

Chapter 4

Kru Labor in Expeditions and Military Campaigns

Beginning in the 1820s, Kru expanded their wage-earning opportunities in British expeditions of exploration and diplomacy in West Africa and West Central Africa. The British depended on Kru pilotage, portage, and general labor in Hugh Clapperton's second expedition to Sokoto (1825–1827), and a series of Niger River expeditions including those led by Richard and John Lander (1830), Macgregor Laird, Richard Lander, and R.A.K. Oldfield (1832–1833), William Allen, Henry Dundas Trotter, and Bird Allen (1841–1842), and William Balfour Baikie (1854). Based on their valuable services, they were later employed on David Livingstone's Zambezi Expedition (1858–1864). Kru continued to rely on their mastery of watercraft as they navigated rivers, collected food and water, and transported European crew ashore for trade and negotiations with local polities. Often, the British provided additional financial incentives including gratuities to ensure that the Kru remained for the duration of the expeditions.⁴¹⁴ After all, the Kru had garnered a favorable reputation seaside and shoreside and remained in control of their labor to the extent that they would refuse work or leave workspaces if contractual terms and conditions were not to their satisfaction.⁴¹⁵ Perhaps most significantly, the expeditions opened the way for a greater British presence in the Niger Delta and increased palm oil production, which led to the creation of several Kru diaspora communities in Bonny and Calabar.

During the same period, Kru duties in the Royal Navy were extended to include service in military campaigns in Asia and Africa including the First Opium War (1839–1842), occupation of Lagos (1851–1852), campaign against Asante (1873–1874), Anglo-Zulu War (1879), and Sudan Campaign (1884–1885). Service in the First Opium War in China expanded their labor to the Pacific Ocean where they continued to serve on Royal Navy ships thereafter. Their participation in the assault on Lagos resulted in British control and the eventual establishment of a Kru diaspora community that lasted well into the twentieth century. While their role in expeditions largely depended on their mariner skills, the opportunity to serve in naval brigades on battlefields truly represented a new facet in the Kru labor experience. Moreover, their role in transporting military equipment and soldiers ashore, portage, and engaging in battles at the front reveals the com-

⁴¹⁴ Allen and Thomson, *Narrative*, 1: 494–495.

⁴¹⁵ *The Church Missionary Review* 32, no. 12 (1881): 725; Frost, *Work*, 72.

plex nature of European colonial processes that unfolded in Asia and Africa in the nineteenth century.

Expeditions

Kru laborers played important roles in British expeditions in Africa. They cut paths, carried materials, manned and piloted British ships, and sailed vessels along two of Africa's most important rivers, the Niger River and the Zambezi River. The expeditions were largely inspired by European ideologies rooted in the desire to increase trade in the African interior, spread Christianity, and, from their perspective, inspire a higher level of civilization based on European social and economic values.⁴¹⁶ The primary concern of the Kru remained earning wages on contract, and they seem to have given little attention to the political impact of their involvement on local societies.

Clapperton's Second Expedition, 1825–27

Kru served on Hugh Clapperton's second expedition to the Sokoto Caliphate between 1825 and 1827. During the first expedition that began in Tripoli, Clapperton established diplomatic relations in Borno and the Sokoto Caliphate after crossing the Sahara under the command of Major Dixon Denham between 1822 and 1825.⁴¹⁷ Clapperton's second expedition arose from a mutual desire between the British and the Sultan of the Sokoto Caliphate, Muhammed Bello, to open up commercial trade with one another. On his voyage back to West Africa, he landed in Freetown for the purpose of acquiring Kru seamen. On October 27, 1825, Clapperton reported that he hired Kru in Freetown:

416 For a discussion on ideologies informing colonial endeavor in Africa see Lewis H. Gann and Peter Duignan, *Colonialism in Africa, 1870–1960* (London: Cambridge, 1969), introduction; Frederick Lugard, *The Rise of Our East African Empire* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood and Sons, 1893), 1:585–587, 2:69–75; Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," *McClure's Magazine* 12, no. 4 (1899): 290.

417 E.W. Bovill, ed., *Captain Clapperton's Narrative*, in *Missions to The Niger: The Bornu Mission, 1822–25*, Part 3, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966); Dixon Denham, Hugh Clapperton, and Walter Oudney, *Narrative of Travels and Discoveries in Northern and Central Africa in the years 1822, 1823, and 1824*, 2 vols. (London: Darf Publishers Ltd., 1826); Bruce Lockhart and Lovejoy, *Hugh Clapperton*, 1.

H.M. Government however most wisely and humanely ordered that every ship serving on the African station shall be allowed a certain number [of hired men] to be paid and victualled on board for those duties during the time she is on the station—every merchant ship is obliged to do the same... I have also for the purpose of being able to land at all places and at all times hired – 14 – the head man of whom is called Tom Freeman.⁴¹⁸

Their duties were to assist in the collection of water, wood, and landing along the coast as they approached Badagry in the Bight of Benin.⁴¹⁹ Clapperton was aware of the necessity of hiring Kru on his voyage because of their positive reputation, and due to the high mortality rates affecting British seaman in West Africa.⁴²⁰ The headman, Tom Freeman's labor gang included: "Bottle of Beer, Black Will, Prince Will, Jack Monday, Ben Coffee, Jim George, Tom Nimblo, Jack Tartar, Yellow Will, Jack Morgiana, Jack Purser, Tom Briggs, and Peter Johnson."⁴²¹ Kru workers in Clapperton's expedition continued to depend on their headman. There were 14 Kru laborers in total, which suggests the manpower required was on par with the number of Kru serving on Royal Navy ships during the period.

Clapperton landed at Badagry on December 7, 1825 and made his way overland and crossed the Niger at Bussa. Kru played a fundamental role in portage and the manning of watercraft. Clapperton realized that the Niger and neighboring rivers formed a larger network of waterways that had the potential to establish a network of trading posts that would link the British on the West African coast with the Sokoto Caliphate in the interior.⁴²² Unfortunately, Clapperton arrived in Kano, the major emporium of the interior, at a time when the Caliphate was at war with Borno, which Clapperton also intended to visit. When it was discovered that Clapperton had presents for Shehu al-Kanemi, the ruler of Borno, that included firearms, he was detained and during his internment in Sokoto died of disease.⁴²³

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

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 82–83.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 53.

Lander Brothers' Expedition, 1830

Following his death in 1827, his assistant, Richard Lemon Lander, returned to the coast and later published Clapperton's journals and his own account in 1829.⁴²⁴ Almost immediately upon his return to Britain, Lander was commissioned to lead a new expedition, together with his brother John, and in 1830 they left Britain on the brig *Alert*. Like Clapperton, the Lander brothers hired Kru seamen for their expedition. They landed at Badagry on March 22, 1830, and made their way to Bussa, from where they traveled down the Niger towards the delta.⁴²⁵ Their mission, too, was far from successful, since they were imprisoned and were only freed in the Niger Delta when a Portuguese ship purchased their liberty. From a European perspective, however, they demonstrated that the Niger River did indeed flow into the Atlantic Ocean in the many rivers that were now recognized as the delta of the Niger.

The Kru played an important role in navigation. One of their duties included piloting the *Alert* and its smaller craft through potentially challenging sub-marine terrain. Richard Lander explained that their duty was to “sound the bar of the river, in order to know whether there was sufficient depth of water for the vessel to pass over it.”⁴²⁶ The Kru also engaged in towing the *Alert* with smaller craft as the anchor was raised.⁴²⁷ In typical Kru fashion, Lander noted that they manned each craft with six rowers while on the Niger.⁴²⁸

Laird Expedition, 1832–33

British interest in establishing the Niger as commercial hub continued to gain momentum and in 1832, Macgregor Laird, supported by Liverpool merchants, sent two ships, the *Alburkah* and the *Quorra*, to the Niger. The *Quorra* had 26 crewmembers and the *Alburkah* had 14, both included Kru, although their exact numbers were not provided.⁴²⁹ Laird noted the “dexterity of the Kroomen

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 82–83.

⁴²⁵ Richard and John Lander, *Journal*, 1: 41.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3: 252.

⁴²⁷ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁴²⁸ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁴²⁹ MacGregor Laird and R.A.K. Oldfield, *Narrative of an Expedition into the Interior of Africa, By the River Niger in 1832, 1833 and 1834 in the Steam-Vessels Quorra and Alburkah* vol. 2 (London: Richard Bentley, 1837), 302; John W. Davies, “On the Fever in the Zambesi: A Note from Dr.

is exemplified in their diving, and their power of remaining under water for a considerable time.”⁴³⁰ Their skills were useful for the maintenance of the hull, which required Kru to venture beneath the ship for the purposes of cleaning it.

