testimony. Elizabeth Tonkin, Merran Fraenkel, Bohumil Holas and Ronald Davis' studies have utilized Kru oral traditions.⁶³ Two of the most valuable sources from the nineteenth century which relied on Kru oral traditions were transcribed by Reverend John Leighton Wilson and Reverend James Connelly. Their accounts provide details on the origins of the Kru Coast and trade with the Portuguese.⁶⁴

⁶³ Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 22; Elizabeth Tonkin, "Creating Kroomen," 32; Merran Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class in Monrovia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 1-100; Bohumil Holas, *Mission Dans L'est Liberien* (Dakar: Institut Francais d'Afrique Noire, 1952), 97; Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 22-26.

⁶⁴ Wilson, *Western Africa*, 101; Reverend Connelly, "Report of the Kroo People," *American Colonization 39th Annual Report* (1856): 38-40; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 73.

Investigating the Kru Coast, the homeland in Kru free wage labour diasporas and labour networks, also requires analysis of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database between 1500 and 1880 in the British legal and illegal eras of trans-Atlantic slave trading in order to understand the reasons why the Kru generally became traders and labourers with the British rather than enslaved.⁶⁵ These statistics, which are numerically low when compared with other slaving regions in West Africa and West Central Africa in the same time period, will strengthen my position that the natural environment played a crucial role in positioning the Kru as workers and traders with the British.

I chose to study the working relationship between the Kru and the British because the British seem to have had the greatest social, economic and political impact on Kru communities as compared with other Europeans, especially after 1792. Although the Kru traded and worked on French, German, Portuguese, Cuban and American ships, they never established diasporas and labour networks on the same economic or geographical scale as with the British. Moreover, there is a wealth of British sources that discuss the Kru, and hence I traced their diasporas and labour networks in tandem with British commercial and military expansion.

The temporal parameters of this study (1792-1900) were selected based on various phases of increased employment between the Kru and the British. While it is crucial to examine the factors that formed the foundation of Kru employment before 1792, this date was selected as its starting point because that is when the Kru's first diaspora community appears to have been formed in Freetown. Over the next century, Kru employment formed a crucial component of British trade in West Africa, the Atlantic and beyond. The conclusion of the study is 1900, when Kru employment decreased in their homeland on the Kru Coast and they sought economic

⁶⁵ See Slave Voyages Database at <http://www.slavevoyages.org>.

opportunities in their diaspora communities in West Africa.

Chapter 1

Kru Coast and the Slave Trade

Originally, the Kru were considered to come from the region between the Sinoe River and Dubo River, although the other parts of the coast later became associated with the Kru. Historically, this part of West Africa has been referred to as the the Upper Guinea Coast, Malaguetta Coast, Pepper Coast, Grain Coast and Windward Coast. Kru traditionally inhabited five main trading towns in the region, which included Nana Kru, Little Kru, Krubah, Settra Kru and King William's Town, as Thomas Ludlam observed in 1812.¹ Each town had its own unique social and territorial identity known as a *dako*, which was based on traditions of migration and a distinct dialect.² The Kru were an ethnically identifiable community, although internal tensions regularly affected relations between their towns.³ Based on their expertise in navigating the rough surf as fishermen, Kru came to serve a vital role in enabling European trade on the coast. Serving as traders and boatmen, their involvement in Atlantic trade may have commenced as early as the fifteenth century. Employment with Europeans and, in particular, the British over several centuries provided the foundation for their free wage labour diaspora to develop from the late eighteenth century.

This chapter explores the origins of the five towns between the Sinoe River and Dubo River, which formed the homeland of the Kru. The linguistic relationship between the Kru and their neighbours including the Grebo, Bassa, Noyo and Alladians is analyzed in order to determine who belonged to the category informing Kru identity. The social organization and

¹ Thomas Ludlam, *The Sixth Report of the Directors of the African Institution* (London: African Institute, 1812), 88.

² Fraenkel, "Social Change," 154-155; Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 22-26; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 74-75.

³ For a discussion of *dako* see Fraenkel, "Social Change," 154-155.

economy of the towns as fishing communities is examined in order to reveal the changes that affected the Kru Coast following their employment on European vessels from as early as the seventeenth century. Significant developments included the emergence of the Kru mark, which ensured Kru immunity from enslavement and became a recognizable feature of the Kru diaspora. Kru employment on European ships was organized under the leadership of headmen who had previous experience in such work, a practice that characterized the organization of work thereafter. While Kru may have been involved in selling some enslaved Africans, the available statistics suggest that the numbers could not have been very large. However, their service in the slave trade continued to be a source of revenue well into the nineteenth century when Kru found employment on Cuban slave ships. European trade fundamentally altered the social and political organization underlying Kru communities.

Kru Origins and Language

The five Kru communities between the Sinoe River and Dubo River are believed to have formed by at least the sixteenth century, although there is evidence for an earlier presence.⁴ Beginning in the late fifteenth century, some Portuguese ship captains may have employed Kru on their vessels sailing along the West African coast.⁵ Exactly when Kru first started working on European ships is not clear, however. The lack of natural harbours, perilous surf and rocky sub-sea terrain along the coast may explain why the Kru, who were master boatmen, could navigate these natural obstacles and develop a trading relationship with Europeans, and thereby avoid

⁴ Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 7. Behrens suggests that Kru inhabited the region since at least the 15th century.

⁵ Pedro de Sintra, *Voyages of Cadamosto*, Second Series, 80, trans. Gerald Crone (London: Hakluyt Society, 1927), 83-84; Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, Second Series, 80, trans. and ed., George H.T. Kimble (London: Hakluyt Society, 1936), 110.

enslavement.⁶ Because Europeans could not transport commodities from ship to shore nor bring goods and enslaved captives to the ships, they came to rely on the Kru as their workers in trade. Hence, the Kru Coast was a region where Europeans could buy provisions as well as hire workers for their voyages along the West African coast. For their part, the Kru could take advantage of the opportunity to work on ships for wages.

Accounts by fifteenth-century explorer Pedro de Sintra and sixteenth-century cartographer Duarte Pacheco Pereira suggest that Kru's ancestors were fishermen when the Portuguese began trading in the region. The construction of their surfboats, their masterful navigation of perilous surf, and a trading process, which included transporting commodities by paddling surfboats several leagues between shore and ship, closely resemble Kru practice from very early until well into the nineteenth century.⁷

Although it is unknown when Kru first found employment on board European ships sailing along the coast, the earliest known reference dates to 1645. An entry in the "Journal of Sao Jorge da Mina" (Elmina Castle) dated 6 February 1645, mentions the word "Krao" with reference to a crew member on board a docked Spanish ship.⁸ Brooks has suggested that this date represents the earliest available example of Kru on board a ship sailing the West African coast.⁹ The document suggests that the Kru were engaged in shipboard employment from at least the

⁶ Francis Bacon, "Cape Palmas and the Mena, or Kroomen," *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 12 (1842): 199.

⁷ de Sintra, *Voyages*, 83-84; Pereira, *Esmeraldo*, 110.

⁸ The "Journal of Sao Jorge da Mina" is in K. Ratelband, ed., *Vijf Dagregisters van Het Kasteel Sao Jorge da Mina (Elmina) aar de Goudkust, 1647-1945* (Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1953), 11. See Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 2; Wilson, "Western Africa," 103. Wilson does not mention the exact date but suggests that it was the "Proper Kru" who first worked on European vessels before all other Kru-speaking peoples.

⁹ Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 2.

mid-seventeenth century and that some had made the transition from fishermen to workers on European vessels sailing down the coast.

Kru were able to trade and gain employment on European ships on the Kru Coast because of the natural environment. The role of the natural coast, currents, winds and sub-sea terrain all combined to make it difficult for Europeans to anchor and tender to shore. Francis Bacon's description of the seacoast reveals navigational challenges:

The outline of the sea-shore is very irregular, the sandy beach being at intervals of about 5 or 6 miles broken by the sharp rocky points, prolonged occasionally into long reefs, partially visible above the water, which constitute the most formidable among the peculiar perils which the navigator encounters along this fatal coast. Notwithstanding this general conformation of points and bights, there is not one bay or harbour, or even roadstead, offering the least shelter to vessels. This remark may also be extended to the whole coast of Western Guinea, from Cape St. Ann to Cape Formoso. Vessels always anchor in the open sea, at from 1 to 5 miles distance from the land, after carefully ascertaining the quality of the bottom by repeated soundings, generally in from 5 to 25 fathoms. The surf on the beach is everywhere formidable, like that on the river-bars, but the danger to life is comparatively trifling, for though a "*capsize*" is an every-day occurrence, it is seldom difficult to scramble out upon the beach with no worse injury than a complete immersion in sea-water of the comfortable warmth of 86 degrees Fahrenheit. The landing is almost always effected in the light and ingeniously constructed canoes of the natives, as there are few places where a boat would not be stove by the surf. Gales of wind are almost unknown on this coast, though short furious tornadoes are frequent throughout the year, most common, however, in the spring and autumn.¹⁰

Despite these adverse conditions, which hampered Europeans from tendering ashore, the Kru took advantage of the opportunity to work for Europeans by transporting commodities and slaves on surfboats between the ships and shoreside.¹¹

¹⁰ Bacon, "Cape Palmas," 199.

¹¹ For more discussion on the indigenous economies of Kru sub-groups See J. M. Sullivan, "Fishers, Traders and Rebels: The role of the Kabor/Gbeta in the 1915 Kru Coast (Liberia) Revolt" (paper presented to the University of Aberdeen Symposium in Aberdeen, Scotland 1985), 51; Elizabeth Tonkin, "Sasstown's Transformation: The Jiao Kru 1888-1981," *Liberian Studies Journal* 8 (1978-79): 3; Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class*, 77; Schuler, "Kru Emigration," 157.

Kru constructed their surfboats for fishing and the transport of goods using Bombacece wood, which was like teak in terms of firmness and weight. William Allen and Thomas Thomson described the useful nature of Bombacece wood in the construction of marine craft on the Niger Expedition of 1841:

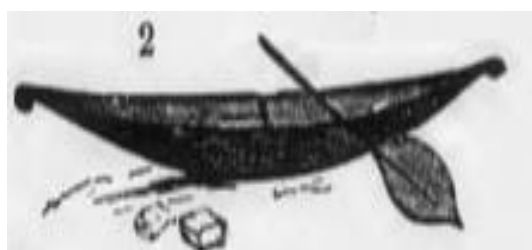
The *Bombacea* are the largest in Africa, some of them being one hundred and fifty feet from the base of the first branch, while the buttresses by which these immense trees are supported often occupy a circumference of fifty or sixty feet. They are truly the giants of African forests; the wood being very soft and buoyant, is suitable for canoes, but scarcely for any other purpose.¹²

The Bombacece tree was essential for the construction of Kru surfboats. Kru dug out single trunks, which Bacon claimed could “carry more bulk than a common ship’s long-boat, and can take in two large puncheons side by side.”¹³ Each surfboat could hold between three and twelve paddlers, which meant that commodities could be carried from shore to ship speedily.¹⁴

In 1508, Duarte Pacheco Pereira commented on the adept skills of local African fisherman at Rock Cess and the distinct shape of their surfboats: “The negroes of this coast...are

Figure 1.1

Kru Surfboat, c. 1859



¹² William Allen and Thomas Richard Heywood Thomson, *Narrative of the Expedition to the River Niger, in 1841*, vol. 2 (London: R. Bentley, 1848), 218.

¹³ Francis Bacon, “Dr. Francis Bacon on Cape Palmas,” *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society* 12 (1843): 201.

¹⁴ Charles Rockwell, “Sketches of Foreign Travel and Life at Sea,” *African Repository* XVIII (1842): 258. See Charles F. Sands, “West African kroomen in surf, 1848.” US Brig Porpoise on Anti-slavery cruise. 1848. Naval Historical Center. Photo# NH63104.

Source: George Thompson, *The Palm-Land, Or West Africa, Illustrated: Being a History of Missionary Labors and Travels with Descriptions of Men and Things in Western Africa*, 2nd ed. (Cincinnati: Moore, Wiltach, Keys & Co., 1859), 189.

great fishermen and go two or three leagues out to sea to fish, in canoes which, in shape, are like weavers' shuttles."¹⁵ Although George Thompson's sketch depicted Kru surfboats in 1859 (Fig. 1.1), several centuries after Pereira, the design of the craft maintained its "weaver's shuttle" appearance. Thompson also noted that "the canoes are made very thin and light so that two men can pick one up that is sufficiently large to carry them."¹⁶

Thompson's description of the Kru's ability to maneuver the craft also would have characterized earlier periods: "They are amazingly expert in their use, and propel them surprisingly fast, with their large paddles."¹⁷ Paddling through turbulent surf meant that the Kru sat on the bottom of the boats and as Thompson noted "indeed it is very difficult to sit in any other position, in a common Kroo canoe, without turning over. While in them they wear but little clothing."¹⁸ Because of the risk of capsizing, the Kru wore very little clothing while paddling. The light weight of the surfboats enabled the Kru to move between ships and shore with ease and to portage between rivers inland when necessary.¹⁹

The term "Kru" is of unknown origin but seems to have derived from several earlier variant terms stretching back to at least the sixteenth century. Brooks and Davis suggest that the name Kru is most probably a corruption of the word Krao or Klao, the former being the original

¹⁵ Pereira, *Esmeraldo*, 110.

¹⁶ George Thompson, *The Palm-Land, Or West Africa, Illustrated: Being a History of Missionary Labors and Travels with Descriptions of Men and Things in Western Africa*, 2nd ed. (Cincinnati: Moore, Wiltach, Keys & Co., 1859), 190.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 190.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 190.

¹⁹ For more discussion on Kru surfboat and paddling techniques see William Barry Lord and Thomas Baines, *Shifts and Expedients of Camp Life, Travel and Exploration* (London: Horace Cox, 1871), 134.

name used to describe the inhabitants of Settra Kru.²⁰ According to oral traditions, Kru living between the Sinoe River and Dubo River recognized themselves as “Proper Kru,” meaning that they were descended from the inhabitants who formed the first Kru communities.²¹

Kru origin traditions collected through interviews with Kru elders by Reverend James Connelly in the 1850s provide some insights into how the Kru perceived their communities. Connelly described the Kru’s ancestors, known as the *Claho*, as having migrated from the West African interior to the Kru Coast centuries before.²² *Claho* may have been a variant spelling of Krao or Klao, which Kru oral traditions consider to be their original name.²³ They first established an unnamed settlement in Bassa region and travelled along the coast before settling Little Kroo, Settra Kroo, Krobah, Nana Kroo, and King William’s Town (William is the Anglicization of the name Weah) between the Sinoe River and Dubo River (Fig. 1.2).²⁴

Kru fishing villages gradually evolved into trading centres with European ships as indicated by the names of Kru communities on maps from the sixteenth century. P.E.H. Hair has

²⁰ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 2; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 4.

²¹ Frost, *Work and Community*, 7-8; Ronald Davis, “The Liberian Struggle for Authority on the Kru Coast,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8, no. 2 (1975): 227; Wilson, *Western Africa*, 101.

²² Connelly suggests the Kru migrated from the interior to the coast around the year 1600. Some scholars suggest it was between 250 and 400 years earlier than Connelly’s account. See Reverend Connelly, “Report of the Kroo People,” *American Colonization 39th Annual Report* (1856): 38-40; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 73.

²³ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 2; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 4.

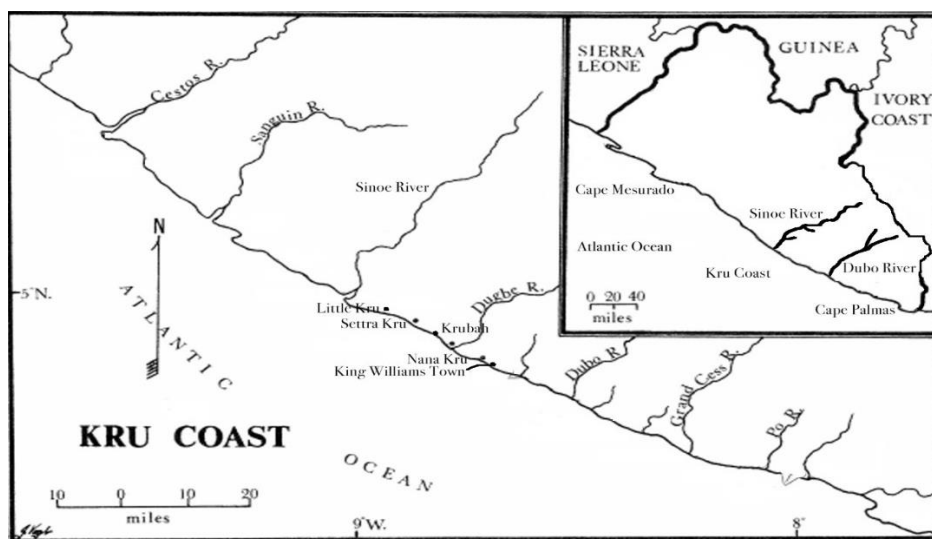
²⁴ Connelly, “Report,” 38-40; Ludlam, “Account,” 43-44; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 78-79; Andreas Massing, “Political Systems of the Kru in Liberia,” unpublished paper, 13, 50; Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 20; Richard Francis Burton, *Wanderings in West Africa from Liverpool to Fernando Po*, vol. 2 (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1863), 12-13.

suggested that English names for settlements along the Guinea Coast were based on local names and vernacular terms, which seems to be the case for the Kru.²⁵

It has sometimes been thought that the term “Kru” and the English term “crew” are related because the Kru worked as crew on British ships. Lynell Marchese has argued that the term “Kru” is directly related to the nature of their employment on ships stating: “the homonymy with crew is obvious, and is at least one source of the confusion among Europeans that there was a Kru/crew tribe.”²⁶ Similarly, Frost has proposed that the Kru formed an “ethnic-occupational” identity that was a response to trade with Europeans. She suggests that the morphing of their

Figure 1.2

Kru Coast



Source: Adapted from map in Davis, “Liberian Struggle,” 223.

²⁵ P.E.H. Hair, “Ethnolinguistic Continuity on the Guinea Coast,” *The Journal of African History* 8, no. 2 (1967): 247-268; P.E.H., “An Ethnolinguistic Inventory of the Upper Guinea Coast before 1700,” *African Language Review* 6 (1967): 32-70.

²⁶ Lynell Marchese, “City Countryside and Kru Ethnicity,” in L. B. Breitbonde, ed. *Africa* 61, no. 2 (1991): 186-201; Lynell Marchese, “Kru,” in *The Niger-Congo Languages*, ed. Bender Samuel (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), 113-119.

identity from *Claho* to Krao/ Klao to Kru was based on their role in the “crew” associated with ships.²⁷ But it is possible to argue the connection between the words “Kru” and “crew” is a coincidence in the English language and is not reflected in other European languages.²⁸ For example, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Dutch ship captains referred to a community in the region as “Crou” in the early seventeenth century, which confirms the identification of the Kru that is not related to the English word “crew.”²⁹ Moreover, English merchant, James Welsh identified a community named Crua in 1588, which confirms that there is no association between “Kru” and “crew.”³⁰ As Christine Behrens has shown, the Kru were known interchangeably as “Krou, Kru, Krew, Krow, Crew, Carow, Courou, Crou, Kroo, Croo, Kroe...Krewmen/Krewmens, Croumane/Croumanes, Kroemens...Kruboy, Kruman, Krumani, Krooman, etc.” between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.³¹ Hence, they identified as Kru long before they were routinely hired for work on ships sailing down the West African coast.³² However, the importance of Kru as crew is indisputable. In 1856, Rev. Connelly reported on the correlation between the Kru and their reputation for serving on ships dating back to the early seventeenth century with the Portuguese.³³

The earliest historical mention directly associated with the Kru dates to about 1588, when a location named “Crua” on the south eastern coast of what was then known as the Malaguetta

²⁷ Frost, *Work and Community*, 10.

²⁸ The word “crew” shows no similarity to Kru in Portuguese (*tripulação*); French (*equipage*); Spanish (*tripulación*); or Dutch (*bemmaning*).

²⁹ Behrens, *Les Krouman*, 23.

³⁰ James Welsh, “A Voyage to Benin beyond the Countrey of Guinea made by Master James Welch, who set forth in the Yeere 1588.” In *The Principle Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*, edited by Richard Hakluyt, vol. 6 (London J. MacLehose and Sons, 1904), 451.

³¹ Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 13.

³² Johnston, *Liberia* I, 88.

³³ Connelly, “Report,” 39.

Coast appeared on a map in James Welsh's *A Voyage to Benin beyond the Countrey of Guinea made by Master James Welsh, who set forth in the Yeere 1588*.³⁴ The town was located south of the Cestos River. Around 1600, Pieter de Marees located a village named "Crou" west of Baddoe and east of Wappo in the same region as the Kru Coast.³⁵ Levinus Hulsius described a village named "Crou" in 1606, while Olfert Dapper mentioned a town called "Crouw" or "Krau" in 1686.³⁶ Behrens suggested that the village known as "Crou" or "Crua" in the sixteenth and seventeenth century may have evolved to become Settra Kru by the eighteenth century.³⁷ However, during his voyage to the region between 1666 and 1667, Villaut de Bellefond described three separate villages, which included "Sestre-Crou," "Crou" and "Crou-Sestre."³⁸ William Bosman's 1698 voyage along the West African coast detailed in *A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea* mentions the names of towns associated with the Kru including Sestre Crou (Settra Kru).³⁹ In all cases, Kru community names in the eighteenth century imply that their origins date from at least the sixteenth century.

³⁴ Welsh, "A Voyage to Benin," 451.

³⁵ Pieter de Marees, *Description and Historical Account of the Gold Kingdom of Guinea*, 1602, eds. A Van Dantzig and Adam Jones (London: British Academy, 1987), 7, 14.

³⁶ Johnston, *Liberia* I, 88.

³⁷ Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 23. Also see Charles Athanase Walckenaer, *Collection des Relations de Voyages par Mer et par Terre en Différentes de l'Afrique Depuis 1400 jusqu'à Nos Jours*, vol. 2 (Paris: n.p., 1842), 88-89.

³⁸ Walckenaer, *Collection des Relations de Voyages*, 8: 29.

³⁹ Bosman, *New and Accurate Description*, 486; Hermann Moll, "New and Exact Map of Guinea," in William Bosman, *New and Accurate Description* (London: J. Knapton, 1705), n.p. A settlement containing a variant of the name Kru appears in the map of the Windward Coast in Bernard Martin and Mark Spurrell, eds., *The Journal of a Slave Trader (John Newton) 1750-1754* (London: Epworth, 1962), 117; Jean Barbot, *A Description of the Coasts of North and South Guinea, and of the Ethiopia Inferior, Vulgarly Angola...And a New Relation of the Province of Guiana, and of the Great Rivers of Amazons and Oronoque in South-America* (London: A. & J. Churchill, 1732), 136.

Although the five towns formed the hub of Kru exchange with Europeans in the region, all the communities on the coast, between the Mesurado River (Monrovia) and the Bandama River (west of Abidjan), were inhabited by people who could be categorized as Kru speakers.⁴⁰ Andreas Massing and Guenter Schroeder propose that as early as the sixteenth century dialects of a common language were recognized between villages along the Malaguetta Coast. Their evidence is based on William Towerson's 1555 voyage in which he observed similarities between languages spoken on the Malaguetta Coast leading him to claim: "The language here [near Cape Palmas], as far as I could judge, seemed to differ little from that formerly mentioned [throughout the Malaguetta Coast]."⁴¹ They have concluded that it is reasonable to assume that the inhabitants of the region spoke dialects of the same language. Dietrich Westermann and M.A. Bryan have subdivided the region into two Kru dialect clusters. Kru speakers in the west between the Bassa region and Sassandra River constituted the Bakwe cluster, while those in the east between the Sassandra River and the Bandama River formed the Bete cluster.⁴² Kru

⁴⁰ Guenter Schroeder and Andreas Massing, "A General Outline of Historical Developments within the Kru Cultural Province," (paper presented at the Second Annual Conference on Social Research in Liberia, Bloomington, Indiana, April 30-May 2, 1970), 5. Also see Jeanne Hein, "Portuguese Communication with Africans on the Searoute to India," in *The Globe Encircled and the World Revealed*, ed. Ursula Lamb (London: Routledge, 2016), 6.

⁴¹ Towerson, "Voyage," 241, accessed on June 14, 2018, https://www.e-reading.club/chapter.php/80243/53/Kerr_-

[_A_General_History_and_Collection_of_Voyages_and_Travels%2C_Vol.VII.html](#).

⁴² Dietrich Westermann and M.A. Bryan, *Languages of West Africa* (London: Oxford University Press for International African Institute, 1952), 48-54. For a discussion on Kru languages see John Victor Singler, "The Homogeneity of the Substrate as a Factor in Pidgin/Creole Genesis," *Language* 64, no. 1 (1988): 27-51; John Victor Singler, "Plural Marking in Liberian Settler English, 1820-1980," *American Speech* 64, no. 1 (1989): 40-64.

speakers including the “Proper Kru,” Bassa, Grebo, Krahn, Sapo, Neyo and Alladians inhabited this vast coastal region.⁴³

There is evidence that Siglio migrated from Cape Palmas and intermarried with Kru, which resulted in the establishment of Grand Cess (Siklio or Siglipo) as early as the seventeenth century.⁴⁴ Grand Cess was founded immediately to the east of the Grand Cess River. Although not one of the original five “Proper Kru” towns it became widely recognized amongst the Kru and European traders as a centre for Kru trade. Moreover, Grand Cess formed its own *dako* that was distinct from the “Proper Kru” and extended the geographical boundaries of the Kru Coast from the region between the Sinoe and Dubo River eastward to include coast between the Sinoe River and Grand Cess.⁴⁵ The inhabitants of Grand Cess identified as Kru but were well aware, as were the “Proper Kru,” that their origin tradition differed from the founding of the five towns.

The etymology of the term Kru demonstrates that by the late eighteenth century the term Kru (or Kroo/Krew) had come to encompass a range of peoples who spoke the same language on in the vicinity of the Kru Coast. The word Kru was more frequently spelt “Kroo” in primary sources. Thomas Winterbottom provides the earliest known source that directly names the Kru on the Kru Coast in 1792 referring to them as “Kroo.”⁴⁶ Similarly, Thomas Ludlam referred to “Kroomen” as early as 1797.⁴⁷ Henry Buckler and Thomas Stevens named traders and fishermen

⁴³ Louis Henrique, *Les Colonies Françaises*, vol. 5 (Paris: Maison Quantin, 1890), 203; Élisée Reclus, *The Universal Geography: Earth and Its Inhabitants* ed. A.H. Keane (London: J.S. Virtue & Co., 1885), 233; Davis, “Liberian Struggle,” 227; Frost, *Work and Community*, 7-8.

⁴⁴ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 139; Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 19-38. Behrens suggests that it was Grebo who migrated from Cape Palmas and established Grand Cess.

⁴⁵ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 139-157; Martin and Spurrell, *Journal of a Slave Trader*, 27.

⁴⁶ Winterbottom, *Account*, 8-9.

⁴⁷ Ludlam, “Account,” 49.

from the Kru Coast “Krooboy.”⁴⁸ William Cobbett referred to them as “Croumen” and John Leighton Wilson, “Krumen.”⁴⁹ Captain William Harwar Parker referred to them as “Kroumen” and they were named “Krewmen” in *The Report of the Directors of the African Institution*.⁵⁰ All of these names frequently appear as interchangeable terms in primary documents and despite the various spelling used to identify the Kru, they always referred to the people living on the Kru Coast. Linguistic analysis shows that by the end of the eighteenth century, the region of the Kru Coast had been firmly established amongst themselves and Europeans to include the region between the Sinoe River and Dubo River.

Social Organization

Kru society was patrilineal.⁵¹ Each patrilineage was known as a *panton*.⁵² The eldest member deemed physically and mentally fit known as a *panton nyefue* headed the *panton*.⁵³ Settlements

⁴⁸ Henry Buckler, *Central Criminal Court. Minutes of Evidence, Taken in Short-Hand* no. 618 (London: George Herbert, 1836), 510; and Thomas Stevens, “Punjabee Well-Jumpers and Krooboy Divers,” *Harper’s Round Table* 8 (September 27, 1887), 766.

⁴⁹ William Cobbett, “Evidence in Support of the Statement, January to June 1802,” in *Cobbett’s Annual Register (Political Register)*, ed. William Cobbett, vol. 1 (London: Cox and Baylis, 1802), 883; Wilson, *Western Africa*, 128.

⁵⁰ Captain William Harwar Parker, *Recollections of a Naval Officer, 1841-1865* (New York: Charles Scribners’ Sons, 1883), 117, 119; Commodore Sir George Collier, “Copies of two Reports from Commodore Sir George Collier, K.C.B. Concerning the Settlements on the Gold Coast and Windward Coast of Africa,” *The Fourteenth Report of the Directors of the African Institution* (London: Ellereeton and Henderson, 1820), 132.

⁵¹ All power structures had a male authority figure. See Ludlam, “Account,” 45. For scholarship on Kru patrilineal power structures see Fraenkel, “Social Change,” 154-172; Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts*, 34; Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 23, 109, 142; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 74, 88, 110; Thomas E. Hayden, “Kru Religious Concepts,” *Liberian Studies Journal* 7 no. 1 (1976-1977): 13-22; Ibrahim Sundiata, *Brothers and Strangers: Black Zion, Black Slavery, 1914-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 69.

⁵² The Kru terms presented in this section are based on the research conducted by scholars between the 1950s and 1970s. See Fraenkel, “Social Change,” 154-155; Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 22-26; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 74-75.

⁵³ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 23.

were generally composed of a number of *panton* each serving as a residential unit. As such, *panton* in various settlements could also share the same name. Hierarchical arrangements between *panton* existed when one *panton* moved into the area of another for demographic or political reasons in which junior *panton* submitted to older *panton* in traditional procedures and guidance. Collectively, *panton* sharing political officers based on a collective historical tradition formed a territorial unit known as a *dako*.⁵⁴ The highest officer in a *dako* was known as the *krogba* or “father of the town” and was democratically selected by a group of *panton nyefue*. The power of the *krogba* rested on the influence of the *panton nyefue*.⁵⁵

The process of selecting the *krogba* differed from settlement to settlement. Werner Korte, Andreas Massing and Ronald Davis have suggested that Kru agriculturalist settlements generally rotated the *krogba* among various *panton*, in contrast to Kru fishing settlements, which tended to select the *krogba* from a single *panton*.⁵⁶ The *krogba* was accountable to the body of *panton nyefue* who had selected him, held offices and tempered his authority.

In 1825, Hugh Clapperton commented on the relationship between the *krogba* and the *panton nyefue*:

The Government is Monarchial but the advice of the Elders has to be taken before any thing of important can be under taken ~ this authority descends by inherit. if the son is too young the deceased kings brother is elected ~ if he behaves ill they depose him – the Elders of the people are the electors – his authority is limited by the elders of the people who form a council.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid, 23.

⁵⁵ Ludlam, “Account,” 45.

⁵⁶ Werner Korte and Andreas Massing, “Institutional Change among the Kru, Liberia-Transformative Response to Change,” in *Africana Collecta*, vol. 2, ed. Dieter Oberndorfer (Dusseldorf: Bertelsmann University, 1971): 119-121; Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 23.

⁵⁷ Bruce Lockhart and Lovejoy, *Hugh Clapperton*, 84.

Clapperton observed that Kru succession was based on a system of inheritance. Despite the monarchical comparison, the *panton nyefue* held the authority to elect whom they saw fit for office should the *krogba* not meet expectations.

The *krogba* lived in a compound, located in an isolated area within the vicinity of the *krogba's panton*. The *panton nyefue* had their own building known as a *tugbejia* where town business was conducted and disputes were resolved.⁵⁸ The office of the *gbaubi* or *gbo bi* known as the “father of the army” held nearly equal authority as the *krogba* and although the *gbaubi* was a political position formed to counterbalance the authority of the *krogba*, it was the younger men who led the soldiers.

Age-sets (*kofa*) formed a crucial component that structured Kru societies on the Kru Coast. Age-sets transcended *panton* lines and consisted of three male groups including children, young adults and elders. Each age set required responsibilities and afforded privileges. Initiation into adulthood was accompanied by circumcision and ceremony. The initiation process was called *gbau* or *gbo* (also the name of the warrior class) and sometimes culminated with the new members of the adult group attacking a nearby village with the purpose of displaying their strength. Behrens suggests the initiation ceremony took one week to complete: “Une initiation d'une semaine, simple entraînement militaire, marquait pour les jeunes gens de 16 à 24 ans le passage à l'âge adulte.”⁵⁹ The age of initiation varied because the transition to adulthood was based on the physical and mental readiness of each candidate. Males were not recognized as adults until they had completed the ceremony. They would be placed under the

⁵⁸ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 26.

⁵⁹ Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 52. Also see Fraenkel, “Social Change,” 154.

mentorship of a warrior and expected to fulfil all required duties of protocol, which could include physical labour associated with working his agricultural land.⁶⁰

The goal of most young Kru was to become prominent warriors, marry wives and expand their kinship group. One avenue to prominence was in fishing, which earned a living and organized young men bound by age-grade regulations in teams who worked under a headman who was responsible for the surfboats and their navigation. These units of work and social organization formed the basis for employment on European ships. In such work, the youngest men in the secret society formed the pool of workers who would accompany their headman (or foreman) on ships just as they did on the surfboats. According to the anthropological research of Guenter Schroeder in the early 1970s,

...the majority of the Kroomen were drawn from the age-group of the young men – often called *kofa* – who in traditional society had economic as well as military functions. The age-group of the young men had to work on the farms of the warriors, they exercised certain policing functions within the community, and in war they were auxiliary corps to the *gbo*, the age of the warriors. Most of these young men were directed by a man who belonged to the oldest group within the age group itself or now even to the next higher age-group. He was responsible for the conduct of the group within the town and during the work on the farms but on the other hand he spoke up for their interests. It is thus not inconceivable that this system of age-groups lent itself easily to the transformation and incorporation into the system of Kroomen labour migrations and gave rise to the headmen system. Thus traditional elements and necessity on the part of the Europeans to have identifiable persons of authority probably influenced each other. Another explanation for the obvious similarities between the system of age-groups and the headman system might be found in the assumption of a reverse development, i.e. not the headman system was patterned according to the age-group system but vice versa. After all, most of the information on the age-groups stems from recent years and it is not inconceivable that the memory concerning the structure of the traditional age-groups already had been considerably influenced and modified by the structures which had developed in connection with Kroomen labour activities.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Thomas E. Hayden, “A Description of the 1970 Grand Cess Gbo” (unpublished paper, 1972), n.p.; Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 25.

⁶¹ Guenter Schroeder, “Letter to George Brooks,” March 31, 1971, 2-3. Schroeder was involved in *Ethnographic Survey of Southeastern Liberia: The Liberian Kran and the Sapo* (Newark, Delaware: Liberian Studies Association, 1974). Also see Schroeder and Andreas Massing, “A General Outline of Historical Developments within the Kru Cultural Province,” (paper presented

Secret societies would later affect the Kru in their diaspora communities. The most commonly documented society on the Kru Coast was *Bo*, *Boviowah* or *Gbo*. Neil Carey has suggested that *Bo* is a sub-group of the Poro secret society, which dominated the interior of this part of West Africa. The supreme Poro bush spirit was honoured by wearing a mask and was generally known as *Kwi* and more significantly as *Nyaswa*.⁶² In 1856, Wilson observed that there were four classes in the Kru secret society known as *Bo* including the *Gnekbade* (elders), *Sedibo* (soldiers), *Kedibo* (youngest men) and *Deyâbo* (doctors).⁶³ The *gnekbade* represent the elders who held the most power and from which the *panton nyefue* was the most prominent member tasked with selecting the *krogba*. They served as a senate during the meetings and had two officers including the *bodio* and the *worabanh*. The *bodio* kept fetishes and was a high priest, and the *worabanh* served as the military leader in times of war.⁶⁴ The *sedibo* required a payment for membership comprising of a cow.⁶⁵ The *ibadio* and *tibawah* were officer roles in this class. The youngest men had little influence and belonged to the *kedibo* class. A fourth class known as the *deyâbo* or doctors formed a separate group.⁶⁶ The distinction between the Kru political organization and *Bo* organization resided in the payment of a cow for membership, which was not needed for transition into the warrior status known as *gbau*.⁶⁷

at the Second Annual Conference on Social Research in Liberia, Indiana University, April 30-May 2, 1970).

⁶² Neil Carey, "Comparative Native Terminology of Poro Groups," *Secrecy: The Journal of the Poro Studies Association* 1, no. 1 (2014): 2.

⁶³ Wilson, *Western Africa*, 130. Although John Leighton Wilson described what he perceived to be Kru political structure in the 1856, Ronald Davis has shown that he was in fact observing the organization of *Bo*. See Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 24.

⁶⁴ Wilson, *Western Africa*, 130

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 130.

⁶⁶ J. Wilson, "Letter from Africa, No.1," *African Repository* 15, no. 16 (1839): 265.

⁶⁷ Wilson, *Western Africa*, 130.

The age for initiation into the Bo secret society apparently was between fourteen and twenty years old. F.W. Butt-Thompson's study of secret societies in 1929, determined that the *deyabo* wore a mask, and the *ibodio* and *tibawah* formed a council representing the War King and the Peace King.⁶⁸ Members of Bo secret society met at the *giwon* meaning "leopard's mouth," a building housing fetishes, war trophies and objects important to the *dako*.⁶⁹ Kru worshipped a monotheistic god known as *Nyessoa*. Clapperton observed that the Kru practiced animal sacrifice: "By advice of their priest or doctor they offer a bullock or sheep to god by killing it and leaving it to rot."⁷⁰ They also practiced rituals associated with moon cycles and agriculture.⁷¹ The Kru demonstrated an outright refusal to recognize Christianity on the Kru Coast and only after the middle of the nineteenth century began to convert to Christianity.⁷²

Women's duties on the Kru Coast included the production of rice and malaguetta pepper for the dual function of subsistence for their family units and trading with Europeans. As wives, their duties were to raise children and manage the domestic duties of the household. In 1812, Ludlam observed "agricultural labour is conducted chiefly by women."⁷³ Similarly, in 1834, Holman noted that Kru women "perform all the field-work, as well as necessary domestic

⁶⁸ F. W. Butt-Thompson, *West African Secret Societies* (London: Routledge, 1929), 225-226. Also see Wilson, "Letter to the American Colonization Society," 262-267; Wilson, *Western Africa*, 129-131. Referring to Wilson, Mary Kingsley also emphasized the important role of the Bo secret society in structuring Kru society. See Mary Kingsley, *West African Studies*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1964), 447-449.

⁶⁹ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 26.

⁷⁰ Bruce Lockhart and Lovejoy, *Hugh Clapperton*, 86.

⁷¹ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 25. In the seventeenth century, Olfert Dapper described religious practices related to moon cycles in the region that would later be known as the Kru Coast.

⁷² William Fox, *A Brief History of the Wesleyan Missions on the West Coast of Africa* (London: Aylott and Jones, 1851), 608.

⁷³ Ludlam, "Account," 43-44.

duties.”⁷⁴ Although both sources were published in the early nineteenth century, it seems probable that Kru women had performed these duties in previous centuries. Marital structures were polygamous and the goal of married women was to expand their husband’s kin group through children. Clapperton commented on the polygamous nature of Kru marriage: “Polygamy is allowed to an unlimited extent and the authority of husband over wife is unlimited.”⁷⁵ Although their society was patriarchal and males held authority, women played a fundamental role in trade. In 1854, Reverend Connelly observed the role of elderly women:

The Kroo women-especially those who are old and incapable of other labor – are constantly and industriously engaged in making salt by boiling down sea water; and this is a principle article of trade with the interior tribes.⁷⁶

Besides producing salt for interior trade, women also laboured for subsistence and provided their husbands with agricultural produce to trade with Europeans anchored off the Kru Coast. Women’s labouring efforts were of paramount importance on the Kru Coast as they produced the agricultural commodities that were traded with Europeans and managed households while their husbands were abroad on contracts.

Hence, the Kru expanded their economy based on fishing and trading into the Atlantic. While Kru fishermen exchanged their fish locally, and in the interior, Kru women grew many types of crops that were used for subsistence and commerce. The major innovation related to the employment of Kru on board European ships. Sweet potatoes and plantains formed their subsistence diet while rice, ivory, gold, palm oil and cam-wood were valuable trade items with

⁷⁴ Unknown Author, “Mr. Holman’s Travels,” *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China and Australasia* 14 (1834): 64.

⁷⁵ Bruce Lockhart and Lovejoy, *Hugh Clapperton*, 87.

⁷⁶ Connelly, “Report,” 40.

European ships sailing along the Kru Coast.⁷⁷ Rice produced by the Kru proved valuable for European crews on board merchant ships.⁷⁸

Kru trade with Europeans was based on an assessment of the value of commodities and labour, which involved payment in-kind with goods. Kru traded rice, ivory, palm oil, Malaguetta pepper and provided ships with plantains, fire-wood and cassava. In exchange for these items, they received cotton cloth made from East India fabric, tobacco, hats, leather trunks, English shawls and handkerchiefs, fire-arms, and bar-iron.⁷⁹ Clapperton noted that “They [Kru] trade in Ivory, Palm oil and Rice in exchange for cotton cloth.”⁸⁰ As early as the sixteenth century, trade was conducted with Europeans by paddling out to their ships, which could be up to four leagues out to sea.⁸¹ All business with Europeans was performed by Kru males.⁸²

The Slave Trade

The Kru economy became closely connected with European slave trading, perhaps as early as the late fifteenth century.⁸³ Portuguese, Dutch, French and English traveler accounts, dictionaries and commerce booklets from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century mention the Kru communities of Sestre Crou, Petit Crou, Grand Crou, Wapo, and Sanguin as main trading centres

⁷⁷ Connelly, “Report,” 38.

⁷⁸ Ludlam, “Account,” 43.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 44-45.

⁸⁰ Bruce Lockhart and Lovejoy, *Hugh Clapperton*, 85.

⁸¹ Ludlam, “Account,” 44-45.

⁸² Ivana Elbl, “The Portuguese Trade with West Africa, 1440-1521,” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1986), 599-600.

⁸³ Ibid, 467, 471, 475-476; Toby Green, *The Rise of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade in Western Africa, 1300-1589* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 5.

on the coast between the Cestos River and Grand Cess and attest to ongoing interaction.⁸⁴ Kru were sometimes recognized as agents in the slave trade.⁸⁵ According to Ludlam, the Kru themselves occasionally kidnapped so-called “Bushmen” from the interior and offered them for sale on the coast although how old this practice was is unclear.⁸⁶ As late as 1856, Connelly noted an agreement between the Kru and the Portuguese that protected Kru from slavery although again when that agreement was reached is unknown.⁸⁷ The slaves who were traded therefore were not Kru but may have come from several hundred kilometres in the interior and before being sold on the coast.⁸⁸ Slaves were acquired in the interior most probably in exchange for gold, firearms, and later, cowries and East Indian fabrics offered by Kru traders who had frequent contact with Europeans.⁸⁹ The relationship between the Kru and the slave trade whether it was formal or tacit seems to have characterized the dynamics of the Kru Coast. In any event, few Kru were sold into the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

⁸⁴ See Towerson, “Voyage from England,” 194; Timothy Childe, *A System of Geography: Or, A New and Accurate Description of the Earth, In All of its Empires, Kingdoms, and States, Part of the Second, Containing the Description of Asia, Africa, and America* (London: Printed for Timothy Childe, 1701), 124; Manoel Pimentel, *Arte de Navegar: Em que se Ensinam as Regras Praticas, E os Modos de Cartear, e de Graduar a Balefilha por via de Numeros, e Muitos Problemas uteis á Navegação* (Lisboa: Francisco da Silva, 1746), 249-251; Jacques Savary Des Bruslons, *Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce* (Paris: Jacques Estienne, 1723), 1059; Antoine Augustin Bruzen de La Martinière, *Le Grand Dictionnaire Géographique et Critique* 5 (Paris: Gosse, 1735), 72. Also see excerpts from William Towerson’s 1555 voyage to the Grain Coast in Johnston, *Liberia* I, 64-65.

⁸⁵ Horatio Bridge, “Extracts from the Journal of an African Cruiser,” *African Repository* 21, no. 11 (1845): 340.

⁸⁶ Ludlam, “Account,” 47.

⁸⁷ Connelly, “Report,” 38.

⁸⁸ Bridge, “Extracts from the Journal,” 340.

⁸⁹ Elbl, “Portuguese Trade,” 367, 516; Ludlam, “Account,” 43.

The emergence of the “Kru mark,” a form of scarification on the face, became an important identifying feature of trade between Kru and Europeans.⁹⁰ The Kru mark consisted of a single vertical line in the middle of the forehead or a collection of three to five incisions on the forehead. Charcoal or some other substance was rubbed into each cut so that when it healed it produced a blue or black mark, although the difference in colour seems to have been insignificant.⁹¹ Commodore George R. Collier provided a clear description of the Kru mark in 1819:

The face of the Krew man is however always disfigured with a broad black line from the forehead down to the nose, and the barb of an arrow, as thus (→), on each side of the temple. This is so decidedly the Krew mark, that instances have occurred of these men being claimed and redeemed from slavery, only from bearing this characteristic mark of independence...[The Kru mark] is formed by a number of small punctures in the skin, and fixed irremoveably by being rubbed, when newly punctured, with a composition of bruised gunpowder and palm oil.⁹²

The Kru mark reinforced the kinship relationships and identification. The function of the mark was its importance in recognition. Collier recognized the Kru mark as a form of disfigurement, but he understood that for the Kru, the mark was associated with independence and implied that they were immune from enslavement. Those who had the scarification were able to engage in trading and labouring activities with Europeans without fear of enslavement as the mark served to distinguish the Kru from people of the interior, often described as “Bushmen,” who were

⁹⁰ For a discussion of tattooing and scarification in West Africa, see Katrina Keefer, “Scarification and Identity in the Liberated Africans Department Register, 1814-1815,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 47, no. 3 (2013): 537-553; Keefer, “Group Identity, Scarification, and Poro Among Liberated Africans in Sierra Leone, 1808-1819,” *Journal of West African History* 3, no.1 (2017): 1-26.

⁹¹ Agnes McAllister, *Lone Woman in Africa: Six Years on the Kroo Coast* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1896), 142-143. Also see J.W. Lugenbeel, “Native Africans in Liberia - Their Customs and Superstitions,” *African Repository* 28, no. 6 (1852): 173.

⁹² Parliamentary Papers, “Reports from Commodore Sir George Collier concerning the Settlements on the Gold and Windward Coasts of Africa,” vol. 12 (1820), 15; Also see Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 34.

readily enslavable from the Kru and European perspective. Esu Biyi suggests that the Kru mark developed at least as early the sixteenth century and was standard practice in the centuries that followed.⁹³

Adolphe Burdo also recognized the importance of the mark as late as 1880, claiming that the Kru mark was “a sign of their independence,” although by then the risk of enslavement had virtually disappeared.⁹⁴ It seems that scarification may well have been a cultural development within Kru society as a direct response to trading with Europeans, which in theory ensured that the Kru were not enslaved. It may also be that Kru scarification practices preceded European contact and were adapted to a new system of trade with Europeans, yet this remains speculative.⁹⁵ Moreover, as the geographical boundaries of the Kru Coast expanded beyond the region associated with the “Proper Kru” not all of those who identified as Kru on contract wore the mark as discussed below. The crucial role of the Kru as agents transporting enslaved Africans and commodities in the slave trading era nonetheless ensured that the Kru mark was respected by British and other European traders.

While the earliest reference to the mark dates to 1819 as discussed above, George Thompson provides the earliest known sketch of a Kru mark in 1859 (Fig. 1.3). The image is alongside illustrations of Kru canoes and rafts. Although the image is grainy in the original, Thompson’s illustration shows a line running downwards on the Kruman’s forehead onto the bridge of the nose and other incisions running laterally across the forehead. Another incision

⁹³ Esu Biyi, “The Kru and Related Peoples, West Africa, Part I,” *Journal of the African Society* 29, no. 113 (1929): 72.

⁹⁴ Burdo, *Niger and the Benueh*, 83.

⁹⁵ Connelly, “Report,” 38.

appears on the right cheek. Similarly, in 1863, Robert Clarke shows a line running downwards on the forehead towards the nose (Fig. 1.4), although because of the quality of the sketch

Figure 1.3

Kru Mark, c. 1859



Source: George Thompson, *The Palm-Land; Or West Africa, Illustrated: Being a History of Missionary Labors and Travels with Descriptions of Men and Things in Western Africa*, 2nd ed. (Cincinnati: Moore, Wiltach, Keys & Co., 1859), 189.

it is difficult to see. As these images show, the Kru mark remained a dominant feature of Kru identity well into the nineteenth century. However, increasingly other people who could speak Kru engaged in migration and apparently did not use the Kru mark.

Figure 1.4

Kru Mark, c. 1863



Source: Robert Clarke, "Sketches of the Colony of Sierra Leone and Its Inhabitants," *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, vol. 2 (1863): 354.

Clark's sketch shows that the Kru mark could be a black line down the forehead. Clarke described the mark as "a black stripe, extending from the forehead along the ridge of the nose."⁹⁶ He also referred to incisions "at the outer angle of each eye are similar short horizontal lines."⁹⁷ In addition to the Kru mark, some Kru also "tattooed [their bodies] with figures of stars."⁹⁸ The significance of the stars is unknown. However, Clapperton suggested that besides the Kru mark on the forehead, Kru were: "marked on the temples, breasts and arms – but the latter are only ornament [sic]."⁹⁹

As Lieutenant Gabriel Bray's watercolour sketch, "The Kroomen of Sierra Leone," shows Kru were working on slave ships in the vicinity of Sierra Leone in approximately 1775 (Fig. 1.5). The illustration may have been completed during his voyage to West Africa on the frigate *Pallas* in 1774-1775.¹⁰⁰ The date is significant because it provides the earliest known image of the Kru, but it is not clear if the Kru were using the Kru mark at that time. Most important, the watercolour reveals that the Kru were working in the vicinity of the Sierra Leone River prior to the establishment of the Province of Freedom in 1787 and Freetown in 1792. Based on their role in slave trading, the Kru most probably went to Bunce Island transporting enslaved Africans to British ships bound for the Americas.

Kru were not the only Africans on European ships sailing the West African coast in the eighteenth century. "Grumettas" were frequently mentioned on ships and working at slave

⁹⁶ Robert Clarke, "Sketches of the Colony of Sierra Leone and Its Inhabitants," *Transactions of the Ethnological Society of London*, vol. 2 (1863): 355.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 355.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 355.

⁹⁹ Bruce Lockhart and Lovejoy, *Hugh Clapperton*, 86.

¹⁰⁰ Gabriel Bray, "Three Kroomen of Sierra Leone," c. 1775, Bray album, PAJ2038. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, United Kingdom.

Figure 1.5

The Kroomen of Sierra Leone, c. 1775



Source: Gabriel Bray, “Three Kroomen of Sierra Leone,” c. 1775. Bray album, PAJ2038. National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, United Kingdom, accessed on April 21, 2017, <http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/201002.html>.

factories. The word “grumetta” derives from the Portuguese word *grumete*, which was rooted in the creolized version of Portuguese spoken in the region of Bissau.¹⁰¹ *Grumete* was the term applied to an African apprentice seaman serving on Portuguese ships who sometimes appear to have been free and other times enslaved.¹⁰² In his examination of slave trader Philip Beaver, Billy Smith has noted that “most grumettas were Africans, although some were mixed-race Creoles.”¹⁰³ Smith refers to them as “hired workers” who were employed in groups of several hundred workers under slave traders on the island of Bolama. He later added that “most

¹⁰¹ Billy G. Smith, *Ship of Death: A Voyage that Changed the Atlantic World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), xiv, 267, 132ff.

¹⁰² Ray Costello, *Black Salt: Seafarers of African Descent on British Ships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 15.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 132.

grumettas” were “working people, hired temporarily, not unlike many of the colonists who had migrated to Bolama.”¹⁰⁴ He used the term “most” because in other instances, references indicate that *grumettas* were often slaves and hence stand in stark contrast to the Kru who were rarely enslaved.

James Searing describes *grumettas* as slaves who were employed on Bunce Island. The slave trading firm owned by Alexander and John Anderson in the 1780s employed them for the purpose of “navigating out craft along the Coast, and in supplying our out-factories with goods, and bringing back the returns to Bance Island.”¹⁰⁵ Bruce Mouser has shown that *grumettas* worked at slave factories on Iles de Los and that when they went to Sierra Leone they received “protection.”¹⁰⁶ In 1815, Robert Thorpe wrote on the “redemption of the grumettas” in Sierra Leone, where they were liberated from slavery as “indented servant[s].”¹⁰⁷ The words “protection” and “redemption” suggest that “grumettas” were enslaved. Similarly, in 1824, James Stephen identified them as “life-servants” under the heading “Sources of Private Slavery.”¹⁰⁸ Stephen suggested that *grumettas* were enslaved to specific individuals. Mouser has

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 267.

¹⁰⁵ James Searing, *West African Slavery and Atlantic Commerce: The Senegal River Valley, 1700-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 95. Also see House of Commons Sessional Papers, vol. 68, 262.

¹⁰⁶ Bruce Mouser, “Shifting the Littoral Frontiers of EurAfrican and African Trade in the Northern Rivers of Sierra Leone, 1794: Opportunities and Challenges from Changing Conditions,” (paper presented at Sierra Leone Studies and Liberian Studies Associations Joint Meeting Charleston, South Carolina April 1994), 12.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Thorpe, *A Letter to William Wilberforce, ESq M.P., Vice President of the African Institution* (London, F.C. and J. Rivington, 1815), 7.

¹⁰⁸ James Stephen, *The Slavery of the British West India Colonies Delineated, As it Exists in Both Law and Practice and Compared with the Slavery of Other Countries* (London: Joseph Butterworth and Son, 1824), 362.

shown that it was common for British slave traders to have between 400 and 500 *grumettas* in their service on the Iles de Los.¹⁰⁹

In contrast, in 1794, Carl Wadstrom referred to them as “free native labourers” in Sierra Leone who were employed on British ships. He described *grumettas* as being paid for their labour while employed on vessels sailing on the coast.¹¹⁰ He identified them as Bullom when in fact they were more likely Bijago.¹¹¹ While *grummetas* have been identified as servants, slaves and free labourers in various regions on the upper Guinea coast, they differed from the Kru who were paid for their labour. Moreover, working on British ships positioned the Kru as free labourers as compared with the various forms of labour experienced by *grumettas* on Portuguese ships. The distinction between *grumettas* and Kru was based on where they came from on the African coast.

Once working on European ships, Kru also served as interpreters known as “talk-men.” They played a crucial role in the bartering and trading process between Europeans and Africans along the coast.¹¹² Their role as interpreters was to win the confidence of village traders and attract them on board coasting vessels for trading. Carnes recognized the Kru as valuable traders

¹⁰⁹ Bruce Mouser, “Iles de Los as Bulking Center in the Slave Trade, 1750-1800,” *Outre-Mers Revue d’histoire* 313 (1996), 86.

¹¹⁰ Joseph Corry, *Observations Upon the Windward Coast of Africa* (London: G. and W. Nichol, 1807), 9. For a study of the *grumettas* see Searing, *West African Slavery*, 95 and references in note 8; Claude George, *The Rise of British West Africa* (London: Houlston and Sons, 1903); Smith, *Ship of Death*, 132; Bruce Mouser, “Iles de Los”; Bruce Mouser, “Shifting the Littoral Frontiers,” 12; David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 3.

¹¹¹ Carl Bernhard Wadstrom, *An Essay on Colonization, Particularly Applied to the Western Coast of Africa, with some Free Thoughts on Cultivation and Commerce* (London: Wadstrom, 1794), 58, 304.

¹¹² Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 13-22.

and claimed “without these people the traffic must be carried on by signs.”¹¹³ Since the Kru language was spoken from Cape Mesurado to beyond Cape Palmas the Kru were able to communicate with people in many villages.¹¹⁴ They brought their own small craft alongside European vessels carrying messages between vessels, trading posts and villages as well as provided their own transportation home following their service.¹¹⁵ “Talk men” served other functions such as moving cargoes between shoreside and ship and could terminate their services at their leisure before returning home.¹¹⁶ Sailing between towns on the Kru Coast, Kru were instrumental in the spread of a creolised version of English as the lingua franca of trade along the West African coast.¹¹⁷

The process of trading on the Kru Coast depended on a headman who recruited and managed the team of workers that was hired. Headmen most probably evolved from the position of lead paddler on surfboats used in fishing and then in supplying European ships to organizing groups for trade and service on European ships.¹¹⁸ Working in a group served the purpose of

¹¹³ J.A Carnes, *Journal of a Voyage from Boston to the West Coast of Africa; with a full Description of the Manner of Trading with the Natives on the Coast* (Boston: J.P. Jewett and Co., 1852), 86.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 277-280. Also see George Howland, “Captain George Howland’s Voyage to West Africa, 1822-1823,” in *New England Merchants in Africa: A History through Documents, 1802-1865*, eds. Norman Bennett and George E. Brooks (Boston: Boston University Press, 1965), 110.

