Chapter 1
Surfboats

The heart of the Kru free wage labor diaspora was the surfboat. It provided the means for fishing, subsistence, trade, and travel between communities on the West African coast. The Kru's specialized ability to maneuver surfboats through heavy coastal surf enabled Kru-speaking peoples to trade with Europeans, work on their vessels, and became emblematic of Kru identity at home and abroad. Thomas Ludlam, Governor of Sierra Leone, claimed that when he arrived in Freetown in 1797 it was "a gross absurdity to imagine that a Krooman would do any kind of work unconnected with boats and shipping."[125] From the earliest known image of the Kru first drawn in the seventeenth century to the travel sketches, newspaper drawings, photographs, and postcards in the centuries that followed, the Kru were shown to be intimately connected with their surfboats. Kru oral traditions continue to remember their command of surfboats as the single most important cultural marker that enabled trade and transportation, whether on calm rivers or traversing adverse surf out to sea.[126]

European Contact

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to make contact with the inhabitants of the Malaguetta or Grain Coast between Cape Mount and Cape Palmas, trading in malagueta pepper by the 1460s.[127] A decade later, the Portuguese coasted the shores of what gradually became known as the Ivory Coast trading for ivory before constructing a permanent settlement, São Jorge de Mina, on the Gold Coast in 1482.[128] Based on his voyage, Dutch trader Pieter De Marees published an account in 1602 that included copper plate images of Fante canoemen transporting people, commodities and livestock at El Mina.[129] As Peter Gutkind has shown, Portuguese sources from the period describe the canoemen as a mixture of

125 Ludlam, "Account," 48.

126 Chief Davis and Deputy Governor Worjloh spoke of the essential role of surfboats in commerce and social life in Kru communities on the Kru Coast and abroad.

127 Gutkind, "Trade and Labor," 340.

128 Ibid., 340.

129 Pieter De Marees, *Beschryvinghe Ende Histoische Verhael Van Het Gout Koninckrijck Van Gunea Anders de Gout-Custe de Mina Genaemt Liggende In Het Deel Van Africa* (S-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1912), 121, 124–125.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110680331-006

free and unfree laborers and provide insight into the hierarchal social order informing relations between headmen or foremen and regular workers that structured their services.[130] The canoemen were so vital to operations at El Mina that Portuguese King Manuel I issued the *Ordenações Manuelinas* in 1514, ordinances that regulated labor relations between the canoemen and ship captains through protocol and remuneration.[131]

As valuable as the malagueta trade was on the Grain Coast, there is no evidence that the ordinances were applied to boatmen in the Kru region. Unfortunately, no images like those produced by de Marees are known to exist that show the similar function Kru mariners played in transporting people and commodities on their surfboats for the period. Rather, only fragmentary Portuguese and later British, Dutch, German, and French accounts attest to their presence. However, the references are telling as to the nature of their surfboats, crews, mariner activities and items of trade, which offer a glimpse of Kru-speaking communities on the Grain Coast.

Some of the earliest European accounts of the region by fifteenth-century explorer Pedro de Sintra and sixteenth-century cartographer Duarte Pacheco Pereira suggest that the Kru's ancestors were fishermen when the Portuguese began trading in the region.[132] Their descriptions of the construction of local surfboats, the inhabitants' masterful navigation of challenging surf, fishing several leagues out at sea, and a trading process, which included transporting commodities by paddling surfboats between shore and ship, closely resemble Kru practice in the centuries that followed.[133] 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 great fishermen and go two or three leagues out to sea to fish, in canoes which, in shape, are like weavers' shuttles."[134]

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130 Peter C.W. Gutkind, "The Canoemen of the Gold Coast (Ghana): A Survey and an Exploration in Precolonial African Labour History (Les piroguiers de la Côte de l' Or (Ghana): enquête et recherche d' histoire du travail en Afrique précoloniale)," *Cahiers d' Études Africaines* 29, no. 115 – 116 (1989), 345.

131 Gutkind, "Canoemen," 344. While Gutkind refers to the laborers as canoemen, I refer to Kru watercraft as surfboats, which according to the Dictionary of Nautical Words and Terms were designed specifically with the purpose of traversing ocean surf. In order to access ocean waters for fishing, trade, and travel, the Kru designed boats specifically for the purpose of mastering challenging surf that otherwise prohibited voyages. See C.W.T. Layton, *Dictionary of Nautical Words and Terms*, rev. Reverend G.W. Miller, 4th ed. (Glasgow: Brown, Son & Ferguson, 1994), 343.

132 de Sintra, *Voyages*, 83 – 84; Pereira, *Esmeraldo*, 110.

133 Ibid., 83 – 84; Ibid., 110.

134 Ibid., 110.

Later in the sixteenth century, English captain James Welsh described seafarers from the region south of the Cestos River approaching his vessel in groups of three paddlers: "at afternoone there came a boate frome the shoare with 3. Negroes from a place (as they say) called Tabanoo."[135] Although surfboats containing three paddlers were most frequently observed in the centuries preceding the nineteenth century, there were also single-manned boats, which may have lent themselves to calmer river waters or may have been used strictly for the purpose of fishing rather than carrying large quantities of trading goods between ship and shore and vice versa. Kru oral traditions support a range of sizes of surfboats for fishing and trading with a varying number of occupants depending on the circumstance.[136]

Based on his voyages to the Cestos River in the seventeenth century, Jean Barbot published a drawing of what is most probably Kru-speaking peoples in their surfboats, which is their first known depiction.[137] The Cestos River marks the traditional boundary of the Proper Kru to the east and Bassa peoples to the west, both of whom spoke Kru and used their watercraft to trade with Europeans. Moreover, Kru oral traditions and European accounts suggest that Kru were firmly established traders in the region prior to the late-seventeenth century.[138] Although Barbot's sketch was most probably created in 1688 and published in 1732 (Figure 1.1[139]), more than two centuries after Pereira's account, the design of the craft maintained its "weavers' shuttle" appearance.[140] The image depicts three paddlers in a single vessel and the accompanying oar used for paddling. Although the Kru often paddled their vessels individually, the number of paddlers in this image is significant because it reveals that paddling could be a team activity that required more than one paddler in order to traverse heavy surf when going out to sea with heavy cargo or to trade with Europeans. The high-lifting ends of the craft were necessary for progressing through coastal surf and the slightly broader mid-section of the craft used to transport people,

135 Welsh, "Voyage," 451.

136 Interview with Deputy Governor Worjloh revealed the varied sizes and purposes of surfboats.

137 Barbot, *Description*, 128 – 141. Given Kru-speaking peoples had migrated to the region and were already engaged in trade with Europeans for more than a century it seems most accurate to label the individuals as Kru-speaking peoples rather than strictly Kru because they may not have self-identified as Kru.

138 Interviews with Deputy Governor S. Tugbe Worjloh in New Krutown, Monrovia on December 11, 2012 and Doe Smith in Krutown, Freetown on December 13, 2012; Sullivan, "The Kru," 282; Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 7.

139 The image of the three individuals in the surfboat appears in Barbot's 1688 publication.

140 Ibid., 128 – 141.

Figure 1.1: Kru surfboat, c. 1732 (via c. 1688).
Source: Barbot, *Description,* Plate F, accompanying p. 128.

commodities, and fish bore the hallmarks of surfboat design.[141] The sketch also implicitly suggests that there was a lead paddler who sat at the back, directed the others, kept time and steered, a role which most probably evolved into the Kru headmen on European contracts in the centuries that followed.[142]

Nineteenth-century descriptions and images reveal continuity in Kru surfboat manning and design. In 1859, George Thompson described Kru surfboats: "the canoes are made very thin and light so that two men can pick one up that is sufficiently large to carry them."[143] The Kru's ability to maneuver the craft individually and in teams would have characterized earlier periods. Paddling through turbulent surf meant that the Kru sat on the bottom of the boats with the exception of the lead paddler, 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."[144] Because of the risk of capsizing and for improved maneuverability, the Kru wore very little clothing while paddling, which could simply be a loincloth. The light weight of the surfboats enabled the Kru to transit between ships and shore with ease and to portage between rivers inland when necessary.[145]

141 Layton, *Dictionary*, 343.
142 The evolution of the lead paddler to headman is discussed at length below.
143 Thompson, *Palm-Land*, 190.
144 Ibid., 190.
145 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.

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

> The *Bombacea* [Bombax] are the largest [trees] 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.[146]

The Bombax 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."[147] By the nineteenth century, each surfboat typically held between one and 12 paddlers, which meant that commodities and people could be carried from shore to ship speedily.[148] The light wait of smaller craft meant that the Kru frequently brought their mid-sized surfboats aboard European ships for quick transport to shore when needed and for a means of returning to their village following the completion their job.