As was the case on previous expeditions, the primary function of Kru workers was cutting wood, gathering supplies, and tendering crew members and goods ashore on small craft.⁴³¹ Occasionally, they were also sent to trade ashore, acquiring food for the crew including meat and livestock to be slaughtered.⁴³² Laird’s expedition had not proven to be an immediate commercial success, but the mission was in part driven by a desire to establish commercial relations with Igbo, Igala, and Edo traders on the Niger in palm oil that it was hoped would ultimately quell the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

In terms of navigation, Laird’s experimentation with steamship technology marked the beginning of a new era in the British Empire in West Africa. Steamship prototypes had been in use since 1819, but the *Alburkah* and *Quorra* were the first multi-purpose armed steamships to make an oceanic voyage, predating the *Nemesis*, which was the first iron steamship solely designed for warfare.⁴³³ Laird eventually founded the African Steamship Company in 1852.⁴³⁴ Faster travel periods and a flat-bottomed hull that enabled travel in shallow rivers played a major role in British expeditions into the interior of West Africa. Moreover, as mentioned above, it created new jobs for the Kru such as firestokers and coalers, and increased the demand for them in supplying wood for the ships.

Niger Expedition, 1841–42

Kru returned for service on the Niger in the expedition of 1841–1842. In 1840, Thomas Fowell Buxton, Member of Parliament, abolitionist and founder of the

Livingstone to Dr. M’William June 3rd 1861,” *Transactions of the Epidemiological Society of London* 1 (1863): 239.

⁴³⁰ Laird and Oldfield, *Narrative*, 303.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 302; William Simpson, *A Private Journal Kept During the Niger Expedition: From the Commencement in May 1841, Until the Recall of the Expedition in June 1842 By William Simpson* (London: John F Shaw, 1843), 69–70.

⁴³² Laird and Oldfield, *Narrative*, 2:133.

⁴³³ Peter Ward Fay, *The Opium War, 1840–1842: Barbarians in the Celestial Empire in the Early Part of the Nineteenth Century and the War by Which They Forced Her Gates Ajar* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1975), 260–263; Lincoln P. Paine, *Warships of the World to 1900* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2000), 115.

⁴³⁴ Peter N. Davies, *The Trade Makers: Elder Demspster in West Africa, 1852–1872, 1973–1989* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), xxvi.

Society for the Mitigation and Gradual Abolition of Slavery (later known as the Anti-Slavery Society), began organizing the largest expedition on the Niger yet undertaken.⁴³⁵ Buxton's vision for increased commerce and the promotion of Christianity in West Africa was rooted in similar principles informing the establishment of Freetown some five decades earlier.⁴³⁶ Reverend J.F. Schon and Reverend Samuel Ajayi Crowther joined the expedition and were responsible for assessing the disposition of African rulers in the interior to receiving the gospel.⁴³⁷ Three ships sailed for the Niger including HMS Albert commanded by Captain H.D. Trotter, HMS Wilberforce commanded by Captain William Allen, and HMS Soudan commanded by Bird Allen. The goal of the expedition was to establish a model farm or trade center and mission in Lokoja at the confluence of the Niger River and Benue River.⁴³⁸

Prior to the expedition, Captain Trotter recognized the need to offer the Kru higher wages than those offered on Royal Navy ships in order to entice Kru to join the expedition. Unlike their service on Royal Navy ships where they could receive additional prize money following the capture of a slave ship, there was no such opportunity on the expedition. Trotter claimed that higher wages would "ensure getting the best description of men."⁴³⁹ He suggested giving those Kru who completed the expedition one month's wages as a gratuity.⁴⁴⁰ The gratuity was not to exceed a total of £200 and was to be distributed amongst Kru laborers.⁴⁴¹ Trotter was concerned Kru seamen would abandon the expedition in search of better economic opportunities. Eleven men were designated as stokers on the ships and the remainder were tasked with landing boats and shoreside duties.⁴⁴² In total, £500 was allotted for Kru employment in expedition expenses.⁴⁴³

435 Junius P. Rodriguez, *Slavery in the Modern World: A History of Political, Social and Economic Oppression*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 156.

436 Suzanne Schwarz, "Commerce, Civilization and Christianity: The Development of the Sierra Leone Company" in David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz, and Anthony Tibbles eds., *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 270.

437 Kenneth Dike, "Origins of the Niger Mission 1841–1891," A paper read at the Centenary of the Mission at Christ Church, Onitsha, on November 13, 1957 (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1962), 6.

438 Whitford, *Trading Life*, 129.

439 Allen and Thomson, *Narrative*, 1: 494.

440 *Ibid.*, 495.

441 *Ibid.*, 497.

442 Parliamentary Papers, vol. 2, no. 15, "Niger Expedition," Colonial Office, R. Vernon Smith, January 1841, 13, 1842.

443 Allen and Thomson, *Narrative*, 1: 491.

On June 26, 1841, Kru were hired on HMS Wilberforce and HMS Albert in Freetown.⁴⁴⁴ The muster list suggests that 108 “Men entered in Africa,” which included the Kru who were dispersed amongst the vessels. Forty-four were assigned on HMS Albert, 37 on HMS Wilberforce, 18 on HMS Soudan, and nine on a fourth vessel, Amelia.⁴⁴⁵ Some of the names of Kru crewmembers were listed on the ships’ manifests. Jack Be-Off on HMS Albert was listed as being born in Kru Country, and held the rank of Ordinary seaman. Two other Kru included Andrew Williams, an Able seaman, and James Carol, a stoker.⁴⁴⁶ The ships sailed for the Niger on August 20, 1841. They performed the same types of jobs they had in previous expeditions, manning small craft along the river, collecting timber for fuel, fresh water, and supplies.⁴⁴⁷ They were responsible for providing a portion of the food for the crew and fished in the lagoons and river.⁴⁴⁸ They were also tasked with unique duties, as demonstrated by a Kru seaman who dug the grave of a fallen crewmember.⁴⁴⁹

As was the case on all previous expeditions, the headman system remained integral for the completion of daily operations. Several headmen were hired on HMS Wilberforce including Wilson who led a gang of eight Kru laborers.⁴⁵⁰ Jack Andrews headed another gang, whose duty was to assist in working small vessels.⁴⁵¹ His gang included Jack Frying-pan, King George, Prince Albert, Jack Sprat, Bottle-of-Beer, Tom Tea-Kettle, Prince of Wales, Duke of York, and Sam Lewis.⁴⁵² The expedition produced a model farm for a Niger mission, albeit the mission did not develop further until Crowther’s return in 1854.⁴⁵³ Treaties between the British and rulers in Aboh and Idah towards the abolition of the slave trade were signed and they granted permission for the presence of missionaries. However, mortality rates were high amongst the British sailors. Fifty-four crew of the total of 162 crewmembers were dead from malaria within weeks of

444 Simpson, *Private Journal*, 128, 18, 22, 68–70. Simpson suggests that the number of Kru employed amounted to 120.

445 Allen and Thomson, *Narrative*, 1:461.

446 *Ibid.*, 465.

447 James Frederick Schön and Samuel Crowther, *Journals of the Rev. James Frederick Schön and Mr. Samuel Crowther: Who, Accompanied the Expedition Up the Niger, in 1841, in Behalf of the Church Missionary Society* (London: Hatchard and Son, 1842), 150; Simpson, *Private Journal*, 47.

448 Allen and Thomson, *Narrative*, 1:167.

449 Schön and Crowther, *Journals*, 164.

450 Simpson, *Private Journal*, 58.

451 Allen and Thomson, *Narrative*, 1:77.

452 *Ibid.*, 77–78.

453 Dike, “Origins,” 9.

the voyage up the Niger. In contrast, Kru seamen experienced a very low mortality rate on the expedition. Only four Kru laborers died from malaria including one on HMS Albert, two on HMS Wilberforce, and one on HMS Soudan.⁴⁵⁴

Baikie Expedition, 1854

High mortality rates amongst British sailors and low economic returns in the 1841–1842 expedition meant that there was little interest amongst the British government in funding another expedition in the Niger until more than a decade had passed. In 1854, the British embarked on another expedition with the goal of increasing the number of trading stations on the Niger and establishing missions. John Beecroft was assigned to command the expedition, but he died in Fernando Po before ascending the Niger. In his stead, Dr. William Balfour Baikie, a surgeon and naturalist, commanded the expedition in the steamer, *Pleiad*. He sailed up the Niger and then up the Benue, surpassing all previous expeditions in terms of distance.

