The landlord-stranger relationship, as it applied to arrangements between Africans as owners of the land and Europeans seeking to settle or trade upon Africa's west coast during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was all things to all parties. Africans saw these agreements as tending to contain Europeans within specified zones and forcing them to abide by African contractual regulations and proscriptions. By controlling foreigners, landlords could regulate the introduction of change and technology and maintain for themselves those by-products beneficial for continuance of local power. Naturally, landlords profited from increased trade and new markets for local products. Restricted from local politics by these agreements, Europeans often saw this relationship as little more than rents, anchorage duties, taxes, licenses, or African attempts to take advantage of European enterprise. Still, they remained on the coast, married Africans, had large families, and often sent sons abroad where they could receive a finishing education. This paper traces the evolution of the landlord-stranger relationship in the trading communities of two rivers on the Windward Coast, the Rio Nunez and the Rio Pongo (Figure 1), from approximately 1790 to 1860. Here the relationship was an agency of change and a process through which local societies allowed foreign ideas to influence local institutions. Both parties to these arrangements initially sought the security of rigid contractual tenancy guarantees. With time, however, accommodation to some European ideas and assimilation of Europeans in local institutions were the rule on both rivers.

A somewhat different version of this paper appeared in *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 8:425-440.

1 Dorjahn and Fyfe (1962:391-397) define “stranger” as tenant, traveler, and foreign resident. Curtin’s (1975:298-299) discussion of landlord-brokership suggests a direct role...
Figure 1. Maps showing the Rio Pongo and Rio Nunez rivers on the Windward Coast.
MAJOR ETHNIC GROUPS AND SOCIOPOLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The areas of the rivers and the peoples who lived there had long been subject to foreign influences from both the African interior and the sea. Sea salt and, according to tradition, elephants migrating toward the setting sun had first drawn Baga peoples from the Futa Jalon highlands to the inhospitable coast (Saint-Père 1930). Related as Mel-speakers to the Temne and Loko of the Sierra Leone-Guinea borderland, the newcomers absorbed or displaced earlier coastal inhabitants. The Nunez Baga played an important role in trade between the coast and the interior. They grew wet rice and extracted salt on the lowlands and sold surpluses to both African long-distance traders and Europeans visiting the rivers (Rivière 1968:733-735; Rodney 1968:274-276). They lived in small villages with chiefs descending in clans of the founders. Villages seldom contained more than two clans. Social relations and political interactions between villages were regulated by a secret society, the Simo, to which all males belonged. A bush spirit, also called the Simo, possessed power over life and death and, in the form of a mask, delivered swift justice for violation of accepted practice. The leader of the society was elected by a council of elders represented by heads of the major clans (Paulme 1956:101-104; 1958).

Once lines of long-distance trade were established, existing commerce attracted new migrants from the interior. Some were Muslims who moved coastward to control the supply of salt and rice and later firearms, and most of these lived under the auspices of local chiefs (Levtzion 1975:218). Others were Landuma and Nalu who moved into the Rio Nunez region, intermarried with the Baga in the littoral grasslands (the Baga of the mangroves were left relatively untouched by the later arrivals), and established their own primacy in the salt exchange (Arcin 1907:129-134). Traditions record that the Nalu migrated from the Upper Gambia during the sixteenth century, as a vanguard of Mandingo commercial hegemony along the Atlantic coastline (Méo 1919:282-283). The Nalu split the Baga and Landuma homelands, first seizing the northern bank of the Nunez and then occupying sections of the southern bank up to the Sacred Grove. The Nalu failed to adopt the institution of kingship or powerful chieftains until the mid-nineteenth century. The Landuma, related linguistically to the Baga, were the last “Mel”-speakers to leave the Futa Jalon, moving coastward during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Of the same tradition as the Baga, the

for landlords in trade, a circumstance that seldom obtained in these rivers until the 1830’s and then not to the extent noted by Curtin in Gambia. Sundström’s (1974:8-15) discussion of customs, tolls, fees, and duties applies to European as well as African strangers.
Landuma also possessed the Simo, which regulated intervillage disputes and cooperation (Monheim 1931:7-8). Increasingly the Nunez became divided into ethnic zones, with Baga at the mouth of the river, Nalu in the middle river, and Landuma dominant above the Sacred Grove.