A sketch in H. Grattan Guinness' 1890 account depicts Kru paddling out in single-manned craft to trade with Europeans (Figure 1.2). Indeed, Kru surfboats provided the foundation for trade with Europeans at all stages of their interaction over the centuries.

Social Organization

Fishing and boating lay at the heart of Kru socio-economic activity in communities, which were patrilineal.[149] Each patrilineage was known as a *panton*.[150] The

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

147 Bacon, "Cape Palmas," 201.

148 Rockwell, *Sketches*, 258. See Charles F. Sands, "West African kroomen in surf, 1848." US Brig Porpoise on Anti-slavery cruise. 1848. Naval Historical Center. Photo# NH63104.

149 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; Tonkin, *Narrating*, 34; Davis, *Ethnohistorical*, 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.

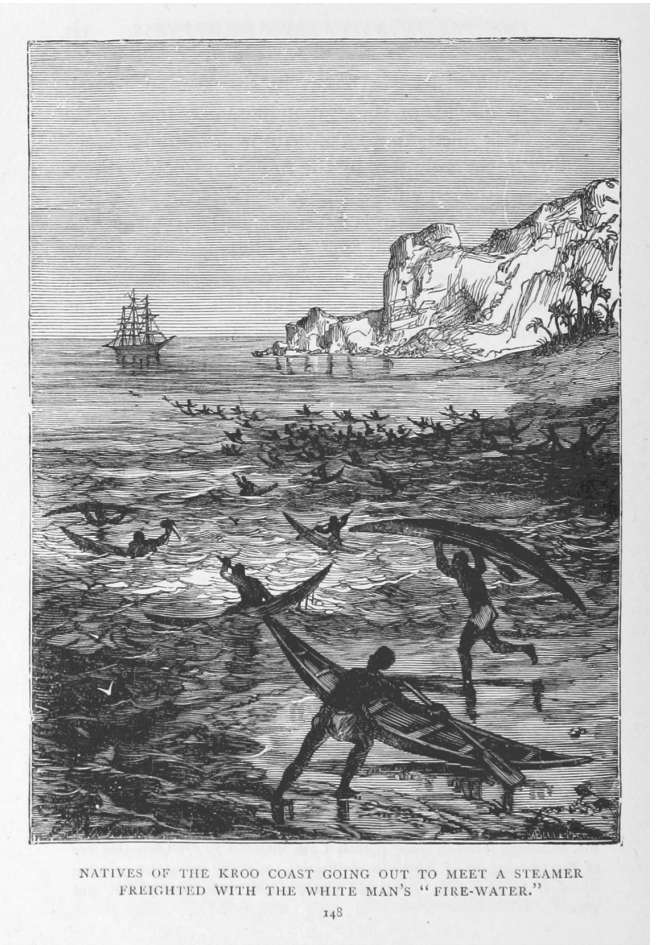

Figure 1.2: Kru surfboats, c. 1890.
Source: H. Grattan Guinness, *The New World of Central Africa: With a History of the First Christian in the Congo* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1890), 148.

eldest member deemed physically and mentally fit known as a *panton nyefue* headed the *panton.*[151] Settlements were generally composed of a number of *panton* each serving as a residential unit. As such, *panton* in various settlements

150 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*, 22–26; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 74–75.
151 Davis, *Ethnohistorical*, 23.

could also share the same name. Collectively, *panton* sharing political officers based on a collective historical tradition formed a territorial unit known as a *dako*.[152] The highest officer in a *dako* was known as the *krogba* or "father of the town" and he was democratically selected by a group of *panton nyefue*. The process of selecting the *krogba* differed from settlement to settlement. The power of the *krogba* rested on the influence of the *panton nyefue*.[153] 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 deceesed kings brother is elected ~ if he beheaves 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.[154]

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. 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*.[155] Regardless of the selection process, Kru oral traditions stress the responsibility of the *krogba* to ensure his actions worked for the benefit of the community, which could otherwise lead to his removal.[156]

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.[157] 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

152 Ibid., 23.

153 Ludlam, "Account," 45.

154 Jamie Bruce Lockhart and Paul E. Lovejoy, eds., *Hugh Clapperton into the Interior of Africa: Records of the Second Expedition, 1825–1827* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 84.

155 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*, 23.

156 Interview with Chief Davis and Deputy Governor Worjloh.

157 Davis, *Ethnohistorical*, 26.

to counterbalance the authority of the *krogba*, it was the younger men who led the soldiers.

Age-sets formed a crucial component that structured Kru societies. 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 from *kofa* (young adult) to *gbo* (adult warrior) was accompanied by circumcision and ceremony. The initiation process was called *gbau* or *gbo* 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."[158] 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 were placed under the mentorship of a warrior and expected to fulfil all required duties of protocol, which included working his agricultural land.[159]

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 groups. They worked under a lead paddler who was responsible for the surfboats and their navigation. 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.[160]

158 Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 52; see also Fraenkel, "Social Change," 154.

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

160 Guenter Schroeder, "Letter to George Brooks," March 31, 1971, 2–3. See Guenter and Dieter Seibel Schroeder, *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 at the Second Annual Conference on Social Research in Liberia, Indiana University, April 30-May 2, 1970).

Whether laboring in agriculture or fishing, these units of work and social organization formed the basis for their future employment on European ships.

Membership in secret societies played an important role in some Kru communities. The most commonly documented society on the Kru Coast was *Bo*, *Boviowah*, *Sedibo* (a subsect of Bo) or *Gbo*.[161] 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 honored by wearing a mask and was generally known as *Kwi* and more significantly as *Nyaswa*.[162] 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).[163] The *gnekbade* represent the elders who held the most power and from which the *panton nyefue* were the most prominent members 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.[164] The *sedibo* required a payment for membership comprising of a cow.[165] 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.[166] The distinction between the Kru political organization and Bo organization resided in the payment of a cow for membership, which was not required for transition into the warrior status known as *gbau*.[167]

Kru women played a significant role in subsistence, local trade, and enabling trade with Europeans. While Kru fishermen exchanged their fish locally, and in the interior, Kru women grew many types of crops that were used for both subsistence and commerce. Sweet potatoes and plantains formed their subsistence diet while rice and malagueta pepper served 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,

161 Davis, *Ethnohistorical*, 24.

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

163 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*, 24.

164 Wilson, *Western Africa*, 130

165 Ibid., 130.

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

167 Wilson, *Western Africa*, 130.

Ludlam observed "agricultural labour is conducted chiefly by women."[168] Similarly, in 1834, Holman noted that Kru women "perform all the field-work, as well as necessary domestic duties."[169] 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 principal article of trade with the interior tribes.[170]

Although these sources were published in the nineteenth century, it seems probable that Kru women had performed these duties in previous centuries. Written accounts and Kru oral traditions recognize that women's laboring efforts were of paramount importance on the Kru Coast as they produced the agricultural commodities that were traded in local and Atlantic economies with Europeans.[171] Over the course of several centuries, all of the social, economic, and political institutions in Kru societies would be greatly impacted through trade with Europeans.

Transformations on the Coast

Several markers of the Kru diaspora in the nineteenth century trace their origins to trade in previous centuries. The English began trading in the region in the 1550s and they did not establish a lasting presence in West Africa until the seventeenth century in such places as Sierra Leone, the Gambia, and the Gold Coast.[172] The trading process was initiated by Europeans using gunfire, smoke signals, raising a flag on their ship or setting anchor within visible range of a town.[173] The Kru then proceeded to approach the European vessel in a large

168 Ludlam, "Account," 43–44.

169 James Holman, "Mr. Holman's Travels," *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China and Australasia* 14 (1834): 64.

170 Connelly, "Report," 40.

171 Interview with Deputy Governor Worjloh revealed that women played a fundamental social and economic role in Kru communities.

172 P.E.H. Hair, "Attitudes to Africans in English Primary Sources on Guinea up to 1650," *History in Africa* 26 (1999), 51.

173 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; Bosman, *New and Accurate*, 486.

fleet of surfboats.[174] In 1555, English Captain William Towerson observed that all trade and transactions were conducted through one lead trader or a lead paddler who guided the surfboat fleet to the European vessel.[175] Europeans indicated the items they wished to trade by reading aloud a list and through visual signals.[176] All business with Europeans was performed by Kru males and the lead trader alone would decide the terms of exchange on the vessels.[177] During his voyage in 1698, William Bosman observed a Kru boatman who boarded his ship near the town of Baffoe with the purpose of trading who supposedly held the rank of "captain", meaning most likely that he was a lead trader or chief.[178] Brooks' exploration of Kru socio-political structures in their homeland and headmen structures in their workplaces led him to conclude that the origins of headmen required further investigation.[179] It seems probable that the origins of the headman (foreman) may be found in the lead trader/lead paddler whose negotiating skills in the sixteenth century mirrored the headman's role in negotiating the terms of wage labor contracts in the nineteenth century.

