

paper hereby recommends that the Yoruba slangs currently in use be documented before they wear out or pave way for new ones in the language. Also, they should be made pedagogically relevant by teaching them to foreign learners of the language so as to furnish them with adequate knowledge about the informal aspect of Yoruba communication.

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Kru as Kru, Kru as Kwa, Kru as Kruan

John Victor Singler

Abstract

At various points across the past 250 years and leading to the present, there have been Kru mariners, crewmen on European ships; Krumen/Krooboys, migrant workers along the West African coast; the Kru/Klao ethnolinguistic group, one of sixteen recognized by the Liberian government; and Kru languages, a constituent of the Niger-Congo language family. Apart from three isolates, the Kru languages are spoken in southern and eastern Liberia and southwestern Côte d'Ivoire. Greenberg placed Kru languages within the Kwa branch of Niger-Congo but said that "the affiliation of Kru . . . to the Kwa group is to be considered tentative" (1966:39n). Beginning in the 1970's, a procession of scholars examining Greenberg's classificatory scheme have concurred that the Kru languages do not belong within Kwa. The post-Greenberg classifications from 1974 to 2000 divide as to whether Kru should be grouped with Gur (or Gur-Adamawa) or treated as a separate branch of its own, but they are in agreement that it should not be placed within Kwa. Nevertheless, Liberians and Liberianist social scientists—apart from linguists—continue to refer to the Kru languages spoken in Liberia as "Kwa."

To understand the persistent application of Kwa to languages that aren't Kwa, it is useful to examine the emergence of the term Kru in its various applications and then to consider how the status of an ethnolinguistic group was imposed upon the people who are called Kru today. Once that is done, it becomes possible to explore various explanations for the aberrant application of the term Kwa to Liberian languages. One explanation is inertia—or indifference. "Kwa" had become a term that includes Liberia's Kru languages, so why change it? A second is scholars' desire to link their own ethnic heritage to the groups of southern Nigeria, especially to Yoruba speakers. The third—and ultimately the argument that seems to carry the most weight—is that Liberians and Liberianists employ Kwa in order to obviate ambiguity between the language and ethnolinguistic group Kru and the larger set of Kru languages and their speakers. Ingemann (1973) proposes an alternative; however, Kwa continues to prevail, as illustrated by its recent use by, for example, Shellum (2016) and Ballah (2017).

1. Introduction

At various points across the past 250 years and leading to the present, there have been

- Kru mariners, crewmen on European ships,
- Krumen/Krooboys, migrant workers along the West African coast,

- the Kru/Klao ethnolinguistic group, one of sixteen recognized by the Liberian government, and
- Kru languages, a constituent of the Niger-Congo language family.

Greenberg (1963, 1966) classified the Kru languages as a part of Kwa but said that the grouping was "tentative" (1966:39n). Subsequent analyses have all departed from Greenberg on this placement of the Kru languages. The change in thinking among linguists who work on African classification notwithstanding, Liberians and Liberianists have continued to refer to Liberia's Kru languages as Kwa. This quotation from President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's memoir illustrates the practice: "The third major group [of languages spoken in Liberia], the Kwa linguistic group, includes the Bassa, Dei (Dey), Grebo, Kru, Belle (Kuwaa), Krahn, and Gbee peoples, found mostly in the southern and eastern parts of Liberia" (2009:2).

Sawyer (1992) contains a cogent synthesis of Liberian societies before there was a Liberia, i.e. before the American Colonization Society and African American emigrants established themselves early in the nineteenth century on what became the Liberian coast. He too uses "Kwa" to refer to ethnolinguistic groups whose language is a Kru language. Sawyer is unusual in actually citing Greenberg (1963:45), but his description of Kwa societies is quite clearly applicable only to Kru-speaking societies and is most definitely not, for example, descriptive of the Ashanti Confederacy or the Kingdom of Dahomey:

Kwa societies were characterized by smaller settlements and many by a seafaring culture. (p. 48);

Before the Liberian government designated chiefs for African societies, many Kwa-speaking societies did not even have chiefs.

Where chiefs existed, their authority was very limited (p. 51).

In a footnote (325n), Sawyer lists "other Kwa-speaking groups": the list consists of four Kru languages spoken in Côte d'Ivoire.

The Liberian use of "Kwa" extends beyond academics and government leaders. There are situations where Liberians more generally use Kwa with specific reference to the country's Kru languages.