¹¹⁵ Carnes, *Journal of a Voyage*, 141.

¹¹⁶ Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 19.

¹¹⁷ For an informative discussion of the spread of Pidgin English as a lingua franca in West Africa, see David Dalby, *Black through White: Patterns of Communication* (Bloomington: Indiana University of African Studies Program, 1970), 1-40.

¹¹⁸ For a discussion on the evolution of lead paddlers and canoemen in the creation of labour class hierarchies see James Hornell, “Kru Canoes of Sierra Leone,” *The Mariner’s Mirror* 15 Issue 3 (1929): 233-237; James Hornell, “String Figures from Sierra Leone, Liberia and Zanzibar,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 60 (1930): 81-114; Kevin Dawson, *Undercurrents of Power: Aquatic Culture in the African Diaspora* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 110; Peter W. Gutkind, “The Canoemen of the Gold Coast (Ghana),” *Cahiers d’ Études Africaines* 115-116 (1989): 339-376; Peter W. Gutkind, “Trade and Labor in Early Precolonial African History: The Canoemen of

completing tasks with greater efficiency and also provided protection for Kru while trading with Europeans ships. The vessel would signal that it wanted to trade by raising a flag.¹¹⁹ In response, a body of surfboats approached the European ship anchored at sea before the headman would negotiate the terms of trade.¹²⁰ Captain J. Carnes described trade on the Kru Coast as follows, although he used the term “canoe” to refer to the surfboats.

Having arrived opposite the town, we anchored within three quarters of a mile of the shore, glad of having some prospect of a trade with the natives. Our anchor had hardly reached the bottom before the surface of the water betwixt us and the shore was dotted with canoes in every direction. In a few moments we were nearly surrounded with them, and the native Africans came on board in great numbers fearlessly and as confidently as children rushing into their mother's arms.¹²¹

As Carnes verifies, the Kru had clearly established a close relationship with the British. The diverse roles performed by Kru as traders and interpreters for European merchants, shows how the Kru were important in commerce. Carnes reveals that trading involved a hierarchal order in which only a select few Kru boarded European vessels. Although he does not use the term, it was most probably the headmen who would have boarded the ships, negotiated exchanges and arranged for the possibility of employment on the ships as they sailed down the Kru Coast. Headmen differentiated themselves by virtue of their ability to speak some English, which meant that they had served on ships in the past and garnered experience working for the British. The

Southern Ghana,” in *The Workers of African Trade*, eds. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch and Paul E. Lovejoy (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985), 38.

¹¹⁹ William Durrant, “The Kru Coast, Cape Palmas and the Niger,” in *Vacation Tourists and Notes of Travel in 1861*, ed. Francis Galton (London: MacMillan and Company, 1862), 293-294; Paul Barret, *L’Afrique Occidentale: La Nature et l’homme Noir*, vol.1 (Paris: Chalamel, 1888), 78.

¹²⁰ A.C.G. Hastings, *The Voyage of the ‘Dayspring’* (London: John Lane - The Bodley Head, 1926), 52-54; Frost, *Work and Community*, 39.

¹²¹ Carnes, *Journal of a Voyage*, 85-86. Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 19. Also see Barret, *L’Afrique Occidentale*, 69.

episode observed by Carnes suggests a continuation of the trading practices described by de Sintra and Pereira in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The most significant revelation Carnes offers is the practice of Kru headmen presenting what he called a “book” in order to secure employment for his gang of labourers. The “book” was essentially a letter of recommendation that was placed in wooden or tin containers and leather pouches. According to Carnes, the “Kroomen,” whom he also identified as interpreters,

as soon as they step upon the deck, presented to our captain their “books,” (as they call them) or letters of recommendation which they had received from masters of vessels, in which was specified their qualifications for trading, their good conduct, etc. These men are necessary and absolutely indispensable, on some parts of the coast, as they are generally acquainted with the English language so as to be understood, and therefore valuable as “traders,” as through them communications can be easily made and interpreted to the other natives, whereas without these useful people the traffic must be carried on by signs, a much more difficult and tedious business for all concerned. After perusing their “books,” or credentials of character, our captain engaged two or three of these kroomen to assist us in our traffic with their sable brethren along these shores. As soon as everything on board was arranged for the transaction of business, a brisk trade was immediately opened....¹²²

In 1811, Captain Samuel Swan described the book as “a recommendation – any paper with writing on it is called by them a Book.”¹²³ The fact that Kru headmen carried a “book” or letter of recommendation from a previous captain shows that they had experience working with Europeans on their vessels and that they required a written certificate and some ability to speak English for future employment. In 1842, while referring to a headman, Captain Midgley noted: “Each man, on going on board a ship takes a ‘book,’ or character, and produces it to the captain.”¹²⁴ Yet, for the most part they did not learn to read and write in English. The letters were needed as proof of previous employment.

¹²² Carnes, *Journal of a Voyage*, 85-86.

¹²³ Swan, “Memoranda,” 318-320.

¹²⁴ Thomas Midgley, “Report on the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Together with Minutes of Evidence Appendix and Index, Part 2,” in Irish University Press Series of

Despite the reliance on written documentation, there appears to have been a reluctance for Kru to acquire fluency in English. In 1812, Ludlam claimed: “It is universally admitted, that if a Krooman were to learn to read and write, they would be put to death immediately.”¹²⁵ While Ludlam’s claim may be an exaggeration, the Kru seem to have had an interest in maintaining a cultural distance from Europeans.

Kru expanded their service on slave ships in the nineteenth century. In the 1830s, the Cuban slave trade was at its height. Kru were hired on slave ships that traded to the Rio Pongo, Rio Nunez and the Gallinas near Cape Mount.¹²⁶ The multitude of waterways and rugged terrain in these locations were ideal conditions for loading slave ships, which sought to avoid detection by British Royal Navy ships tasked with their interception. Kru served as pilots and interpreters sailing between slave factories along the coast.¹²⁷

In 1836, the *African Repository* reported that there were approximately 100 slave vessels in operation on the Kru Coast and in the vicinity of Rio Pongo and the Gallinas.¹²⁸ Ten of the captured vessels were Cuban slave ships with many more operating in the region.¹²⁹ Infamous slave trader, Theophilus Canot, suggested that Kru were hired for transporting slaves on Cuban

British Parliamentary Papers (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 592. Also see Büttikofer, *Travel Sketches*, 574.

¹²⁵ Sixth Report, 99.

¹²⁶ “The Slave Trade,” *African Repository* 12, no. 5 (1836): 158-160; “Slave Trade,” *African Repository* 13, no.7 (1837): 224-225.

¹²⁷ Holman, *Travels in Madeira*, 178-179; Frost, *Work and Community*, 32; FO 84/197, no. 72-73, “Havana: Commissioners Schenley and Madden. Dispatches,” July-December 1836, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom; Parliamentary Papers; House of Commons and Command, “Havana” vol. 50, (1896), 88.

¹²⁸ “The Slave Trade,” *African Repository* 12, no. 5 (1836): 158-160; “Auxiliary Societies,” *African Repository* 12, no. 8 (1836): 247.

¹²⁹ “Slave Trade,” *African Repository* 13, no.7 (1837): 224-225.

ships (he used the term Spanish) in the Rio Pongo.¹³⁰ He described the Kru as “amphibious” as a salute to their ability to transport cargoes of human beings from shore to ship in adverse surf conditions.¹³¹ They were frequently tasked with maintaining order amongst enslaved Africans. George Francis Dow even claimed that Kru were “flogging” the enslaved before they boarded ships, although admittedly his observations are based on much later testimony.¹³² Once on board, Kru were often responsible for carrying out physical discipline towards the enslaved as directed by Cuban captains.¹³³ Whether engaged in so-called “legitimate commerce” or the slave trade, the Kru continued to be admired for their prowess as seamen and provided a valuable service as a disciplined work force.

Cuban ships took in goods in New York before sailing for Havana and having their ships refitted for the purpose of transporting enslaved Africans. They sailed to the Kru Coast where they traded cloth and other goods for rice to feed the slaves on their journey across the Atlantic. Once arriving at slave factories, the Kru’s role was to man the surfboats transporting enslaved Africans and commodities from ship to shore and vice versa.¹³⁴ In 1837, Kru were reported by an informant to have simultaneously worked for Cuban slave traders and the Royal Navy in its suppression activities. For example, a Kru informant in 1837, alerted the British of the departure of a Cuban slave ship, which enabled Royal Navy ships to intercept it.¹³⁵ The Kru seemed to

¹³⁰ For information on Canot’s slave trading operations in the region see Bruce Mouser, “Théophilus Conneau: The Saga of a Tale,” *History in Africa* 6 (1979): 97-107.

¹³¹ Théophilus Canot, *Revelations of a Slave Trader; or Twenty Years’ Adventures of Captain Canot* (London: Richard Bentley, 1854), 187-189.

¹³² George Francis Dow, *Slave Ships and Slaving* (1927; repr., Dover: Dover Publications, 2013), 53.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹³⁴ “The Slave Trade,” *African Repository* 13, no. 7 (1837): 229.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 229.

have no moral qualms regarding being employed in the slave trade while simultaneously in its suppression on Royal Navy ships.

In the 1830s, some Kru were observed working in Havana because of their service on Cuban slave ships, including the *Preciosa*. The British navy intercepted the *Preciosa* and its crew were captured. After the Liberated Africans aboard were disembarked in Belize, Kru sailed on the HMS *Pincher* to Havana. They were asked by British authorities to testify against slave ship Captain Jousiffe in the Admiralty Court in Havana and the Court of Mixed Commission in Freetown, Sierra Leone.¹³⁶ The Kru were not punished by the British for their service on slave ships but seem to have been routinely asked to testify against slave ship captains as was the case with Captain Jousiffe. Perhaps the Kru were not held responsible for the activities of the ship captain. The British clearly adopted a policy that did not disrupt the contractual labour they had developed with the Kru. Even so, the Kru apparently did not provide evidence against Jousiffe. As a result, the Kru were held in Freetown awaiting the judge for the trial, but their fate remains unknown.¹³⁷

In another case, the merchant schooner *Planeta* was intercepted on route to Havana in 1832. After departing Havana with papers that showed the ship was supposedly on route to St. Thomas, the *Planeta* diverted to Cameroons River where 241 slaves were loaded on the ship. The *Planeta* was seized by the British schooner *Speedwell*. Krumen were present on the ship but

¹³⁶ FO 84/197, no. 72-73, "Havana: Commissioners Schenley and Madden. Dispatches," July-December 1836, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom; Parliamentary Papers; House of Commons and Command, "Havana" vol. 50 (1896), 88.

¹³⁷ Parliamentary Papers, Correspondence with the British Commissioners, "Her Majesty's Commissioners to Viscount, 23 September 1837," vol. 50, no. 9 (1838), 5-6.

their fate is not mentioned as compared with the Cuban crew of the *Planeta* which was imprisoned.¹³⁸

The relationship between the Kru and Cuban slave traders was important enough for the Kru *krogba* in Grand Bassa to send five Kru to Havana in 1835.¹³⁹ Their goal was to learn “Spanish fashion,” meaning Spanish trading practices, mannerisms and language. The five Kru reportedly served as domestic servants in Don Joaquim Gomez’s household.¹⁴⁰ This is the only known source that mentions Kru working on shore in Havana. It seems that any plans for a labour scheme never advanced beyond the Kru serving on ships between the Kru Coast and Havana.

Documentation exists that shows Kru served on slave ships between 1832 and 1860, as shown in Table 1.1. The evidence is probably incomplete because only British officials who decided to allot special mention to the Kru in reports and muster lists have survived. Records are limited to those British. It is likely that Kru worked on other slave ships as well.

Table 1.1

Kru Service on Slave Ships

Year	Name of Ship	Number of Kru Serving
1832	<i>Planeta</i>	Unknown
1834	<i>Preciosa</i>	5
1841	<i>L’Antonio</i>	Unknown

¹³⁸ FO 84/128, no. 94-96, “Havana: Commissioners Macleay and Mackenzie,” The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom. For a database containing information on slave ships that were captured and liberated Africans see www.liberatedafricans.org.

¹³⁹ Naval Database, Cygnet, accessed March 11, 2017, <http://www.pbenyon.plus.com/18-1900/C/01243.html>.

¹⁴⁰ “M.L. Melville and James Hook to the Earl of Aberdeen, Sierra Leone, August 14, 1844,” no. 69, in General Report of the Emigration Commissioners vol. 2, *Correspondence with the British Commissioners at Sierra Leone, Havana, Rio De Janeiro, Surinam, Cape of Good Hope, Jamaica, Loanda, and Boa Vista Relating to the Slave Trade* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1845), 84.

1844	<i>Constancia</i> ¹⁴¹	5
1845	<i>Lady Sale</i>	4
1853	<i>Cameons</i>	Several
1860	<i>Thomas Watson</i>	20

Source: FO 84/197, no. 72-3, “Havana: Commissioners Schenley and Madden. Dispatches,” July-December 1836; House of Commons and Command, “Havana,” vol. 50 (1896), 88; Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, “Minutes of Evidence taken Before the Duke de Broglie,” Enclosure 1 in no. 149, vol. 6 (1847), 249; Dow, *Slave Ships and Slaving*, chapter 16; Abel Stevens and James Floy, eds., *The National Magazine* 3 (1853): 451; Parliamentary Papers, Correspondence with the British Commissioners, “Her Majesty’s Commissioners to Viscount, 23 September 1837,” no. 9, vol. 50 (1838), 5-6.

By the early nineteenth century, those who identified as Kru not only included Kru from the original five villages but also included so-called “Fishmen” who lived in the vicinity of the original five settlements.¹⁴² In 1812, Ludlam suggested “Fishmen” lived near Settra Kru and on beaches between the Sinoe River and Grand Cess River.¹⁴³ While “Fishmen” seem to have originally focused on subsistence and local trade on the coast, they increasingly found employment as crew on European ships.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ *Constancia* was believed to be a slave ship disguised as a commercial ship that was intercepted off the Sherbro River in 1844. There were five Kroomen among her crew. Several Spanish crewmen had been previously penalized for slave trading. See “M.L. Melville and James Hook to the Earl of Aberdeen, Sierra Leone, August 14, 1844,” no. 69, in General Report of the Emigration Commissioners vol. 2, *Correspondence with the British Commissioners at Sierra Leone, Havana, Rio De Janeiro, Surinam, Cape of Good Hope, Jamaica, Loanda, and Boa Vista Relating to the Slave Trade* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1845), 84.

¹⁴² “Fishmen” was the title given to people living adjacent to Kru communities in European captain and traveler accounts in the nineteenth century. “Fishermen” was the grammatically correct term, however, “Fishmen” or “Fishes” are the only terms that were used to describe their communities in primary documents.

¹⁴³ Ludlam, “Account,” 44.

¹⁴⁴ For more discussion on the difference between Kru from the original villages and “Fishmen” see Wilson, *Western Africa*, 103-104; Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 21; Ibrahim K. Sundiata, “The Rise and Decline of Kru Power: Fernando Po in the Nineteenth Century,” *Liberian Studies* 6, no. 1 (1975): 27.

Canot's description of the Kru and Fishmen in the 1830s did not reveal much difference between them. Rather, he contrasted Kru and "Fishmen" with so-called "Bushmen" in the interior:

Kroomen and Fishmen are different people from the Bushmen. The two former classes inhabit the seashore exclusively, and living apart from other African tribes, are governed by their elders under a somewhat democratic system. The Bushmen do not suffer the Kroos and Fishes to trade with the interior; but, in recompense for the monopoly of traffic with the strongholds of Africa's heart, these expert boatmen maintain despotic sway along the beach in trade with the shipping. As European and Yankee boats cannot live in the surf I have described, the Kroo and Fishmen have an advantage over their brothers of the Bush, as well as over the whites, which they are not backward in using to their profit.¹⁴⁵

"Bushmen" in the interior were cut-off from trading directly with Europeans on the coast. Conversely, Kru and "Fishmen" were barred from the interior. "Bushmen" remained under the authority of the Kru on the coast when it came to access European trade. Kru also served as intermediaries in the trans-Atlantic slave trades by trading enslaved "Bushmen" with Europeans. Yet, Canot was careful to differentiate the Kru and "Fishmen" or "Fishes" by name. The large number of European references to Kru as compared with "Fishmen" in the nineteenth century suggests that those who identified as Kru was expanding.¹⁴⁶ Apparently, some "Fishmen" began to work on European vessels, although the identification of the Kru from the original five settlements continued to be significant.

In 1837, Laird and Oldfield apparently described the extension of Kru identification to include people who were not from the original five settlements.

The inhabitants of that district [Kroo country] consist of two distinct classes, namely, Kroomen and Fishmen.... The Fishmen exact a tribute from the Kroomen when passing their shores; and if their demands be not complied with, they will upset their canoes, and

¹⁴⁵ Canot, *Revelations*, 272.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 272.

from their superior agility in the water generally manage to secure their greater portion of the cargoes.¹⁴⁷

Laird and seem to have observed a struggle over who could benefit from Kru identification.

Their reference to “Fishmen” suggests that who was considered to be Kru was changing.

Employment on slave ships continued to provide some Kru with income until the mid-nineteenth century. In 1845, Horatio Bridge reported that the Kru remained “active agents” in slave factories and on slave ships.¹⁴⁸ As late as the 1840s and 1850s, Kru were recorded as serving in several slave barracoons along the west coast of Africa.¹⁴⁹ In 1848, Bouët-Willaumez described the Kru’s role in transporting the enslaved from factory to ship:

Les esclaves, une fois vendus aux traitants négriers, sont enfermés par ces derniers dans de vastes cases de paille et de bambou nommées <<barracoons>>, ou les malheureux sont enchaînés et surveillés avec soin; s ices barracoons sont des succursales de traite établies dans l’intérieur, ils n’y séjournent pas longtemps; des que leur nombre est suffisant pour former une caravane, ils sont dirigés vers le foyer de traite principal, établi non loin du bord de la mer. Ils partent ainsi sous la garde et la conduit de quelques <<barraconniers>> ou nègres geoliers; ces barraconniers sont le plus souvent des Kroumanes our noirs de la côte de Krou.¹⁵⁰

Slave factories became the labouring sites where the Kru worked and lived. However, there is no evidence that they established a formal quarter or Krutown in association with slave factories. The barracoons trade depended upon quick boarding times for the enslaved at secret locations especially after the British increased their suppression of the slave trade after the 1840s. The Kru expanded their slave trading network beyond the Kru Coast to include Rio Pongo, Rio Nunez,

¹⁴⁷ Laird and Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition*, 1: 33-34; Also see “Negro Civilization,” *The Journal of Health and Disease* 1 (1846): 258.

¹⁴⁸ See Horatio Bridge, *Journal of an African Cruiser* ed. Nathaniel Hawthorne (London: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 53; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 81, 90; Frost, *Work and Community*, 32.

¹⁴⁹ Dow, *Slave Ships and Slaving*, 53.

¹⁵⁰ Bouët-Willaumez, *Commerce et Traite*, 194. Also see Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 32.

the Gallinas and across the Atlantic to Cuba, but they never established diaspora communities in these locations.

This chapter has established the nature of Kru identity and the practice of trade on the Kru Coast between the Cestos River and Grand Cess. Their activities in the five original towns demonstrate that the Kru were engaged in trade with Europeans since at least the sixteenth century, although when they started working on European ships is less clear. The role of headmen evolved from the organization of the traditional surfboat to facilitate work on European ships. Trade on the Kru Coast with Europeans led to new roles as tradesmen and interpreters. The Kru mark may have surfaced as a response to trade with Europeans as the Kru sought to distinguish themselves from other people who were enslavable, but in any event served that purpose. The advantages of hiring the Kru were that they provided cheap labour. They were self-sufficient and capable of procuring their own food including fish, rice and palm oil. Their knowledge of coastal waters meant that they were able to go to villages further along the coast in their surfboats to establish trade ahead of European vessels. A local labour force was essential with respect to knowledge of trading practices. The Kru thereby engaged in slave trading and worked on slave ships until the second half of the nineteenth century. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Kru were able to expand their activities once the British established a permanent settlement at Freetown in 1792, which initiated the formation of a diaspora away from the Kru Coast.

Chapter 2

Founding of Freetown and the Suppression of the Slave Trade

The establishment of Freetown in 1792 on the peninsula at the mouth of the Sierra Leone River offered new opportunities for Kru labour.¹ Kru were already working at Bunce Island, the main slave trading station in the Sierra Leone River, and they were employed on slave ships that were sailing up and down the coast. Now the Kru were encouraged to extend their employment with the British on the Kru Coast to include contracts in Freetown. The opportunity to earn wages resulted in the creation of a labour cycle based on migration and homecomings that would structure Kru contracts with the British thereafter.

This chapter traces the presence of the Kru in Freetown during the period when the Sierra Leone Company established Freetown and then after the establishment of the British Colony in 1808 and the transformation of Freetown from a settlement for repatriated Africans to the base of British abolition efforts in West Africa. The nature of Kru work activities in Freetown was multifaceted. They served as crew members and shoreside labourers including their roles as porters, boat-pullers, lightermen, longshoreman and stevedores, but they also worked as domestic servants and were woodcutters and transporters in the timber trade. Beyond these activities, they increasingly found service in the Royal Navy after British abolition of the slave trade in 1807. Their presence was significant and led to the foundation of Krutown as a part of Freetown in 1816. Krutown effectively became the first community in what can be described as a diaspora. The chapter investigates the role of the Kru mark, headmen, the Krutown Headman

¹ Ludlam, "Account," 43-55; 48.

and Kru women in Krutown. Muster lists are examined, which allow an assessment of the number of Kru serving on Royal Navy ships and enable a discussion of their pay rates.

The chapter closes with an analysis of the relationship between the diaspora community in Freetown and the Kru Coast through homecomings. Despite the establishment of a permanent community in Freetown, Kru maintained a close relationship with the Kru Coast, especially the five towns. Kru tended to work for specific periods of time under headmen, depending upon their contracts, and return to their communities with the intention of marrying and establishing kinship networks. The organization of work continued to rely on headmen who usually possessed written documents attesting to their experience. The headmen apparently recruited workers based on the age-grade system of the Kru Coast and were responsible for supervising the work teams and distributing wages. The establishment of Krutown led to the creation of new positions including the British appointed Headman of Krutown. By the 1820s, at least, Freetown became the main hub of Kru employment as some Kru remained in Freetown permanently while others circulated between Krutown and the Kru Coast.

Kru and the Foundation of Freetown

Available evidence indicates that the Kru were present on the Sierra Leone Peninsula even before Freetown was founded in 1793.² On 1 October 1793, Zachary Macaulay recorded the following:

² Christopher Fyfe has suggested that 1793 marks the arrival of Kru labourers in Freetown. See Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 78. This date has been widely accepted by scholars as the beginning of Kru employment in Freetown despite the fact there is no documented evidence. The earliest known source on the Kru in Freetown is by Thomas Winterbottom, who arrived in Freetown in July 1792 and remained until 1796. Winterbottom mentions Kru migrant labourers in his 1803 publication. There is good reason to assume that the Kru had worked in Freetown from his arrival in 1792.

The *James and William* arrived from the Windward Coast with 3554lbs. of ivory. Two tons of pepper and three tons of rice.... Three traders of some consequence have come up in the cutter and about fifteen grumettas [sic] who are to remain here or to be employed in different craft. These men (crewmen) have none of the ordinary indolence of Africans about them, they are active, athletic and tractable.³

Macaulay apparently confuses those he identified as “fifteen grumettas” and the Kru who he immediately identifies as “crewmen.” Based on the location of their embarkation on what was known as the “Windward Coast” (of which the Kru Coast belonged), the items of trade including ivory, pepper and rice, the fact they were labourers hired out to be “employed” locally in Freetown or on other craft based at Freetown, and the way in which they were distinguished from other Africans as being “active,” “athletic” and “tractable,” suggest that the Kru were present in Freetown from October 1793 and probably earlier.⁴

Macaulay suggests that the terms “grumettas” and “crewmen” from the “Windward Coast” were used interchangeably, although *grumettas* seem to have come from further north (as discussed in Chapter One), while “crewmen” appear to refer to the Kru. Macaulay’s use of these terms requires a rereading of John Clarkson’s diary, the first Governor of the Colony of Sierra Leone. On 6 November, 1792, Clarkson mentions the presence of “Grummettas” and “labourers” whose duties included providing transport, fishing and clearing land. He differentiated between these groups.⁵ His choice of terms can be read in two ways. Although the Kru are not named directly, the “Grummettas” and “labourers” were both performing similar tasks that the Kru were doing less than one year later. Clarkson observed fishing boats that

³ Schwarz, “Zachary Macaulay,” 67.

⁴ Winterbottom, *Account*, 8-9; William Hutton, *A Voyage to Africa, Including a Narrative of an Embassy to One of the Interior Kingdoms, in the Year 1820* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821), 34-35.

⁵ John Clarkson, “Governor Clarkson’s Diary, November 6 1792,” in *Sierra Leone After A Hundred Years*, ed. Ernest Graham Ingham (London: Seeley, 1894), 146; Schwarz, “Zachary Macaulay,” 67.

served as transport boats for boarding larger vessels, which may refer to Kru seamen. Secondly, Clarkson seems to have been differentiating labouring groups to distinguish the Kru from the “grummettas.”⁶

Thomas Winterbottom referred to the Kru in Freetown during his stay between 1792 and 1796. He described an employment cycle whereby Kru were hired on ships for periods of several months in the capacity of sailors and stevedores who loaded and unloaded cargo before returning to their homeland.⁷ Winterbottom’s narrative demonstrates that by the early 1790s, the Kru already had a reputation as sailors and traders with an industrious nature. When Winterbottom’s description and Macaulay’s journal are read in association with John Clarkson’s description of labour in 1792, it becomes even more likely that the Macaulay’s reference to “grummettas” is in fact to Kru.

Upon his arrival in Sierra Leone in 1797, Governor Thomas Ludlam claimed that Kru were engaged in work associated with “boats and shipping.”⁸ Similarly, in 1802, William Cobbett recognized their role as sailors tasked with manning small craft.⁹ Kru performed a range of duties in Freetown on ships and shoreside with the British. Much like they did on the Kru Coast, Kru were at the heart of operations in the harbour moving commercial goods from ships to warehouses on shore and vice versa.

Beyond shipping, they were employed by the government in public works and served as porters. In 1811, Thomas Coke observed that Kru were employed by settlers as “hewers of wood

⁶ Clarkson, “Governor Clarkson’s Diary,” 140.

⁷ Winterbottom, *Account*, 8-9.

⁸ Ludlam, “Account,” 48.

⁹ Cobbett, “Evidence in Support,” 883.

and drawers of water,” that is as common labourers¹⁰ They were paid per task by settlers in addition to their service with the British. This income supplemented the formal contracts offered by the British. John Peterson has suggested that the presence of the Kru work force in Sierra Leone enabled the Nova Scotians and other early settlers to form a merchant class above the Kru working class.¹¹ Kru were eager to earn wages in Sierra Leone in order to send income back home to their families in Kru settlements.

Kru formed a very small labour force in Freetown before the early nineteenth century (Table 2.1). They were estimated at only 15 in 1793, which was insignificant when compared to the number of Nova Scotian settlers, which was 1190.¹² Within a decade their numbers had only increased to several dozen. William Cobbett’s report suggested there were 60 Kru working in Freetown in 1802, although the Colonial Office’s “List of Inhabitants of Freetown, 1802” claimed there were 90 Kru. Magbaily Fyle suggests the population of Freetown was estimated to be 2,000 in 1808 and 1,900 according to the 1811 census in Freetown.¹³ As seen in Table 2.1, the figures show that the Kru population in Freetown experienced more significant growth after 1811.¹⁴

Following the establishment of Krutown in 1816, the Kru population fluctuated between a few hundred to a few thousand over the course of the nineteenth century. In 1816, a report

¹⁰ Thomas Coke, *An Interesting Narrative of a Mission, Sent to Sierra Leone, in Africa: By Methodists, in 1811: to Which is Prefixed, An Account of the Rise, Progress, Disasters, and Present State of that Colony: The Whole Interspersed with a Variety of Remarkable Particulars* (London: Paris & Son, 1812), 44.

¹¹ John Peterson, *Province of Freedom: A History of Sierra Leone 1787-1870* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 85.

¹² Nova Scotians refers to the Black Loyalists who served alongside the British in the American Revolutionary War. They resided in Nova Scotia before being transported to the Sierra Leone peninsula in 1793 where they established Freetown.

¹³ Magbaily Fyle, *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2006), xviii.

¹⁴ Figures between 1812 and 1815 are currently unknown.

indicated that there were 700 Kru living in “Krooman’s Town” alone.¹⁵ The report did not include the number of Kru working and residing elsewhere in the Colony of Sierra Leone,

Table 2.1

Population of Freetown

Year	Total Population	Kru Population
1793	1,125-1,200	15
1800	1,200-1,500	40-50
1801	1,200-1,500	60
1802	1,615	60-90
1809	2,000	800
1811	2,518	601
1816	2,518	700
1817	2,833	650
1818	4,430	505
1819	4,450	749
1820	4,785	615
1822	5,643	947
1826	7,483	1,100
1831	15,210	504
1846	15,000	730
1848	18,190	743
1850	16,679	560
1859	18,035	560
1891	30, 033	1,234
1901	34, 463	1,903

Source: William Cobbett, “Evidence in Support,” 883; CO 270/8, 22 January - 6 September 1802, “List of Inhabitants of Freetown, 1802,”; Barbara Harrell-Bond, *Community Leadership and the Transformation of Freetown, (1801-1976)* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 1978), 31, 71; Missionary Register for MDCCC XIX Containing the Principal Transactions of the Various Institutions Propagating the Gospel: With Proceedings, at Large, of the Church Missionary Society (London: L.B. Seeley, 1819), 399; Walter Scott, *The Edinburgh Annual Register, For 1825*, 18 (Edinburgh: John Ballantyne and Company, 1826), 47; Kenneth Macaulay, *The Colony of Sierra Leone Vindicated from the Misrepresentations of Mr. Macqueen of Glasgow* (London: Cass, 1826), 17; Farah J. Griffith and Cheryl J. Fish, *Stranger in the Village: Two Centuries of Travel Writing* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 102; Accounts and Paper, Session 1 February-1 August 1849, vol. 34 (1849), 304-305; Michael Banton, *West African City: A Study of Tribal Life in Freetown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 225; David Brewster, *The Edinburgh Encyclopedia* 17 (1832): 274-275; “Census for 1820,” *Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser* (Saturday July 8, 1820), n.p.; Walter Chapin and David Watson, *The*

¹⁵ Zachary Macaulay, ed., *The Christian Observer: Conducted by Members of the Established Church, Given by Disciples Divinity House* 15, no.11 (1816): 756.

Missionary Gazetteer (Woodstock: David Watson, 1825), 132; *The Missionary Register for 1817* (London: L.B. Seeley, 1817), 355; James Cleland, *Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the City of Glasgow and County of Lanark. For the Government Census with Population Statistical Tables relative to England and Scotland*, 2nd edition. (Glasgow: John Smith & Son, 1832), 220; Robert Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire*, vol. 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 80; Ludlam, "Account," 45; Macaulay, *The Christian Observer*, 756; Wilks, *The Christian Observer*, 859; *A Gazetteer of the World, or Dictionary of Geographical Knowledge, Compiled for the Most Recent Authorities, And Forming a Complete Body of Modern Geography*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: A. Fullarton & Co., 1859), 465; Reclus, *Universal Geography*, 210; Fox, *Brief History*, 193; John MacGregor, *Commercial Statistics: A Digest of the Productive Resources, Commercial Legislation, Custom Tariffs, of All Nations. Including All British Commercial Treaties with Foreign States*, vol. 5 (London: Whittaker and Company, 1850), 124; Arthur Thomas Porter, "The Development of the Creole Society of Freetown, Sierra Leone" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1960), 37.

although it is likely that most Kru were located in Krutown. By 1819, statistics reveal that the Kru accounted for 749 of the total Freetown population, and 997 Kroomen were listed in the entire colony of Sierra Leone.¹⁶

In the 1820s, James Holman revealed that the number of Kru in Freetown (and elsewhere in the colony) had increased to almost 2,000, although this seems to be an exaggeration.¹⁷ Holman suggested that the Kru had earned a "decided preference" in Freetown in the role of servants and labourers over their African competitors. This may have stemmed from their willingness to live in Freetown and engage in longer commercial and Royal Navy contracts for periods of between eighteen months and three years.¹⁸ Other estimates are more conservative and place the Kru population in Freetown at 615 in 1820 before rising to 1,100 in 1826 and their dropping dramatically to 504 in 1831.¹⁹ By 1850, Robert Kuczynski has suggested there were

¹⁶ Samuel Charles Wilks, ed., *The Christian Observer: Conducted by Members of the Established Church, Given by Disciples Divinity House* 18, no. 11 (1819): 859.

¹⁷ James Holman, *Travels in Madeira, Sierra Leone, Teneriffe, St. Jago, Cape Coast, Fernando Po, Princess Island, Etc., Etc.* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 1840), 190-191.

¹⁸ *The Monthly Magazine; Or, British Register* 56, no. 390 (1824): 493.

¹⁹ Harrell-Bond, *Community Leadership*, 31, 71.

560 Kru in Freetown.²⁰ The Kru population seems to have remained stable throughout the rest of the century at between 500 and 600 Krumen until the 1890s when their population peaked following increased migration that stemmed from tensions between the Kru and the Liberian government.²¹ Despite varied figures, what is for certain is that the Kru maintained a distinct identity in Freetown as evidenced by the name assigned to them in census records.

British Suppression of the Slave Trade and the Kru

The transfer of governance from the Sierra Leone Company to the British Crown on 1 January 1808 played a significant role in the growth of the Kru population in Freetown. 1808 marked the year that the Royal Navy began patrolling the Atlantic off the coast of West Africa with the goal of intercepting slave ships following the 1807 decree to abolish British participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Freetown became the central port assigned with British anti-slave trade operations in the Atlantic. Until 1819, it housed the Vice-Admiralty Court tasked with adjudicating the fate of slave ship captains and the resettlement of recaptives and after 1819 the Courts of Mixed Commission that fulfilled the same function.

Following the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was reinvigorated despite British attempts to pressure European countries, the United States, and Brazil to abolish slave trading. In 1819, the Preventative Squadron, more commonly known as the West Africa Squadron, was created with the specific task of intercepting slave ships along a 2000-mile stretch of the West African coastline.²² In the same year, a Court of Mixed

²⁰ Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey* vol. 3, 80.

²¹ Harrell-Bond, *Community Leadership*, 31, 71.

²² Junius P. Rodriguez, ed., *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, vol.1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio), 20-21; David Northrup, "African Mortality in the Suppression of the Slave Trade: The Case of the Bight of Biafra," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9 (1978): 47-64;

Commission was established in Freetown, which replaced the Vice-Admiralty Court and was the first of an international system of anti-slave trade courts.²³ Initially, seven Royal Navy ships were sent from England to Freetown to serve in the Preventative Squadron and patrol the Atlantic. Subsequently, there were frequently up to twenty Royal Navy ships based at the West Coast of Africa Station in Freetown that sailed between a network of ports from Ascension Island and Fernando Po to the Cape of Good Hope. Service on Royal Navy ships set the stage for the establishment of Kru towns in various places in the Atlantic islands and southern Africa as an extension of naval pursuit of slave ships.

Beginning 15 January 1808, the HMS *Derwent* arrived in Freetown and began its anti-slave trade patrols. Kru seized the opportunity to work on Royal Navy contracts as reflected in the growth of their population following 1808. When Cobbett's conservative estimates are compared with Ludlam's figure, then the number of Kru rose from approximately 60 workers in 1802 to 800 workers in 1809. Christopher Fyfe has suggested that in 1808 the population of the entire Colony of Sierra Leone was 2,000, which would mean that Kru workers played a pivotal role in the colony's economic activities by providing perhaps 40 percent of its total population.²⁴

The Westminster Review, vol. 51 (New York: Leonard Scott and Company, 1849), 273.

²³ For scholarship on Mixed Commission Courts see Farida Shaikh, "Judicial Diplomacy: British Officials and the Mixed Commission Courts" in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807-1975*, eds., Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), 42-64; A.W.H. Pearsall, "Sierra Leone and the Suppression of the Slave Trade," *Sierra Leone Studies* 12 (1959): 216, 218; Tara Helfman, "The Court of the Vice Admiralty at Sierra Leone and the Abolition of the West African Slave Trade," *The Yale Law Journal* 115, no. 5 (2006): 1132-1134; W. Mulligan and M. Bric, *A Global History of Anti-Slavery Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Springer, 2013), 37-96; Henry B. Lovejoy, "The Registers of Liberated Africans of the Havana Slave Trade Commission: Implementation and Policy, 1824-1841," *Slavery and Abolition* 37, no. 1 (2016): 23-44; Wills, "Royal Navy," 16.

²⁴ Christopher Fyfe, *A Short History of Sierra Leone* (London: Longmans, 1962), 44.

Based in Freetown, Kru were highly valued by the Royal Navy for similar reasons they were valued by British commercial merchants, namely for their ability to man and land boats in order to conduct operations smoothly. Kru seamen had an advantage over shoreside workers because of the specialized surfboat skills required to work on Royal Navy contracts.²⁵ As Schwarz has demonstrated, British anti-slave ship patrols landed between 11,909 and 12,178 individuals between 1808 and 1819, all of whom would have been landed in Kru boats.²⁶ The correlation between increased employment opportunities and population eventually led to the creation of their own quarter in Freetown that catered for the transient population and also resulted in the permanent settlement of a small Kru community.

Since their arrival in Freetown 1792, Kru resided on the shores of what would become known as Kroo Bay. Many of the Kru lived in what was known as the “Kru Reservation” and after its formal establishment in 1816 it was known as Kroo Town (or Krutown).²⁷ British authorities purchased the land from Elli Akim adjacent to Kroo Bay for the purpose of providing a specific quarter for the Kru who had been working in Freetown for some time.²⁸ The convenient location on the ocean allowed the Kru to fish for subsistence and pull their surfboats ashore following work.

²⁵ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 56.

²⁶ Suzanne Schwarz, “Reconstructing the Life Histories of Liberated Africans: Sierra Leone in the Early Nineteenth Century,” *History in Africa* 39 (2012):182.

²⁷ *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, vol. 13 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1882): 65; *Missionary Register for 1817*, vol. 5 (London: Seeley, 1817), 251; *The Christian Observer* 15, no. 11 (1816): 756.

²⁸ *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, vol. 13 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1882): 65.

At the same time, the length of contracts for Kru workers was increased, in some cases to three years.²⁹ The establishment of an officially designated area in Freetown for Kru workers provided the British with a readily available labour pool. For Kru migrants, Krutown gave them a semi-permanent, and even a permanent home, depending on how long they remained in Freetown. More significantly, Krutown provided the Kru with a cultural space that was their own in which they could speak their native Kru language, carry out rituals associated with their Bo secret society and for those few who brought their wives and children a place to raise their families, which became steadily more important by the middle of the nineteenth century.

Figure 2.1

Krootown Bay, c. 1910



Source: Gary Schulze Collection, <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Gspostcards> (accessed May 15, 2017).

²⁹ Holman, *Mr. Holman's Travels*, 64. The increase in contracts was also affected by Kru service in the Royal Navy, which increased after 1819.

The close connection between homeland on the Kru Coast and the diaspora community in Freetown was apparent by virtue of the street names that were assigned in Krootown, which included “Nana Kroo,” “Little Kroo,” “Settra Kroo,” “King William,” and “Grand Cess,” all of which radiated outward from Krootown Road towards Krootown Bay (Fig 2.1, Fig. 2.2 and 2.3).³⁰ The streets were named after the Kru’s main trading towns of the “Proper Kru” settlements on the Kru Coast. The only exception was Grand Cess, which was a Kru village established adjacent to the Grand Cess River from at least the seventeenth century. Possibly, members from each community were housed on the appropriate street linked to their specific village.

Figure 2.2

Krootown Road, Freetown, c. 1910



Source: Lisk-Carew Brothers Postcard, Gary Schulze Collection, accessed May 15, 2017, <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Gspostcards>.

³⁰ See Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 79.

While the postcards date to the first decade of the twentieth century, the layout of the town remained the same since the early nineteenth century and hence later images accurately reflect what Krotown looked like throughout the century. As the Lisk-Carew postcards reveal, Krotown was the centre of the Kru diaspora in Freetown.³¹

Even though their community was largely populated by the “Proper Kru,” Krotown gradually also became home to Grebo, Bassa, and Krahn labourers, all of whom spoke

Figure 2.3

Kroo Town, c. 1910



Source: Lisk-Carew Brothers Postcard, Gary Schulze Collection, accessed May 3, 2017, <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Gspostcards>.

Kru. While census records amalgamated these groups under the general heading of “Kru” in Freetown, they would have been able to distinguish between who was “Proper Kru” and who

³¹ Between 1910 and 1925 Alphonso and Sylvester Lisk-Carew, known in published photographs as the Lisk-Carew Brothers, took photos in Freetown and throughout the Colony of Sierra Leone. Their images were used on postcards. Some of their works are available at: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Gspostcards>.

were Bassa, Grebo, and Krahn not least because their autonomous communities competed for trade and were sometimes in conflict back in their homeland.³² Despite their differences, they accepted the general label of “Kru” in the context of Freetown as evidenced by the name of their quarter – Krutown. After all, no Bassa Town, Grebo Town or Krahn Town was ever created in Sierra Leone. As work increased in Sierra Leone, so too did those Kru speakers beyond the Kru Coast who wanted to obtain employment.

As discussed previously, the Kru mark had an importance that continued to have special significance in Krutown. While the Kru did not have to secure protection from enslavement in Freetown after 1807 as they did while serving on European vessels on the coast, the mark served to distinguish them from other labouring African groups such as the Yoruba and Vai.³³ Each African community had its own quarter in Freetown including Congo Town. The Kru mark ensured that they were readily identified by the British, other African peoples and amongst themselves. It may have even given the Kru an advantage over competing labourers because of the hardworking reputation they had garnered. In 1823, Edward Bold “strongly recommended” the Kru to all ship captains on the West African coast based on their “hard-working” nature.³⁴ Similarly, in 1825, Kru were hired in Freetown by Hugh Clapperton during his second

³² Ludlam, “Account,” 46; Fraenkel, “Social Change,” 154-155.

³³ The Yoruba, Fante and Vai had their own facial marks on the cheeks and forehead. For information on Yoruba, Fante and Vai facial markings see Keefer, “Scarification and Identity,” 537-553; Keefer, “Group Identity, Scarification,” 1-26; Toyin Falola and Fallou Ngom, *Facts, Fiction and African Creative Imaginations* (London: Routledge, 2009), 86; Olanike Orie, “The Structure and Function of Yoruba Facial Scarification,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 53, no.1 (2011): 15-33; James Obunbaku, “The Use of Tribal Marks in Archaeological and Historical Reconstruction,” *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 6 (2012): 251-260.

³⁴ Bold, *Merchant's and Mariner's African Guide*, 45.

expedition to Sokoto.³⁵ The Kru mark in Freetown made them that much easier to single out and hire.

In addition to the Kru mark, it seems that regular employment with the British also led to tattooing of an anchor on the arm, which seems to have been an innovation in Freetown. Clarke observed the practice in Freetown: “the figure of an anchor is sometimes traced upon their arms, in imitation of the English seamen with whom they associate.”³⁶ The traditional Kru mark and the tattoo on the arm thereby became distinct items in identification. As contracts with the British became an increasingly important source of revenue for the Kru economy, a tattoo on the arm may also have symbolized prestige amongst the Kru.

The establishment of Krutown necessitated the creation of a new position called the Krutown Headman (later the Kru Tribal Headman).³⁷ British authorities in Sierra Leone began appointing Krutown Headmen for the purpose of keeping order amongst the Kru working in that colony. In 1849, Lieutenant Frederick Forbes described the position:

Krutown is under superintendence of a headman, who receives a shilling a day, and he is held responsible for the good behaviour of his tribe. Besides this he has large emoluments, receiving a fee for all returning and from new members: the superintendent of each street is under him.³⁸

The growth in the communities that made up Freetown, many of which were designated as “towns,” led the British to appoint officials in order to ensure law and order and the “good

³⁵ Bruce Lockhart and Lovejoy, *Hugh Clapperton*, 82. Kru service in Clapperton’s expedition will be discussed in Chapter Five.

³⁶ Clarke, “Inhabitants,” 355.

³⁷ The term Krutown Headman and then Kru Tribal Headman continues to be used in the twenty-first century. See <http://slconcordtimes.com/as-protest-against-kroo-tribal-head-continues/>. For information on the acquisition of land for the Kru see *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute*, vol. 13, 1881-1882 (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1882), 65.

³⁸ Lieutenant Forbes, *Six Months’ Service in the African Blockade*, 1849 (London: Dawsons, 1969), 19.

behaviour” of its inhabitants. Superintendents were responsible for maintaining order on their street and reporting to the Krutown Headman. At various times in the nineteenth century, Kru were noted as being quarrelsome.³⁹ The Krutown Headman was expected to deal with any difficulties within the Kru community.

The Krutown Headman differed from the headmen on ships who were tasked with administering their workers. Rather, the Krutown Headman was responsible for the administration of Krutown and sat at the top of a hierarchal order in the Kru community. Each street in Krutown had a superintendent who answered to him. The Krutown Headman received an allowance for supplying the British with seamen and regular labourers and received a portion of their pay as well. All Kru labourers were expected to pay their headman in their labour pool but also the Krutown Headman, who was described as “a king or headman in Sierra Leone who settles their own disputes.”⁴⁰ The authority and responsibilities of the Krutown Headman mirrored the role of the *krogba* in the Kru homeland, who also collected money from Kru labourers and held administrative responsibility for their community. Similar to the ship headman and shoreside headman, he was the intermediary between the Kru and the British ensuring the overall discipline of the entire Kru community in Freetown.

By the 1860s, the Krutown Headman played a central role in the hiring process as merchant ship captains sought Kru seamen. Those merchants seeking Kru labour applied to the Krutown Headman who then called upon a ship headman to obtain the required number of labourers.⁴¹ Whereas the Kru had once been hired from their surfboats directly on the Kru Coast,

³⁹ See Holman, *Travels in Madeira*, 65, 69; CO 267/56, “MacCarthy to Bathurst, 23 September 1822”; Frost, *Work and Community*, 127.

⁴⁰ *The Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record* 6 (1881): 725.

⁴¹ J.F. Napier Hewett, *European Settlements on the West Coast of Africa: With Remarks on the Slave Trade and the Supply of Cotton* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1862), 113.

in Freetown, the Krutown Headman was responsible for supplying British captains with a ship headman who in turn provided a labour gang from whom he extracted a fee from each Kru labourer. Conversely, the Krutown Headman charged a fee to the British authorities for providing labour.⁴²

Kru women did not begin to immigrate to Krutown to any extent until the mid-nineteenth century. Krutown guaranteed a place for the Kru and their families to reside without the worry of searching for land for their lodgings.⁴³ Although Krutown was part of an urban setting, it seems Kru women were initially limited to the household and restricted from trading in the markets by their husbands.⁴⁴ However, by the close of the nineteenth century the opening of the City Market on Kroo Town Road meant that some Kru women had the opportunity to sell fish and produce in the market.⁴⁵ Their role signifies a change from the Kru Coast where it was the males who sailed out to meet European ships to discuss trade. Women could now trade directly with fellow Kru, Temne women, and other Africans.⁴⁶ For the greater part of the nineteenth century, labour remained gendered in Freetown with Kru males working on British ship and shoreside contracts, while women ran domestic affairs in the household and traded in Krutown.⁴⁷

⁴² For further discussion on the Kru Tribal Headman see Frost, *Work and Community*, 39; Harrell-Bond, *Community Leadership*, 97.

⁴³ Harrell-Bond, *Community Leadership*, 7; Frost, *Work and Community*, 120.

⁴⁴ Frost, *Work and Community*, 102; Lynn Schler, *Nation on Board: Becoming Nigerian at Sea* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2016), 96.

⁴⁵ Joseph Bangura, *The Temne of Sierra Leone: African Agency in the Making of a British Colony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 172; Frost, *Work and Community*, 208.

⁴⁶ Bangura, *Temne*, 171-172.

⁴⁷ Kru women continue to be the dominant trading group in Krutown's markets in the twenty-first century in Krutown.

Terms of Employment

Wage rates and the duration of contracts depended on the the nature of the work being performed. In 1819, wages in the Royal Navy were governed by rank and experience. Table 2.2 shows the variation in pay between Kru headmen and regular crewmembers on the HMS *Snapper* between 5 September and 31 December 1819. There were twelve Kru on board. Their rates of pay were usually £4 8s. 6d., although several received more, as high as £5 4s. 2d., plus an additional payment in tobacco valued as 3s. 8d. in most cases.

On the HMS *Snapper*, a Kru seaman classified as an ordinary seaman (meaning that he had achieved the rank of headman in Kru society and was a headman on the current voyage) named Jack Savage received £5 4s. 2d. (5 pounds, 4 shilling, 2 pence) full wages, while Jumbo,

Table 2.2

Pay List for Kru, HMS *Snapper*, 5 September – 31 December 1819

African Names	Rank	Tobacco	Full Wages	Net Wages
Jack Savage (1)	Ord	3s 8d	£5 4s 2d	£4 8s 2d
Tom Freeman (1)	Sm		£4 8s 6d	£3 18s 8d
Jumbo	Ord		£5 1s 2d	£4 11s 4d
Bottle Beer	Sm	3s 8d	£4 8s 6d	£3 15s 6d
Jack Savage (2)	Ord	3s 2d	£5 1s 2d	£4 8s 2d
Ben Freeman	Sm		£4 8s 6d	£3 18s 8d
Ben Roberts	Sm		£4 8s 6d	£3 18s 8d
Jack Brown	Sm	3s 2d	£4 8s 6d	£3 15s 6d
Ben Coffee	Sm		£4 8s 6d	£3 18s 8d
Tom Freeman (2)	Sm		£4 8s 6d	£3 18s 8d
Big William	Sm	3s 2d	£4 8s 6d	£3 15s 6d
John Freeman	Sm	3s 2d	£4 8s 6d	£3 15s 6d

Source: ADM 30/26 “Muster Lists, Pay List for African Krou employed on board His Majesty’s Brig Snapper between the 5th day of September and 31st December 1819,” The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom. “Or” signified Ordinary Seaman, while “Sm” signified Seaman.

also ranked an ordinary seaman, received £5 1s. 2d.. The slight difference in wage rates may suggest that Jack was the second headman on the voyage. Different pay for those Krumen with the same rank suggests that those with more sea experience were paid more than those who had accumulated less sea time. Full wages refer to the total wages earned for the duration of the contract over a three-month period. “Nett Wages” refers to deductions that were made for any expenses the Kru incurred using tobacco or other consumables. Not all consumables are listed in the muster list for every crew member, yet they would have incurred some expenses as evidenced by the difference in full and net wages.

When compared with the previous table, Table 2.3 illustrates that wage rates could differ from ship to ship. In 1819, Kru headman Tom Freeman on the HMS *Morgiana* received a rate of £5 5s. 6d., while regular Kru seamen received £4 12s. 3d.. However, John Peter, also a

Table 2.3

Pay List for Kru, HMS *Morgiana*, 1 June – 1 October 1819

African Names	Rank	Full Wages	Net Wages
Tom Freeman (1)	Ord	£5 5s 6d	£5 5s 6d
John Purser	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Half Dollar	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Bottle of Beer	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jack Wise	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Joe Harris	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Tom Freeman (2)	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Tom Toby	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jim Freeman	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Tom Freeman (3)	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Tom Peter	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jack Freeman	Ord	£5 5s 6d	£5 5s 6d
Billy Williams	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Joe Andrews	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jack Purser	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jim Rufus	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
John Grey	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d

Hugo Williams	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jack Boo	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jack Freeman	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jack Jim	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Tom Will	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Tom Harris	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
John Peter	Ord	£5 10s 6d	£5 10s 6d
Total		£112 18s 9d	£112 18s 9d

Source: ADM 30/26. 1 June 1819 to 1 October 1819. “Muster Lists, Pay List for African Krou employed on board His Majesty’s HMS *Morgiana*, between 1 June 1819 to 1 October 1819,” The National Archives, London, United Kingdom. “Or” signified Ordinary Seaman, while “Sm” signified Seaman.

headman, received a salary of £5 10s. 6d., which may indicate that he had more experience at sea than Freeman. The HMS *Morgiana* had a crew of twenty-four Krumen, more than double the number of Kru on board the HMS *Snapper*. The ability to work on a variety of Royal Navy ships over a three-year contractual period represented a new model of employment for Kru seamen who had typically served between six and eighteen-month contracts on commercial ships (see Appendix for a list of Kru seamen serving on Royal Navy Ships in 1819 and 1820).

While headmen were initially distinguished from regular workers by virtue of their English names on the Kru Coast, the use of English names on ships became standard practice for all Kru seamen in the nineteenth century. As English names became common, rank came to distinguish headmen from regular workers in terms of higher pay. English names amongst the Kru such as King Tom, Prince of Wales and Jack Soke represented a change affecting the identity of Kru workers.⁴⁸ John Rankin’s study of Royal Navy naming practices amongst Kru seamen shows that their names derived from alcoholic drinks such as “Bottle of Brandy” or “Bottle of Beer” and also included references to British royalty as evident in such names as King

⁴⁸ Hastings, *Voyage*, 52-54.

John, Prince of Wales and King George.⁴⁹ As bizarre and humorous as some of the names were, the headman adopted a dual identity as they navigated between their workplace in Freetown, on board British ships, and on the Kru Coast. As the Kru economy became increasingly dependent on British contracts, Kru social status came to be defined by service with the British. The practice of adopting an English name became widespread for all Kru seamen and especially for those Kru who served in the Royal Navy.

It appears that the names of Kru sailors were initially assigned to them by Royal Navy captains. In 1833, a list of English names and corresponding Kru names was compiled and featured in *The Monthly Review*. The Kru name was listed next to the recommended English name as follows: Jack Ropeyarn/Namboe, Jack Fryingpan/Tabooa, Great Tom/Yiepam, Peas Soup/Woorawa, Will Centipede/Blattoo, Jack Neverfear/ Nieca, Jack Toggle/ Niepa, Tom Seedy/ Ba Sidi, Government Packet/Niaie.⁵⁰ Presumably their Kru names were the actual names of workers at the time. The function of their English names was to enable smooth communication between British and Kru seamen.

Kru enlisted on Royal Navy and Preventative Squadron ships to earn wages that were higher than on commercial contracts. Initially, the captain and crew of Preventative Squadron vessels were entitled to prize bounties for every slave ship that was captured. The Abolition Act explicitly stated prize values of £40 for a male, £30 for a female, and £10 for a child.⁵¹ The hierarchal and gendered nature of the prizes reflected the value of males, females and children in

⁴⁹ John Rankin, "Nineteenth-Century Royal Navy Sailors from Africa and the African Diaspora: Research Methodology," *African Diasporas* 6, no. 2 (2013): 179-195.

⁵⁰ See Ralph Griffiths and George Edward Griffiths, eds., "Exposure of the Slave Trade," *The Monthly Review* 1, no.1 (London: G. Henderson, 1833), 26.

⁵¹ John Raithby, *The Statutes Relating to the Admiralty, Navy, Shipping and Navigation in the United Kingdom from 9 Hen. III. to 3 Geo IV., inclusive with Notes* (London: George Eyre and Andrew Strahan, 1823), 742.

the trans-Atlantic slave trade in first half of the nineteenth century. The practice of receiving prize money was discontinued during the 1840s due to the high rate of slave ship seizure. Had the practice of prize money continued, the amount associated with children might have risen dramatically as children became highly valued in the trans-Atlantic slave trade in the last decades of slave trading between the 1850s and 1870s.

Kru received their share of the prize money based on their naval rank. Kru headmen, second Kru headmen, and regular Krumen along with their British counterparts were classed by the Royal Navy as follows: a Kru headman was considered eighth class and were entitled to two shares of the prize earnings; ninth class second head Kroomen received one and a half shares; regular Kroomen who were eleventh class received three-fourths of a share.⁵² Although the initial prize money proved to be unsustainable as a result of the high number of recaptives, the Kru's pay was directly based on their Royal Navy rank.