As in the Rio Nunez, long-distance trade also brought new migrants into the Rio Pongo. Various writers describe a gradual infiltration of Susu trading families into Baga communities on the Pongo, where they intermarried with ruling elites and Baga traders and over a long period modified Baga institutions (Saint-Père 1930). Susu adopted the Simo from the Baga as an institution of political and social control. The Susu ruled only two chieftaincies: Bangalan and Dominguija-Thia. On their part, the Pongo Baga asserted authority over local areas and recognized Susu predominance in regional polity. Accommodation and assimilation were the rule rather than the exception in the Pongo area. The diffusion of new political institutions along both rivers and the expansion of new markets for sea salt up-country led to an imposition of a general Mandingo hegemony in the areas, with farim [governors] appointed to maintain proper contacts with the interior trading systems (Rodney 1970:25-26).

While the extent or duration of the relationship between coastal peoples and the Mandingo is unclear in the sources, it would appear that both rivers were free of Mandingo farim control by 1700, when significant structural changes occurred. In Nunez area, shrinking Mandingo influence accompanied the emergence among the Landuma of a single royal family, with kingship alternating between branches. Mandiale Cumbassa, the first ruler, established his capital at Kacundy; Modiere, his brother, succeeded him and moved the capital to Boke, a few miles farther upstream. These traditions laid the foundation for a century-long struggle for control of commerce in the upper river (Berenger-Ferand 1879:335; Arcin 1911:168). No Landuma king list dates the development of a separate kingship earlier than 1700. The Simo played a significant role in the selection of candidates and in the election of rulers among the Landuma (Caillié 1930:153-160; Monheim 1931:7-8).

The Nalu, positioned between the larger entrepôts on the Upper Nunez and the sources of salt and rice in the mangroves, first arrived from the north as traders among the Baga and Landuma and as middlemen in the profitable salt trade. Gradually they carved for themselves a homeland in the middle river, especially after Nalu traders became involved in the competition between the Kacundy- and Boke-based branches of the Landuma royal family (Méo 1919:282-283). The position of the Nalu in the middle river was a disadvantage to them as long as interior trade could be regulated through the Landuma centers. This changed once the Atlantic trade became a focus for slaves in return for European products.

On the Pongo, a prominent shift from Baga to Susu political predominance occurred at about the same time. Several writers have suggested
that this was a result of a military coup (Arcin 1911:128–143). Rodney (1975:292–294) specifically points to Susu in the Sumbuya, Moria, and Foricariah districts as support for a conquest theory. On the other hand, the Susu of the Rio Pongo were earlier non-Muslim migrant traders who had adopted many Baga customs, including the Simo. These Susu may have merely filled the vacuum accompanying shrinking Mandingo control. Susu kingship descended through two branches during the nineteenth century; the Domin Kante branch descended from the founder and the Uli Kati Damba branch from a usurper of the early nineteenth century (Arcin 1907:141–142). Despite the emergence of apparent Susu dominance, many of the Pongo Baga remained in control of former chieftaincies. Interspersed Susu and Baga villages remained bases of political influence, with regional cooperation practices through conferences called to resolve intervillage disputes. Although the two groups were markedly different in language, in the organization of their secret societies and in their political structures the Baga and Susu communities were fundamentally indistinguishable.

Against the emergence of new political awareness and institutions on the coast, the demands for sea salt by Fula herdsmen in the Futa Jalon continued as before and perhaps expanded. To guarantee continued outlets for their products and a secure source of salt for their herds, the Fula extended their hegemony coastward in the mid-eighteenth century, subjecting the peoples of the Nunez and Pongo to a tributary alliance with the Fula empire of the Futa Jalon (Laing 1825:403–404). Each year the chiefs of Labe and Timbi Tunni, the principal diwals [administrative districts] responsible for maintaining proper relationships with chiefs on the Pongo and Nunez, sent representatives accompanied by armed caravans to collect the annual sagale [tribute] from their charges (Hopewell 1958:69; Suret-Canale 1970:81). This generally occurred once the paths dried and the grasses were cut, some time between October and January, the peak of the trading season (Méo 1919:286). At the beginning of the rains the Fula withdrew to the interior, leaving their subjects free from up-country supervision until the rains ended and a new trading season commenced. The Fula intervened in coastal politics only when events interfered with the free flow of European manufactures or of slaves, rice, salt, and other African products. They also reserved the right to overrule the selection of chiefs by local societies, especially when the choice of candidate endangered commerce (Mouser 1971: ch. 5).