Advances in medicine with the development of quinine meant that an anti-malarial drug could be taken as a prophylactic for the first time. Although Jesuits in the sixteenth century and indigenous populations in South America, Central America, the Caribbean, and parts of West Africa had known about the medicinal properties of cinchona bark, it was not used in the large-scale production of medicine until the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁵⁵ The Niger Expedition provided the opportunity to test the viability of quinine amongst British sailors.⁴⁵⁶ Quinine became available in the 1850s for regular use and played a major role in lowering

454 Allen and Thomson, *Narrative*, 506; John Beecroft, “On Benin and the Upper Course of the River Quorra, or Niger, by Captain Beecroft,” *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 11 (1841): 184, 189. Kru served on the *Ethiope* steamer in April 1840. Commanded by Captain Beecroft, they sailed in Fermoso River (Benin River) before finding it impassable and, in May 1840, sailed the Niger River.

455 Philip Curtin, *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780–1850*, vol. 1 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1973), 81; Philip Curtin, *Disease and Empire: The Health of European Troops in the Conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 5, 21, 113, Curtin, “End,” 63–88; Alexander Bryson, “Prophylactic Influence of Quinine,” *Medical Times and Gazette* 7 (January 7, 1854): 6–7; J.O. M’William, *Medical History of the Expedition to the Niger during the years 1841–1842 comprising An Account of the Fever* (London: John Churchill, 1843), 10.

456 Curtin, *Image of Africa*, 81; Bryson, “Prophylactic Influence,” 6–7; M’William, *Medical History*, 10.

fatalities. As a result, there was not a single death amongst British sailors due to malaria for the first 118 days of the expedition.⁴⁵⁷

Based on high mortality rates amongst British sailors in past expeditions, the British government hired as many African laborers as possible. Unlike previous expeditions in which Kru laborers were hired in Freetown, Kru were hired directly on the Kru Coast.⁴⁵⁸ The Kru formed half of the complement on the voyage up the Niger in the 1854 expedition: 33 in a total crew of 66.⁴⁵⁹ Samuel Crowther observed the Kru paddling canoes between ship and shore, collecting wood, and purchasing food and beer from local Igbo traders.⁴⁶⁰ Ultimately, Baikie's efforts led to the creation of trading posts and missions in Onitsha, Gbebe, and Lokoja.

Opening up the Niger led to the increased employment of Kru workers in the Niger Delta in the palm oil industry. The demand for palm oil in British factories rose and more ships were devoted to the trade in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁶¹ Used as a lubricant for machinery as well as for soap, candles, and the palm kernels for margarine and cattle feed, palm oil grew in demand.⁴⁶² The shift to so-called "legitimate trade" was meant to encourage Kru, Yoruba, and other traders on the west coast of Africa to earn profits from palm oil production rather than from slave trading, which abolitionists believed to be mutually exclusive.⁴⁶³ How-

⁴⁵⁷ Dike, "Origins," 10.

⁴⁵⁸ William Balfour Baikie, *Narrative of an Exploring Voyage Up to the Rivers Kuora and Binue Commonly Known as the Niger and Tsadda in 1854* (1856; repr., London: Psychology Press, 1966), 18, 366.

⁴⁵⁹ Davies, "On the Fever in the Zambesi," 241.

⁴⁶⁰ Samuel Crowther, *Journal of an Expedition up the Niger and Tshadda Rivers Undertaken by Macgregor Laird in Connection with the British Government in 1854* (London: Church Missionary House, 1855), 8, 43, 66, 87, 89, 94, 130.

⁴⁶¹ David Northrup, "The Compatibility of the Slave and Palm Oil Trades in the Bight of Biafra," *The Journal of African History* 17, no. 3 (1976): 359, 360.

⁴⁶² Martin Lynn, "From Sail to Steam: The Impact of the Steamship Services on the British Palm Oil Trade with West Africa, 1850–1890," *The Journal of African History* 30, no. 2 (1989): 228.

⁴⁶³ Kristin Mann, "Owners, Slaves and the Struggle for Labour in the Commercial Transition in Lagos," in *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth Century West Africa*, ed. Robin Law (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 195–214; Robin Law, "The Politics of Commercial Transition: Factional Conflict in Dahomey in the Context of Ending the Slave Trade," *The Journal of African History* 38, no. 2 (1997): 213–333; Martin Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: The Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 34–104; Northrup, "Compatibility," 353.

ever, the transition caused an increase in local slavery as the enslaved were re-directed to agricultural production in the Bight of Biafra.⁴⁶⁴

Bonny and Calabar

During this transitional period, Kru remained on wage labor contracts with the British and founded diaspora communities in the Niger Delta. Palm oil production in Bonny played a major role in Kru migration. By the 1850s, there were between 500 and 600 Kru working on agricultural contracts in Bonny.⁴⁶⁵ Many Kru were hired specifically for the transport of palm oil on British vessels.⁴⁶⁶ Kru worked on contracts that lasted between six months and a year before returning to Freetown where many had been hired or to their homeland on the Kru Coast.⁴⁶⁷ In 1850, the *Petrel* carried 63 Kru workers for contracts in palm oil agriculture.⁴⁶⁸ Demand was so high that up to 200 vessels engaged in the palm oil trade were said to employ Kru annually.⁴⁶⁹

Kru were hired for their ability to navigate unpredictable waters with adverse sub-marine terrain including sandbars. Using their surfboats as they had for centuries on the Kru Coast, Kru were recorded as transporting individuals, loading and unloading cargo including palm oil and missionary goods, and manning small boats upon the arrival of mail steamers arriving at Bonny.⁴⁷⁰ Kru living in Bonny made for a labor pool that offered hundreds of Kru workers.⁴⁷¹ Gangs of Kru laborers were hired out from Bonny for service along the many riv-

464 Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City: Lagos, 1760–1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 1–8, 51–130; Lovejoy, *Transformations*, 160–184.

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

466 *Ibid.*, 450.

467 *Ibid.*, 450.

468 *Ibid.*, 450.

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

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

471 Peter N. Davies, ed., *Trading in West Africa, 1840–1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 30.

ers and tributaries that make up the Niger Delta as the British traded and loaded ships at Bonny, Opobo, Calabar, and elsewhere.

Table 4.1 shows Kru wages earned on British commercial contracts in the Bight of Biafra. The location and duration of contracts determined wage rates. The pay rates and rank are not always provided in the sources and so information is both sporadic and inconsistent. Table 4.1 shows an approximation of Kru wage rates on commercial vessels in the Bights of Benin and Biafra. As the nineteenth century progressed, Kru had the opportunity to earn higher wages while engaged in commercial labor for the British. The Kru headman continued to receive a percentage of wages from his labor gang, and therefore, his wages increased depending on the size of the labor force. Kru were also guaranteed that all travel expenses including return passage were covered. The low salaries for the year 1899 did not specify the length of the contract. However, the table shows that headmen continued to make up to three times higher salary than regular workers.

Table 4.1: Kru Wages in the Bight of Biafra.

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

Source: Smith, *Trade*, 100–103; “Negro Civilization,” *Journal of Health*, 259; Frost, *Work*, 26; Guinness, *New World*, 213; Colonial Reports, no. 315, “Southern Nigeria, Report for 1899–1900” (London: Darling & Son, 1901), 26.

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

When shipped at S’a Leone for merchant service, their wages are more than those who embark at Cape Palmas; nominally the former now receive 30s., the latter \$2 per month in goods, which reduce it to \$1. Some picked gig-crews in the Oil Rivers, receive \$5, besides additional clothes and caps; the average pay is from \$3 to \$4.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷² Richard Francis Burton, *Wanderings in West Africa from Liverpool to Fernando Po*, 2 vols. (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1863), 26.

According to Burton, Kru hired in Sierra Leone had the opportunity to earn a higher wage rate than those hired in their homeland on the Kru Coast near Cape Palmas. However, Burton shows that Kru already based in their diaspora communities in the Niger Delta were hired for work on the Oil Rivers at a higher salary than in all other locations. Perhaps, the British were willing to pay a little more because they did not have to worry about additional expenses incurred on the voyage from Freetown or Cape Palmas to the Niger Delta.