I begin this paper by reviewing proposals for the classification of Kru languages within Niger-Congo. I then consider the origin of the term "Kru" and examine the history of the Krumen, including Kru mariners. From there I look briefly at the nature and status of ethnicity in Liberia among speakers of Kru languages, considering in particular the difference between ethnicity in the rural homelands and ethnicity in the city. I then address the question as to why Liberians—social scientists, government leaders, and Liberians in general—use Kwa as a term for Kru languages and Kru-language speakers.

find my answer in church. I examine an alternative to "Kwa" for Kru languages proposed by Ingemann (1973). I conclude by considering the future in Liberia of the competing forms.

2. Kru Languages and Niger-Congo¹

2.1 The Classification of Languages in the Kru Family

At its most basic, the organization of Kru languages is non-controversial. It is the following (Marchese 1979, 1989):

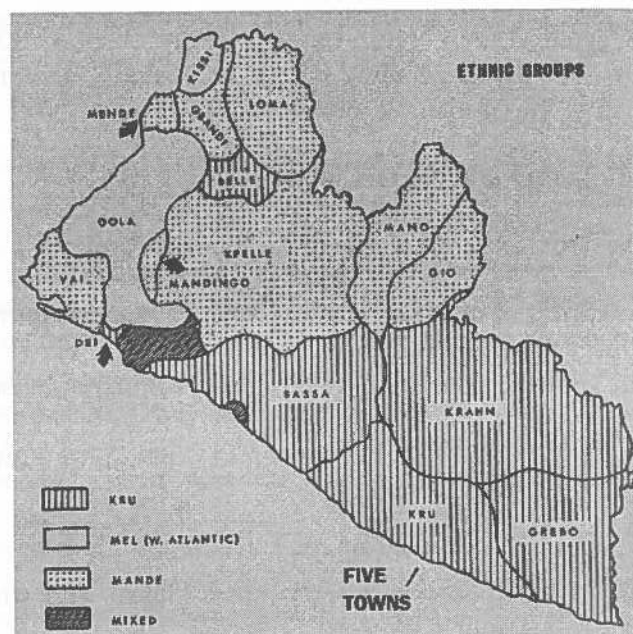
- a western branch, consisting of languages spoken in southern and eastern Liberia and southwestern Côte d'Ivoire,
- an eastern branch, of languages spoken in Côte d'Ivoire immediately to the east of the western Kru languages,
- three isolates, distinct from one another and from the eastern and western branches:
 - Kuwaa (Belle), spoken in northwestern Liberia and surrounded by Mande and Atlantic languages,
 - Aizi, specifically Tiegba and Abrako (cf. Marchese and Hook 1982), spoken on the Ebrié Lagoon in Côte d'Ivoire, and
 - Seme, spoken near Orodara in Burkina Faso, and arguably the furthest removed of all.

The Liberian government recognizes six Kru ethnolinguistic groups, hence six Kru languages. Apart from the isolate Belle (Kuwaa), they are Western Kru: Dei, Bassa, Kru (Klao), Grebo, and Krahn. (However, the 2008 Liberian census separated Sapo from Krahn. Johnson Sirleaf (2009), cited above, treats Gbii [Gbee] as distinct from Bassa.)

The map in (1), taken from von Gnieleski (1972:38), presents the sixteen ethnolinguistic groups recognized by the government.

(1). The sixteen ethnic groups recognized by the Liberian government, from von Gnielinski (1972:39). In addition, the location of the Five Towns, discussed in Section 3, has been indicated.

¹Sections 2.1 and 2.2 owe much to Marchese (1979, 1989).



Although von Gnielinski gives the map the heading "Ethnic Groups," the coding reflects language classification. With minor changes, Dwyer (1981) presents von Gnielinski's map with the heading "Location of Liberian languages" (p. 3). For the Kru part of the country, the implicit isomorphism in the relationship between languages and ethnolinguistic groups is not fully supported. Dialect surveys carried out in the 1970's by The Institute for Liberian Languages (TILL), a Lutheran Bible translation organization, posit seven Grebo languages, five Krahn languages, two Kru (Klao) languages, and two Bassa languages, Bassa and Gbii.²

2.2 The Place of Kru Languages within Niger-Congo

The status within Niger-Congo of Kru languages as a whole is vexed. Westermann (1927) classified the Kru languages as a part of Kwa, but then Westermann and Bryan (1952) moved them out of Kwa, saying that they formed an "isolated language group." Greenberg placed the Kru branch within Kwa, but commented, "The affiliation of Kru and Ijo to the Kwa group is to be considered tentative" (1966:39n). Welmers, acknowledging Greenberg's hesitation in placing Kru within Kwa, suggested that "Kru may well deserve the status of a separate branch" (1973:18). Classifications from 1974 to 2000 have gone back and forth as to whether Kru should be grouped with Gur (or Gur-Adamawa) or treated as a separate branch of its own, as the following list documents:

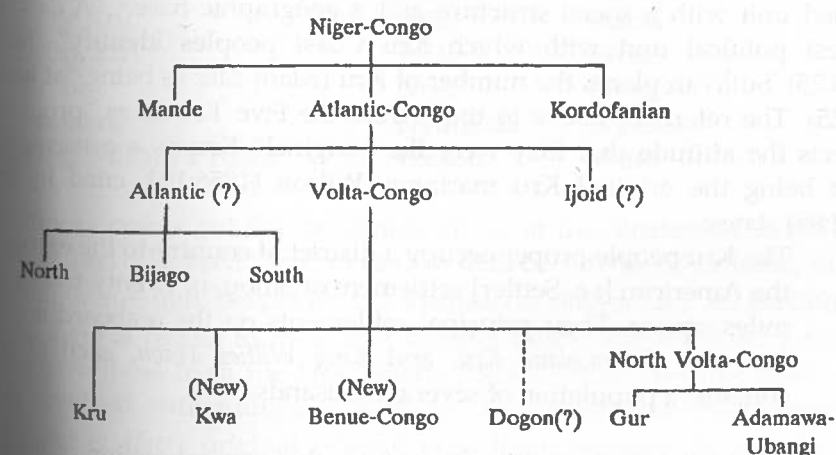
² Ingemann and Duitsman (1977) for Grebo; Ingemann, Duitsman, and Doe (1972) for Krahn; Duitsman, Bertkau, and Laesch (1975) for Kru (Klao); Bertkau, Gbadyu, and Duitsman (1974) for Bassa.

(2). The placement of Kru within Niger-Congo, assuming that Kordofanian, Mande, Atlantic have already been separated

- Vogler (1974), with Gur³
- Welmers (1977), a separate branch
- Bennett and Sterk (1977), **either** tripartite with Gur and Adamawa **or** a separate branch
- Marchese (1979, 1989), a separate branch
- Williamson (1989), a separate branch
- Williamson and Blench (2000), bipartite with Gur-Adamawa

The classification in Williamson (1989), identified by Olson (2004) as "the most widely accepted general classification of Niger-Congo", is given in (3).

(3). Niger-Congo classification proposed by Williamson (1989:21)



The question marks are in the original. Olson (2004) states, "The exact placement of Ijoid, Kru, and Dogon within the Niger-Congo genetic tree remains to be determined" (p. 23), but elsewhere he refers to Gur and Kru as Adamawa-Ubangi's "nearest linguistic neighbors" (16).

3. The Term Kru and its Early History: Kru Mariners and Krumen

The peoples along the Liberian coast have traditions of having moved there from interior lands. For some groups now on the coast, their arrival there was the end of the journey, the conclusion of their travels. For others, arriving on the coast was the end of their journey by land but only the beginning of their travels. They became skilled mariners. In this capacity, some of them interacted with Europeans engaged in maritime trade along

³ According to Marchese (1989:121), "Vogler attempts to show that Kru is closer to the Gur and Mande families than to Kwa." The putative link to Mande places Vogler at odds with other analysts.

the African coast. "The indigenous group first involved to a large extent with European trade" were the men of the Five Towns, a coastal region in what is now eastern Sinoe County in Liberia (Breitborde 1976-77:110). They were also called the Five Tribes and were sometimes referred to in nineteenth-century documents as "proper Kru" (Tonkin 1978-79:3), as in the quote from Wilson below. Kru (Klao) ethnicity was, at that time, nascent. (Arguably, it was still nascent a century later.) Kru/Klao societies were acephalous; age sets and lineage were central components of governance. Although they spoke a common language—with dialect variation—and largely shared a common culture, the Kru (Klao) did not see themselves as a people. Fishman (1977) sees as forces in defining an ethnic group a belief in shared ancestry (Fishman's "paternity"), a common heritage ("patrimony"), and a recognition by members of the group and by others that the group exists as a group ("phenomenology"). It is this last that is crucial in this case. Individuals saw themselves as belonging to a particular *dakɔ* (pl. *dake*), a named unit with a social structure and a geographic base.⁴ "A *dako* is the largest political unit with which Kru Coast peoples identify" (Sullivan 1978:25). Sullivan places the number of Kru (Klao) *dake* as being "at least 40" (p. 25). The reference above to those from the Five Towns as "proper Kru" reflects the attitude that they were the "original" Kru as a consequence of their being the original Kru mariners. Wilson (1856:103, cited in Brooks 1972:95) states:

The Kru people proper occupy a district of country to the eastward of the American [i.e. Settler] settlement of Sinou, of twenty-five or thirty miles square. Their principal settlements on the seaboard are *Settra Kru*, *Kru Settra*, *Nana Kru*, and *King Willies Town*, each of which contains a population of several thousands.