Trade was not limited to the decks of European vessels. Kru transported European traders and crew to their villages so that trading could commence with the *krogba* of the village. Perhaps, agricultural trade was done on the ships because it was easier to transport commodities through the surf in sizeable quantities with less risk of loss whereas trade in enslaved Africans took place shoreside under the authority of the *krogba* due to higher value and higher risk of financial loss. In any case, the relationship between the lead trader on ships and the *krogba* in the village between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries resonates with the relationship between the headman and the *krogba* in the nineteenth century. The lead trader and headman alike were responsible for organizing the terms of trade and later contracts, while the *krogba* remained the ultimate

174 Hakluyt, *First Voyage*, 184 – 85; Johann von Lübelfling, "Johann von Lübelfling's Voyage of 1599 – 1600," in *German Sources for West African History 1599 – 1669*, ed. Adam Jones (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1983), 28; Nicolas Villault, *Relation des costes d'Afrique, appellées Guinée: avec la description du pays, moeurs & façons de vivre des habitans, des productions de la terre, & des marchandises qu'on en apporte, avec les remarques historiques sur ces costes* (Paris: Chez Denys Thierry, 1669), 148 – 149; Ludlam, "Account," 44 – 45.

175 In 1555, Towerson noted that all transactions were to be completed through one individual. See Hakluyt, *First Voyage*, 184 – 85.

176 Ibid., 184 – 185.

177 Ivana Elbl, "The Portuguese Trade with West Africa, 1440 – 1521" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1986), 599 – 600.

178 Bosman, *New and Accurate*, 484.

179 Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 9.

beneficiary governing the whole system as he received a share of all trading revenue, and in the nineteenth century, a cut of all migratory laborer wages.

Kru trade with Europeans was based on an assessment of the value of commodities and labor, which involved payment in-kind with goods.[180] In 1554, English Captain John Lok anchored off the coast seeking to obtain grains and water for his crewmen.[181] A century later, John Ogilby observed that the Kru trading town, Krow (Crou), was a well-known watering spot, where cotton seeds and beads where exchanged for pots of fresh water.[182] Kru traded rice, ivory, palm oil, malagueta pepper and provided ships with plantains, wood, and cassava. In exchange for these items, they received cotton cloth made from East India fabric, tobacco, hats, leather trunks, cowries, English shawls and handkerchiefs, firearms, and bar iron.[183] During his 1693 voyage to the region, Captain Thomas Phillips noted the cost of malagueta pepper: "I bought 1000 weight of it at one iron bar (value in England three shillings and six pence) and a dashy of a knife or two to the broker."[184] Some of the malagueta pepper he purchased was used to feed the enslaved Africans on his ship Hannibal, which was thought to remedy their sick condition and painful stomachs.[185] In 1825, Clapperton noted that "They [Kru] trade in Ivory, Palm oil and Rice in exchange for cotton cloth."[186] Rice, water, and food supplies provided by the Kru proved valuable for European crews on board merchant ships sailing the coast.[187] Kru were recorded as wearing cowrie shells on necklaces, as well as on their arms and ankles, which the lead trader bartered for tobacco, hats, and shirts.[188] Over the centuries, Kru developed a taste for European and American fashions for which they were willing

180 Ludlam, "Account," *Sixth Report*, 88–89.

181 John Lok, *The second voyage to Guinea set out by Sir George Barne, Sir John Yorke, Thomas Lok, Anthonie Hickman and Edward Castelin, in the yere 1554. The Captaine whereof was M. John Lok* (London, 1554), 522.

182 John Ogilby, *Africa: being an accurate description of the regions of Egypt, Barbary, Lybia, and Billedulgerid, the land of the Negroes, Guinee, Ethiopia, and the Abyssines, with all the adjacent islands... Collected and translated from most authentick authors... by John Ogilby* (London: T. Johnson, 1670), 470.

183 Ludlam, "Account," 44–45.

184 Thomas Phillips, "Journal," in *Churchill's Collection of Voyages*, vol. 6 (London: n.p., 1746), in *Slave Ships and Slaving with an Introduction by Capt. Ernest H. Pentecost, R.N.R.*, ed. George Francis Dow (1927; repr., Cambridge, MD: Cornell Maritime Press, 1968), 54.

185 Ibid., 54.

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

187 Ludlam, "Account," 43.

188 Manning, "Six Months," 315.

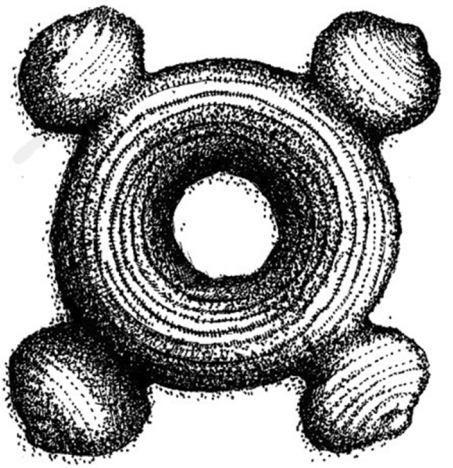

Figure 1.3: Kru currency, ring.
Source: Sketch of a Kru ring by artist Mark Williamson.

to trade one of their most valued forms of currency, cowrie shells, in order to acquire clothing that was perceived as foreign and may have represented status.

A major innovation in Kru communities towards a wage economy was the development of a local currency in the form of circular brass bars known as *tien*, or *dwin* (Figure 1.3).[189] These bars not only held monetary value but also spiritual significance. Kru oral traditions reveal that these items known as *tien* were living objects or water spirits found in lagoons, rivers, and creeks that could be tamed and serve as a protector or guardian.[190] The value of their currency known as "Manilly" was mentioned by Horatio Bridge:

> I have procured some of the country-money. It is more curious than convenient... The "Manilly," worth a dollar and a half, would be a fearful currency to make large payments in, being composed of old brass-kettles melted up and cast in a sand-mould. The weight being from two to four pounds.[191]

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Kru engaged in a multi-currency economy. Depending on the employer, they were paid in manilly or in-kind, meaning

189 William C. Siegmann and Cynthia E. Schmidt, *Rock of the Ancestors: Namoa Koni* (Suakoko: Cuttington University College, 1977), 82.
190 Siegmann and Schmidt, *Rock*, 82.
191 Bridge, *Journal*, 106.

in goods valued at a wage rate determined in Pound-sterling, US dollars, and other currencies.

Manilly also known as "manillas" remained a form of currency in the 1890s. Mary Kingsley described the value of the manilla in Kru trade as follows:

> They [the Kru] get paid in manillas, which they can, when they wish, get changed again into merchandise either at the factory or on the trading ship. The manilla is, therefore, a kind of bank for the black trader, a something he can put his wealth into when he wants to store it for a time.[192]

Kru accumulated manillas through trade and the completion of contracts before cashing them out in the form of merchandise. The value of the manilla was maintained by the value of Kru labor on European vessels and in factories.

Before the nineteenth century, bartering and payment in-kind were the basis of trade and seaborne labor between Kru and Europeans on the West African coast. Thereafter, pay lists show that a combination of payment in-kind and monetary wages became the norm for Kru working on British ships.[193] The manilly's heavy weight most certainly made payment in-kind and eventually coins and paper money more desirable and may explain its gradual disappearance as a form of currency. The transition from bartering and payment in-kind to monetary wages had a profound impact on all aspects of Kru society as traditional hierarchal power structures evolved through European trade.

Trade with Europeans led to another significant innovation in naming practices that affected Kru identity. In the eighteenth century, it was common for British merchants to give the *krogbas*' sons English names.[194] The practice of an African trader or leader adopting an English name had been the norm since at least the seventeenth century. In 1698, William Bosman recognized that "the Great or Principal Men hereabouts, assumes an European Name."[195] Based on his 1721 voyage to West Africa, Royal Navy surgeon John Atkins observed that "Tom Freeman" and "Bottle of Beer" were the names given to the sons of the *krogba* on the Grain Coast.[196] While "Tom Freeman" sounded like a typical British name, "Bot-

192 Mary Kingsley, *West African Studies*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2011), 70.

193 See Royal Navy Pay Lists in Chapter 2.

194 During his voyage to West Africa in 1698, William Bosman mentioned African traders named James and Peter. James, presumably the lead trader, boarded his vessel. See Bosman, *New and Accurate*, 484.

