

Chapter 2

Freetown – A Catalyst for Diaspora

The establishment of Freetown in 1792 on the peninsula at the mouth of the Sierra Leone River offered new opportunities for Kru labor, impacted Kru identity and stimulated the growth of their diaspora.¹⁷⁵ While Kru were already working in the Sierra Leone peninsula and were employed on European ships sailing the coast, they were now encouraged to extend their employment in so-called “legitimate” trade with the British to include contracts in Freetown. Surfboats remained at the heart of Kru labor activity in the port as they moved people, commodities, and supplies shipside and shoreside. The opportunity to earn steady wages resulted in the creation of a labor cycle based on migration and homecomings that would structure Kru contracts with the British thereafter.

Founding of Freetown

Inspired by a number of factors including the abolition movement in Britain, abolitionists pushed for the creation of a free society for repatriated Black Loyalists and free black peoples from London in the Sierra Leone peninsula in West Africa.¹⁷⁶ The timing of this initiative was significant as the British slave trade was at its height in the later decades of the eighteenth century. Britain was the premier force driving the Industrial Revolution, whose machinery and markets required raw materials and since the West Indian monopoly over sugar prohibited its importation from all sources other than its plantations, abolishing the slave trade became the target that would liberate other markets and producers of raw materials.

The Abolition Society, whose members and affiliates included William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa), and Ottobah Cugoana (John Stuart) among others, lobbied members of government against the British slave trade based on moral and economic arguments.¹⁷⁷ Influenced by their efforts, in April 1787, London’s Black Poor (as many free blacks were labelled) along with British settlers set sail for Sierra

¹⁷⁵ Ludlam, “Account,” 43–55.

¹⁷⁶ Black Loyalists fought with the British in the American Revolution and were guaranteed land settlement in Nova Scotia before being relocated to Sierra Leone in 1792.

¹⁷⁷ Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery, 1776–1848* (London: Verso, 1988), 138.

Leone in order to establish Granville Town in the “Province of Freedom.”¹⁷⁸ However, the settlement was short-lived as disease, adverse weather conditions, and an attack by local ruler King Jimmy in 1789 led to its destruction.¹⁷⁹

In 1791, the Sierra Leone Company was established with the role of administering the land in the Sierra Leone peninsula, which had originally been purchased by officials on behalf of the Committee for the Relief of the Black Poor between 1787 and 1788. Prominent abolitionists including William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp, Thomas Clarkson, and John Clarkson were the directors of the Sierra Leone Company. The Colony of Sierra Leone was founded on the ideology that slave trading was prohibited, Africans would be treated as equals with Europeans, and missionaries would educate Africans.¹⁸⁰ Beyond philanthropic concerns, 1,833 shareholders raised £235,000 worth of capital in support of its founding and there was the expectation that the colony would generate income and markets.¹⁸¹

Perhaps even more influential for Kru workers was the abolitionist goal of creating an African labor force and market for British commodities. Olaudah Equiano (Gustavus Vassa) and Ottobah Cugoana (John Stuart), two formerly enslaved Africans who became prominent abolitionists in London, offered financial solutions in order to combat economic arguments that were made by apologists regarding the vital importance of the trans-Atlantic slave trade to Britain’s economy. Equiano proposed a solution that dealt with the economic void and the demand for an alternative source of revenue that would result from abolition:

As the inhuman traffic of slavery is now taken into the consideration of the British legislature, I doubt not, if a system of commerce was established in Africa, the demand for manufactures would most rapidly augment, as the native inhabitants would insensibly adopt the British fashions, manners, customs, &c. In proportion to the civilization, so will be the consumption of British manufactures... The wear and tear of a continent, nearly twice as large as Europe, and rich in vegetable and mineral productions, is much easier conceived than calculated... It is trading upon safe grounds. A commercial intercourse with Africa opens an inexhaustible source of wealth to the manufacturing interests of

178 Stephen J. Braidwood, *Black Poor and White Philanthropists: London’s Blacks and the Foundation of the Sierra Leone Settlement 1786–1791* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 1994), 5–128.

179 For a detailed history of the origins of Sierra Leone see Fyfe, *Short History*, 28.

180 For a study on missions and education in Sierra Leone see Katrina Keefer, “Mission Education in Early Sierra Leone, 1793–1820,” (Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 2015).

181 Suzanne Schwarz, “‘A Just and Honourable Commerce’: Abolitionist Experimentation in Sierra Leone in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries,” (paper presented at The Hakluyt Society Annual Lecture 2013), 8, 16. Magbaily Fyfe, *A Nationalist History of Sierra Leone* (Freetown: self-published, 2011), 46.

Great Britain... [therefore]... The abolition of slavery, so diabolical, will give a most rapid extension of manufactures... The manufacturers of this country must and will, in the nature and reason of things, have a full and constant employ, by supplying the African markets.¹⁸²

Sierra Leone was perceived by abolitionists as the perfect location in Africa for the British to experiment with African labor. The British already had a presence in the region through seaborne trade, which included a working relationship with transient seafarers including the Kru. Abolitionists believed Africa had the potential to provide British manufacturers with a massive labor force and a new market double in size compared with Europe, which could produce profits that exceeded the African slave trade.¹⁸³ Equiano proposed moral terms with which to conduct business with Africans. By starting a new kind of commercial relationship with Africa based on wage labor contracts, profits had the potential to soar based on low labor costs. Moreover, Equiano proposed that Africans would adopt the fashions of Europe and their demand for products would supply a steady stream of income for the British manufacturers. They would also provide the workforce based on mutually beneficial labor relations similar to those proposed by Ottobah Cugoano.¹⁸⁴ Whether Equiano or Cugoano were aware of Kru laborers or not, based on centuries of trade and service on European ships, the Kru seemed to be the ideal African workers abolitionists had envisioned.

Following its inception in 1792, Kru seafarers entered a diverse laboring port governed by Sierra Leone Company administrators, composed of Nova Scotians (Black Loyalists), the Black Poor (those who had survived the 1789 destruction of Granville Town), and later, Jamaican Maroons (1800).¹⁸⁵ Kru interacted with local Africans including the Temne, Loko, Sherbro, Kissi, Bulom, Mande, and Susu as well as Fulani traders who formed their own trading diaspora, which extended from Freetown to Futa Jalon in the West African interior. Freetown was perhaps the most multicultural and vibrant laboring port in West Africa in the 1790s and first decade of the nineteenth century.

¹⁸² Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 233–234.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 234.

¹⁸⁴ Cugoano, *Thoughts*, 133.

¹⁸⁵ For an in-depth discussion of these groups see Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 1–80; Magbaily Fyle, *The History of Sierra Leone* (Freetown: Sierra Leone Adult Education Association, 1988), 69.

As discussed above, Kru were present on the Sierra Leone peninsula serving on European ships from at least the 1770s.¹⁸⁶ However, the founding of Freetown offered unprecedented steady employment. On October 1, 1793, soon to be governor of the colony Zachary Macaulay observed the Kru, whom he called “crewmen”, arriving from their villages on the Windward Coast on the James and William vessel, which delivered ivory, pepper, and rice.¹⁸⁷ He distinguished the Kru from other Africans whom he considered “indolent”, as being “active, athletic and tractable” and noted that 15 of them were to remain in Freetown to potentially be “employed in different craft.”¹⁸⁸ Similarly, Dr. Thomas Winterbottom, an English physician, who practiced in Freetown during his stay between 1792 and 1796, described an employment cycle whereby Kru were hired on ships for periods of several months in the capacity of sailors and stevedores who loaded and unloaded cargo in such places as Freetown before returning to their villages.¹⁸⁹ Winterbottom’s narrative demonstrates that by the early 1790s, the Kru had established a reputation as sailors and traders with an “industrious” nature.¹⁹⁰ The main differences from their previous employment with the British included that their seafarers were to remain in Freetown on a semi-permanent basis for marine work in the bay. They embarked on round-trip voyages from Freetown in addition to their villages on the Kru Coast. For the first time, they engaged in migratory free labor that was not directly connected with the slave trade.