Headmen continued to play an important role in the organization of the Kru workforce. Jane Martin has suggested that the headman changeover process in Calabar occurred every twelve months. A second headman returned to the Kru Coast or Freetown and recruited a labor gang every six months. The newly-hired gang went to Calabar and familiarized itself with the work routine by learning from the gang that was already there. A full changeover took place every October.⁴⁷³ Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Kru seem to have developed a unique process of selecting a second headman to return and recruit gang laborers to replace the existing ones, such as the case in Calabar.⁴⁷⁴

In Calabar, Kru living and working quarters were associated with a building known as the “Kroo House.”⁴⁷⁵ It was located on a stretch of beach next to the boatshed and marine stores. This building most probably served as lodgings for some Kru workers and a storage space for their marine equipment. Although not a quarter, the fact they had their own residence named after them signifies that they formed a distinct community in Calabar and played a fundamental role in marine and agricultural operations.

Zambezi Expedition, 1858–1864

The lasting impact of Kru participation in British expeditions was not limited to West Africa, as they also served in David Livingstone’s Zambezi Expedition between 1858 and 1864. Similar to British expeditions on the Niger, Livingstone’s expedition was rooted in the British desire to establish trading posts and missions in the African interior.⁴⁷⁶ The British government and subscriptions raised

⁴⁷³ Martin, “Krumen,” 405.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 405.

⁴⁷⁵ *Foreign Office Diplomatic and Consular Reports on Trade and Finance No. 1834: Africa: Report for the Year 1895–1896 of the Administration of the Niger Coast Protectorate* (London: Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1897), 130.

⁴⁷⁶ David Livingstone, *Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa* (London: John Murray, 1857), 92.

£5,000 for the expedition. Livingstone served as British Consul, whose task was to establish trade on the Zambezi.⁴⁷⁷

Livingstone sailed on HMS Pearl on March 10, 1858 from Liverpool to Quelimane to undertake an exploratory journey up the Zambezi River. Kru, who were hired in Freetown, assembled and manned the Ma-Robert, a 75-foot long paddle wheeled flat-bottomed steam boat intended to carry 36 men up the Zambezi River.⁴⁷⁸ Similar to their role in the Niger expeditions, Kru continued to serve as boatmen, collected wood, and provided ship maintenance. New duties included keeping night-watch and serving as cooks.⁴⁷⁹

Livingstone offers a brief glimpse into the lives of those Kru who served. Two Kru on the expedition were mentioned by name. Tom Coffee served as engineer's mate.⁴⁸⁰ A Kru named Tom Jumbo supposedly served to reassure the local inhabitants of the benevolent intentions of Livingstone's expedition, even though he spoke a completely different language.⁴⁸¹ However flawed, Livingstone hoped that by employing the Kru as mediators they would garner trust between themselves and the Shupanga, Tsonga, and Shona along the route. Thomas Baines described the Kru as being "lent" for their services, which suggests that they were valuable for operations on board the Ma-Robert and shoreside.⁴⁸²

One challenge during the expedition was that the Ma-Robert kept running aground. Kru helped to keep the boat on course as one passenger observed: "Kroomen going into water willingly... Grounded again-then a third and fourth time; very trying to their tempers."⁴⁸³ The Ma-Robert was unable to navigate the cataracts on the Shire River. As a result, Livingstone had to make his way to Lake Nyassa by way of an overland trek.⁴⁸⁴ Kru did not accompany Livingstone on the trek. Initially, Livingstone commented favorably on their work ethic claim-

477 A.D. Roberts, "Livingstone, David (1813–1874)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) online, n.p., accessed August 10, 2018, [https:// www.oxforddnb.com/](https://www.oxforddnb.com/).

478 Donald Simpson, *Dark Companions: The African Contribution to the European Exploration of East Africa* (London: Paul Elek Limited, 1975), 39.

479 G.W. Clendennen and D.H. Simpson, "African Members of the Zambezi Expedition, 1861–1864: A Prosopographical Foray," *History in Africa* 12 (1985): 29–49; Livingstone, *Expedition*, 59; Edward C. Tabler, *Baines on the Zambezi, 1858 to 1859* (Johannesburg, SA: Brenthurst Press, 1982), 93, 97, 117; Livingstone, *Narrative*, 95, 96.

480 Simpson, *Dark Companions*, 41.

481 *Ibid.*, 41.

482 Tabler, *Baines*, 62.

483 Simpson, *Dark Companions*, 41.

484 "Letters Relating to Dr. Livingstone," *Proceedings and Monthly Record of Geography* 40 (1866): 307–308.

ing: “The Kroomen all worked admirably.”⁴⁸⁵ Despite their important role in operations, the Kru fell out of favor with Livingstone after one Kru was supposedly accused of theft. This was followed by a strike amongst the Kru who refused to work in response to the accusation, which led to their condemnation by Livingstone.⁴⁸⁶ Livingstone also condemned the Kru for their inability to march on long treks, which was likely the result of their unwillingness to cooperate with him following the strike. Since the next phase of the expedition would be an overland trek, he thought the Kru unfit.⁴⁸⁷ On July 29, 1859, the Kru were dismissed and set sail on HMS Persian to Freetown.⁴⁸⁸ They were replaced by eight Kololo laborers. Livingstone concluded: “Disciplined Europeans are much better than Kroomen.”⁴⁸⁹

Despite their usefulness and hard work, the Kru were viewed with suspicion and condemned if they dared to challenge British authority. Livingstone’s remarks upon hiring Kru reveal the Victorian racist perceptions that informed his perspective: “We have twelve Kroomen, who seem docile and willing to be taught.”⁴⁹⁰ From Livingstone’s perspective, Kru on the expedition were like children who required European instruction and were at odds with their traditional reputation as hardworking and industrious. There was also an economic aspect to their dismissal. Livingstone complained that while the Kololo ate local “country food” in the region, Kru insisted on their “man of war’s allowance of beef, biscuit, tea, sugar, etc.”⁴⁹¹ Kru were accustomed to a higher standard of treatment in the Royal Navy, which they expected on the expedition. Livingstone seems uncomfortable with their expectations. He implies that expenditures could be cut with the dismissal of Kru seamen.

Ultimately, the expedition did not succeed as parts of the Zambezi proved unnavigable. The expedition was recalled by the British government in 1863 be-

485 Simpson, *Dark Companions*, 41.

486 David Livingstone and Charles Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambesi and Its Tributaries: And of the Discovery of the Lakes Shirwa and Nyassa, 1858–1864* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1866), 96–103; William Garden Blaikie, *The Personal Life of David Livingstone* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1881), 257; Sjoerd Rijpma, *David Livingstone and the Myth of African Poverty and Disease: A Close Examination of his Writing on the Pre-Colonial Era* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 121.

487 Livingstone, *Narrative*, 96.

488 *Ibid.*, 96–103; Rijpma, *David Livingstone*, 121; Sir Reginald Coupland, *Kirk on the Zambesi* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928), 98.

489 J.P.R. Wallis, ed., *The Zambezi Expedition of David Livingstone, 1858–1863*, vol. 1 (London: Chatto & Windus, 1956), 104–105, 325; Rijpma, *David Livingstone*, 175–176.

490 Blaikie, *Personal Life*, 248.

491 Wallis, *Zambezi Expedition*, 104–105, 325.

cause the economic and political prosperity of the region was questioned. There was no opportunity for Kru to establish diaspora communities along the Zambezi River as there had been in the Niger Delta. Despite Livingstone's negative attitude towards the Kru, employment opportunities with the British increased as they were hired in military campaigns in the decades that followed.

In all of the expeditions under question, Kru were hired in Freetown or in Cape Palmas, which meant that the expeditions were most likely comprised of Proper Kru, Grebo, and Bassa laborers. Similar to their relationship on the Kru Coast, the British continued to rely on Kru surfboats and seafaring skills while maneuvering sub-marine terrain, conducting trade and obtaining supplies in riverine environments.

Military Campaigns and Naval Brigades

Kru served in various British military campaigns in Asia and Africa in the nineteenth century. Their contribution played a significant role in the consolidation of British influence, and ultimately the establishment of British colonial rule in both continents. Their function was to serve in Royal Navy brigades as porters, stevedores, boat transporters, soldiers, and to assist with firing rockets, artillery, and Gatling guns. Kru service in military operations expanded the geographical breadth of their diaspora in the African continent and Pacific Ocean.