195 Bosman, *New and Accurate*, 480.

196 John Atkins, *A Voyage to Guinea, Brasil, and the West-Indies: In His Majesty's Ships, the Swallow and Weymouth. Describing the Several Islands and Settlements, Viz, Madeira, the Canaries, Cape de Verd, Sierraleon, Sesthos, Cape Apollonia, Cabo Corso, and Others on the Guinea*

tle of Beer" was humorous and Africans were often given fanciful names after alcoholic beverages, seafaring terminology or English royalty. Pay lists show that the name "Tom Freeman" became a standardized name that was frequently recorded for Kru serving in the Royal Navy a century later.[197] Hence, some Kru adopted a dual identity whereby they maintained their Kru names and embraced English names when engaged in trade with the British. Whether it was meant to be a playful gesture or condescending from the perspective of British merchants, according to Atkins, the inhabitants took a sense of pride in adopting an English name.[198] Besides creating a favorable rapport between the trading parties, it may also have been understood as a sign of status reinforcing traditional power structures, as only the *krogba* and his sons seem to have been named during the period.[199] Although it remains unknown when the practice of naming began in the region, it was in full swing by the early eighteenth century and would be commonplace by the nineteenth century amongst all Kru serving on British Royal Navy ships.

Slave Trade

The Kru economy became connected with European slave trading, perhaps as early as the late fifteenth century.[200] In the early sixteenth century, Pereira noted that slaves could be obtained from a town southeast of the Cestos River.[201] English involvement in the slave trade on the Grain Coast was minimal in the sixteenth century. P.E.H. Hair has suggested that the majority of the trade between the English and African traders up to 1640 was largely in non-slaving commodities and only thereafter the slave trade gained momentum.[202] The Grain Coast region differed from other slaving regions on the West African

Coast; Barbadoes, Jamaica, & c. in the West-Indies. The Colour, Diet, Languages, Habits, Manners, Customs, and Religions of the Respective Natives and Inhabitants. With Remarks on the Gold, Ivory, and Slave-trade; and on the Winds, Tides and Currents of the Several Coasts (London: C. Ward and R. Chandler, 1735), 63–69.

197 See Royal Navy Pay Lists in Chapter 2.

198 Atkins, *Voyage*, 63–69.

199 Ibid., 63–69.

200 Elbl, "Portuguese Trade," 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.

201 Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis: côte occidentale d'Afrique du sud marocain au Gabon*, trans. and ed. Raymond Mauny (Bissau: Centro de Estudos da Guiné Portuguesa, 1956), 104.

202 Hair, "Attitudes," 53.

coast in terms of the number of enslaved Africans that were traded and the features of the natural environment. In some cases, surfboats carried only three or four enslaved Africans to European vessels and captains used the method of collecting the enslaved at various towns on the coast in order to augment their numbers. Overall, the slave voyages database shows that the region never produced the numbers that were comparable with the Gold Coast, Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra or Angola. The Kru Coast, which was a part of the region notated as the Windward Coast, was in fact the second lowest slave exporting region in Africa.[203]

The natural environment or what Gutkind deemed the "physiographic features" of the coast played a major role in the limited number of enslaved Africans traded and transported to the Americas from the region and served to position the Kru as trading partners and laborers with Europeans.[204] The role of the natural coast, currents, high surf, winds, and sub-sea terrain all combined to make it difficult for Europeans to anchor and tender to shore. Dr. Francis Bacon's description of the seacoast revealed the 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.[205]

Despite these adverse conditions, which hampered Europeans from tendering ashore, the Kru took advantage of the opportunity to work for Europeans by

203 See Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database at http://www.slavevoyages.org.

204 Gutkind, "Trade," 25. The role of the natural environment in making landings difficult was recognized by Pietr de Marees in 1602; see de Marees, *Description*, 14.

205 Bacon, "Cape Palmas," 199.

transporting commodities and slaves on surfboats between the ships and shoreside.[206] Their surfboats provided the means to trade with Europeans rather than face mass enslavement and reflect John Thornton's position that trade between Europeans and Africans was built on parity relations prior to the nineteenth century.[207]

Portuguese, Dutch, French, and English maps, traveller accounts, dictionaries, and commerce booklets between the sixteenth and eighteenth century mention Kru communities including Sestre Crou (Settra Kru), Crou, Petit Crou (Little Kru), Grand Crou (Grand Cess), Wapo (Wappo), and Sanguin between the Cestos River and Grand Cess River, Gerowae (Garroway) and Cape Palmas between the Grand Cess River and Cavalla River, and Cavally, Bereby, Tabou, Drouin (Drewin), San Pedro, and Lahou between the Cavalla River and Bandama River as the main slave trading centers on the coast and attest to ongoing interaction.[208] However, not every town appears together on every map. Nicolas Sanson's 1650 map contained the names Sangwin (Sanguin) and Vappa (Wappo). John Ogilby's 1670 production contained a number of Kru trading centers including Sanguin, Crou, and Tabou.[209] He divided the region at the Cavalla River between the Greya Cust (Grain Coast) in the west and the Tand Cust (Tooth or Ivory Coast) in the east. Despite the demarcation, local seafarers in both regions came to be recognized by ship captains and merchants as Kru even while they most certainly self-identified according to their local village and *dako*.[210] A decade later,

206 For more discussion on the indigenous economies of Kru sub-groups see Jo Mary 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; Tonkin, "Sasstown's Transformation," 3; Fraenkel, *Tribe*, 77; 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), 157.

207 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.

208 See Towerson, "Voyage," 194; Villault, *Relation*, 146; Ogilby, *Africa*, 414; Bosman, *New and Accurate*, 485; 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 Baleftilha por via de Numeros, e Muitos Problemas uteis á Navegaçaõ* (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. See also excerpts from William Towerson's 1555 voyage to the Grain Coast in Johnston, *Liberia*, 1: 64–65.

209 Ogilby and van Meurs, *Africae*.

210 McEvoy, "Understanding," 62–80.

William Berry's 1680 map omitted Sanguin but kept Crou, Taboo (Tabou), and added Grand Setters (Grand Cess).[211] Cartographers who included Grand Cess, Cape Palmas, Tabou, Berbi (Bereby), and Lahou are of particular interest because these were not Proper Kru trading towns, but were inhabited by Grebo (or Glebo) and Bété peoples, all of whom spoke Kru languages.

Within Proper Kru boundaries, Settra Kru and Little Kru remained centers of trade for centuries while towns including Nana Kru, Krobah, and King William's Town (King Weah's Town) do not commonly appear on maps in the region until the nineteenth century.[212] However, these trading towns may have been present but were known by a different name or existed as smaller villages that grew in size, garnering the title of Proper Kru, the perceived heartland of Kru trade in the nineteenth century. The name that consistently appears on maps and in accounts of the region dating to the 1580s is "Crua", more accurately pronounced "Crou".[213] The label was gradually applied to all peoples in the vicinity beyond the original town, thereby expanding the conceptual boundaries of Kru peoples from a European perspective and adding new layers of meaning to Kru-speaking peoples in the region.

Figure 1.4 shows many of the main Kru trading towns that were present in the nineteenth century. Although the region regarded as the Kru homeland is traditionally located between the Cestos and Grand Cess Rivers, the Proper Kru towns are more accurately located between the Sino and Dubo Rivers on the map (Figure 1.4).[214]

Commerce booklets, narratives, and maps demonstrate that the Kru were impacted by European contact. The Kru expanded their traditional economy in fishing, salt, rice, and other agricultural commodities to include the Atlantic economy, which presented a new demand for enslaved Africans. The procurement of enslaved Africans for trade on the coast suggests that some of them came from the interior in Proper Kru region, albeit in small numbers. According to Ludlam, the Kru themselves occasionally kidnapped so-called "Bushmen" from the interior and offered them for sale on the coast, although how common and old

211 Berry, *Africa Divided*. His map of Africa was based on Alex-Hubert's 1674 map, which in turn was based on Nicolas Sanson's 1650 map. The name Grand Sesters and its variants not only reference the river, but are frequently accompanied by a circle adjacent to its mouth indicating the town Grand Cess that was a major trading center.

212 Ludlam, "Account," *Sixth Report*, 88; Connelly, "Report," 38–40; Koelle, *Polyglotta*, 4; Wilson, *Western Africa*, 101.