Kru laborers became crucial to operations in Freetown Bay from the 1790s. Governor Ludlam observed that they dominated marine activities.¹⁹¹ Similarly, in 1802, William Cobbet recognized their role as seamen tasked with manning

186 Christopher Fyfe has suggested that 1793 marks the arrival of Kru laborers in Freetown. See Fyfe, *History*, 78. This date has been widely accepted by scholars as the beginning of Kru employment in Freetown despite the fact Fyfe presented no documented evidence. The earliest known direct references to the Kru in Freetown are by Zachary Macaulay in 1793 and Thomas Winterbottom who described the period between 1792 and 1796. When Winterbottom’s description and Macaulay’s journal are read in collaboration with John Clarkson’s diary entry on 6 November, 1792 in which he provided a description of “free labourers”, and the fact that the Kru were present in Sierra Leone since the 1770s as evidenced by Gabriel Bray’s 1775 painting, it becomes highly plausible that the Kru began to work for merchants in Freetown from its inception in 1792. See John Clarkson, *Governor Clarkson’s Diary*, “November 6 1792,” in *Sierra Leone After A Hundred Years*, ed. Ernest Graham Ingham (London: Seeley, 1894), 146.

187 Suzanne Schwarz, “Zachary Macaulay and the Development of the Sierra Leone Company, 1793–4, Part I: Journal, June–October 1793,” *History and Culture* 4 (2000): 67.

188 *Ibid.*, 67.

189 Winterbottom, *Account*, 8–9.

190 *Ibid.*, 9.

191 Ludlam, “Account,” 48.

small craft in the bay.¹⁹² Much like they did in their villages, Kru were at the heart of marine operations in the harbor moving commercial goods on their surfboats between ship and shore and vice versa. The Kru also served as woodcutters and gatherers and were heavily involved in the timber trade, which required them to use their surfboats in order to float African teak to awaiting ships for export to Europe.¹⁹³

An increase in the duration of contracts offered by the British between the eighteenth and nineteenth century played a significant role in the development of the Kru free wage labor diaspora in Freetown. Ludlam provided a description on the length of Kru labor contracts in the 1790s:

When hired by the month, their wages depending on the time they are at work, not upon the work performed... they are fond of task work, or working by the piece; and exert themselves exceedingly when the reward is proportioned to the labour.¹⁹⁴

Ludlam's description reveals that the Kru worked on a monthly basis, the succession of which usually lasted between six months and 18 months before the Kru returned to their villages.¹⁹⁵ This timeframe represented a longer period than the typical one to three months on merchant ships sailing the West African coast. The Kru community in Freetown was growing and they were more inclined to remain for longer periods that promised steady wages.

Ludlam also reveals that besides receiving a monthly salary, Kru were interested in task work where they could hire themselves for a second job while in Freetown. In 1811, Thomas Coke observed that Kru were employed by settlers as "hewers of wood and drawers of water," that is as common laborers.¹⁹⁶ Their inclination towards a combination of regular wages and task-based labor became the norm as they expanded their diaspora communities to British Gui-

192 William Cobbett, "Evidence in Support of the Statement, January to June 1802," in *Cobbett's Annual Register (Political Register)* vol. 1 (London: Cox and Baylis, 1802), 883.

193 For further discussion on the Kru's duties see J.B. Webster, A.A. Boahen, and H.O. Idowu, *The Growth of African Civilisation: The Revolutionary Years. West Africa Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1973), 167; Elizabeth Tonkin, "Creating Kroomen: Ethnic Diversity, Economic Specialism and Changing Demand," in *Africa and the Sea*, edited by J. Stone, 27–47 (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University African Studies Group, 1985), 41.

194 Ludlam, "Account," 48.

195 Ludlam, "Account," *Sixth Report*, 94; Holman, "Mr. Holman's Travels," 64.

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

ana and Trinidad in the 1840s.¹⁹⁷ The Kru seem to have understood the value of their labor and would only work proportional to their economic reward. John Peterson has suggested that the presence of the Kru workforce in Sierra Leone enabled the Nova Scotians and other early settlers to form a merchant class above the Kru and other African working class.¹⁹⁸ Regardless, Kru were eager to earn wages in Sierra Leone in order to send income back home to their families in Kru settlements.

Kru formed a very small labor force in Freetown before the early nineteenth century. They were estimated at only 15 in 1793, which was insignificant when compared to the number of Nova Scotian settlers, which was 1,190. Within a decade their numbers had only increased to several dozen. William Cobbett's report suggested there were 60 Kru working in Freetown in 1802, although the Colonial Office's "List of Inhabitants of Freetown, 1802" claimed there were 90 Kru. As seen in Table 2.1, the figures show that the Kru population in Freetown gradually grew from a small number in the eighteenth century to a significant number in the early nineteenth century with fluctuating numbers but a steady presence thereafter.¹⁹⁹

Table 2.1: Population of Freetown.

Year	Total Population	Kru Population
1793	1,125 – 1,200	15
1800	1,200 – 1,500	40 – 50
1801	1,200 – 1,500	60
1802	1,615	60 – 90
1809	2,000	800
1811	2,518	601
1816	2,518	700
1817	2,833	650
1818	4,430	505
1819	4,450	749
1820	4,785	615
1822	5,643	947
1826	7,483	1,100
1831	15,210	504
1846	15,000	730
1848	18,190	743

¹⁹⁷ See Chapter 5.

¹⁹⁸ John Peterson, *Province of Freedom: A History of Sierra Leone 1787–1870* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), 85.

¹⁹⁹ Figures between 1812 and 1815 are currently unknown.

Table 2.1: Population of Freetown. (*Continued*)

Year	Total Population	Kru Population
1850	16,679	560
1859	18,035	560
1891	30, 033	1,234
1901	34, 463	1,903
1921	44,142	4,744

Source: William Cobbett, "Evidence in Support," 883; CO 270/8, January 22 – September 6 1802, "List of Inhabitants of Freetown, 1802,," Barbara Harrell-Bond, *Community Leadership and the Transformation of Freetown, (1801–1976)* (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 1978), 31, 71; Missionary Register for MDCCC XIX Containing the Principal Transactions of the Various Institutions Propagating the Gospel: With Proceedings, at Large, of the Church Missionary Society (London: L.B. Seeley, 1819), 399; Walter Scott, *The Edinburgh Annual Register, For 1825*, 18 (Edinburgh: John Ballantyne and Company, 1826), 47; Kenneth Macaulay, *The Colony of Sierra Leone Vindicated from the Misrepresentations of Mr. Macqueen of Glasgow* (London: Cass, 1826), 17; Farah J. Griffith and Cheryl J. Fish, *Stranger in the Village: Two Centuries of Travel Writing* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 102; Accounts and Paper, Session 1 February-1 August 1849, vol. 34 (1849), 304–305; Michael Banton, *West African City: A Study of Tribal Life in Freetown* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 225; David Brewster, *The Edinburgh Encyclopedia* 17 (1832): 274–275; "Census for 1820," *Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertiser* (Saturday July 8, 1820), n.p.; Walter Chapin and David Watson, *The Missionary Gazetteer* (Woodstock: David Watson, 1825), 132; *The Missionary Register for 1817* (London: L.B. Seeley, 1817), 355; James Cleland, *Enumeration of the Inhabitants of the City of Glasgow and County of Lanark. For the Government Census with Population Statistical Tables relative to England and Scotland*, 2nd ed. (Glasgow: John Smith & Son, 1832), 220; Robert Kuczynski, *Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire*, vol. 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 80; Ludlam, "Account," 45; Macaulay, *The Christian Observer*, 756; Samuel Charles Wilks, ed., *The Christian Observer: Conducted by Members of the Established Church, Given by Disciples Divinity House* 18, no. 11 (1819): 859; *A Gazetteer of the World, or Dictionary of Geographical Knowledge, Compiled for the Most Recent Authorities, And Forming a Complete Body of Modern Geography*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: A. Fullarton & Co., 1859), 465; Reclus, *Universal Geography*, 210; William Fox, *A Brief History of the Wesleyan Missions on the West Coast of Africa* (London: Aylott and Jones, 1851), 193; John MacGregor, *Commercial Statistics: A Digest of the Productive Resources, Commercial Legislation, Custom Tariffs, of All Nations. Including All British Commercial Treaties with Foreign States*, vol. 5 (London: Whittaker and Company, 1850), 124; Arthur Thomas Porter, "The Development of the Creole Society of Freetown, Sierra Leone" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1960), 37

When Cobbett's conservative estimates are compared with Ludlam's figure, then the number of Kru rose from approximately 60 workers in 1802 to 800 workers in 1809. Magbaily Fyle and Christopher Fyfe have suggested that in 1808 the population of the entire Colony of Sierra Leone was 2,000, which would mean that Kru workers played a pivotal role in the colony's economic activities by pro-

viding perhaps 40 percent of its total population.²⁰⁰ By the 1820s, Captain James Holman suggested that the Kru had earned a “decided preference” in Freetown in the role of servants and laborers over their African competitors.²⁰¹ This may have stemmed from their willingness to live in Freetown and engage in longer commercial and Royal Navy contracts for periods of between 18 months and three years by the 1820s.²⁰² Most revealing, the figures show that the Kru population in Freetown experienced significant growth from 1809.²⁰³ The increase was most certainly a result of the opportunity to serve in the British Royal Navy based in Freetown beginning in 1808.