While the employment of men from this general section of the Grain or Melegueta Coast by European ships started earlier, Brooks (1972) estimates that systematic hiring of these mariners by European trading vessels probably began in the 1780's. In the following decade, the Sierra Leone Company, which administered Freetown, instituted standard wage scales for African laborers, "an unprecedented practice for this part of West Africa," (Brooks 1972:5). This drew men from the Five Towns to Freetown. They worked on the Company's ships and also engaged in manual labor.

4 In the literature on the Kru (Klao) and Grebo, *dakɔ* and *dake* are spelled in various ways, the variation occurring in the final vowel. Klao has—or had—ATR vowel harmony, a characteristic of Kru languages and, in the case of Klao, identical to that of Grebo as described by Innes (1966:14). Singler (1983, 2008) argues that the Klao vowel system is undergoing restructuring, shifting from a nine-vowel system to a seven-vowel system, with vowel harmony being lost as a consequence. The "old" and "new" versions of the singular form of *dakɔ* are identical, but the plural is in the process of changing phonetically from *dake* to *dake*, a flat-out violation of the vowel harmony system.

including agricultural labor, for the Sierra Leone Company and then for the colonial government that succeeded it. The men from the Five Towns established a Kru Town in Freetown.

The link between the term "Kru"/Kroo" and the Five Towns seems clear enough, as reflected in their names, but it should be noted that the names listed are the towns' English names. I am not aware of any explanation for the existence of these names. In the chart in (4), I present the English name for each of the Five Towns as well as the name of the town in Kru/Klao, as presented in Tonkin (1978-79) and Sullivan (1978):

(4) The Five Towns, with their English and Kru (Klao) names, the latter coming from two sources, Tonkin (1978-79: opposite p. 1) and Sullivan (1978:424-425).⁵

English name	Tonkin	Sullivan
Little Kru	Jirifà	Jlufaa
Settra Kru	Wètè	Wete
Kruba	Nìgbí	Nyigbi
Nanakru	Nyimbala	Nyimala
King William's Town	Weaou	Weao

Brooks points out that no group, either in the nineteenth century or the present day, calls itself 'Kru' in its own dialect. On the other hand, in the population in question, people do call themselves *klau* (or *kla*). As Breitborde suggests, there is reason to think that initially *kla/kra* and *klau/krau* referred specifically to those from the Five Towns (1976-77:110). Then, as other *dake* became involved with European ventures, they employed these terms as well. Whatever *klau*'s original referent was, there remains the question of where the term "Kru" comes from. The two liquids are allophones, and both are routinely used in this environment, i.e. as the second element of an onset cluster. Thus, the question is about the difference in vowels between "Kru" and "Klau." The received account (which I have no reason to challenge) has two parts. The first is that early Dutch navigators represented [krau] as <crow>. In Dutch, <ouw> represents [aw], and the Dutch transcription is close to the *krau* original, certainly as close as Dutch spelling could get to the actual pronunciation. The second part is that speakers of English misinterpreted the Dutch orthography and rendered Dutch <crow> as English <Kroo> or <Croo> or <Kru> (Davis 1976:2, Johnston 1906, vol. 1:84, 88). Moreover, the homophony of Kru and *crew* may extend still further. As noted, the Kru (Klao) call themselves *klau*. The word in *klau* for 'crew' is

⁵ Tonkin carried out her research in Sasstown, Sullivan in Greenville. The differences between the researchers' terms are to be explained at least in part by dialect differences.

likewise *klav*, as in *mɛ-klav* 'ship's crew' (Breitborde 1976-77:111). Thus, the Klao analogue of English Kru/crew is *klav/klav*.

As we have seen, the people of the Five Towns were only a part of what comprises the Kru/Klao ethnolinguistic group today. Nineteenth-century descriptions of the coastal region distinguished between Krumen (focusing on the Five Towns) and the Fishmen. The Fishmen were, as their name suggests, proficient fishermen, from the Gbeta and Kabor *dake*. Gbeta and Kabor were different from other *dake* in that each consisted of several dispersed communities located according to where the fishing was good. A third part of the population was the Bushmen, people who lived away from the coast. As noted, other coastal *dake*, including Gbeta and Kabor, followed the lead of the Five Towns in becoming involved with European trade. In time, so too did Bushmen. Speakers of Grebo languages to the southeast of the Kru/Klao also participated. The term "Kru Coast" was used as a reference to the source of Krumen, but its scope varied and expanded. Tonkin (2010) presents a map that displays four competing versions of it. In one, it refers to the area occupied by the Five Towns. In a second variant, it refers to the homeland of the Kru (Klao). It corresponds to the coastal part of the Kru (Klao) section of Liberia in Figure 1. The third is roughly equivalent to the Grain Coast, which in turn constitutes modern Liberia's coastline. Finally, what Tonkin terms the "Krooman Coast" extended from Monrovia to the Sassandra River in Côte d'Ivoire. This ambiguity of reference to the "Kru Coast" reflects the ambiguity surrounding the term Kru/Krumen.