213 Welsh, "Voyage," 451.

214 The map does not include all Proper Kru towns.

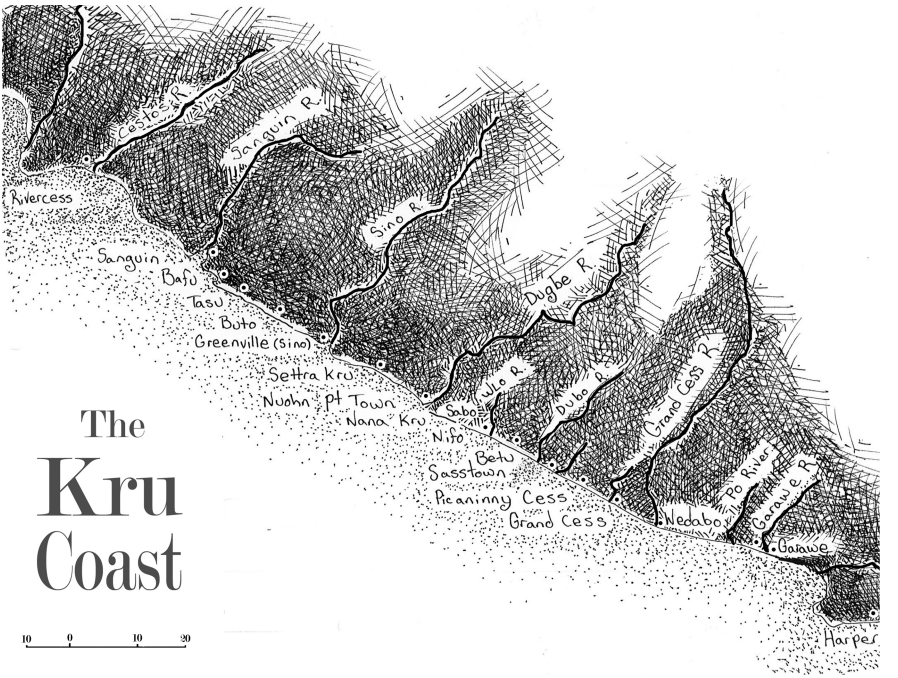

Figure 1.4: Kru Coast.
Source: Sketch of the Kru Coast by artist Mark Williamson.

this practice was remains unclear.[215] It is probable that the Kru developed their own small-scale interior slave trade network in the forests in the hinterland and beyond. They were cut off from the large-scale Juula and Malinke network in the savannah to the north by an impenetrable forest belt, which limited trade.[216] This meant that the enslaved were most likely Krahn, Sapo, Sikon, and possibly other Kru-speaking peoples. The enslaved were acquired in the interior in exchange for gold, firearms, and, later, cowries and East Indian fabrics offered by Kru traders who had frequent contact with Europeans.[217] However, Vos has suggested that the practice of Kru kidnapping other Kru-speaking peoples in the Proper Kru region by way of raiding villages or selling criminals was more common than previously believed by scholarship. He referred to the sizeable presence of Kru-

215 Ludlam, "Account," 47.
216 Vos, "Slave Trade," 46.
217 Elbl, "Portuguese Trade," 367, 516; Ludlam, "Account," 43.

speaking enslaved Africans in Dutch Guiana in the later eighteenth century and the fact women and children, who may have been more vulnerable to capture, dominated the market. This may signal that Kru were willing to sell other Kru-speaking peoples beyond their own villages and *dako*.[218] Vos' claim seems probable when considering the competition between villages to attract European trade as well as the tensions that existed between Kru *dako* given the periodic attacks between their autonomous communities that could result in the accumulation of prisoners of war. However, Vos' claim is at odds with Kru oral traditions, which hold that very few Kru were enslaved, signalling the importance of differentiating the Kru community in question.[219]

By comparison, access to the Bandama River at Lahou in the eastern extremity of the Kru Coast ensured that Mandingo peoples were acquired through Sudanese trade networks in the north by way of Guro and Asante polities by river and overland.[220] Baule and Guro warfare may have also augmented the supply as prisoners who were sold.[221] It is important to examine the social, economic, and political dynamics of each section of the Kru Coast when analyzing trade and determining the origins of the enslaved.

Adam Jones published a list of estimates regarding annual enslaved African exports for European ships from various Kru-speaking communities that most probably dates to the 1760s (Table 1.1).[222] The list provides the opportunity to analyze each section of the Kru Coast and identify the degree of engagement with the slave trade. The Bassa region between Cape Mesurado and the Cestos River exported 1,800 enslaved Africans; the Proper Kru between Cestos River and Grand Cess River, 2,150; the Grebo between Grand Cess River and Cavalla River, 800; the Grebo, Bété, Wané, and Neyo between the Cavalla River and Sassandra River, 1,150; and Dida residing between Sassandra River and the Bandama River, 500. The estimates reveal the Proper Kru region produced the most annual exports of all Kru speaking regions. The main hubs were Cape Mesurado in Bassa territory, Cestos River and Krou Sestre in Proper Kru territory, the Cavalla River (which supplied Grebo territory on both sides of the river), Drewin and Rivière S André in Grebo, Bété, Wane and Neyo territory, and Dida territory between

218 Vos, "Slave Trade," 46.

219 Interviews with Deputy Governor Worjloh revealed that the Kru considered themselves exempt from enslavement and very few were ever sent to the Americas. It may be that this only applied to Kru-speaking peoples on the coast who traded with Europeans whereas those Kru-speaking peoples in the interior remained enslaveable.

220 Ibid., 45, 51.

221 Ibid., 45.

222 Jones suggests the undated list from the eighteenth century could be from the 1760s.

Table 1.1: Annual slave exports on the Windward Coast (1760s).

Location	Number of Enslaved Exports
Cape de Mounte	300
Petit Cap de Monte	100
Petit Mesurade	100
Rivière S. Paul	200
Cap Mesurade	500
Rio Junko	100
Gran Junko	100
Petit Barsay	100
Grand Barsay	200
Tapequenin	200
Petit Sestre	200
Petit Coulou	200
Grand Coulou	200
Rio de Sestos	500
Petit Sestre	200
Isle Palma	100
Sanguin	200
Bassa	200
Rivière Sino	50
Sestre Krou	200
Krou Sestre	400
Droma	200
Badrou	50
Petit Sestre	200
Gojava	150
Grand Sestre	200
Cap de Palmas	200
Riviere Cavallos	400
Pequenin Drouin	500
Tabo	50
Taho	200
Rivière S André	400
Cassaret	200
Cap Laho	300
Jacques Laho	400
Jacen Jacko	300
Issini	500
Total	8,450

Source: 2 Paris, Arch. Nat., C6i8, "Remarques. Etat en appersu des Esclaves que peuvent retirer les Nations de l' Europe de la Côte Occidentale d' Afrique," in Adam Jones and Marion Johnson, "Slaves from the Windward Coast," *The Journal of African History* 21, no. 1 (1980): 28.

the Sassandra and Bandama Rivers. Based on Esu Biyi's division of the region into Upper Kru between Cape Mesurado and the Cavalla River and the Lower Kru peoples between the Cavalla River and Bandama River, comparative analysis shows that the Upper Kru exported 4,950 and the Lower Kru 2,050 enslaved Africans annually.[223] Hence, the Kru-speaking peoples residing between Cape Mesurado and Cavalla River exported more than double the number in the region between the Cavalla and Bandama Rivers. The larger number of trading towns in the former region may explain the sizeable difference. Besides the turbulent surf on the coast, the forests which limited the number of enslaved Africans that were obtained for sale could explain the low number of exports for the entire region compared with other slaving regions in Africa. The relationship between the Kru and the slave trade, whether it was formal or tacit, seems to have characterized a considerable part of the socio-economic dynamics of the Kru Coast.

In order to ensure that the Kru themselves were not enslaved, Kru oral traditions and written accounts detail a form of scarification known as the Kru mark which was applied to distinguish Kru from other Africans and preserve their freedom. While the earliest known written account referencing the mark dates to 1819, Kru oral traditions tell of the mark emerging in tandem with Portuguese trade.[224] Esu Biyi suggests that the Kru mark developed at least as early as the sixteenth century and became standard practice in the centuries that followed.[225]

The emergence of the "Kru mark," a form of scarification on the face, became an important identifying feature of trade between Kru and Europeans. 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.[226] Commodore George R. Collier provided a clear description of the Kru mark in 1819:

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223 Biyi, "Kru," 73–74. Note that non-Kru speaking regions have been omitted when analyzing the numbers.

224 Parliamentary Papers, "Reports from Commodore Sir George Collier concerning the Settlements on the Gold and Windward Coasts of Africa," vol. 12 (1820), 15; interviews with Chief Davis, Smith, and Deputy Governor Worjloh revealed that Kru oral tradition remembers tattooing and scarification as having been practiced since trading with Europeans had been inaugurated and that the purpose of the Kru mark was for protection from enslavement.

225 Biyi, "Kru," 72.

226 McAllister, *Lone Woman*, 142–143. See also Lugenbeel, "Native Africans," 173.

> 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.[227]

The Kru mark reinforced 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 laboring activities with Europeans without fear of enslavement as the mark served to distinguish the Kru from people of the interior, who were readily enslavable from both Kru and European perspectives.