Kru were paid wages in-kind meaning that they received goods that were valued based on a British wage rate for the Royal Navy, merchant ships and commercial labour in Freetown. While contracts stipulated wage rates, both the British and Kru agreed upon their corresponding value in goods. Kru workers in Freetown were paid in the form of goods with an equivalent wage value at 5s. a month with a 10s. advance.⁵³ The advance was used to secure their labour for the period of the contact in Freetown. Following the completion of the contract, items were then carried home to the Kru Coast and traded for iron bars, cattle and other items of value in Kru

⁵² Admiralty, *The Navy List* (London: John Murray, 1850), 196-197.

⁵³ John Smith, *Trade and Travels in the Gulph of Guinea, with an Account of the Manners, Habits, Customs, and Religion of the Inhabitants* (London: Simpkin & Marshall, 1851), 100-103; "Negro Civilization," *Journal of Health and Disease* 2, no. 3 (1847): 259; Frost, *Work and Community*, 26.

society.⁵⁴ Other times, the Kru sold their items for cash in Freetown. In 1845, R.G. Butts suggested the Kru received cloth for their labour at a value of £1 4s. per piece, which they then sold at a price of between 6s. 8d. and 8s. 4d. for cash.⁵⁵ However, even by the 1880s and 1890s, it was still more common to convert a cash wage into “marketable items.”⁵⁶

One significant distinction affecting working conditions in Freetown as compared to the Kru Coast was that headman received standardized monthly wages and earned a higher salary from the British based on managerial skills in Freetown as shown in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. He also received a portion of the pay from each member of his gang.⁵⁷ This entrenched the hierarchal order first established on the Kru Coast between headman and workers to an even greater degree and provided an incentive for labourers to aspire to become headmen.

One of the most important duties the headman performed was to ensure the discipline of his labour gang. In 1862, Captain Napier Hewett described the headman’s role as follows:

[Regular Krumen and apprentices were to] pay implicit obedience to the chief of the gang; obey his instructions, and are amenable only to his rules and punishments. The captain of the vessel, when desirous to punish a Krooman, complains to the head-man, who inflicts summary justice, and as his orders are never disobeyed, or his judgment impeached, it would appear as though he exercised some powerful and mysterious influence over his people; and as he himself is equally attentive to the orders of the captain, the links in the chain of responsibility and discipline are complete.⁵⁸

The Kru were very particular that the Kru headman was the individual to deal out punishment for insubordinate behaviour amongst the Kru. Punishment by proxy worked very well for the British who left it to the Kru to carry out their disciplinary orders, which could include

⁵⁴ Smith, *Trade and Travels*, 103.

⁵⁵ Accounts and Papers, “Report of R.G. Butts to the Governor of British Guiana, 13, March 1845,” Session 18 November 1847-5 September 1848, vol. 44 (1848), 28.

⁵⁶ Zöller, *Das Togoland*, 56; Ingham, *Sierra Leone After a Hundred Years*, 274.

⁵⁷ Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa*, 644-655; Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, vol. 2 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), 774-781; Fyfe, *History*, 135.

⁵⁸ Hewett, *European Settlements*, 113.

floggings.⁵⁹ While there were some cases in which the British captain intervened and carried out the discipline, this was considered to be taboo amongst the Kru and could result in their refusal to work, abandonment of their compliment of the crew or the boycotting of captains known to mistreat Kru seamen.⁶⁰ Moreover, if Kru workers were undisciplined it could cost them a payment as was the case for one drunken Kru in 1884, who had to pay a penalty of 15s..⁶¹

Some headmen were in charge of a larger number of workers, occasionally as many as twenty-five to one hundred men as compared to six to ten men on a typical Royal Navy ship. While shoreside contracts usually lasted for periods of between six months and eighteen months, they worked for longer periods, up to three years, on naval vessels.⁶² The longer term at sea may be attributed to the considerable distances of voyages and the irregular frequency of intercepting slave ships. The infrastructure projects on land were calculated on the basis of the project, not on the length of a voyage.

The selection of headmen on Royal Navy ships and commercial vessels docked in Freetown could take two forms. The earliest known source addressing the issue is Captain Thomas Midgley's 1842 report that suggested that the progression towards becoming a headman was based on merit.⁶³ According to Midgley, headmen were appointed based on their previous service and the notes in their books, which described their experience and character. Once a Kru

⁵⁹ Reverend J. Clarke, "The West African Company," *Anti-Slavery Reporter* 2, no. 16 (Wednesday, August 11, 1841): 170.

⁶⁰ *The Church Missionary Review* 32, no. 12 (1881): 725; Frost, *Work and Community*, 72.

⁶¹ John Langdon, "Three Voyages to the West Coast of Africa, 1881-1884," in Betty Wood and Martin Lynn, eds., *Travel, Trade and Power in the Atlantic, 1765-1884* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2002), 268.

⁶² Martin, "Krumen," 407-408.

⁶³ "Report on the Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Together with Minutes of Evidence Appendix and Index, Part 2," in Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 592.

labourer secured his position as a headman, he passed on his book to another Kruman whom he in effect recommended by doing so.⁶⁴ The recipient would then add to the book and become a headman. In effect, the headman was a foreman, a term that was adopted nearly a century later in the British Attorney General's Office.⁶⁵

Young men ascending from the *kofa* age group to the warrior class provided the pool of workers who became regular workers and might aspire to become headmen in the future. Hence, the Kru adapted a traditional social system in participating in British trade and abolition suppression activities based on contractual labour. Perhaps, headman selection was based on a combination of age-set structures and merit. Regardless, the position of headman became institutionalized in Freetown in the nineteenth century in terms of pay and authority.

In 1890, H. Guinness observed that a gang of twenty-five Kru had been secured in Freetown on what he termed "usual terms," as follows:

For a year's service, the hirer to pay travelling expenses both ways. These men are so much in demand as labourers that they get pretty good pay, and always expect a month's wages in advance. The headmen have two shillings each day, and the others one shilling. They have to be fed and lodged, and sent home if ill, so that they are pretty expensive helpers.⁶⁶

While they all expected advanced wages, headmen were distinguished from their gang by a higher salary that amounted to double a regular workers wage. The contract also stipulated that they would be fed on the job and that they would receive housing while abroad.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 592.

⁶⁵ Cited in Frost, *Work and Community*, 38. Frost used the following source: Colonial Secretary's Office, Lab 83, Attorney General, 1937 The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

⁶⁶ H. Grattan Guinness, *The New World of Central Africa: With a History of the First Christian in the Congo* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1890), 213.

Fig. 2.4 shows a Kru headman dressed in a blue-striped robe. As early as 1811, Thomas Coke observed that Kru labourers in Freetown wore “no clothing, excepting a handkerchief, or a piece of blue cloth tied about their middle, and sometimes a hat.”⁶⁷ Coke did not distinguish the headman’s attire from regular workers. However, he did mention that the blue cloth was highly valued by the Kru.⁶⁸ By 1890, the robe may have been directly associated the authority of headmen as indicated by the sketch’s original title “A Kroo-Boy Headman,” which included the word “Dressed” in brackets. The fact the headman was dressed seems to suggest that this was his official attire. Wearing the robe distinguished headmen from regular Kru workers who were

Figure 2.4

Kru Headman in Freetown, c. 1890



Source: Guinness, *The New World*, 214.

⁶⁷ Coke, *An Interesting Narrative*, 45.

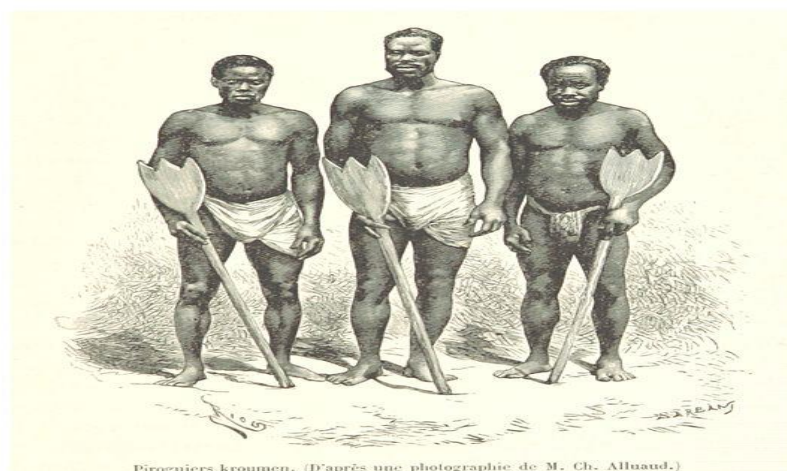
⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 46.

frequently pictured as shirtless with white cloth covering around their loins (see Fig. 2.5).

Whether this was the Krutown Headman or a ship headman is unknown. Although the quality of the image is not good, it seems that there is no Kru mark on the forehead, which may indicate that the practice of scarification declined because of the diminished threat of enslavement following the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The term “Kroo-Boy” which accompanied the image in the text was derogatory and part and parcel of the European racist perception that often generally regarded Africans as uncivilized and child-like.⁶⁹ Yet, the British

Figure 2.5

Kru with Oars, c. 1892



Source: “Piroguiers kroumen,” photograph by Ch. Alluaud, in Louis Gustave Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinee, par le pays de Kong et le Mossi*, vol. 2 (Paris: Hachette et Cie, 1892), 311.

depended on the Kru for their labour and they remained a valuable resource for British enterprise in West Africa. In contrast with the Kru headman in Fig. 2.4, the Kru seamen pictured above in

⁶⁹ For a discussion on nineteenth century European racism that regarded Africans as uncivilized, savage or “other” see V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (London: James Currey, 1988), 1-23; V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Idea of Africa* (London: James Currey, 1994), 1-70; Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and The Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 5; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 1-30.

1892 by Louis Gustave Binger are not wearing a robe and were most probably regular labourers. Most nineteenth century sketches of the Kru show them wearing loin cloths, while images of the robe are rare and lend credence to its association with headmen.⁷⁰

Employment with the British in Freetown depended on headmen as much as it had in prior times on board European ships. Moreover, headmen organized recruitment to ensure that future generations of Kru would remain employed under British contracts. Young men formed the pool of labourers who followed their headman to Freetown.⁷¹ They could be drawn from a Kru headman's *dako* and belonged to the *kofa* age-set, which had traditionally formed the next generation of warriors. As the number of Kru workers in Freetown increased in the early nineteenth century, the expectation that young men would serve as workers on ships and shoreside projects grew exponentially.

In Freetown, the progression from adolescent to adult was marked by the transition from young labourer to regular worker. Behrens has shown that many labourers began their service as adolescents: "chaque Krooman...part de chez lui vers 13 and 14 ans, sous la responsabilité d'un Headman."⁷² A complement of 8 or 10 Kru workers formed the labour gang.⁷³ After serving on

⁷⁰ Images of Kru wearing a single cloth can be found in the following sources: *The Illustrated London News*, May 8, 1853, 461; "Kroomen Disembarking From the 'Michalla' at Wady Halfa," *The Graphic* 30, December 6, 1884, 597; "The Nile Expedition For The Relief General Gordon - Towing The Armed Steamer 'Nasaf-El-Khair' Over The Second Cataract, Beyond Wady Halfa," *The Graphic* 28, October 11, 1884, 276; Captain's Clerk Charles F. Sands, "West African kroomen in surf, 1848." US Brig Porpoise on Anti-slavery cruise. 1848. Naval Historical Center. Photo# NH63104; Captain's Clerk Charles F. Sands, "West African kroomen launching a boat, 1848." US Brig Porpoise on Anti-slavery cruise. 1848. Naval Historical Center. Photo# NH63103; *Voyage au Congo*, directed by Herr Marc Allegret (Paris: Independent, 1927).

⁷¹ F. Harrison Rankin, *The White Man's Grave: A Visit to Sierra Leone, in 1834*, I (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), 149.

⁷² Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 56.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

several contracts over a period of three or four years, they would return as independent labourers.⁷⁴ Similar to the transition from *kofa* to *gbo*, after three or four years of service, an adolescent progressed to the status of a regular worker with the possibility of becoming a headman. The Kru would have appreciated the three-step progression from adolescent worker to adult labourer to headman based on their understanding of the right-of-passage from *kofa* to *gbo* to *krogba* in Kru society. Young men would have shown due protocol towards their headman who organized labour on their behalf for the same reasons they held great respect for the *krogbas* (town leaders) of their respective *dakos* (territorial units) who were selected based on merit (and in some cases *panton* affiliation) and were accountable to their communities on the Kru Coast.

They were expected to hand a portion of their earnings over to their headman.⁷⁵ The power dynamic between the headman and his workers was based on the principle of education. The young men were learning their craft from their headman and the adult labourers who formed the labour pool. In 1840, James Holman suggested Kru workers first had to learn the “White man’s fashion” meaning they had to acquire a familiarity with working on British contracts and working with white British sailors and administrators.⁷⁶ Adolescent workers could not advance to adult labourers until they had some experience working in an environment that was directed by British operations.

There was some concern among European anti-slavery groups that young Kru workers were in fact enslaved by their headmen. In 1850, Reverend Gurley compared the headmen system to a form of slavery based on the tradition of younger workers handing over a portion of

⁷⁴ Parliamentary Papers, “Report of a Commission of Inquiry into the State of Sierra Leone, part 1,” vol. 7 (1827), 312. Also see Davies, *Extracts from the Journal*, 26.

⁷⁵ Holman, *Travels in Madeira*, 186.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 186.

their earnings to their headman.⁷⁷ Gurley admitted he did not know exactly how the workers were selected.⁷⁸ By doing so, he showed that he was unaware of the age-set system from which they were drawn and was forced to make inaccurate comparisons with slavery. In 1874, *Nautical Magazine* reported that the headman's "word was law" amongst his labourers.⁷⁹ But this does not necessarily mean that young Kru were mistreated in any fashion, only that a rigid order structured labour relations. Similarly, in 1889, the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* raised concerns that the Kru forced prisoners of war to serve on labour contracts, even going as far as marking them with the Kru mark in order to ensure that their headman and the entire Kru village on the Kru Coast prospered from their labour.⁸⁰ Their accusations may have arisen because of the Kru's role in slave trading, which seems to have tarnished their reputation from abolitionist perspectives. Despite their concerns, there is no available evidence to substantiate their claims.

Relationship with the Homeland

The Kru's homecoming experience was an essential component that maintained their diaspora in Freetown. British contracts in Freetown based on standardized timeframes that could range from six months to eighteenth months and even three years created a regular cycle of homecoming protocol that influenced Kru culture in their homeland. Following the completion of a contract, the great majority of Kru would disembark in Freetown and remain in Krutown

⁷⁷ Dan Webster, "Report of The Secretary of State Communicating the Report of the Rev. R.R. Gurley, who was recently sent out by the government to obtain information in respect to Liberia," United States' State Department (September 14, 1850), 7.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 7.

⁷⁹ "A Timber Voyage of Thirty-three Years Ago," *The Nautical Magazine for 1873: A Journal of Papers on Subjects Connected with Maritime Affairs*, vol. 42 (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1874), 16.

⁸⁰ "Enlistment of Negroes," *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* vol. 6, no. 5 (May 1, 1858): 116; *Journal of the Arts* 37, no. 1 (1889): 301.

before accepting their next contract, but many also returned to their homeland on the Kru Coast whether or not they intended to return to Freetown for further employment.

Meeting the demands of bride-price formed the main reason for becoming a worker and seeking promotion to headman. Kru labourers hoped to acquire as many wives as possible for elevating their social status and expanding their kinship group. In exchange for their labour, British officials, captains and merchants offered the Kru iron bars, cattle, brass kettles, and blue baft.⁸¹ In 1851, John Smith claimed that the Kru used these items to “build a house and trade.”⁸²

Kru also used these items to purchase the bride-price necessary to obtain wives. Many nineteenth century sources suggest that acquiring wives was a major incentive for working contracts. In 1825, Captain Robert Pearce of the HMS *Brazen* observed that upon the Kru’s homecoming the following process unfolded:

[Kru] lay out in merchandize such as cloths, hats, muskets, Powder, Iron Bars, tobacco in stone jars, Large Brass pans, beads, knives & c &c with fruits of their labour on their return they purchase as many wives as they can maintain – their rank there afterwards estimated according to the proportion of that scale of establishment.⁸³

Pearce showed that the Kru exchanged the items they had earned in Freetown for wives on the Kru Coast. Similarly, Clapperton claimed that a Kruman was “esteemed according to the No of his wives.”⁸⁴

In 1840, Holman claimed: “For the first wife, they pay two bullocks, two brass kettles, one piece of blue baft, and one iron bar.”⁸⁵ He did not mention how much each subsequent wife

⁸¹ Holman, *Travels in Madeira*, 186-187; J.W. Lugenbeel, “Native Africans in Liberia-Their Customs and Superstitions,” *African Repository* 28, no. 1 (1852): 15; Holman, “Mr. Holman’s Travels,” *The Asiatic Journal*, 64; *Sixth Report of the African Institution* (1812): 68-70; *The Analectic Magazine* 1 (1813): 12-13.

⁸² Smith, *Trade and Travels*, 100.

⁸³ Bruce Lockhart and Lovejoy, *Hugh Clapperton*, 418.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 86.

⁸⁵ Holman, *Travels in Madeira*, 187.

cost but seemed to suggest that the first wife was the most expensive. This may have been because the first wife would have authority over the other wives the Kruman acquired following contracts. During interviews with the Kru in 1860, Reverend Thomas Charles learned about the cost of purchasing a wife. A Kruman named Tom Pepper explained: “S’pose he people be poor, he sell for twenty dollar; s’pose he no want sell much, he be price fiftee dollar.”⁸⁶ Pepper indicated that the price was determined by the bride’s father and could range between \$20.00 and \$50.00.⁸⁷ The price differential depended on whether the bride came from a poor or wealthy family – the wealthier the family the higher the cost of their daughter. The cost of a wife was paid for in goods at a pre-determined monetary value. The socio-economic impact of the Kru free wage labour diaspora in Freetown was thereby felt at home on the Kru Coast. Whereas the headman was once solely responsible for organizing labour on vessels visiting the Kru Coast, the institutionalization of their position through higher wages enabled the headman to become a pillar of authority both in their workplace and back in their homeland on the Kru Coast. Regular Kru labourers were expected to give their advance to their headman following the negotiation of a contract.⁸⁸

Through employment in Freetown, the British offered the Kru an alternative means for raising their bride-price obligations on the Kru Coast. British contracts provided the Kru with the necessary funds to marry more wives and obtain wealth and prestige within Kru society.

⁸⁶ Reverend Charles W. Thomas, *Adventures and Observations on the West Coast of Africa, and Its Islands* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1860), 107.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 107.

⁸⁸ Smith, *Trade and Travels*, 100-103; Thomas Joseph Hutchinson, *Impressions of Western Africa* (London: Longman, 1858), 47-54, 137, 282; Thomas Joseph Hutchinson, *Ten Year’s Wandering among the Ethiopians; with sketches of the Manners and Customs of the Civilized and Uncivilized Tribes, From Senegal to Gaboon* (London: Hurst and Blackett Publishers, 1861), 96, 209.

Apprenticeship became a necessary stage in the Kru's progression to adult labourer. Traditional age-sets became inextricably connected with British labour contracts, structuring the Kru labour pool and adapting to meet bride-price demands.

The protocol of gift-giving and the incentive for pursuing contracts became intimately ingrained in Kru society. Contracts created social prestige and enabled social mobility. Value was measured by gift-giving and the accumulation of wives. Kru provided for their family bringing back gifts, which could be used to accumulate social value or be traded with Europeans on the Kru Coast. Gifts given to the *krogba* played a role in maintaining traditional power dynamics in Kru villages. The *krogba* continued to hold his position of authority over the community and in the process was able to increase his wealth. Because of these demands, many Kru would only remain in their homeland for several months before they returned to Krutown for further employment.⁸⁹

As discussed with reference to the slave trade, the Kru were already making voyages from the Kru Coast to the Sierra Leone River prior to the establishment of Freetown in 1792. However, the cyclical nature of their migration between their homeland and their community in Freetown became standardized through contractual labour in the nineteenth century. In 1840, Captain James Holman described the Kru work cycle:

The following trait in the history of the Kroomen, or natives of the Kroo country, upon that part of the coast called the Grain Coast, is curious...The Kroomen...are almost the only people on the coast who voluntarily emigrate, to seek for labour out of their own country. They come to Sierra Leone, to work in any capacity in which they can obtain employment, until they are possessed of sufficient property to enable them to purchase several wives...Before they are able to accomplish this object, they are obliged to make several visits to Sierra Leone, as they do not like to be absent more than two or three years at a time from their own country. The average duration of this voluntary banishment is perhaps about eighteen months. A sketch of the progress of the Kroomen,

⁸⁹ *Sixth Report of the African Institution* (1812): 68-70; *The Analectic Magazine* 1 (1813): 12-13; Lugenbeel, "Native Africans," 15.

from their first visit to Sierra Leone to the final consummation of their wishes, in the attainment of their paradise...one of whose usages is that of seeking abroad, during the vigorous years of life, the means of dwelling with ease and comfort in old age at home.⁹⁰

Holman's description dates to 1840, but it reveals several significant features that informed the Kru free wage labour diaspora that clearly date back some decades at least. These include: the Kru voluntarily immigrated to Sierra Leone for work; they completed at least several contracts that on average lasted eighteen months; they continually circulated between homeland and workplace; they were compensated for their labour; their objective was to purchase wives and thereby expand their kin group; they eventually returned to the Kru Coast following retirement. Kru would not permanently return to the Kru Coast until they had accumulated enough wages that would effectively elevate their status in Kru society. Holman's account is corroborated by numerous sources that discuss the cyclical nature of Kru labour in Freetown.⁹¹

Over the course of the nineteenth century, traditional structures that governed the Kru homeland would be increasingly affected by the Kru free wage labour cycle. One of the most prominent indicators of such change was evidenced by the way in which the *krogba* adapted to include the homecoming ritual as an essential part of displaying their wealth and authority. Social, economic and political developments that emerged in the Krutown community in Freetown had a profound impact on the Kru economy and social order as shown below.

⁹⁰ Holman, "Mr. Holman's Travels," 64.

⁹¹ Sources that support the idea that the Kru were engaged in a free wage labour diaspora in Freetown by circulating between their homeland and Krutown include Lugenbeel, "Native Africans," 15; Sixth Report of the African Institution (1812): 68-70; *The Analectic Magazine* 1 (1813): 12-13; Parliamentary Papers, "Report of a Commission of Inquiry into the State of Sierra Leone, part 1," vol. 7 (1827), 312; William Davies, *Extracts from the Journal of the Rev. William Davies, 1st, when a Missionary at Sierra Leone, Western Africa; Containing some Account of the Countrey, etc* (New York: Wesleyan Printing Office, 1835), 26.

This chapter has analyzed Kru employment in Freetown. The Kru presence in Freetown from 1792 led to the creation of Krutown, which continues until today. Krutown created a cultural space where institutions as reflected in the continued use of the Kru mark and the role of headmen in social and economic organization transferred features that had been first created on the Kru Coast. The continuity would develop further as Kru wages became standardized. Based in Freetown, the Kru expanded the geographical breadth of their free wage labour diaspora to other British ports in West Africa while serving on Royal Navy vessels and commercial ships as discussed in Chapter Three.

Chapter 3

Krutowns as Labouring Communities in Atlantic Ports and the Shift to Legitimate Trade

British expansion in West Africa in the nineteenth century led to an increase in Kru employment. Kru continued to be hired in their homeland on the Kru Coast, which resulted in the extension of their activities to the new communities of returning African Americans who founded Liberia, as well as in their diaspora community at Freetown. Kru were offered contracts in West Africa as part of the British initiative to encourage legitimate trade (trade in agricultural commodities such as palm oil and peanuts) and repress the Atlantic slave trade.¹ Gradually, the Kru formed a network of diaspora communities that extended beyond the Kru Coast. The first of these new communities after Freetown was located at Monrovia, after it was founded in 1822, which in effect extended the coastal concentration of Kru settlements to the west of the original five towns. Thereafter, Royal Navy service and commercial contracts in the palm oil industry formed the main thrust of Kru employment and provided the rationale for the creation of Krutowns in many of the ports where they laboured.²

This chapter investigates the foundation of the Kru community at Monrovia and the subsequent extension of Kru labour along the West African coast, first at Cape Coast, and in the Atlantic at Ascension Island, Fernando Po, and Simon's Town at the Cape of Good Hope. Their

¹ For a discussion on the transition from slave trading to so-called legitimate trade in agricultural commodities in West Africa see Paul Lovejoy and David Richardson, "The Initial 'Crisis of Adaptation': The Impact of British Abolition on the Atlantic Slave Trade in West Africa, 1808-1820," in *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth Century West Africa* ed., Robin Law (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 32-56; Martin Lynn, "The West African Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century and the 'Crisis of Adaptation,'" in *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth Century West Africa* ed., Robin Law (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 57-77.

² Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class*, 76.

communities were established adjacent to naval bases as part of the Royal Navy's suppression strategy to maintain a steady labour pool of seamen. Kru labourers in Lagos served both a military function and worked in palm oil production, which extended to Calabar and Bonny in the Niger Delta. The establishment of new diaspora communities in these locations was related to their employment in commercial and military contexts. Kru labour was increasingly important in the suppression of the trans-Atlantic slave trade in pursuit of Cuban, French, and Brazilian slave ships, even as the Cuban slave trade intensified. Their involvement in British suppression efforts led to the creation of Krutowns that followed the model of Freetown. This chapter explores the ways that headmen continued to structure labour relations with the British in diaspora communities as Kru labour came to include agricultural contracts and coaling on Royal Navy steamships.

Coastal West Africa

The Kru established a labouring community at Cape Mesurado, which became Monrovia after the arrival of the first African American settlers (Americo-Liberians) who were to found Liberia.³ Fraenkel suggests that when the settlers arrived in 1822, there was already a Kru community present that dated to at least the first decade of the nineteenth century.⁴ Similar to the Kru community in Freetown, it was not formally recognized as Krutown until several years after the arrival of Kru labourers. In 1822, American Colonization Society agent, Jeduhi Ashmun

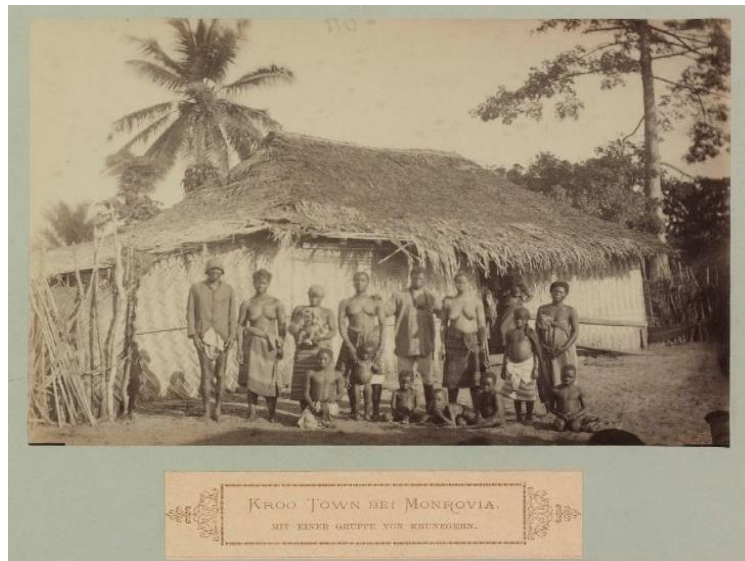
³ For more discussion on the term "Americo-Liberians" see Robert P. Murray, "Whiteness in Africa: Americo-Liberians and the Transformative Geographies of Race," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Kentucky, 2013), 25.

⁴ Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class*, 71.

estimated the Kru population on Bushrod Island to be 50.⁵ Samuel Wilkeson made an early reference to “Krootown” in 1825.⁶ However, it was not until the 1830s that there were frequent references to a Monrovia Krootown in the *African Repository* and other writings of the period, and the earliest known photograph dates to 1886 (Fig. 3.1).⁷

Figure 3.1

Krootown, Monrovia, c. 1886



Source: Johann Büttföcker, “Kroo Town bei Monrovia, mit einer Gruppe van Krunegem. Maker,” 1886, accessed on June 1, 2017, <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/460774605603362096/>.

Kru continued their role as stevedores loading and unloading cargoes in port and were hired on British, Dutch and American ships. The hiring practices in Monrovia resembled those

⁵ Jehudi Ashmun, *History of the American Colony in Liberia from December 1821 to 1823* (Washington: Way & Gideon, 1826), 7.

⁶ Samuel Wilkeson, *A Concise History of the Commencement, Progress and Present Condition of the American Colonies in Liberia* (Washington: Madisonian Office, 1839), 20. Although Wilkeson published his book in 1839, he refers to Krootown in a section referring to events in 1825.

⁷ “Municipal Legislation at Monrovia,” *African Repository* 12, no. 5 (1836): 163; *African Repository* 48 (1872): 186; *A Manual to Accompany Colton’s Missionary Map of the World* (New York: G.W. & C.B. Colton & Co., 1878), 53; “Elevation of the Natives,” *African Repository* 51, no. 2 (1875): 125.

in Freetown as Kru headmen negotiated the terms of contracts for service on ships. In 1842, Charles Rockwell described the hiring process in Monrovia as follows:

On coming to anchor in the harbor of Monrovia, we made an arrangement with one of the chiefs or captains of the Kroomen, by which we secured the services of about thirty of his tribe, to fill our ship with water from the neighboring river, and to perform other boat service, by which the health of our own crew would have been exposed. They had rations allowed them on board, and a part of them commonly slept there at night. As they had most of them either served for a time aboard English men-of-war, or had frequent intercourse with merchant ships of the same nation, or of our own, they spoke a broken English, in which the pronoun *me* was almost the only one used.⁸

The passage reveals that the Kru had regular contact with British vessels in Monrovia. Many of the Kru who resided in Krutown had previously been employed in the Royal Navy or on British merchant ships and decided to settle in Monrovia rather than Freetown. This may have been because of the opportunity to find continual employment in Dutch and German factories between contracts with the British as discussed below. The headman, who Rockwell identifies as a chief or captain, secured employment for his labour gang. The process begun on the Kru Coast and in Freetown had become standard hiring practice in the Kru diaspora community in Monrovia by the 1840s.

Like the Krutown that developed in Freetown, Kru resided next to the waterside, which was essential due to the nature of their work. Their community was located on the bank of the Mesurado River (Fig. 3.2). They fished for subsistence and sold their catch locally. A fish market was established in Krutown in 1872.⁹ As seen in Fig. 3.2, living on the riverbank allowed Kru easy access to European and American ships for trade and employment. The size of the Kru population in Monrovia in the early nineteenth century is unknown. Yet, it is reasonable to suggest that the population was far less than the number of Kru in Freetown because they were

⁸ "Description of the Kroo," *African Repository* 18, no.11 (1842): 277.

⁹ "Liberian Intelligence," *African Repository* 48, no. 6 (1872): 186.

Figure 3.2

Krootown, Monrovia c. 1900



Source: Unknown Photographer. Krootown, Monrovia, Postcard, accessed on June 1, 2017, http://cartespostales.eu/liberia/110463-LIBERIA_-_MONROVIA_-_Krootown_-_tr_s_bon__tat.html.

not employed on steady contracts with the British in Monrovia. Their employment more closely resembled their hiring practices on the Kru Coast, which depended on passing ships.

However, the Kru population had increased by the 1880s. Eventually, a second Krootown developed on the other bank of the Mesurado River.¹⁰ It was smaller and was more akin to a makeshift settlement than an official Krootown. In 1886, Johann Büttikofer differentiated the two communities.

Whereas the Krootown at Monrovia supplies the Dutch factory with labourers and sailors, the Woermann factory draws the same almost exclusive from the other, which therefore is also called German Krootown. It is smaller though, and now also built anew,

¹⁰ Büttikofer, *Travel Sketches*, 49.

as a couple of years ago the town stood quite close to the mouth of the river on the so-called *Kroo-point*.¹¹

Beyond supplying British ships with seamen, both Krutowns catered to the labour demands of Dutch and German factories by supplying workers. The establishment of German Krootown suggests that Kru continued to live close to their workplaces and were willing to create new communities in any location where they had the opportunity to earn steady wages. Their duties included transporting cargo from factory to ship before departure for Europe. Kru residing in German Krootown engaged in supplying docked ships with coal that was stored in the Woermann factory. Kru were hired at many Woermann factories on the African coast between Monrovia and Swakopmund in South West Africa.¹² German companies tended to hire Kru labourers in Monrovia, which meant that most Kru working on contract came from Kabor and Jloh *dako*.¹³ In 1883, there was a fire that burnt down part of Krutown in Monrovia, but it was rebuilt.¹⁴ During this period, Büttikofer estimated the population of Kru working in Monrovia to be approximately 1,000.¹⁵

Beginning in the 1880s, the Krutown Headman in Monrovia was given the title of “Kru Governor” by the Liberian state.¹⁶ His role was like the Krutown Headman in Freetown, which was to keep order in the community and secure labour for ships. And, like the Kru community in Freetown who competed with Yoruba labourers for contracts, Kru residing in Monrovia competed with Vai. Vai traditionally resided in Cape Mount, which was the region adjacent to

¹¹ Ibid, 50.

¹² Kru worked on Woermann factories in Victoria, Doula, Cape Lopez, Gabon and Swakopmund. See Theodor Böhner, *Die Woermanns* (Berlin: Brücke zur Heimat, 1935), 133.

¹³ Sundiata, “Rise and Decline,” 28.

¹⁴ Büttikofer, *Travel Sketches*, 49.

¹⁵ Ibid, 49.

¹⁶ Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class*, 89.

Monrovia. They established a community in the vicinity of Monrovia known as “Vey town.”¹⁷ Labourers from their community went to Monrovia in search of work. In 1899, Heinrich Klose described their relationship with the Kru as follows: “Die Kruboy und Weiboy [Vai] sind Todfeinde.”¹⁸ Klose’s characterization of the Kru and Vai as mortal enemies most likely developed from the fact that the Kru had migrated to Monrovia in the vicinity of Vai territory and threatened to take labour contracts away from their community. Unlike the Kru, Vai labourers failed to establish diaspora communities on the coast of West Africa. In 1916, Monrovia Krutown became known as the Borough of Krutown, and the Kru Corporation that secured contracts for Kru workers was established. By 1920, the Kru population was estimated at 8,000.¹⁹

When compared with the Kru from the five towns who formed the majority in Krutown in Freetown, those Kru working in Monrovia were primarily the Jloh Kru from Sasstown and Gbeta Kru from Picininny Cess on the Kru Coast.²⁰ While both groups spoke Kru and resided on the Kru Coast for centuries, their towns did not belong to the original five settlements. Tonkin and Davis have suggested that their towns developed in the nineteenth century. The Jloh are believed to have migrated from east of the Cavalla River at an unknown date before eventually being associated with the creation of Sasstown around 1840.²¹ The Gbeta Kru formed the town Picaninny Cess to the northwest of Grand Cess. They are believed to have emigrated from the St. John River in Bassa country before establishing themselves in Picaninny Cess.²²

¹⁷ Reverend Joseph Tracy, “Muhammedanism in Central Africa,” *African Repository* 45, no. 8 (1869): 240.

¹⁸ Klose, *Togo unter Deutscher Flagge*, 11.

¹⁹ Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class*, 89.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

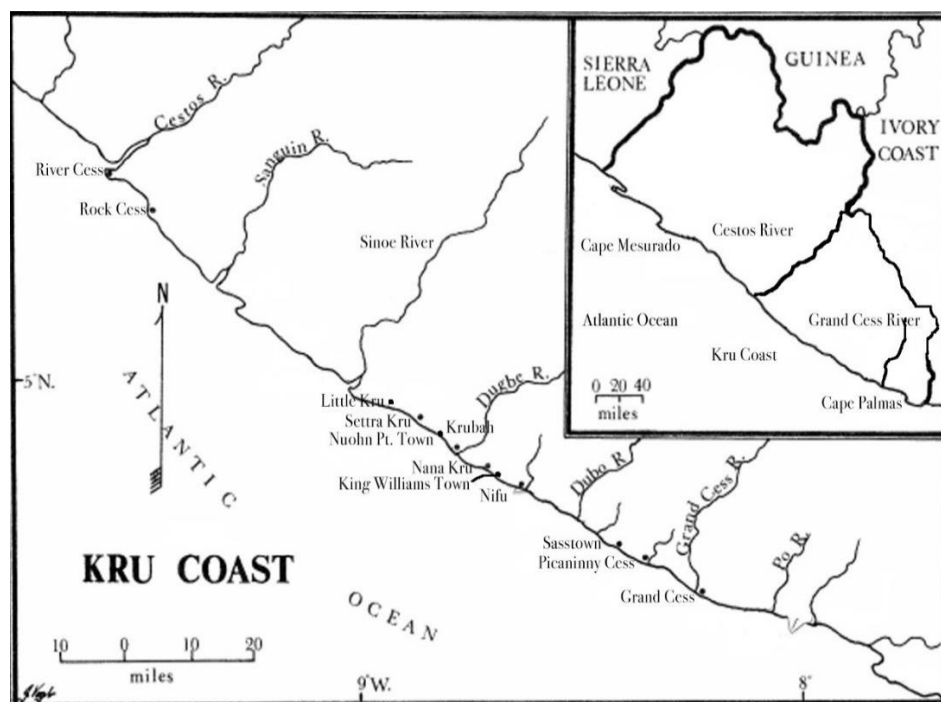
²¹ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 106-107; Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts*, 22.

²² Davis *Ethnohistotical Studies*, 130.

The establishment of new coastal communities on the Kru Coast in the nineteenth century led to the formation of new *dako* including Kabor, Jloh, Sasstown (or Pahn), and Gbeta, and interior *dako* including the Matro, Bolo, Nanke and Bwa.²³ Kru villages adjacent to the “Proper Kru” extended to the Cestos River in the west and Grand Cess in the east (Fig. 3.3). They all

Fig. 3.3

Kru Coast, Mid-Nineteenth Century



Source: Adapted from map in Davis, “Liberian Struggle,” 223.

spoke Kru and expanded the geographical parameters of the Kru Coast. The formation of new towns that sent their workers abroad meant that new *dako* were established and engaged in migratory labour, and like those Kru in Freetown, those in Monrovia were identified as Kru.

²³ Fraenkel, “Social Change,” 154-155; Frost, *Work and Community*, 7; Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 69-196; Martin, “Krumen,” 402-403; Fraenkel, “Social Change,” 154; Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 19-38; C. Wondji, “The States and Cultures of the Upper Guinea Coast,” in *General History of Africa, Vol. 5: Africa from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Bethwell A. Ogot (Los Angeles: University of California, 1992), 381.

By the 1830s, the Kru established another community at Cape Coast Castle. Their service on Royal Navy ships ensured that they sailed between Freetown and Cape Coast in pursuit of slave ships. While there is no evidence that they established a quarter known as Krutown as they had in Freetown, Thomas Baynes writing for *The Encyclopedia Britannica* described their community as a “colony of Kroomen” living in quarters adjacent to Cape Coast Castle in 1833.²⁴ Although the size of their community is not documented, they were distinguished from local Fante labourers. The earliest available figure regarding the size of the community dates to 1868 when there were 16 Kru listed as living in the colony at Cape Coast.²⁵ Kru loaded and unloaded cargo as well as served in a military capacity being stationed at Cape Coast Castle and the adjacent barracks.²⁶

Should Kru labourers suffer an injury on the job, they were admitted to the Government Hospital in Cape Coast (and all locations in the Gold Coast). They were charged a special fee compared with Royal Navy officers and seamen. An ordinance in 1887 stated the following:

When a Krooman in service of any person shall have been admitted as a patient in any Government Hospital by a Surgeon in charge, even though not upon the request of such Krooman’s employer, there shall be a payable by such employer in respect of such Krooman the sum of One shilling for each day in residence in such a Hospital.²⁷

Whether a Kru shoreside labourer or seaman in the Royal Navy or commercial vessel, the employer was responsible for paying one shilling per day for hospitalization. By comparison,

²⁴ Thomas Spencer Baynes, *The Encyclopedia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences and General Literature, Ninth Edition*, vol. 5 (New York: Henry G Allen and Company Publishers, 1833), 41.

²⁵ J.J. Crooks, *Records Relating to the Gold Coast, 1750-1874* (London: Routledge, [1903] 2016), 354.

²⁶ Kru service in the campaign against the Asante will be discussed in Chapter Five.

²⁷ William Brandford Griffith, Esquire, C.M.G. Governor, “An Ordinance to Establish Payment for the Treatment of Certain Patients in Government Hospitals,” Ordinance No. 2, 12 March 1887, 641.

British masters paid a fee of 10s., officers 7s. 6d. and seamen 4s. per day.²⁸ Perhaps the lower fee was an incentive for British captains to employ Kru without fear of heavy costs associated with hospital care. Moreover, the fact that the Kru were allotted special mention in the ordinance and assigned a fee that differed from British seamen demonstrates that the Kru had established a distinct identity in Cape Coast. Gradually, it became a common feature in hospital ordinances in West Africa to give the Kru special mention as shown below in the discussion of the Kru community in Lagos.

Apparently, one of their duties that was important at Cape Coast included Kru service in shoreside transportation. Kru taxied British officials and visiting foreigners on go-carts that were comparable in design to the “Japanese rickshaw.”²⁹ In 1897, Colonial Secretary of the Gold Coast, F.M. Hodgson reported that the Kru drove the go-carts in the following manner:

I had been conveyed to the foot of the hills in a go-cart, which in the towns of Accra and Cape Coast is fast becoming the common means of locomotion...the Gold Coast go-cart is a pole and a cross-bar take the place of shafts. It is propelled by Krooboy one of whom, usually the senior, holds the pole at the crossbar and guides the cart, and two push behind by means of a rail fitted at the back for that purpose. These lads- natives of the Kroo Coast...bowl along with the go-carts at a fair speed.³⁰

Hodgson associated Kru labourers exclusively with go-cart transportation in Cape Coast and Accra. Go-carts were manned by three Kru in a hierarchal structure. It most probable that the most “senior” worker was the headman in the operation. He directed the pace, route and logistics of transportation between locations and was assumed to take his share of earnings from the other labourers.³¹

²⁸ Ibid, 641.

²⁹ F.M. Hodgson, “Notes on a Journey in the Gold Coast Colony,” *St. Martin’s Le Grand*, vol. 6 (London: W.P. Griffith & Sons, 1896), 2.

³⁰ Ibid, 2.

³¹ Ibid, 2.

Kru continued to man the surfboats from ship to shore as they had in Freetown and on the Kru Coast. They also sailed between Cape Coast and Freetown on Royal Navy vessels in pursuit of slave ships. Their permanent presence reveals that Kru diaspora and labour communities had expanded from the 1790s in Freetown to include Cape Coast by at least the 1830s, if not before.

Ascension Island became an important port in Royal Navy operations when it was occupied in 1815.³² It served as the naval headquarters supply depot for the Royal Navy in the Atlantic. Located nearly mid-way between Africa and Brazil, its strategic position enabled naval vessels to pursue slave ships far out to sea in all directions. The Kru had a long history throughout the nineteenth century of residing in and transiting through Ascension Island while serving in the Royal Navy. Much like the colony of Kru established at Cape Coast, they also formed an independent colony in Garrison Station, in the port, Georgetown. In their quarter, they lived in sheds adjacent to the lodgings of British seamen. This space enabled the Kru to speak their language, sing Kru work songs, and maintain cultural practices in diaspora.³³ Unlike Freetown, where there were many quarters inhabited by a range of African communities including Yoruba and Congolese, in Garrison, the Kru formed the only unique African community.

While they only remained in Garrison for short periods before sailing on Royal Navy ships, they were also employed in shoreside jobs. Their duties included loading and unloading

³² Ascension Island Government website. Accessed November 18 2018. <http://www.ascension-island.gov.ac/the-island/history/>.

³³ H. Davy, "Voyage of H.M.S. Thunderer to the Mauritius and Back, Notes by Mr. H. Davy, Master, R.N.-1843," *The Nautical Magazine and the Naval Chronicle for 1844, A Journal of Subjects Connected to Maritime Affairs* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1844), 427.

cargo, coaling ships, constructing the observatory and providing portage services moving equipment from the coast to Green Mountain.³⁴

Kru were so integral to operations on the island that the Royal Navy constructed Krooman's Hospital following the establishment of Georgetown Hospital in 1833.³⁵ It was classified as a government hospital and not only provided service for Kru seamen, but also functioned as an isolation centre for disease-ridden British seamen.³⁶ An ordinance entitled "Rates Payable for Kroomen" in 1887 specified that Royal Navy was to pay a fee for injured Kru for every day spent in the hospital:

When any Krooman in the service of any person shall have been admitted as a patient into any Government Hospital by a Surgeon in charge, even though not upon the request of such Krooman's employer, there shall be payable by such employer in respect of such Krooman the sum of One shilling for each day of residence in such Hospital.³⁷

The Royal Navy was responsible for paying the hospital one shilling per day. This differed from their experience in the hospital in Lagos where they were required to pay a higher rate as discussed below. The difference may have been based on the small number of Kru serving in Ascension Island. They were required to serve at sea and perform manual duties based on the island's lack of resources and small population, as compared to the shore labourers in Lagos who could be more readily replaced. The name of the hospital reveals the high value placed on Kru

³⁴ Gill, *Six Months in Ascension*, 96.

³⁵ "Hospital, Ascension Island," *London Illustrated News*, February 28, 1874, 20; Ascension Island Heritage Society, accessed June 15, 2016, <http://www.ascension-island.gov.ac/heritage-ample/>; <http://www.pdavis.nl/GreenMountain.htm>.

³⁶ "Hospital, Ascension Island," *London Illustrated News*, 28 February 1874, 20; Ascension Island Heritage Society, accessed June 16, 2016, <http://www.ascension-island.gov.ac/heritage-ample/>; <http://www.pdavis.nl/GreenMountain.htm>.

³⁷ William Brandford Griffith, "Government Hospitals No.2," Ordinance 4, *Ordinances of the Settlements on the Gold Coast and of the Gold Coast Colony, in Force April 7th, 1887, with an Appendix containing the Rules, Orders in Consul, and Proclamations of Practical Utility and an Index* (London: Waterlow & Sons, 1887), 641.

seamen in the Royal Navy. The ordinance shows that the Kru formed a distinct community on the island given there was a hospital for their community. Alternatively, it may also reveal that the Kru were segregated and not encouraged to receive care alongside British seamen. The British relied on Kru seamen for their labour on the island, but did not perceive them as equals.

Although the Kru population in Ascension Island remained small compared to those residing in Freetown, it formed a vital component of the total population. With only 50 Kru on the island in 1830, their population rose to between 70 and 80 individuals in 1877 (Table 3.1).³⁸ *The Statesman's Year Book* for 1899 suggests that the Kru population increased to an estimated

Table 3.1

Kru Population in Ascension Island

Year	Total Population	Kru Population
1830	150	50
1877	300	70-80
1899	500	177
1905	450	166

Source: Gill, *Six Months*, 134; Webster, *Narrative of the Voyage*, 384; *Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes* 23 (London: A.H. Baily and Co., 1873), 290; J. Scott Keltie, ed., *The Statesman's Year-Book: Statistical and Historical Annual of the States of the World for the Year 1899* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1899), 180; Army and Navy Calendar for 1882/83-1893/94 (1894), 133; J. Scott-Keltie, ed. *The Statesman's Year-Book* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1905), 192.

177.³⁹ Based on these figures, the Kru accounted for a third of population in 1830, 26.6 percent in 1877, 35.4 percent in 1899, and 36.8 percent of the total population in 1905. Statistics show that Kru seamen formed a significant part of the total population of the island between 1830 and

³⁸ Webster, *Narrative of the Voyage*, 64.

³⁹ Keltie, *Statesman's Year-Book*, 180.

1905. Their service in the Royal Navy ensured that they continued to circulate between Ascension Island, Freetown and other ports where they formed their own quarter.

Fernando Po became a major staging point for Royal Navy operations in the suppression of slave trade in the Bight of Biafra after 1827. Clarence Town, the main settlement on the island was founded by Captain W.F. Owen in 1827.⁴⁰ Britain and Spain negotiated that Britain could establish a Mixed Commission Court for the Suppression of the Slave Trade on the island.⁴¹ The idea was to establish a tribunal closer to the Bights of Benin and Biafra where slave trading was most prevalent. Almost immediately after Britain acquired Fernando Po in 1827, Kru were hired for the construction of the British naval station at Clarence Cove.⁴² Clarence Town, as it was also known, became a strategic port for British operations against slave ships that was geographically in proximity to slave trading hotspots along the Bight of Benin and Biafra and whose prize ships could be sailed back to Freetown following capture. While the Kru diaspora community in Ascension Island was formed as a result of their service in the Royal Navy, those Kru residing in Fernando Po had the opportunity to work both Royal Navy and commercial contracts.⁴³

Kru were employed as longshoreman and boatmen and tasked with clearing land, cutting timber and agricultural production.⁴⁴ Kru worked on the local steamer transporting inhabitants of

⁴⁰ Martin Lynn, "Commerce, Christianity and The Origins of 'Creoles' of Fernando Po," *The Journal of African History* 25, no. 3 (1984):258. Richard Francis Burton, *Abeokuta and the Camaroon Mountains: An Exploration*, vol. 2 (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1863), 49.

⁴¹ John Lipski, "The Spanish of Equatorial Guinea: Research on La Hispanidad's Best-Kept Secret," *Afro-Hispanic Review* 21, no. 1/2 70-97 (2002): 76; Martin Lynn, "John Beecroft and West Africa, 1829-54," (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1979), 19-39.

⁴² Alfred Burdon Ellis, *West African Islands* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1885), 70.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 70; Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 155.

⁴⁴ Leonard, *Records of a Voyage*, 155; FO 47/30; Sundiata, 1990, 44-45.

the island along the coast and on rivers.⁴⁵ One of their primary duties was to provide coal for Royal Navy vessels docked in Clarence Cove.⁴⁶ The advent of steamships created new jobs that were dominated by Kru workers including the coaling of Royal Navy ships: “when coaling at Clarence Cove...The filling of the coal bags on shore was done by the Kroomen.”⁴⁷ Coaling seems to have been solely performed by Kru.

By 1832, the Kru community in Clarence Cove was mixed with other “free negroes” and numbered 2,000.⁴⁸ “Free Negroes” included black settlers from Sierra Leone and possibly other African peoples including the Yoruba, who in some cases were recaptives.⁴⁹ The Kru were designated as distinct from other Africans, most probably because of their frequent employment with the British and the British reliance on their skill set. Although the precise number of Kru in this community is unknown, they formed a crucial part of British military and labour operations in Fernando Po. The height of Royal Navy activity occurred between 1827 and 1834. Anti-slave raids temporarily ceased in 1835 as main operations shifted back to Freetown.⁵⁰ However, the Royal Navy continued to use Clarence as a strategic port for refuelling their vessels with coal.

⁴⁵ Sundiata, “Rise and Decline,” 32.

⁴⁶ Parliamentary Papers, Session 6 February-5 August 1873, vol. 8 (1873), 186-187. The HMS *Rosamond* had a crew of twenty-three seamen, which included six Krumen or just over 25 percent of the total. Also see Parliamentary Papers, Session 6 February- 5 August 1873, vol. 8 (1873), 186-187; Sir Henry Huntley, *Seven Years' Service on the Slave Coast of Western Africa*, vol. 1 (London: Thomas Cautley Newby, 1850), 210.

⁴⁷ Parliamentary Papers, Session 6 February-5 August 1873, vol. 8 (1873), 186-187; Also see Parliamentary Papers, Correspondence Respecting Affairs in the Cameroons, Enclosure 1, no. 25 “Captain Brook to Rear-Admiral Salmon” (1885), 22; ADM 101/132/2, Folios 14-24.

⁴⁸ Richard and John Lander, *Journal of an Expedition*, 2: 296.

⁴⁹ Thomas Jefferson Bowen, *Central Africa: Adventures and Missionary Labors in Several Countries in the Interior of Africa* (New York: Southern Baptist Publication Society, 1857), 217-218.

⁵⁰ Castillo-Rodríguez, “First Missionary Linguistics,” 76.

A distinct “Kroo Town” developed in Clarence Town from 1841.⁵¹ Like their diaspora communities in Freetown and Monrovia, the Kru community in Clarence Town was led by a “head Krooman.”⁵² Apart from organizing labour on Royal Navy ships and agricultural labour, his duty was to negotiate contracts for ship captains who sought Kru seamen.⁵³ Their community was almost entirely male as most of its members were described as living “singly” in 1842.⁵⁴ It is not known if Kru women were included in the population figures provided below. However, in 1848, the *Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal* carried a story about Kru men having concubine relationships with the indigenous Bubi women much to the dislike of the European missionaries.⁵⁵ In reality, Kru may have intermarried and had children with these women to create a new creole generation. Such relations added to the tense relations between the Kru and local Bubi as the Kru who attempted to settle in the interior were met with physical violence and forced to return to Clarence Town.⁵⁶ Based on such a response, the Bubi most likely perceived the Kru as foreigners who attempted to acquire their traditional land.

Some Kru were discontent with their treatment on plantations in West Africa Company contracts. In 1841, the Baptist Missionary Society reported one story regarding Kru labour an

⁵¹ CO 82/9, “John Clarke to the British Foreign and Anti-Slavery Society,” November 2, 1841.

⁵² Rev. Hope Masterson Waddell, *Twenty-nine Years in the West Indies and Central Africa: A Review of Missionary Work Adventure 1829-1858 By the Rev. Hope Masterson Waddell* (London: T. Nelson and Sons, Paternoster Row Edinburgh, 1863), 297.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 297.

⁵⁴ *Baptist Missionary Herald* 37 (September 1841): 132.

⁵⁵ Thomas Richard Heywood Thomson, “The Bubis, or Edeeyah of Fernando Po,” *The Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal* 44 (1848): 240; Ibrahim K. Sundiata, *From Slavery to Neoslavery: The Bight of Biafra and Fernando Po in the Era of Abolition, 1827-1930* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 86.

⁵⁶ For more discussion on tensions between the Kru and the Bubi peoples see Ibrahim K. Sundiata, *From Slaving to Neoslavery*, 86-87; Sundiata, “Rise and Decline,” 25-42; Susana Castillo-Rodríguez, “The First Missionary Linguistics in Fernando Po,” in *Colonialism and Missionary Linguistics*, ed., Klaus Zimmermann and Birte Kellmermeier-Rehbein (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015), 75-106.

English owned plantation in which “two headmen named Freeman and Tom Jack were cruelly tortured by John Scott.”⁵⁷ In response to the incident, Kru migrated into the interior and formed an independent community. Kru were accustomed to high wages and standard treatment as stipulated in their contracts. Mistreatment was met with resistance in the form of an exodus away from the main port town in Clarence. They created a new settlement consisting of 400 Kru labourers in the North-West Bay of the island.⁵⁸ However, they clashed with local Bubi villages who perceived the Kru as encroaching on their territory. One point of contention was the fish market. Kru were soon in competition for selling fish to ships and locally at market.⁵⁹ Moreover, the Kru leader of their new community known as Baffler supposedly forced the Bubi to provide them with fish and women.⁶⁰ The West Africa Company captured Baffler, deported him to Freetown and replaced him with a new leader.⁶¹ Some Kru were enticed back to Clarence Town with the promise of higher wages which included 2s. 6d. per day for headmen, 2s. 2d. for regular adults and 1s. per day for adolescents.⁶² The payment system based on hierarchal pay was still very much in play. This episode is unique because rarely did Kru diaspora communities feature break away communities that left their original workplaces.

In 1843, a Spanish expedition led by Captain Lerena resulted in a permanent Spanish presence on the island.⁶³ The British handed over authority to the Spanish, and Kru living and

⁵⁷ Baptist Missionary Society, John Clarke, Journal vol. 1 (1 series), 320. Also see Sundiata, “Rise and Decline,” 33.

⁵⁸ CO 82/11, John Clarke to the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, November 2, 1841. Also see Sundiata, “Rise and Decline,” 31.

⁵⁹ Nuria Fernández Moreno, “Bubi Government at the End of the 19th Century: Resistance to the Colonial Policy of Evangelization on the Island of Bioko, Equatorial Guinea” *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 22, no 1&2 (2013): 27.

⁶⁰ Sundiata, “Rise and Decline,” 31.

⁶¹ Ibid, 31.

⁶² Ibid, 31.

⁶³ Castillo-Rodríguez, “First Missionary Linguistics,” 83.

working on the island were greatly impacted by Spanish plantation contracts offered thereafter. However, John Beecroft was named Governor by the Spanish and also became the British Consul the Bights of Biafra and Benin.⁶⁴ Based on his experience with Kru labourers, Spanish authorities understood the value of maintaining a steady labour force from the Kru Coast. Fernando Po remained connected with Royal Navy operations in the Bights, serving as a refuelling station and depot for hiring Kru seamen.