As suggested by the growing territory covered by the term "Kru Coast," especially by what Tonkin designates the "Krooman Coast," over time the number of "Krumen" increased vastly, and their provenance expanded, into the interior (including people who today would be considered Bush Grebo or Krahn) and northward along the coast to include Bassa and, in smaller numbers, Vai (Mande) and Gola (Atlantic). Whatever their actual ethnicity, the mariners and migrant workers were called Krumen.

Across the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, the geographic range of their employment grew as did the scope of the jobs they held. Schwartz observes: "Ainsi, à partir de 1830, les Kroumen sont associés à la quasi-totalité des entreprises européennes, sur la côte africaine et dans le monde tropical" (1980:153). He details the remarkable range of their activities, including working on British sugar plantations in the Caribbean after the emancipation of the enslaved population had created a labor shortage (cf. Wood 1981), helping to build the Suez Canal, and working on the ill-fated French attempt to build a Panama canal (Kuhn 1975). Schwartz also notes that in 1873 there were 2,000 Krumen employed on the Bays of Benin and Biafra in palm oil production. Work in British colonies in West Africa became a major source of employment for Krumen. Martin (1982)

states that, prior to World War I, Nigeria was the primary location for Kru labor. After World War I, this shifted to the Gold Coast. Krumen were domestic servants for the British, they built and then manned the port at Sekondi-Takoradi, they worked on the railroad, in the gold mines, and on cocoa plantations. They were night soil collectors in Accra and elsewhere. The Krumen's presence was tied to the British presence.

When colonialism ended and the Krumen returned home, the local workers who replaced them were, with one exception that I am aware of, not called Krumen. That exception involved night soil collection. An Akan colleague told me that in his village the night soil collectors now came from Northern Ghana but were still referred to as Krumen.

Although I noted above that there were some Vai and Gola (speakers of a Mande and an Atlantic language respectively), the preponderance of Krumen were in fact speakers of some Kru language. Since they were known as "Krumen," it is not surprising that early linguists called the set of languages spoken by the Krumen "Kru," whether they were in fact speakers of Kru (Klao) or not. Koelle (1854) presents five Kru languages in *Polyglotta Africana*: Dey, Bassa, Kru (Klao), Grebo, and Gbii (as noted above, closely related to Bassa and considered to be a part of Bassa in the Liberian government's assignment of ethnicity).

4. Language and Ethnicity in Southeastern Liberia

The government's recognition of sixteen ethnic groups manifested itself in the government's inclusion of them in the list of ethnic affiliation in the 1962 census. Earlier I made reference to *dake* and made the point that they were the fundamental units of ethnicity for residents of the southeastern region, the home of the Kru (Klao), Grebo, and Krahn. McEvoy (1977) argues that in Liberia's southeastern region the government **imposed** overarching ethnic groups. Arguing against the government's assumption of ethnic homogeneity within each of these, he says, "There is no *single* 'Grebo' tribe. . . Neither is there a *single* 'Kru' tribe nor a *single* 'Krahn' tribe" (66, emphasis in the original).

McEvoy proposes that these larger units (as opposed to the level of the *dake*) emerged outside a group's homeland. In the context of Krumen working along the West African coast, "the combination of processes of 'lumping together', by others, and the 'coming together' of the migrants themselves led to the emergence of a 'Kru', and perhaps later, a 'Grebo' ethnicity among Kru- and Grebo-speaking migrants in locations outside the Kru-Grebo homelands" (68, emphasis in the original). Their sense of being "Kru" (specifically Kru/Klao) evolved from how others saw them and how, over time, they came to see themselves—this description embodies

Fishman's point introduced earlier as to the role of phenomenology in defining ethnicity.⁶

McEvoy locates "such places as Freetown, Monrovia, or Accra" as the sites where Kru (Klao) and Grebo ethnicity emerged (68). Sullivan makes similar comments. Speaking of the late twentieth century, she writes, "It is only in an urban context such as Greenville [the county seat of Sinoe County], Monrovia, or a foreign concession, that one would use the term Kru to identify oneself, in particular to distinguish oneself from other ethnic groups in Liberia. That is, one is Kru in terms of **not** being Krahn or Bassa or Vai" (1978:27, emphasis in the original).

Insofar as the orientation of the present paper is toward urban Liberia and western-leaning scholarship, these ethnic groups—the government's sixteen—are more directly relevant than the *dako*-level ethnicity of the groups' homelands.