First Opium War, 1839 – 42

In one of their first known military engagements, Kru served in Britain's campaign against the Chinese in the First Opium War. Since the 1620s, when the British arrived at the Canton River, the East India Company traded silver for such items as silk, porcelain, and tea with Guangzhou merchants. Once the British understood the great value placed on opium, they sought to control the opium trade from India to China.⁴⁹² The British held a monopoly over the opium trade until 1834, and, in 1839, Commissioner Lin was sent on behalf of the Emperor and ordered to halt the trade in the region. Fifteen hundred tons of opium were destroyed and Western traders were placed under house arrest.⁴⁹³ Conflict

⁴⁹² Daniel Headrick, *Power Over Peoples: Technology, Environments, and Western Imperialism, 1400 to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 198.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 199.

between the British and Chinese ensued and the East India Company set up a Secret Committee, which ordered six new steamers ready for combat. These included the *Nemesis*, *Phlegethon*, *Ariadne*, *Medusa*, *Pluto*, and *Proserpine*.⁴⁹⁴

The *Nemesis* embodied new steamship technology as it was the largest iron steamer built in the period and because of its flat bottom and six-foot draft it was able to sail up rivers and across oceans in deep and shallow waters with equal proficiency. Weaponry included a rocket-tube, ten small cannons, five six-pounders, and two pivot-mounted 32-pounders.⁴⁹⁵ Although the *Nemesis* was commissioned by the Secret Committee of the East India Company, it was commanded by Royal Navy Commander William Hall. Both the British Royal Navy and the East India Company sought to quell Chinese opposition to British influence and stabilize the opium trade in their favor. Whereas Kru had hitherto been involved in the suppression of the trans-Atlantic slave trades, they now also served on a ship engaged in a war for control of commerce.

Kru served on the *Nemesis* between 1840 and 1842 for the duration of the itinerary from St. Thomas to the Canton River.⁴⁹⁶ William Dallas Bernard and Sir William Hutcheon Hall reported that three Krumen boarded the *Nemesis* in St. Anne on the island of St. Thomas and participated in the China Wars.⁴⁹⁷ Kru were drawn from the pool of laborers working in St. Thomas (São Tomé as it was known in Portuguese).⁴⁹⁸ São Tomé and Príncipe served as refueling ports for Royal Navy ships engaged in anti-slaving activities in the Atlantic.⁴⁹⁹ Some Kru remained on the islands and cut timber for the purposes of coaling.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., 200.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid., 200.

⁴⁹⁶ Fay, *Opium War, 1840–1842*, 260–263.

⁴⁹⁷ William Dallas Bernard and William Hutcheon Hall, *Narrative of the Voyages and Services of the Nemesis, from 1840–1843; And of the Combined Naval and Military Operations in China: Comprising a Complete Account of The Colony of Hong Kong, And Remarks on The Character and Habits of the Chinese from Notes of Commander W.H. Hall, R.N. by W.D. Bernard, ESQ. A.M. Oxon, In Two Volumes* vol. 1 (London: Henry Colburn, 1844), 28. Kru were noted for their service in the Opium Wars; see *The Mariner's Church Gospel Temperance Soldier's and Sailor's Magazine* 30, no. 3093 (1843): 40. St. Thomas was the English name given the Portuguese island of São Tomé. Kru were hired as agriculturalists on São Tomé by a mix of British and Portuguese planters. The Kru who returned to the United Kingdom was also confirmed in a magazine; see *The Mariner's Church Gospel Temperance Soldier's and Sailor's Magazine* 30, no. 3093 (1843): 40. For more information on *Nemesis* see Fay, *Opium War*, 260–263.

⁴⁹⁸ Bernard and Hall, *Narrative*, 23. Kru were employed for agricultural labor contracts on São Tomé in the 1870s. There was a proposal to hire Kru laborers for a period of ten years. See Minutes of Evidence Taken Before The Royal Commission of Fugitive Slaves, Lieutenant V.L. Cameron, May 2, 1876, 61.

⁴⁹⁹ Bernard and Hall, *Narrative*, 23.

There is no clear indication as to why Kru were not hired in Freetown or in Cape Colony in southern Africa. It may be that the captain decided to increase the size of his crew en route in order to meet ship maintenance demands. As expert divers and swimmers, Kru were employed on the *Nemesis* based on their ability to perform laborious duties, including cleaning barnacles under the hull of ships.⁵⁰⁰

The *Nemesis* was the first iron steam frigate to circumnavigate the Cape of Good Hope before heading to Cape Delagoa. The itinerary included anchorage at Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and Singapore, before sailing towards its final destination in China.⁵⁰¹ The *Nemesis* arrived in Macao in November 1840 and by early 1841 it was engaged in attacks on forts on the Bogue River, the main defenses protecting Guangzhou. The *Nemesis* engaged Chinese war junks and fire rafts (rafts laden with oil-soaked cotton and gunpowder) before taking control of the Grand Canal at the Yangzi River.⁵⁰² By July 1842, following attacks on Chinese forts at Wusong, near Shanghai, the British took Zhenjiang up the Yangzi and effectively blocked the Grand Canal, which was China's main channel of trade between Beijing and the central and southern provinces. As a result, in August 1842, the Treaty of Nanjing was signed by the Chinese and British, which transferred the island of Hong Kong to Britain, opened five ports to foreign trade, and set import duties.⁵⁰³

Serving on the *Nemesis* in Pacific waters expanded the geographical breadth and military nature of the Kru labor network. Until this voyage, Kru are not known to have sailed east of Simon's Town in the Cape of Good Hope. It is likely they performed the task of manning boats and transporting British seamen and war materials from ship to shore on the smaller boats, as they were generally hired for their ability to handle small craft. They were also likely to serve as "powder monkeys", meaning gunners' assistants whose job it was to replenish fresh gun powder to the gunners firing the canons.⁵⁰⁴ Two of the three Kru who embarked the ship in St. Thomas survived the conflict and made the return voyage to Freetown, while the third Kru had been killed in action in China, which suggests that beyond boating their involvement most probably had a military

500 Ibid., 26.

501 Nathan Hale, ed., *The Monthly Chronicle of Events, Discoveries, Improvements, and Opinions* 2, no. 1 (Boston: S.N. Dickinson, 1841): 86.

502 Headrick, *Power*, 204.

503 Ibid., 204.

504 See Costello, *Black Salt*, 55.

component.⁵⁰⁵ In typical fashion, the surviving Kru were provided with return transport home via Calcutta.

The fact that Kru were sought for service on the *Nemesis* is significant. By 1840, they had developed a strong reputation based on their skills as seamen, which led to their selection for the voyage on the *Nemesis* to China. Kru continued to serve on Royal Navy ships in Hong Kong and along the Chinese coast thereafter. In 1861, 21 of them were listed as serving on HMS *Algerine* in Hong Kong following the Second Opium War 1857–60.⁵⁰⁶ While little documentation exists providing details on their daily experiences on the *Nemesis* and HMS *Algerine*, the fact they served on these ships reveals that the Kru labor network had expanded to include Pacific waters in the Far East. Their service in the Opium War marks the first known case in which Kru participated in a British military campaign against a sovereign polity and adds an important nuance to the nature of their military service, which would gradually lead to Kru serving on the front lines in future campaigns.

Occupation of Lagos, 1851–52

Beginning in the 1850s, Kru participated in succession of British military campaigns in Africa. In 1851, Kru served in the assault on Lagos. While the British suggested that the reason for the attack was to end illegal slave trading and local slavery that persisted in the region, a more pertinent reason seems to have been to establish Lagos as a British port for trade and commerce.⁵⁰⁷ Conflict between multiple claimants for the position of Oba of Lagos and Kosoko's refusal to sign a treaty that would have abolished slave trading with John Beecroft who was waiting for an agreement aboard HMS *Bloodhound* proved to be the main factors that influenced the British decision to intervene.⁵⁰⁸ Another factor was an increase in slave exports from Lagos to Cuba, the southern United States,

505 Bernard and Hall, *Narrative*, 26, 471.

506 Daniel Owen Spence, *A History of the Royal Navy: Empire and Imperialism* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2015), 227; Pereira, "Black Liberators," 3.

507 See Mann, *Slavery*, 1–8, 51–130; Biko Agozino, *Pan-African Issues in Crime and Justice* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2017), 224; Johnson U.J. Asiegbo, *Nigeria and its British Invaders, 1851–1920* (Lagos: Nok Publishers International, 1984), 3–40.

508 Robert Smith, "To the Palaver Islands: War and Diplomacy on the Lagos Lagoon in 1852–1854," *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* 5, no. 1 (December 1969), 3; Robert Smith, "The Lagos Consulate, 1851–1861," *The Journal of African History* 15, no. 3 (1974), 398.

and Brazil even after the Palmerston Act and Aberdeen Act had sought to quell the illegal slave trades to the Americas.

During the campaign, Kru served on HMS Teazer, HMS Penelope, and HMS Sampson under Lieutenant Corbett, Captain Lyster, and Captain Jones.⁵⁰⁹ On December 26, 1851, Captain Jones led a military force of 400 soldiers and officers ashore in boats that were manned by Kru.⁵¹⁰ Their role was to transfer the landing parties ashore and guard the launch boats as the soldiers and other Kru proceeded to the front.