The arrival of Spanish missionaries meant that some Kru workers were exposed to Catholicism for the first time. Most of the missionaries they had encountered in Freetown belonged to Protestant denominations. Beyond attempting to convert Kru workers, Catholic missionaries sought to decipher linguistic structures informing the Kru language. In 1843, Catholic missionary, Gerónimo M. Usera y Alarcón, found two Krumen who were willing to speak with him.⁶⁵ In the process, the two Krumen converted to Catholicism. In 1852, Gerónimo M. Usera y Alarcón recounted the details of their baptism:

Pues bien, los dos negro *Crumanes* que tripulaban la primera canoa que en Fernando Póo abordó la bergantín *Nervion*, eran los mismos que el 1.º de mayo de 1844 recibían el santo Bautismo en la Real Capilla, eran mis dos hijos espirituales Felipe Quir y Santiago Yegüe.⁶⁶

Following their baptism, the two Krumen (Crumanes in Spanish) were given the names Felipe Quir and Santiago Yegüe.⁶⁷ They had manned the canoes on the *Nervion*, a Spanish naval vessel. They continued their tradition of transporting people and commodities from ship to shore and

⁶⁴ Ibid, 76.

⁶⁵ Gerónimo M. Usera y Alarcón, *Observaciones al Ilamado Opúsculo sobre la Colonizacion de Fernando Póo* (Madrid: Aguado, 1852) 26-27. Also see Castillo-Rodríguez, Susana. "The First Missionary Linguistics in Fernando Po," in *Colonialism and Missionary Linguistics*, eds., Klaus Zimmermann and Birte Kellermeier-Rehbein (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2015) 75-106.

⁶⁶ Usera y Alarcón, *Observaciones*, 27.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 26-27.

vice versa with the Spanish in Fernando Po. Quir and Yegüe became fluent in Spanish following instruction by a teacher named José Mariano Vallejo.⁶⁸ Even though only two Kru are mentioned in the sources, the episode is significant. Kru had been resistant to literacy and conversion to Christianity on the Kru Coast and in Freetown until the later decades of the nineteenth century. Quir and Yegüe are two of earliest known cases of Kru converts to Christianity. Their willingness to learn to read and write in Spanish and convert to Catholicism demonstrates that Kru were affected by a range of European influences in their diaspora community in Fernando Po. Increased contact with missionaries resulted in a trend towards conversion to Christianity amongst the Kru in the second half of the nineteenth century on the Kru Coast and in their diaspora communities as discussed in Chapter Six.

Based in Clarence Town, Kru served on British vessels including the HMS *Antelope* and HMS *Rosamond*. In 1850, Sir Henry Huntley described the crew of the HMS *Rosamond*: “twenty-three, three of whom were officers and six were Kroomen to conduct the vessel...for the *Rosamond* was fast gaining upon the retreating vessel.”⁶⁹ Kru accounted for nearly 25 percent of the crew on the HMS *Rosamond*. Andrew Pearson has suggested that most Royal Navy ship crews in the Atlantic consisted of between 10 and 15 Kru seamen.⁷⁰ Their continued presence on Royal Navy vessels transiting through Clarence demonstrates the important role Fernando Po continued to serve in British operations.

The establishment of Krutown in Fernando Po owed its existence to Royal Navy anti-slave trade operations and the West Africa Company (the company responsible for most

⁶⁸ Ibid, 26-27.

⁶⁹ Huntley, *Seven Years' Service*, 210.

⁷⁰ Andrew Pearson, “Waterwitch: A Warship, Its Voyage and its Crew in the Era of Anti-Slavery,” *Atlantic Studies* 13, no. 1 (2016): 116.

plantation schemes on the island). Kru accepted labour contracts in Fernando Po working the plantation fields.⁷¹ In 1899, Élisée Reclus described the nature of Kru labour: “the trade of Fernando-Po is in the hands of the English and Portuguese dealers.... The land is divided into large estates, and cultivated by the Kroomen.”⁷² They were noted for cultivating corn, rice and plantains while on Fernando Po.⁷³ It seems that black settlers from Sierra Leone also made their way to Fernando Po and hired Krumen to work their plantations.⁷⁴ Palm oil and yams were staples between 1830s and 1880s, and cocoa was introduced from Brazil in 1854.⁷⁵ In 1864, British Consul in Fernando Po, Richard Burton, noted: “Krumen [are]...employed all day long in clearing, cutting, and planting.”⁷⁶ Other Kru, numbering a total of 17, worked on a local steamer transporting people and commodities throughout the island.⁷⁷ Similar to their situation in Sierra Leone, Kru served on both shoreside and seaborne contracts and played a major role in the daily operations in Fernando Po.

Table 3.2 shows that the population varied between 1832 and 1901. The initial population between 1827 and 1832 was upwards to 2,000 inhabitants. However, the Kru population fell after 1834 when British activity came to a temporary halt on the island because of

⁷¹ MSN/MN 5014/1-20, William E. Hearsey, Jr. Letters, Rare Books and Special Collections, University of Notre Dame, United States.

⁷² Reclus, *Africa and Its Inhabitants*, 118.

⁷³ Parliamentary Papers, vol. 35 (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1842), 607.

⁷⁴ Ellis, *West African Islands*, 60; Reclus, *Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 118.

⁷⁵ Sundiata, Ibrahim K. “Prelude to Scandal: Liberia and Fernando Po, 1880-1930,” *The Journal of African History*, 15, no. 1 (1974): 98.

⁷⁶ Richard Burton, *A Visit to Gelele, King of Dahome* (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1864), 15.

⁷⁷ John Clarke, 2, 1st series, 554, Baptist Missionary Society Archives, Cameroons and Fernando Po, London, United Kingdom.

Table 3.2

Kru Population in Fernando Po

Year	Total Population	Population of Clarence Town	Kru Population
1832	2,000	1,500	1,000
1835		1,500	1,000
1838			300
1841		873	192
1843			209
1846		1027	50
1848		900	
1856		982	380
1858			209
1872	15,000		2000
1877		1,106	
1885		1,284	
1901	30,000		993

Source: Huntley, *Seven Years' Service*, 167; *Baptist Missionary Herald* (September 1841), 133; Thomas Hutchinson, *Impressions of Western Africa* (London: Longman, 1858), 180; Simmons, *Tropical Agriculture*, 246, Gerónimo M. Usera y Alarcón, *Memoria de la isla de Fernando Poo* (Madrid: T. Aguado, 1848), 13; J. Scott Keltie, ed., *The Statesman's Year Book* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1897), 959; Navarro, *Apuntes Sobre*, 159-160; Martin Lynn, "Commerce, Christianity and The Origins of 'Creoles' of Fernando Po," *The Journal of African History* 25, no. 3 (1984): 259, 261; Reclus, *Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 503; Sundiata, "The Rise and Decline," 28-29; Sundiata, *From Slaving to Neoslavery*, 57; *Baptist Missionary Herald* September (1841): 132; "Fernando Po," 182-187 *The Missionary Herald* September (1846), 186-187.⁷⁸

a shift in anti-slaving Royal Navy activity back to Freetown. In 1838, British interest in the agricultural viability of the island was renewed and the Kru population increased.

⁷⁸ Huntley, *Seven Years' Service*, 1:167; *Baptist Missionary Herald* (September 1841), 133; Hutchinson, *Impressions*, 180; Simmons, *Tropical Agriculture*, 246. A separate community of 400 Kru labourers was established in North West Bay in 1841. See CO 82/9, "John Clarke to the British Foreign and Anti-Slavery Society," November 2, 1841, The National Archives, Kew. Simmons' figure of 2000 Kru includes Kru circulating between the Oil Rivers, the Bight of Benin and Fernando Po. The number 993 includes Kru in all regions of Fernando Po. See Manuel De Teran, *Síntesis Geográfica de Fernando Póo* (Madrid: Institut d'Estudes Africains, 1962), 85.

Fernando Po was a British colony between 1827 and 1843 when the Kru population was at its highest. The number of Kru living in and transiting through Fernando Po had increased dramatically by 1872.⁷⁹ Peter Lund Simmons provided the figure of 2,000 Kru.⁸⁰ Although population statistics for Fernando Po and Clarence Town are sporadic, Kru formed a constant segment of the labour force on the island. At its height, Kru formed 66.6 percent of the population of Clarence Town in 1832, as compared with only 4.8 percent in 1846. Increased palm oil, cocoa and other agricultural production in these regions may have been a factor that influenced the growth of the Kru population in the second half of the nineteenth century that was directly connected to these work environments. After all, the Kru were familiar with the palm oil production as they formed an integral part of the workforce on the Kru Coast in the same period.

Kru serving on Royal Navy ships docking at Clarence Town sailed to Freetown following the capture of a slave ship before returning to Fernando Po. Much like their routine movement between Ascension Island and Freetown, the cyclical trajectory between Clarence Town and Freetown shows that Kru not only migrated between their homeland on the Kru Coast and workplace, but between diaspora communities in regular intervals.

Cape of Good Hope naval station in Simon's Town also formed a crucial link in the suppression of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. With closer geographical approximation to the coast of Angola than any other Royal Navy port besides James Town, St. Helena, Simon's Town provided the Royal Navy with a greater degree of proficiency towards intercepting ships engaged

⁷⁹ Peter Lund Simmons, *Tropical Agriculture: A Treatise on the Culture, Preparation, Commerce, and Consumption of the Principal Products of the Vegetable Kingdom* (London: E & F.N. Spon, 1877), 246.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 246.

in slave trading in the south Atlantic network between Angola and Brazil.⁸¹ The British occupied Simon's Town in 1806 and established a naval base in 1814.⁸² Over the next several decades, an influx of workers, including the Kru, came to construct the town and serve on Royal Navy ships.

Beginning in 1838, Kru came to form a vital part of operations from Simon's Town in Cape Colony. They arrived on the HMS *Melville* for service on Royal Navy ships engaged in the suppression of the slave trade in the south Atlantic.⁸³ 1838 also marked the British abolition of apprenticeship in Cape Colony and the Caribbean and informed the context for hiring the Kru.⁸⁴ Slavery had been permitted in Simon's Town since 1743 when the Dutch East India Company had used Simon's Town as a winter anchorage.⁸⁵

Based in Simon's Town, Kru served as contract workers tasked with coaling ships, clearing and mooring. Once again, their superb seamen skills meant their labour was in high demand by the British. Initially, they were housed in a building exclusively reserved for Krumen

⁸¹ Albert Bergman, *On Board the "Pensacola": The Eclipse Expedition to the West Coast of Africa* (New York: n.p., 1890), 38; "St. Helena," *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China and Australasia* 3 (1830), 70. For more discussion on slave ship network in the southern Atlantic between Angola and Brazil see Daniel B. Domingues da Silva, "The Atlantic Slave Trade from Angola: A Port-by Port Estimate of Slaves Embarked, 1701-1867," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 46, no.1 (2013), 105-122; Daniel B. Domingues da Silva, *The Atlantic Slave Trade from West Central Africa, 1760-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1-15. For information on the slave trade between Mozambique and Cuba see Hilary C. Palmer, Malyn D.D. Newitt, eds. *Northern Mozambique in the Nineteenth Century: The Travels and Explorations of H.E. O'Neill* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 79.

⁸² Albert Thomas, "'It Changed Everybody's Lives': The Simon's Town Group Areas Removals," in *Lost Communities, Living Memories: Remembering Forced Removals in Cape Town*, ed. Sean Field (Cape Town: David Philip, 2001), 83.

⁸³ Arthur Davey, "Kroomen: Black Sailors at the Cape," (Unpublished paper, 1992), 9.

⁸⁴ For a discussion on the abolition of slavery in Cape Colony see John Edwin Mason, *Social Death and Resurrection: Slavery and Emancipation in South Africa* (Richmond: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 38.

⁸⁵ Michael Whisson, *The Fairest Cape? An Account of the Coloured People in Simonstown* (Johannesburg: The South African Institute of Race Relations, 1972), 4.

in West Dockyard that became known as the Warrant Officer's Club in the twentieth century.⁸⁶ During this period, they also continued to dominate the fishing industry selling to local markets.⁸⁷ In 1883, Kru were described as living in the "native quarter."⁸⁸ Some Kru continued to reside in the dockyard, while others made their homes on the hillside of the native quarter. By at least the 1890s, they established "Kroo Town" near the local railway station built from tents.⁸⁹ The area was located apart from both the dockyard and the native quarter. Their decision to establish living quarters apart from the British and other African labourers reveals the Kru urge to maintain distance between their community and other labouring groups. While statistics for the population of Krutown in the nineteenth century are unknown, the population was 115 in 1890.⁹⁰ Although not as grand in scale as the Krutown in Freetown or Fernando Po, Kru continued their tradition of creating diaspora communities in British ports.

The headman system remained very important for British-Kru relations in Simon's Town. In 1901, a Kruman was convicted of the attempted murder of his boss, Mr. Pinkham master of Admiralty coal hulk, called the *Nubian*. Pinkham had a staff of seven Krumen in charge of coaling ships. The headman was given the task of flogging the convicted Kruman.⁹¹ This

⁸⁶ Whisson, *Fairst Cape*, 6; Lynn Harris, "A Gulf Between the Mountains," 35; Parliamentary Papers, "West Coast of Africa and Cape of Good Hope Station," vol. 42 (1883), 64.

⁸⁷ Thomas, "It Changed Everybody's Lives", 84.

⁸⁸ Parliamentary Papers, "West Coast of Africa and Cape of Good Hope Station," vol. 42 (1883), 64.

⁸⁹ Arthur Davey, "The Kroomen of Simon's Town." *Simon's Town Historical Bulletin* XVI, no. 2 (1990): 51.

⁹⁰ The population of 115 Kru is an approximate number based on the figures provided by Arthur Davey. See Davey, "Kroomen of Simon's Town," 51.

⁹¹ Joline Young, "The West African Kroomem and their Link to Simon's Town," *South African History Online*, accessed on June 17, 2016, <http://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/west-african-kroomen-and-their-link-simons-town-joline-young>.

episode demonstrates that the hierarchal order governing headman-labour relations remained firmly in place.

In contrast to Kru working in Freetown and Fernando Po, their entire population in

Figure 3.4

Kru Stationed in Simon's Town, c. 1889



Source: "Kroomen Stationed in Simon's Town," 1889, Simon's Town Museum, accessed on May 1, 2017, http://www.simonstown.com/museum/stm_hist_miscellaneous.htm.

Simon's Town was employed by the Royal Navy (Fig 3.4). The Kru are dressed in naval attire complete with a hat. The three Kru standing in front of the others may signify that they were headmen and had a higher naval rank.

Some Kru seamen practiced Christianity in Simon's Town. This is a significant development in the context of a naval base because they had largely rejected Christianity in their communities on the Kru Coast until the later decades of the nineteenth century. Some Kru attended St. George's Naval Church at the Dockyard where they were baptized. St. Francis Church contains the burial records, dated 1859 and 1861, of the wives of two of the Kru.⁹² Information found on gravestones in Seaforth Cemetery indicates that some Kru living in Simon's Town were by 1880 baptized and Christian.⁹³ Perhaps, working in the Royal Navy

⁹² Davey, "Kroomen of Simon's Town," 51.

⁹³ Seaforth Cemetery, accessed on May 1, 2017, <https://blog.ecu.edu/sites/expeditionsouthafrica/seaforth-cemetery/>.

played a role in their decision to convert because of the influence of their British colleagues who would have been Christian. While only speculative, it may be that their service in the Royal Navy was a factor in the growing number of conversion rates to Christianity amongst the Kru in the second half of the nineteenth century.

A significant number of Kru have gravestones in the Garden of Remembrance in Simon's Town. Lynn Harris has compiled a list of Kru buried in the cemetery (Table 3.3). In total, 89 Krumen were commemorated in the Garden of Remembrance at Seaforth, Simon's Town and in the Commonwealth Cemetery in Dido Valley. Twenty-six more appear in Naval Hospital and

Table 3.3

Kru Gravestones in Simon's Town, South Africa

Ship Affiliation	Service Action	Kru
HMS <i>Pandora</i>	Royal Navy gunboat that served in West Africa and Mediterranean squadrons in the 1860s	Tom Sharp, Died 1880 J.M. Massey, Died 1880 Tom Cockroach, Died 1881 Black Whale, Died 1880 Jack Glasgow, Died 1881 Jack Smart Died 30/10/1880
HMS <i>Flora</i>	Zulu Wars, served as a guard, store and receiving ship in Simon's Town from the 1850s	Jim Brown, Died 18/4/1882, Age 26 Tom Freeman, Died 6/12/1884, Age 23 Jack Never, Died 26/11, 1893, Age 22 Ben Jumbo, Died 16/7, 1881, Age 30 Tom Dollar, Died 11/1883, Age 40
HMS <i>Raleigh</i>	Squadron in Bombay, Madeira, Falkland Islands, Calcutta, Cape Town, Gibraltar, Ascension Island	Jack Johnson, Died 7/7/1886, Age 26 Charles Cole, Died 3/4/1888, Age 25 Jack Everyday, Died 25/10/1885, Age 25 Jim Brown, Died 2/4/Unknown Ben Roberts, Died 7/10/1890, Age 25 Joseph Mannie, Died 15/9/1888, Age 27 Jack Purse, Died 28/4/1886, Age 22
HMS <i>Penelope</i>	Anglo-Egyptian War in 1882. A receiving ship in 1888 and a Boer War orison hulk in 1897.	Ben Johnson, Died 29/4/1889 George Baker, Died 29/11/1890 Jim Daws, Died 10/7/1890 Tom D., Died 4/1896

		John Bull, Died 28/4/1890 Sim Reeves, Died 11/8/1890 Tom Tree, Died 18/9/1890 Jack Smart No.2, Died 24/9/1880, Age 22 Tom Peter No.8, Died 8/1893 Jack Andrews, Died 9/1893 Flying Jim, Died 3/12/1889 Sam Lewis, Died 9/10/1889 Dick Dead Eye, Died 21/8/1890 Tom Poorfellow, Died 28/4/1889, Age 24
HMS <i>Boadicea</i>	Slave Trade Raids around Zanzibar in 1890s. Flagship of the East India Station	George Moses, Died 16/1/1882 Dick Dallik, Died 26/7/1882, Age 28
HMS <i>Curacoa</i>	Cape and West Africa Stations in the 1880s	Jim Crow, Died 7/4/1890
HMS <i>St. George</i>	West Africa Station	Bob Roberts Died 8/6/1896, Age 22 Tom Bowling, Died 4/1896 John Westlake, Died 7/1895
HMS <i>Watchful</i>	Gunboat in Royal Navy in the 1880s	Tom Peters No.5, Died 18/8/1886, Age 18
HMS <i>Rapid</i>	Cape of Good Hope Station and missions in Mediterranean countries including Corfu, Albania and Malta	John Bull, Died 11/3/1886, Age 26
HMS <i>Alecto</i>	Anti-slavery service of the coast of West Africa	Tom Pea Soup, Died 23/4/1886, Age 21
HMS <i>Simoon</i>	British War against the Ashante in 1873. A Hospital and water supply ship for troops.	Jim Crow, Died 23/10/1904

Source: Lynn Harris, "A Gulf Between the Mountains," 35.

Burial records, bringing the total Kru to 115.⁹⁴ Gravestone records show which Royal Navy ships the Kru served on while based in Simon's Town. These records illustrate that Kru life expectancy was between eighteen years and thirty-three years. Their age is significant because it provides a glimpse of the average age of the workers and shows that the majority of Kru were

⁹⁴ Davey, "Kroomen of Simon's Town," 51.

adults rather than *kofa*. Their low life-expectancy rate was most probably based on the dangerous conditions associated with the nature of their work in the Royal Navy.

The gravestones show the geographical extent of Kru service on sea routes in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Personal information therein reveals that the Kru returned to their community in Simon's Town following the completion of their contracts. The existence of Kru gravestones and Krutown suggest they had established a diaspora community by the 1880s when the first gravestones were produced. Despite its distant location, the Kru community in Simon's Town remained intimately connected with other Kru communities in ports in the Atlantic, especially Freetown, where they were hired by the British.

Lagos after British Occupation in 1851 and Formal Annexation in 1861

Kru began to work in Lagos following the British occupation in 1851. During the 1850s, the bulk of Kru service continued to centre on the Royal Navy. In 1857, for example, Kru were responsible for manning the launch boats in the HMS *Brune*, which was stationed at Lagos.⁹⁵ Kru migrant workers lived on Lagos Island next to Tinubu Square, which was initially formed in the 1870s.⁹⁶ The location was ideal for its close proximity to the harbour where they laboured. Sixty-six Kru children were recorded as being born in Lagos during the 1870s and 1880s.⁹⁷ While the male population continued to dominate the Kru community in Lagos, the birth of Kru children suggests that Kru women may have accompanied their husbands. Alternatively, Kru may have intermarried with local Yoruba women, and the children were recorded as Kru.

⁹⁵ Geary, *Nigeria*, 33.

⁹⁶ Martin, "Krumen," 9.

⁹⁷ Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 189.

The acting Governor of Nigeria estimated the “floating Kroo population” in Lagos to be 1,200 in 1897. While many Kru transited through the port on ship contracts, the increase in population may have been related to the construction of the port in Lagos.⁹⁸ Kru were engaged in shoreside and seaborne labour with some only able to find work in domestic service. They also contributed to the construction of infrastructure including roads and buildings in Lagos, and most notably, Lagos Port and the railway north of the port.⁹⁹ The British had come to rely on Kru labour in Lagos as they had in Freetown and the Gold Coast. It seems that by the early twentieth century the Kru community in Lagos outnumbered those in all of their other diaspora communities.

The Kru were distinguished as a distinct community in documents pertaining to hospitalization in Lagos. Kru working as pilots in the harbour and in local factories were required to pay for their stay in the Colonial Hospital in Lagos a total “sum of Four shillings and two pence for each of the first five days of his residence in the said Hospital, and the sum of One shilling and three pence for each subsequent day.”¹⁰⁰ The fact the Kru were distinguished from servants and designated their own quarter is telling in that they had formed their own unique identity while in the Colony of Lagos. Ordinance No.1 also reveals that the Kru were making wages in order to pay for their stay in the hospital.

Kru were also distinguished by the British through their inclusion in the procession in Port Lagos in 1897 honouring Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee (Fig. 3.5). The Kru are

⁹⁸ Cynthia Schmidt, “Kru Mariners and Migrants of the West African Coast,” in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music: Africa*, ed. Ruth M. Stone (London: Routledge, 2017), 110-123.

⁹⁹ Mann, *Slavery and the Birth, 189*; “Southern Nigeria, Report for 1899-1900”, 26.

¹⁰⁰ George Stallard and Edward Harrinson Richards, *Ordinances and Orders, and Rules Thereunder, in Force of the Colony of Lagos on December 31, 1893*, “Hospital Fees for Kroomen and Servants, no.1 1881” (London: Stevens, 1894), 412.

Figure 3.5

Kru Procession in Lagos Marina, c. 1897



Source: Trustees of the British Museum. “Diamond Jubilee – Procession of Kroo boys on the Marina Lagos.” British Museum, registration number Af, A51.71; also Posted in *Asiri Magazine* on June 15, 2017, accessed October 28, 2017, <http://asirimagazine.com/en/>.

visible in an image and report under the title “portraits of local people.”¹⁰¹ Categorizing the Kru as local people meant that their diaspora community in Lagos was both unique and sizeable.

The accompanying note on the British Museum website suggests that these Kru were in the Royal Navy and wore white on this special occasion of Queen Victoria’s diamond jubilee as a form of commemoration.

By the early twentieth century, Kru were requested to serve labour contracts in Lagos as boatmen for periods of six months, with a chance to renew for twelve months. As was the case in boarding in Freetown, Kru were given an advance of £1 for each headman who could earn £2 10s. per month and 10s. for every Kru boatman on £1 5s. per month (see Table 3.4). The decision to hire the Kru in Lagos was based on the Governor’s previous experience of drawing

¹⁰¹ Trustees of the British Museum. “Diamond Jubilee – Procession of Kroo boys on the Marina Lagos.” British Museum, registration number Af, A51.71; also posted in *Asiri Magazine* on June 15, 2017, accessed October 28, 2017, <http://asirimagazine.com/en/>.

on Kru labour in the Gambia.¹⁰² The wage rate reveals that the headman structure that became institutionalized in Freetown was still very much in play as regular labourers were expected to provide their headmen with a portion of their earnings.

Palm Oil Production, Legitimate Trade, and Kru Employment

Kru also participated in the shift to so-called “legitimate trade” and the development of palm oil as a major export. The shift was meant to encourage Kru, Yoruba, and other traders on the west coast of Africa to earn profits from palm oil production rather than from slave trading.¹⁰³ However, the transition caused an increase in local slavery as the enslaved were directed to agricultural production in the Bight of Biafra.¹⁰⁴ During this transitional period, Kru remained on wage labour contracts with the British and founded labour communities in the Niger Delta. It is not known whether they used slave labour in palm oil production on the Kru Coast during this period.

Palm oil production in Bonny played a major role in Kru migration there. By the 1850s, there were between 500 and 600 Kru working on agricultural contracts in Bonny.¹⁰⁵ Many Kru

¹⁰² Frost, *Work and Community*, 26.

¹⁰³ Kristin Mann, “Owners, Slaves and the Struggle for Labour in the Commercial Transition in Lagos,” in *From Slave Trade to ‘Legitimate’ Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth Century West Africa*, ed. Robin Law (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 195-214; Robin Law, “The Politics of Commercial Transition: Factional Conflict in Dahomey in the Context of Ending the Slave Trade,” *The Journal of African History* 38, no. 2 (1997): 213-333; Robin Law, *Ouidah: The Social History of a West African Slaving ‘Port’, 1727-1892* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004), 189-230; Martin Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: The Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 34-104.

¹⁰⁴ Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, 1-8, 51-130; Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 160-184.

¹⁰⁵ Accounts and Papers, vol. 9, Session 4 February-August 8, 1851, “Enclosure 1, in No. 50, Colonial Land and Emigration Office” (June 8, 1850), 450.

were hired specifically for the transport of palm oil for British vessels.¹⁰⁶ Kru worked on contracts that could last several years at a time before returning to Freetown where many had been hired or to their homeland on the Kru Coast.¹⁰⁷ In 1850, the *Petrel* carried 63 Kru workers as labourers in palm oil agriculture.¹⁰⁸ Up to 200 vessels engaged in the palm oil trade were said to employ Kru annually.¹⁰⁹

Kru were hired for their ability to navigate unpredictable waters with adverse sub-marine terrain including sandbars. Using their surfboats as they had for centuries on the Kru Coast, which typically carried 12 men, the Kru were recorded as transporting individuals, loading and unloading cargo including palm oil and missionary goods, and manning small boats upon the arrival of mail steamers arriving at Bonny.¹¹⁰ Kru in Bonny made for a labour pool that offered hundreds of Kru workers.¹¹¹ Gangs of Kru labourers were hired out from Bonny for service along the many rivers and tributaries that make up the Niger Delta as the British traded and loaded ships at Bonny, Opobo, and elsewhere, as far as Calabar.

Table 3.4 shows Kru wages earned on British commercial contracts in the Bight of Biafra. The location and duration of contracts determined wage rates. The pay rates and rank

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 450.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 450.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 450.

¹⁰⁹ British and Foreign State Papers, 1861-1862, vol. 52, "Reports from Naval Officers. West Coast of Africa Station," no. 62, Commodore Edmonstone to Rear-Admiral Sir H. Keppel," January 4, 1861, 538.

¹¹⁰ John Whitford, *Trading Life in Western and Central Africa* (Liverpool: The "Porcupine" Office, 1877), 287; Adolphe Burdo, "Travels in Central Africa," *The Christian World Magazine and Family Visitor*, vol. 17 (London: James Clarke and Company, 1881): 154; British and Foreign State Papers, 1861-1862, vol. 52, "Captain Walker to Mr. Hamilton, Abstract of Journal of Steam-Ship *Sunbeam* During the Expedition Up the River Niger in 1861," (September 28, 1861), 598.

¹¹¹ P.N. Davies, ed., *Trading in West Africa, 1840-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 30.

Table 3.4
Kru Wages in West Africa

Year	Rank	Duration of Contract	Location	Pay Rate/Month	Advance
1860s-1870s	Boatmen	6 months	Bight of Biafra	£1 5s	10s
1860s-1870s	Headman	6 months	Bight of Biafra	£2 10s	£1
1899	Headman	NA	Calabar	30s	None
1899	Ordinary	NA	Calabar	10s	None

Source: Smith, *Trade and Travels*, 100-103; “Negro Civilization,” *Journal of Health*, 259; Frost, *Work and Community*, 26; H. Grattan Guinness, *The New World of Central Africa: With a History of the First Christian in the Congo* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1890), 213; Colonial Reports, no. 315, “Southern Nigeria, Report for 1899-1900” (London: Darling & Son, 1901), 26.

are not always provided in the sources and so information is both sporadic and inconsistent.

Table 3.4 shows an approximation of Kru wage rates on commercial vessels. As the nineteenth century progressed, Kru had the opportunity to earn higher wages while engaged in commercial labour for the British. The Kru headman also received advances from his gang of labourers. His wages increased depending on the size of the labour force. Kru were also guaranteed that all travel expenses with respect to return passage were covered. The low salaries for the year 1899 did not specify the length of the contract. However, the table shows that headmen continued to make a higher salary when compared with regular workers.

Wages were not only dependent on rank but may have also been affected by the location of their embarkation. In 1863, Richard Burton observed the following correlation between embarkation and pay rates:

When shipped at S’a Leone for merchant service, their wages are more than those who embark at Cape Palmas; nominally the former now receive 30s., the latter \$2 per month

in goods, which reduce it to \$1. Some picked gig-crews in the Oil Rivers, receive \$5, besides additional clothes and caps; the average pay is from \$3 to \$4.¹¹²

According to Burton, Kru earned their highest wages in Sierra Leone. Kru hired in their homeland on the Kru Coast near Cape Palmas made the least. By the second half of the nineteenth century, it had become more profitable for Kru to obtain contracts in Sierra Leone as compared with other regions. Burton shows that Kru based in Calabar and Bonny could be hired in their labour communities for additional work on the Oil Rivers. In the 1860s, Kru continued to be paid in-kind before they returned to the Kru Coast and exchanged the items for wives.

Headmen continued to play an important role in the organization of the Kru work force. Jane Martin has suggested that the headman changeover process in Calabar occurred every twelve months. A second headman returned to the Kru Coast or Freetown and recruited a labour gang every six months. The newly-hired gang went to Calabar and familiarized itself with the work routine by learning from the gang that was already there. A full changeover took place every October.¹¹³ Similar to the length of contracts offered in Freetown, contracts lasted for a period of one year before the Kru returned to either Freetown or the Kru Coast. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Kru seem to have developed a unique process of selecting a second headman to return and recruit gang labourers to replace the existing ones such as the case in Calabar.¹¹⁴

In Calabar, Kru living and working quarters were associated with a building known as the “Kroo House.”¹¹⁵ It was located on a stretch of beach next to the boat-shed and marine stores.

¹¹² Burton, *Wanderings in West Africa*, 26.

¹¹³ Martin, “Krumen,” 405.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 405.

¹¹⁵ *Foreign Office Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade and Finance No. 1834: Africa: Report for the Year 1895-1896 of the Administration of the Niger Coast Protectorate* (London: Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1897), 130.

This building most probably served as their lodgings. Although not a quarter, the fact they had their own residence named after them signifies that they were a distinct community in Calabar.

In 1894, Bishop Ingham of Sierra Leone explained how ships from Sierra Leone sailing for the Bight of Biafra picked up labourers on route for contractual work in a variety of ports including Cape Coast, Accra, Lagos and on the Niger.¹¹⁶ While Ingham's observation shows that Kru were routinely circulating between ports in West Africa by the close of the nineteenth century, what is even more significant is that they had established diaspora communities in each port. Their communities were linked with each other and their homeland on the Kru Coast. Moreover, comparisons between "Proper Kru" in Freetown, Ascension Island, Fernando Po, Simon's Town and Lagos, Jloh and Gbeta Kru in Monrovia, Grand Cess Kru in Cape Coast, and Settra Kru in Bonny and Calabar, show that connections between specific villages on the Kru Coast and diaspora communities were maintained. Identities in diaspora were deeply influenced by *dako* associations as Kru villages often remained in a state of commercial competition.

By the close of the nineteenth century, the Kru free wage labour diaspora had evolved to such an extent that Freetown had been displaced as the main hub for Kru employment by virtue of other Krutowns on the West African coast. Nor were Kru Coast villages the primary ports of embarkation for Kru workers. Between 5,000 and 20,000 Kru were estimated to have worked in West Africa annually in the later part of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁷ As Kru workers circulated between their network of Krutowns they maintained a unique identity that differentiated them from other Africans in British employment. Whereas other labouring groups such as the Vai in

¹¹⁶ See Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 277. The Kru settlement in Accra was a later development, which was proposed in 1896. See *Board of Trade Journal of Tariff and Trade Notices* 20 (1896): 100.

¹¹⁷ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 49.

Monrovia and Congolese in Freetown had their own quarter, they did not have settlements on the same geographic scale as the Kru in all of the ports where they worked with the British.

This chapter has analyzed the expansion of Kru labour communities in West Africa and the Atlantic. Royal Navy and commercial contracts enabled their diaspora communities to grow beyond Freetown. By the 1830s, the Kru were engaged in a labour cycle between the Kru Coast and coastal communities including Monrovia, Cape Coast, Bonny and Lagos. They also established a Kru quarter in Ascension Island and Kru towns in Fernando Po and Simon's Town. Kru participation in the suppression of the slave trade that resulted in the creation of diaspora communities in the Atlantic directly contradicted their service in slave factories on the west coast of Africa and on board Cuban, French and Brazilian slave ships. Kru were clearly engaged in what Earl Lewis has termed "overlapping diasporas" in the sense that their labour was vital for daily operations in both contexts. Moreover, they followed labour itineraries that produced socio-economic outcomes that were diametrically opposed.¹¹⁸

While many Kru diaspora communities in West Africa continue to thrive in the twenty-first century, Kru diaspora communities in the British Caribbean were limited to the nineteenth century. Kru serving on commercial contracts in post-Emancipation Trinidad and British Guiana found themselves in a working environment that was unique from their employment in Atlantic ports. They laboured alongside Indian, Yoruba and Creole workers on contracts that offered

¹¹⁸ Lewis, "To Turn as on a Pivot," 765-787.

enticing economic benefits ensuring that some Kru would remain in their diaspora communities for the remainder of the nineteenth century as discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter 4

Kru Diaspora in the British Caribbean

The British understood that Emancipation in 1834 and the cessation of Apprenticeship in 1838 caused a labour shortage in some British colonies that led the British to experiment with indentured labour on plantations in the Caribbean.¹ While most indentured workers came from the Indian sub-continent, there were efforts to require Liberated Africans taken off slave ships to serve as indentures in the Caribbean.² By contrast, the Kru willingly signed free wage labour contracts and went to the Caribbean, although their numbers were not sufficient to meet the labour needs of the British colonies. They were one of many Asian and African groups who went to the Caribbean during the 1840s under contract alongside Indian, Chinese, Indonesian, Igbo, Yoruba and Congolese workers.³ This chapter analyzes Kru employment in Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guiana between 1841 through the 1890s.

¹ “Topic: Labour Problem and African Immigrants,” West Indies Committee Papers 1833-1843 Box 4, Folder 1, Minutes July 1833-June 1843, Resolutions of the Standing Committee of West India Planters: On Immigration, 18 February 1842, p. 109. West Indiana Special Collections Library, The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago.

² Daniel Domingues da Silva, David Eltis, Philip Misevich, Olatunji Ojo, “The Diaspora of Africans Liberated from Slave Ships in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of African History* 55, no. 3 (2014): 347-369; Richard Anderson, “The Diaspora of Sierra Leone’s Liberated Africans: Enlistment, Forced Migration, and ‘Liberation’ at Freetown, 1808-1863,” *African Economic History* 41 (2013): 101-138.

³ For a discussion on the diversity of African and Asian labourers who migrated to the Caribbean on contracts see David Hollet, *Passage from India to El Dorado: Guyana and the Great Migration* (Madison: Associated University Press, 1999), 85, 321; Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labour, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1918* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 154-270; K.O. Laurence, *A Question of Labor: Indentured Immigration into Trinidad and British Guiana, 1875-1917* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1994), 8-38; Juanita De Barros, *Reproducing the British Caribbean: Sex, Gender, and Population Politics after Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 16-39.

The nature of Kru contracts and their labouring activities on wharves, canals and estates in Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guiana suggests that the Kru extended their diaspora in the Caribbean. They established villages that resembled Krutowns in West Africa albeit on a smaller scale. The chapter will investigate British policy informing Kru immigration in the Caribbean. Settlement patterns and the Kru mark that continued to signify Kru identity in the Caribbean will be explored. However, some of the economic structures that had governed Kru communities in West Africa did not survive in the Caribbean. Factors including the decline of headmen and traditional channels of gift-giving, the purchase of privately-owned land, and intermarriage with Creole women inhibited their regular return to the Kru Coast and undermined the long-term stability of Kru diaspora communities in the Caribbean, thereby altering the pattern of Kru migration.

Context for Hiring Kru in the British Caribbean

In the post-slavery period, the British government provided economic initiatives for West Africans to work in the Caribbean plantation setting. British planters understood hiring migrant workers as a strategic maneuver to compete with slave-produced crops in French, Spanish, and Dutch domains and ultimately realize their 1815 goal at the Congress of Vienna by abolishing all illegal trans-Atlantic slave trading and slavery. In 1842, the planters' position was clearly expressed by the Standing Committee of West Indian Planters:

That in addition to the immediate and direct advantages which West India Colonies would derive from such a Free Immigration of Labourers from British Settlements on the Coast of Africa as would render the supply of labour sufficient, the most effective means of abolishing the Slave Trade would be afforded; for, by an adequate supply of labour,

the British Planters would be enabled to compete with the grower of Sugar by Slave Labour, and the motives for continuing the Slave Trade would no longer exist.⁴

The challenge the British faced was how to produce competitive crops using free over slave labour. Their remedy was believed to reside in the immigration of workers in their colonies so that the supply of labour equaled the demand.⁵ Workers were sought from Sierra Leone and the Kru Coast based on their previous work experience with the British and for their ability to work in tropical climates. Freetown, Sierra Leone, was the main hub for acquiring Kru labour in the initial stages of British Caribbean immigration.⁶

The consensus amongst planters in the British Caribbean was that they needed an immediate new source of labour as a result of the shortage caused by Emancipation. As Michael Craton has suggested, the reason for encouraging migrant workers from West Africa, India and China was also meant to secure the planters' hegemony over emancipated African descendants (Creoles) by creating competition for jobs and inserting a new class between the planters and former slaves.⁷ The common denominator was rooted in the need to continue to make a profit following Emancipation and the ending of Apprenticeship.

⁴ "Topic: Labour Problem and African Immigrants," West Indies Committee Papers 1833-1843 Box 4, Folder 1, Minutes July 1833-June 1843, Resolutions of the Standing Committee of West India Planters: On Immigration, 18 February 1842, p. 109. West Indiana Special Collections Library, The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago.

⁵ Ibid, 109.

⁶ Schuler, "Kru Emigration," 164.

⁷ Michael Craton, "Reshuffling the Pack: The Transition from Slavery to Other Forms of Labor in the British Caribbean, ca. 1790-1890" *New West Indian Guide* 68, no. 1&2 (1994): 41. Also see Mary Turner, "Chattel Slaves into Wage Slaves: A Jamaican Case Study," in Malcolm Cross and Gad Heuman eds., *Labour in the Caribbean: From Emancipation to Independence* (London: Macmillan, 1988), 14-31; Richard B. Sheridan, "Changing Sugar Technology and the Labour Nexus in the British Caribbean 1750-1900, with Special Reference to Barbados and Jamaica," *Nieuwe Wesr-Indische Gids* 63 (1989): 59-93; Schuler, "The Recruitment of African Indentured Labourers," 125-161.

Between 1834 and 1917, the British Caribbean received 300,000 immigrants of which only a tiny minority, about 4 percent, came from Africa.⁸ The number of immigrants contracted to work in the British Caribbean and their distribution between 1834 and 1849 was recorded by the British Parliament in 1849 (see Table 4.1). Table 4.1 provides the most relevant period pertaining to the scope of Kru immigration. The parliamentary report specifies that 11,682 immigrants hired at the Kru Coast and Sierra Leone went “chiefly to Jamaica, Trinidad and Guiana.”⁹ However, African workers hired in Sierra Leone also included Liberated Africans and other Freetown Africans. Therefore, the exact number of Kru workers remains unknown. The

Table 4.1

Immigrant Labour to the British Caribbean, 1834-1849

British Colony	Immigrant Workers
Antigua	1,075
British Guiana	39,043
Dominica	732
Grenada	1,476
Jamaica	14,519
Nevis	427
Trinidad	13,356
St. Kitts	95
St. Lucia	663
St. Vincent	1,197
Total	72,583

Source: “Abstracts of Parliamentary Documents,” *Companion to the Almanac, Or, Yearbook of General Information 1851* (London: Charles Knight, 1851), 171.

⁸ Schuler, “Kru Emigration,” 155-156.

⁹ “Abstracts of Parliamentary Documents,” in *Companion to the Almanac, Or, Yearbook of General Information 1851* (London: Charles Knight, 1851), 171. For information on the scale of immigrant labour in the British Caribbean in the nineteenth and twentieth century see *General Censuses and Vital Statistics in the Americas* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 112, 114-115. For other sources that focus on British migrant worker immigration in the British Caribbean in the nineteenth century see Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey*, I, 141; George W. Roberts, *The Population of Jamaica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 110.

remainder of immigrant workers came from the East Indies, Madeira, China and Britain. It is significant that the Kru Coast and Sierra Leone were distinguished as unique sources of labour, alongside Great Britain and the East Indies, because it reveals the importance of Kru labour in the British Caribbean in the 1840s.

There are discrepancies as to the number of Kru who entered Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guiana. Trinidadian historian Donald Wood has suggested that between 1,000 and 2,000 Kru entered the British Caribbean between 1840 and 1860.¹⁰ G.W. Roberts provides an even more conservative figure estimating that only 400 Kru labourers immigrated to the West Indies.¹¹ Records suggest that in the 1840s and 1850s, 2,421 migrant labourers from the Kru Coast went to British and French Guianas, however.¹² In 1848, Acting Governor of Sierra Leone, Benjamin Pine, claimed that 500 Kru workers went to Demerara in British Guiana, 200 to Jamaica and 150 to Trinidad.¹³ Pine's figures may only be accurate until 1848 as Kru continued to arrive in the British Caribbean until 1853.

Schuler provides the best estimate of the number of Kru landing in British Guiana based on ship records, as shown in Table 4.2. Schuler's ship muster lists show that 989 Kru arrived in British Guiana between 1841 and 1853. Their number may have been even higher because some officials did not distinguish Kru workers from other Africans. When combined with the numbers offered by Pine, Schuler's figures reveal that the number of Kru entering British Guiana was in line with Donald Wood's estimates of between one and two thousand Kru. Schuler claims that

¹⁰ Wood, "Kru Migration," 266-282.

¹¹ Roberts, *The Population*, 110.

¹² Schuler, "Kru Emigration," 155.

¹³ Accounts and Papers, Papers Relative to the Emigration of Labourers from Sierra Leone and St. Helena to the West Indies, "Despatch from the Acting Governor Pine to Earl Grey," Government House, Sierra Leone, 5 June 1848, vol. 8, no. 1 (1850), 643, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

Table 4.2
Kru Emigration to British Guiana, 1841-1853

Year	Ship	Sierra Leone	Kru Coast	Total Kru	Total Ship
1841	<i>Superior I</i>	23		23	199
	<i>Superior II</i>	60		60	229
1842	<i>Superior III</i>	60		60	146
1843	<i>Arabian II</i>	16		16	48
	<i>Superior IV</i>	9		9	17
1844	<i>Arabian III</i>	92		92	104
	<i>Arabian IV</i>	2		2	266
	<i>Arabian V</i>	22		22	22
	<i>Arabian VI</i>	110		110	247
	<i>Arabian VII</i>		26	26	212
1845	<i>Louisa Baillie I</i>	3		3	259
	<i>Arabian VIII</i>	2		2	78
1846	<i>Margaret</i>		60	60	164
	<i>Louisa Baillie II</i>	24		24	115
1847	<i>Prince Regent</i>		108	108	108
1850	<i>Glentanner II</i>	10		10	267
	<i>Clarendon</i>	41	38	79	159
1852	<i>Julindur</i>	10		10	140
1853	<i>Elphinstone I</i>		187	187	187
	<i>Elphonstone II</i>		86	86	86
Total		484	505	989	3,050

Source: Schuler, "Kru Emigration," 165; CO 111/180, CO 111/182, CO 111/193, CO 111/201, CO 267/176, CO 111/205, CO 111/207, CO 111/208, CO 111/210, CO 267/184, CO 111/221, CO 111/223, CO 111/225, CO 111/231, CO 111/232, CO 111/233, CO 111/253, CO 267/185, CO 267/189, CO 267/214, Parliamentary Papers 1851, XXII [1383.], 405, CO 267/215, CO

267/217, Parliamentary Papers 1859, 14 [2555. Sess. 2], 256, CO 111/244, Parliamentary Papers 1852-1853, 40 [1647], 116.¹⁴

British Guiana had the second largest Kru population outside of Freetown.¹⁵ Therefore, their settlements in Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara represent important nodes in the Kru free wage labour diaspora in the British Caribbean.

Kru are sometimes distinguished in ship emigration records while in other instances they are not and were included under the general title of African immigration. Although their contracts were significantly longer in duration (five years) than they had previously accepted in the Royal Navy (three years), Kru were given special privileges including free return passage to Freetown and the Kru Coast following the completion of contracts, which was not always the case for Liberated Africans who went to the Caribbean under contract.¹⁶ Based on their history as preferred workers on British contracts in West Africa, Kru, perhaps more than any other immigrants to the West Indies "felt themselves in a position to state terms" to their employers.¹⁷ The power dynamics between the British and Kru, as compared with the British and other labouring groups in the Caribbean, was unique, as this chapter demonstrates.

Although Kru had ventured into Caribbean waters as early as the 1830s on board Cuban slave ships that were sometimes seized and delivered to British authorities in Havana, British contracts offered between 1841 and 1853 created new opportunities for their employment. The

¹⁴ Schuler's table does not include information on *Arabian I*, which sailed in 1841. She mentions that an unknown number of wives accompanied the workers on *Superior II* and up to 12 people on *Elphinstone I* and *Elphinstone II* were from the Vai region and may have been slaves.

¹⁵ Schuler, "Kru Emigration," 155-156.

¹⁶ CO 111/210, no. 107, "Henry Light to Lord Stanley," May 16, 1844.

¹⁷ West India Committee Papers, "Report of the Committee Appointed to Confer with Her Majesty's Government, [and], Meeting of Merchants, held in Bishopgate Street, on the 26th Oct 1842," A. Colvile, 22 February 1843, Box 4, Folder 1 (1843), 3, West Indiana Special Collections Library, The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago.

hundreds and possibly several thousand Kru who worked in the British Caribbean were drawn by contracts promising higher wages than previously offered as compensation for the lengthy duration of five years (in some cases shortened to three years). Kru who accepted these contracts engaged in seaborne and agricultural labour that bore both similarities and differences to the nature of their work on the Kru Coast and in their diaspora communities in West Africa.

Policy and Immigration

Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guiana became the workplaces in Britain's "experiment" with Kru labour in the Caribbean.¹⁸ In the early 1840s, the British hoped to develop a labour scheme between Freetown, the Kru Coast and their colonies in the Caribbean. They sought Kru labour in ports and plantations.¹⁹ The first Kru arrived in the Caribbean in 1841 before any formal act of legislature had been created regarding the terms of their employment. On 21 May 1841, Kru arrived in Jamaica on board the *Hector* along with an unnamed barge. Sixteen Krumen disembarked in Port Royal.²⁰ The length of their informal contract was initially for one year.²¹ The British hoped that by bringing a Kru headman, he would recognize the benefits and encourage a steady flow of recruits to immigrate to Jamaica on contract.

¹⁸ Newspapers and magazines of the period frequently referred to African labour in the British Caribbean as an "experiment." See *The Economist*, January 15, 1848, in *The Economist Weekly Commercial Times, Bankers Gazette, and Railway Monitor*, vol. 6 (London: Economist Office, 1848), 60.

¹⁹ House of Commons Papers, Select Committee on West Coast of Africa, "Copy of Mr. Barclay's Address to the Headman of the Villages in Sierra Leone Freetown, Sierra Leone 12 April 1841, Appendix to Report from the Select Committee on West Coast of Africa," no. 24 (1841), 467, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 467.

²¹ *Ibid*, 467.

Within a year, in 1842, a series of acts calling for the regulation of Kru workers and African migrants to Jamaica focused on their role as farm workers. The call for labour was mandated in the *Laws of Jamaica*, which sought to direct the flow of immigrant labourers towards cultivation on plantations.²² The laws governing the length of contracts and free return passage were enacted in 1843.²³ Contract periods were raised from one year to five years and if that number was exceeded with two additional years the Kru were required to give six months-notice in order to receive free passage home.²⁴

However, the impulse to hire the Kru for plantation labour in Jamaica failed to generate the steady flow of workers that the British government had anticipated. Kru immigration from West Africa to Jamaica ended in 1843 with Kru arriving on the *Glen Huntley*.²⁵ The Kru seemed to be disinterested in the plantation contracts offered in Jamaica as compared with those in Trinidad and British Guiana. Some Kru found the voyage too long as it could take up to one week longer to travel from Sierra Leone to Jamaica as compared with the twenty-eight days to sail to Trinidad and British Guiana.²⁶ Census records in Jamaica do not distinguish between the

²² “The Acts of Jamaica Passed in the Year Annual Laws of Jamaica, Cap 51. Act to make Provision for the Introduction of emigrants to this Island, 1842,” in *The Laws of Jamaica* (Kingston: Government Printer, 1843), 116.

²³ Parliamentary Papers, “Papers Relative to Emigration,” no. 52, Enclosure no.10, vol. 8, April 20, 1843, p.142.

²⁴ Ibid, 143.

²⁵ Accounts and Papers, vol. 35, “Correspondence Relative to the Emigration of Labourers to the West Indies and the Mauritius, From the West Coast of Africa, the East Indies, and China, R. Bruce, Agent General of Immigration, King’s House, May 13, 1843,” in *Papers Relative to the Emigration from the West Coast of Africa to the West Indies* (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1844), 21.

²⁶ Accounts and Papers, vol. 31, Emigration, Session February 3-12 August 1842, Correspondence Relative to Emigration, no. 13, “Copy of the Despatch from Lord John Russell to John Carr, Esq. or the Officer Administering the Government of Sierra Leone, Enclosure in No. 13, Extract of a Letter from Mr. Marryat to Lord John Russell,” 469. The *Elizabeth and Jane* made the journey from Sierra Leone to Trinidad in twenty-eight days, while the *Superior*

Kru and other African immigrants. As such, the exact number of Kru who immigrated is unknown. Only a single account in *Littell's Living Age* in 1884 referenced the failed attempt of the British authorities to procure a steady flow of Kru workers on Jamaican plantations whose population dwindled by the 1880s.²⁷

Kru immigration to Trinidad occurred on a slightly larger scale than Jamaica. The first Kru workers arrived in Trinidad from Sierra Leone on a merchant vessel named *Elizabeth and Jane* in January 1841.²⁸ Sixteen Krumen out of a total of one hundred eighty labourers landed at Port of Spain.²⁹ The arriving Kru had high monetary expectations for working in Trinidad. In 1843, a second Kru labour gang arrived on the *Senator*.³⁰ Although the exact number of Kru on board is not known the total crew numbered 102 including 12 delegates and 90 workers.³¹ In 1843, Captain Denman noted that they demanded an advance payment of T20.00 (Trinidadian

took thirty-six days to land in British Guiana. This was abnormally long perhaps due to weather and sea conditions and should have taken roughly the same amount of time as Trinidad.

²⁷ E. Pluribus Unum, *Littell's Living Age*, 5th series, vol. 46 (Boston: Littell and Co., April-June 1884), 40.

²⁸ General Report of the Emigration Commissioners, vol. 1, no. 2 "Copy of the Despatch from Lieutenant-Governor Sir Henry MacLeod to Lord John Russell, 20 May 1841," 47. The number of Kru on board is provided. However, in many documents, the name of the merchant ship is not mentioned. This was not uncommon as the ship that accompanied the *Hector* to Jamaica was also an unnamed brig. However, a description in another source described the Kru and other African workers landing in Trinidad from Sierra Leone on a vessel called the *Elizabeth and Jane*. See Accounts and Papers, vol. 31, Emigration, Session February 3-12 August 1842, Correspondence Relative to Emigration, no. 13, "Copy of the Despatch from Lord John Russell to John Carr, Esq. or the Officer Administering the Government of Sierra Leone, Enclosure in No. 13, Extract of a Letter from Mr. Marryat to Lord John Russell," 469.

²⁹ Parliamentary Papers, "No. 5, Paris 17 June 1842, No. 5 Letter from S. Cipriani to Messrs. Jos Marryat & Sons 17 June 1842," in *Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers Report from the select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Together With Minutes of Evidence Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Appendix and Index Part II, 1842* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 480.

³⁰ E. Littell, *Littell's Living Age* vol. 8 (1846): 188.

³¹ *Ibid*, 188.

dollars) before their departure.³² Kru felt it was their “right” to ask for an advance, which was standard practice on British contracts in West Africa.³³

British officials and the plantocracy in Trinidad seem to have been very interested in acquiring thousands of Kru workers. As part of their strategy, Captain Denman proposed bringing over a headman to observe the working conditions in Trinidad.³⁴ Similar to British officials in Jamaica, the West Indies Committee hoped that the headman would be impressed with the working conditions and would encourage a regular flow of Kru labourers. The proposal suggested that the Kru embark directly from their homeland on the Kru Coast, although in the 1840s, Kru were hired on the Kru Coast and in Freetown.³⁵ British colonial and consular authorities provided various incentives to encourage Kru labour in Trinidad. In 1844, free passages were offered to those Kru who brought their wives.³⁶ The requirement that an equal number of women depart for the British Caribbean may have been proposed by the British for the same reasons they encouraged Kru women to immigrate to Krutown in Freetown in order to maintain a steady labour pool.³⁷

By 1852, the British began to attribute their success in sugar cultivation in Trinidad to the immigrants brought to work the plantations, including the Kru. The West Indies Committee recognized that immigrant labour was at the heart of British enterprise in the Caribbean because

³² Parliamentary Papers, “Evidence of the Honourable Captain Denman R.N.,” Acting Committee 14 November 1843, vol. 6 (1843), 119-120.

³³ Ibid, 119-120.

³⁴ Ibid, 119-120.

³⁵ CO 111/210, no. 107, “Henry Light to Lord Stanley,” May 16, 1844.

³⁶ Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey I*, 83. For more discussion on incentives see Frost, *Work and Community*, 21.

³⁷ Ibid, 83.

it lowered the costs of production.³⁸ Trinidad fared better in sugar production than Jamaica partly because both required a significant number of migrant labourers and Trinidad did a better job of recruitment. While the precise number of Kru workers who immigrated to Trinidad for contracts is unknown, it was suggested by De Verteuil that “several hundred” Kru workers had made the journey.³⁹

Censuses in the nineteenth century rarely distinguished the Kru from other African labourers in Trinidad. A census in 1891 shows that Africans accounted for 1,288 or 1.8 percent of the total population. Although Kru are not identified as a unique group in the census, they formed a small segment of the population as their presence was singled out by the sources in this chapter. Since all African immigration ceased in 1861, any Kru labourers that had immigrated to Trinidad were elderly in 1891 when the census was conducted and only formed a small group within the total number of African immigrants.⁴⁰

The majority of Kru labourers were destined for British Guiana. Sixty Kru labourers among a total Kru of 226 African labourers were landed in British Guiana at the port in Demerara on 22 September 1841 on the *Superior*.⁴¹ Kru were hired both in Freetown and on the Kru Coast. However, in 1844, there was a conscious shift towards hiring the Kru directly on the Kru Coast. R.G. Butts, planter and representative of Berbice and Demerara planters, proposed a labour scheme between the Kru Coast and British Guiana due to a supposed dislike of Liberated

³⁸ West India Committee Papers, “The West India Committee Minutes from 9 January 1852-19 February 1857,” Acting Committee 9 January 1852, Box 4 Folder 3, (1852), 1, West Indiana Special Collections Library, The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago.

³⁹ Verteuil, *Trinidad*, 341.