EUROPEAN COMMERCIAL PENETRATION: THE SLAVE TRADE

The first to exert influence from the sea were Portuguese traders from the
Cape Verde Islands and from Bissau. Initial contact came through the auspices of company-sponsored merchants, some establishing factories or trading centers above the mangroves and in the upper reaches of the coastal rivers. Afro-Europeans of Portuguese descent, called lançados along this coast and usually outside the strictures of charter companies, soon became active throughout the area, and by 1600 several had established residences on the Río Nunez and Río Pongo (Rodney 1970: ch. 4). Rice, gold, dyes, cloth, ivory, raw hides, hippopotamus teeth, salt, and eventually slaves became the commercial fare of these traders, who gradually acquired important positions in the river trade and transformed commerce from one based on salt to one oriented toward the Atlantic (Golberry 1803:163–172). In the process, the lançado provided new markets for African products and brought in firearms, tobacco, knives, and beads and other trinkets. As a Portuguese or an Afro-Portuguese with a knowledge of European languages and techniques, the lançado received trade goods on credit (later called advances) to exchange for various products and thereby acquired status as trusted middleman between European ship captains and long-distance traders who carried products from the interior (Rodney 1970:125).

No recent research of a detailed nature on the dimensions of the slave trade in the regions of the Río Pongo and Río Nunez has yet been completed. The quantity of slaves shipped from the rivers is uncertain in the available records, and the task is made still more complicated by the shifting geographic terminologies used by most contemporary observers. Both rivers were included in the designations of Rivères du Sud, Portuguese Guinea, Northern Rivers, and Windward Coast. Curtin’s (1969) study of the Atlantic slave trade uses the label “Sierra Leone” to cover the broad region from the Casamance in the north to Cape Mount in the south, but he points out the difficulties of estimating the flows of slaves from specific interior regions and specific ports. He also suggests that the exports of slaves from this general area were far more dependent on local supply conditions than on the demands of European traders. The lure of the rivers region for European slavers can probably be correlated with the ready supply of captives resulting from the wars between the Fula peoples and their neighbors, for example, in 1762–1763 (Hopewell 1958:68–70).

European foreigners resident on the coast accepted their relationship with the Africans they lived among as one between landlords and strangers. In fact, the process of accommodation was probably little different from that which had characterized previous associations between African coastal elites and interior traders. The European or Afro-European seeking to establish a factory on the rivers first presented himself to a host chief, who called a conference of his district paramount, the heads of surrounding villages, and the newcomer to formalize a contract among them. While the technicalities of such arrangements differed from chief to
chief and from river to river, the patron generally agreed to protect the life and property of his client and to guarantee his client's debts. The composition of the conference symbolized the boundaries within which the trader might be active. In return for this hospitality, the stranger paid an annual custom, or rent, and a head tax on every slave exported from the territory. He also provided his landlord with guns and supplies in time of war (Mouser 1973a:46). Although theoretically strangers were restricted from politics, the success of the African trade inevitably improved the foreigner's leverage in river commerce. In addition, the activities of chiefs tended to confuse the relationship. Some were themselves traders and attempted to tie their prosperity to their clients' by marrying their daughters to them (Mayer 1854:110-117). Whatever the initial motive for such alliances, the relationship became even more complex in succeeding generations, when descendants of lançados claimed political privileges as descendants of chiefs (Saint-Père 1930:35-36; Rodney 1975:294-296). This was the case on the Pongo, where in the 1780's the Fernandez and Gomez families acquired power in the Bramaya and Bakia chieftaincies (Arcin 1911:141).

From the mid-eighteenth century, British and American traders joined the lançados on the Nunez and Pongo and established bulking centers from which they supplied local and distant marts with European and American products (Newbury 1971:94-96). More than twenty such men are identifiable on the Pongo by the turn of the century, with eight more on the Nunez. Few of the new Europeans dealt solely in slaves. Most purchased slaves and the ivory, gold, rice, and other products which slaves carried to the coast. Most initially sought to avoid the marriage alliances which would eventually entangle them in local politics (Mouser 1973a:51).