Surgeon Samuel Donnelly provides a valuable record that demonstrates the extent of Kru participation in the battle (Table 4.2). In the document titled “List of Officers, Seamen, Marines, and Kroomen, belonging to H.M.S. *Sampson*, killed and wounded at Lagos on Dec. 26, 1851,” Donnelly reported that a Kruman named Jumbo received a “wound of the right shoulder.”⁵¹¹ The fact that Kru were designated their own category on the list demonstrates their significant role in Royal Navy operations in the battle.

Table 4.2 shows Kru serving on each craft belonging to HMS Sampson. They accounted for 11.1 percent of the crew carried on the 1st Lifeboat, 11.4 percent on the 2nd Lifeboat, 9.5 percent on Pinnace, 12.5 percent on the 1st Cutter, 14.2 percent on the 2nd Cutter.⁵¹² A larger number of Kru manned the small craft belonging to HMS Penelope as they accounted for 24.6 percent on the whaler, 20.5 percent on the 1st Lifeboat, 20 percent on the 2nd Lifeboat, 14.2 percent on the Pinnace, ten percent of the 1st Cutter, and ten percent of the 2nd Cutter.⁵¹³ In total, 14 Kru served on the watercraft belonging to HMS Sampson out of a total of 134 crewmembers engaged in the battle, which shows that they formed 10.4 percent of the force. Forty-one Kru out of a total of 223 crewmembers landed watercraft belonging to HMS Penelope, which reveals they formed 18.3 percent of the total landing force.⁵¹⁴ Overall, 55 Kru engaged in the assault out of a total of 357 crewmembers thereby forming 15.4 percent of the total landing complement. Their duties transporting ammunitions, crew, and guarding the surfboats served a crucial function in the attack on Lagos.

509 William Ernst Ward, *The Royal Navy and the Slavers: The Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969), 212, 215; Accounts and Papers, Inclosure 7 in No. 70, “Lewis T. Jones, Captain H.M.S. Sampson,” (1852), 202.

510 Ward, *Royal Navy*, 212, 215.

511 Accounts and Papers, Inclosure 7 in No. 70, “Lewis T. Jones, Captain H.M.S. Sampson,” (1852), 202.

512 *Ibid.*, 203.

513 *Ibid.*

514 *Ibid.*

Table 4.2: Kru serving on HMS Ships in the assault on Lagos.

Ship	Type of Watercraft	Number of Kru	Total Crew
HMS Sampson	1st Lifeboat	4	36
	2nd Lifeboat	4	35
	Pinnace	2	16
	1st Cutter	2	21
	2nd Cutter	2	14
	1st Gig	0	7
	2nd Gig	0	5
HMS Penelope	Whaler	19	77
	1st Lifeboat	7	34
	2nd Lifeboat	7	35
	Pinnace	4	28
	1st Cutter	2	20
	2nd Cutter	2	20
	1st Gig	0	9
Total		55	357

Source: Accounts and Papers, Inclosure 7 in No. 70, "Lewis T. Jones, Captain H.M.S. Sampson" (1852), 202.

The treaty handing authority over land in Lagos to the British was signed by John Beecroft, Henry William Bruce, Oba Akitoye, and Chief Ashogbon aboard HMS Penelope on January 1, 1852.⁵¹⁵ Based on available sources, this was most probably the first time Kru served in a military capacity in a British campaign in Africa. Their role as guards and the fact some Kru were wounded and killed in the conflict shows that they were assigned a military function beyond transportation.

Kru began to work in Lagos following the British occupation in 1851 and its formal annexation in 1861. Lagos became the site of one of their largest diaspora communities and differed from those mentioned above in that their community developed as a direct result of a military campaign. Kru were responsible for manning the launch boats in HMS Brune, which was stationed at Lagos.⁵¹⁶ Kru migrant workers lived on Lagos Island next to Tinubu Square, which was initially formed in the 1870s.⁵¹⁷ Like other Krutowns and quarters, the location was ideal for its close proximity to the harbor where they labored. Moreover, in the 1850s

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 212, 215.

⁵¹⁶ Sir William M.N. Geary, *Nigeria Under British Rule* (London: Routledge, 1927), 33.

⁵¹⁷ Martin, "Krumen," 406, 412.

and 1860s it continued to serve as a stop for West Africa Squadron ships replenishing supplies while in search of slavers in the Bights. Sixty-six Kru children were recorded as being born in Lagos during the 1870s and 1880s.⁵¹⁸ While the male population continued to dominate the Kru community in Lagos, the birth of Kru children suggests that Kru women may have accompanied their husbands. Alternatively, Kru may have intermarried with local Yoruba women, and the children were recorded as Kru. Regardless, it shows the growth of the Kru diaspora community towards a permanent presence.

The acting Governor of Nigeria estimated the “floating Kroo population” in Lagos to be 1,200 in 1897. While many Kru transited through the port on ship contracts, the increase in population may have been related to the construction of the port in Lagos.⁵¹⁹ Kru were engaged in shoreside and seaborne labor with some only able to find work in domestic service. They also contributed to the construction of infrastructure including roads and buildings in Lagos, and most notably, Lagos Port and the railway north of the port.⁵²⁰ The British had come to rely on Kru labor in Lagos as they had throughout West Africa.

Similar to the Gold Coast, Kru were distinguished as a distinct community in documents pertaining to hospitalization in Lagos. Kru working as pilots in the harbor and in local factories were required to pay for their stay in the Colonial Hospital in Lagos a total “sum of Four shillings and two pence for each of the first five days of his residence in the said Hospital, and the sum of One shilling and three pence for each subsequent day.”⁵²¹ Ordinance No.1 also reveals that the Kru were making wages in order to pay for their stay in the hospital. The fact the Kru were distinguished from servants and designated their own quarter reveals that they maintained their unique identity while in the Colony of Lagos.

Kru were also distinguished by the British through their inclusion in the procession in Port Lagos in 1897 honoring Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. The Kru are visible in a photograph and report under the title “portraits of local people.”⁵²² Categorizing the Kru as local people meant that their diaspora community in Lagos was both distinct and sizeable. Kru serving in the Royal Navy

518 Mann, *Slavery*, 189.

519 Schmidt, “Kru Mariners,” 110 – 123.

520 Mann, *Slavery*, 189; “Southern Nigeria, Report for 1899–1900,” 26.

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

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

wore white on this special occasion of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee as a form of commemoration.

By the early twentieth century, Kru were requested to serve on labor contracts in Lagos as boatmen for periods of six months, with a chance to renew for 12 months. As was the case in boarding in Freetown, Kru were given an advance of £1 for each headman who could earn £2 10s. per month and 10s. for every Kru boatman on £1 5s. per month.⁵²³ The decision to hire the Kru in Lagos was based on the Governor's previous experience of drawing on Kru labor in the Gambia.⁵²⁴ The wage rate reveals that the headman structure that became institutionalized in Freetown was still very much in play as regular laborers were expected to provide their headmen with a portion of their earnings a century later.

Asante Campaign, 1873–74

While the short and long-term effects of the assault on Lagos can be said to have influenced Kru employment, the Anglo-Asante War in 1873–74 involved Kru but did not have an immediate impact on Kru employment in the region. Rather, the sizeable Kru diaspora communities that were founded in Accra and Sekondi in the twentieth century were the product of later developments.⁵²⁵ A series of battles had unfolded in the Gold Coast between the British and the Asante since the 1820s, most notably when the British were defeated in 1822 at the Battle of Nsamankow. The Second Anglo-Asante War ended in 1864 in a stalemate.

⁵²³ Smith, *Trade*, 100–103; “Negro Civilization,” *Journal of Health*, 259; Frost, *Work*, 26; Guinness, *New World*, 213; Colonial Reports, no. 315, “Southern Nigeria, Report for 1899–1900” (London: Darling & Son, 1901), 26.

⁵²⁴ Frost, *Work*, 26.

⁵²⁵ An interview with Ga community leader A Bonso III (Stool Secretary) and Okyeeme Abeka Gikafo (Chief Linguist) on December 20, 2012 revealed that the Kru formed a sizeable community in the James Town quarter of Accra in the early twentieth century. According to oral tradition, the Kru paid a form of tribute to the Ga chiefs who administered James Town in exchange for land for the establishment of Krutown. This was a unique economic arrangement compared with other Krutowns, such as the one established in Freetown, where they were not required to pay tribute to local Mende and Temne chiefs. Their duties included loading and unloading ships in the harbor using their surfboats. They also performed manual labor contributing to the construction of the sewer system. During the time of the interview, Krutown was completely abandoned and in a state of ruin. Many Kru had returned to their communities in Liberia or scattered throughout Accra decades earlier when contracts became too few.