⁴⁰ Trinidad Registrar-General’s Department, *Census of the Colony of Trinidad, 1891* (Port of Spain: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1892), vii, 26; Daniel Hart, *Trinidad and the Other West India Islands and Colonies*, 2nd ed. (Trinidad: The Chronicle Publishing Office, 1866), 66.

⁴¹ Schuler, “Kru Emigration,” 165; Frost, *Work and Community*, 166.

Africans hired at Freetown, who they regarded as less productive and skilled as compared to the Kru.⁴² The Kru had been noted for their “prodigious capacity and organization for work,” a perception that informed the planters’ decision to only hire Kru workers.⁴³ The British thus sent delegates to the Kru Coast to acquire labourers for contracts in British Guiana. They were selected from the colonial immigration department and from the body of labour recruiters for planters and headmen.⁴⁴ Butts met with King Freeman, who agreed to send his attendant and son as delegates to British Guiana at the rate of £1 per month for one year.⁴⁵

Cape Palmas, Grand Cess and Settra Kru became the main villages on the Kru Coast for recruitment in British Guiana. The “Proper Kru” from Settra Kru, Grand Cess Kru and the Grebo from Cape Palmas came to form the demographic composition of the Kru working in British Guiana. A direct connection between Grand Cess and Berbice (British Guiana) was established by Jack Purser, a merchant from Settra Kru, who worked as a sub-agent for emigration. He requested that his son, who had worked in Berbice, return to the Kru Coast in order to share his experiences of working in British Guiana. As was the case in West Africa, connections between diaspora communities and specific villages on the Kru Coast can be traced, which reveals the demographic composition of the Kru’s diaspora in British Guiana.

By 1846, the British government reassessed the strategies used to attract Kru labour in British Guiana. Five-year contracts were largely replaced by three-year contracts. Some reports also suggest that salaries were higher at £1 per month as compared with lower rates back in West

⁴² CO 111/123, “H. Light to Lord Stanley, 30 September 1844, enclosing R.G. Butts to H.E.F. Young, 23 July-7 August 1844, no. 200,” The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom; CO 111/121, “Light to Stanley enclosing Butts to Young, 13 March 1845, no. 57,” The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

⁴³ Schuler, “Kru Emigration,” 155-156.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 166.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 167.

Africa.⁴⁶ From the Kru perspective, contracts in British Guiana enabled young Krumen to gain experience and an education in long-distance migratory labour.⁴⁷ Workers were offered a pay rate of 8d. per day and free passage to British Guiana.⁴⁸

In 1850, there remained a strong market for Kru labour in British Guiana. Incentives including free passage home, advance payments and higher wages than those offered in West Africa continued to be offered by the British. Kru now had the option of remaining for a period of five years with free passage home or three years without paid passage.⁴⁹ The option for free return passage following a five-year contract may have enticed some Kru to remain for the longer contract. The direct appeals on the Kru Coast continued to attract workers for several years as emigration from the Kru Coast to British Guiana continued until 1853. The final voyage from the Kru Coast to British Guiana was made on the *Elphinstone* in 1853, decades before the ending of Indian and Chinese migrant labour in the British Caribbean.⁵⁰ Mounting tensions and the frequent outbreak of war between the Kru and Liberian settler communities in Kru territory was probably a factor which led the Kru to use the funds from their workers who had served in British Guiana towards their war effort against the Liberian settlers, which is discussed in Chapter Six.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Ibid, 171.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 167-168.

⁴⁸ West India Committee Papers, "General, Communicated by the Demose," Oct 8 1844, SC 89, Box 4, No. 2 (1844), 206. West Indiana Special Collections Library, The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago.

⁴⁹ Accounts and Papers of the House of Commons, vol. 9, Enclosure in No. 19, no. 340 Downing Street (July 5, 1850): 401-403, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

⁵⁰ Schuler, "Kru Emigration," 171.

⁵¹ Ibid, 172; Jo Mary Sullivan, "Settlers in Sinoe County, Liberia, and their Relations with the Kru, c. 1835-1920 (Boston: unpublished Ph.D. thesis, 1978), 209-219.

Labour in the Caribbean

Kru workers continued their tradition of working in wharves in the British Caribbean. The first Kru workers who arrived in Trinidad in January 1841 were selected by British contractors to work at the wharf of Port of Spain. Their duties included serving as stevedores, loading and unloading cargo.⁵² Kru were also responsible for manning ferries and tenders (small boats) transporting people, raw materials and commodities between ship and shore.⁵³ Similarly, Kru who arrived in Port Royal, Jamaica, several months later in May 1841, were employed in the dockyards.⁵⁴ Immediately following their arrival, Robert Montgomery Martin reported that the Kru were employed at the wharves in both Port Royal and Kingston.⁵⁵ They performed the same duties as in Port of Spain moving cargo on small craft. Kru labour in Trinidad and Jamaica was an extension of their work with the British in Freetown and other diaspora communities in West Africa.

Kru who landed in Demerara in September 1841 were employed in marine labour that was slightly different from their work on the dockyards in Trinidad and Jamaica.⁵⁶ Rather than working on the dockyards, Kru were required to sail flatboats while transporting crops and individuals on canals between the plantations and ships.⁵⁷ An intricate system of canals enabled

⁵² Parliamentary Papers, "No. 5 Letter from S. Cipriani to Messrs, J. Marryat and Sons," June 17, 1842, vol. 12, (1842), 480.

⁵³ *Trinidad Royal Gazette* 7, no. 3, March 18, 1846.

⁵⁴ House of Commons Papers, Select Committee on West Coast of Africa, Appendix no. 24, "Copy of Mr. Barclay's Address to the Headman of the Villages," vol. 12 (1842), 467.

⁵⁵ Robert Montgomery Martin, ed., "West Indies," *The Colonial Magazine and Commercial Maritime Journal* 6 (1841): 118.

⁵⁶ Schuler, "Kru Emigration," 155-156; Frost, *Work and Community*, 166.

⁵⁷ Accounts and Papers, Emigration, Session 3 February to 12 August 1842, vol. 21, Correspondence Relative to Emigration, Enclosure in No. 8 Government House, Demerara 6 June 1841, Henry Light (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1842), 373.

the transport of commodities directly between plantation and ship in many cases without having to employ porters to deliver goods to the dockyards before loading them on vessels.

In 1841, Henry Light provided details on the Kru's occupation as boatmen on estates in British Guiana who were "separated in squads" and paid at a rate of between \$10.00 and \$12.00 per month.⁵⁸ Agent-General James Hackett described the Kru as "free agents" who "remained unindentured" making their "own bargains for daily, weekly, or monthly work."⁵⁹ Kru were at liberty to decide where they wanted to work in British Guiana. Most significantly, they were not indentured, meaning they had mobility and could move between dockyards, estates and other work environments. Based on their long history of employment with the British, Kru continued to occupy a privileged position in British Guiana. The rules described by Hackett as applying to the Kru were completely different from those that applied to Indian and Chinese labourers, who were engaged in unfree labour as indentured workers and compelled to remain on their assigned estates by virtue of their contracts, through fines and the threat of violence.⁶⁰ Many Kru elected to continue their traditional job moving cargo on rivers and canals as shown in Table 4.3. The note accompanying the list of Krumen explained their role:

The above being principally boatmen, and very intelligent and active people, were all readily engaged to work on board the steamers and drohergs belonging to estates at a

⁵⁸ Accounts and Papers, Emigration, Session 3 February to 12 August 1842, vol. 21, Correspondence Relative to Emigration, 1842, Enclosure in No. 8 Government House, Demerara 6 June 1841, Henry Light (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1842), 373.

⁵⁹ Accounts and Papers, Emigration, Session 3 February to 12 August 1842, vol. 21, Correspondence Relative to Emigration, 1842, Extract Minute from the Proceedings of the Immigration Committee, Tuesday the 25th May 1841, James Hackett, Agent-General (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1842), 368.

⁶⁰ For a discussion on the differences between free wage labour and indentured labour in the British Caribbean see Northrup, *Indentured Labor*, 4-10; Mahmud, "Cheaper than a Slave," 215-243.

high rate of wages, none of them receiving less than at a rate of 10 dollars per month, besides houses, food &c.⁶¹

Kru served as boatmen on steamers and drohergs and received housing and food in addition to a salary of \$10.00 per month.⁶² Their specialization in manning craft ensured that they experienced a degree of mobility and pay rate that distinguished their service from other immigrant labourers in British Guiana.

Besides continuing their tradition of seaborne labour, Kru also performed agricultural labour on estates in Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guiana. While they had worked on plantations

Table 4.3

Kru Working Sea Transport in Demerara, 1842

Kru not living on any particular Estate		
Kingson	Jim George	John Davis
Tom Walker	Salt Water	Sea Breeze
Jack Passer	Seargent	Tom Lee
Big Gum	George Andrews	Yellow Will
Peter Jumbo	Tom Nimmey	Petar Warman
Thomas Nimmey	Tom Freeman	Jim Freeman
John Grey	Tom Toby	Tom Brown
Bottle Beer		

Source: Accounts and Papers, Emigration, Session 3 February to 12 August 1842, vol. 21, Correspondence Relative to Emigration, 1842, Enclosure in No. 8 Government House, Demerara 6 June 1841, Henry Light (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1842), 372.

⁶¹ Accounts and Papers, Emigration, Session 3 February to 12 August 1842, vol. 21, "Correspondence Relative to Emigration, 1842," Enclosure in No. 8 Government House, Demerara 6 June 1841, Henry Light (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1842), 372.

⁶² Accounts and Papers, Monthly Return of African Emigrants located in District G, County of Essequibo, 1 August 1841, A. W. Lyons, Stipendiary Magistrate, District G, Affairs of British Guiana, General Report of the Emigration Commissioners, vol. 1 (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1842), 55.

in Fernando Po as early as the 1830s, their numbers were small and any large-scale plantation work did not commence until the later decades of the nineteenth century. It was hoped by planters that the Kru would adapt quickly to the task system working in groups as they had under headmen on ships and shoreside in Freetown.⁶³ While working on several estates in Trinidad, the Kru laboured in sugarcane, cocoa, and later, coffee production.

In Trinidad, Kru found employment on Belmont Estate, Bellevue Estate, and Beauxjour Estate, among others. Belmont Estate was located close to Port of Spain, Bellevue Estate was near Freeman's Bay in Oropuche, and Beauxjour Estate was in the south western region of the island in South Naparima.⁶⁴ Kru workers were initially sent to a specific estate and later had the opportunity to switch locations. In 1842, a letter from S. Cipriani, the owner of the Beauxjour Estate, reveals the number of Kru labourers on his estate and their wage rate:

The Kroomen who went from Sierra Leone to Trinidad were on their arrival engaged by me, and employed on the Beauxjour Estate, South Naparima, a property I own in partnership with Mr. M.P. Begné; their number, I believe, was 16. In consequence of a dispute among themselves, some left the estate a few months after; the remainder are still on it. The rate of wages out of crop is 40 cents per task; during crop they receive 50 or 60; they also receive an allowance of salt fish. They did not contract to work for any given time; they were employed in field labour.⁶⁵

⁶³ Parliamentary Papers, "No. 5, Paris 17 June 1842 No. 5 Letter from S. Cipriani to Messrs. Jos Marryat & Sons 17 June 1842," Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers Report from the select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Together With Minutes of Evidence Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Appendix and Index Part 2, 1842 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 480.

⁶⁴ Parliamentary Papers, "No. 5 Letter from S. Cipriani to Messrs, J. Marryat and Sons," June 17, 1842, vol. 12, 480.

⁶⁵ Parliamentary Papers, "No. 5, Paris 17 June 1842 No. 5 Letter from S. Cipriani to Messrs. Jos Marryat & Sons 17 June 1842," Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers Report from the select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Together With Minutes of Evidence Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Appendix and Index Part 2, 1842 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 480.

The pay rate model in Trinidad differed from the Kru's past experience working on commercial and Royal Navy ships. Whereas the Kru received standard wages on commercial vessels every month and wages were determined by rank in the Royal Navy, in Trinidad, their wages were seasonal, increasing and decreasing depending on crop cycles. Their pay rate at 40¢ per task in out of crop season and between 50¢ and 60¢ per task during crop season was described as much higher than what they could receive in Sierra Leone, which was given as 4d. per day during the same period.⁶⁶

Equally significant, the above passage also shows that the Kru left estates for work elsewhere on the island where "they did not contract to work for any time." The Kru were promised return passage to Sierra Leone after three or five years of service. However, once they arrived on the island they were not obliged to remain on a single estate for the duration of the contract.

In British Guiana, Kru served on the following plantations in Essequibo: Plantation Hamburg, Bathsheba's Lust, Lima, Reliance, Land of Plenty, Aberdeen; and in Demerara: La Resouvenir, Helena, Enmore, Greenfield, Tukeyen, Annandale, and Dochfour.⁶⁷ Their primary duties included harvesting the sugar cane.⁶⁸ In 1841, five Kru labourers are recorded at

⁶⁶ Burnley, *Observations on the Present Condition of the Island of Trinidad*, 71. The Kru had some experience with task pay in Freetown in the 1790s before their pay became standardized on British commercial and Royal Navy ships in the early nineteenth century. However, even in Freetown their pay rate was not informed by crop cycles to the same degree as it was in Trinidad. See Ludlam, "Account," 48; *Sixth Report of the Directors of the African Institute*, 93.

⁶⁷ Accounts and Papers, Emigration, Session 3 February to 12 August 1842, vol. 21 "Correspondence Relative to Emigration, 1842, Enclosure in No. 8 Government House, Demerara 6 June 1841 Henry Light (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1842), 370-371.

⁶⁸ H. Barkly, *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on Sugar and Coffee Planting: Together with the Minutes of Evidence and Appendix* (18 March 1848), 24; Cruickshank, "African Immigrants," 81.

Plantation Hamburg in Essequibo.⁶⁹ Their tasks are described as jobbing and performing field labour for which they received a salary of \$11.00 per month and which was higher than the neighbouring plantation at Bathsheba's Lust, where African workers received between \$8.00 and \$10.00 per month. The Kru were further given an allowance of salt fish and allotted provision grounds for cultivation on estate grounds.⁷⁰

Jobbing could include maintenance of estate buildings or digging new canals to connect and expand the network of estates with waterways.⁷¹ One official described a gang of ten Kroomen building a canal on Montrose Estate in 1844.⁷² In 1848, H. Barkly noted the Kru's strong work ethic: "All the canes on the estate, making 360 hogsheads...were cut by 16 Kroomen from the day of their arrival; an extent of work which had never been done by any number of slaves."⁷³ Based on their positive reputation, they were recommended for contracts in the timber trade in British Guiana.⁷⁴

Evidence for Kru agricultural labour in Jamaica shows that the Kru presence was small in scale. In 1843, an unknown number of Kru workers arrived in Jamaica on the *Glen Huntley*.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Monthly Return of African Emigrants located in District G, County of Essequibo, 1 August 1841, A. W. Lyons, Stipendiary Magistrate, District G, Affairs of British Guiana, General Report of the Emigration Commissioners, I (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1842), 55.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 55.

⁷¹ Accounts and Papers, vol. 35, "Copy of a Despatch from Governor Light to Lord Stanley, No.8, May 13, 1843," *Papers Relative to Emigration from the West Coast of Africa to the West Indies* (1843), 72.

⁷² Accounts and Papers, Colonies: Emigration, vol. 35, Session 1, February- September 1844 *Papers Relative to Emigration from the West Coast of Africa to the West Indies* (1844), 72, The National Archives, United Kingdom.

⁷³ Ibid, 24; Rodney, *History of the Guyanese Working People*, 252.

⁷⁴ W.H. Campbell, "The Forests of British Guiana, Appendix III," *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute* (London: The Institute, 1874), 153.

⁷⁵ Accounts and Papers, vol. 35, Correspondence Relative to the Emigration of Labourers to the West Indies and the Mauritius, From the West Coast of Africa, the East Indies, and China, R. Bruce, Agent General of Immigration, King's House, May 13, 1843. *Papers Relative to the*

They landed in Montego Bay to be employed in agricultural labour.⁷⁶ However, in the case of Jamaica, specific estate names where the Kru worked remains unknown in contrast to their work sites in Trinidad and British Guiana.

Settlement Patterns

The Kru formed several diaspora communities in Trinidad. The British government was keen to enable the Kru land allotments for the purpose of establishing entire villages. These lands were Crown lands that were set aside for immigrant worker villages.⁷⁷ The primary example of such a scheme was the establishment of “Krooman’s Village.” Similar to Krutowns in West Africa, “Krooman’s Village” was established in Trinidad for the purpose of providing a steady labour pool for the British.⁷⁸ The settlement was located within the vicinity of Freeman’s Bay in Oropuche. In 1855, Dr. Louis De Verteuil described Krooman’s Village as one among many African settlements adjacent to the village of St. Mary’s.⁷⁹ Based in their village, Kru worked as agricultural labourers on nearby plantations including Bellevue Estate and Otaheiti Estate.⁸⁰ With access to Freeman’s Bay, the location of their village also enabled them to continue to load and unload cargo between British ships and shoreside using small craft. The

Emigration from the West Coast of Africa to the West Indies, (London: W. Clowes and Sons, 1844), 21.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 21.

⁷⁷ CO 295/261, “Sub Indendant of Crown Land Report, 1871,” The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom; “No. 5, Paris 17 June 1842 No. 5 Letter from S. Cipriani to Messrs. Jos Marryat & Sons 17 June 1842,” Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers Report from the select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Together With Minutes of Evidence Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Appendix and Index Part II, 1842 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 480.

⁷⁸ *Trinidad Royal Gazette* 12, no. 2, 1 January 1851-31 December 1851, 2.

⁷⁹ Verteuil, *Trinidad*, 313-314.

⁸⁰ *Trinidad Royal Gazette* 12, no. 2, 1 January 1851- 31 December 1851, 2.

Kru could also serve as porters transporting commodities between estate and ship. Krooman's Village in Trinidad represents the expansion of their diaspora communities in West Africa. The Kru working in Trinidad were hired in Freetown and Kru Coast.

Two other Kru settlements existed in Trinidad: one near Cipriani Estate, Beaujour, in South Naparima, and the other adjacent to Belmont Estate.⁸¹ The number of Kru living in these settlements remains unknown but the concentration of Kru labourers in each region may date as early as 1842.⁸² Kru were encouraged to move closer to Belmont because of its proximity to Port of Spain and the hope that the Kru would begin regular immigration if their Kru headman could have a residence built closer to Port of Spain.⁸³ A Kru headman requested a piece of land be set aside for his gang of Kru workers to reside near Port of Spain, which may have been an attempt to replicate a miniature Krutown like those back in West Africa.⁸⁴

Reverend Alexander Kennedy described the diverse African groups who resided in Belmont between 1836 and 1849:

Belmont was, to a large extent, peopled by African settlers, brought hither by English vessels.... They worked for the Government as free labourers – on the roads, the Savannah and Public Gardens. They were allowed to settle on the east of the Dry River, principally in Belmont, which became known as Freetown Valley – the free Africans

⁸¹ CO 295/261, "Sub Indendant of Crown Land Report, 1871," The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom; "No. 5, Paris 17 June 1842 No. 5 Letter from S. Cipriani to Messrs. Jos Marryat & Sons 17 June 1842," Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers Report from the select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Together With Minutes of Evidence Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Appendix and Index Part II, 1842 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 480.

⁸² "No. 5, Paris 17 June 1842 No. 5 Letter from S. Cipriani to Messrs. Jos Marryat & Sons 17 June 1842," Irish University Press Series of British Parliamentary Papers Report from the select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Together With Minutes of Evidence Select Committee on the West Coast of Africa Appendix and Index Part 2, 1842 (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 480.

⁸³ *Caribbean Societies* 2 (1985): 50-51.

⁸⁴ Hollett, *Passage from India to El Dorado*, 85.

having settled there. Among the settlers were the following tribes: the Mandingo, Eboe, Kramanti, Kroomen, Congo and Yarraba.⁸⁵

All Africans are described as working as free labourers on the construction and maintenance of roads, the Savannah and Public gardens. The African groups mentioned made for a diverse labour force. The area where they resided in the vicinity of Belmont Estate was named Freetown Valley, which most certainly reveals a connection with Freetown. Many African labourers were hired by the British in Freetown where they served a similar working role. More significantly, the mix of workers resembled Freetown as each group had its own quarter.

A major concern of both the British government and planters was to avoid a population of squatters. By enabling the Kru and their fellow migrant workers the opportunity to live in villages reduced the problem of squatters on estates and in ports.⁸⁶ In *Notice to Emigrants to the Island of Trinidad*, W. Hamilton revealed that the Kru were to be “furnished with a house and provision grounds.”⁸⁷ Those Kru living in Krooman’s Village and Freetown Valley were provided with lodgings and land.

Communal land schemes resulted in Kru settlements that ensured traditional social, political and economic structures would continue to inform Kru labour relations. Initially, Kru headmen remained responsible for organizing labour and continued the practice of exacting a portion of their labour gang’s salary as was protocol in West Africa. Kru headmen remained integral to ensuring the flow of Kru workers to Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guiana. The British hoped the headman arriving on the first ships that delivered the Kru would return to

⁸⁵ Franklin, *After Many Days*, 76.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 341.

⁸⁷ W. Hamilton, Papers Relative to the Affairs of Trinidad, March 18, 1841, General Report on the Emigration Commissioners, vol. 1, Papers Relative to the West Indies, 1841-1842, (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1842), 48.

Freetown and the Kru Coast following the completion of their contracts and encourage more Kru immigration to the Caribbean. And, upon their return to the Kru Coast they were expected to give a portion of their salary to the *krogba* of their village.

However, several developments would gradually limit Kru immigration and undermine the authority of headmen in the British Caribbean. Most significantly, the opportunity for Kru to purchase privately owned land enabled Kru labourers to gain unprecedented economic, social and political autonomy. Besides the creation of communal land schemes, the Colonial Office encouraged the Kru to purchase their own private land plots.⁸⁸ The British hoped that by presenting the opportunity to own land, African migrant workers including the Kru would consider permanent settlement in Trinidad.

The price of land in Trinidad as authorized by the British colonial government, was “one Pound per Acre.”⁸⁹ Land purchases were to be paid in cash and were to range in size between forty and fifty acres.⁹⁰ At £1 per acre, a forty-acre lot cost £40. Kru who worked at a rate of approximately 2 shillings per day could make £1 in 10 days (20 shillings equalled £1) in a month.⁹¹ It took Kru workers between thirteen and fourteen months to afford the cost of a lot. In 1855, Verteuil reported that a migrant worker in Trinidad had the opportunity “to commute his return passage in exchange for £5 in money and five acres of land.”⁹² The financial incentive and ability to own land were appealing for some Kru.

⁸⁸ CO 295 /132-133 (1840), 181.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 190.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 190.

⁹¹ Ibid, “Lots, Living quarters and Pay Rate,” 135.

⁹² Verteuil, *Trinidad*, 348.

Similarly, Kru in British Guiana were encouraged to purchase land plots. Upon their arrival in the early 1840s, they had been housed in estate lodgings and cottages.⁹³ However, by the 1850s, Crown lands were available for purchase in plots of less than 100 acres in the Canal No. 1 district, along the Demerara River, where the Kru largely resided.⁹⁴ According to J.A. Veerasawmy in 1919, “many Kroomen and Oku people from Oruba [Yoruba] from West Africa, and Congoes were settled there” in the 1890s.⁹⁵ Veerasawmy estimated their population to have grown from 100 in 1891 to 1,000 by 1911.⁹⁶ The size of the Kru community at Canal No. 1 is unknown, but a large community of African labourers consisting of Yoruba, Kongo and Kru continued to live in the vicinity into the early twentieth century.⁹⁷

In 1853, John Brummel suggested that land purchase enabled Kru a new found sense of individuality in British Guiana.⁹⁸ Their independence may explain why some Kru labourers were recorded as being reluctant to give a percentage of their wages to headmen in the Kru villages and to the Kru *krogha* on the Kru Coast upon completion of contracts.⁹⁹ Brummel contended that

⁹³ Accounts and Papers, Emigration, Session 3 February to 12 August 1842, vol. 21, Correspondence Relative to Emigration, 1842, Enclosure in No. 8 Government House, Return of Emigrants from Sierra Leone working as Labourers or Trademen in District E County of Demerara 1 July 1841, J.O. Lockhart Mure Stipendiary Justice of the Peace, District E (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1842), 378.

⁹⁴ Josephine Boenisch, “Ethnic Differences in Peasant Agriculture: The Canals Poulder” (master’s thesis, McGill University 1971), 28.

⁹⁵ J.A. Veerasawmy, “The Noitgedacht Murder,” *Timehri* 6, Third Series (1919): 116. Also see Boenisch, “Ethnic Differences,” 28; Brian L. Moore, *Cultural Power, Resistance, and Pluralism: Colonial Guyana, 1838-1900* (Montreal: McGill Press, 1995), 139, 144; B.W. Higman, Carl Campbell and Patrick Bryan, *Slavery, Freedom and Gender: The Dynamics of Caribbean Society* (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2003), 138, 144.

⁹⁶ Veerasawmy, “Noitgedacht Murder,” 116.

⁹⁷ See E.P. Skinner, “Ethnic Interaction in a British Guiana Rural Community: A Study in Secondary Acculturation and Group Dynamics” (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1955), 258.

⁹⁸ Brummell, *British Guiana*, 78.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

land ownership became a way of liberating Kru from the traditional gift-giving protocol altogether since they remained in British Guiana and effectively ended ties with their homeland.¹⁰⁰ The opportunity to own land individually differed from their experience on the Kru Coast where land was communally owned by their respective *dako* and where they remained subject to the authority of the *krogba*. The combination of the Kru's ability to own land outside of the communal village and complete task-based work on an individual basis as jobbers enabled the Kru to function beyond traditional societal norms. Employment could be obtained without having to wait for a headman to secure a contract. As a result, the practice of giving a portion of their wages to headmen gradually became redundant. Similarly, the authority of the *krogba* on the Kru Coast had been maintained through gift-giving rituals associated with homecomings. In the British Caribbean, there was no equivalent figure that structured relations in their communities. Both the decline of the headmen's authority and the absence of the *krogba* played a role in creating an unprecedented sense of Kru individualism.

The demographic imbalance between Kru males and females was another factor that influenced the development of Kru communities in Trinidad and British Guiana. Very few Kru women made the voyage to the Caribbean and none were recorded as having joined Kru workers in Jamaica. In 1841, the *Superior* carried the wives of several Kru workers to British Guiana.¹⁰¹ A report by W.M. Humphrys, Agent-General for Immigration, in 1844, described the arrival of the *Arabian* in 1843 containing 48 immigrants, 15 of whom were Krumen accompanied by a single Kru woman.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 78.

¹⁰¹ Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons and Command, "Affairs of British Guiana Immigration Office, September 23, 1841," vol. 29 (1842), 113.

¹⁰² Accounts and Papers, Colonies, Emigration, vol. 35, Session 1 February-5 September 1844, Papers Relative to Emigration from the West Coast of Africa to the West Indies, Enclosure in

British colonial and consular authorities provided various incentives to increase Kru female immigration in Trinidad and British Guiana. In 1844, free passages were offered to those Kru who brought their wives.¹⁰³ The British government certainly seemed to think that the option of bringing wives would result in a permanent labour force, as demonstrated by their desire for every ship sailing from Freetown to contain a manifest of one-third women.¹⁰⁴ Despite these incentives, few Kru women migrated. Similar to Kru communities in West Africa, those in Trinidad and British Guiana were overwhelmingly male. The main factor discouraging Kru women to immigrate may have been the three to five-year duration of contracts and the long distance between the Kru Coast and the Caribbean.

Based on the low number of Kru women in Caribbean, the Kru diaspora was transformed through intermarriage with Creole women.¹⁰⁵ Many of the Kru who migrated were young labourers and unmarried, which explains the low numbers of Kru women who immigrated to British Guiana. An unmarried Kru woman found it much more difficult to survive if she was not supported by a husband. With few Kru women available, Kru males were led to marry beyond their community. Single Kru men were reported to be more likely to settle permanently in British Guiana as compared with those Kru who had wives back in Freetown or the Kru Coast.¹⁰⁶

No. 13 Immigration Agent's Office, Georgetown, Demerara, September 19, 1843, W.M. Humphrys, Agent-General for Immigration (1844), 89, The National Archives, United Kingdom.

¹⁰³ Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey* I, 83. For more discussion on incentives see Frost, *Work and Community*, 21.

¹⁰⁴ Parliamentary Papers, Acting Committee 14 November 1843, "Evidence of the Honourable Captain Denmase R.N.," November 1843, 6, 119-120.

¹⁰⁵ Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons and Command, vol. 29, "Affairs of British Guiana Immigration Office September 23, 1841" (London: HM Stationary Office, 1842), 113.

¹⁰⁶ Accounts and Papers, Sugar Growing Colonies, "Despatch from Governor Barkly to Earl Grey," 25 September 1850, vol. 9, no. 49, 1851, 188.

Creole women outnumbered men in British Guiana, as reported by the Commissioners of Immigration in 1850: “British Guiana, where it so happens that of the African race there are more females than males, and that Africans coming to this colony without their wives readily form alliances with the Creole population.”¹⁰⁷ These unions resulted in a new generation marked by what Stuart Hall terms “hybridity” as plural societies with multiple ancestral origins creolized.¹⁰⁸ Kru labourers were among many labouring groups in British Guiana, and in the second half of the nineteenth century a new generation of creolized Kru became the norm.

Despite these changes within Kru communities, a traditional practice that endured was the Kru mark. According to Henry Kirke in 1898, “men, with...tattooes on their noses and cheeks...tireless oarsmen...they roused their spirits by chanting wild Kroo songs, which marked the time to the measured beat of the oars.”¹⁰⁹ Kirke’s comments reveal that the Kru continued to practice their tradition of scarification, although Kirke refers to the scars as “tattooes,” in British Guiana. He also showed that Kru identity continued to be intimately bound with marine service. However, due to their low numbers and intermarriage with the Creole population, the Kru eventually disappeared as a distinct ethnic group in the twentieth century. The ability to study their diaspora in the Caribbean with a degree of certainty is limited to the nineteenth century.

This chapter has analysed the transition of Kru labour and the formation of diaspora communities in the British Caribbean. Kru continued to engage in the labour they were familiar with on marine vessels and agriculture in West Africa on the estates, dockyards and rivers in Trinidad, Jamaica and British Guiana. The establishment of Krooman’s Village in Trinidad

¹⁰⁷ Accounts and Papers, vol. 9, Enclosure in no. 49, W.B. Wolseley, Acting Secretary, “Minute of the Proceedings of the Commissioners of Immigration Correspondence, at a Meeting Held at the Guiana Public Buildings, Tuesday, 20 August 1850,” 189.

¹⁰⁸ Hall, “Cultural Identity,” 235.

¹⁰⁹ Kirke, *Twenty-Five Years*, 171-172.

enabled the Kru to maintain a cultural space with a distinct identity alongside Indian, Chinese, Yoruba and Congolese workers for a period that lasted several decades. In British Guiana, Kru seemed to have had a greater degree of mobility in terms of contracts and living quarters than elsewhere in the British Caribbean. While they maintained the tradition of the Kru mark that distinguished them from other labourers, their community was transformed through the ability to own private land and obtain contracts independent of headmen.

Kru labour migration in Jamaica was short-lived, transient, and small in scale. Therefore, while the Kru formed diaspora communities in Trinidad and British Guiana, based on a limited visible record that has survived, in Jamaica they seemed only to have extended their labour network. The relationships the Kru formed with Creole women and the decision of many Kru to remain in mixed ethnic communities along the Demerara River and elsewhere led to their creolization and eventual absorption. One crucial distinction between the Kru experience in the British Caribbean and West Africa was that while the Kru were assimilated into an emerging creole society in the former, their diaspora communities in West Africa continued well into the twentieth century and, in some cases, continue in the twenty-first century.

Chapter 5

Labour Networks and the Role of Kru in British Expansion

The Kru played a role in British colonial expansion in the nineteenth century. They served in British expeditions of exploration and diplomacy, slave trade suppression in the Indian Ocean, and military campaigns in Africa. The British depended on Kru as boatmen, pilots, porters and in watering and wooding in Hugh Clapperton's second expedition to Sokoto (1825-1827), and a series of Niger River expeditions including those led by Richard and John Lander (1830), Macgregor Laird, Richard Lander and R.A.K. Oldfield (1832-1833), William Allen, Henry Dundas Trotter and Bird Allen (1841-1842) and William Balfour Baikie (1854) as well as and David Livingstone's Zambezi Expedition (1858-1864). As in the Atlantic, Kru were hired on Royal Navy ships in the Indian Ocean towards assisting with the suppression of the slave trade. Their ability to man surfboats became even more significant due to a shortage of Royal Navy ships in the region. Kru found themselves on the front lines of intercepting slave *dhow*s (Arab-owned slave ships) as a coalition of British naval ships and launch boats were required to fulfil their mission. The Kru were assigned with navigating the launch boats while in pursuit of *dhow*s, which increased their risk of capture or death. Kru duties in the Royal Navy were extended to include service in military campaigns in Asia and Africa including the First Opium War (1839-1842), occupation of Lagos (1851), the campaign against Asante (1873-1874), the Anglo-Zulu War (1879), the Sudan Campaign (1884-1885), and the exile of Jaja of Opobo in the British Oil Rivers Protectorate (1887).

Rather than continuing the development of diaspora communities, the Kru expanded their labour network as they sailed between ports and were enlisted for specific expeditions and campaigns. In the Indian Ocean, Royal Navy ships became the cultural spaces where the Kru

were able to evolve their seaborne practices first developed on the Kru Coast. The Kru's role on Royal Navy ships in the Indian Ocean between 1862 and 1881 was based on an itinerary that included Simon's Town in South Africa, Zanzibar, the Seychelles, Aden, Basra, Bombay, and Trincomalee. This chapter analyzes Kru service in expeditions of exploration, slave trade suppression in the Indian Ocean, and military campaigns in order to demonstrate how their contractual duties evolved with the British over the course of the nineteenth century.

Expeditions of Exploration and Diplomacy

Kru labourers played important roles in British expeditions of exploration in Africa. The Kru cut paths, carried materials, manned and piloted British ships and sailed vessels along two of Africa's most important rivers – the Niger River and the Zambezi River. The expeditions were largely inspired by European ideologies rooted in the desire to increase trade in the African interior, spread Christianity and, from their perspective, inspire a higher level of civilization based on European social and economic values. The primary concern of the Kru remained earning wages on contract, and they seem to have given little attention to the political impact of their involvement on local societies.

Kru served on Hugh Clapperton's second expedition to the Sokoto Caliphate between 1825 and 1827. During the first expedition that began in Tripoli, Clapperton established diplomatic relations in Borno and the Sokoto Caliphate after crossing the Sahara under the command of Major Dixon Denham between 1822 and 1825.¹ Clapperton's second expedition

¹ E.W. Bovill, ed., *Captain Clapperton's Narrative*, in *Missions to The Niger: The Bornu Mission, 1822-25*, Part 3, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); Dixon Denham, Hugh Clapperton, and Walter Oudney, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the years 1822, 1823, and 1824*, 2 vols. (London: Darf Publishers Ltd., 1826); Bruce Lockhart and Lovejoy, *Hugh Clapperton*, 1.

arose from a mutual desire between the British and the Sultan of the Sokoto Caliphate, Muhammed Bello, to open up commercial trade with one another. On his voyage back to West Africa, he landed in Freetown for the purpose of acquiring Kru seamen. On 27 October 1825, Clapperton reported that he hired Kru in Freetown:

H.M. Government however most wisely and humanely ordered that every ship serving on the African station shall be allowed a certain number [of hired men] to be paid and victualed on board for those duties during the time she is on the station-every merchant ship is obliged to do the same...I have also for the purpose of being able to land at all places and at all times hired – 14 – the head man of whom is called Tom Freeman.²

Their duties were to assist in the collection of water, wood, and landing along the coast as they approached Badagry in the Bight of Benin.³ Clapperton was aware of the necessity of hiring Kru on his voyage because of their positive reputation, and due to the high mortality rates affecting British seaman in West Africa.⁴ The headman, Tom Freeman's gang included: "Bottle of Beer, Black Will, Prince Will, Jack Monday, Ben Coffee, Jim George, Tom Nimblo, Jack Tartar, Yellow Will, Jack Morgiana, Jack Purser, Tom Briggs, and Peter Johnson."⁵ Kru workers in Clapperton's expedition continued to depend on their headman, as they did in the Royal Navy and diaspora communities, in order to organize their labour.

Clapperton landed at Badagry on 7 December 1825 and made his way overland and crossed the Niger at Bussa. Clapperton realized that the Niger and neighboring rivers formed a larger network of waterways that had the potential to establish a network of trading posts that would link the British on the West African coast with the Sokoto Caliphate in the interior.⁶ Unfortunately, Clapperton arrived in Kano, the major emporium of the interior, at a time when

² Bruce Lockhart and Lovejoy, *Hugh Clapperton*, 83.

³ Ibid, 82-83.

⁴ Ibid, 83.

⁵ Ibid, 83.

⁶ Ibid, 12.

the Caliphate was at war with Borno, which Clapperton also intended to visit. When it was discovered that Clapperton had presents for Shehu al-Kanemi, the ruler of Borno, that included firearms, he was detained and during his internment in Sokoto died of disease.⁷

Following his death in 1827, his assistant, Richard Lemon Lander, returned to the coast and later published Clapperton's journals and his own account in 1829.⁸ Almost immediately upon his return to Britain, Lander was commissioned to lead a new expedition, together with his brother John, and in 1830, they left Britain on the brig, *Alert*. Like Clapperton, the Lander brothers hired Kru seamen for their expedition. They landed at Badagry on 22 March 1830, and made their way to Bussa, from where they traveled down the Niger towards the delta.⁹ Their mission, too, was far from successful, since they were imprisoned and were only freed in the Niger Delta when a Portuguese ship purchased their liberty. From a European perspective, however, they demonstrated that the Niger River did indeed flow into the Atlantic Ocean in the many rivers that were now recognized as the delta of the Niger. The Landers hoped to exploit British public interest in geography for their own fame and fortune.

The Kru played an important role in navigation. One of their duties included piloting the *Alert* and its smaller craft through potentially challenging sub-marine terrain. Richard Lander explained that their duty was to "sound the bar of the river, in order to know whether there was sufficient depth of water for the vessel to pass over it."¹⁰ The Kru also engaged in

⁷ Ibid, 53.

⁸ Ibid, 82-83.

⁹ Richard and John Lander, *Journal*, 1:41.

¹⁰ Ibid, 3:252.

towing the *Alert* with smaller craft as the anchor was raised.¹¹ In typical Kru fashion, Lander noted that they manned each craft with six rowers while on the Niger.¹²

British interest in establishing the Niger as commercial hub continued to gain momentum and in 1832, Macgregor Laird, supported by Liverpool merchants sent two ships, the *Alburkah* and the *Quorra*, to the Niger. The *Quorra* had 26 crewmembers and the *Alburkah* had 14, both also included Kru, although their exact numbers were not provided.¹³ Laird noted the “dexterity of the Kroomen is exemplified in their diving, and their power of remaining under water for a considerable time.”¹⁴ Their skills were useful for the maintenance of the hull, which required Kru to venture beneath the ship for the purposes of cleaning it.

As was the case on previous expeditions, the primary function of Kru workers was cutting wood and gathering supplies, serving as firestokers, and tendering crew members and goods ashore on small craft.¹⁵ Occasionally, they were also sent to trade ashore acquiring food for the crew including meat and livestock to be slaughtered.¹⁶ Laird’s expedition had not proven to be an immediate commercial success, but the mission was in part driven by a desire to establish commercial relations with Igbo, Igala and Edo traders on the Niger in palm oil that it was hoped would ultimately quell the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

In terms of navigation, Laird’s experimentation with steamship technology marked the beginning of a new era in the British Empire in West Africa. Steamship prototypes had been in

¹¹ Ibid, 283.

¹² Ibid, 284.

¹³ Laird and Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition*, 2: 302; Davies, “On the Fever,” 239.

¹⁴ Laird and Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition*, 2:303.

¹⁵ Ibid, 302; William Simpson, *A Private Journal Kept During the Niger Expedition: From the Commencement in May 1841, Until the Recall of the Expedition in June 1842* By William Simpson (London: John F Shaw, 1843), 69-70.

¹⁶ Laird and Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition*, 2:133.

use since 1819, but the *Alburkah*, and *Quorra* were the first multi-purpose armed steamships to make an oceanic voyage, predating the *Nemesis* which was the first steamship solely designed for warfare.¹⁷ Laird eventually founded the African Steamship Company in 1852.¹⁸ Faster travel periods and a flat-bottomed hull that enabled travel in shallow rivers played a major role in British expeditions into the interior of West Africa. Moreover, it created new jobs for the Kru such as firestokers, coalers and increased the demand for them in supplying wood for the ships.

Kru returned for service on the Niger in the expedition of 1841-1842. In 1840, Thomas Fowell Buxton, Member of Parliament, abolitionist and founder of the Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery (later known as the Anti-Slavery Society), began organizing the largest expedition on the Niger yet undertaken.¹⁹ Buxton's vision for increased commerce and the promotion of Christianity in West Africa was rooted in similar principles informing the establishment of Sierra Leone some five decades earlier.²⁰ Religious incentives were demonstrated by the presence of Reverend J.F. Schon and Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther who both resided in Sierra Leone and were responsible for assessing the disposition of African rulers in the interior to receiving the gospel.²¹ Three ships sailed for the Niger including the HMS

¹⁷ Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840-1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the War by Which They Forced Her Gates Ajar* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1975), 260-263; Lincoln P. Paine, *Warships of the World to 1900* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000), 115.

¹⁸ Peter N. Davies, *The Trade Makers: Elder Demster in West Africa, 1852-1872, 1973-1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xxvi.

¹⁹ Junius P. Rodriguez, *Slavery in the Modern World: A History of Political, Social and Economic Oppression*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 156.

²⁰ Suzanne Schwarz, "Commerce, Civilization and Christianity: The Development of the Sierra Leone Company" in David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz and Anthony Tibbles eds., *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 270.

²¹ Kenneth Dike, "Origins of the Niger Mission 1841-1891," A paper read at the Centenary of the Mission at Christ Church, Onitsha, on November 13 1957 (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1962), 6.

Albert commanded by Captain H.D. Trotter, the HMS *Wilberforce* commanded by Captain William Allen and the HMS *Soudan* commanded by Bird Allen. The goal of the expedition was to establish a model farm or trade center and mission in Lokoja at the confluence of the Niger River and Benue River.²²

Prior to the expedition, Captain Trotter recognized the need to offer the Kru higher wages than those offered on Royal Navy ships in order to entice Kru to join the expedition. Unlike their service on Royal Navy ships where they could receive additional prize money following the capture of a slave ship, there was no such opportunity on the expedition. Trotter claimed that higher wages would “ensure getting the best description of men.”²³ He suggested giving those Kru who remained on the expedition until its conclusion one month’s wages as a gratuity.²⁴ The gratuity was not to exceed a total of £200, which would be distributed amongst Kru labourers.²⁵ Trotter was concerned that Kru seamen would abandon the expedition in search of better economic opportunities. In total, £500 was allotted for Kru employment in expedition expenses.²⁶

On 26 June 1841, Kru were hired on the HMS *Wilberforce* and the HMS *Albert* in Freetown.²⁷ The crew list for each vessel suggests that 108 “Men entered in Africa,” which included the Kru. Kru were then dispersed amongst the vessels. Forty-four were assigned on the HMS *Albert*, 37 on the HMS *Wilberforce*, 18 on the HMS *Soudan*, and 9 on a fourth vessel,

²² Whitford, *Trading Life*, 129.

²³ Allen and Thomson, *Narrative of the Expedition*, 1:494.

²⁴ Ibid, 495.

²⁵ Ibid, 497.

²⁶ Ibid, 491.

²⁷ Simpson, *Private Journal*, 128, 18, 22, 68-69, 70. Simpson suggests that the number of Kru employed amounted to 120.

Amelia.²⁸ Some of the names of Kru crewmembers were listed on the ships' manifests. Jack Be-Off on the HMS *Albert* was listed as being born in Kru Country, and held the rank of Ordinary seaman. Two other Kru included Andrew Williams, an able seaman, and James Carol, a stoker.²⁹ The ships sailed for the Niger on 20 August 1841. They performed the same types of jobs they had in previous expeditions, manning small craft along the river, collecting timber for fuel, fresh water and supplies.³⁰ They were responsible for providing a portion of the food for the crew and regularly fished in the lagoons and river.³¹ They were also tasked with unique duties as demonstrated by a Kru seaman who dug the grave of a fallen crewmember.³²

As was the case on all previous expeditions, the headman system remained integral for the completion of daily operations. Several headmen were hired on the HMS *Wilberforce*. One was named Wilson. He led a gang of eight Kru labourers.³³ Another gang was led by Jack Andrews, whose duty was to assist in working the small vessels.³⁴ His gang included Jack Frying-pan, King George, Prince Albert, Jack Sprat, Bottle-of-Beer, Tom tea-kettle, Prince of Wales, Duke of York, and Sam Lewis.³⁵ The expedition produced a model farm for a Niger mission, albeit the mission did not develop further until Crowther's return in 1854.³⁶ Treaties between the British and rulers in Aboh and Idah towards the abolition of the slave trade were forged, and the rulers of these communities granted permission for the presence of missionaries. However, mortality rates were high amongst the British sailors. Fifty-four crew of the total of

²⁸ Allen and Thomson, *Narrative of the Expedition*, 1:461.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 465.

³⁰ Schön and Crowther, *Journals*, 150; Simpson, *Private Journal*, 47.

³¹ Allen and Thomson, *Narrative of the Expedition*, 1:167.

³² Schön and Crowther, *Journals*, 164.

³³ Wilson, *Private Journal*, 58.

³⁴ Allen and Thomson, *Narrative of the Expedition*, 1:77.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 77-78.

³⁶ Dike, "Origins of the Niger Mission," 9.

162 crewmembers were dead from malaria within weeks of the voyage up the Niger. In contrast, Kru seamen experienced a very low mortality rate on the expedition. Only four Kru labourers died from malaria including one on the HMS *Albert*, two on the HMS *Wilberforce*, and one on the HMS *Soudan*.³⁷

High mortality rates amongst British sailors and low economic returns in the 1841-1842 expedition meant that there was little interest amongst the British government in funding another expedition in the Niger until more than a decade had passed. In 1854, the British embarked on another expedition with the goal of increasing the number of trading stations on the Niger and establishing missions. John Beecroft was assigned to command the expedition, but he died in Fernando Po before ascending the Niger. In his stead, Dr. William Balfour Baikie, a surgeon and naturalist, commanded the expedition in the steamer, *Pleiad*. He sailed up the Niger and then up the Benue surpassing all previous expeditions in terms of distance.

Advances in medicine with development of quinine meant that an anti-malarial drug could be taken as a prophylactic for the first time. Although Jesuits in the sixteenth century and indigenous populations in South America, Central America, the Caribbean, and parts of West Africa, had known about the medicinal properties of Chinchona bark, it was not used in the large scale production of medicine until the mid-nineteenth century.³⁸ The Niger Expedition

³⁷ Allen and Thomson, *Narrative of the Expedition*, 506; Becroft, "On Benin," 184, 189. Kru served on the *Ethiope* steamer in April 1840. Commanded by Captain Becroft, they sailed in Fermoso River (Benin River) before finding it impassable and, in May 1840, sailed the Niger River.

³⁸ Philip Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1973), 81; Philip Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 5, 21, 113, Philip Curtin, "The End of the 'White Man's Grave?'" Nineteenth-Century Mortality in West Africa," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21, no. 1 (1990): 63-88; James L.A. Webb, "On Biomedicine, Transfers of Knowledge and Malaria Treatments in Eastern North America and Tropical Africa," in *Indigenous Knowledge and the Environment in Africa and North America*,

provided the opportunity to test the viability of quinine amongst British sailors.³⁹ Quinine became regularly available in the 1850s for regular use and played a major role in lowering fatalities. As a result, there was not a single death amongst British sailors due to malaria for the first 118 days of the expedition.⁴⁰

Based on high mortality rates amongst British sailors in past expeditions, the British government hired as many African labourers as possible. Kru were hired directly on the Kru Coast.⁴¹ The Kru formed half of the compliment on the voyage up the Niger in the 1854 expedition: 33 in a total crew of 66.⁴² Samuel Crowther observed the Kru paddling canoes between ship and shore, collecting wood, and purchasing food and beer from local Igbo traders.⁴³ Ultimately, Baikie's efforts led to the creation of trading posts and missions in Onitsha, Gbebe and Lokoja.

The importance of Kru labour in British expeditions was not limited to West Africa, as they also served in David Livingstone's Zambezi Expedition between 1858 and 1864. Similar to British expeditions on the Niger, Livingstone's expedition was rooted in the British desire to

edited by David M. Gordon and Shepard Krech (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2012), 53-68; A. Bryson, "Prophylactic Influence of Quinine," *Medical Times and Gazette*, 7 (7 January 1854): 6-7; L.J. Bruce-Chwatt, "Malaria in Nigeria," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 4, no. 3 (1951): 317-320; J.O. M'William, *Medical History of the Expedition to the Niger during the years 1841-1842 comprising An Account of the Fever* (London: John Churchill, 1843), 10; A.A. Boahen, "British Penetration of North-West Africa and the Western Sudan, 1788-1861," (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, London, 1959), 252; E.H. Acherknecht, *Malaria in the Upper Mississippi Valley, 1760-1900* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1945), 101-104.

³⁹ Curtin, *Image of Africa*, 81; Bryson, "Prophylactic Influence," 6-7; M'William, *Medical History*, 10.

⁴⁰ Dike, "Origins of the Niger Mission," 10.

⁴¹ Baikie, *Narrative*, 18, 366.

⁴² Davies, "On the Fever in the Zambesi," 241.

⁴³ Samuel Crowther, *Journal of an Expedition up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers Undertaken by Macgregor Laird in Connection with the British Government in 1854* (London: Church Missionary House, 1855), 8, 43, 66, 87, 89, 94, 130.

establish trading posts and missions in the African interior.⁴⁴ The British government and subscriptions raised £5000 for the expedition. Livingstone served as British Consul, whose task was to establish trade on the Zambezi.⁴⁵

Livingstone sailed on the HMS *Pearl* on 10 March 1858 from Liverpool to Quelimane to undertake an exploratory journey up the Zambezi River. Kru, who were hired in Freetown, assembled and manned the *Ma-Robert*, a seventy-five foot long paddle wheeled flat-bottomed steam boat intended to carry 36 men up the Zambezi River.⁴⁶ Similar to their role in the Niger expeditions, Kru continued to serve as boatmen, collect wood, provide ship maintenance. New duties included keeping night-watch and serving as cooks.⁴⁷

Livingstone offers a brief glimpse into the lives of those Kru who served. Two Kru on the expedition were mentioned by name. Tom Coffee served as engineer's mate.⁴⁸ And, a Kru named Tom Jumbo, supposedly served to reassure the local inhabitants of the benevolent intentions of Livingstone's expedition, even though he spoke a completely different language.⁴⁹ However flawed, Livingstone hoped that by employing the Kru as mediators they would garner trust between themselves and the Shupanga, Tsonga and Shona along the route. Thomas Baines

⁴⁴ Livingstone, *Missionary Travels*, 92.

⁴⁵ A.D. Roberts, "Livingstone, David (1813-1874)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) online, n.p, accessed August 10, 2018, <https://http://www.oxforddnb.com/>.

⁴⁶ Donald Simpson, *Dark Companions: The African Contribution to the European Exploration of East Africa* (London: Paul Elek Limited, 1975), 39.

⁴⁷ G.W. Clendennen and D.H. Simpson, "African Members of the Zambezi Expedition, 1861-1864: A Prosopographical Foray," *History in Africa* 12 (1985): 29-49; Livingstone, *Expedition*, 59; Thomas Baines, *Baines on the Zambezi, 1858 to 1859* (Johannesburg, SA: Brenthurst Press, 1982), 93, 97, 117; Livingstone, *Narrative*, 95, 96.

⁴⁸ Simpson, *Dark Companions*, 41.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 41.

described the Kru as being “lent” for their linguistic services, which suggests that they were valuable for operations on board the *Ma-Robert* and shoreside.⁵⁰

One challenge during the expedition was that the *Ma-Robert* kept running aground. Kru helped to keep the boat on course as one passenger observed: “Kroomen going into water willingly...Grounded again-then a third and fourth time; very trying to their tempers.”⁵¹ The *Ma-Robert* was unable to navigate the cataracts on the Shire River. As a result, Livingstone had to make his way to Lake Nyassa by way of an overland trek.⁵² Kru did not accompany Livingstone on the trek. Initially, Livingstone commented favourably on their work ethic claiming: “The Kroomen all worked admirably.”⁵³ Despite their important role in operations, the Kru fell out of favour with Livingstone after one Kru was supposedly accused of theft. This was followed by a strike amongst the Kru who refused to work in response to the accusation, which led to their condemnation by Livingstone.⁵⁴ Livingstone also condemned the Kru for their inability to march on long treks, which was likely based on their unwillingness to cooperate with him following the strike. Since the next phase of the expedition would be an overland trek, he thought the Kru unfit.⁵⁵ On 29 July 1859, the Kru were dismissed and set sail on the HMS *Persian* to Freetown.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Baines, *Baines on the Zambezi*, 62.

⁵¹ Simpson, *Dark Companions*, 41.

⁵² “Letters Relating to Dr. Livingstone,” *Proceedings and Monthly Record of Geography* 40 (1866): 307-308.

⁵³ Simpson, *Dark Companions*, 41.

⁵⁴ David Livingstone and Charles Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and Its Tributaries: And of the Discovery of the Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa, 1858-1864* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1866) 96-103; Willaim Garden Blaikie, *The Personal Life of David Livingstone* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1881), 257; Sjoerd Rijpma, *David Livingstone and the Myth of African Poverty and Disease: A Close Examination of his Writing on the Pre-Colonial Era* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 121.

⁵⁵ Livingstone, *Narrative*, 96.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 96-103; Sjoerd Rijpma, *David Livingstone and the Myth of African Poverty and Disease: A Close Examination of his Writing on the Pre-Colonial Era* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 121; Sir Reginald Coupland, *Kirk on the Zambesi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), 98.

They were replaced by eight Kololo. Livingstone concluded: “Disciplined Europeans are much better than Kroomen.”⁵⁷

Despite their usefulness and hard work, the Kru were still viewed with suspicion, and condemned if they dared to challenge British authority. Livingstone’s remarks upon hiring Kru reveal the Victorian racist perceptions that informed his perspective: “We have twelve Kroomen, who seem docile and willing to be taught.”⁵⁸ From Livingstone’s perspective, Kru were like children who required European instruction.

There was also an economic aspect to their dismissal. Livingstone complained that while the Kololo ate local “country food” in the region, Kru insisted on their “man of war’s allowance of beef, biscuit, tea, sugar, etc.”⁵⁹ Kru were accustomed to a high standard of treatment in the Royal Navy, which they expected on the expedition. Livingstone seems uncomfortable with their expectations. He implies that expenditures could be cut with the dismissal of Kru seamen.

Ultimately, the expedition did not succeed as parts of the Zambezi proved unnavigable. The expedition was recalled by the British government in 1863 because the economic and political prosperity of the region was questioned. Despite Livingstone’s negative attitude towards the Kru, employment opportunities with the British increased as they were hired on Royal Navy ships in the Indian Ocean in the decade that followed.

⁵⁷ J.P.R. Wallis, ed., *The Zambezi Expedition of David Livingstone, 1858-1863*, vol. 1 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956), 104-105, 325; Rijpma, *David Livingstone*, 175-176

⁵⁸ Blaikie, *Personal Life*, 248.

⁵⁹ Wallis, *Zambezi Expedition*, 104-105, 325.