The structure of the commerce practiced at the end of the eighteenth century followed similar patterns in both rivers. European and Afro-European traders who had arrangements with local landlords built or purchased factories where they conducted their business. Factories took various forms, but most were located along the riverbank with a store and adjoining quarters, a barracoon for marketable slaves, a courtyard for protecting caravans in the process of bargaining, and a wharf for European visitors (Stock 1899:134). Coastal strangers generally remained near their factories, but some were known to venture as far as Timbo for the purpose of advertising their wares. Others sent African employees into the interior as hawkers, announcing prices and varieties of goods which particular traders had available on the coast (Public Record Office n.d.a). Resident traders purchased both slaves and other products and tried to supply a wide range of goods in exchange. Exportable slaves necessarily came from the interior and not from among the people of the area, since local labor was required to provision slave vessels for the
Middle Passage. Local chiefs therefore supported the traders as the source of markets for salt, foodstuffs, and local manufactures and for the customs, rents, and taxes which traditionally had brought income.

Caravans formed in the interior once the rains ended, between October and May, at the capitals of various Fula provinces. Custom required all traders having business with the coast to place themselves under the protection of a caravan leader, who guaranteed a safe journey, conducted the bargaining session at the factory, and in return received a percentage of the sale (Mayer 1854:179–180). Slaves carried ivory and hides coastward and returned to the interior with rice, salt, and European manufactures, excess porters remaining at coastal factories as merchandise (Watt 1794:74). The reputation of a caravan leader depended in part upon his contacts with Europeans, but also important was his ability to bargain for the group. This was complicated by the fact that the European traders provided the caravan with hospitality for the duration of the bargaining process, a circumstance which tended to insure that the caravan received a fair exchange even if it became necessary to remain a little longer on the coast.

The third partner in this triangle of commerce was the European ship captain, who generally sought specific African products and tended to return time after time to the same entrepôts. Most arranged for future cargos and attempted to minimize the time necessary for acquiring a full complement. Each day on the rivers increased the dangers of fevers and malaria (Bennett and Brooks 1965:283–294). The large number of Europeans on the Rio Pongo and Rio Nunez meant, moreover, that a full cargo could perhaps be collected from among the traders within a short time. One described a celebration which concluded one such sale in 1795 (Hawkins 1797:1550):

They [the traders] come to the table nearly intoxicated, and before dinner is completed, they become downright drunk. . . . The coarse jocularity of destroying their apparel or wasting the food, is their amusement; while the most exquisite viands are wasted without utility, and the appetite being palled by superabundance, loses all its value but that which gratifies the vanity of the provider, by indulging the waste and absurdity of his guests. After the wine has circulated freely, the meats are even occasionally dashed about at the heads of the best humored, or most patient of the company, and the empty dishes, plates, and tables are demolished to shew the spirit of the party, and the lengths to which they could carry a joke.

SLAVE TRADE ABOLITION AND PROMOTION OF LEGITIMATE TRADE

The sequence of outside events and influences which modified the relationship between landlords and strangers and the structure of commerce
between 1790 and 1860 is long and complicated. While it is difficult to pinpoint the direct causes of sociocultural change during this period, a brief historical catalog of events helps to put the changes into proper time perspective. First came the Sierra Leone Company settlement at the mouth of the Sierra Leone River (1791–1808), which increasingly sought to tap into the interior trade patterns which supplied goods for the Nunez and Pongo traders (Coupland 1964:64–65). Company officials attacked the rivers' trade from two directions. They relied initially on direct negotiations with Fula in the Futa Jalon to establish a new path that would divert commerce from the Nunez and Pongo (as well as from the rivers of Moria, Sumbuya, and Moricania) to the British settlement at Freetown (Public Record Office 1802; Robinson 1966: vii–viii). James Watt's trip to the Fula capital of Timbo in 1794 and his unsuccessful attempts to establish a company factory there were the result of this policy. A second plan called for setting up trading settlements at the known terminals of caravans to seize control of legitimate commerce through monopolistic price manipulation and to end slave trading by providing improved markets for legitimate African products (Knutsford 1900:49). To this end the company built two factories on the Pongo and arranged with merchants on the Nunez for others. A combination of trader animosity, an Anglo-French war, rebellion in Freetown, and violations of accepted trading practices by company agents on the spot doomed the enterprise, and the company abandoned the rivers in 1802 (Brooks 1970:55; Peterson 1969:31; Afzelius 1967:13, 15, 20, 31). Traders and officials in Sierra Leone (among them Alexander Gordon Laing, Brian O'Beirne, and William Tuft) refused to forsake the dream of diverting trade from the rivers to Freetown directly through Port Loko, however, and periodically made new attempts into the 1820's. Their efforts were thwarted by frequent wars between the Fula and the Susu of Sulima and by the jealousy with which the chief of Foricariah guarded and guaranteed the trade terminals in Moria country (Laing 1825:413).3