Freetown and British Anti-Slavery Patrols

The transfer of governance from the Sierra Leone Company to the British Crown on January 1, 1808 played a significant role in the growth of the Kru population in Freetown. A combination of delays and irregularities in charter status, the inability to raise sufficient funds, and famine rendered the Company in financial ruin by 1807.²⁰⁴ Overall, the British government spent £96,516 on the Company and nearly twice as much on expenditures in Freetown.²⁰⁵

1808 also marked the year that the Royal Navy began patrolling the Atlantic off the coast of West Africa with the goal of intercepting slave ships following the 1807 decree to abolish British participation in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Freetown became the central port assigned with British anti-slave trade operations in the Atlantic. Until 1819, it housed the Vice Admiralty Court tasked with adjudicating the fate of slave ship captains and the resettlement of recaptives and, after 1819, the Court of Mixed Commission that fulfilled the same function.

Africans were employed as free laborers on British ships in the 1770s in West Africa, although they had served in various capacities as free and unfree laborers

200 Magbaily Fyle, *Historical Dictionary of Sierra Leone* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2006), xviii; Fyfe, *Short History*, 44.

201 Holman, *Travels*, 190–191.

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

203 Figures between 1812 and 1815 are currently unknown.

204 Alexander Peter Kup, “John Clarkson and the Sierra Leone Company,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 5, no. 2 (1972): 212; James W. St. G. Walker, *The Black Loyalists: The Search for a Promised Land in Nova Scotia and Sierra Leone, 1783–1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 245–247; Joseph Corry, *Observations*, 6–7.

205 Walker, *Black Loyalists*, 186, 246; Michael J. Turner, “The Limits of Abolition: Government, Saints and the ‘African Question’, c. 1780–1820,” *The English Historical Review* 112, no. 446 (1997): 320–321.

aboard naval and commercial vessels since at least the sixteenth century.²⁰⁶ The Navigation Act of 1651 required that all British ships contain three-fourths British subjects, which kept an open door, even if limited, for the official employment of foreigners.²⁰⁷ In the Caribbean, the impressment of slaves of African descent on Royal Navy ships had been an unofficial practice at the discretion of captains since the early eighteenth century until measures were taken in 1746 to limit the number of impressed seamen.²⁰⁸ In contrast, Costello has suggested that British Royal Navy ships offered free black sailors a sense of protection from enslavement, especially following the Somerset case in 1772 when slavery was effectively outlawed in England.²⁰⁹ Charles Foy has captured the precarious nature of black employment on Royal Navy ships in the eighteenth century by showing that enslaved sailors could obtain their freedom at the captain's discretion, and yet, even free laborers continued to face the constant threat of re-enslavement during voyages.²¹⁰

Shortages in manpower in wartime served as a significant factor in the decision to hire African sailors and affected the rise and fall in the overall number of seamen serving in the Royal Navy.²¹¹ The size of the Royal Navy had risen from 36,000 in 1740 to 140,000 in 1815 before returning to 90,000 in 1817 following the Napoleonic wars.²¹² The need to expand the navy in wartime was reflected in the British practice of gang impressment via the Quota Acts of 1795 and 1796 in which English ports and towns were purged of men taken on board ships to serve in order to meet increased manpower needs in the face of the Revolution-

206 Costello, *Black Salt*, 40. Costello analyzed the wage list for the *Hawk* in 1781 which revealed wages received by Fante seamen from the Gold Coast sailing to Liverpool.

207 Henry Fry, *The History of North Atlantic Steam Navigation: With Some Account of Early Ships and Shipowners* (London: S.L. Martson, 1896), 18.

208 Denver Brunsman, *The Evil Necessity: British Naval Impressment in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (University of Virginia Press, 2013).

209 Costello, *Black Salt*, 73. For information on the Somerset Case which resulted in the Mansfield Decision see James Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of Slavery in the British Empire*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001), 12, 13 and chronology unpaginated.

210 Charles R. Foy, "The Royal Navy's Employment of Black Mariners and Maritime Workers, 1754–1783," *The International Journal of Maritime History* 28 no.1 (2016): 31; Charles R. Foy, "Britain's Black Tars," in *Britain's Black Past*, ed. Gretchen H. Gerzina (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 70.

211 Christopher Lloyd, *The Nation and the Navy: A History of Naval Life and Policy* (London: The Cresset Press, 1954), 130.

212 *Ibid.*, 130.

ary Wars with the French.²¹³ It is highly probable that Kru sailors working in Freetown, possibly Liverpool, and aboard British merchant ships on the coast of West Africa were sought for service on British Royal Navy ships in the eighteenth century, yet records remain scarce. One challenge is that Royal Navy pursers did not begin to officially record the origins of the sailors until 1764, and tended to use general labels such as “African” regardless of their ethnicity, which makes it more challenging to decipher Kru sailors for that period.²¹⁴

However, in the early nineteenth century, Kru were frequently recorded in Royal Navy pay lists, muster lists, and captains’ logs. Beginning January 15, 1808, HMS Derwent arrived in Freetown and began its anti-slave trade patrols before being joined by HMS Solebay several months later. By 1811, the count had risen to four ships including HMS Ganymede, Trinculo, Kangaroo, and Amelia. Thereafter, Kru sailors served on Royal Navy ships engaged in intercepting slave ships in the Atlantic. Four Kru sailors named Ben Freeman, Jack Savey, Prince Will, and Ben Coffee are listed as boarding HMS Thais for a four-month voyage as supernumeraries in Sierra Leone on November 19, 1812 before sailing to Ambriz in Angola and disembarking back in Freetown on March 16, 1813.²¹⁵ This remains one of the earliest known records of Kru serving in the Royal Navy. Moreover, Freeman’s reference letter or “book” has been preserved in the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. It is actually a powder horn with text carved in ivory, which reads: “BEN FREEMAN, BORN AT, KREW CETRA IS A Sober Honest Man. has SAILED in HM SHIP THAIS from SIERRA LEONE TO AMBRIZ to the SATISFACTION of the OFFICERS.”²¹⁶ The information contained his place of birth being Krew Cetra on the Kru Coast, his character, destination, and appraisal. His “letter” shows that the Kru were circulating the Atlantic in anti-slaving activities on voyages of at least four months within several years of British suppression. These “books” or letters of reference continued to be used throughout the nineteenth century in order to secure future employment.

Based in Freetown, Kru were highly valued by the Royal Navy for similar reasons they were valued by British commercial merchants, namely for their ability to man and land boats in order to conduct operations smoothly. Kru seamen had an advantage over shoreside workers because of the specialized surfboat skills

213 Niklas Frykman, “Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships,” *International Review of Social History* 54, no. 1 (2009): 69–70; Lloyd, *Nation*, 132; Mark Philip, ed., *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 107.

214 Vincent Carretta, “Black Seamen and Soldiers,” review of *Black Salt: Seafarers of African Descent on British Ships*, by Ray Costello, *Eighteenth-Century Life* 38, no. 3 (Fall, 2014): 150–153.