The Third Anglo-Asante War commenced in 1873 led by General Garnet Wolseley with a force of 2,500 British troops that were augmented with several thousand African and Indian troops against the Asante. Kru served with the British in the campaign against the Asante between 1873 and 1874. Similar to their role in Lagos, they were employed for their ability to land supplies and military personnel in the face of adverse sea conditions. Henry Brackenbury recognized the need for Kru expertise in piloting surfboats carrying military equipment when he lamented about the “difficulty... in the landing and storage of supplies and stores.”⁵²⁶ This campaign was augmented by a large body of Kru hired at Cape Palmas, meaning they were most probably Grebo, to serve as carriers on board HMS Ambriz.⁵²⁷ Beyond landing supplies, their function was to carry the heavy equipment and ammunition towards the front.⁵²⁸ They served alongside carriers from Accra (presumably Fante).⁵²⁹ They far outnumbered their counterparts, the “Accramen,” by 500 percent. According to George Dobson, the British “fed” and “properly led” the Kru.⁵³⁰

However, Kru formed but one component of a mixed force, as reported by Henry Stewart in 1879:

The forces at his disposal consisted of only 20 royal marine artillery, under Lieutenant Allen; 169 royal marine light infantry, from H.M.S. *Simoon*, under Captain Crease; 500 blue-jackets and marines... 200 West India negro troops... 20 Kroomen and 126 Houssas, under Lieutenant Richmond; besides a few armed police, and 300 labourers with axes to clear a path.⁵³¹

The British drew their forces from their various ports in the Caribbean, Bight of Biafra, and towns on the Kru Coast. Kru were tasked with cutting paths through

526 Henry Brackenbury, *The Ashanti War: A Narration Prepared from the Official Documents by Permission of Major-General Sir Garnet Wolseley By Henry Brackenbury*, vol. 1 (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1874), 164.

527 Charles Rathbone Low, *A Memoir of Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet J. Wolseley. By Charles Rathbone Low* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1878), 95. Cape Palmas is the heart of the Grebo region and therefore it seems that Grebo would most likely make up the greatest proportion of hired laborers.

528 George Armand Furse, *Military Transport: H.M. Stationary Office, 1882* (London: W. Clowers & Sons, 1882), 45; Low, *Memoir*, 146.

529 George Dobson, “The River Volta, Gold Coast, West Africa By Mr. George Dobson of Cardiff Read to the Members, in the Library, January 29th 1892, at 7:30 pm,” *The Journal of Manchester Geographical Society* 8 (Manchester, 1892): 21.

530 *Ibid.*, 21.

531 Henry Stewart, *Our Redcoats and Bluejackets: War Pictures, forming a Narrative of the Naval and Military History of England from 1793* (London: Ballantyne Press, 1879), 350.

the dense jungle on the way to Kumasi and served in the naval brigade on the war front. Every Royal Navy ship had its own brigade, which was a ground combat force made of crewmembers whose role was to assist British land forces in battle. The British defeated the Asante at the Battle of Amoafu on January 31, 1873 and occupied the capital Kumasi before burning it. In July 1874, the Treaty of Fomena was signed. Victory can be attributed to the use of quinine and the Gatling gun, which provided an advantage over the Asante. Little is known about the Kru's first-hand experiences at the front and if they served in a role beyond delivering equipment. However, based on available evidence, this was most probably the first episode in which Kru travelled from the coast to the war front in a British military campaign and set the stage for further involvement in future campaigns.

Anglo-Zulu War, 1879

Kru continued to serve on front lines in conflict in an even greater capacity during the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879. The British attempted to annex the Zulu state, which was not completed until 1887.⁵³² Factors that influenced the conflict included British tensions with Boer settlers, the goal of avoiding bush conflict with the Zulu in the way they had encountered the Xhosa, the desire to quell the threat of Portuguese expansion who sought to control the Port Delgoa region in the east, and the need to protect the sea route between the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.⁵³³ British colonial administrator Sir Henry Frere was tasked with the goal of uniting South Africa under a British confederation despite the great challenges of uniting independent black states, the Boer republics, and British colonies. Looking to the British Governor of Natal and the Transvaal, Sir Theophilus Shepstone, for valid reasons to invade Zulu territory, Frere ultimately based his decision to attack on the number of firearms accumulating in Zulu territory and incursions they made in the adjacent lands. Furthermore, the British had a direct stake in the region following the annexation of the Transvaal into a formal British colony in 1877, which created shared borders with the Zulu.⁵³⁴ An ultimatum

532 For information on the Anglo-Zulu wars see Carolyn Hamilton, ed., *The Mfecane Aftermath: Reconstructive Debates in Southern African History* (Witswatersrand: Wits University Press, 1995), 1–12, 395–416; Harold E. Raugh, Jr., *Anglo-Zulu War 1879: A Selected Bibliography* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 1–74.

533 *Ibid.*, 287, 293, 303.

534 Joyce Bowman, "Reconstructing the Past Using the British Parliamentary Papers: The Anglo-Zulu War of 1879," *History in Africa* 31 (2004): 121.

was sent to Zulu King Cetshwayo in December 1878, which required him to disband his army or face the British military. Knowing the terms would not be accepted, an army led by Lord Chemsfield was prepared and the war commenced.

In early January 1879, Kru arrived on Royal Navy ships on the coast at Durban. Royal Navy ships that carried Kru included HMS Active, HMS Tenedos, HMS Boadicea, and HMS Forester. HMS Active was ordered to sail from the Cape to Durban with 42 Kru on board.⁵³⁵ Kru stationed in Simon's Town provided the bulk of Kru engaged in the conflict. Others made their way from Freetown to the Cape for assignment on the ships. Given their location of embarkation, Kru serving were most certainly Proper Kru, Grebo, and Bassa seamen. Similar to their role in the Asante campaign, they carried artillery supplies ashore and served as porters.⁵³⁶

HMS Active's naval brigade included 14 Kru, ten of whom had been honored with the South African Medal in 1878.⁵³⁷ They were recognized for their contributions in several battles preceding the outbreak of the Anglo-Zulu War, including the Battle of Quintana against the Xhosa and battles against the Galeka and Gaika.⁵³⁸ A total of 76 medals were given with the 1877–1878 clasp. Fifty-three went to Royal Navy seamen, 13 to the Royal Marines, and ten to Kru.⁵³⁹ Although their names were not recorded, the appearance of ten “Kroomen” in the South African Medal Roll reveals the important role they served in Royal Navy brigades.⁵⁴⁰

Following their landing in Durban, under the direction of Commander Henry Campbell, HMS Active's naval brigade made their way to the front by steamer, marching, and railway assisting with the transport of two 12-pound guns and a Gatling gun.⁵⁴¹ One war correspondent noted that: “Onlookers during the disembarkation of the Navals were highly amused, when Kroomen (native sailors) came ashore, to note the astonishment of the local natives, who spoke to them in Zulu but elicited only replies in English.”⁵⁴² This episode shows the great dif-

535 Sir Henry Hallam Parr, *A Sketch of the Kafir and Zulu Wars: Guadana to Isandhlwana* (London: C. Kegan & Co., 1880), 36; Dutton, *Forgotten Heroes*, 376.

536 *The Graphic* (August 16, 1879): 507.

537 John Laband and Ian Knight, *The War Correspondents, The Anglo-Zulu War* (KwaZulu-Natal: Jonathan Ball, 1996), 13; Dutton, *Forgotten Heroes*, 374.

538 Dutton, *Forgotten Heroes*, 374.

539 *Ibid.*, 374.

540 *Ibid.*, 374.

541 *Ibid.*, 13.

542 W.H. Clements, *The Glamour and Tragedy of the Zulu War* (London: John Lane, The Brodley Head, 1936), 20.

ference between Kru and the indigenous population in appearance, dress, and language. Indeed, the divide was so great that they were paid wages to fight against the Zulu and ensure the colonial conquest of the Zulu state. The naval brigade arrived at the Lower Tugela River and was assigned to Colonel Pearson's Number One Column. On January 22, 1879, the Kru fought at the Battle of Inyezane. Two Kru named Jack Lewis and Jack Ropeyarn were recorded as being wounded in the battle and were sent to Fort Eshowe to recover until March 1879.⁵⁴³

Figure 4.1 is a portrait of the British line at the Battle of Inyezane. The image depicts the members of HMS Active's naval brigade dressed in blue uniforms with white sailor caps. Both the colour of their uniform and distinct shape of their cap distinguished them from regular armed forces servicemen who wore red uniforms and white helmets. Within the naval brigade, Kru were distinguished from British members by the satchel worn over their shoulder. The satchel most likely contained ammunition or other materials related to their duties. Four Kru are shown servicing the artillery gun. They were responsible for loading artillery and ammunitions and operating rockets. As the illustration shows, their role in the Anglo-Zulu War had evolved from transporting military supplies to engaging in battles on the front. Kru risked their lives alongside their British counterparts.