Indian Ocean Service

During the same period of British expeditions of exploration and diplomacy, Kru extended their service on Royal Navy ships into the Indian Ocean. Based in Simon's Town, the Cape of Good Hope Station (also known as Cape Station) served as the main staging port for Royal Navy operations towards the suppression of the slave trade in the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean slave trade had grown in scale over the course of the nineteenth century. Between 1815 and 1830, 10,000 enslaved Africans were shipped annually from East Africa to Brazil with a further 7,000 sent to French islands, including Reunion and Mauritius. Enslaved Africans were further sent northward into the Islamic slave trade to the Arabian Peninsula, Persia and the Ottoman Empire to serve as domestic servants, soldiers, farm workers, concubines, and pearl divers.⁶⁰ The main ports for acquiring slaves included Zanzibar, Pemba Island, and Kilwa, whose primary exports were cloves, ivory, copal, coconut oil, and captives.⁶¹ Slave disembarkation ports included Muscat, Soor and Persian Gulf ports including Bussorah and Mohamrah in

⁶⁰ Edward Alpers, "Recollecting Africa: Diasporic Memory in the Indian Ocean World," in Special Issue on the Diaspora, ed. Judith Byfield, *African Studies Review* 43, no. 1 (2000): 83-99; Edward Alpers, *East Africa and the Indian Ocean* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publications, 2009), 68-69; Behnaz A. Mirzai, *A History of Slavery and Emancipation in Iran, 1800-1929* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 33-90; Behnaz A. Mirzai, "African Presence in Iran: Identity and its Reconstruction," *Outre-Mers revue d'histoire* 89, no. 336-337 (2002): 229-246; Ralph Austen "The Mediterranean Islamic Slave Trade Out of Africa: A Tentative Census," *Slavery & Abolition* 13, no. 1 (1992): 214-248; Gwynn Campbell, *Structure of Slavery in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London: Routledge, 2004), 58; Matthew Hopper, "East Africa and the End of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade," *Journal of African Development* 13, no. 1 (2011): 27-54; Matthew Hopper, *Slaves of One Master: Globalization and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire* (New haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 1-40; Opolot Okia, "The Windmill of Slavery: The British and Foreign Antislavery Society and Bonded Labor in East Africa," *Middle Ground Journal* 3 (2011): 1-35; www.liberatedafricans.org.

⁶¹ Edward Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 53, 95; Howell, *Royal Navy*, 3; Matthew Hopper, "The African Presence in Eastern Arabia," in *The Gulf in Modern Times, People, Ports, and History* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2014), 327-350;

Persia.⁶² Perisan, Omani and Ottoman caravans arrived, purchased enslaved Africans and then dispersed as far abroad as Turkey.⁶³

The Moresby Line (1822) and Hammerton Treaty (1845) played a role in attempting to limit the number of enslaved Africans transported in the Indian Ocean by imposing restrictions on where slave ships could embark and disembark slaves.⁶⁴ However, the trade continued to flourish and the need for Royal Navy ships remained urgent. Although Britain's main concern in the Indian Ocean was protecting their sea routes to India, they were also influenced by the rejuvenated call for the abolition of slave trading by the British public during the 1850s and 1860s. Similar to British abolitionist narratives in the 1780s, David Livingstone and Richard Burton's writings on the horrors of the slave trade created a sense of urgency towards the abolition of the East African slave trade in the Indian Ocean amongst the British public.⁶⁵ While their Royal Navy service continued to be military in nature, Kru did not form diaspora communities in ports in the Indian Ocean as they did in the Atlantic.

Kru were hired with the sole purpose of serving on East Africa Squadron ships beginning in 1862.⁶⁶ Their reputation in the Atlantic had made them the preferred seamen in the Royal Navy's suppression of the slave trade in the Indian Ocean. Kru had served at Simon's Town

⁶² Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, 344.

⁶³ Ibid, 399.

⁶⁴ See Gerald S. Graham, *Great Britain in the Indian Ocean* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967) 196-210; J. B. Kelly, *Britain and the Persian Gulf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 411-51. For details on negotiations concerning the Moresby Line see Howell, *The Royal Navy*, 5. ADM 123/23, "Enclosure in Hammerton to Rear-Admiral Dacres," 9 April 1846, p. 45-49, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom; Howell, *The Royal Navy*, 9.

⁶⁵ See David Livingstone, *Last Journals*, vol. 2, ed., Horace Waller (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1874), 212; Richard Francis Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Equatorial Africa*, vol. 1 (London: Longman, 1860), 99; Richard Francis Burton, *The Lake Regions of Central Equatorial Africa*, vol. 2 (London: Longman, 1860), 368, 377.

⁶⁶ Howell, *Royal Navy*, 41; ADM 123/48, "Admiralty (Romaine) to Rear-Admiral Walker, Number M 39," 30 January 1862, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

since 1838, but beginning in 1862 they circulated between British ports including Bombay, Mombasa, Aden, and Trincomalee, and other ports and islands including Zanzibar, Mozambique and the Persian Gulf anchorages.

In 1861, Rear-Admiral Walker requested that the Admiralty grant him use of Kru seamen at Cape Station. Beginning in January 1862, Royal Navy ships in the Indian Ocean were authorized to carry Kru. There had already been 56 Kru serving on Royal Navy ships in the Indian Ocean that were embarking at the Cape Station even before the 1861 request. However, the system of employment in the Indian Ocean became more systematized as they were recruited for the specific task of manning launch boats and intercepting slave ships in the Indian Ocean.⁶⁷ Kru embarked in Freetown and Simon's Town.⁶⁸ By the 1860s, the Kru diaspora had come to provide the bulk of Kru seamen serving in the Royal Navy.

The Kru headman system continued to structure labour relations between the British and Kru in the context of their Indian Ocean service. Each Royal Navy ship carried twelve Kru seamen including a headman, second headman and ten seamen. Smaller ships carried eight Kru consisting of a headman, second headman and six seamen. Rear-Admiral Walker made a request immediately to exceed this number.⁶⁹ The dominant role of the second Kru headman seems to have been more common in the Indian Ocean context, as compared with the Atlantic suppression of the slave trade. Reasons may have included the shift to steamships in the 1840s, which expanded the jobs performed by the Kru to include firestokers and coalers. A greater number of workers may have necessitated the need for greater supervision, and hence a second headman.

⁶⁷ Howell, *Royal Navy*, 42.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 41; ADM 123/48, "Admiralty (Romaine) to Rear-Admiral Walker," no. M 39, 30 January 1862, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

⁶⁹ Howell, *Royal Navy*, 42.

In 1862, Kru served on the HMS *Gorgon*, which carried fifteen, and the HMS *Lyra*, which carried fifty-one. By 1863, a total of 100 Kru were working on various Royal Navy ships engaged in the suppression of Indian Ocean slave trade.⁷⁰ By then, the Kru were in high demand and there was a British initiative for the Kru to become officers.⁷¹ There is no evidence that they became officers, but headman did reach the rank of eighth class in the Royal Navy as shown in Chapter Two.

Captain G.L. Sullivan employed Kru on board the HMS *Daphne*. He acquired Kru at Freetown and Simon's Town before sailing to Mauritius, Bombay and Aden.⁷² Sullivan's account details the abolitionist itineraries sailed by Royal Navy ships in the Indian Ocean, all of which had Kru on board. The HMS *Pantaloön* sailed between Aden, the Seychelles, the Coco-de Mer Latham Islands, and Zanzibar, before returning to East India Station in Bombay on 11 May 1866.⁷³ Sullivan reveals a second sailing route between Cape St. Andrews, Madagascar and Trincomalee, Ceylon (Sri Lanka).⁷⁴ A third route seems to have commenced at Aden before sailing the Seychelles, the Comoros Islands before returning to Aden.⁷⁵ Sullivan's account is

⁷⁰ ADM 8/141 and ADM 8/142, "List Books, Cape of Good Hope Station," The National Archives, London, United Kingdom; Howell, *The Royal Navy*, 42.

⁷¹ Howell, *Royal Navy*, 42; ADM 1/5768, "Notes on African Slave Trade, Captain E. Wilmot," 1861, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

⁷² Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, 91.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 93.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 127.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 137.

valuable for understanding the anti-slavery sea routes sailed by Royal Navy ships and the Kru's role in the crew. The Kru engaged in coaling at Port Victoria, Seychelles and Aden.

Captain Sullivan further provided details on the different slave ship suppression regions in the Indian Ocean and the Royal Navy vessel allocation for each. These included the following list:

1. On the Arabian coast, from Ras-el-Had to Haura, one vessel and two steam launches.
2. Red Sea, one vessel and two launches.
3. From Cape Guardafui to Formosa Bay, one vessel and one launch – but removed during monsoon.
4. From Formosa Bay to Cape Delgado, one vessel and one launch.
5. From Cape Delgado to Macalanga River, one vessel and one launch.
6. From Macalanga River to Inhambane, one vessel and one launch.
7. From Commoro Islands to N.W. coast of Madagascar, one vessel and two launches.⁷⁶

The Royal Navy formed what it conceptualized as a spider's web in the Indian Ocean as a practical means of patrolling vast distances. Yet, they suffered from a lack of naval resources to cover the vast expanse of ocean. As such, the Royal Navy relied on a coalition of launches and

⁷⁶ Ibid, 199.

vessels while chasing down slave *dhow*s.⁷⁷ Launches, sometimes referred to as “whaleboats” were operated by Kru, who relied on their deep-seated knowledge of operating small vessels.⁷⁸ The coalition of Royal Navy vessels and launch boats placed the Kru on the front lines of abolitionism as they boarded slave ships.

In an episode off the east coast of Africa in the Indian Ocean, the heroic actions of several Krumen on board the HMS *Dryad* are recorded as they chased down a *dhow* slave ship. The HMS *Dryad* was engaged in the pursuit of a slave ship near Ras Madraka in which it ran aground. Three ships were dispatched to rescue the enslaved Africans on board and the Kru played a crucial role in rescuing a total of fifty-eight Africans. Headman Jim George and Peter Warman swam back through the surf to the third boat and helped pull slaves from the *dhow*. For his efforts, Jim George was awarded a medal of honour; a bronze medal by the Royal Humane Society.⁷⁹ The names of specific Kru sailors were celebrated, which may have enabled the nineteenth century British public to appreciate the great risks that were associated with service in the Royal Navy. Individual stories of Kru sailors resonated with nineteenth century British

⁷⁷ In order to appreciate the relative strength of the Royal Navy in the Indian Ocean as compared with other regions it is worthwhile to examine Britain’s global distribution of naval stations. In 1840, the West Coast of Africa station had twelve vessels, the Baltic station had seventeen vessels, the East Indies station had twenty vessels (more were added during 1850s because this station included Australia until 1859 and China until 1864), the West Indies and North America station routinely had twenty ships, and the Mediterranean station possessed seventy ships. See ADM 8/126-139, List Books, 1845-1860, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom; Arthur J. Marder, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre Dreadnought Era, 1880-1905* (London: Putnam, 1941), 66-85; ADM 1/6138, “Report and Notes, E. J. Reed,” February 3, 1869, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom; Howell, *Royal Navy*, 67.

⁷⁸ Howell, *Royal Navy*, 22; ADM 123/178, “Commander Oldfield to Captain Crawford,” no. 3, March 23, 1861.

⁷⁹ ADM 127/40, “Acting Lieutenant Henn to Commander Colomb, 6 May 1869, and Admiralty to Commodore Heath,” no. P270, 21 September 1869; Howell, *Royal Navy*, 71.

authors who frequently crafted seamen tales, which referenced the Kru, for a readership who craved “exotic” characters and foreign adventures.⁸⁰

Table 5.1 shows the number of Kru serving on each Royal Navy vessel in the Indian Ocean during the 1860s.

Table 5.1

Kru on Royal Navy Ships in the Indian Ocean, 1862-1869

Year	Name of Ship	Number of Kru Serving
1862	HMS <i>Gorgon</i>	15
1862	HMS <i>Lyra</i>	15
1862-1869	HMS <i>Star</i>	10-15
1862-1869	HMS <i>Nymph</i>	10-15
1862-1869	HMS <i>Dryad</i>	10-15
1862-1869	HMS <i>Daphne</i>	10-15

Source: Howell, *Royal Navy*, 5, 51; Sullivan, *Dhow Chasing*, 91.

Anchored off the coast of Zanzibar, the HMS *London* served as the East Africa base for Royal Navy operations and expeditions. Kru were described in Zanzibar during the 1860s by Reverend Halcombe in an unnamed church. Kru were seeking a copy of the Bible. While in his church, Halcombe observed on 1 April 1866 that the Kru were “baptized at Sierra Leone...they were men of 30, with the Kroo mark down the forehead and nose.”⁸¹ Kru were allowed shore leave when anchored off the coast of Zanzibar. They maintained the Kru mark that distinguished

⁸⁰ For the body of Victorian and contemporary literature featuring Kru characters see Charles Dickens, “Our Phantom Ship,” in *A Collection of British Authors*, vol. 212, *Household Words* 5 (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1852):363-378; Charles Dickens, “Cheerily, Cheerily!” *Household Words: A Weekly Journal* no. 131 (Saturday September 25, 1852): 25-31; William Henry Giles Kingston, *The Two Whalers, Or, Adventures in the Pacific* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1879), 61; Morley Roberts, “A Steerage Passage,” in *Land Travel and Sea-faring* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1891), 7; Adam G. Marshall, *Nemesis: The First Iron Warship and Her World* (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2016), 37.

⁸¹ Rev. J.J. Halcombe, *Mission Life: A Magazine of Information about Church Missions and the Countries in which They are Being Carried On* (London: Lothian and Co, 1866), 58-59.

them from other Africans and these Krumen had been baptized and converted to Christianity. These two phenomena reveal both continuity and transformation in the Kru free wage labour diaspora.

Following the capture of a *dhow* slave ship, the enslaved Africans on board were disembarked in the Seychelles, Aden, Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius, and Bombay.⁸² Between 1861 and 1872, the Royal Navy delivered 2,409 captive Africans to the Seychelles. In 1864, approximately 2,000 liberated slaves disembarked in Bombay.⁸³ The condition of the enslaved was not always known after they were released. Much like the recaptives in the Atlantic who were delivered and released in Freetown, Liberated Africans in the Indian Ocean found themselves in a foreign environment with an uncertain future that could very easily have turned them into recaptives.⁸⁴ Slave ship crews were often condemned to prison in Zanzibar.

Despite the tightening succession of restrictions enabled by the Moresby Treaty, Hammerton Treaty, as well as the Royal Navy initiative to seize slave *dhow*s, the loading of slave ships continued to thrive in the 1860s and 1870s. Like the Rio Pongo, Rio Nunez and the Gallinas in West Africa, the natural environment played a role in the ability of slave ships to elude capture during Royal Navy patrols in the Indian Ocean. Cape Ras Madraka was a slave

⁸² Howell, *Royal Navy*, 69-70; CO 167/522, "Foreign Office (Otway) to Under-Secretary, no. 6426 Mauritius," June 5, 1869, The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

⁸³ Clifford Pereira, "Black Liberators: The Role of Africans & Arabs sailors in the Royal Navy within the Indian Ocean 1841-1941" (paper presented at UNESCO Symposium on 'The Cultural Interactions Resulting from the Slave Trade and Slavery in the Arab-Islamic World, Rabat, May 18, 2007), 4.

⁸⁴ British and Foreign State Papers, 1822-1823, "Inclosure – Evidence of Quashie Sam" (London: James Ridgway and Sons, 1850), 522.

ship haven. *Dhows* took refuge in bays hidden by towering hills in order to out maneuver Royal Navy ships.⁸⁵

By the 1880s, Kru had been replaced by Seedies and Somali workers.⁸⁶ This was much to the dissatisfaction of Captain Lushington who vehemently claimed “12 Seedies equals 8 Kroomen.”⁸⁷ The decision to replace the Kru was based on the time and cost required to transfer them between Freetown and East Africa. Moreover, the Indian Ocean slave trade was winding down by the 1880s.

Kru played a vital role in Royal Navy operations in the Indian Ocean between 1862 and 1881. Despite their small number of between 10 and 15 Kru on each ship, the British relied on their manning and maneuvering skills on launch boats in pursuit of slave ships. While the Kru never formed a diaspora in the Indian Ocean, they established a large labour network by virtue of the ports they transited on Royal Navy ships pursuing slave ships.

Military Campaigns Associated with British Imperialism

Kru served in various British military campaigns in Africa and Asia in the nineteenth century. Their contribution played a significant role in the consolidation of British influence, and ultimately the establishment of British colonial rule in both continents. Their function was to serve in Royal Navy brigades as porters, stevedores, boat transporters, soldiers, and to assist

⁸⁵ Philip Howard Colomb, *Slave-Catching in the Indian Ocean: A Record of Naval Experiences* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1873), 199.

⁸⁶ “Seedies” was the name assigned to Liberated Africans who served on ships along the East Coast of Africa. The term “seedies” derives from the word *sayyids*. See Alessandro Stanziani, *Sailors, Slaves and Immigrants: Bondage in the Indian Ocean World, 1750-1914* (New York City: Springer: 2014), 63; ADM 127/1, “Admiralty to Commodore Heath, number M73,” April 7, 1870, The National, Kew, Archives, United Kingdom; Howell, *Royal Navy*, 72.

⁸⁷ ADM 1/6220, “Minute, V. Lushington,” June 9, 1871; Howell, *Royal Navy*, 72.

with firing rockets, artillery, and Gatling guns. Kru service in military operations expanded the geographical breadth of their labour network in the African continent and Pacific Ocean.

Kru served on the *Nemesis* between 1840 and 1842.⁸⁸ The *Nemesis* was commissioned by the Secret Committee of the East India Company, but was commanded by Royal Navy Commander William Hall. The British Royal Navy and the East India Company sought to quell Chinese opposition to British influence and stabilize the opium trade in their favour. Whereas Kru had been involved in the suppression of the trans-Atlantic and trans-Indian Ocean slave trades, they now also served on a ship engaged in a war for control of commerce.

Kru who were on board the *Nemesis* served for the duration of the itinerary from St. Thomas to Hong Kong and the Canton River. William Dallas Bernard and Sir William Hutcheon Hall reported that the Krumen boarded the *Nemesis* in St. Anne on the island of St. Thomas.⁸⁹ Three Kru went on to serve in the China Wars.⁹⁰ Kru were drawn from the pool of labourers working in St. Thomas (São Tomé as it was known in Portuguese).⁹¹ São Tomé and Príncipe served as a refueling port for Royal Navy ships engaged in anti-slaving activities in the Atlantic.⁹² Kru remained on the island and cut timber for the purposes of coaling. There is no

⁸⁸ Fay, *Opium War, 1840-1842*, 260-263.

⁸⁹ Bernard and Hall, *Narrative of the Voyages*, 28. Kru were noted for their service in the Opium Wars; See *The Mariner's Church Gospel Temperance Soldier's and Sailor's Magazine* 30, no. 3093 (1843): 40. St. Thomas was the English name given the Portuguese island of São Tomé. Kru were hired as agriculturalists on São Tomé by a mix of British and Portuguese planters.

⁹⁰ The Kru return to the United Kingdom was also confirmed in a magazine; See *The Mariner's Church Gospel Temperance Soldier's and Sailor's Magazine* 30, no. 3093 (1843): 40. For more information on *Nemesis* see Fay, *The Opium War*, 260-263.

⁹¹ Bernard and Hall, *Narrative of the Voyages*, 23. Kru were also employed for agricultural labour contracts on São Tomé in the 1870s. There was a proposal to hire Kru labourers for a period of ten years. See Minutes of Evidence Taken Before The Royal Commission of Fugitive Slaves, Lieutenant V. L. Cameron, May 2, 1876, 61. It is probable that Kru were randomly hired in St. Anne for the journey to the Canton River.

⁹² Bernard and Hall, *Narrative of the Voyages*, 23.

clear indication as to why Kru were not hired in Freetown. It may be that the captain decided to increase the size of his crew on the way in order to meet ship maintenance demands. Kru were employed based on their ability to perform laborious duties, including cleaning barnacles under the hull of ships.⁹³

The *Nemesis* was the first iron steam frigate to circumnavigate the Cape of Good Hope before heading to Cape Delagoa. The itinerary included anchorage at Ceylon and Singapore, before sailing towards its final destination in China.⁹⁴ Serving on the *Nemesis* in Pacific waters expanded the geographical breadth and military nature of the Kru labour network. Until this voyage, Kru are not known to have sailed east of Simon's Town in the Cape of Good Hope. While little can be found in sources detailing Kru duties in the Opium War in China, it is likely they performed the task of manning boats and transporting British seamen and war materials from ship to shore on the smaller boats, as they were generally hired for their ability to handle small craft. Two of the three Kru who embarked the ship in St. Thomas survived the conflict and made the return voyage to Freetown, while the third Kru had been killed in action in China.⁹⁵ In typical fashion, the surviving Kru were provided with return transport home via Calcutta.

The fact that Kru were sought for service on the *Nemesis* is significant. By 1840, they had developed a strong reputation based on their skills as seamen, which led to their selection for the voyage on the *Nemesis* to China. Kru continued to serve on Royal Navy ships in Hong Kong during the 1860s. In 1861, twenty-one of them were listed as serving on the HMS *Algerine* in

⁹³ Ibid, 26.

⁹⁴ Nathan Hale ed., *The Monthly Chronicle of Events, Discoveries, Improvements, and Opinions* 2, no. 1 (Boston: S.N. Dickinson, 1841): 86.

⁹⁵ Bernard and Hall, *Narrative of the Voyages*, 26, 471.

Hong Kong.⁹⁶ While little documentation exists providing details on their daily experiences on the *Nemesis* and the HMS *Algerine*, the fact they served on these ships reveals that the Kru labour network had expanded to include the Pacific waters in the Far East. Their service in the Opium War marks the first known case in which Kru participated in a British military campaign against a sovereign polity and adds an important nuance to the nature of their military service, which would gradually lead to Kru serving on the front lines as discussed below.

From the 1840s onwards, Kru participated in several British military campaigns, which was amplified in the form of African colonial conquest by the close of the nineteenth century. Kru served in the assault on Lagos between 1851 and 1852. While the British suggested that the reason for the attack was to end the illegal slave trading and local slavery that persisted in Lagos a more pertinent reason seems to have been to establish Lagos as a British port for trade and commerce.⁹⁷

During the campaign in Lagos, Kru served on the HMS *Teazer*, HMS *Penelope*, HMS *Sampson* under Lieutenant Corbett, Captain Lyster, and Captain Jones who led a force of 200 men.⁹⁸ Their role was to transfer the landing parties ashore. Once ashore, they were tasked with guarding the boats as the soldiers and some other Kru proceeded to the front. On 26 December 1851, Captain L.T. Jones led a military force of 400 soldiers and officers ashore in boats that were manned by Kru.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Daniel Owen Spence, *A History of the Royal Navy: Empire and Imperialism* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2015), 227; Pereira, "Black Liberators," 3.

⁹⁷ See Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City*, 1-8, 51-130; Biko Agozino, *Pan-African Issues in Crime and Justice* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 224; Johnson U. J. Asiegbu, *Nigeria and its British Invaders, 1851-1920* (Lagos: Nok Publishers International, 1984), 3-40.

⁹⁸ Ward, *Royal Navy*, 212, 215; Accounts and Papers, Inclosure 7 in No. 70, "Lewis T. Jones, Captain H.M.S. Sampson," (1852), p. 202.

⁹⁹ Ward, *Royal Navy*, 212, 215.

Surgeon, Samuel Donnelly, provides a valuable record that demonstrates the extent of Kru participation in the battle. In the document titled “List of Officers, Seamen, Marines, and Kroomen, belonging to H.M.S. *Sampson*, killed and wounded at Lagos on Dec. 26, 1851,” Donnelly reported that a Kruman named Jumbo received a “wound of the right shoulder.”¹⁰⁰ The fact that Kru were designated their own category on the list and their separation from regular British sailors demonstrates their significant role in Royal Navy operations in the battle. The number of Kru serving on each craft belonging to the HMS *Sampson* was as follows: four Kru were listed as serving on the 1st Lifeboat, four on the 2nd Lifeboat, two on the *Pinnance*, 2 on the 1st Cutter, and two on the 2nd Cutter.¹⁰¹ Kru accounted for 11 percent of the crew carried on each lifeboat, 9 percent on *Pinnance*, 12 percent on the 1st Cutter, 14 percent on the 2nd Cutter.¹⁰² A larger number of Kru manned the small craft belonging to the HMS *Penelope*: 19 Kru served on the whaler, seven on the 1st Lifeboat, seven on the 2nd Lifeboat, four on the *Pinnance*, two on the 1st Cutter, and two on the 2nd Cutter.¹⁰³ Kru accounted for 20 percent on the whaler, 25 percent on the 1st Lifeboat, 20 percent on the 2nd Lifeboat, 14 percent on the *Pinnance*, 10 percent of the 1st Cutter, and 10 percent of the 2nd Cutter.¹⁰⁴ In total, 41 Kru served in a total of 223, which meant that Kru formed 18 percent of the total crew.¹⁰⁵ Their duties transporting ammunitions, crew and guarding the surfboats served a crucial function in the attack on Lagos.

The treaty handing authority over land in Lagos to the British was signed by John Beecroft, Henry William Bruce, Oba Akitoye and Chief Ashogbon aboard the HMS *Penelope* on

¹⁰⁰ Accounts and Papers, Inclosure 7 in No. 70, “Lewis T. Jones, Captain H.M.S. *Sampson*,” (1852), p. 202.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 202.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, 203.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

1 January 1852.¹⁰⁶ Based on available sources, this was most probably the first time Kru served in a military capacity in a British campaign in Africa. Their role as guards in the assault shows that they were assigned a military function beyond transportation.

Kru served with the British in the campaign against the Asante between 1873 and 1874. Similar to their role in Lagos, they were employed for their ability to land supplies in the face of adverse sea conditions. Henry Brackenbury recognized the need for Kru expertise in piloting surfboats carrying military equipment when he lamented about the “difficulty...in the landing and storage of supplies and stores.”¹⁰⁷ This campaign was augmented by a large body of Kru hired at Cape Palmas to serve as carriers on board the HMS *Ambroz*.¹⁰⁸ Their function was to carry the heavy equipment and ammunition towards the front.¹⁰⁹ They served alongside carriers from Accra (presumably Fante).¹¹⁰ Kru were hired for their manning and navigational skills, as they sailed small vessels carrying equipment and military personnel. They far outnumbered their counterparts, the “Accramen,” by 500 percent. According to George Dobson, the British “fed” and “properly led” the Kru.¹¹¹

However, Kru formed but one component of a mixed force, as reported by Henry Stewart in 1879.

The forces at his disposal consisted of only 20 royal marine artillery, under Lieutenant Allen; 169 royal marine light infantry, from H.M.S. *Simoon*, under Captain Crease; 500 bluejackets and marines...200 West India negro troops...20 Kroomen and 126 Houssas,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 212, 215.

¹⁰⁷ Brackenbury, *Ashanti War*, 164.

¹⁰⁸ Low, *Memoir*, 95.

¹⁰⁹ Furse, *Military Transport*, 45; Low, *Memoir*, 146.

¹¹⁰ George Dobson, “The River Volta, Gold Coast, West Africa By Mr. George Dobson of Cardiff Read to the Members, in the Library, January 29th 1892, at 7:30pm,” *The Journal of Manchester Geographical Society* 8 (Manchester, 1892): 21.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 21.

under Lieutenant Richmond; besides a few armed police, and 300 labourers with axes to clear a path.¹¹²

The British drew their forces from their various ports in the Caribbean, Bight of Biafra and Kru Coast. Kru were tasked with cutting the paths through the dense jungle on the way to Kumasi, and also served in the naval brigade on the war front. Every Royal Navy ship had its own brigade, which was a ground combat force made of crew members whose role was to assist British land forces in battle. Based on available evidence, this was most probably the first episode in which Kru travelled from the coast to the warfront in a British military campaign. Kru thus contributed to the defeat of Asante in 1874.

Kru continued to serve on front lines in conflict in an even greater capacity during the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879. The British attempted to annex the Zulu state.¹¹³ Royal Navy ships that carried Kru included the HMS *Active*, HMS *Tenedos*, HMS *Boadicea*, and HMS *Forester*. Kru seamen had been transferred from Simon's Town to Durban. The HMS *Active* had been ordered to sail from the Cape to Durban with 42 Kru on board.¹¹⁴ Kru stationed in Simon's Town provided the bulk of Kru engaged in the conflict. Others made their way from Freetown to the Cape for assignment on the ship. Like their role in the Asante campaign, they carried artillery supplies ashore and served as porters.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Henry Stewart, *Our Redcoats and Bluejackets: War Pictures, forming a Narrative of the Naval and Military History of England from 1793* (London: Ballantyne Press, 1879), 350.

¹¹³ For information on the Anglo-Zulu wars see Carolyn Hamilton, eds., *The Mfecane Aftermath: reconstructive Debates in Southern African History* (Witswatersrand: Wits University Press, 1995), 1-12, 395-416; Harold E. Raugh, Jr., *Anglo-Zulu War 1879: A Selected Bibliography* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 1-74.

¹¹⁴ Parr, *A Sketch of the Kafir and Zulu Wars*, 36; Roy Dutton, *Forgotten Heroes: Zulu and Basuto Wars including Medal Roll 1877-8-9* (Prenton: Infodial, 2010), 376.

¹¹⁵ *The Graphic* (August 16, 1879): 507.

The HMS *Active*'s naval brigade included 14 Kru, 10 of whom had been honoured with the South African Medal in 1878.¹¹⁶ They were recognized for their contributions in several battles preceding the outbreak of the Anglo-Zulu War, including the Battle of Quintana against the Xhosa and battles against the Galeka and Gaika.¹¹⁷ A total of 76 medals were given with the 1877-1878 clasp. Fifty-three went to Royal Navy seamen, thirteen to the Royal Marines, and ten to Kru.¹¹⁸ Although their names were not recorded, the appearance of ten "Kroomen" in the South African Medal Roll reveals the important role they served in Royal Navy brigades.¹¹⁹

In early January 1879, under the direction of Commander Henry Campbell, the HMS *Active*'s naval brigade made their way to the front by steamer, marching, and railway assisting with the transport of two twelve-pound guns and a Gatling gun.¹²⁰ One war correspondent noted that: "Onlookers during the disembarkation of the Navals were highly amused, when Kroomen (native sailors) came ashore, to note the astonishment of the local natives, who spoke to them in Zulu but elicited only replies in English."¹²¹ This episode shows the great difference between Kru and the indigenous population in appearance, dress and language. The divide was so great that they were paid wages to fight against the Zulu and ensure the colonial conquest of the Zulu state. The naval brigade arrived at the Lower Tugela River and was assigned to Colonel Pearson's Number One Column. On 22 January 1879, the Kru fought at the Battle of Inyezane.

¹¹⁶ John Laband and Ian Knight, *The War Correspondents, The Anglo-Zulu War* (KwaZulu-Natal: Jonathan Ball, 1996), 13; Dutton, *Forgotten Heroes*, 374.

¹¹⁷ Dutton, *Forgotten Heroes*, 374.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 374.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 374.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 13.

¹²¹ W.H. Clements, *The Glamour and Tragedy of the Zulu War* (London: John Lane, The Brodley Head, 1936), 20.

Two Kru named Jack Lewis and Jack Ropeyarn were recorded as being wounded.¹²² They were sent to Fort Eshowe to recover until March 1879.¹²³

Fig. 5.1 is a portrait of the British line at the Battle of Inyezane. The image depicts the members of the HMS *Active*'s naval brigade dressed in blue uniforms with white sailor caps. Both the colour of their uniform and distinct shape of their cap distinguished them from regular armed forces servicemen who wore red uniforms and white helmets. Within the naval brigade,

Figure 5.1

The Zulu War –The Naval Brigade Landed from the HMS *Active*, c. 1879



Source: "The Zulu War –The Naval Brigade Landed from the HMS *Active*," *The Graphic* 15 (February 1879), 150.

Kru were distinguished from British members by the satchel worn over their shoulder. The satchel most likely contained ammunition or other materials related to their duties. Four Kru are shown servicing the artillery gun. They were responsible for loading artillery and ammunitions, operating rockets and the Gatling gun. As the illustration shows, their role in the Anglo-Zulu War had evolved from transporting military supplies to engaging in battles on the front. Kru risked their lives and killed Zulu alongside their British counterparts. Their example complicates

¹²² Parliamentary Papers, "Letter of Henry F. Norbury, Staff Surgeon, RN to Director-General, Medical Department of the Navy," January 24, 1879, vol. 54, *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of South Africa*, 174; Dutton, *Forgotten Heroes*, 389-390.

¹²³ Ibid, 174.

any straightforward racial notions regarding British colonialism highlighting that the process involved a plethora of manpower drawn from various indigenous peoples in Africa.

In what became their most publicized contribution in a British military campaign in the nineteenth century, Kru formed a major part of the Nile fleet sent to reinforce General Charles Gordon in Khartoum between 1884 and 1885. Their duty was to bring fresh supplies and reinforce Egyptian garrisons in service of the British who had been cut off from General Gordon's men by Madhist rebellious forces.¹²⁴ The British built eight hundred "whaling gigs," which were wooden boats that were thirty feet long and carried two sailors and ten soldiers. Sailing up the Nile, Donald Featherstone described their boats as follows: "Like beads on a string, they were towed upstream to Wadi Halfa by paddle steamers chartered from Thomas Cook."¹²⁵

Kru served as auxiliaries on steamships performing coaling activities and navigating the Nile. Like all previous campaigns, they were hired for their boat manning skills, this time in the cataracts of the Nile.¹²⁶ Working in labour gangs, the Kru were tasked with hauling the whaling boats through difficult stretches of the Nile, along with Sudanese labourers and Egyptian soldiers. Under sail, the whaleboats could reach speeds of six knots and, in the absence of wind, the Kru had to row the boats using six men.¹²⁷

Three hundred Kru were sought out for the expedition. They were paid depending on

¹²⁴ De Cosson, *Days and Nights of Service*, 327.

¹²⁵ Donald Featherstone, *Khartoum, 1885: General Gordon's Last Stand* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1993), 56.

¹²⁶ Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, 45-46.

¹²⁷ Featherstone, *Khartoum, 1885*, 56.

their role and status. Headmen received 2s. 6d. per day, second headman, 2s. per day, and regular workers 1s. per day.¹²⁸ The minimal length of their contract was 6 months. Their job was to sail and man the boats on the Nile that carried troops and supplies. Kru embarked in Freetown and the Kru Coast before they transited through Gibraltar (a major port on route from West Africa to Britain and to ports in the Mediterranean) and landed at Alexandria. They then took the railway to Assouit where they set sail up the Nile. In total, 261 Kru served in the campaign.¹²⁹

Unlike their service in the Ashanti War and the Anglo-Zulu War, Kru only helped to transport supplies and were not directly involved in military battles with the Mahdists. Kru served an important role in the transportation of supplies and troops in the Sudan Campaign. Although small in number, the British relied on the Kru's ability to pilot small craft through the cataracts. The skills they developed in their homeland on the Kru Coast were transferable and utilized by the British in military contexts.

One of the final British military campaigns that involved Kru in the nineteenth century was their role in Henry Hamilton Johnston's military force that led to the detention and exile of Jaja in Opobo. Jaja was the largest of palm oil broker on the Opobo River and traded directly with Liverpool merchants.¹³⁰ He had a monopoly over the palm oil trade in the region.¹³¹ Increased competition over palm oil markets in the Oil Rivers between African traders, the British, French and Germans inspired the British to take a greater economic foothold in the

¹²⁸ Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, 46.

¹²⁹ Kru routinely anchored at Gibraltar on route to Britain. For evidence of Kru seamen in Gibraltar see *The Nautical Magazine: A Journal of Papers on Subjects Connected with Maritime Affairs* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1855): 348; Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, 46.

¹³⁰ Sir William M.N. Geary, *Nigeria Under British Rule* (London: Routledge, 1927), 89.

¹³¹ Jonathan Derrick, *Africa, Empire and Fleet Street: Albert Cartwright and the West Africa Magazine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 21-22, 92.

region. In 1871, there were 61 trading establishments owned by 20 British firms in the Niger Delta.¹³²

On 5 June 1885, the Berlin Act proclaimed the region a British Protectorate.¹³³ Jaja ruled over a valuable stretch of land on the Opobo River near Bonny. It was strategic because it allowed access to a series of rivers and creeks where palm oil could be grown and sold to market. Jaja was targeted by Agent Consul Johnston for restricting access to the markets for Europeans in Obako, Azumera and Ohombela.¹³⁴ Johnston ordered Jaja to allow free trade in Opobo and to provide the British with access to a beach at Ohombela.¹³⁵ He threatened military action should Jaja not comply.

Johnston invited him to a meeting in August 1887. He accused Jaja of organizing armed attacks, and obstructing waterways and markets. Johnston arrived with a military force consisting of Kru on the HMS *Goshawk*. Kru resided in a quarter of the Agent Consul building, and formed a readily available labour and military force as required.¹³⁶ At the meeting, the HMS *Goshawk* positioned all guns on Jaja's followers under the order of Johnston. The crew was instructed to fire should Jaja not agree to be exiled to the Gold Coast.¹³⁷ Ultimately, Jaja was deported to the West Indies and British influence in the palm oil industry developed in the region unhindered.

Kru service in military campaigns reveals the complex nature of British colonialism in Africa. The British were concerned with garnering influence over vast regions of the continent

¹³² John Holland Rose, ed., *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 75; Sylvanus Cookey, *King Jaja of the Niger Delta: His Life and Times, 1821-1891* (New York: Nok, 1974), 118-135.

¹³³ Geary, *Nigeria*, 285.

¹³⁴ Abiodun, "Historical Study," 126-127.

¹³⁵ Geary, *Nigeria*, 279.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 114.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 282.

at the expense of their European rivals including the French, Germans and Portuguese. British military campaigns in Africa opened indigenous peoples to colonization, a process which was intensified following the Berlin Conference in 1884 and 1885. In this context, Kru labour has political implications that may be perceived as complicit with colonialism and the racism underscoring the European mantra of the three “C’s” (Civilization, Christianity and Commerce), which drove the colonial project.¹³⁸ It is reasonable to assume that the Kru had few qualms about fighting an ethnically different indigenous people in the same way they had no hesitation in engaging in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Ethnic differences seem to have been as divisive a factor as race was between Europeans and Africans. Individuals from outside one’s ethnic group were fair game for enslavement and military conquest. What seems most probable is that the Kru were simply willing to serve on any contract with the British that ensured wages. Their entrepreneurial impulses continued to guide them during the era of European colonial conquest in Africa and Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

In this chapter, I have examined the Kru’s role in British expansion in Africa, Asia and the Indian Ocean. As demonstrated, Kru played a significant role in British expeditions of exploration and diplomacy including Hugh Clapperton’s second expedition (1825-1827), the Lander brothers Niger Expedition (1830), Laird’s Niger Expedition (1832-1833), Allen’s Niger Expedition (1841-1842), Baikie’s Niger Expedition (1854), and David Livingstone’s Zambezi Expedition (1858-1864). They served a significant role in British military campaigns such as the Opium War (1839-1842), occupation of Lagos (1851), the campaign against Asante (1873-

¹³⁸ For a discussion on ideologies informing colonial endeavor in Africa see Lewis H. Gann, and Peter Duignan, *Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960* (London: Cambridge, 1969), introduction; Frederick Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1893), 1:585-587, 2:69-75; Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden,” *McClure’s Magazine* 12, no.4 (1899): 290.

1874), Anglo-Zulu War (1879), Sudan Campaign (1884-1885), and the exile of Jaja in the British Oil Rivers Protectorate (1887). Their service contributed to British colonization. In some cases, Kru labour was extended to include front line military battles.

Rather than forming diaspora communities, the Kru extended their labour network as they sailed between ports and enlisted for specific campaigns. The Kru role in the suppression of the slave trade in the Indian Ocean was particularly important between 1862 and 1881 when they served on Royal Navy ships. And, Kru continued to serve an important role in British military campaigns. During this period of British expansion, Kru had to deal with increasing pressure in their homeland on the Kru Coast as the Liberian state threatened to undermine the political, social and economic foundation of their communities, as discussed in Chapter Six.

Chapter 6

Growth in Diaspora and Decline in the Homeland: Kru and the Liberian State

The founding of the colony of Liberia in 1822 had a profound impact on the Kru economy and their labour migration.¹ As the American Colonization Society established colonies in the vicinity of the Kru Coast in the 1830s, a series of treaties were negotiated to maintain peace between their communities and the Kru amid mounting tensions. However, the establishment of the Liberian state in 1847 increased political tensions through the implementation of Port of Entry Laws, which imposed a tax on Kru labourers. In response, Kru migration to their diaspora communities in ports in West Africa increased.² Liberian State measures also fostered competition between the British and French, which compelled some Kru to accept French contracts in Grand Bassam, Grand Lahou and Libreville in order to evade an oppressive regime of taxation.³ As a result, the later decades of the nineteenth century were characterized by a labour drain from the Kru Coast.

This chapter examines the social, economic and political relationship between the Kru and the colony of Liberia between 1822 and 1846, and the Liberian state between 1847 and 1900. The push factors that shaped Kru immigration to their diaspora communities are analyzed including state sanctioned land acquisition and taxation. Legislation impeded the authority of the

¹ The American Colonization Society sponsored colony in Cape Mesurado was known as the colony of Liberia, or simply Liberia, in the period between 1822 and 1846. See Tom Shick, "A Quantitative Analysis of Liberian Colonization From 1820 to 1843 with Special Reference to Mortality," *The Journal of African History* 7, no. 1 (1971): 45; Nathaniel Richardson, *Liberia's Past and Present* (London: Diplomatic Press and Publishing Co., 1959), 229; Christina Spicer, "The Perpetual Paradox: A Look into Liberian Colonization," *The Corvette* 3, no. 2 (2015-2016): 42; William D. Hoyt, Jr. "John McDonogh and Maryland Colonization in Liberia, 1834-1835," *The Journal of Negro History* 24, no. 4 (1939): 444;

² Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 47.

³ Henry Astbury Leveson, *The Forest and the Field* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1874), 272.

krogba and headmen, and by the 1870s, led to a shift in the Kru economy towards palm oil production. Equally disruptive was the state strategy to support missions on the Kru Coast, which resulted in increased conversion to Christianity amongst the Kru. The chapter closes by suggesting Liberian policies including the Port of Entry Laws influenced Kru migration.

Americo-Liberian Settler and Kru Relations, 1822-1846

The creation of the colony of Liberia in Cape Mesurado in 1822 was welcomed by many American planters as an ideal opportunity for dealing with the United States' growing free Black population. Their population had more than tripled from 59,466 in 1790 to 186,466 in 1810.⁴ By 1816, their number had increased to more than 200,000 compared with 1.5 million enslaved Africans.⁵ Free Blacks were thought to pose a direct threat to the social order informed by the plantocracy in the southern states.⁶ At the heart of this project was the American Colonization Society. Founded in 1816, it was an association whose proclaimed aim was "to colonize, with their own consent, on the coast of Africa or in such other place as Congress shall deem

⁴ Thomas Shick, *Behold the Promised Land* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1980), 13.

⁵ Charles I. Foster, "The Colonization of Free Negroes, in Liberia, 1816-1835," *The Journal of Negro History* 38, no. 1 (1953): 41.

⁶ For a discussion on the politics informing the creation of the colony of Liberia and the American Colonization Society see George W. Brown, *The Economic History of Liberia* (Washington: Washington Associated Publishers, Inc., 1941), 9-10; Early Lee Fox, *The American Colonization Society, 1817-1840* [1919] (Whitefish, MO: Kessinger Publishers, 2007), 1-25; Allan Yarema, *The American Colonization Society: An Avenue to Freedom?* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2006), 1-14; Philip John Staudenraus, *The History of the American Colonization Society*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1958), 1-75; Eric Burin, *Slavery and the Peculiar Solution: A History of the American Colonization Society* (Gainesville: University of Florida, 2008), 6-78; Werner Theodor Wickstrom, *The American Colonization Society and Liberia: An Historical Study in Religious Motivation and Achievement, 1817-1867* (Hartford: Hartford Seminary Foundation, 1958), 8-19; John Sed David, *The American Colonization Society: And the Founding of the First African Republic* (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2014), 1-30; Roland P. Falkner, "The United States and Liberia," *The American Journal of International Law* 4, no. 3 (1910): 530.

expedient, the people of colour in our country.”⁷ Founder of the American Colonization Society, Virginia federalist, Charles Fenton Mercer, applied for federal funds via the Virginia Assembly in order to establish the colony of Liberia at Cape Mesurado.⁸ American Colonization Society agents closely observed the Colony of Sierra Leone and hoped to create a vibrant settlement of their own at Cape Mesurado that would foster trade and growth for a settler population.

However, many free Blacks in the United States were suspicious of the colonization scheme. In February 1817, free Blacks based in Richmond addressed Congress and expressed interest in a colonization scheme in the western United States rather than in Africa.⁹ They were accustomed to American society, and the prospect of settling in a foreign colony in Africa was undesirable.¹⁰ Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison attacked the American Colonization Society for reflecting planter interests and being “pro-slavery.”¹¹ His arguments were based on the

⁷ Brown, *Economic History*, 9-10; Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class*, 4.

⁸ Mary Tyler McGraw, “Free Blacks and African Colonization, 1816-1832,” *Journal of American Studies* 21, no. 2 (1987): 208.

⁹ Louis Mehlinger, “The Attitude of the Free Negro Toward African Colonization,” *Journal of Negro History* 1, no. 3 (1916): 276-301.

¹⁰ William Lloyd Garrison, *Thoughts on African Colonization, Part I* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1832), ii-xi. Leonard Sweet, *Black Images of America 1784-1870* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976), 56; Shick, *Behold*, 7; Mehlinger, “Attitude of the Free Negro,” 276-301.

¹¹ Amos J. Beyan, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State: A Historical Perspective, 1822-1900* (Landham, MD: University Press of America, 1991), 12-27; Antoine McDaniel, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot: The Mortality Coast of Colonizing Liberia in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 47; Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 28-29; Eugene H. Berwanger, *The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Ant-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1967), 4-5; George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 1-34; Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 106, 355-360. For abolitionist perspectives on Liberia see Penelope Campbell, *Maryland in Africa: The Maryland State Colonization Society, 1831-1857* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 242-243; Bell I. Wiley, ed., *Slaves No More: Letters from Liberia, 1833-1869* (Lexington, Kentucky: University of Kentucky, 1980), 1-12; Jane Ailes and Marie Tyler-

premises that by sending free Blacks to Liberia, the plantation system in the Antebellum South would continue to thrive. Whereas the American Colonization Society never predicted that free Blacks would achieve citizenship in the United States based on prejudice, Garrison and fellow abolitionists understood the “national solution” to be the abolition of slavery, and the recognition of all African Americans as full citizens in an amended Constitution.¹² Yet, some free Blacks welcomed immigration to Liberia such as Reverend Daniel Coker who “viewed Negro colonization in Africa as a viable solution to the problems they faced in the United States.”¹³

Cape Mesurado was selected as the ideal location for trade and colonial expansion because it had served as a regular port-of-call for American commercial ships for at least a decade and European vessels for several centuries.¹⁴ Indigenous peoples in the vicinity of Cape Mesurado included the Dei, Gola, and Condo. Kru seamen were recorded as being hired on European merchant ships at the Cape since at least the first decade of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ By the second decade of the nineteenth century, Cape Mesurado served as a frequent port-of-call for Royal Navy ships engaged in the suppression of trans-Atlantic slave trade where Kru seamen were regularly hired for service.¹⁶

Dei inhabited the region between the Mesurado River and St. Paul River at the Cape. They established autonomous communities that functioned as a confederacy in times of conflict. A Dei leader named “King Peter” held authority on the Cape.¹⁷ In December 1821, two

McGraw, “Leaving Virginia for Liberia: Western Virginia Emigrants and Emancipators,” *West Virginia History* 6, no. 2 (2012): 2.

¹² Ailes and Tyler-McGraw, “Leaving Virginia,” 2.

¹³ Garrison, *Thoughts*, iii; Spicer, “Perpetual Paradox,” 39.

¹⁴ Swan, “Memoranda,” 318-320.

¹⁵ Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class*, 71, 77.

¹⁶ Rockwell, “Description of the Kroo,” 277;

¹⁷ Svend E. Holsoe, “A Study of Relations between Settlers and Indigenous Peoples in Western Liberia, 1821-1847,” *African Historical Studies* 4, no. 2 (1971): 334-335.

American Colonization Society agents, Robert F. Stockton and Eli Ayres, persuaded King Peter to sign a treaty and cede Cape Mesurado and Dazoe Island for the settlement of colonists.¹⁸

Several Dei chiefs in the region provided their signatures to ensure the validity of the treaty.¹⁹

Eighty-eight African American emigrants, two American Colonization Society agents and two American government officials embarked the *Elizabeth* in New York on February 6 1820.²⁰ The first leg of their voyage concluded Sherbro Island in Sierra Leone. However, their community had been ravaged by malaria, and after Stockton and Ayres secured a site for settlement at Cape Mesurado, the survivors proceeded for the final leg of their voyage. The first settlers landed at Cape Mesurado on 7 January 1822. American Colonization Society agents labelled the settlers “Americo-Liberians” (a term with which they self-identified) in the colony based on their heritage in the Americas and their association with the newly formed colony of Liberia.²¹ They received plots of land from American Colonization Society agents, established stores, and constructed buildings.²² Agents provided tools to the settlers for cultivation.²³

As discussed in Chapter Three, when the colonists arrived at the Cape, there was a Kru migrant settlement in the southwest corner of Bushrod Island.²⁴ Kru had expanded westward

¹⁸ Ibid, 336.

¹⁹ Ibid, 336, 357; Ralph Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun* (Washington: Gales & Seaton, 1825), 127; Ashmun, *History*, 14.

²⁰ Foster, “Colonization of Free Negroes,” 41; Richardson, *Liberia’s Past*, 22.

²¹ Shick, *Behold*, 72; Thomas Sabin, “The Making of the Americo-Liberian Community: A Study of Politics and Society in Nineteenth Century Liberia,” (Ph.D. thesis, Columbia University, 1974), 81.

²² Paul Finkelman, ed., *Encyclopedia of African-American History, 1619-1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 58.

²³ Gershoni, *Black Colonialism*, 10; Richard West, *Back to Africa: A History of Sierra Leone and Liberia* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), 108-111.

²⁴ Lawrence B. Breitborde, “Structural Continuity in the Development of an Urban Kru Community,” *Urban Anthropology* (1979): 70, 71, 112-114.

from the Kru Coast and formed a migrant community. In 1822, American Colonization Society agent, Jeduhi Ashmun noted the following:

It is proper, in this place, to avert to a small hamlet placed on the beach one mile to the northward of the settlement, belonging to a people entirely distinct in origin, language and character, from all their neighbours. These are the Kroomen, well known by foreigners visiting the coast, as the watermen and pilots of the country. They originate from a populous maritime tribe, whose country is Settra-Kroo, near Cape Palmas.”²⁵

Ashmun was well aware of their reputation as seamen for hire. Their community was distinct from Krutown in Sierra Leone because it had developed independent of the British. The possibility of working for wages had led them to go west to Cape Mesurado, and find employment on British, French, Dutch, German and American vessels.²⁶ Another distinction between Krutown in Cape Mesurado and Freetown had to do with hiring practices. Whereas Kru headmen in Freetown secured contracts prior to departure, in Liberia they continued their traditional practice of approaching vessels in their canoes under the direction of headmen as they had on the Kru Coast.²⁷

Kru on Bushrod Island were hired for service in the African Squadron, the United States equivalent of the Royal Navy’s Preventative Squadron. In 1819, the United States Congress motioned for the use of United States Navy ships to intercept and seize American flag slave ships.²⁸ They were tasked with intercepting slave ships between 1820 and 1822. One of the

²⁵ Ashmun, *History*, 6.

²⁶ Holsoe, “Study,” 342; Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun*, 160, 238-239.

²⁷ Harriette G. Brittan, *Scenes and Incidents of Every-day Life in Africa* (New York: Pudney & Russell, 1860), 24.

²⁸ William Leonard, “William Leonard’s Journal, 1859-1861,” in *USS Constellation on the Dismal Coast: Willie Leonard’s Journal, 1859-1861*, ed., Herbert Gilliland (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2013), 3; For more information on the history of the African Squadron see John Pentangelo, “Sailors and Salves: USS Constellation and the Transatlantic Slave Trade,” in *Navies and Soft Power: Historical Case Studies of Naval Power and the Nonuse of Military Force*, eds., Bruce A Elleman and S.C.M. Paine, *Naval War College Newport Papers* 42 (Newport: Naval War College Press, 2015), 7.

earliest American sources detailing Kru employment in the United States navy dates to 1820, when Kru were hired on the USS *Cyane*. Like their role in the Royal Navy, Kru were hired to man small craft and collect water and wood. The African Squadron focused on quelling slave activities in the waters off the coast of West Africa, which included circulating between the Porto Praya, Cape Coast, Rio Pongo, Rio Nunez with special attention to the Gallinas and the Kru Coast both understood as hotspots for continued slave trade activity.²⁹ Like their experience in the Royal Navy, Kru service in the African Squadron reveals their contrary impulse to profit from the slave trade and its abolition.

A series of conflicts between Americo-Liberians and Dei erupted almost immediately following the founding of the colony. When the colonists came to settle Dazoe Island in March 1822, King Peter did not honour the treaty and returned all of the treaty goods with the exception of a barrel of rum.³⁰ Americo-Liberian settlers were restricted to Bushrod Island while they waited for American Colonization Society agents to renegotiate the treaty for settlement on Dazoe Island. Shortly thereafter, a British ship fell under attack by a force led by a Dei leader named King George.³¹ Americo-Liberian settlers at Cape Mesurado aided the British against the Dei. In response, Dei attacked their settlements and formed a blockade around the island.³² Following the incident in early April 1822, Dei chief, Ba Caia, and a number of local chiefs, convened and decided that they had in fact signed over land to the American Colonization Society in the treaty. They thought it would be in their best interest to increase trade with the

²⁹ John Wright, ed., *The New York Times Almanac* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1262.

³⁰ Holsoe, "Study," 337; Ashmun, "Memoir," *African Repository* 2, no. 5 (1826): 144.

³¹ "Relations of the Colony with the Kroomen," *African Repository* 2, no. 3 (1826): 96-97.

³² *Ibid*, 96-97.

Americo-Liberian settlers rather than engage in continuous conflict.³³ The American Colonization Society took formal possession of Dazoe Island on 28 April 1822.

However, within months another Dei attack ensued, which included an alliance with the Kru.³⁴ It is not known whether Kru paid tribute to the Dei in exchange for their settlement on Bushrod Island, but it seems probable that they were expected to assist the Dei in times of conflict. Their forces attacked the colony of Liberia on 11 November 1822, and the Americo-Liberians defended their settlement.³⁵ Peace was negotiated with the arrival of a British colonial schooner, the *Prince Regent*, on 2 December 1822.³⁶ Trade between Americo-Liberian settlers and Dei commenced, but was short-lived when the Dei placed an embargo on rice and all interior trade with the colony.³⁷ As a result, a succession of skirmishes between Americo-Liberian settlers and the Dei, Gola and Kru transpired between 1822 and 1823.³⁸ Ashmun negotiated with Dei leaders Ba Caia, King George and King Gray, which resulted in a treaty that lifted the embargo on 22 September 1823.³⁹

Monrovia became the capital of the colony of Liberia in 1824. The colony of Liberia's Constitution was written in 1825, which provided American Colonization Society agents with the power to enforce laws, defined Americo-Liberian settler rights, and laid the legal framework for all future colonies.⁴⁰ Under the Constitution, the American Colonization Society would

³³ Ashmun, "Memoir," 116-119.

³⁴ *African Repository* 2, no.3 (1826): 96-97.

³⁵ Ashmun, "Memoir," 178-180.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 212-214.

³⁷ Charles Henry Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia*, vol.1 (New York: Central Book Co., 1947), 286.

³⁸ Holsoe, "Study," 340.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 341, 359-360.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 11; John Bernanrd Blamo, "Nation-Building in Liberia as Revealed by Symbol Analysis" (Ph.D. thesis, Boston University, 1969), 43; Huberich, *Political and Legislative History*, 1:212-

appoint a governor to head each colony as they were established on the coast forming a commonwealth. Americo-Liberian settlers could run for office, and it was their responsibility to elect a deputy governor in each settlement. The Constitution stipulated that each colony was allocated ten seats in the commonwealth government and the deputy governor held the power to enact laws, which could be subject to a veto by the governor.⁴¹ However, Kru, Dei, Gola and Kondo were excluded from the Constitution and, consequently, tensions between Americo-Liberians and indigenous peoples grew.

Besides Americo-Liberians and aboriginals, Liberated Africans were given the rights and benefits of citizenship. They established settlements in the colony, served in militias, and worked as domestic labourers in Americo-Liberian households.⁴² They also laboured as farmers and sold their produce in local markets.⁴³ Claude Clegg III argued that their communities served as a “buffer zone” between Americo-Liberians and indigenous populations.⁴⁴ Liberated Africans established a settlement called New Georgia on Bushrod Island adjacent to Krutown and Americo-Liberians.⁴⁵

213, 272-286; Charles Henry Huberich, *The Political and Legislative History of Liberia*, vol. 2 (New York: Central Book Co., 1947), 1029.

⁴¹ Gershoni, *Black Colonialism*, 12; Archibald Alexander, *A History of Colonization on the Western Coast of Africa* (New York: Negro Universities Press, [1846], 1969), 569.