215 NMM, ZBA 2465.

216 NMM, ZBA 2465.

required to work on Royal Navy contracts.²¹⁷ As Schwarz has demonstrated, British anti-slave ship patrols landed between 11,909 and 12,178 individuals between 1808 and 1819.²¹⁸ In 1819, the Preventative Squadron, more commonly known as the West Africa Squadron, was created with the specific task of intercepting slave ships along a 2000-mile stretch of the West African coastline.²¹⁹ In the same year, a Court of Mixed Commission replaced the Vice Admiralty Court in Freetown, the first in an international system of anti-slave trade courts.²²⁰ Initially, seven Royal Navy ships were sent from England to Freetown to serve in the Preventative Squadron and patrol the Atlantic. Thereafter, the size of the patrol varied from five ships in 1822 to 30 ships on patrol in 1847. Based at the West Coast of Africa Station in Freetown, they sailed between a network of ports from Ascension Island and Fernando Po to St. Helena and the Cape of Good Hope. The squadron operated until 1870 and it is estimated that between 1808 and the 1860s, the squadron captured 1,600 slave ships and delivered more than 213,000 recaptives for resettlement.²²¹

Wage rates in the Royal Navy were governed by rank and experience. Table 2.2 shows the variation in pay between Kru headmen and regular crewmembers on HMS Snapper between September 5, and December 31, 1819. There were 12 Kru on board. Their rates of pay were usually £4 8s. 6d. for the total voyage, although several received more, as high as £5 4s. 2d., plus an additional payment in tobac-

217 Surgeon Peter Leonard, *Records of a Voyage to the Western Coast of Africa in His Majesty's Ship "Dryad," And of the Service on that Station for the Suppression of the Slave Trade, in the Years 1830, 1831, and 1832* (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1833), 56.

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

219 Junius P. Rodríguez, ed., *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, vol.1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio), 20–21; David Northrup, "African Mortality in the Suppression of the Slave Trade: The Case of the Bight of Biafra," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 9 (1978): 47–64; *The Westminster Review*, vol. 51 (New York: Leonard Scott and Company, 1849), 273.

220 For scholarship on Mixed Commission Courts see Farida Shaikh, "Judicial Diplomacy: British Officials and the Mixed Commission Courts" in *Slavery, Diplomacy and Empire: Britain and the Suppression of the Slave Trade, 1807–1975*, eds., Keith Hamilton and Patrick Salmon (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2009), 42–64; Tara Helfman, "The Court of the Vice Admiralty at Sierra Leone and the Abolition of the West African Slave Trade," *The Yale Law Journal* 115, no. 5 (2006): 1132–1134.

221 Stuart A. Notholt, "Sailing Against Slavers," *Soldiers of the Queen* issue 134 (Sept, 2008): 29; Andrew Pearson, "Waterwitch: A Warship, Its Voyage and its Crew in the Era of Anti-Slavery," *Atlantic Studies* 13, no. 1 (2016): 114; David Eltis, "The Volume and Structures of the Transatlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment," *William and Mary Quarterly* (2001), 58.

Table 2.2: Pay list for Kru, HMS Snapper, September 5 – December 31, 1819.

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

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

co valued as 3s. 8d. in most cases. It seems that their service in the West Africa Squadron paid higher rates than their previous service on HMS *Thais* in 1812.²²²

On HMS *Snapper*, a Kru seaman classified as an ordinary seaman (meaning that he had achieved the rank of headman in Kru society and was a headman on the current voyage) named Jack Savage received £5 4s. 2d. (5 pounds, 4 shilling, 2 pence) full wages, while Jumbo, also ranked an ordinary seaman, received £5 1s. 2d. The slight difference in wage rates may suggest that Jack was the second headman on the voyage. Different pay for those Krumen with the same rank suggests that those with more sea experience were paid more than those who had accumulated less sea time. Full wages refers to the total wages earned for the duration of the contract over a three-month period. “Net Wages” refers to deductions that were made for any expenses the Kru incurred using tobacco or other consumables. Not all consumables are listed in the muster list for every crewmember, yet they would have incurred some expenses as evidenced by the difference in full and net wages.

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

222 NMM, ZBA 2465.

12s. 3d. However, John Peter, also a headman, received a salary of £5 10s. 6d., which may indicate that he had more experience at sea than Freeman. HMS *Morgiana* had a crew of 24 Krumen, more than double the number of Kru on board HMS *Snapper*. The ability to work on a variety of Royal Navy ships over a three-year contractual period represented a new model of employment for Kru seamen who had typically served between six and 18-month contracts on commercial ships and ashore in Freetown (see Appendix A for a list of Kru seamen serving on Royal Navy Ships in 1819 and 1820).²²³ The longer term at sea may be attributed to the considerable distances of voyages and the irregular frequency of intercepting slave ships.

Naming practices first developed through trade in Kru villages evolved on Royal Navy ships. While headmen, the *krogba*, and his family members were initially distinguished from other inhabitants by virtue of their English names in their villages as discussed above, the use of English names on ships became standard practice for all Kru seamen in the nineteenth century. It appears that the names of Kru sailors were initially assigned to them by Royal Navy captains. In 1833, a list of English names and corresponding Kru names was compiled and featured in *The Monthly Review*. The recommended English name was listed next to the Kru name as follows: Jack Ropeyarn/Namboe, Jack Fryingpan/Tabooa, Great Tom/Yiepam, Peas Soup/Woorawa, Will Centipede/Blattoo, Jack Neverfear/Nieca, Jack Toggle/ Niepa, Tom Seedy/ Ba Sidi, Government Packet/Niaie.²²⁴ Presumably their Kru names were the actual names of workers at the time. The function of their English names was to enable smooth communication between British and Kru seamen. Kru oral traditions recall that as the Kru economy became increasingly dependent on British contracts, Kru social status came to be defined by service with the British.²²⁵ The practice of adopting an English name became widespread for all Kru seamen and especially for those Kru who served in the Royal Navy. As English names became common, rank came to distinguish headmen from regular workers in terms of higher pay.

Kru enlisted on Royal Navy ships continued to earn wages that were higher than on commercial contracts. Initially, the captain and crew of Squadron vessels were entitled to prize bounties for every slave ship that was captured. Prize earn-

²²³ Jane Martin, "Krumen 'Down the Coast': Liberian Migrants on the West Africa Coast in the 19th and early 20th century," *The International Journal of Historical Studies* 18, no. 3 (1985): 407–408.

²²⁴ See Ralph Griffiths and George Edward Griffiths, eds., "Exposure of the Slave Trade," *The Monthly Review* 1, no.1 (London: G. Henderson, 1833), 26.

²²⁵ Interviews with Chief Davis and Smith indicated that service in the Royal Navy increased status within Kru communities.

Table 2.3: Pay list for Kru, HMS Morgiana, June 1 – October 1, 1819.

African Names	Rank	Full Wages	Net Wages
Tom Freeman (1)	Ord	£5 5s 6d	£5 5s 6d
John Purser	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Half Dollar	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Bottle of Beer	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jack Wise	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Joe Harris	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Tom Freeman (2)	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Tom Toby	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jim Freeman	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Tom Freeman (3)	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Tom Peter	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jack Freeman	Ord	£5 5s 6d	£5 5s 6d
Billy Williams	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Joe Andrews	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jack Purser	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jim Rufus	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
John Grey	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Hugo Williams	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jack Boo	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jack Freeman	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Jack Jim	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Tom Will	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
Tom Harris	Sm	£4 12s 3d	£4 12s 3d
John Peter	Ord	£5 10s 6d	£5 10s 6d
Total		£112 18s 9d	£112 18s 9d

ings had been a Royal Navy wartime practice stretching as far back as at least the Seven Years War.²²⁶ The Abolition Act explicitly stated prize values of £40 for a male, £30 for a female, and £10 for a child.²²⁷ The hierarchal and gendered nature of the prizes reflected the value of males, females, and children in the trans-Atlantic slave trades in the first half of the nineteenth century. The practice of receiving prize money was discontinued during the 1840s due to the high rate of slave ship seizure. Had the practice of prize money continued, the amount associated with children might have risen dramatically as children became highly

²²⁶ See Equiano, *Interesting Narrative*, 47.