5. A Name for the Set of Liberia's Kru Languages

5.1 Kru qua Kwa

We have seen that a term associated at the outset with individuals from the Five Towns became a term that referenced a particular set of occupations. If the term no longer bore a direct association with a particular ethnolinguistic group, it was still the case that most of the Krumen were speakers of some Western Kru language. Thus, the transformation was from ethnic to occupational, but it was also from one language and ethnic group (the Klao of Five Towns) to a range of occupations and a range of related languages. This brings us back to the original question: why do people refer to the set of Liberian Kru languages as Kwa?

This is not something that academic linguists do. I am only aware of a handful who have published on Liberian Kru languages in recent decades, but each of them has referred to the language group as "Kru." Nonetheless, the use of Kwa for Liberian Kru languages and ethnolinguistic groups endures among other social scientists. Sawyer (1992), as I noted above, and also Moran (1990) cite Greenberg (1963) but make no reference to subsequent modifications to Greenberg's classification. The lone non-linguist whom I have found who acknowledges work on classification subsequent to Greenberg is the historian George Brooks in his 1993 book, *Landlords and Strangers*. As part of his discussion, Brooks presents a slightly modified diagram of Bennett and Sterk's (1977) re-organization of Niger-Congo.

⁶ By all accounts, this Fishman was neither Gbeta nor Kabor.

⁷ Frances Ingemann is an exception. I discuss her contribution below.

In 1990, I published an article in the *Liberian Studies Journal* on recent developments in linguistics pertaining to Liberian languages. The opening paragraph of that article cites Vogler (1974), Welmers (1977), Bennett and Sterk (1977), and Marchese (1979, 1986) in asserting that the Kru languages are not part of Kwa. Brooks (1993) acknowledges my comments about the Kru branch not being Kwa and about the uncertainty as to where Kru languages fit in Niger-Congo, but I am not aware of any other scholar ever having done so. Three years after my article, the *Journal* published an article that took the use of "Kwa" one step further. In that article, Burrowes labels the Liberian coast from the Cestos River to Cape Palmas the "Kwa Coast" (1993:231ff). The Cestos River being the boundary between the Bassa and Kru (Klao) ethnic groups, this stretch of coastline corresponds roughly to what Tonkin labels "Kru speakers," i.e. the homeland of the Kru [Klao] [2010:103].

Two decades after my *Liberian Studies Journal* publication, at the 2010 meeting of the Liberian Studies Association, held at Temple University, I tried again. I gave a paper entitled "On the classification of Liberia's languages." In it I point out that that "Kwa" had originated with linguists and that linguists had now determined that the term did not properly apply to Kru languages. A few hours before my talk, I was near the registration desk when a participant in the conference came out of the auditorium where it was taking place and demanded to see the local organizer. The scholar announced that she was Grebo. The Grebo, she said, were Kwa, and—like their fellow Kwa, the Yoruba—the Grebo were great warriors. Therefore, she was not to be trifled with. I had heretofore assumed that the primary motivation for scholars' perseverant use of Kwa to characterize Liberia's Kru languages had simply been that scholars were unaware of developments in the classification of African languages after Greenberg, or, if not unaware of those developments, then indifferent to them or uncertain what to make of them. As the Grebo scholar/warrior showed me, there is sometimes a proud assertion of a link to the Yoruba. (Those who assert the Yoruba connection are apparently unaware that not only Liberia's Kru languages but also, in, for example, Williamson (1989), Yoruba and Igbo and their congener languages have likewise been escorted out of Club Kwa, in their case into Benue-Congo).

I understand the Grebo scholar's desire to align herself with the Yoruba, specifically with legendary Yoruba warriors. After all, within linguistics, like Bamgbose and Awobuluyi before him, Akinbiyi Akinlabi is a legendary warrior. I say this with regard to his attention to phonological theory, his scholarly rigor, and his intellectual energy. To these should be added his work on undocumented languages. Further, I have seen firsthand his efforts on behalf of the African Linguistics School. His integrity and his concern for the well-being of participants, most especially students, have been vital to the success of the ALS.

However, as I was to discover (and no doubt should already have understood), neither lack of knowledge about language classification nor a desire to assert kinship with the Yoruba tells the whole story.