Ship captain Adolphe Burdo understood 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.[228] As mentioned above, it seems that scarification may well have been a cultural development within Kru society as a direct response to trading with Europeans. It may also be that Kru scarification practices preceded European contact and were adapted to a new system of trade with Europeans.[229] Regardless, 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 generally respected by British and other European traders.

T. W. Ramsay provides the earliest known sketch of a Kru mark in 1830 (Figure 1.5). Ramsay's illustration shows a blue line running downwards on the Kruman's forehead onto the bridge of the nose, which extends down to the chin. Another set of blue line incisions run laterally across the temple. His chest also appears to have blue marks around the nipples, although the significance of scarification in this region of the body remains unknown. His hat and umbrella became a symbol of Kru employment with the British as they adopted some European fashion. The fish in his hand reveal the Kru's deep connection with the sea in their homeland and diaspora communities.

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

228 Burdo, *Niger*, 83.

229 Connelly, "Report," 38.

Figure 1.5: Kru mark, c. 1830.
Source: T. W. Ramsay, *Costumes on the Western Coast of Africa* (np, 1830), 19.

Subsequent sketches reveal the prevalence of the Kru mark. In 1859, George Thompson provides a sketch of a man with a Kru mark alongside illustrations of Kru canoes and rafts. Although the image is grainy in the original, Thompson's illustration shows continuity with Ramsay's sketch, which includes a line running downwards from the Kruman's forehead onto the bridge of the nose and other incisions running laterally across the forehead. Another incision appears on the right cheek.[230]

Similarly, in 1863, Robert Clarke' sketch shows a line running downwards on the forehead towards the nose. Clarke'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."[231] He also referred to incisions "at the outer angle of each eye are similar short horizontal lines."[232] In addition to the Kru mark, some Kru also "tattooed [their bodies] with figures of stars."[233] The significance of the stars is unknown. However, Clapperton suggested that besides the Kru mark on the forehead, Kru were "marked on the tem-

230 Thompson, *Palm-Land*, 189.
231 Clarke, "Sketches," 355.
232 Ibid., 355.
233 Ibid., 355.

ples, breasts and arms – but the latter are only ornament [sic]."[234] The mark served to protect the Kru trading on the coast and for those who worked on ships from the seventeenth century and throughout the globe in the nineteenth century it became a marker of the Kru diaspora for those who bore the mark.

It is important, however, to recognize that as the geographical boundaries of the Kru Coast expanded beyond the region associated with the Proper Kru not all of those who spoke or identified as Kru wore the mark. Rather, the practice seems to have only been limited to the Proper Kru and Kru-speaking peoples residing between the Cestos and Grand Cess Rivers. Nineteenth-century accounts and images do not indicate that Bassa, Grebo, Bété, and Dida laborers applied the mark. Therefore, the mark serves to limit the links between Kru laborers in their diaspora and place of origin to specific regions of the Kru Coast with a degree of certainty.

While the Kru continued to trade with European traders along their coast into the nineteenth century, they entered the next phase of their commercial relationship with Europeans by working on ships sailing the West African coast in the seventeenth century, and perhaps earlier. An entry in the "Journal of Sao Jorge da Mina" (Elmina Castle) dated February 6, 1645, mentions the word "Krao" with reference to a crew member on board a docked Spanish ship.[235] Brooks has suggested that this date represents the earliest available example of Kru on board a ship sailing the West African coast.[236] The name suggests connections with the Krao people, the original name of the Kru, or the town known as Crua, which was referenced by Captain James Welsh in 1588.[237]

Kru were not the only Africans serving on European ships sailing the West African coast, but were part of a mixed labor force composed of free laborers, bondsmen, and the enslaved. Ray Costello's study has shown that as early as 1547, Africans served on European ships, as was the case for Jacques Francis, an enslaved African, tasked as a diver in the attempt to salvage King Henry VIII's warship *Mary Rose* off the coast of Mauretania.[238] Kevin Dawson's recent

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

235 Ratelband, *Vijf Dagregisters*, 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.

236 Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 2.

237 Welsh, "Voyage," 451.

238 Costello, *Black Salt*, xx, 3; see also Gustav Ungerer, "Recovering a black African's voice in an English lawsuit: Jacques Francis and the salvage operations of the Mary Rose and the Sancta Maria and Sanctus Edwardus, 1545-ca 1550," *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 17 (2005): 255 – 271.

study has revealed that many enslaved Africans served as salvage divers whose labor was sought based on their perceived prowess in aquatic environments.[239] During his 1595 voyage, Sir Walter Raleigh kept a personal slave of African-descent aboard his ship while sailing the Caribbean. Although his duties remain unknown, it reveals that enslaved Africans were serving on British ships from at least the sixteenth century.[240] In 1702, the Royal African Company sought two enslaved Africans between the ages of 16 and 20 per ship. They were referred to as "privilege negroes", which meant the captain and upper ranked crewmembers were permitted to own and use the enslaved for duties aboard their ships with the option of selling them during or after the completion of the voyage or keeping them in their private households in England.[241] Abolitionist Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa) provides some insights into the nature of enslavement on British Navy vessels in the eighteenth century, having served on HMS Roebuck, HMS Savage, HMS Preston, HMS Royal George, and HMS Namur, where he was denied prize money, but was eventually able to save enough funds through private trade to purchase his manumission.[242]

In West Africa, "Grumettas" were frequently mentioned serving on ships and at slave 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.[243] *Grumete* was the term applied to an African apprentice seaman serving on Portuguese ships who sometimes appeared to have been free and other times enslaved.[244] In his examination of slave trader Philip Beaver, Billy Smith noted that "most grummettas were Africans, although some were mixed-race Creoles."[245] 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 grumettas" were "working people, hired

239 Kevin Dawson, *Undercurrents of Power: Aquatic Culture in the African Diaspora* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 61, 89.

240 Sir Walter Raleigh, *The Discovery of Guiana* (1595; repr., London: Cassell, 1887), 77.

241 Costello, *Black Salt*, xx; John Latimer, *The Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Butler & Tanner, 1893), 144, 146; Alexander Peter Kup, "Instructions to the Royal African Company's factor at Bunce, 1702," *Sierra Leone Studies*, no. 5 (December 1955), 52.

242 See Paul Lovejoy's website dedicated to Equiano, https://equianosworld.org, accessed June 1, 2020. Also note the author composed "Equiano's Journey" in honor of Equiano for use on the website.

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

244 Costello, *Black Salt*, 15.

245 Smith, *Ship*, 132.

temporarily, not unlike many of the colonists who had migrated to Bolama."[246] 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."[247] 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."[248] In 1815, Robert Thorpe wrote on the "redemption of the grumettas" in Sierra Leone, where they were liberated from slavery as "indented servant[s]."[249] 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."[250] Stephen suggested that *grumettas* were enslaved to specific individuals. Mouser has shown that it was common for British slave traders to have between 400 and 500 *grumettas* in their service on the Iles de Los.[251]

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 labor while employed on vessels sailing on the coast.[252] He identified them as Bullom when in fact they were more likely Bija-

246 Ibid., 267.

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

248 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.

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

250 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.

251 Bruce Mouser, "Iles de Los as Bulking Center in the Slave Trade, 1750 – 1800," *Outre-Mers Revue d'histoire* 313 (1996), 86.

252 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*, 132; Bruce Mouser, "Shifting the Littoral Frontiers," 12; David Hancock, *Citizens of the World:*

go.[253] While *grumettas* have been identified as servants, slaves, and free laborers in various regions on the Upper Guinea Coast, they differed from the Kru who were paid for their labor in-kind and in monetary wages by the nineteenth century and most certainly before.[254] Moreover, based on their trading relationship on the coast where the British formed a dependency on Kru surfboats in order to trade, working on British ships positioned the Kru as free laborers as compared with the various forms of labor experienced by *grumettas*. The distinction between *grumettas* and Kru was based on where they came from on the African coast, which was a great distance apart and informed by the very different environmental conditions affecting trade between Europeans and their villages.

Despite their differences, there is evidence that in the eighteenth century, Kru may have been categorized as *grumettas* by some merchants regardless of differences in ethnicity, state of freedom, and geographical origins. Those *grumettas* sailing southwards on round trips in the "sloop trade" from Bunce Island to the Windward Coast were most probably Kru based on the fact that Kru villages were engaged in slave trading and they were already serving on European ships sailing the coast during the period.[255] Moreover, Kru were shown to be present in the Sierra Leone peninsula as early as 1775 before the founding of Freetown in 1792. Gabriel Bray's 1775 painting (Figure 1.6) is very significant not only because it is most probably the second known image of the Kru, but the first to name them directly in the title using the word "Kroomen".[256] The title of the painting, "Three Kroomen of Sierra Leone", reveals that they had carved out a unique persona beyond their homeland shores by the eighteenth century and that they were making trips on British ships between their villages and Sierra Leone by the 1770s.[257] However, even though Bray recognized a distinct Kru iden-

London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735–1785 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 3.