²²⁷ John Raithby, *The Statutes Relating to the Admiralty, Navy, Shipping and Navigation in the United Kingdom from 9 Hen. III. to 3 Geo IV., inclusive with Notes* (London: George Eyre and Andrew Strahan, 1823), 742.

valued in the trans-Atlantic slave trades in the last decades of slave trading between the 1850s and 1870s.²²⁸

Kru received their share of the prize money based on naval rank. Kru headmen, second Kru headmen, and regular Krumen along with their British counterparts were classed by the Royal Navy as follows: a Kru headman was considered eighth class and he was entitled to two shares of the prize earnings; ninth class second head Kroomen received one and a half shares; eleventh class regular Kroomen received three-fourths of a share.²²⁹ Rank in the Royal Navy was determined by *Regulations and Instructions relating to H.M. service at Sea* first published in 1731.²³⁰ The rank of Ordinary Seamen was applied to those British sailors who had served one year at sea, Able Seamen to those with three years' experience. Comparing the Kru salary with British seamen of similar rank reveals that the difference was not very significant for headmen during their first year of service. In 1807, British Ordinary Seamen were paid £1 5s 6d. per month, which was comparable with Kru headmen who held the rank of Ordinary Seamen.²³¹ However, regular Kru sailors continued to receive less pay than British sailors of the lowest rank.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, Kru headmen rose in rank to become petty working officers. The Navy List in 1878 indicates that Headmen held the rank of First Class Working Petty Officer and Second Headmen that of Second Class Working Petty Officer.²³² The second Kru headman became more common after the advent of steamships, which led to increased employment on ships engaged in trans-Atlantic voyages between Africa and Europe and the Caribbean based on the belief that the Kru were better suited to labor in the hot conditions in the engine room as firestokers and coal trimmers compared with British seamen.²³³

228 For information on changing prices of the enslaved in the eighteenth and nineteenth century see Paul Lovejoy and David Richardson, "Competing Markets for Male and Female Slaves: Prices in the Interior of West Africa, 1780–1850," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28, no. 2 (1995): 261–293; David Geggus, "Sex Ratio, Age and Ethnicity in the Atlantic Slave Trade: Data from French Shipping and Plantation Records," *The Journal of African History* 30, no. 1 (1989): 23–44.

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

230 Lloyd, *Nation*, 135.

231 *Ibid.*, 138.

232 C.E. Warren, *The Royal Navy List* (London: Witherby & Co., 1878), 256.

233 Diane Frost, "Ethnic Identity, Transience and Settlement: The Kru in Liverpool Since the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Africans in Britain*, ed. D. Killingray (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1994), 88–106.

Kru were paid wages in-kind, meaning that they received goods that were valued based on a British wage rate for the Royal Navy, merchant ships, and commercial labor in Freetown. While contracts stipulated wage rates, both the British and Kru agreed upon their corresponding value in goods. As the nineteenth century progressed, Kru workers routinely received a 10s advance.²³⁴ The advance was used to secure their labor for the period of the contract in Freetown or on ships. The advance was a significant development in the context of Freetown because it showed that the Kru were beginning to understand the market value of their labor, which was a service. While Eric Hobsbawm has commented on the long period it took for English workers in the Industrial Revolution to appreciate the value of their labor based on the principle of market demand versus use-value, it seems the Kru were well aware of the great value placed on their services by the mid-nineteenth century and came to expect an advance before accepting contracts.²³⁵

Following the completion of the contract, items were carried home to the Kru Coast and traded for iron bars, cattle, and other items of value in Kru society.²³⁶ Other times, the Kru sold their items for cash in Freetown. In 1845, R.G. Butts suggested the Kru received cloth for their labor at a value of £1 4s. per piece, which they then cut into smaller pieces and sold at a price of between 6s. 8d. and 8s. 4d. for cash.²³⁷ However, even by the 1880s and 1890s, it was still more common to convert a cash wage into “marketable items.”²³⁸

One significant distinction affecting working conditions in Freetown and on Royal Navy ships as compared to their villages was that Kru headmen received standardized monthly wages and earned a higher salary from the British based on their managerial skills as shown in Tables 2.2 and 2.3. They also received a portion of pay from each member of their gang.²³⁹ This entrenched the hierarchy first established in Kru villages between headman and workers to an even greater degree and provided an incentive for laborers to aspire to become headmen.

234 Smith, *Trade*, 100–103; Anonymous, “Negro Civilization,” *Journal of Health and Disease* 2, no. 3 (1847): 259; Frost, *Work*, 26.

235 Eric Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men: Studies in the History of Labour* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1964).

236 Smith, *Trade*, 103.

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

238 Hugo Zöller, *Das Togoland und die Sklavenküste* (Berlin: Verlag von W. Spemann, 1885), 56; Ernest Graham Ingham, *Sierra Leone After A Hundred Years* (London: Seeley, 1894), 274.

239 Mary Kingsley, *Travels in West Africa* (New York: Macmillan, 1897), 644–655; Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, vol. 2 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1928), 774–781; Fyfe, *History*, 135.

By the 1890s, the headman's salary in some cases doubled that of regular workers. In 1890, H. Guinness observed that a gang of 25 Kru were hired in Freetown on what she termed "usual terms," as follows:

For a year's service, the hirer to pay travelling expenses both ways. These men are so much in demand as labourers that they get pretty good pay, and always expect a month's wages in advance. The headmen have two shillings each day, and the others one shilling. They have to be fed and lodged, and sent home if ill, so that they are pretty expensive helpers.²⁴⁰

While all of the workers expected advanced wages, their contracts had expanded to cover food, housing, travel and sickness expenses.

One of the most important duties the headman performed was to ensure the discipline of his labor gang. Captain Napier Hewett described the headman's role as follows:

[Regular Krumen and apprentices were to] pay implicit obedience to the chief of the gang; obey his instructions, and are amenable only to his rules and punishments. The captain of the vessel, when desirous to punish a Krooman, complains to the head-man, who inflicts summary justice, and as his orders are never disobeyed, or his judgment impeached, it would appear as though he exercised some powerful and mysterious influence over his people; and as he himself is equally attentive to the orders of the captain, the links in the chain of responsibility and discipline are complete.²⁴¹

The Kru were very particular that the Kru headman was the individual to deal out punishment for insubordinate behaviour amongst the Kru. Punishment by proxy worked very well for the British who left it to the Kru to carry out their disciplinary orders, which could include floggings.²⁴² While there were some cases in which the British captain intervened and carried out the discipline, this was considered taboo amongst the Kru and could result in their refusal to work, abandonment of their complement of the crew or the boycotting of captains known to mistreat Kru seamen.²⁴³ Moreover, if Kru workers were undisciplined it

²⁴⁰ Guinness, *New World*, 213.

²⁴¹ J.F. Napier Hewett, *European Settlements on the West Coast of Africa: With Remarks on the Slave Trade and the Supply of Cotton* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1862), 113.

²⁴² Reverend J. Clarke, "The West African Company," *Anti-Slavery Reporter* 2, no. 16 (Wednesday, August 11, 1841): 170.

²⁴³ *The Church Missionary Review* 32, no. 12 (1881): 725; Frost, *Work*, 72.

could cost them a payment, as was the case for one drunken Kru in 1884, who had to pay a penalty of 15s.²⁴⁴

The selection of headmen on Royal Navy ships and commercial vessels docked in Freetown could take two forms. The earliest known source addressing the issue is Captain Thomas Midgley's 1842 report that suggested the progression towards becoming a headman was based on merit.²⁴⁵ According to Midgley, headmen were appointed by the British based on their previous service and the nature of the notes in their books, which described their experience and character.²⁴⁶ A second way was for a headman to pass on his book to another Kruman whom he in effect recommended by doing so.²⁴⁷ Essentially, the headman was a foreman, a term that was adopted nearly a century later in the British Attorney General's Office.²⁴⁸

Figure 2.1 shows a Kru headman dressed in a blue-striped robe. As early as 1811, Thomas Coke observed Kru laborers in Freetown who wore "no clothing, excepting a handkerchief, or a piece of blue cloth tied about their middle, and sometimes a hat."²⁴⁹ Coke did not distinguish the headman's attire from regular workers. However, he did mention that the blue cloth was highly valued by the Kru.²⁵⁰ By 1890, the robe may have been directly associated with the authority of headmen as indicated by the sketch's original title "A Kroo-Boy Headman," which included the word "Dressed" in brackets. The fact the headman was dressed seems to suggest that this was his official attire. Wearing the robe distinguished headmen from regular Kru workers who were frequently pictured as shirtless with a white cloth covering around their loins (see Figure 2.2). Although the quality of the image is not good, it seems that there is no Kru mark on the forehead, which may indicate that the practice of scarification declined because of the diminished threat of enslavement following the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trades. The term "Kroo-Boy" which accompanied the image in the text was derogatory and part and parcel of the European racist perception that

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

245 "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.