⁴² Harrison Akingbade, “The Liberian Settlers and the Campaign Against the Slave Trade, 1825-1865,” *Africa Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell’Istituto italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente* 38, no. 3 (1983): 342, 345; A. Doris Banks Henries, *The Liberian Nation* (New York: Herman Jaffe Publishers, 1954), 58; “Hostile Movement among the Natives of the Dey Country,” *Liberian Herald* 3 (1832): 3; “Mechlin to Gurley, April 1832,” *African Repository* 8, no.5 (1832): 130-136.

⁴³ *African Repository* 8, no.3 (1833): 93-94.

⁴⁴ Claude Andrew Clegg III, *The Price of Liberty: African Americans and the Making of Liberia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 94.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 93.

Friction between Americo-Liberian settlers and Kru erupted in periodic skirmishes in 1825 in direct response to the Constitution.⁴⁶ Despite their differences, American Colonization Society agents and Americo-Liberian settlers understood the economic value of hiring Kru whom they viewed as “serviceable.”⁴⁷ In 1826, the “Kroo nation” signed treaties with the American Colonization agents based in Monrovia. The Kru received an annual tribute of 100 bars of iron in order to keep the peace and in recognition of their invaluable potential as a workforce.⁴⁸ Moreover, their recognition as a “nation” strengthens my position that they had carved out a distinct homeland and diaspora in the nineteenth century that was recognized by American Colonization Society agents.

Conflict between Americo-Liberians and Kru, Dei, and Gola arose from their participation in the slave trade. Dei and Gola slave depots were constructed within several kilometres of the colony of Liberia. In 1827, the Liberian militia headed by American Colonization Society agent Jehudi Ashmun fought Spanish traders and their Kru allies on the *Teresa* in Trade Town down the coast from Monrovia.⁴⁹ As discussed in Chapter One, Kru were hired on slave ships such as the *Teresa* for the purpose of transporting enslaved Africans from shore to ship and assisting with ship operations. On 16 January 1827, the colony of Liberia signed a peace treaty with King West in Trade Town.⁵⁰ Upon the threat of further conflict, King West promised to end participation in the slave trade and accept colonial authority over his dominion.⁵¹ The colonists desire to stamp out slave trading continued in the early 1830s. On 17

⁴⁶ *African Repository* 2, no.3 (1826): 96-97.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 96.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 96-97.

⁴⁹ Akingbade, “Liberian Settlers,” 342; Henries, *Liberian Nation*, 58.

⁵⁰ Akingbade, “Liberian Settlers,” 342; Henries, *Liberian Nation*, 58.

⁵¹ Akingbade, “Liberian Settlers,” 342.

March 1832, Joseph Mechlin led the colony's militia, which consisted of a coalition of colonists and recaptives in a battle against a Dei leader named King Bromley.⁵² The attack resulted in the defeat of his forces, and the release of enslaved Africans in his possession for settlement in the colony.⁵³

Controlling the flow of Kru labour was a primary concern in the colony of Liberia. In 1835, Monrovia Town Council passed an ordinance declaring procedures that all Kru labourers had to follow upon their arrival at Krootown. In 1836, the ordinance was published and stated the following:

All Kroomen...residing, or who may hereafter reside at Krootown, on this side of the Mesurado river, shall pay annually, to the Town of Monrovia, the sum of one dollar and fifty cents, as a tax, and do any fatigue duty that may be required of them by the President of the Town Council.... That all Kroomen...arriving at thus place for the purpose of laboring or residing, shall report themselves within five days after their arrival, to the President of the Town Council; and receive a certificate, - which certificate shall grant them permission to reside in Krootown, and for which certificate they shall pay the sum of one dollar and fifty cents.⁵⁴

Kru had to pay an annual fee and obtain a certificate in order to reside in Monrovia. All Kru and other indigenous peoples who resided in Monrovia and were not employed by its citizens could be arrested and forced to serve hard labour.⁵⁵ The ordinance affected the mobility of the Kru diaspora community who had lived in the vicinity of Monrovia for decades before the arrival of the Americo-Liberian settlers. The council wanted to control their labour to ensure that the colony generated an income through taxation.

⁵² Ibid, 345.

⁵³ Ibid, 345; "Hostile Movement," 3; Mechlin to Gurley, April 1832, *African Repository* 8, no.5 (1832), 131.

⁵⁴ "Municipal Legislation at Monrovia," *African Repository* 12, no. 5 (1836): 163.

⁵⁵ Huberich, *Political and Legislative History*, 2:508; Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class*, 13.

The American Colonization Society held legal authority over Kru labourers in the colony. Fines were listed as follows: “And be it further resolved, That no person or persons, are permitted to employ, Kroomen...without they have complied with the above resolution, unless they become responsible for their tax.”⁵⁶ Kru labourers risked a \$2.00 fine for failure to produce a work certificate and forced to leave the settlement. If they were unable to pay the fine, they were to perform public labour until it was paid.⁵⁷ Americo-Liberians, European and American ship captains who employed the Kru without proper documentation would be fined and forced to pay their tax.⁵⁸ The colony’s taxation policy was a precursor to state taxation legislature in the republic era following independence.

American Colonization expansion increased in the 1830s. The American Colonization Society established settler colonies on the Kru Coast. Each colony was funded by state chapters of the American Colonization Society. “Maryland in Africa” colony was established near Cape Palmas, and was supported by the Maryland Colonization Society in 1833.⁵⁹ In 1834, the New York and Pennsylvania societies founded colonies near Bassa Cove. In 1837, the Mississippi and Louisiana societies founded the colony of Greenville at the Sinoe River.⁶⁰ The colony of Greenville at the mouth of the Sinoe forced Kru to vacate their land and move across the river to Blue Barre in 1837.⁶¹ Two British traders, David Murray and Jack Purse, who traded in Settra Kru created petitions and appealed to the British to protect them against Liberian encroachment, although the British government seems to have provided no assistance.⁶² British employment and

⁵⁶ “Municipal Legislation,” 163.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 163.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 163.

⁵⁹ Hoyt, “John McDonogh,” 440-453.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 228.

⁶¹ David, “Struggle,” 235; Fraenkel, “Social Change,” 156.

⁶² Davis, “The Liberian Struggle,” 235; FO 47/5, “Hamilton to Palmerstone May 9, 1851.”

trade was central to the Kru economy. The risk of displacement threatened to undermine their free wage labour cycle.

In 1837, the Legislative Council ordered a trade policy on the coast that limited all trade to six official ports of entry in Harper, Grenville, Buchanan, Marshall, Monrovia and Robertsport.⁶³ The policy was the precursor to the succession of Port of Entry Laws in 1849, 1859, 1865, and 1891, in the republic era that placed customs on all trade. The policy elevated tensions with British traders. Laurie Hamilton and Hatton Cookson of London were two firms operating on the Kru Coast.⁶⁴ Hamilton agent, David Murray, employed Kru in a factory in Settra Kru. In one episode, *Ranger*, a Hamilton-owned brig, was seized in Buchanan by Liberian authorities for not paying customs.⁶⁵ The incident not only intensified relations between the Kru and the Liberian colony, but also increased British traders' resentment towards the Liberian colonial government. Customs threatened both Kru and British trader returns.

In 1838, the American Colonization Society proposed to establish the Commonwealth of Liberia by uniting the autonomous colonies that dotted the coast.⁶⁶ Headed by Thomas Buchanan, head of the American Colonization Society envoy, a commonwealth was formed gradually. The commonwealth did not consider the possibility of citizenship for the Kru and other indigenous peoples until 1841, at which time there was a proposal for citizenship for those Kru who had lived in an American Colonization Society colony for a minimum of three years.⁶⁷

⁶³ Brown, *Economic History*, 127.

⁶⁴ "Message of Governor Roberts to the Legislative Council, January 9, 1843," *African Repository* 19, no. 6 (1843): 176-184; Davis, "Liberian Struggle," 231.

⁶⁵ Davis, "Liberian Struggle," 231.

⁶⁶ Gershoni, *Black Colonialism*, 12. For an analysis of Maryland Colony see Hannah Abeodu Bowen Jones, "The Struggle for Political and Cultural Unification in Liberia, 1847-1930" (Ph.D. thesis, Northwestern University, 1962), 7; A study on Mississippi Colony includes Sabin, "Making of the Americo-Liberian Community," 81.

⁶⁷ Huberich, *Political and Legislative History*, 2:724.

They had to be “civilized,” which meant converting to Christianity and abandoning “all the forms, customs and superstitions of heathendom.”⁶⁸ Americo-Liberians equated civilization with Christianity at the expense of indigenous religious practices. Despite the opportunity for the Kru to become citizens they largely refused to convert to Christianity. Their response may have been a form of resistance against Americo-Liberian colonization, which required them to submit to the terms and conditions defined by the interests of the American Colonization Society and Americo-Liberian settlers.

In 1842, “Mississippi in Africa,” joined the commonwealth and became the main hub of Sinoe County. Based in Cape Palmas, “Maryland in Africa” remained independent until 1857 after which it entered the Republic of Liberia as Maryland County.⁶⁹ Each colonial settlement gradually gained territory as a result of treaties with the local populations including the Kru.⁷⁰ Figure 6.1 is a map of the Commonwealth of Liberia in 1839, which illustrates the extent of American Colonization Society colonies between the Gallinas River in the west and the region to the east of Harper in Maryland Colony.

Part of the Liberian strategy to secure authority over the Kru Coast was to establish missions in all of the colonies. A variety of denominations responded including Methodist, Baptist, Roman Catholic, Wesleyan and Presbyterian missionaries. By 1838, Methodists had

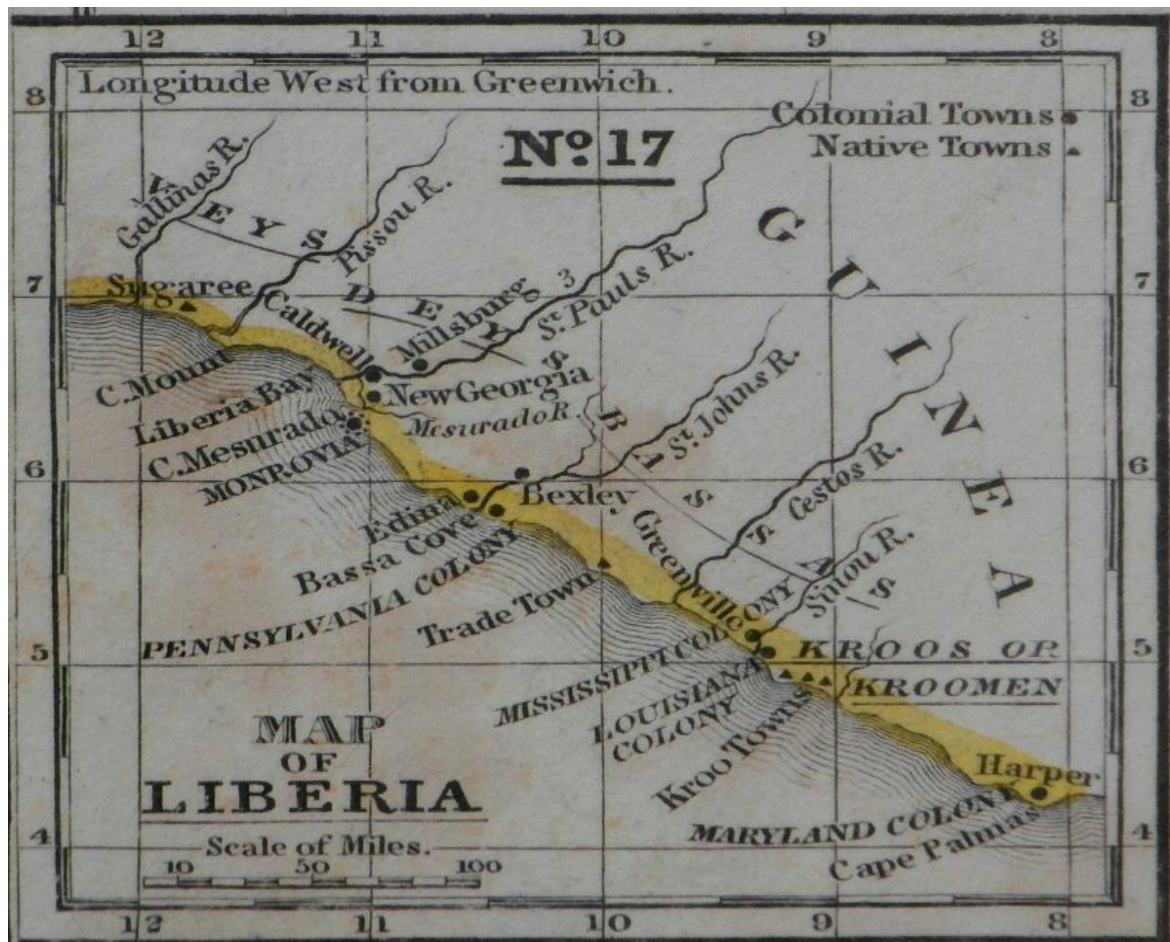
⁶⁸ Ibid, 724; Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class*, 13.

⁶⁹ Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class*, 15.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 15-16.

Figure 6.1

Map of the Commonwealth of Liberia, 1839



Source: S. Augustus Mitchell, *Map of Africa: Map of Liberia*, no. 17, 1839. Engraved by J.H. Young. American Colonization Society, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., United States.

constructed missions in Sinoe County on the Kru Coast.⁷¹ Missionaries were dealing with a sizeable Kru population. In 1840, Presbyterian missionaries Pinney, Canfield and Alward published their population estimates on the main trading towns on the Kru Coast. The layout of Grand Cess was observed by Canfield:

⁷¹ J. Wold, *God's Impatience in Liberia* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 58; Lawrence Bart Breitborde, *Speaking Social Identity: English in the Lives of Urban Africans* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998), 144.

Grand Sesters [Grand Cess] is 40 or 50 miles above Cape Palmas... There is one large town of near 500 houses, and some six and seven smaller towns are in the immediate neighborhood. We judge the entire population to be not far from five or six thousand....⁷²

While Grand Cess (Grand Sesters) was reported to have a population of between five and six thousand, the wider population in the region was estimated at between 10,000 and 12,000 inhabitants.⁷³ Smaller “Proper Kru” towns including Little Kru, Nana Kru, King William’s Town and Krubah were estimated to have between 400 and 600 inhabitants each.⁷⁴ In 1866, *The Missionary Magazine* later reported: “They [Kru] lay off their towns at right angles, and place each principal street under a chief or headman.”⁷⁵ Kru organized the physical layout of their villages based on hierarchal structures that enabled for easy access to labour pools.

The entire Kru Coast was estimated to be between 30,000 and 40,000.⁷⁶ When these numbers are compared with the number of Kru migrant labourers working in their diaspora communities in Freetown, Monrovia, Cape Coast, Ascension Island and the number of Kru working on contracts who were hired on the Kru Coast, which was estimated to be between 5,000 and 20,000 a year, the percentage of workers ranges from 16.6 to percent upwards to 66.6 percent of a population of 30,000 and between 12.5 percent and 50 percent of a population of 40,000.⁷⁷ It cannot be known what percentage of the Kru Coast estimates provided by Pinney, Canfield and Alward were male. Since workers purchased multiple wives it is reasonable to assume females outnumbered males. Given this unknown variable, the percentage of male migrant workers may have been considerably higher.

⁷² Mr. Pinney, Canfield and Alward, “Report of Messrs Pinney, Canfield and Alward,” *The Missionary Chronicle* 8 (1840): 213.

⁷³ Ibid, 212.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 182.

⁷⁵ “Miscellany,” *The Missionary Magazine* 46 (1866): 120.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 183; *The Missionary Chronicle* 11 (1843): 6.

⁷⁷ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 49.

In 1842, a Methodist mission was built in the vicinity of Cape Palmas.⁷⁸ “Coloured ministers” were sent by Presbyterian missions to Settra Kru and Sinoe (Greenville) in 1842.⁷⁹ In spite of these developments, the Kru remained largely resistant to conversion during the colonial era between 1822 and 1846. They may have perceived the missions as part of the American Colonization Society’s attempt to dominate their society and force them into the commonwealth. In 1844, one report concluded: “there never was an instance known of a Krooman being converted.”⁸⁰

Americo-Liberians sought to become active trading-partners with Europeans in camwood, palm oil, and gold, which effectively displaced the Kru’s traditional role as intermediaries in trade with Europeans along the Kru Coast. Conflict between these communities was exacerbated further by the Liberian colonial government’s attempt to abolish the slave trade. The slave trade provided the Kru with a source of revenue that was deemed illegitimate because it could not be taxed by the Liberian government. A third source of tension was created by Americo-Liberian expansion in the vicinity of the Kru Coast, which led to a shortage of Kru land for cultivation and village development.⁸¹ The Liberian colonial government’s attempt to tax Kru labourers and limit their employment opportunities to mandated ports created a further rift between Kru and the Americo-Liberian communities, who in contrast were not taxed in ports.⁸²

⁷⁸ Breitborde, *Speaking Social*, 144.

⁷⁹ Bliss, “Board of Foreign Missions,” 247; *Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian in the United States of America* 4 (New York: Presbyterian Church, 1841), 9.

⁸⁰ Pedro de Zulueta, *Trial of Pedro de Zulueta, Jun., on a Charge of Slave Trading* (London: C. Wood and Company, 1844), 77.

⁸¹ Zuleta, *Trial*, 29.

⁸² Brown, *Economic History*, 127.

In 1845, the Peace and Friendship Treaty called for the Kru to pledge to end their participation in slave trading.⁸³ The treaty stated the following conditions:

[The Kru]...bind themselves to abstain from all participation, direct or indirect, in the slave trade, that no foreign officer, agent or subject, except of the colony of Liberia, or the American Colonization Society, shall purchase, have, or in any way, by sale, lease or gift, obtain right to, or claim upon, the Kroo territory.”⁸⁴

As evidenced in the above passage, the Kru remained engaged in slave trading on the Kru Coast as late as 1845. Their continued participation in the slave trade was understood by commonwealth authorities as a hindrance to moral and economic progress. Kru were further instructed to not consider selling their lands to a foreign power. Based on the Kru’s long-established practice of working on British contracts, the Liberian Commonwealth was naturally concerned that the Kru would form an alliance with the British and seek a British protectorate in their homeland. Similarly, the French employed Kru in the neighbouring colony of Côte d’Ivoire, and could also entice the Kru to join their colony over the Liberian Commonwealth. In the emerging political system, Kru remained at the mercy of the commonwealth government. They could not purchase land, and did not have equal access to or protection of the law. As such, the option of leaving the Kru Coast for work abroad with the British or French may have seemed increasingly appealing.

The Liberian Commonwealth had created stratified communities. Americo-Liberian settlers held little regard for the Dei, Gola, Condo and Kru, who they perceived as “uncivilized” based on their non-Christian religious traditions and minimal attire.⁸⁵ In contrast, Dei including King Peter, Bristol and Getumbe were recorded as not wanting to participate in attacks on the

⁸³ Frost, *Work and Community*, 32; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 84, 90.

⁸⁴ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 46; *African Repository* 21, no. 2 (1845): 41.

⁸⁵ Gershoni, *Black Colonialism*, 1-10; Huberich, *Political and Legislative History*, II: 724; Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class*, 13.

Americo-Liberian settlers because they were “brothers based on same skin colour.”⁸⁶ Their perspective suggests an affinity with the Americo-Liberians based on racial connections, as compared with the disconnect between Dei and Kru, which was rooted in ethnic differences. A socio-economic hierarchy emerged that positioned Americo-Liberians as the dominant group at the expense of indigenous populations. Liberated Africans found themselves in the middle, and sided with Americo-Liberians in time of conflict with the Kru.⁸⁷ However, the American Colonization Society recognized the Kru’s important role in commerce and trade in the commonwealth.⁸⁸ Yuketiel Gershoni has argued that the creation of Liberia occurred through “a process of colonization.”⁸⁹ Although his position holds merit, Gershoni tends to place complete blame on the Americo-Liberian settlers rather than recognizing the role of the American Colonization Society as being responsible for fomenting a system of oppression against indigenous peoples.

In total, free Black migration from the United States to Liberia between 1822 and 1846 amounted to 4,571 individuals.⁹⁰ Migration peaked in 1833 with 718.⁹¹ As Tom Shick has demonstrated 270 came from Free States including New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Washington, DC, Ohio, Iowa, and Illinois. The majority including 3,927 came from slave states including Missouri, Virginia, Maryland, South Carolina, North Carolina, Delaware, Tennessee,

⁸⁶ Ashmun, *History*, 24; “Statement of Getumbe Recorded by E.W. Blyden,” vol. 15/1, 1870-1871, letter nos. 04853-5, *American Colonization Society Papers*, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., United States.

⁸⁷ Akingbade, “Liberian Settlers,” 342, 345; Henries, *Liberian Nation*, 58; “Hostile Movement,” 3; *African Repository* 8, no. 5 (1832): 131.

⁸⁸ Davis, *Ethnohistorical*, 46; *Missionary Register*, vol. 34 (London: Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, 1846): 19.

⁸⁹ Gershoni, *Black Colonialism*, 1-10.

⁹⁰ Shick, “A Quantitative Analysis,” 46.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 47.

Kentucky, Georgia, Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi.⁹² Another 288 immigrants came for Port au Prince.⁹³ The relationship between Americo-Liberians and Kru would intensify following independence as the Liberian state sought to control their labour and land.

Liberian and Kru Relations following Statehood, 1847-1864

On 26 July 1847, Liberia became an independent republic. The American Colonization Society ceased to provide all management and finance.⁹⁴ Liberia was divided into three counties including Montserrado, between the Farmington River and Mano River, Grand Bassa, between the Farmington River and Sangwin River, Sinoe, between the Sangwin River and Grand Cess River, and two districts, including Marshall and Cape Mount. Maryland County came into existence in 1857 after the Colony of Maryland joined the republic.⁹⁵ The Kru Coast was included in Sinoe County. However, Liberian authority in the region was minimal at the time of independence.

Kru, Dei, Gola and other indigenous peoples were not mentioned in the 1847 Liberian Constitution and no funds were allotted for their communities.⁹⁶ In contrast, Americo-Liberian settlements were assigned the status of townships with access to federal government and county financial assistance.⁹⁷ The discrepancy in access to government funds contributed to uneven economic development between Americo-Liberian townships and aboriginal villages in the second-half of the nineteenth century.

⁹² Ibid, 48.

⁹³ Ibid, 48.

⁹⁴ Gershoni, *Black Colonialism*, 13.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 16; Benjamin Nnamdi Azikiwe, *Liberia in World Politics* (London: A.H. Stockwell, 1934), 65.

⁹⁶ Fraenkel, *Tribe and Class*, 18-19.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 19.

Controlling coastal trade was a primary concern for the Liberian government. On 26 December 1849, the Port of Entry Act was created with intention of limiting all trade to specific ports in Americo-Liberian communities, which included Monrovia, Buchanan, Greenville and Marshall.⁹⁸ The legislation stated “no vessel, which shall arrive from any foreign port, or the cargo on board, shall be entered elsewhere than at one of the ports of entry established by the government.”⁹⁹ Foreign traders had to supply a manifest with destinations for their cargoes in Liberia and the persons co-signed to the delivery.¹⁰⁰ European-owned factories could gain exemption in exchange for a fee.¹⁰¹ The Liberian government did not have the military manpower to rigidly enforce the Act. British and French traders largely ignored the laws, and continued to trade in ports of their choosing much to the displeasure of the Liberian state.

Tensions between Kru and Americo-Liberian community of Greenville erupted in 1855. Kru villages including Settra Kru, Little Kru, Blue Barre, Buto and Tasi formed an alliance against the Americo-Liberian community in Greenville. The impetus for the conflict was the seizure of three Kru labourers working on the British brig *Ariel* in Sino Bay. In 1856, the conflict was described in the *African Repository*:

Fisherman from Blue Barre seized a canoe and 3 Croomen working for the British ship, *Ariel*, in Greenville harbor. County sheriff went to secure their release, but as he was leaving their village, a few mysterious fires broke out. There followed a dispute about who set them: Blue Barre said that the settlers did, settlers thought natives did or pretext for commencing hostilities. They then murdered a few settlers and attached settlements (Readsville, Bluntsville, Louisa, and Upper Tannersville). Combining with the Booloo

⁹⁸ FO 47/3, “Hamilton to FO January 3, 1850”; FO 47/3, “Roberts to Palmerston February 6, 1850”; Davis, “Liberian Struggle,” 234.

⁹⁹ Davis, “Liberian Struggle,” 234.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 234.

¹⁰¹ FO 47/7, “Roberts to Earl of Malmesbury, July 21, 1852”; FO 47/7, “Malmesbury to Roberts October 12, 1852”; FO 47/7, “Roberts to Malmesbury October 13, 1852”; Davis, “Liberian Struggle,” 234,

and Sinou tribes, they attacked Lexington. Settlers lost 8 killed and 6 wounded. Took place in Nov., 1855.¹⁰²

The establishment in Greenville had forced the Kru to relocate across the Sinoe River and create a new settlement called Blue Barre. The *African Repository* report may have overlooked the possibility that the “Fishermen” were actually Kru. Since Kru villages were in competition, it is not surprising that they would seize the three Kru workers who belonged to another *dako*. In the aftermath of their forced removal to Blue Barre, they may have perceived the three Kru as taking their jobs after being offered employment via Americo-Liberian agents in Greenville.

Regardless of who fired the shots first during their release, the Americo-Liberians or the Fisherman, Kru responded by attacking Americo-Liberian communities including Readsville, Bluntsville, Louisa and Upper Tannersville before surrounding Greenville.¹⁰³

The Liberian government in Monrovia sent a military force to assist Greenville. Outnumbered and outgunned, the Kru surrendered. The government demanded that the Kru should make payments for damages incurred during their assault on the settlements. Liberian authorities forced Kru to pay fines by placing an embargo on all foreign trade between Sanguin and Little Kru on the Kru Coast. Foreign traders were given until May 1856 to close operations. Unable to trade, Kru communities complied and the incident came to be known as the Sino War.¹⁰⁴

The Sino War arose from the ability of Americo-Liberian traders to displace the Kru as intermediaries in trade between the coast and the interior. Sapo and Krahn workers spoke Kru

¹⁰² *African Repository* 32, no. 2 (1856): 59-60.

¹⁰³ Davis, “Liberian Struggle,” 236; “Message of President Roberts to the Legislature, 20 December 1855,” in Holsoe, “Study,” 166; “Roberts to ACS,” *African Repository* 32, no. 2 (1856): 60; FO 47/11, “Newham to FO, 31 December 1855”; *African Repository* 32, no.2 (1856): 59-60.

¹⁰⁴ Davis, “Liberian Struggle,” 237.

language, but inhabited territory to the north of the Kru Coast. Prior to independence, Sapo and Krahn had traditionally traded with Americo-Liberians by way of the Kru on the coast.

However, the growth of Americo-Liberian communities enabled settlers to hire workers beyond the Kru labour pool on the Kru Coast.

Within a year, in 1856, hostilities between the Kru-speaking Grebo peoples, who lived immediately to the east of the Kru Coast between Grand Cess and Cape Palmas, and Americo-Liberian settlers, evolved into a revolt. Americo-Liberian communities were dependent on the Grebo for their food supplies and local trade. Similar to the Kru, Grebo served as middlemen in trade with the interior. Americo-Liberians sought to regulate and control prices on trade items such as rice, which equated to lower profits.¹⁰⁵

The issue of land acquisition was even more concerning for Kru communities. Americo-Liberian settlers forcibly acquired land near Cape Palmas and established Harper. On 22 December 1856, Governor Drayton ordered the removal of the Grebo from Cape Palmas with an offer to purchase their towns.¹⁰⁶ He had heard the rumour that Grebo had massacred colonists with no evidence to support the claim. The Grebo refused to leave and Drayton ordered an attack. Americo-Liberians frequently employed a strategy of divide and rule aligning themselves with one Grebo village over another in times of conflict as was the case when they supported Padee against the Naffau.¹⁰⁷ Drayton allied with the Rocktown and Cavalla people against the Grebo, who were their traditional enemies. In co-ordination with Cavalla and Rocktown forces, the colonial militia burnt their houses and killed Grebo in four settlements in Garaway.¹⁰⁸ The

¹⁰⁵ Harrison Ola Abingbade, "The Settler African Conflicts: The Case of the Maryland Colonists and the Grebo, 1840-1900," *The Journal of Negro History* 66, no. 2 (1981): 93.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

Grebo responded by setting fire to the Protestant Episcopal Mission at Mount Vaughn near Harper.¹⁰⁹

Drayton appealed to Monrovia government for assistance. On 11 February 1857, Liberia sent a force of 115 men commanded by General J.J. Roberts. The use of heavy artillery forced the Grebo to sign a treaty. On 26 February 1857, head of the Palmas Grebo and chiefs of the Garaway Grebo agreed to a treaty, which forced them to reside on the banks of the Hoffman River about 4 kilometres from their village at the Cape. The treaty was called the “Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Indemnification, between Liberia, State of Maryland in Liberia, and the Cape Palmas and Garaway Tribes.”¹¹⁰ The conditions stipulated that Americo-Liberians “settle on the Hoffman River, north of Harris’ house.”¹¹¹ The treaty demanded that the Grebo provide 12,000 pounds of rice or the equivalent value in cattle to the colonial government in Harper within seven months. In return, the Grebo were given a payment in goods that equated to \$1000.00.¹¹² The seventh stipulation declared that any future disputes were to be taken before the administration in Harper for settlement.¹¹³ On 6 April 1857, Maryland was annexed by Liberia and became Maryland County. Based on their reliance on Liberian military forces, the conflict precipitated their amalgamation in the state.

Despite their contentious relationship with the Liberian state, some Kru continued to serve in the United States African Squadron. The African Squadron worked in collaboration with the government in Monrovia who accepted a steady stream of Liberated Africans. Kru

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 96.

¹¹⁰ *British and Foreign State Papers, 1856-1857*, vol. 48 (London: William Ridgeway, 1866), 586.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 586.

¹¹² Ibid, 586.

¹¹³ Ibid, 578.

seamen served on the USS *Porpoise*, USS *Dolphin*, and USS *Constellation*.¹¹⁴ By 1859, Willie Leonard noted that African Squadron ships routinely carried Kru mariners:

...the vessels that trade on this coast, every one of which takes 10 or 12 of them to help load their vessels. The U.S. government allows their vessels on this station two kroomen to every gun they carry. We are on a 20 gun ship, therefore we are entitled to keep forty of them. The object of having them is to man the boats so as to keep the white men from being exposed to the sun, which is dreadful hot all along the Coast. They are a very hardy race of people and can stand a great deal of fatigue. They require no bedding; they sleep on deck.¹¹⁵

The number of Kru hired on United States Navy ships was proportional to the number of guns.

Kru served a military function as gunners. And, like the British, Leonard explicitly states that the purpose of hiring Kru was based on their ability to work productively in the tropical climate.

Muster lists provide useful information on the size of the crew and their ranks. Table 6.1 reveals the number of Kru serving on the *USS Constellation* on 25 October 1859. The muster list on the *USS Constellation* shows that Kru worked under a headman and second headman. It is unclear what rank the other seamen held. However, what is for certain is that the Kru were paid as the lowest rank of crewmen because the Americans, like the British, outsourced cheap African labour.¹¹⁶ Kru received a wage of between \$4.00 and \$10.00 per month, a share of prize money,

¹¹⁴ Kru served on the USS brig *Porpoise* see Bridge, *Journal of an African Cruiser*, 20, 48; Kru service on the USS *Dolphin* see Samuel Phillips Lee, *Report and Charts of the Cruise of the U.S. Brig Dolphin, Made Under the Direction of the Navy Department* (Washington: Beverley Tucker, 1854), 34; Kru service on the USS *Constellation* see Gilliland, ed., *USS Constellation on the Dismal Coast: Willie Leonard's Journal, 1859-1861* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2013), 198; Five Kru served on the USS *Jamestown* in 1861. See Donald L. Canney, *African Squadron: The US Navy and The Slave Trade* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2006), 34.

¹¹⁵ Leonard, *USS Constellation*, 45.

¹¹⁶ Canney, *Africa Squadron*, 46.

Table 6.1

Kru on the USS *Constellation*, 1859

Name	Rank
John Tobie	Head Krooman
Tom Walker	
Tom Pepper	
Jack Frying Pan	Second Head Krooman
Tom Dennis	
Bottle of Beer	
Jack After Breakfast	
Flying Jib	
Tar Bucket 1 st	
Black Bugger	
Jack Smart	
Ben Liverpool	
Beau Hickman	
Two Forty	
Jim Crow	
Jack Monrovia	
Jack Savage	
Josiah Anderson	
Bill Harness Cask	
Jim Dough	
Bill Half Dollar	
Bill Boston	
Jack Half Dollar	
Jack After Supper	
Tom Out Hauler	
Fresh Water	
Tar Bucket 2 nd	
Upside Down	
Ben Coffee	
Jack Poor Fellow	
Bob Roberts	
Jim Bobstay	
Jack Every Day	
Tom Freeman	
Prince of Wales	
Sea Breeze	
Charles Mack	
Tom Rattlin	
Jack Smoke Stack	

Sam Binnacle	
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Source: Leonard, "Willie Leonard Journal, 1859-1861," 45.

and return passage to their port of embarkation.¹¹⁷ Their important role in African Squadron activities contributed to population growth in Liberia as Liberated Africans continued to be delivered. Similar to their contracts on British vessels, the Kru remained a convenient source of cheap labour and their experiences were governed by an undercurrent of racial bias that privileged white sailors and delegated them to the bottom of the pay hierarchy.

In Liberia, a larger state with more counties and a growing population equated to an even greater potential to generate state revenue. As such, in 1859, the Liberian Legislature passed a new series of Port of Entry Laws. The laws ensured customs duties were collected from American and European ships trading on the Liberian coast.¹¹⁸ However, in 1859, unlike the Port of Entry Act in 1849, the laws did not specify ports. Rather, Liberian authorities attempted to intercept ships and impose customs in all ports where possible. However, the state still lacked the military manpower to strictly enforce the laws. It was not until 1865 that all unregulated trade ceased, specific ports of entry were selected, and the law was fully implemented.¹¹⁹

Liberian State and Kru Relations, 1865-1883

The Port of Entry Law of 1865 was written by President Daniel B. Warner (1864-1868) and limited all foreign trade and export to six towns including Harper, Marshall, Buchanan,

¹¹⁷ Reverend Charles W. Thomas, *Adventures and Observations on the West Coast of Africa and Its Islands* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1860), 105. Also see Jarvis L. Hargrove, *The Political Economy of the Interior Gold Coast: The Asante and the Era of Legitimate Trading, 1807-1875* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 107.

¹¹⁸ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 47.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 47; W.A. Johnson, "Port Regulations of Liberia," *African Repository* 35, no. 4 (1859): 117-118.

Greenville, Monrovia and Robertsport.¹²⁰ All of these ports were Americo-Liberian settlements. Kru villages along with all indigenous settlements were excluded.¹²¹ Significantly, Liberian traders were exempted from restrictions, and could call at any port of their choosing.¹²² Although the laws limited trade to specific ports much in the same way legislature had attempted to influence trade in 1837 and 1849, unlike previous legislature in which ship captains landed and presented their itineraries, in 1865, trade was concentrated exclusively in the mandated ports.

One of the aims of the new law was to impede unregulated British and French trade on the Liberian coast. The new regulations led to a decline in foreign trade on the Kru Coast and became a major impetus for Kru migration.¹²³ The Kru's response to the laws was mixed. Settra Kru complied, but Picaninny Cess, Grand Cess and Sasstown continued to trade illegally.¹²⁴ Kru residing in Krutown in Monrovia had no choice but to comply. Their location in the capital made it extremely difficult to circumnavigate the new laws.

Headmen experienced a major shift in their ability to negotiate contracts as a result of Port of Entry Law. Wages for contracts were negotiated between the headman and the employer before reporting to Liberian government officials. The shipper and labourer were required to pay a tax both at departure from and return to Liberia.¹²⁵ Upon departure and return, employers paid a fee at a rate of \$1.00 per Kru worker and \$2.00 per stevedore to the Liberian government.¹²⁶

The process for hiring Kru required that European and American ship captains submit "order

¹²⁰ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 47; Johnston, *Liberia*, 1:392-393.

¹²¹ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 47; Johnston, *Liberia*, 1:392-393.

¹²² "Message of President Warner to the Legislature 6 December 1864," in Holsoe, "Study," 167.

¹²³ Davis, "Struggle," 239.

¹²⁴ "Message of President Warner to the Legislature, 10 December 1868," in Holsoe, "Struggle," 168; FO 47/24, "King Tobey Settra Kru to FO, 12 December 1894."

¹²⁵ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 49.

¹²⁶ Martin, "Krumen," 13-14.

books” containing the number of workers for contract, their special skills, work history, and information on whether or not they had paid their taxes on previous contracts. Liberian authorities recorded the number of labourers and determined the amount of tax to be paid.¹²⁷ The headman hoped to secure the highest wages possible as they were now responsible to pay taxes to the Liberian government.¹²⁸

The evolution of the headman’s “book” from its initial use on the Kru Coast as a means of securing contracts was transformed for use by the Liberian state to ensure they controlled Kru labour. Headmen faced the double task of negotiating beneficial wages with ship captains in a regulated system governed by the Liberian state. Their once powerful role was diminished as they sought approval on two levels before contracts could commence. Furthermore, headmen were still responsible for giving a portion of their earnings to the *krogba* upon the completion of a contract. The situation was even worse for regular Kru labourers who earned lower wages than the headman, and had to follow homecoming protocol.

Faced with increased taxation, it proved to be more profitable for many Kru migrant labourers to remain in their diaspora communities. As a result, less frequent homecomings forced the Kru who remained in their villages to rely on one of their secondary trades in agricultural production in order to secure a steady income. The Port of Entry Laws seemed to have an immediate effect. In 1866, *The Spirit of Missions* reported: “They [Kru] have...ceased to work on board of ships, and are occupied chiefly in trade on their own account or as agents of foreigners.”¹²⁹ The population of Grand Cess remained about the same as it was reported in 1840

¹²⁷ Ibid, 49.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 49. Grenville operations appears in the FO 47/36, “Minutes of the Kroo Labour Conference,” October 1, 1902.

¹²⁹ “Full Description of Our African Field,” *The Spirit of Missions* 31 (1866): 76.

at about 12,000 inhabitants, which suggests many Kru remained in their labouring communities.¹³⁰ Regardless of whether Kru decided to abandon migrant labour or remain in their diaspora communities, a disruption in the power relations that governed the relationship between the *krogha*, headmen, and regular workers perpetrated through state regulation and taxation threatened to undermine the Kru economy and social structure.

Port of Entry Laws not only influenced Kru migrant workers to remain in their diaspora communities while working with the British, but also influenced Kru immigration beyond Liberian borders in search of contracts with the French. While the Kru had traded with the French for centuries on the Kru Coast, beginning in the 1870s they found a new wave employment on French contracts in ports to the east of Cape Palmas in territory that would become Côte d'Ivoire.¹³¹ The result was twofold: increased employment and competition between the British and French as they vied to hire the Kru on labour contracts and the creation of a Kru wage labour diaspora and network with the French in the Atlantic.

Where there had been minimal Kru employment with the French in the first half of the nineteenth century, by the 1860s, the Kru formed a large diaspora community in Grand Bassam.¹³² In 1863, Captain A. Vallon observed the role of the Kru in Grand Bassam: “Dans le dangereux brisant de Grand-Bassam, un Krouman, porteur d’un magnifique poisson pris dans la lagune, essayait d’atteindre une embarcation du *Dialmath*.”¹³³ Kru continued to practice their

¹³⁰ Ibid, 76.

¹³¹ Bruslons, *Dictionnaire Universel*, 1059; Martinière, *Le Grand Dictionnaire*, 72; *Dictionnaire Universel de Commerce*, 640; Charles Athanase Walckenaer, *Histoire Générale Des Voyages ou Nouvelle Collection des Relations de Voyages Par Mer*, vol. 19 (Paris: Chez Lefèvre, 1830), 180.

¹³² Walckenaer, *Histoire Générale*, 272; Henrique, *Les Colonies Françaises* 5: 203-204.

¹³³ A. Vallon, “La Côte Occidentale,” in *Revue Maritime et Coloniale*, vol. 9 (Paris: Ministère de la Marine, 1863), 388; “Établissements de la Cote D’Or et du Gabon,” in *Revue Maritime et Coloniale*, vol. 9 (Paris: Ministère de la Marine, 1863), 41.

tradition of catching fish for subsistence. Even more significant is that the *Dialmath* was one of the French Navy ships that embarked Kru in Grand Bassam and sailed for Libreville, which shows a clear connection between Kru diaspora communities.¹³⁴ Grand Bassam formed a major hub for French contractual employment that was connected to French ports along the West African coast. Kru resided in a quarter of the “native village.”¹³⁵ Much like their diaspora community in Freetown, Kru lived alongside a variety of African labouring groups including the Fante and Nzima.¹³⁶

Kru were hired for loading and unloading cargoes and were once again called upon to utilize their seamen skills transporting commodities and crew between shore and ship.¹³⁷ Working in Grand Bassam freed the Kru from Liberian regulation and taxation that burdened those who continued to seek contracts in their homeland on the Kru Coast. Kru also immigrated to the towns of Sassandra and Grand Lahou for contracts with the French. They formed migrant communities and were distinct from indigenous Noyo in Sassandra and the Alladians or Jack-Jacks in Grand Lahou.¹³⁸ In Grand Bassam, their reputation for being “efficient and obedient” enabled the Kru to find employment in French ports in West and West Central Africa.¹³⁹

Libreville was the French equivalent of Britain’s colony in Sierra Leone. French West African Squadron ships in the Atlantic delivered recaptives to the settlement, which took the

¹³⁴ Vallon, “La Côte Occidentale,” 388; “Établissements de la Cote D’Or et du Gabon,” 41, 55.

¹³⁵ Visona, *Constructing African Art Histories*, 51, 121.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 51, 121.

¹³⁷ Leonard Chenery, *The West Coast of Africa: From Sierra Leone to Cape Lopez, Part 2* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875), 125.

¹³⁸ Jonas Ibo, “Le phénomène “Krouman” à Sassandra: la marque d’une institution séculaire,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 32 Issue I (1998):65-94; John D. Hargreaves, *West Africa Partitioned: Volume II, The Elephants and the Grass* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 52.

¹³⁹ Robert Hamill Nassau, *My Ogoe: Being a Narrative of Daily Incidents During Sixteen Years in Equatorial West Africa* (New York: Neale Publishing Company, 1914), 398.

name Libreville from 1849.¹⁴⁰ Kru laboured in Libreville from the time of its founding. Kru serving in the French Navy were tasked with clearing land for the purpose of building homes.¹⁴¹ Inhabitants in Libreville included “French and other whites, Senegalese, Kroomen, and Mpongwes.”¹⁴² French authorities lobbied to have Kru labourers brought to Libreville for work because of the supposed lack of interest amongst the Mpongwes who regarded manual labour as the work of slaves.¹⁴³

Serving on contracts lasting between one and two years, Kru workers established a diaspora community in Libreville that not only included workers but individuals who performed religious rituals.¹⁴⁴ In 1875, Captain Oskar Lenz described the practice of Kru purchasing “leopard’s teeth” before selling them to Kru “diviners” in Libreville.¹⁴⁵ Although this may have been related to Kru fetishes and spiritual practices in *Bo* secret society, the exchange of teeth for merchandise represents a development in the Kru diaspora in the French context of Libreville. Available evidence suggests that this was unique to the Kru community in Libreville. The teeth held spiritual and monetary value that manifested in trade, and have not been mentioned in British sources.

The French employed Kru on shoreside contracts in Libreville and along the Gabon River. In 1855, Ricard observed the Kru pay rate in factories on the Gabon River as follows:

¹⁴⁰ Henry H. Bucher, “Liberty and Labor: The Origins of Libreville Reconsidered,” *Bulletin de l’Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noir*, 2nd series, 41, no.3 (1979): 478-496; Peter P. Hinks and John R. McKivigan, *Encyclopedia of Anti-Slavery and Abolition*, vol. 2 (Westport: Greenwood, 2007), 432.

¹⁴¹ Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 74-75. Also see Guy Lasserre, *La Ville et sa Region: Etude de Géographie Humaine* (Paris: A. Colin, 1958), 67-69, 348.

¹⁴² Reclus, *Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 408.

¹⁴³ Rich, “Rough Sailing,” 126.

¹⁴⁴ *Société de Géographie de Rocheforte* 7 (1885): 270-271.

¹⁴⁵ Lenz, *Skizzen aus West-Africa*, 281.

les bâtiments de commerce donnent aux Kroumanes 15 francs par mois, et par jour 0,500 kg de riz et 0,10 l d'eau-de-vie...et la station a donne jusqu' à 30 francs par mois et la ration d'Europeens à des Kroumanes qu'elle employait à terre (soit environ 3 et 6 dollars).¹⁴⁶

Kru were paid considerably less than what they could receive with the British on commercial and Royal Navy ships (See Table 3.4). However, they received rations in the form of rice and brandy and resided on factory grounds on the Gabon River or in Libreville depending on the location of their labour. Kru also frequently received rations of rum.¹⁴⁷

The majority of Kru employed in Gabon served at the harbour in Libreville manning the surfboats, searching for anchors, painting boats, loading guns and transporting commodities and people between ship and shore.¹⁴⁸ In 1863, four Kru headmen and six regular workers were listed as working in harbour services.¹⁴⁹ In 1884, labour demands had increased, and 150 Kru were requested by France for work in the harbour: “en vue de l’installation des chantiers qui doivent recevoir la canonnière, Le Pionnier, et des opérations de remontage de ce petit bâtiment.”¹⁵⁰ Within two years, another 165 Kru were requested for service on factories on the Gabon River in Franceville.¹⁵¹ Their contracts lasted between 13 and 15 months before they returned to the Kru Coast.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Ricard, “Notes Sur Le Gabon,” *Revue Coloniale* 14 (1855): 254; Also see Vallon, *La Côte Occidentale*, 387.

¹⁴⁷ Oberlander, *Deutsch-Afrika*, 20; Zöller, *Das Togoland*, 56.

¹⁴⁸ John Reading, *The Ogwe Band* (Philadelphia, 1890), 168; Charles de Chavannes, *Avec Brazza* (Paris: Plon, 1935), 57; See Richard Harding Davis, *The Congo and the Coasts of Africa* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1907), 18, 48-50, 94-96, 101, 111.

¹⁴⁹ “Établissements de la Cote D’Or et du Gabon,” in *Revue Maritime et Coloniale*, vol. 9 (Paris: Ministère de la Marine, 1863), 54.

¹⁵⁰ Archives Nationales, Section d’Outre-Mer, Gabon-Congo, vol. 14, 1884.

¹⁵¹ Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Brazza*, 418.

¹⁵² Barret, *L’Afrique Occidentale*, 2:308.

By 1885, little had changed in terms of their pay rate. Their pay rate and duties in Gabon were reported by *Société de Géographie de Rocheforte* as follows: “Les Kroomen sont libres et ne s’engagent que pour un temps limité. Au Gabon, le contract est généralement d’un an. Leur solde varie de 15 à 30 fr. par mois, suivant l’âge de la force.”¹⁵³ Their pay ranged between F15 and F30 per month, which on the high end at F30 was comparable with British wages in the same year, but much less if receiving F15.¹⁵⁴ Whereas adolescent labourers gave a portion of their earnings to headmen in British workplaces, it seems that in French workplaces the Kru worker’s age was a factor in the pay they received from the employer. This small variation marks a significant difference in payment methods between the French and British.

However, the average pay rate appears to have been F20. There seems to have been a lack of adults for the contracts. A series of government reports in 1885 and 1887 show that pay rates were determined by age and fluency in French:

la solde normale est 20 F par mois, mais on est souvent forcé d’accepter faute d’adultes, quelques jeunes gens, presque des enfants, qui consentent à venir à 15 et même 10 F par mois: d’un autre côté, certains Kroumen parlant un peu le français...demandent à être Sous-chefs et même Chefs; je leur donne alors 25, 30 et même 40 F.¹⁵⁵

Kru who could speak French were in higher demand and asked for salaries of between F25 and F40 per month. When compared with British contracts, French contracts seem to be less structured with arbitrary pay rates. The size of the Kru labour force was smaller and the

¹⁵³ *Société de Géographie de Rocheforte* 7 (1885): 270-271.

¹⁵⁴ See wage rates for British commercial labourers and Royal Navy sailors in Chapter Two and Chapter Three. For pay rate differentials see the website “Historical Statistics,” accessed on November 25, 2018, <http://www.historicalstatistics.org/Currencyconverter.html>.

¹⁵⁵ Archives Nationales, Section d’Outre-Mer, Gabon-Congo, vol. 14, 1c, January 19, 1885; Archives Nationales, Section d’Outre-Mer, Gabon-Congo, vol. 14, 1c, Rapport du Chef de Service des Travaux Publics du Gabon à Monsieur le Lieutenant-Gouverneur. L’élément travail au Gabon. Les Kroumanes. Leur recrutement. Leur utilisation au Service des Travaux Publics, November 1887. Also see Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 61.

tendency to employ younger workers may have been more prevalent with the French. However, even in this context, they were paid wages and were rarely, if ever, enslaved.

Kru may have been willing to work for slightly lower wages with the French because they still earned a higher profit than if they had been hired on the Kru Coast. They were also taxed at a rate of \$1.00 per labourer if they were hired in a mandated Port of Entry.¹⁵⁶ Their short journey to ports in the neighboring French territory immediately adjacent to their homeland in Côte d'Ivoire may have influenced their decision to labour with the French over the British. In the later decades of the nineteenth century, Kru circulated between French worksites in Brazzaville, Dahomey, Ouidah and even as far abroad as Panama and French Guiana where in some cases they formed diaspora communities.¹⁵⁷ Many Kru returned to their diaspora community in Grand Bassam between contracts rather than return to their homeland on the Kru Coast where they faced the possibility of fines for tax evasion.¹⁵⁸ Many Kru were hired in Grand Bereby, Cavally and Wapoo.¹⁵⁹ Like the Kru living in Freetown, Cape Coast and Calabar, the

¹⁵⁶ Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-Mer, Gabon-Congo, vol. 14, 1c, October 28, 1882. Also see Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 86.

¹⁵⁷ For information on the Kru labour in the French Congo see John Hope Franklin, *George Washington Williams: A Biography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 201; Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Brazza et la Prise de Possession du Congo: La Mission de l'Ouest Africain, 1883-1885* (Paris: Mouton et Cie, 1971), 1-30; Bruce Whitehouse, *Migrants and Strangers in an African City: Exile, Dignity, Belonging* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 31. For information on the Kru in Dahomey, Ouidah, Togo and Loango see Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 74, 80; Vallon, "La Côte Occidentale," 373-394. For information on Kru labour in French Guiana see Schuler, "Kru Emigration," 174-183. Kru labourers contributed to the construction of the Panama Canal where they were described as forming their own unique community. See Charles Rogers, "Report on the Panama Canal," *The Panama Canal* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 43; Charles Rogers, "Progress at Panama," *Popular Science* 32 (1888): 453; Gary G. Kuhn, "Liberian Contract Labor in Panama, 1887-1897," *Liberian Studies Journal* 6, no. 1 (1975): 43-52.

¹⁵⁸ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 47.

¹⁵⁹ Archives Nationales, Section d'Outre-Mer, Gabon-Congo, vol. 14, 1c, Libreville, March 25, 1888, recrutement des Kroumen.

link between diaspora and labour communities and competing *dako* and villages on the Kru Coast continued to characterize their labour migration on French contracts.

As Kru migration to West African ports on French contracts increased and employment opportunities on the Kru Coast declined, Kru turned to agricultural production as an important source of income. The agricultural viability of Liberia as a mass exporter of agricultural crops had been under consideration since its formation. As early as the 1830s, one report proposed an agricultural system directed by Americo-Liberians as follows: “The Liberians might adopt the system, of procuring the aborigines, to aid in the cultivating their lands, with advantage and success. Such a connexion, between the colonists and them, was one of mutual dependence.”¹⁶⁰

The Liberian government’s main concern was the lack of a labour force to produce the agricultural commodities. Kru had traded in agricultural products for centuries in rice, plantain, grains and malaguetta pepper.¹⁶¹ Their experience made them the prime candidates for labourers tasked with the cultivation of Americo-Liberian lands. The proposal reveals the power dynamics in the relationship between Americo-Liberians, the owners of the land, and Kru, who worked the land. Trade with buyers was conducted by the Americo-Liberians, and not Kru who had traditionally negotiated contracts with Europeans on the coast. The Liberian state was clearly forming a hierarchal system that placed Americo-Liberian and Kru in a co-dependent albeit uneven economic relationship.

However, it wasn’t until the 1870s, that the Kru Coast became the epicentre of Liberian palm oil production. The main palm oil and palm-kernel trading depots were all located in a series of villages on the Kru Coast and included Trade Town, New Cess, Trade Town Point,

¹⁶⁰ *African Repository* 8, no. 2 (1832): 53.

¹⁶¹ Elbl, “Portuguese Trade,” 516; Parliamentary Papers 12 (1842): 607.

Timbo, Grand Collah, Settra Kroo, River Cess, Waupee, Nana Kroo, Neffu and Sassa Town.¹⁶² Kru were responsible for producing the palm oil and transporting Americo-Liberian settlements for sale to European traders.¹⁶³ European merchant ship captains praised the Kru for their ability to heat palm oil and pour it into casks before carefully transporting it on their surfboats and loading cargo ships.¹⁶⁴

Kru participation in the Liberian palm oil industry led to a transformation in relationship between the *krogba*, headmen and labourers that had developed on the Kru Coast. In some cases, the *krogba* (Kru chief) agreed to “furnish the labour” for Americo-Liberian estates and factories that were established close to the vicinity of a Kru village.¹⁶⁵ This is significant in labour relations because it meant the *krogba* was tasked with supplying a labour force and not headmen who had traditionally been responsible for providing labour gangs on contracts with the British. *Krogba* negotiated the terms of the contracts. Since gift-giving protocol associated with the homecoming of migrant workers was in decline due to the impact of Port of Entry Laws, the *krogba* could potentially earn a higher profit by taking a cut of the workers’ wages and cutting out headmen who served as the middleman in migrant labour. The change represents a change in the hierarchal labour system that developed between the Kru and British, and more closely resembles eighteenth century trade on the Kru Coast.

While Kru engaged in state-driven agricultural production, their communities saw a rise in the presence of missions. Until the 1870s, Kru conversion to Christianity had been a slow

¹⁶² “Liberian Intelligence” *African Repository* 48, no. 6 (1872): 186.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, 186.

¹⁶⁴ Martin, “Krumen,” 411.

¹⁶⁵ Ralph Randolph Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun, Late Colonial Agent: With an Appendix contacting Extracts from His Journal and Other Writings; with a Brief Sketch of the Life of the Rev. Lott Cary* (New York: Leavitt, Lord and Co., 1835), 331.

process. As late as 1851, William Fox lamented: “Next to the Mohammedans, I believe the Kroomen are the most difficult to be brought under the influence of the gospel.”¹⁶⁶ In the first half of the nineteenth century when the Kru diaspora cycle was in full effect, Kru may have seen little need to convert to Christianity and viewed it as Americo-Liberian attempt to exact socio-political influence over their communities on the Kru Coast.

President Joseph Roberts (1848-1856 and 1872-1876) recognized the political advantage of establishing missions on the Kru Coast. He proposed increasing the number of missions for the purpose of “introduce[ing] into degraded and benighted Africa the blessings of Civilization and Christianity.”¹⁶⁷ Despite their inclusion in the state, Liberia did not have complete authority over Kru communities. Roberts hoped to work in tandem with missionaries in order to garner Christian converts that would lead to improved relations between Kru and the Liberian state. The government used a divide and rule policy by forming alliances with some Kru villages over others, while defending those communities with missions at all costs.¹⁶⁸

Wesleyan and Methodist mission schools were established in Kru villages including Sinoe, Ebinezer, Settra Kru, Nana Kru and Little Kru on the Kru Coast.¹⁶⁹ Reverend Edwin Munsell Bliss described an evangelical process based on “farming, teaching and preaching.”¹⁷⁰ Each mission focused on literacy, religious study and maintenance through agriculture. Sunday was recognized as the Sabbath in the town of Ebenezer, and the chief had instructed the Kru to attend church service rather than work.¹⁷¹ In Cape Palmas, *Dictionary of the Grebo* published by

¹⁶⁶ Fox, *A Brief History*, 609.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 237.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid 237; FO 47/7, Roberts to Malmesbury, July 27, 1852.

¹⁶⁹ Reverend Eugene R. Smith, ed., *The Gospel in All Lands* (New York: Methodist, 1890), 41-42; Bliss, *Encyclopedia of Missions*, 389.

¹⁷⁰ Bliss, *Encyclopedia of Missions*, 389.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 389.