St. Mary's Roman Catholic parish on Monrovia's Bushrod Island started out with a church by the Duala market, just on the edge of New Krutown. (The "Kru" in Krutown refers to the Kru [Klao].) However, the parish outgrew the edifice, in part because of the meteoric growth of Monrovia after Liberia's civil war ended in 1996 and especially during and after the fighting in 2003. A new church, Our Lady of Lourdes, was built for the parish at Tweh Farm, further out on the Island. While the parish is still Kru[Klao]-dominant, other ethnic groups are now also active in the church, most prominently the Kisi (Atlantic) and Kpelle (Mande). There are six choirs in the parish: the primary choir, the youth choir, and the children's choir all sing in English, and the Kru (Klao), Kisi, and Kpelle choirs sing in their languages. At the 8 o'clock Mass on Sunday, the Gospel is read in English and then in Kru (Klao); the same is done at the 10 o'clock Mass with Kisi and at 12 o'clock with Kpelle. Organizations within the church meet once a month after the 10 o'clock Mass. This is when the parish council, the ushers' guild, the women's organization, and the Knights and Ladies of Marshall, among others, hold their regular meetings. In addition, there are four identity-based groups that meet on an ad-hoc basis after the 10 o'clock Mass in order to undertake projects to benefit the parish, e.g. to provide new chairs for the parish hall. The four groups are the Kisi, the Kpelle, the Nigerians, and the Kwa. Using the designation "Kwa" brings in not just the Kru (Klao), but also the Bassa, the Grebo, and the Krahn. In my description of the liturgy and activities of the church, each instance where I have written "Kru (Klao)" is one where Comfort Swen Toe, president of the ushers' guild, used "Kru" in detailing them for me, e.g. the Kru choir, and someone reads the Gospel in Kru. It is clear that announcing a meeting after Mass of "the Kru community" or even "the Kru communities" would bring in the Kru (Klao) and nobody else. Using "Kwa" rather than "Kru" signals that the meeting is not just for the Kru (Klao) but for the Bassa, Grebo, and Krahn as well. When fundraising is involved, it is always a good idea to cast a wide net.

Disambiguation has practical consequences in churches and other organizations. It is also a desirable practice in academic writing. Thus, the use of Kwa to encompass the entire set of Liberian Kru languages has the virtue of distinguishing between (1) the whole set and (2) Kru (Klao). Although I would not say it occurs frequently, there are instances where a scholar confuses the two, as seems to have been the case for Adebajo (2002:21): "Most of these groups [the "usual" sixteen] had ethnic clansmen in neighboring states: Mende, Gola, Kissi, and Vai also resided in Sierra Leone; Loma, Kpelle, Mandingo, Mano, and Gio in Guinea; and Grebo, Kru, and

Krahn in Côte d'Ivoire." There are Kru languages in Côte d'Ivoire, but the Kru (Klao) are not there.

5.2 Kru qua Kruan

Frances Ingemann, a linguist at the University of Kansas and a consultant to The Institute for Liberian Languages, proposed a solution. In the opening paragraph of a paper delivered in 1972 at the Mid-American Linguistics Conference at Oklahoma State University and published in 1973 in the conference proceedings, Ingemann states: "Within Liberia and the Ivory Coast there is a group of languages which are usually called Kru. Because one of the languages within the group is also called Kru, I propose to avoid confusion by referring to the group as Kruan and retaining the name Kru only for the language" (1973:108). Ingemann provides no further arguments in support of her proposal, but then no further arguments are needed. She has stated the one overriding reason for the change she proposes: to remove confusion. Dialect surveys and other relevant publications from TILL immediately made the shift. In 1979, at the First International Conference on Kru Languages, held in Abidjan, Ingemann proposed the adoption of "Kruan" to designate the language family. She explained that she had proposed the *-ansuffix* based on its use in Amerindian linguistics to distinguish languages from the families that contained them, e.g. Iroquois/Iroquoian, Sioux/Siouxan, Chinook/Chinookan. Those present at the Abidjan conference rejected her proposal with little discussion. A majority of those present were linguists and missionaries who worked on Ivoirian Kru languages. They worked on "les langues kru," but, as I have indicated, there is no individual language in Côte d'Ivoire named "Kru." Hence, ambiguity wasn't *their* problem.

Kruan has now achieved some acceptance beyond the TILL sphere and is used by other Liberianists. However, Kwa also continues to be used with reference to Liberian Kru languages. I did a count to gauge the comparative frequency of each of the three possibilities, i.e. Kru, Kwa, and Kruan. I looked at all 49 issues of the *Liberian Studies Journal* from 1988 to the present, I worked my way through the Liberia-related books in NYU's library, and did searches on Google. I tried to ensure that my methods of finding materials online did not favor one of the candidates. In all, I found 49 articles or books that had one or more references to Kru languages as a group. "Kru" as a term for the Kru branch was much less common than the other two. "Kwa" was used about twice as often as "Kruan." With either term, the group being referred to was almost always Liberian Kru languages rather than the entire set of Kru languages.