246 *Ibid.*, 592.

247 *Ibid.*, 592.

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

249 Coke, *Interesting Narrative*, 45.

250 *Ibid.*, 46.



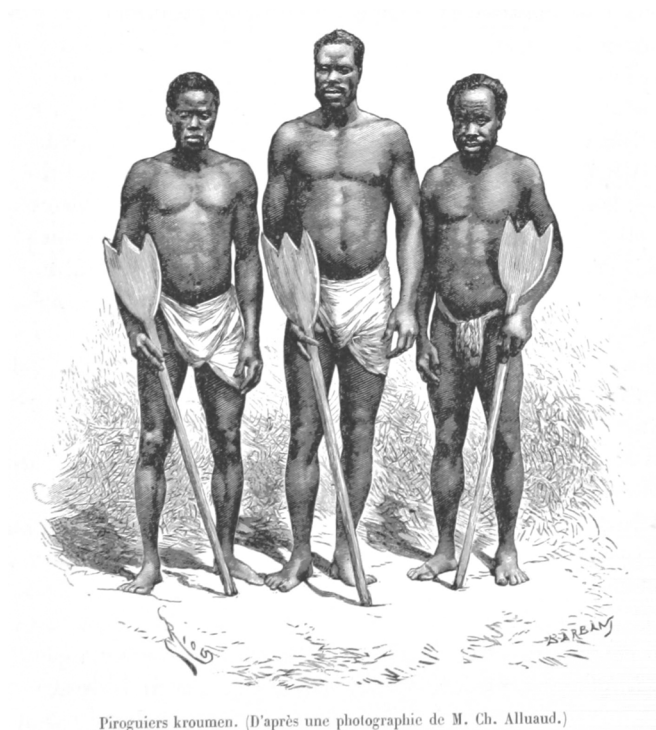
Figure 2.1: Kru headman in Freetown, c. 1890.

Source: Guinness, *New World*, 214.

often regarded Africans as uncivilized and child-like.²⁵¹ Yet, the British depended on the Kru for their labor and they remained a valuable resource for British enterprise in West Africa. In contrast with the Kru headman, the Kru seamen pictured above in Figure 2.2 in 1892 by Louis Gustave Binger are not wearing a robe and were most probably regular laborers. Most nineteenth century sketches of the Kru show them wearing loincloths, while images of the robe are rare and lend credence to its association with headmen.²⁵²

251 For a discussion on nineteenth century European racism that regarded Africans as uncivilized, savage or “other”, see Mudimbe, *Invention*, 1–23; Mudimbe, *Idea*, 1–70; Meek, *Social Science*, 5; Said, *Orientalism*, 1–30.

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



Piroguiers kroumen. (D'après une photographie de M. Ch. Alluaud.)

Figure 2.2: Kru with oars, c. 1892.

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

Employment with the British in Freetown depended on headmen as much as it had in prior times on board European ships. Moreover, headmen organized recruitment to ensure that future generations of Kru would remain employed under British contracts. Young men formed the pool of laborers who followed their headman to Freetown.²⁵³ They could be drawn from a Kru headman's *dako* and belonged to an age-set, which had traditionally formed the next generation of warriors as discussed in Chapter 1. As the number of Kru workers in Freetown increased in the early nineteenth century, the expectation that young men would serve as workers on ships and shoreside projects grew exponentially.

²⁵³ F. Harrison Rankin, *The White Man's Grave: A Visit to Sierra Leone, in 1834*, vol. 1 (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), 149.

In the context of Freetown, traditional age-sets were adapted to meet labor demands. The progression from adolescent to adult was marked by the transition from young laborer to regular worker. Behrens has shown that many laborers began their service as adolescents: “chaque Krooman... part de chez lui vers 13 and 14 ans, sous la responsabilité d’un Headman.”²⁵⁴ A complement of eight or ten Kru workers formed the labor gang, which could be upwards to 25 and 100 depending on the type of work.²⁵⁵ After serving on several contracts over a period of three or four years, they would return as independent laborers.²⁵⁶ Similar to the transition from *kofa* to *gbo* in their homeland communities, after three or four years of service, an adolescent progressed to the status of a regular worker with the possibility of becoming a headman. The Kru would have appreciated the three-step progression from adolescent worker to adult laborer to headman based on their understanding of the right-of-passage from *kofa* to *gbo* to *krogba* in Kru society. Indeed, the units of work and social organization rooted in age-grade regulations which informed mariner trade in their villages formed the basis for their employment on British ships and, by extension, diaspora communities such as their settlement in Freetown.²⁵⁷ Young men would have shown due protocol towards their headman who organized labor on their behalf for the same reasons they held great respect for the *krogbas* of their respective *dakwe* who were selected based on merit (and in some cases *panton* affiliation) and were accountable to their communities on the Kru Coast.

Laborers were expected to hand a portion of their earnings over to their headman.²⁵⁸ The power dynamic between the headman and his workers was based on apprenticeship. The young men learned their craft from their headman and the adult laborers who formed the labor pool. In 1840, James Holman suggested Kru workers first had to learn the “White man’s fashion”, meaning they had to acquire a familiarity with working on British contracts and working

254 Behrens, *Les Kroumen*, 56.

255 Ibid., 56.

256 Parliamentary Papers, “Report of a Commission of Inquiry into the State of Sierra Leone, part 1,” vol. 7 (1827), 312. See also William Davies, *Extracts from the Journal of the Rev. William Davies, 1st, when a Missionary at Sierra Leone, Western Africa; Containing some Account of the Countrey* (New York: Wesleyan Printing Office, 1835), 26.

257 Guenter Schroeder, “Letter to George Brooks,” March 31, 1971, 2–3. Schroeder was involved in *Ethnographic Survey of Southeastern Liberia: The Liberian Kran and the Sapo* (Newark, Delaware: Liberian Studies Association, 1974). Also see Schroeder and Andreas Massing, “A General Outline of Historical Developments within the Kru Cultural Province” (paper presented at the Second Annual Conference on Social Research in Liberia, Indiana University, April 30-May 2, 1970).

258 Holman, *Travels*, 186.

with white British sailors and administrators.²⁵⁹ Adolescent workers could not advance to adult laborers until they had some experience working in an environment that was directed by British operations. The adaptation of the age-set system towards supplying a steady labor force on British contract marks a major shift in the nature of the socio-economic structures informing Kru communities.

Krutown

The greatest marker of the emerging Kru diaspora in Freetown was the establishment of Krutown. Since their arrival in Freetown around 1792, Kru resided on the shores of what became known as Kroo Bay. Many of the Kru lived in the “Kru Reservation” which after its formal establishment in 1816 was known as Kroo Town (or Krutown).²⁶⁰ British authorities purchased the land from Eli Ackim adjacent to Kroo Bay for the purpose of providing a specific quarter for the Kru.²⁶¹ The convenient location on the ocean allowed the Kru to fish for subsistence and pull their surfboats ashore following work. Following the establishment of Krutown, the Kru population fluctuated between a few hundred to over a thousand over the course of the nineteenth century. In 1816, a report indicated that there were 700 Kru living in “Krooman’s Town” alone.²⁶²

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

The close connection between homeland on the Kru Coast and the diaspora community in Freetown was evident in the street names that were assigned in Krutown, which included “Nana Kroo,” “Little Kroo,” “Settra Kroo,” “King Wil-

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 186.

²⁶⁰ *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute* 13 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1882): 65; *Missionary Register for 1817*, vol. 5 (London: Seeley, 1817), 251; *The Christian Observer* 15, no. 11 (1816): 756.

²⁶¹ *Proceedings of the Royal Colonial Institute* 13 (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington, 1882): 65.