253 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.

254 Fante canoemen had been remunerated since the early sixteenth century and there is no reason to believe that this was not the case for Kru seafarers. See Gutkind, "Canoemen," 345.

255 Joseph Opala, "Bunce Island: A British Slave Castle in Sierra Leone, Historical Summary," Appendix in Christopher DeCorse, "Bunce Island Cultural Resource Assessment and Management Plan," Report prepared for the U.S. Embassy in Sierra Leone and Sierra Leone Monuments and Relics Commission (November 2007), 5.

256 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.

257 Opala, "Bunce Island," 5.

Figure 1.6: Three 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. Courtesy of the National Maritime Museum.

tity, it is highly probable that most Bunce Island officials simply never bothered to distinguish Kru from *grumetta* laborers in their accounts.

Once working on European ships, Kru served as interpreters known as "talkmen." They played a crucial role in the bartering and trading process between Europeans and Africans along the coast.[258] Their role as interpreters was to win the confidence of village traders and attract them on board coasting vessels for trading. Captain J.A. Carnes recognized the Kru as valuable traders and claimed "without these people the traffic must be carried on by signs."[259] Since the Kru language was spoken from Cape Mesurado to the Bandama River, the Kru were able to communicate with people in many villages.[260] They frequently brought their own small surfboats on board European vessels for the purpose of carrying messages between vessels, trading posts, and villages. They served

258 Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 13–22.
259 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.
260 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.

other functions such as moving cargoes between shoreside and ship and could terminate their services at their leisure before returning home.[261] Their surfboats also provided a means of transportation home following their service.[262] Hiring Kru was economical from the British perspective because they could provide their own means home should the ship not make a return voyage to their village and they were able to fish and eat rice for subsistence at little if any cost to the British beyond their labor.

Sailing between towns on the coast, Kru were instrumental in the spread of a creolized version of English as the lingua franca of trade along the West African coast.[263] Kru were recorded as being able to communicate, even if in a limited manner, in a variety of languages including French, Dutch, and Portuguese.[264] Creolized versions of European languages became the language of commerce in the region and positioned the Kru for increased labor opportunities with the British, other Europeans, and Americans.

Serving on European ships had a direct impact on the evolution of the most significant figure in the Kru free wage labor diaspora: the headman. Shipboard labor necessitated the position of a Kru foreman known as headman, which as shown above was a natural extension of the lead trader or lead paddler who for centuries had conducted shipside trade back on their coast.[265] While approaching a ship for hire, the headman was identifiable by sometimes holding a red rag, which he waived from side to side in order to keep his paddlers' oar strokes in time with one another.[266] The headman negotiated trade, labor terms, recruited and managed the team of workers that was hired for the voyage. Working in a group served the purpose of completing tasks with greater efficiency and provided protection for Kru from enslavement while trading with European ships.

By the nineteenth century, the means of securing employment on European and American vessels on the Kru Coast mirrored the trading process that had characterized earlier periods. Upon arrival of a vessel, a body of surfboats ap-

261 Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 19.

262 Carnes, *Journal*, 141.

263 For an informative discussion of the spread of Pidgin English as a lingua franca in West Africa, see Dalby, *Black*, 1–40.

264 Manning, "Six Months," 326; Bosman, *New and Accurate*, 484.

265 For a discussion on the evolution of lead paddlers and canoemen in the creation of labor 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; Dawson, *Undercurrents*, 110; Gutkind, "Canoemen," 339–376; Gutkind, "Trade and Labor," 38.

266 Manning, "Six Months," 314.

proached and boarded the ship anchored at sea before the headman negotiated the terms of service.[267] 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 confidingly as children rushing into their mother's arms.[268]

As Carnes verifies, the Kru had clearly established a close relationship with merchant vessels. The diverse roles performed by Kru as traders and interpreters for European and American merchants shows how the Kru were important in commerce. Despite the large volume of Kru boarding the ship, a hierarchal order led by a headman ultimately ensured employment.

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 laborers. The "book" was essentially a letter of recommendation that was placed in wooden or tin containers and leather pouches. Carnes detailed the hiring process as follows:

> ...as soon as they [Kroomen] stept 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 brethen along these shores. As soon as everything on board was arranged for the transaction of business, a brisk trade was immediately opened....[269]

267 A.C.G. Hastings, *The Voyage of the 'Dayspring'* (London: John Lane – The Bodley Head, 1926), 52–54; Frost, *Work*, 39.
268 Carnes, *Journal*, 85–86; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 19; see also Barret, *L'Afrique Occidentale*, 69.
269 Carnes, *Journal*, 85–86.

In 1811, Captain Samuel Swan described the book as "a recommendation – any paper with writing on it is called by them a Book."[270] The fact that Kru headmen carried a "book" or letter of recommendation from a previous captain shows that they had experience working with Europeans and Americans on their vessels and that they required a written certificate and some ability to speak English for future employment. Since the headman was responsible for selecting a labor gang, he would have had the first opportunity of employment in this episode. Despite the fact the captain selected only three laborers, they most certainly would have been headmen in rank rather than regular laborers who were on a lower tier of employment opportunities and followed hierarchal protocol.

The practice of presenting books or reference letters continued and eventually all Kru seafarers were required to present their books in order to ensure 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."[271] While Midgley mentions that every man carried the book by the 1840s, Kru oral traditions suggest that employment was based on a hierarchy of experience with the headman deciding who would accompany him on the voyage prior to presenting the book, a practice maintained into the twentieth century.[272] Yet, for the most part Kru did not learn to read and write in English. The letters were needed simply as proof of previous employment.

While the Kru served on merchant ships since at least the seventeenth century, only sporadic documentation exists prior to the nineteenth century. However, the Kru expanded their service on slave ships well into the nineteenth century, and by the 1830s the Cuban slave trade offered an abundance of employment opportunities. Kru were hired on slave ships that traded to the Rio Pongo, Rio Nunez, and the Gallinas near Cape Mount.[273] The multitude of waterways and rugged terrain in these locations were ideal conditions for loading slave ships,

270 Samuel Swan, "Memoranda on the African Trade (1810 – 1811)," in *Yankee Traders, Old Coasters and African Middlemen: A History of American Legitimate Trade with West Africa in the Nineteenth Century*, Appendix J, ed. George E. Brooks (Boston: Boston University Press, 1970), 318 – 320.

271 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 British Parliamentary Papers* (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1968), 592. See also Johann Büttikofer, *Travel Sketches from Liberia: Johann Büttikofer's 19th Century*, eds. Henk Dop and Phillip Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 574.

272 Interviews with Chief Davis and Smith suggest that the headman selected his labor gang or crew well into the twentieth century.

273 Hilary Teage, "The Slave Trade," *African Repository* 12, no. 5 (1836): 158 – 160; Anonymous, "Slave Trade," *African Repository* 13, no.7 (1837): 224 – 225.

which sought to avoid detection by British Royal Navy ships tasked with their interception. Kru served as pilots, waterers, and interpreters sailing between slave factories along the coast.[274] Their familiarity with creolized Portuguese and Spanish proved to be a valuable asset for employment in the Cuban and Brazilian slave trades as well as English on American slavers.[275] Some Kru continued to be identified by their Kru mark and were often given fanciful English names associated with seafaring by slavers such as "Main-stay," Cat-head", "Bulls-eye", and "Rope-yarn."[276]

Nineteenth-century slaver narratives reveal the Kru's role in slave factories that were erected on the West African coast. In one case in 1808, the Coralline set sail from Rio to Cape Palmas and hired 40 "Kroomen" (most probably Grebo who spoke Kru) with their surfboats, which they brought aboard the ship before sailing up the coast.[277] The Kru assisted in building makeshift settlements, which included sheds with coverings surrounded by picket fences.[278] One trading center they helped to establish was Rio Basso, which became the staging point for attaining enslaved Africans between Cape Palmas and Rio Gambia.[279] Kru also served as lookouts or spies on the beaches and islands leading to slave trading depots, as was the case when they were employed by Pedro Blanco, an infamous slave trader in the Gallinas, who is believed to have shipped more than 5,000 enslaved Africans annually between 1822 and 1839.[280] They relayed messages of approaching Royal Navy vessels to the lagoon where Blanco's slave factory reside in order avoid detection and interception.[281] However, in

274 James Holman, *Travels in Madeira, Sierra Leone, Teneriffe, St Jago, Cape Coast, Fernando Po, Princess Island, Etc., Etc.*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge, 1840), 178–179; Frost, *Work*, 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; Manning, "Six Months," 326.