Bishop Payne in 1860, played a role in spreading the gospel amongst the Kru in the decades that followed. Grebo spoke Kru and Payne hoped that many Kru would have access to the Bible via this dictionary.¹⁷² Missionaries were gradually garnering influence amongst the Kru.

One of the most prominent evangelical figures credited with the spread of Christianity on the Kru Coast was William Wadé Harris. Born on the Kru Coast in 1860, his uncle Reverend John Lowrie was a Methodist.¹⁷³ He baptized Harris who received a missionary education in Sinoe before they transferred for Lowrie's new job at the Methodist Episcopal Mission in Cape Palmas.¹⁷⁴ Like most Kru, Harris had worked contracts under a headman in his youth moving between ports in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, the Camerouns and Gabon.¹⁷⁵ Many denominations experienced growth because of his large body of followers who regarded him as a prophet because of his passionate sermons.¹⁷⁶ Allan Anderson has suggested that the Christian prophet came to "replace the archetypal traditional healer in African societies."¹⁷⁷ By the early twentieth century, Harris was considered a social and political threat by the Liberian government who in 1909 placed him on trial and imprisoned him because of the threat posed by his followers and his disdain towards the government.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² David A. Shank, *Prophet Harris: The "Black Elijah" of West Africa* (Leiden: Brill 1994), 40.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 29.

¹⁷⁴ Carina E. Ray, and Jeremy Rich, eds., *Navigating Maritime African History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 7; Shank, *Prophet Harris*, 46, 53.

¹⁷⁵ Shank, *Prophet Harris*, 52-53. For Kru service in Cameroon see William Winwood Reade, *The African Sketchbook*, vol. 2 (London: Smith, Elder & Company, 1873), 5.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 124.

¹⁷⁷ Allan Anderson, *African Reformation: Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century* (Africa World Press, 2001), 199.

¹⁷⁸ Shank, *Prophet Harris*, 101; Ben Stimpson, "William Wade Harris: The 'Black Elijah' of West Africa," *Church History* 4 (2007), 4. For further information on Harris in the twentieth century see Sheila S. Walker, *The Religious Revolution in the Ivory Coast – The Prophet Harris and the Harrist Church* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 3-16.

Kru in diaspora communities in West Africa may have also played a role in the expansion of Christianity through their homecomings. Mary A. Sharp's mission in Krutown, Monrovia, played a significant role in converting Kru. Established in 1878, Miss Sharp's Mission, as it was known, served as a religious and educational institution.¹⁷⁹ While preachers had attempted to convert the Kru in Krutown as early as 1837, there is no evidence they had garnered any converts.¹⁸⁰ Missions not only encouraged conversion to Christianity, but also provided education. Sharp provided "school work for the Kroos."¹⁸¹ Sharp's mission was also a centre for baptisms. A Kru male and female were among sixteen converted by Miss Sharp in 1885.¹⁸² As converts, they could have possibly influenced family members to follow suit during their homecoming visits to the Kru Coast. An example is found in those Kru who formed part of the Methodist settlement called Jekwikpo. Many Jloh Kru, known as Jloh Methodists, had converted while on contracts on the West African coast and remained on mission grounds after the death of the missionaries.¹⁸³

By the 1880s, it seems that missionary efforts were paying off as religious conversion characterized many Kru communities on the Kru Coast. Missions were located in nearly every town on the Kru Coast including in Sasstown, Niffoo, Nanna Kroo, Settra Kroo, Garaway and Grand Sesters.¹⁸⁴ Minister, J. Wold suggested the Kru Coast experienced the "greatest rate of

¹⁷⁹ John Morrison Reid, *Missions and Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church I* (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1895), 247; "Kroo boys, Miss Sharps Mission, Monrovia," *Liberia Graphic* (1900): 8; "Bishop Taylor in Liberia," *The African Repository* 62, no.3 (1885): 87.

¹⁸⁰ "Monrovia, December 21, 1836," *African Repository* 12, no. 7 (137): 221.

¹⁸¹ Reid, *Missions and Missionary Society*, 247.

¹⁸² "Bishop Taylor in Liberia," *African Repository* 61, no.3 (1885): 86-87.

¹⁸³ Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts*, 22.

¹⁸⁴ Reverend Eugene R. Smith, ed., *The Gospel in All Lands* (New York: Methodist, 1890), 41-42; Also see *The Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (New York: Presbyterian Board, 1846) 14-16.

conversion to Christianity in Liberia.”¹⁸⁵ With a weakening economy that threatened to displace the traditional power dynamics between *krogha*, headmen, and workers, Kru may have been more receptive to Christianity and, in particular, missionary institutions that provided the opportunity to gain security and social standing in the emerging society that was influencing their villages.¹⁸⁶

Between 1822 and 1867, some 13,130 emigrants migrated to Liberia from the United States.¹⁸⁷ Moreover, during the same time period, 5,722 liberated Africans were delivered to Monrovia by the United States Navy.¹⁸⁸ The influx of American immigrants to Liberia decreased following the conclusion of the American Civil War in 1865. The decrease in American immigration resulted from the abolition of slavery in the United States. In theory, emancipated slaves were free and could purchase land in the United States thereby diminishing the need to immigrate to Liberia in order to live in freedom. However, the reality was much more challenging. In the United States, many of the former slaves continued to live on their former master’s land, each with his or her own plot owned by the plantocracy, as they did in the Caribbean.¹⁸⁹ As a result, the Liberian government looked increasingly to harness Kru labour in a variety of sectors.

¹⁸⁵ Breitborde, *Speaking Social*, 82.

¹⁸⁶ One of the most important works of historical fiction that engages with the complex relationship between Europeans and indigenous communities through colonialism is Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (London: Heinemann, 1958).

¹⁸⁷ *Appleton’s Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1887*, vol. 12 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889), 417.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 419.

¹⁸⁹ See Mary Turner, “Chattel Slaves into Wage Slaves,” 14-31; H.J. Nieboer, *Slavery as an Industrial System: Ethnological Researches* (New York: Springer, 2013), 304.

Liberian Borders and Kru Identity, 1884-1900

Following the Berlin Conference between 1884 and 1885, in which European powers sought to establish formal colonies over vast regions of Africa, the primary concern for Liberia immediately became defining the extent of its national borders. Treaties with Gola and Vai leaders and the British in the region of Gallinas secured the Liberian border with Sierra Leone in the west.¹⁹⁰ Although British ships continued to trade without paying proper taxes to Liberian authorities in the region, they recognized Liberian claims to the region.¹⁹¹

The border in the east was of much more concern because both the French and Liberia had claims to the territory between the Cavalla River and San Pedro River. The Liberian government believed that the only way to ensure secure their borders was to establish new settlements in the region. In 1884, President Johnson's expansionist position was clearly stated when he proclaimed "the first and principal measure to be adopted...is the establishment of the settlements."¹⁹² Johnson suggested creating a new settlement at the mouth of the San Pedro River, which required treaties with local communities in the region.¹⁹³ He requested the American Colonization Society to encourage a new wave of Black immigrants and financial aid from the United States for the purpose of settlement in the region. President Johnson selected Cavalla and Nifu as two new ports of entry in 1885.¹⁹⁴ The race to secure Liberian borders has been recognized by Gershoni who argued: "The plans of President Johnson and decisions of the

¹⁹⁰ "Message of the President of Liberia, 5 December 1862," Presidential Message, Liberian National Archives.

¹⁹¹ FO 403/6, "Smith to Lewis [Liberian Secretary of State], December 17, 1860"; FO 403/6, "Smith to Hill [Governor of Sierra Leone], 22 December 22 1860."

¹⁹² "Inaugural Address of President Johnson, January 7, 1884," 118, Liberian National Archives.

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 119.

¹⁹⁴ "Message of President Johnson to the Legislature, 1884," Holsoe, "Study," 170.

Legislature were in fact aimed at implementing effective control and seem to be an unequivocal response to the February 1885 resolutions of the Berlin Conference.”¹⁹⁵

However, the American Colonization Society’s response was one of disinterest. Liberia’s poor economy after 1871, when it was forced to take a loan from the United States coupled with the ending of the Civil War in 1865 meant that immigration from America slowed. The other obstacle was that the French had made agreements in the same region with Grebo leaders near Bereby, east of the Cavalla River.¹⁹⁶ In 1886, Liberia decided to enforce their port of entry policy and tax all Grebo entering and exiting the mouth of the Cavalla River. Shortly thereafter, a Grebo revolt unfolded in Half Cavalla near the Cavalla River. The Grebo sought protection against Liberian forces by requesting that the British governor in the Gold Coast intervene and form a protectorate in the region.¹⁹⁷

One rationale used by the Liberian government in support of their land claim was to include the region between the Cavalla and San Pedro River as part of the Kru Coast. Grebo inhabited the region on either side of the Cavalla River. They were interchangeably known as Glébo or Kroumen in Côte d’Ivoire and continue to identify as Krouman in the twenty-first century.¹⁹⁸ Unlike Grand Bassam and Grand Lahou, they cannot be considered living in diaspora communities because of the Glébo population who identified as Kroumen already lived there for

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 298.

¹⁹⁶ “Legislation of the U.S., Monrovia, to the Secretary of State, Washington, December 7, 1885, no. 149, and Message of the President of Liberia, 18 December 1885,” Enclosure No. 6, Diplomatic, 6, both in Diplomatic Dispatches from U.S. Ministers to Liberia, 1863-1906, vol. 10, May 4, 1885-9 January 1891.

¹⁹⁷ FO 47/20, “King of Chiefs of Cavally to the Governor of the Gold Coast, 27 January 1887,” The National Archives.

¹⁹⁸ Kroumen formed 8.5 percent of the total population in a demographic survey conducted in 2018. Accessed on May 1, 2017, https://www.indexmundi.com/cote_d_ivoire/demographics_profile.html.

centuries. Rather, Kru migrant labourers who traveled eastwards towards these communities in order to evade taxation represent a second wave of migration from an earlier period about which more research is required based on limited available evidence. What is for certain is that the Kru found themselves in the heart of French colonial interests in the territory of Côte d'Ivoire. The common denominator linking their communities under the name "Kru" was the Kru language.

The reconceptualization of Kru Coast boundaries was politically and economically motivated. While the Liberian government regarded the Kru Coast as within Liberian borders in hopes of generating revenue through taxation, French and American sources extended the boundaries of the Kru (known as Krouman or Croumanes in French) homeland on the Kru Coast of Liberia to include the towns in the southwestern region of Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁹⁹ By 1874, Henry Leveson identified the towns of Cavalli, Half Bereby, Grand Lahou and Grand Bassam, all in French territory, as belonging to the Kru Coast.²⁰⁰ While Leveson's claim fails to understand the nature of Kru migration to the latter two towns, he reveals a strong Kru presence in their diaspora communities in Grand Bassam and Grand Lahou. Kru living in diaspora communities in Grand Bassam and Grand Lahou formed a migrant community in regions dominated by the Alladian (Jack-Jacks) and Neyo.²⁰¹ Both groups spoke Kru and belonged to the Bete cluster as discussed in Chapter One. Leveson's observation supports the idea of increased Kru migration as a response to Port of Entry Laws by the mid-1870s. Kru were not identified as forming a unique community in these ports in any significant number until the second half of the nineteenth

¹⁹⁹ Reclus, *Earth and Its Inhabitants*, 233-234; *Comptes Rendus des Séances de la Société de Géographie et De La Commission Centrale* (Paris: Société de Géographie, 1897), 260-261; Chenery, *West Coast*, 114, 118.

²⁰⁰ Leveson, *Forest and the Field*, 272.

²⁰¹ Visona, *Constructing African Art*, 51; Ibo, Le phénomène "Krouman" à Sassandra," 65-94; Hargreaves, *West Africa Partitioned*, 52.

century. Moreover, the urge to identify Grebo as Kru was most certainly an economic strategy to ensure that British, French and Americans continued to hire their preferred Kru labourers beyond the restrictions imposed through Liberian taxation.

In 1885, Élisée Reclus published a map of the Kru Coast or “Kru Territory” in which he limited the region between the Sinoe and King William’s Town. When compared with earlier maps, Figure 6.2 reveals that the Kru homeland underwent several phases of expansion and contraction. Reclus limited the Kru homeland within Liberia compared with Leveson who extended it much further east to Grand Bassam.²⁰² Similarly, Francis Bacon defined the Kru Coast as the “one country” that extended 100 miles in the interior between Little Kroo and Tabou.²⁰³ Trading towns including Garraway, Harper, and Tabou were perceived as belonging to the Kru Coast alongside “Proper Kru,” Grebo, and Krahn communities.²⁰⁴ Krouman, as they were known to the east of Cavalla River, were hired in Cavally, Bereby, Wapoo, and Sassandra.

While it is problematic that the Kru homeland experienced periods of expansion and contraction based on the exterior perception of European traders and the Liberian government who were informed by their own economic and political agendas, what is for certain is that those individuals who identified as Kru continued to trade and find employment within and sometimes beyond these geographical parameters. What remained constant in all known map productions in the nineteenth century was the inclusion of what is claimed by Kru oral traditions as the

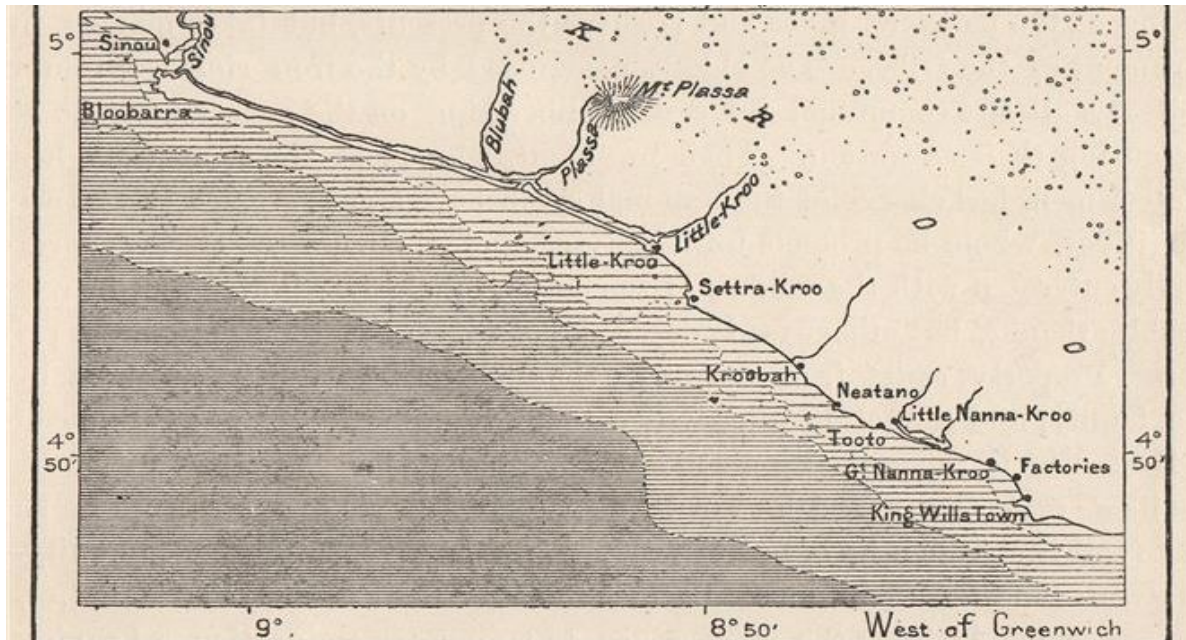
²⁰² Leveson, *Forest and the Field*, 272.

²⁰³ Bacon, “Cape Palmas,” 196.

²⁰⁴ Ludlam, “Account,” 43-44; *The Knickerbocker* 33 (1849): 337. See Ronald Davis map of Kru Coast in Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, v. Davis does not include any mention of Glébo (Krou) villages east of Cape Palmas.

Figure 6.2

Kru Coast, 1885



Source: Élisée Reclus, "The Universal Geography," ed., A.H. Keane (London: J.S. Virtue & Co., 1885), 219.

original five Kru villages.²⁰⁵ Much in the same way that nations and homelands have been described by Benedict Anderson as "imagined communities," the Kru homeland could be perceived as larger or smaller in geographic scale depending on whose perspective informed its construction.²⁰⁶ Dimensions may have varied depending on whether "Proper Kru," Grebo or European ship captains were tasked with providing details. Maps of the period can at best provide historians with an approximate sample of the Kru homeland when language is a variable.

²⁰⁵ Connelly, "Report," 38-40.

²⁰⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1991), 5-8. Also see Frederick D. McEvoy, "Understanding Ethnic Realities among the Grebo and Kru Peoples of West Africa," *Africa* 47, no. 1 (1977): 62-80.

In 1891, French Minister of Colonies, Noël Ballay, presented French claims to the region between the Cavalla River and San Pedro River. France planned on establishing a protectorate over the territory. The French agreed to void their treaties with Buto Garawe, Grebo and Kru villages west of the Cavalla River in return for Liberia ending its claims on the territory between the Cavalla and San Pedro Rivers.²⁰⁷ On 8 December 1892, the Liberian government and the French signed an agreement that set the boundary at the Cavalla River.²⁰⁸

During the same period of negotiations with the French, the Liberian government tightened its Port of Entry Laws. In 1891, the Liberian Legislature established the African Shipping Bureau. Kru labour was even more forcefully regulated, recorded and taxed by the Liberian government.²⁰⁹ While Kru were limited to where they could trade and hire themselves out for foreign contracts, Americo-Liberians were not restricted by the Port of Entry Laws and could trade in any port. Such restrictions and unequal treatment of Kru workers fuelled tensions between the communities.²¹⁰ Many Kru violated the Port of Entry Laws, and, in many cases, continued to hire themselves directly from their coastal towns.²¹¹ In response, the Liberian government imposed fines and in some cases burnt Kru villages.²¹² Their marginalization continued in the twenty-first century leading to numerous conflicts with the Liberian state.²¹³

²⁰⁷ “John Russwurm to J.H.B. Latrobe, 30 December 1845,” *African Repository* 22, no.8 (1846): 205; Bernand Schnapper, *La Politique et le commerce Français dans le Golfe de Guinée de 1838 à 1871* (Paris: Mouton, 1961), 19, 42.

²⁰⁸ Gershoni, “Boundaries,” 306; Pete John Murdza, Jr. “The Tricolor and the Lone Star: A History of Franco-Liberian Relations 1847-1903 (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1979), 347.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 11.

²¹⁰ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 47; Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 85.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, 48.

²¹² *Ibid*, 47.

²¹³ For a discussion on the Kru Revolts in 1915 and 1930 see Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 51-64.

Tensions between Liberian authorities and French traders did not subside following the agreement. In 1893, the Liberian ship the *Goronommah* formed a blockade at Cavalla in French territory to ensure no ships could offload Kru workers without paying the labour tax.²¹⁴ In another incident, the *Goronommah* fired on and killed Kru on a canoe serving the *Ambriz* in Setra Kru.²¹⁵ Liberian vessels fended off German, French and British ships attempting to trade on the Kru Coast. They were conducting illegal trade at ports that were not recognized by the Port of Entry Laws. Liberian enforcement contributed to the decline of the Kru economy and regular returns in their free wage labour diasporas. Liberian actions also fuelled tensions between Kru and the state that eventually developed into a large-scale rebellion in the early twentieth century.²¹⁶

Faced with mounting pressures associated with Liberian taxation, Kru began to establish settlements along rivers in the interior. In 1893, Reverend Ezekiel Smith observed their migration into the interior: “They [Kru] are beginning to settle along the rivers of the country and spreading themselves interiorward, where they engage in trade and farming.”²¹⁷ The Kru embarked on an internal migration as a result of the dire economic situation created by the Port of Entry Laws. Unlike their migration one hundred years earlier from the Kru Coast to Freetown, which accelerated and expanded Kru free wage labour diasporas, Kru migrated in retreat out of necessity in the name of subsistence and survival in unfamiliar territory.

²¹⁴ Davis, 244; FO 47/18, “W.H. Willcocks, acting British vice-consul, to FO, 18 November 1893.”

²¹⁵ Davis, 245; FO 47/19, “Cardew to FO, 16, 17, and 24 November, 1894.”

²¹⁶ Davis, *Ethnohistorical Studies*, 51.

²¹⁷ *African Repository* 48, no. 2 (1872): 52; “Address of Rev. Ezekiel E. Smith,” *Liberia* 2 (1893): 29.

On 11 January 1894, the government in Grand Bassam imposed a tax on Kru labour at a rate of F25 per labourer.²¹⁸ Governor of Côte d'Ivoire, Louis-Gustave Binger, understood the economic potential of regulating and taxing Kru labour. However, as was the case in Liberia, the implementation of taxation proved to be difficult as Kru continued to be hired in a range of ports on the coast that were challenging to administer.

While some Kru continued to engage in direct trade with Europeans and Americans on the Kru Coast at the risk of financial penalties, many Kru decided to migrate for work and remain in their diaspora communities they had forged under British employment in Freetown, Lagos, Cape Coast and Accra. All of these communities experienced rapid population growth from the 1890s when the Port of Entry Laws were rigidly enforced.

By the early twentieth century, the Kru population in Lagos rose to 2,680 while Freetown had 1,551 and Accra 13,000.²¹⁹ Despite its close proximity to the Kru Coast, Krutown in Monrovia had a population of approximately 1,000.²²⁰ The lower population compared with other diaspora communities was most probably the result of Liberian laws aimed at controlling Kru labour for the benefit of the state. The result of their migration was a decline in the return of migrant labourers, which undermined the gift-giving protocol associated with homecomings that structured Kru free wage labour diasporas and fuelled the Kru economy. In contrast, there is no evidence that the Kru diaspora community in Libreville experienced significant growth in response to taxation. The lower number of Kru residing in Côte d'Ivoire as compared with Liberia may account for the small population.

²¹⁸ Archives Nationales, Section d' Outre-Mer Côte d'Ivoire, Vol. 14, 1a, Grand-Bassam, January 11, 1894. Also see Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 90.

²¹⁹ Estimates found in Martin, "Krumen," 406, 412; Crooks, *Records Relating*, 354.

²²⁰ Büttikofer, *Travel Sketches*, 49.

In this chapter, I have examined the social, economic and political relationship between the Kru and the colony of Liberia between 1822 and 1846, and the Liberian state between 1847 and 1900. The succession of Port of Entry Laws between 1837, 1849 1859, 1865, and 1891, gradually undermined the authority of *krogha* and headmen. The increased presence of missions on the Kru Coast and the shift to agricultural production were part of the Liberian strategy to extend political influence in the region.

The Liberian government's attempts to legislate restrictions on Kru trade through taxation inadvertently increased competition between the British and French. French contracts resulted in the establishment of Kru communities in Grand Bassam and Libreville. Although Kru formed diasporas and labour networks with the French, they were never on the same global scale as with the British. Far more Kru served with the British in a variety of commercial and military contexts in the Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. The evolution of headmen under the British hiring system that emerged in the early nineteenth century in Freetown became the model for their employment that influenced other Europeans including the French as well as the Americans in terms of pay structures, contract length, authority and the hierarchal nature of their service.²⁰³

²⁰³ Kru served on US Navy ships in the Atlantic tasked with intercepting slave ships in two periods between 1820 and 1822 and between 1840 and 1861. Kru rank and pay in the US Navy was directly influenced by the Royal Navy from whom the US took their lead in anti-slaving operations in the Atlantic. For a history of Kru service on US Navy vessels see Canney, *African Squadron*, 68; Pentangelo, "Sailors and Slaves," 7; Rockwell, "Sketches," *African Repository* 18 (1842): 277-278; Lee, *Report*, 34; Bridge, *Journal of an African Cruiser*, 20, 48; Thomas, *Adventures and Observations*, 105; William Elliot Griggs, *Matthew Calbraith Perry, A Typical Naval Officer* (Boston: Cupples and Hurd, 1890), 307-308; *Correspondence Relative to the Naval Expedition to Japan 1852-1854* (1855), 2; Herbert Gilliland, ed., *USS Constellation*, 3.

Conclusion

This dissertation has structured the fragmented history of the Kru into coherent diaspora frameworks and labour networks. The migration of Kru workers under British employment between 1792 and 1900 represents a movement of free wage labour that resulted in the formation of diasporas in Africa and the British Caribbean. Kru established diaspora communities based on commercial and military contracts with the Royal Navy. However, their service did not guarantee the establishment of a diaspora community. Kru serving in the Indian and Pacific Oceans formed labour networks as they transited through ports, never forming Krutowns as they had done in Atlantic ports. Rather, Kru lived and worked on Royal Navy ships and adapted their seamen skills in the pursuit of slave ships.

This study has shown that the Kru engaged in voluntary diasporas as defined by Jalloh. Regardless of whether they worked in a diaspora community or solely on a ship, they routinely returned to their homeland on the Kru Coast between contracts. Their diasporas were qualified as a free wage labour diasporas because they were paid for their labour and had the choice to work. Further, the definition of Kru workers expanded as the boundaries of the Kru Coast came to include a range of peoples who spoke Kru. While not always a marker of ethnicity, language was one of the binding forces that enabled Kru beyond the original five settlements to claim Kru ethnicity. This dissertation has shown that many Kru in British Guiana underwent a process of creolization through intermarriage with African descendants and Yoruba workers.

The first chapter demonstrated that the five original Kru settlements between the Sinoe River and Dubo River traced their origins to the sixteenth century. Portuguese accounts of surfboats in the region suggest that contact with the Kru was established as early as the fifteenth century. Although their communities were politically autonomous and competed for trade with

Europeans, they belonged to the *dako* collectively known as the “Proper Kru.” Their designation distinguished them from other Kru speaking peoples on the West African coast including the Grebo, Bassa, Krahn and Noyo. The Kru Coast’s natural environment consisting of rocky sub-sea terrain and adverse surf conditions gave the Kru an advantage and placed them in a position to negotiate trading terms with European traders who struggled to carry out trade operations between ship and shore. As fishermen, Kru developed the necessary seamen skills, which enabled them to find employment on European merchant vessels sailing the West African coast from at least the seventeenth century, when the first known shipping record mentioned a Kru seaman in 1645. By the eighteenth century, a new *dako* known as Grand Cess or Siglio was established to the east of “Proper Kru.” They soon competed with the “Proper Kru” in shoreside trade and labour on European vessels. During this initial phase of Kru trade with the British and other Europeans, this dissertation has shown that the Kru experienced a number of socio-economic transformations including the emergence of trade-men, “talk-men,” and interpreters, the advent of the Kru mark and, most significantly, headmen. These developments were in response to European trade. While the Kru traded in rice, palm oil and ivory, the slave trade played a significant role in their economy from at least the seventeenth century. Kru continued to trade in slaves on the Kru Coast and serve on Cuban slave ships on the West African coast until the mid-nineteenth century.

The second chapter examined Kru labour in Freetown beginning in 1792. Population statistics revealed that the number of Kru workers increased from 15 in 1793 to more than 800 in 1809, which constituted 40 percent of the total population in Freetown. The growth of their community was related to their service in the Royal Navy following British abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and an increase in shoreside contracts. Freetown became the epicentre

of Royal Navy activity as the Kru were offered contracts, which lasted three years with a monthly salary that exceeded all other contracts. Kru served on the front lines of British abolitionism in the Atlantic intercepting slave ships, releasing enslaved Africans and delivering slave ship crews to Sierra Leone for trial at the Vice Admiralty Court and later the Court of Mixed Commission. By 1816, they had established their own distinct community in a district known as Krutown, which provided the British with a readily available pool of labourers for ship and shoreside contracts. In my analysis of Krutown, I have unpacked further socio-economic transformations including the institutionalization of the position of headman, restructuring of the age-grade system to meet the manpower demands of the British, and new responsibilities for women in the market. Headmen played a crucial role in organizing labour gangs, ensuring wages were distributed and maintaining discipline amongst workers. As such, they were paid more than regular workers and served as the link between British captains and Kru workers. Hierarchical order was further entrenched following the creation of the Krutown Headman who served as administrator with the British, overseeing all contracts and the conduct of Kru community.

The homecoming experience was shown to have developed into a crucial component in the Kru's diaspora cycle as they circled between their community in Freetown and their villages on the Kru Coast. The result is that direct links between *dako* on the Kru Coast and Krutown can be firmly established. While the "Proper Kru" formed the majority of labourers as demonstrated in the naming of the streets after the original five settlements, members of the Grand Cess *dako* were also present in the nineteenth century. Moreover, homecoming protocol, which included presenting gifts to the *krogba* and purchasing wives, became crucial components of the Kru economy.

The third chapter analyzed the Kru growth of the Kru free wage labour diaspora as they shifted their labour towards Royal Navy contracts and so-called “legitimate” trade in palm oil production. As such, a succession of Krutowns and labouring communities were established on the West African coast as the Kru migrated for work. Kru in Monrovia served on British and American vessels and worked in European factories. Service in the Royal Navy enabled the Kru to establish settlements in Cape Coast, Ascension Island, Fernando Po and Simon’s Town in the Cape of Good Hope. Their duties included coaling ships and intercepting slave ships before sailing to Freetown. In the case of Fernando Po, Kru also performed agricultural labour. Population statistics show that the Kru community in Ascension Island and Fernando Po continued to experience growth in the nineteenth century. Ordinances reveal that the Royal Navy had to pay for sick or injured Kru while they received care in “Krooman’s Hospital” in Garrison. Their designation in records demonstrates their importance in the Royal Navy.

Their role as stevedoers, porters and boatsmen engaged in so-called “legitimate trade” in palm oil led to the creation of Kru communities in Lagos, Bonny and Calabar. Headmen continued to organize and ensure labour gangs circulated between the Kru Coast and the Oil Rivers annually. During the same period, the establishment of new coastal communities on the Kru Coast in the nineteenth century led to the formation of new *dako* including Kabor, Jloh, Sasstown (or Pahn), and Gbeta. They all spoke Kru, and their villages, which were adjacent to the “Proper Kru,” extended to the Cestos River in the west and Grand Cess in the east. In all cases, *dako* on the Kru Coast continued to inform the demographic composition of each diaspora settlement. Jloh from Sasstown and Gbeta from Picaninny Cess were the most common Kru working in Monrovia, while Grand Cess Kru formed the majority in Cape Coast. Workers from Settra Kru were hired for contracts in Calabar and Bonny, and Kru in Ascension Island,

Fernando Po, Simon's Town and Lagos were most frequently hired in Freetown and belonged to the "Proper Kru" and Grand Cess *dakwe*. All of their settlements were interconnected as Kru circulated on contract between their homeland on the Kru Coast and diaspora communities. By the close of the nineteenth century, their diaspora communities displaced the Kru Coast as the main centres of employment.

The fourth chapter explored the Kru free wage labour diaspora in the British Caribbean. Beginning in 1841, Kru migrated to Jamaica, Trinidad and British Guiana for contracts on estates and wharves that promised higher wages than those earned on the West Coast of Africa. Service in Jamaica was short-lived and little records survive of their service beyond the wharf in Kingston and their landing in Montego Bay. Much more can be said of their experience in Trinidad where they worked on several estates in Port of Spain and Oropuche. Similarly, Kru circulated between estates in Demerara, Berbice and Essequibo in British Guiana. They continued their tradition of manning flotillas and small craft as they transported people and commodities from estate to ship. Their contracts were between three and five years in length. As an incentive, they were offered higher wages than could be earned in West Africa. Although their service in Jamaica amounted to a node in their labour network, the Kru free wage labour diaspora was maintained in Trinidad with the creation of "Krooman's Village" and other communities that resembled Krutowns in West Africa, but on a smaller scale. In British Guiana, Kru formed a community in Canal No.1 where they resided alongside Yoruba labourers. They continued to apply the Kru mark, which distinguished Kru from other labouring groups including Yoruba and Liberated Africans. Kru bound for British Guiana were hired in Freetown and Setra Kru, which shows that the majority belonged to the "Proper Kru" *dako*. Many Kru working in Berbice were also hired in Grand Cess.

Despite these continuities, Kru labourers underwent a process of creolization. Their ability to purchase land was a major factor. On the Kru Coast where land was communally owned by their respective *dako*, Kru remained subject to the authority of the *krogba*. In Trinidad and British Guiana, this was not the case. The combination of the Kru's tendency towards task-based work on an individual basis as jobbers and the opportunity to own land outside of the communal village allowed the Kru to function beyond traditional societal norms. The hierarchal order informing the relationship between Kru worker, headman and *krogba* became obsolete as many Kru decided to remain in Trinidad and British Guiana indefinitely following the completion of their contract. By circumnavigating the traditional protocol of gift-giving for the *krogba* and paying a percentage of their wages to their headman, Kru labourers gained a new found sense of economic independence. Another factor in their creolization was intermarriage with Creole women. As such, their descendants were frequently classified as "Africans" rather than Kru or confused with Yoruba labourers in demographic surveys. The result was that the Kru free wage labour diaspora in the British Caribbean was short-lived, and these factors led to their disappearance as a distinct ethnic group in Trinidad and British Guiana by the early twentieth century.

The fifth chapter examined Kru service in British colonial expansion in Africa. Kru service in various expeditions was analyzed including Hugh Clapperton's second expedition to the Sokoto Caliphate (1825-1827), the series of Niger River expeditions led by Richard and John Lander (1830), Macgregor Laird, Richard Lander and R.A.K. Oldfield (1832-1833), William Allen, Henry Dundas Trotter and Bird Allen (1841-1842), and William Balfour Baikie (1854).

They also played a role in David Livingstone's Zambezi Expedition (1858-1864). In all cases, Kru served as boatmen and porters who were frequently charged with collecting wood and water for the crew. Their services contributed to the functioning of the expeditions.

Between 1862 and 1881, Kru were hired on Royal Navy ships in the Indian Ocean to assist in the suppression of the slave trade. Kru played a major role in capturing slave *dhow*s. The shortage of Royal Navy ships meant that Kru were tasked with manning the launch boats aboard each vessel, which enabled a larger coalition to form. Kru operated out of Simon's Town in South Africa, Zanzibar, the Seychelles, Aden, Basra, Bombay, and Trincomalee. Although Kru did not form Krutowns in Indian Ocean ports, they were identified as Kru in Zanzibar because of their Kru mark. Even when they did not form distinct communities, their bodies bore the mark of their diaspora.

Kru service in the Royal Navy was extended to include military campaigns in Asia and Africa, including the First Opium War (1839-1842), the occupation of Lagos (1851), the campaign against Asante (1873-1874), the Anglo-Zulu War (1879), the Sudan Campaign (1884-1885), and the exile of Jaja of Opobo in the British Oil Rivers Protectorate (1887). Their duties included serving as porters, boatmen, and, more significantly, gunners and auxiliary soldiers in naval brigades. The nature of their service adopted a military dimension as they served on the front lines in the Anglo-Zulu War and were awarded medals for their service. Rather than continuing the development of a diaspora, Kru enlisted for specific campaigns without establishing settlements. Royal Navy ships became the cultural spaces where Kru maintained traditional practices and were also able to evolve their seaborne practices first developed in their homeland on the Kru Coast. Kru participation in expeditions, Royal Navy service in the Indian

Ocean, and in military campaigns played a role in the British consolidation of its empire in Africa.

The sixth chapter demonstrated that by the close of the nineteenth century, Kru diaspora communities experienced growth, while employment in their homeland on the Kru Coast declined. American Colonization Society agents and Americo-Liberian settlers aimed to profit from Kru labour as early as the 1830s when all Kru labourers were made to pay a head tax while working in Krutown in Monrovia. Following independence in 1847, the succession of Port of Entry Laws had a major effect on the Kru economy. Kru headmen acquired new state responsibilities ensuring each worker was properly taxed before they could embark and disembark vessels. This created pressure on headmen to secure higher wages in order to avoid lower net wages. The Kru Coast economy was forced to shift towards its secondary industry in palm oil production, which placed Kru in a subservient role to Americo-Liberian settlers and the Liberian state that controlled all sales on the Kru Coast. Conversion rates to Christianity surged as a result of the growing missionary presence on the Kru Coast.

Competition between the British, French, Americans, Germans and Liberians for Kru labour increased. Increased taxation via Port of Entry Laws imposed by the Liberian government and mounting conflict were responsible for the lack of opportunities on the Kru Coast as Kru workers sought to make a living abroad free from government interference. Many Kru decided to immigrate to their diaspora communities in Freetown, Cape Coast, and Lagos. Others accepted French contracts and formed diasporas and labour networks in Grand Bassam, Grand Lahou, Libreville, Congo, and French Guiana. Still others worked on German contracts at Woermann factories in Douala and Swakopmund. While economic incentives to work abroad increased, there was little desire to return and hand over a portion of their earnings to both their

krogha and the Liberian state. Moreover, conflict with Americo-Liberian settler communities and the loss of land that transpired created an unstable socio-economic environment on the Kru Coast that further marginalized the Kru in relation to the Liberian state.

The sixth chapter also showed that in the late nineteenth century, the nature of Kru identity evolved to encompass a greater range of Kru speaking peoples as they emigrated for contracts. Kru Coast boundaries were at the heart of the conflict between the Liberian and French government to secure the border between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. In 1891, Liberian authorities perceived the Kru Coast as the expanse of land that extended eastwards to the San Pedro River. There was an attempt to extend Port of Entry Laws in the region and tax labourers. However, the Liberian government was only able to secure the region to the west of the Cavalla River. The French understood that the region was inhabited by Krouman in the towns to the east of Cavalla River, which included Cavally, Bereby, Tabou, and Sassandra. These were the main trading villages where labourers were traditionally employed by French merchants. The British generally hired the Kru on the Kru Coast or in diaspora communities such as in Freetown. The boundaries of the Kru Coast were politicized and depending on who was responsible for providing the dimensions it could be as large as the region between the Cestos River and Sassandra River or limited within the Liberian national borders created in 1893. In the latter, the Kru Coast encompassed the region between the Cestos River and Cavalla River in Liberia and the area between the Cavalla River and San Pedro River in Côte d'Ivoire. While the Kru Coast experienced periods of growth and contraction in the nineteenth century depending on sources, the peoples therein spoke Kru and were able to identify each other by *dako* affiliation and the location of their villages.

The data presented suggests that Kru free wage labour diasporas were often contradictory and overlapping in nature. Kru served an abolitionist function on board British Royal Navy ships tasked with intercepting slave ships, while simultaneously serving on Cuban slave ships bound for Havana. Kru loaded enslaved Africans in the Rio Pongo and the Gallinas and continued to engage in the slave trade on the Kru Coast until at least the 1850s. Similarly, Kru participated in military and exploration campaigns that paved the way for British colonial conquest in Africa. Their contradictory impulses revealed their tendency to make a living by all necessary available means.

Although Kru contractual employment with the British had definitive starting dates, in many cases, the contracts ran their course simultaneously, creating overlapping layers of employment. Each contract formed its own labour trajectory that was differentiated in pay scale, duration, commercial versus military contracts, and geographic context. While Kru diaspora communities in West Africa expanded into the twentieth century, others such as those in Trinidad and British Guiana gradually disappeared as a result of creolization.

Kru free wage labour diasporas were distinct from the larger trans-Atlantic diasporas, which transported 12.8 million enslaved Africans to the Americas. The nature of Kru free wage labour diasporas presented in this dissertation resonate with aspects of the parity trade relations proposed by John Thornton, which existed between Europeans and Africans until the mid-nineteenth century.¹ While Kru were never in a position of authority over the British, they were empowered to decide which contracts they would accept and they were paid wages for their labour based on contract terms.

¹ John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-10, 13-42, 43-71.

This dissertation also poses a challenge to notions of race in the Atlantic world. The Kru formed different types of diasporas built on contracts and circulated between British ports maintaining and evolving their culture through the establishment of Krutowns and community settlements. A crucial component of Paul Gilroy's argument in *Black Atlantic* is that diaspora communities originated in slavery which, in turn, shaped transnational black identity. As such, Gilroy suggests that African diaspora communities collectively created "a counterculture of modernity."² Gilroy's focus on the impact of slavery raises interesting questions as to whether the migration of the Kru, as free labourers in an era of both slavery and emancipation, can inform Gilroy's insights on modernity, "double consciousness" and the meaning of blackness in the nineteenth century Atlantic world.³ The complex nature of the Kru case reveals the limitations of Paul Gilroy's "Black Atlantic" framework, which needs to be expanded in order to contemplate the social, economic and political dimensions of the other black experiences in the Atlantic. In short, both systems of slavery and free labour must be considered in the project of constructing black identity in the Atlantic world.

The power dynamics governing the economic relationship between the British and the Kru were structured differently than the systems informing master and slave relations in the Americas. While enslaved Africans could negotiate and possess a degree of mobility within the framework of slavery, Kru remained free and in control of their bodies and labour for which they were paid. They answered to their headmen and worked within the parameters established in British contracts, but were never enslaved in the process. Much like their transition from

² Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (New York: Verso, 1993), 25-26, 218.

³ Ibid, 25-26, 218.

childhood to adulthood through Kru age-sets, adolescent Kru understood that they first had to learn the necessary skills to become regular labourers, which could be a physically and emotionally demanding transition.

Furthermore, British-Kru working relations were informed by race but in a way that was unique from the institution of slavery, which sought to dehumanize the enslaved. While the British hired the Kru, they were never perceived as equals but frequently assigned the derogatory term “Kroo Boys.” The application of the term “boys” meant that the Kru were not considered real men in the European sense simply because of their black race and their perceived lower position of societal development in stadial theory.⁴ As this dissertation has shown, Kru were often romanticized by the British as an “exotic” “other.” Assigned almost animalistic properties in written accounts and newspaper images, they were perceived as perfect for meeting the arduous physical demands required on contracts in tropical climates, while British sailors were deemed “unfit” or such labour. Kru were well aware of uneven socio-economic relations in their workplaces, yet wages and the opportunity to rise in social status back in their homeland outweighed any animosity they felt towards the British. After all, Kru had largely rejected two of the most important symbols of British culture in the period: Christianity and literacy for most of the period under review.

⁴ A product of the Scottish Enlightenment, stadial theory refers to the four stages theory of human societies, which proposes that human societies evolve from a primitive society characterized by hunting and pastoralism and agriculture before they reach the commercial stage, which was the fourth stage and regarded as the most civilized. Europeans understood themselves to inhabit the fourth stage, while African societies were assigned a place in the lower three stages. For further discussion of the four stages of stadial theory see Nathaniel Wolloch, “The Civilizing Process, Nature, and Stadial Theory,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 44, no. 2 (2011): 245-259; Ronald Meek, *Social Science and The Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 5.

Despite racist undertones that informed their working relationship, the ship became a cultural space where the Kru could perform both within and outside racial parameters. Peter Linebaugh and Markus Rediker's (2000) study proposed the existence of an alternative society using the example of a community in the Americas forged by a shipwrecked crew where rigid class hierarchies informing power-relations amongst the ship crew had the potential to become fluid depending on the circumstances in question.⁵ Their notion of alternative societies resonates with the nature of Kru service on British Royal Navy ships as the Kru were able to take full advantage of the fluid hierarchies which defined their roles on ships despite racial hierarchies that contextualized the period. The British came to depend on the Kru, particularly in the Indian Ocean, when they were tasked with manning Royal Navy launch boats as part of a wider coalition in pursuit of slave ships. They frequently led the charge, boarded slave ships and put their lives at risk for which they were awarded medals. Their normal role as stevedoers and porters could be augmented at a moment's notice to heroic status. As such, Royal Navy ships created a fluid space that could not contain the Kru within a rigid racial system based on a zero-sum outcome that was the order informing white-black racial relations throughout much of the world in the nineteenth century.⁶

By the close of the nineteenth century, the Kru economy in their homeland was in a state of decline. Walter Rodney's position that Europeans undermined African societies economically

⁵ Peter Linebaugh and Markus Rediker, *The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 13-14.

⁶ Zero-sum is a concept rooted in game theory that proposes that one party can only benefit at the expense of another party. In the case of British-Kru relations, both parties were able to benefit economically from contractual labour despite racial hierarchies underscoring their relationship. See Alan D. Taylor, *Mathematics in Politics: Strategy, Voting, Power and Proof* (New York: Springer, 1995), 1-2, 21-25; Robert Harms, *Games Against Nature: A Cultural History of the Nunu of Equatorial Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 1-10.

and politically through the creation of colonies while has merit, is incomplete.⁷ The Kru story adds a complex layer demonstrated through the case of Americo-Liberian settlers who played a major role in the colonization process in Liberia. As indigenous Africans, Kru were perceived by Americo-Liberians as uncivilized savages who were not included in Liberian settler society unless they converted to Christianity and thus became “civilized.” While it is important to recognize that the American Colonization Society inaugurated the colonization process and funded the settlers, it is equally as important to understand the ways the Liberian state continued to marginalize the Kru through regulation, taxation, and the acquisition of land, all of which led to a series of military conflicts. The wider processes of European colonization and global capitalism framed the Kru’s socio-economic experience on British contracts. Yet, the Kru experienced a unique form of settler colonization distinct from any other region of Africa in the nineteenth century.

While the Liberian state played a significant role in the decline of the Kru economy in the later decades of the nineteenth century, Kru had positioned themselves on a course for economic disaster long before. Although they continued to trade with Europeans and Americans on the Kru Coast, this study has shown that the Kru economy developed a dependency on British contracts. The risk of losing the revenue generated from the homecomings of migrant workers threatened to undermine the social, economic and political structures that informed Kru societies in the nineteenth century. Traditional age-sets were geared towards fulfilling British labour contracts. Profits earned affected social status, the ability to meet bride-price demands necessary for marriage, and maintained the authority of the *krogba*. The Kru failed to diversify their

⁷ Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1972), 115-142, 231-319.

homeland economy to the extent that was needed given the encroaching Liberian state. Once the Liberian state imposed regulatory measures to interrupt the free flow of labourers, their entire social, economic and political structures began to collapse and they were forced to develop alternative strategies of survival that ultimately led their homeland into a state of decline and marginalization in the twentieth century. Like many global indigenous peoples, the weakening of the Kru's economy expedited their forced assimilation into the nation-state apparatus, which valued their labour but not their political will.

Kru were engaged in contractual wage labour nearly a century before the official creation of most European colonies in Africa. Their case adds to those presented in Lovejoy and Coquery-Vidrovitch's study of African labourers working in the transitionary period between the abolition of the British trans-Atlantic slave trade and so-called legitimate trade in West Africa.⁸ In the process, this dissertation calls for the expansion of the Eric Williams' thesis as demonstrated by the fact that the Kru contributed to the growth of British capitalism as free wage labourers and not as enslaved persons.⁹ Most significantly for Kru studies, while George E. Brooks' study revealed the important contributions of Kru seamen and labourers in British and American trade in West Africa, this study expands the framework of analysis by documenting that the Kru played a major role in British commercial and military operations in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans, one that resulted in the formation of several free wage labour diasporas and labour networks.

⁸ Lovejoy and Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Workers*, 1-30.

⁹ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), 126-177.

In conclusion, the Kru developed a strategic engagement with British employment in shipping contexts in West Africa. The transformations which occurred within Kru communities along the Kru Coast, in Freetown, and the migratory culture that emerged is comparable with other African communities such as the Nyamwezi caravan culture that came to fruition in the nineteenth century in East Africa.¹⁰ What distinguished the Kru from their African labouring competitors, including the Cabinda in Angola, Fante canoemen on the Gold Coast, Sereer and Wolof in Dakar, and Vai workers in the Gallinas, was the longevity of their service with the British (between the sixteenth century and twentieth century), the geographical breadth of their labouring activities in the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans, the diversity of their roles which ranged from pilots, interpreters, porters, and stevedores serving on Royal Navy and commercial ships, their service in naval brigades engaged in British military campaigns, their establishment of Krutowns, and the long-term infrastructural impact of their labouring contributions in the construction of Takoradi Harbour and the Panama Canal.

While Kru did not occupy a position of authority, their labour force became vital to British commercial operations in West Africa. Tracing Kru free wage labour diasporas and labour networks from the Kru Coast to the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans reveals the active role they played in the expansion of British trade and military campaigns and calls for a rethinking of African agency in the development of global capitalism. Their case remains an early example of the outsourcing wage labour model that has come to dominate work environments in the twenty-first century. Perhaps no other African ethnic group occupied such a

¹⁰ See Stephen Rockel, *Carriers of Culture: Labor on the Road in Nineteenth-Century East Africa* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann: 2006), 4-5.

versatile and important social and economic role in British commercial and military interests in the nineteenth century as the Kru did.

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Appendix

The tables presented in Appendix A reflect the pay for Kru serving in the Royal Navy. The information comes from the ADM 30/26 series “Muster Lists of Kroomen Serving on Various Ships, 1819-1820.” The columns are divided into African Names, Rank, Full Wages, and Net Wages (also spelled Neat and Nett in some instances). In some cases, there is an Advance column and in-kind payment column usually under the heading Tobacco. In terms of naval rank, “Ord” refers to ordinary seamen who carried the rank of eighth class seamen. These individuals were the headmen who received higher wage rates. “Sm” refers to Kru who carried an eleventh class rank. Salaries were paid in pounds, shillings and pence. For example, £4 1s. 1d. means 4 pounds, 1 shilling and 1 pence.

HMS *Whistle*

Pay List for African’s employed on board His Majesty’s Brig “Whistle”
10 November 1819 to 19 January 1820.

African Names	Rank	Slopes supplies by the Navy Board	Full Wages	Net Wages
Thom Nimma	Ord	18s 4d	£3 19s 8d	£3 1s 4d
Prince Will	Ord	18s 4d	£3 19s 8d	£3 1s 4d
John October	Ord	18s 4d	£3 19s 8d	£3 1s 4d
Dick Williams	Ord	18s 4d	£3 19s 8d	£3 1s 4d
Jon Many	Ord	18s 4d	£3 19s 8d	£3 1s 4d
Jon Arab	Ord	18s 4d	£3 19s 8d	£3 1s 4d
Thom Stuart	Ord	£1 0s 1d	£2 16s 6d	£1 10s 5d
Charles Smith	Sm	18s 0d	£1 6s 6d	8s 6d
Ben Coffee	Sm		£4 8s 6d	£3 18s 8d
Tom Freeman (2)	Sm		£4 8s 6d	£3 18s 8d
Big William	Sm		£4 8s 6d	£3 15s 6d
John Freeman	Sm		£4 8s 6d	£3 15s 6d
Total				£48 3s 0d

Source: ADM 30/26, "Muster list of Kroomen Serving on Various Ships," The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

HMS *Myrmidan*

26 November to 20 December 1819

African Names	Rank	Full Wages	Net Wages
Thomas Reed	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£1 1s 6
John Freeman	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£1 1s 6d
Grando	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£1 1s 6d
Tom Toby	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£1 1s 6d
Jim George	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£1 1s 6d
Sam Coffee	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£1 1s 6d
Jack Freeman	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£1 1s 6d
Jim Centire	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£1 1s 6d
Bottled Beer	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£1 1s 6d
Tom Walker	Sm	18s 9d	18s 9d
Jack Haulauney	Sm	18s 9d	18s 9d
James Pallas	Sm	18s 9d	18s 9d
Ben Coffee	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£1 1s 6d
Boy Lancha	Sm	18s 9d	8s 9d
Total		£12 9s 3d	£12 9s 3d

Source: ADM 30/26, "Muster list of Kroomen Serving on Various Ships," The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

HMS *Myrmidan*

21 December 1819 to 29 July 1820

African Names	Rank	Two Months Advance	Full Wages	Net Wages
Thomas Reed	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£4 2s 4d	£3 0s 10d
Jon Pallas	Sm	18s 9d	£3 14s 3d	£2 15s 6d
Ben Williams	Sm	18s 9d	£3 12s	£2 13s 3d
Jack Savee	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£4 2s 4d	£3 0s 10d
Jack Luisefoot	Ord	£1 1s 6d	£4 2s 4d	£3 0s 10d
Chaus Tobacco	Sm	11s 9d	£3 12s	£2 13s 3d

Jack Reed	Sm	11s 9d	£3 12s	£2 13s 3d
Bill Williams	Ord		£2 8s	£2 8s
King George	Ord		£2 0s 4d	£2 0s 4d
Bottled Beer	Sm		£1 15s 3d	£1 15s 3d
Galley Will	Sm		£1 15s 3d	£1 15s 3d
Boy Tom	Sm		£1 15s 3d	£1 15s 3d
Bill Thomas	Sm		£1 15s 3d	£1 15s 3d
Limon Row	Sm		£1 15s 3d	£1 15s 3d
John Reed	Ord		£1 18s 6d	£1 18s 6d
Jas Freeman	Sm		£1 13s 9d	£1 13s 9d
Tom Freeman	Sm		£1 13s 9d	£1 13s 9d
Total				£38 8s 4d

Source: ADM 30/26, "Muster list of Kroomen Serving on Various Ships," The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

HMS *Tartar*

Pay List for Africans employed on His Majesty's Ship *Tartar* Commissioner Sir George Collier
14 January 1820 to 3 June 1820

Mens' Names	Rank	Full Wages	Net Wages
Ben Freeman (1)	Ord	£6 1s 8d	£6 1s 8d
Tom Freeman	Ord	£6 1s 8d	£6 1s 8d
Tom Jack	Ord	£6 1s 8d	£6 1s 8d
Will Freeman	Ord	£6 1s 8d	£6 1s 8d
Jack Aboo	Ord	£6 1s 8d	£6 1s 8d
Tom Freeman (2)	Ord	£6 1s 8d	£6 1s 8d
Tom Lee	Sm	£5 6s 6d	£4 16s 8d
Jack Fletcher	Ord	£6 1s 8d	£6 1s 8d
Bob Williams	Sm	£5 6s 6d	£4 16s 8d
Gar Will	Ord	£6 1s 8d	£6 1s 1d
Bottle of Beer	Sm	£5 6s 6d	£4 16s 8d
Will Grey	Ord	£6 1s 8d	£6 1s 8d
Jac Freeman	Ord	£6 1s 8d	£6 1s 8d
Jac George	Ord	£6 1s 8d	£5 11s 10d
Will Jumbo	Sm	£5 6s 6d	£5 6s 6d
Sam Louise	Sm	£5 6s 6d	£4 16s 8d
Total		£93 10s 10d	£90 11s 10d

Source: ADM 30/26, "Muster list of Kroomen Serving on Various Ships," The National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

Glossary of Kru Language Terms

Bo, Boviowah or *Gbo*: Secret society practiced by the Kru.

Bodio: An officer in Bo secret society. The *bodio* kept fetishes and was a high priest.

Borh: Soldiers.

Claho: Possible ancestors of the Kru who migrated between two and three hundred miles from in the interior came to the region that became known as the Kru Coast in the nineteenth century.

Dako: A territorial unit composed of various *pantons* sharing political officers based on a collective historical tradition. The six coastal dako consisted of Kabor, Jloh, Gbeta, Sasstown (or Pahn), Grand Cess (or Siklio), and “Proper Kru” or “Five Tribes.” The interior dako consisted of Matro, Bolo, Nanke and Bwa.

Dea: Village.

Deyâbo: The doctors in Bo secret society.

Fishmen: People living in same vicinity as the Kru along the Kru Coast. They were distinguished from the Kru as subsistence fishermen, as compared with the Kru who were traders with Europeans. The Kru and Fishmen frequently engaged in confrontation according to sources.

Gbaubi or *gbo bi*: A figure known as the “father of the army” held nearly equal authority as the *krogba* and although the *gbaubi* was a political position formed to counterbalance the authority of the *krogba*, it was the younger men who led the soldiers.

Gbau: The warrior class in Bo secret society.

Giwon: Meaning “leopards mouth,” a building housing fetishes, war trophies and objects important to the *dako*.

Gnekbade: Elders in Bo secret society.

Ibadio: Function of council to the dual leadership of the War King and the Peace King.

Kafah: Scouts.

Kedibo: The young men in Bo society.

Klao: The origins of the name Kru are believed in oral traditions to have been derived from this term.

Kofa: Age-set composed of young adolescent boys.

Krogba: The highest officer in a *dako* was known as the “father of the town” who was democratically selected by a group of *panton nyefue*.

Kru: A term denoting the peoples who live on the Kru Coast of Liberia between and the River Cestos and Cape Palmas. Alternative and interchangeable names include Carou, Carow, Croo, Crewmen, Crou, Croumen, Kharoo, Klao, Krao, Krau, Krewmen, Kroo, Krooboy, Kroomen, Krou, Kroumen.

Kwi: Poro bush spirit honoured by wearing a mask.

Nyaswa: The most revered Poro bush spirit honoured by wearing a mask.

Nyessoa: Monotheistic god worshipped by the Kru in the nineteenth century.

Panton: The name given to a patrilineage in Kru society.

Panton Nyefue: The head of the *panton* who was the eldest member deemed physically and mentally fit to hold the position.

Sedibo: The soldier class composed of middle-aged men in Bo secret society.

Tibowah: Function of council to the dual leadership of the War King and the Peace King.

Torh: War.

Worabanh: Served as the military leader in times of war.