²⁶² Zachary Macaulay, ed., *The Christian Observer: Conducted by Members of the Established Church, Given by Disciples Divinity House* 15, no.11 (1816): 756.



Figure 2.3: Krootown Bay, c. 1910.

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



Figure 2.4: Krootown Road, Freetown, c. 1910.

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

liam,” and “Grand Cess,” all of which radiated outward from Krootown Road towards Krootown Bay (Figure 2.3, Figure 2.4, and Figure 2.5).²⁶³ The streets were named after several of the Kru’s main trading towns in Proper Kru settlements

²⁶³ See Brooks, *Kru Mariner*, 79.



Figure 2.5: Krootown, c. 1910.

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

on the Kru Coast. The only exception was Grand Cess, which was a village composed of Siklio Kru established adjacent to the Grand Cess River from at least the seventeenth century. Possibly, members from each community were housed on the appropriate street linked to their specific village and *dako*.

While the postcards date to the first decade of the twentieth century, the layout of the town remained the same since the early nineteenth century and hence later images accurately reflect what Krutown looked like throughout the century. As the Lisk-Carew postcards reveal, Krutown was the center of the Kru diaspora in Freetown.²⁶⁴

Even though their community was largely populated by the Proper Kru, Krutown gradually also became home to more and more Grebo and Bassa laborers, all of whom spoke Kru. While census records amalgamated these groups under the general heading of “Kru” in Freetown, they would have been able to distinguish between who was Proper Kru and who were Grebo and Bassa, not least because their autonomous communities competed for trade and were sometimes in conflict back in their homeland.²⁶⁵ Despite their differences, they accepted the general label of “Kru” in the context of Freetown as evidenced by the name of

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

265 Ludlam, “Account,” 46; Fraenkel, “Social Change,” 154–155.

their quarter – Krutown. After all, no Grebo Town or Bassa Town was ever created within the boundaries of Freetown during the period.²⁶⁶ As work increased in Sierra Leone, so too did those Kru speakers beyond the Proper Kru towns who wanted to obtain employment. However, there is little evidence that any Grebo, Bété, Noyo, Wane or Dida laborers to the east of the Cavalla River in Côte d'Ivoire ever made their way on contract to Freetown. Although some did work with the British, they appear more frequently on French ships and itineraries working in such locations as Libreville.²⁶⁷ Perhaps, the closer proximity of Proper Kru villages made them the prime candidates for contracts in Freetown.

The Kru mark continued to have special significance in Krutown. While the Kru did not have to secure protection from enslavement in Freetown after 1807 as they did while serving on European and American vessels on the coast, the mark served to distinguish them from other laboring African groups such as the Yoruba and Vai.²⁶⁸ Each African community had its own quarter in Freetown including Congo Town and Maroon Town. Beyond these quarters, other communities were founded including Cossoo Town, Bambara Town, Cabenda Town, Bassa Town, and Jolify Town.²⁶⁹ The main distinction was that these towns were composed of recaptives, or formerly enslaved Africans, who were delivered to Freetown. The Kru mark ensured that they were readily identified by the British, other African peoples, and amongst themselves. It may have even given the Kru an advantage over competing laborers because of the hardworking reputation they had garnered. For instance, in 1823, Edward Bold “strongly recommended” the Kru to all ship captains on the West African coast based on their “hard-working” nature.²⁷⁰ The Kru mark in Freetown made them that much easier to single out and hire.

In addition to the Kru mark, it seems that regular employment in the British Royal Navy also led to the tattooing of an anchor on the arm, which seems to have been an innovation in Freetown. Robert Clarke observed the practice in

266 Eventually, Bassa Town was founded outside of the boundaries of Freetown and it was inhabited by recaptives along with the neighboring towns.

267 Service with the French is discussed in Chapter 6.

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

269 Population Return for Sierra Leone, May 1, 1813, CMS/CA1/E3/76.

270 Bold, *Merchant's and Mariner's*, 45.

Freetown: “the figure of an anchor is sometimes traced upon their arms, in imitation of the English seamen with whom they associate.”²⁷¹ The traditional Kru mark and the tattoo on the arm thereby became distinct items in identification. As contracts with the British became an increasingly important source of revenue for the Kru economy, a tattoo on the arm may also have symbolized prestige amongst the Kru.

The establishment of Krutown necessitated the creation of a new position called the Krutown Headman (later the Kru Tribal Headman).²⁷² While its origins can be traced to the early nineteenth century when a “principal chief” maintained authority over the Kru community, the position was eventually formalized.²⁷³ British authorities in Sierra Leone began appointing Krutown Headmen for the purpose of keeping order amongst the Kru working in that colony. In 1849, Lieutenant Frederick Forbes described the position:

Krutown is under superintendence of a headman, who receives a shilling a day, and he is held responsible for the good behaviour of his tribe. Besides this he has large emoluments, receiving a fee for all returning and from new members: the superintendent of each street is under him.²⁷⁴

The growth in the communities that made up Freetown, many of which were designated as “towns,” led the British to appoint officials in order to ensure law and order and the “good behaviour” of its inhabitants. At various times in the nineteenth century, Kru were noted as being quarrelsome.²⁷⁵ The Krutown Headman was expected to deal with any difficulties within the Kru community.

The Krutown Headman differed from the headmen on ships who were tasked with administering their workers. Rather, he was responsible for the administration of Krutown and sat at the top of the hierarchical order in the Kru community. Superintendents were responsible for maintaining order on their street and reporting to him. In some ways, this mirrored the organizational layout of Kru villages back home in which each street was frequently managed by a leader or member of

271 Clarke, “Sketches,” 355.

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

273 Coke, *Interesting Narrative*, 45.

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

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

the *panton nyefue* who answered to the *krogba*.²⁷⁶ All Kru laborers were expected to pay their headman in their labor pool as well as the Krutown Headman, who was described as “a king or headman in Sierra Leone who settles their own disputes.”²⁷⁷ His authority and responsibilities mirrored the role of the *krogba* in the Kru homeland, who also collected money from Kru laborers and held administrative responsibility for their community. Similar to the ship headman and shoreside headman, he was the intermediary between the Kru and the British ensuring the overall discipline and well-being of the entire Kru community in Freetown.

By the 1860s, the Krutown Headman played a central role in the hiring process as merchant ship captains sought Kru seamen. Those merchants seeking Kru labor applied to the Krutown Headman who then called upon a ship headman to obtain the required number of laborers.²⁷⁸ Whereas the Kru had once been hired from their surfboats directly on the Kru Coast, in Freetown, the Krutown Headman was responsible for supplying British captains with a ship headman who in turn provided a labor gang from whom he extracted a fee from each Kru laborer. He also charged a fee to the British authorities for providing labor.²⁷⁹

Kru women did not begin to immigrate to Krutown to any extent until the later nineteenth century. Krutown guaranteed a place for the Kru and their families to reside without the worry of searching for land for their lodgings.²⁸⁰ Although Krutown was part of an urban setting, it seems Kru women were initially limited to the household and prevented from trading in the markets by their husbands.²⁸¹ However, by the close of the nineteenth century the opening of the City Market on Kroo Town Road meant that some Kru women eventually had the opportunity to sell fish and produce in the market.²⁸² Their role signifies a change from their villages where males engaged in trade with Europeans. Women could now trade directly with fellow Kru, Temne women, and other Africans.²⁸³

Kru oral traditions remember one of the most significant transformations that impacted Kru women in Freetown was their role as overseer of communal households. The oldest wife of a Kru headman was assigned the authoritative role of

276 “Miscellany,” *The Missionary Magazine* 46 (1866): 120.

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

278 Hewett, *European Settlements*, 113.

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

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

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

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

283 Bangura, *Temne*, 171–172.

being responsible for the management of Kru sailors who lodged at the headman's house while awaiting their next contract. She was tasked with feeding and ensuring the discipline of sailors who remained in Freetown between contracts. The workers were expected to give the headman's eldest wife a portion of their earnings and became like "extended family members" of the headman.²⁸⁴ Although official responsibility for maintaining the "good behaviour" of the community in Krutown was assigned to the Krutown Headman, the wives of headmen became crucial background players who made it happen on the ground.