Ultimately, the war concluded in August 1879 and Cetshwayo was exiled to Cape Town before his eventual reinstatement in the Natal, albeit in a limited capacity in 1883. Due to conflict between Zulu factions, the Natal was not fully absorbed until 1887. Significantly, Kru service complicates any straightforward racial notions regarding British colonialism, highlighting that the colonial process involved a plethora of manpower drawn from various indigenous peoples in Africa and Asia. While the British held power and directed operations, Kru served in the Royal Navy and engaged in conflict with whomever was required regardless of the ethnic group in question, which was perhaps rooted in an impulse stemming from competition between their autonomous communities on the Kru Coast.

⁵⁴³ Parliamentary Papers, "Letter of Henry F. Norbury, Staff Surgeon, RN to Director-General, Medical Department of the Navy," January 24, 1879, vol. 54, *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of South Africa*, 174.

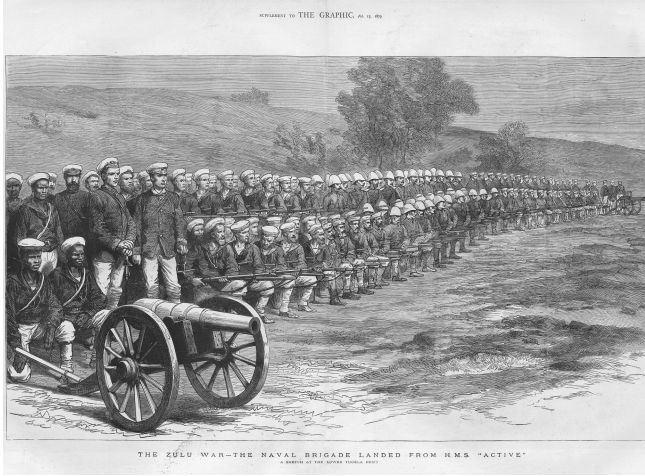


Figure 4.1: The Zulu War – the naval brigade landed from the HMS Active, c. 1879.
 Source: “The Zulu War –The Naval Brigade Landed from the HMS Active,” *The Graphic* 15 (February 22, 1879), 150. Courtesy of ©Illustrated London News Ltd/Mary Evans.

Sudan Campaign, 1884 – 85

In what became their most publicized contribution in a British military campaign in the nineteenth century, Kru formed a major part of the Nile fleet sent to reinforce General Charles Gordon in Khartoum between 1884 and 1885. An outpost for the Ottoman Empire via Egyptian rule since 1820 when the Sudan region was occupied, taxation and enslavement led to discontent among the local populace. The arrival of the British in Egypt in 1873 led to the installation of Gordon as Governor of Sudan. His anti-slavery campaign and advocacy for the spread of Christianity were seen as a threat and local inhabitants took up resistance led by Sudanese Islamic cleric, Muhammad Ahmad. On June 29, 1881, he declared himself Mahdi (the Guided One or Redeemer) and urged jihad against Anglo-Egypt authorities.⁵⁴⁴ The Mahdist Revolution led to the creation of an army and Islamic state led by the Mahdi. Mahdi’s army secured control of Khartoum in 1882 and in 1883 successfully defended an assault by a British-Egyptian military expedition led by British Colonel William Hicks, which resulted in the evacuation of British forces until the military campaign to secure Khartoum commenced in 1884 led by Gordon.

⁵⁴⁴ References to the Mahdi in Islam can be found in compilations in the Hadith.

The Kru's duty was to operate small craft that would transport fresh supplies and reinforce Egyptian garrisons in service of the British who had been cut off from General Gordon's men by Mahdi's forces.⁵⁴⁵ The British built eight hundred "whaling gigs," which were wooden boats that were 30 feet long and carried two sailors and ten soldiers. Sailing up the Nile, Donald Featherstone described their boats as follows: "Like beads on a string, they were towed upstream to Wadi Halfa by paddle steamers chartered from Thomas Cook."⁵⁴⁶

Kru served as auxiliaries on steamships performing coaling activities and navigating the Nile. Like all previous campaigns, they were hired for their boat manning skills, this time in the cataracts of the Nile to the north of Khartoum.⁵⁴⁷ Working in labor gangs, Kru were tasked with hauling the whaling boats through difficult stretches of the Nile, along with Sudanese laborers and Egyptian soldiers. Under sail, the whaleboats could reach speeds of six knots and, in the absence of wind, the Kru had to row the boats using six men.⁵⁴⁸

Three hundred Kru were sought for the expedition. Headmen received 2s. 6d. per day, second headman, 2s. per day, and regular workers 1s. per day.⁵⁴⁹ The minimal length of their contract was six months. Kru embarked in Freetown and Cape Palmas before they transited through Gibraltar (a major port on route from West Africa to Britain and the Mediterranean) and landed at Alexandria. Given their ports of embarkation, Kru serving most certainly included Proper Kru, Grebo, and Bassa. They then took the railway to Assouit where they set sail up the Nile. In total, 261 Kru served in the campaign.⁵⁵⁰

Unlike their service in the Anglo-Asante War and the Anglo-Zulu War, Kru only helped to transport supplies and were not directly involved in military battles with the Mahdists. However, Kru served an important role in the transportation of supplies and troops in the Sudan Campaign. Although small in number, the British relied on the Kru's ability to pilot small craft through the cataracts. The siege on Khartoum ended on January 28, 1883, but not before the beheading

⁵⁴⁵ Emilius Albert De Cosson, *Days and Knights of Service with Sir Gerald Graham's Field Force at Suakin* (London: John Murray, 1886), 327.

⁵⁴⁶ Donald Featherstone, *Khartoum, 1885: General Gordon's Last Stand* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 1993), 56.

⁵⁴⁷ Alex Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon and Khartoum: the Testimony of an independent Eye-Witness of the Heroic Efforts for the Rescue and Relief. With Maps and Plans and Several Unpublished Letters of the Late General Gordon* (London: Spottiswoode and Co., 1887), 45–46.

⁵⁴⁸ Featherstone, *Khartoum*, 56.

⁵⁴⁹ Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, 46.

⁵⁵⁰ Kru routinely anchored at Gibraltar on route to Britain. For evidence of Kru seamen in Gibraltar see *The Nautical Magazine: A Journal of Papers on Subjects Connected with Maritime Affairs* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Co., 1855): 348; Macdonald, *Too Late for Gordon*, 46.

of Gordon and heavy losses. Resistance continued and the Mahdi continued to battle the Anglo-Egyptian Army until they were defeated on September 2, 1898 at Karari. On January 19, 1899, the Condominium Agreement created joint administration of the Sudan by the British and Egyptian governments.

Kru service in expeditions and military campaigns reveals the complex nature of British colonialism in Africa. The British were concerned with garnering influence over vast regions of the continent at the expense of their European rivals including the French, Germans, and Portuguese. While expeditions provided the blueprint for permanent incursions, British military campaigns in Africa opened indigenous peoples to colonization, a process which was intensified following the Berlin Conference in 1884 and 1885. In this context, Kru labor has political implications that may be perceived as complicit with colonialism and the racism underscoring the European mantra of the three “C’s” (Civilization, Christianity, and Commerce), which drove the colonial project.⁵⁵¹ It is reasonable to assume that the Kru had few qualms about fighting an ethnically different indigenous people in the same way they had no hesitation in engaging in the trans-Atlantic slave trades. In Africa, ethnic differences seem to have been as divisive a factor as race was between Europeans and Africans. In short, individuals from outside one’s ethnic group were fair game for enslavement and military conquest. What seems most probable is that the Kru were simply willing to serve on any contract with the British that ensured wages. Their entrepreneurial impulses continued to guide them during the era of European colonial conquest in Africa and Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

⁵⁵¹ For a discussion on the ideologies informing European colonial endeavor in Africa see Gann and Duignan, *Colonialism*, introduction; Lugard, *Rise*, 1: 585–587, 2: 69–75; Kipling, “White Man’s,” 290.