275 Manning, "Six Months," 326.

276 Ibid., 326; George Howe, "The Last Slave Ship," 1890, in *Slave Ships and Slaving with an Introduction by Capt. Ernest H. Pentecost, R.N.R.*, ed. George Francis Dow (1927; repr., Cambridge, MD: Cornell Maritime Press, 1968, 352–382: 359).

277 Richard Drake, "Revelations of a Slave Smuggler: being an Autobiography of Capt. Richard Drake, an African Trader for Fifty Years – from 1807 to 1857 [New York, 1860]", in *Slave Ships and Slaving with an Introduction by Capt. Ernest H. Pentecost, R.N.R.*, ed. George Francis Dow (1927; repr., Cambridge, MD: Cornell Maritime Press, 1968), 229.

278 Ibid., 229.

279 Ibid., 229.

280 George Francis Dow, ed., *Slave Ships and Slaving with an Introduction by Capt. Ernest H. Pentecost, R.N.R.* ([1927] The Marine Research Society; Cambridge, MD: Cornell Maritime Press, 1968), 19.

281 Ibid., 19.

1837, Kru were reported by an informant to have simultaneously worked for Cuban slave traders and the Royal Navy in its suppression activities. According to the report, a Kru seafarer alerted the British of the departure of a Cuban slave ship, which enabled Royal Navy ships to intercept it.[282] The Kru seemed to have no moral qualms about being simultaneously employed in the slave trade and its suppression on Royal Navy ships. In 1845, Horatio Bridge reported that the Kru remained "active agents" both in slave factories and on board slave ships.[283] 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 enfermes par ces derniers dans de vastes cases de paille et de bamboo nommées "barracons", ou les malheureux sont enchaînés et surveillés avec soin; s ices barracons 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 "barraconners" ou nègres geoliers; ces barraconniers sont le plus souvent des Kroumanes our noirs de la côte de Krou.[284]

Slave factories became the laboring sites where the Kru worked and lived. However, there is no evidence that they established a formal quarter in association with slave factories. The slave trade depended upon quick boarding times for the enslaved at secret locations especially after the British, Americans, and French increased their suppression of the slave trade in the 1840s.[285]

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.[286] Ten of the captured vessels were Cuban slave ships with many more operating in the region.[287] Infamous slave trader Theophilus Canot

282 Drake, "Revelations," 229.

283 Bridge, *Journal*, 53; Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 81, 90; Frost, *Work*, 32.

284 Édouard Bouët-Willaumez, *Commerce et Traite des Noirs aux Côtes Occidentales D'Afrique* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1848), 194. See also Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 32.

285 The Anglo-French Agreement in 1845 between the British and French and the Webster-Ashburton Treaty in 1842 ensured that each party would provide a minimum of 25 ships in the Atlantic region off the coast of West Africa in pursuit of intercepting slave ships and delivering the enslaved to such ports as Freetown, Monrovia, and Libreville. See Jean Allain, "The Nineteenth Century Law of the Sea and the British Abolition of the Slave Trade," *British Yearbook of International Law* 78, issue 1 (2007), 375.

286 Teage, "Slave Trade," 158–160; "Auxiliary Societies," *African Repository* 12, no. 8 (1836): 247.

287 Anonymous, "Slave Trade," *African Repository* 13, no. 7 (1837): 224–225.

suggested that Kru were hired for transporting slaves on Cuban ships (he used the term Spanish) in the Rio Pongo.[288] 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.[289]

Kru service was not limited to transporting enslaved Africans on slave ships, as they also served on the trans-Atlantic voyages. Routinely, Cuban ships took in goods in New York before sailing for Havana and having their ships refitted for the purpose of transporting enslaved Africans. In the 1830s, some Kru were observed serving on Cuban slave ships, including the Preciosa. The Royal Navy intercepted the Preciosa and its crew was captured. After the Liberated Africans aboard were disembarked in Belize, Kru sailed on 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.[290] 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 labor 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.[291]

The relationship between the Kru and Cuban slave traders was important enough for one *krogba* to send five Kru to work in Havana in 1835.[292] Their goal was to learn "Spanish fashion," meaning Spanish trading practices, mannerisms, and language. The five Kru, who were in fact Bassa who spoke Kru from the region immediately to the northwest of the Cestos River, reportedly served as domestic servants in Don Joaquim Gomez's household.[293] This is the

288 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.

289 Theophilus Canot, *Revelations of a Slave Trader; or Twenty Years' Adventures of Captain Canot* (London: Richard Bentley, 1854), 187–189.

290 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.

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

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

293 "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*

only known source that mentions Kru-speaking peoples working on shore in Havana. It seems that any plans for a labor scheme never advanced beyond the Kru serving on ships between the Kru Coast and Havana.

Kru were observed working aboard the Thomas Watson in 1860, a slaver that had sailed from Sandy Hook, United States, to West Africa in order to purchase enslaved Africans before proceeding to Cuba. Kru were tasked with maintaining order amongst enslaved Africans as they were transported from barracoon (factory or building holding the slaves prior to departure) to surfboat before being paddled to the awaiting slave ship for boarding.[294] Once on board, they were often responsible for leading and arranging the enslaved below deck.[295] Kru were divided into gangs and given their own section "to clean and a number of negroes to attend to."[296] Other Kru were stationed on deck to perform manual seaborne labor or "whatever was required of them."[297] During the trans-Atlantic voyage, their duties included feeding the enslaved, maintaining order, especially at night when the risk of mutiny may have been more prevalent, and carrying out physical discipline towards the enslaved as directed by Cuban captains.[298]

Documentation exists that shows Kru served on slave ships between 1808 and 1860, as shown in Table 1.2. The evidence is probably incomplete because only British officials and slavers who decided to allot special mention to the Kru in reports, narratives, and muster lists have survived. Records are limited to those Cuban, British, and American. It is likely that Kru worked on other slave ships as well. With the exceptions of the Coralline in 1808 and Thomas Watson in 1860, the low number of Kru working on the ships may show that they were more frequently engaged shoreside loading enslaved Africans rather than in great numbers on ships. This was most probably because of the illegal nature of the slave trade and the lack of institutionalized contractual labor that characterized their relationship with the British during the same period.

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 workforce. While Kru expanded their slave trading network beyond the Kru Coast to include Rio Pongo, Rio Nunez, the Gallinas,

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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.

294 Manning, "Six Months," 321.

295 Ibid., 330.

296 Ibid., 327.

297 Ibid., 327. For more information on slave ship crews see Emma Christopher, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes, 1730–1807* (2006), 52.

298 Ibid., 326, 330, 332, 339.

Table 1.2: Kru service on slave ships.

Year	Name of Ship	Number of Kru Serving
1808	Coralline	40
1808	Florida	Unknown
1832	Planeta	Unknown
1834	Preciosa	5
1841	L'Antonio	Unknown
1844	Constancia[a)]	5
1845	Lady Sale	4
1853	Cameons	Several
1860	Thomas Watson	20

Source: Drake, "Revelations," 229; FO 84/197, no. 72–73, "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*, 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," vol. 50, no. 9 (1838), 5–6.

[a)] *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 previously been 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.

and across the Atlantic to Cuba, they never established lasting diaspora communities in these locations as they did elsewhere in the Atlantic. Kru oral traditions remember their role in slave trading as an unsavory facet of their employment with Europeans and Americans, and reflect more favorably upon their service on Royal Navy ships tasked with abolishing the trans-Atlantic slave trades.[299]

299 Interview with Deputy Governor Worjloh revealed that the Kru acknowledge their role in both legitimate trade and the slave trade.

A distinct Kru identity grew over time in the region between Cape Mesurado and the Bandama River between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Trade with Europeans led to a socio-economic shift in Kru communities towards a wage economy. Kru embraced their roles as tradesmen and interpreters. English naming practices created a dual identity for Kru and reinforced traditional power structures between the *krogba*, his family, and community members. The Kru mark may have surfaced as a response to trade with Europeans as some Kru sought to distinguish themselves from other people who were enslavable. The role of headmen evolved from the organization of the traditional surfboat to facilitate work on European ships. The advantages of hiring the Kru were that they provided cheap labor, they were self-sufficient and capable of procuring their own food including fish and rice, and provided their own transportation back to their villages. 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. Kru played a major role in the spread of creolized English and other European languages as the lingua franca of the coast. The seeds of their diaspora began to grow as the Kru moved from coastal trade to shipborne labor on European vessels sailing the West African coast and beyond. The Kru would soon enter a new phase of employment once the British established a permanent settlement at Freetown in 1792, which initiated the formation of a sizeable diaspora community beyond their homeland.