Relationship with the Homeland

The Kru's homecoming experience was an essential component that maintained their diaspora in Freetown. British contracts in Freetown based on standardized timeframes that could range from six months to 18 months and even three years created a regular cycle of homecoming protocol that influenced Kru culture in their homeland. Following the completion of a contract, the great majority of Kru would disembark in Freetown and remain in Krutown before accepting their next contract, but many also returned to their villages whether or not they intended to return to Freetown for further employment.

Through employment in Freetown, the British offered the Kru an alternative means for raising their bride-price obligations, wealth, and prestige. Kru laborers hoped to acquire as many wives as possible for elevating their social status and expanding their kinship group. Using their payments in iron bars, cattle, brass kettles, and blue baft, the Kru built houses and purchased wives.²⁸⁵ In 1825, Captain Robert Pearce of HMS Brazen observed that upon the Kru's homecoming, the following process unfolded:

[Kru] lay out in merchandize such as cloths, hats, muskets, Powder, Iron Bars, tobacco in stone jars, Large Brass pans, beads, knives & c &c with fruits of their labour on their return they purchase as many wives as they can maintain – their rank there afterwards estimated according to the proportion of that scale of establishment.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ Smith, personal interview, December 13, 2012.

²⁸⁵ Holman, *Travels*, 186–187; Lugenbeel, "Native Africans," 15; Holman, "Mr. Holman's Travels," *The Asiatic Journal*, 64; *Sixth Report of the African Institution* (1812): 68–70; *The Analectic Magazine* 1 (1813): 12–13; Smith, *Trade*, 100.

²⁸⁶ Bruce Lockhart and Lovejoy, *Hugh Clapperton*, 418.

Pearce showed that the Kru exchanged the items they had earned in Freetown for wives in their villages. Similarly, Hugh Clapperton claimed that a Kruman was “esteemed according to the No of his wives.”²⁸⁷

The cost of purchasing wives was expressed in 1840 by Holman who observed: “For the first wife, they pay two bullocks, two brass kettles, one piece of blue baft, and one iron bar.”²⁸⁸ He did not mention how much each subsequent wife cost but seemed to suggest that the first wife was the most expensive. This may have been because the first wife had authority over the other wives the Kruman acquired following contracts. During interviews with the Kru in 1860, Reverend Thomas Charles learned about the cost of purchasing a wife. A Kruman named Tom Pepper explained: “S’pose he people be poor, he sell for twenty dollar; s’pose he no want sell much, he be price fiftee dollar.”²⁸⁹ Pepper indicated that the price was determined by the bride’s father and could range between \$20.00 and \$50.00.²⁹⁰ The price differential depended on whether the bride came from a poor or wealthy family – the wealthier the family the higher the cost of their daughter. The cost of a wife was paid for in goods at a pre-determined monetary value.

The socio-economic impact of the Kru free wage labor diaspora in Freetown was thereby felt at home in their settlements. Whereas the headman was once solely responsible for organizing labor on vessels visiting the coast, the institutionalization of their position through higher wages enabled the headman to become a pillar of authority both in their workplace and in their homeland on the Kru Coast. Their role in securing future employment was so important that regular Kru laborers were gradually expected to give their advance to their headman following the negotiation of a contract.²⁹¹

The protocol of gift-giving and the incentive for pursuing contracts became intimately ingrained in Kru society. Contracts created social prestige and enabled social mobility. Value was measured by gift-giving and the accumulation of wives. Kru provided for their family bringing back gifts, which could be used to accumulate social value or be traded with Europeans on the Kru Coast.

287 Ibid., 86.

288 Holman, *Travels*, 187.

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

290 Ibid., 107.

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

Gifts given to the *krogba* played a role in maintaining traditional power dynamics in Kru villages. The *krogba* continued to hold his position of authority over the community and in the process was able to increase his wealth. Because of these demands, many Kru would only remain in their homeland for several months before they returned to Krutown for further employment.²⁹²

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

The following trait in the history of the Kroomen, or natives of the Kroo country, upon that part of the coast called the Grain Coast, is curious... The Kroomen... are almost the only people on the coast who voluntarily emigrate, to seek for labour out of their own country. They come to Sierra Leone, to work in any capacity in which they can obtain employment, until they are possessed of sufficient property to enable them to purchase several wives... Before they are able to accomplish this object, they are obliged to make several visits to Sierra Leone, as they do not like to be absent more than two or three years at a time from their own country. The average duration of this voluntary banishment is perhaps about eighteen months. A sketch of the progress of the Kroomen, from their first visit to Sierra Leone to the final consummation of their wishes, in the attainment of their paradise... one of whose usages is that of seeking abroad, during the vigorous years of life, the means of dwelling with ease and comfort in old age at home.²⁹³

Holman's description dates to 1840, but it reveals several significant features that informed the Kru free wage labor diaspora that clearly date back to the late eighteenth century.²⁹⁴ These include: the Kru voluntarily immigrated to Sierra Leone for work; they completed at least several contracts that on average lasted 18 months; they continually circulated between homeland and workplace; they were compensated for their labor; their objective was to purchase wives and thereby expand their kin group; they eventually returned to the Kru Coast following retirement. Kru would not permanently return to the Kru Coast until they had accumulated enough wages that would effectively elevate their status

292 Coke, *Interesting Narrative*, 45–46; Ludlam, "Account," *Sixth Report*, 68–70; *The Analectic Magazine* 1 (1813): 12–13; Lugenbeel, "Native Africans," 15.

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

294 Migratory labor cycles informing Kru labor developed in the 1790s and were firmly established by the early nineteenth century in Freetown. See Winterbottom, *Account*, 8–9; Coke, *Interesting Narrative*, 45–46.

in Kru society. Holman's account is corroborated by Kru oral traditions and numerous sources that discuss the cyclical nature of Kru labor in Freetown.²⁹⁵

The opportunity to earn wages in-kind and later monetary wages created a fundamental shift in notions of power and authority within Kru communities as they began to labor in Freetown. Although the gradual process had begun in their communities since they first traded with Europeans on the coast, the process was accelerated in Freetown. Because of the regular timeframes of the British contracts, greater amounts of capital accumulation could be had versus the ununiform nature of trade on the coast. Suddenly, there was great incentive to obtain contracts in Freetown and ascend the social hierarchy at home. Kru sought to gain capital accumulation through the commerce of selling their labor for the purposes of climbing the social ladder from regular laborer to headmen to Kru-town Headman and in some cases to *krogba*.²⁹⁶

Perhaps most significantly, employment in Freetown resulted in the crystallization of Kru identity and their homeland, known as the Kru Coast, from the perspective of British employers and the Kru alike. As discussed above, while most Kru were contracted from the Proper Kru region between the Cestos and Grand Cess Rivers, other Kru-speaking peoples migrated from the adjacent regions and were simply categorized as Kru upon arrival in Freetown by British officials. While Proper Kru self-identified as Kru, an unprecedented twofold Grebo-Kru and Bassa-Kru identity emerged in the context of Freetown based on common language, similar occupations, and place of residence in Krutown. As a result, the conceptual parameters of the Kru homeland gradually expanded. It is important to remember that the label Krumen or Kroomen was not regularly applied by Europeans until the 1790s. Labor in Freetown and trade on the coast reverberated and resulted in new meanings of Kru identity and the renaming of their homeland as the Kru Coast as it was known thereafter in the nineteenth century. The Kru would gradually expand the geographical breadth of their free wage labor diaspora to other British ports in West Africa and beyond while serving on Royal Navy and commercial ships.

295 An interview with Chief Davis revealed that the goal of Kru laborers was to complete as many contracts as possible before retiring in their village or in their diaspora community in Freetown. Sources that support the idea that the Kru were engaged in a free wage labor diaspora in Freetown by circulating between their homeland and Krutown include Lugenbeel, "Native Africans," 15; Ludlam, "Account," *Sixth Report*, 68–70; *The Analectic Magazine* 1 (1813): 12–13; Parliamentary Papers, "Report of a Commission of Inquiry into the State of Sierra Leone, part 1," vol. 7 (1827), 312; Davies, *Extracts*, 26.

296 Coquery-Vidrovitch and Lovejoy, *Workers*, 17.