In looking at the uses of "Kwa," "Kruan," and "Kru," I searched for distributional regularities, but none appeared. The three terms are used in

the same contexts. Also, I did not see evidence of any quantitative changes over time. I did notice that the set of "Kruan" users included some prominent Liberianists, as did the set of "Kwa" users. Also, some authors used two out of three, presumably to assist the reader who might know one of the terms but not the other, by establishing their equivalence, as the following authors do:

the area where the Kruan/Kru languages are spoken (Tonkin 2010:104),

the Kruan-speaking (or Kwa) peoples of the south (Moran 2013:30),
Bassa people are part of the Kwa (or Kru) linguistic group (Chukpue-Padmore 2014:61).

6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

From the point of view of linguists, the use of "Kwa" to describe languages that are not Kwa is unsatisfactory. It is true that, in the sample of publications that I examined, those who used Kwa were not likely to have any point of reference to the "real" Kwa languages. However, drawing on Greenberg's schema, two authors say that Kwa extends from Liberia east to the Niger Delta (Sawyer 1992, Sundiata 2003). So long as "Kwa" is used for Liberian Kru languages, the danger of confusion or warrior appropriation lurks. The primary problem with "Kruan" is that it has come to mean "Liberian Kru languages and ethnolinguistic groups," not "the entire set of Kru languages and ethnolinguistic groups." Those who study Ivoirian Kru languages and ethnolinguistic groups have continued to use "Kru" (or the equivalent "Krou"). If Kruan is employed only in Liberia, this entails that the Kru branch of Niger-Congo consists of Liberian Kruan and Ivoirian Kru languages. This division obscures the instances where a language either in the Grebo complex or the Guere [Krahn] complex has dialects on both sides of the border. My own preference is to use the term "Kru" for this branch of Niger-Congo, but, because of the overlap between Kru (the set of languages) and Kru (Klao), this seems doomed. I tried to come up with an alternative—in the spirit of created linguistic terms like "Bantu" (the class 2 human plural marker plus the word for 'person') or "Gbe" (the common word for 'language or dialect'), but I did not find a suitable shared form. Because "Kwa" represents the misappropriation of an existing term while "Kruan" is *sui generis*, I have come to favor the use of "Kruan" over "Kwa" by social scientists generally.⁸ However, I won't be taking "Kruan" to church. Rivalry among Kru-speaking ethnolinguistic groups can be intense, just as rivalry between *dake* can be intense and rivalry between *pāt5* 'patriclans' (the term is represented in English in Liberia by 'quarters') within a *dakɔ* can be intense. "Advantage" in the sense of 'unfair or unmerited advantage' is heavily

policed. The first syllable of "Kruan" privileges the Kru (Klao). It's as if someone was saying *kru dem*. On the other hand, "Kwa" gives no one an advantage. Until Liberian churches replace Mass with sessions devoted to the mass comparison method, the godly and the academic are sufficiently removed from each other that a confusing collision between book people and God people seems unlikely.

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⁸ Prior to writing this paper, I would have said that neither was acceptable. I now have come to accept "Kruan" as the lesser of two evils.

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Documenting Oral Media in African Languages as a Tool for National Development¹

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Abstract
In African rural societies, many aspects of life are transmitted from generation to generation via spoken language usually through some form of oral media such as town crying, folklores, songs, narratives, dances, rites of passage, etc. Many forms of African oral media are today threatened by such factors as migration, education, religion, contact with 'prestigious' languages and urbanization that lead to lack of use and eventual loss of the associated vocabulary and practices. One way of preserving and developing oral media is by documenting language as expressed in its oral culture. Language documentation aims at providing a long lasting record of the linguistic and cultural practices of a people so that it can be used for a myriad of purposes (Himmelmann 2006, Austin 2010). This paper posits the documentation of oral media, which is the traditional form of communication in African societies, as a tool useful for creating traditional language resources, preserving the cultural and linguistic heritage of the people and arousing both local and international interests; towards the development of the indigenous languages that in turn can enhance national development.

Keywords: oral media, language documentation, traditional language resources, national development

1 Introduction

The African continent is a linguistic paradise. It contains more languages than any other continent. Over 2,000 of the world's estimated 6,700 languages are spoken in Africa (Grimes 1996, Bamgbose 2011) by over 400 million people. This language total is not certain as many language areas in Africa remain inaccessible or have not been accessed at all. Even though this number may well be an underestimate, it represents nearly one third of the world's languages. Very few of these languages are spoken by large populations and more than 1,800 of them are minority languages (Batibo 2009). Amongst the major languages, a few such as Hausa, Fulfulde and Kiswahili are spoken in more than one country. With Africa being the home of almost one third of the world's languages, it is not surprising to discover

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