While plans to divert the commerce to Sierra Leone had little influence on the peoples on the rivers, the company's presence on the Pongo opened the way for other agents of change. The first missionaries, from the Edinburgh Missionary Society, landed on the Pongo in 1798, but within a year that effort had collapsed (Missionary Records 1836:68–72). In 1807 missionaries from the Church Missionary Society moved into the area, where they remained for a decade, establishing two schools which they supported through tuition, gifts, and government subsidies.

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2 Howard (1972:54–60) places the Moria terminals within the Futa-Scarcies corridor of long-distance trade between the Niger and the coast. In chapter 3, he distinguishes between types of African strangers who used and often settled along this corridor. 

3 See Mouser (1973b: 805–812) for more detailed treatment of Freetown-Moria relations to 1814 and Howard (1972: ch. 4) for the evolution of Mandingo authority in Moria.
Enrollment jumped from thirty-five in 1808 to nearly a hundred in 1814. Approximately half the students were the sons and daughters of chiefs. The remainder were offspring of traders on the Nunez, Pongo, and Dembia Rivers, and after 1814 liberated Africans were sent to the Pongo schools from Sierra Leone (Missionary Records 1836:93-94, Church Missionary Society Archives 1814b). Instruction was conducted in English, and at the insistence of the trading community the curriculum included commercial skills such as mathematics and bookkeeping (Butscher 1806-1809). The influence of the Church Missionary Society mission peaked in early 1816, when the council of chiefs granted them permission to proselytize freely throughout the area (Missionary Register 1817; Church Missionary Society Archives 1816). Yet in May 1817, after a year of war and turmoil in the region, the missionaries abandoned their schools and retreated to Freetown (Walker 1845:515).

The collapse of the mission was less the result of the missionaries' actions (although some of them were not blameless) than of policy decisions, innovations, and changes occurring in Europe and in the Futa Jalon (Church Missionary Society Archives 1812a, 1814b). At the turn of the century, one European country after another outlawed slaving by its nationals, but Great Britain was the first to interfere with commerce on the Windward Coast, specifically along the Nunez and Pongo Rivers. The first recorded military action against slave merchants there took place in 1811, when Governor Charles Maxwell sent an expedition into the Pongo to seize British subjects equipping slavers for the Middle Passage (Fyfe 1962:120). The introduction of military violence as a means of transforming commercial patterns severely weakened the basis of support for the mission schools, and chiefs increasingly were forced to reconsider the benefits of continued patronage (Church Missionary Society Archives 1813, 1814b). When the missionaries were asked for gunpowder to fight British warships, they refused, and as a result their presence in the country became one of the casualties in the conflict (Church Missionary Society Archives 1817, n.d.).

The exit of the missionaries gave but small respite to those who sought a return to more profitable days. After 1818, the newly organized British antislavery squadron made the Iles de Los, only fifty miles south of the Pongo, a principal station for their surveillance activity on the coast (Lloyd 1968:45). With squadron vessels plying the shoreline at will, the physical characteristics of the rivers themselves became increasingly important. The Nunez was especially disadvantageous for continued slave trading. Only one of its exits was capable of handling large vessels, and a single warship could easily block the estuary and send longboats upstream to search for slavers (Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertizer 1821; Parliamentary Papers 1821:45–46). To avoid entrapment, slavers
increasingly bypassed the Nunez factories in favor of those of the Pongo, where multiple entrances, meandering inlets and lagoons, and friendly traders improved their chances of escaping an unannounced warship.\textsuperscript{4} The result was a depressed Nunez economy and an at least temporarily improved one on the Pongo.

Moreover, these apparent transformations of market practices were affected by policy decisions in the Futa Jalon. Occasional contacts between the Freetown merchants and the Fula had led the Fula regime to consider designating specific products for specific routes. In 1794 and 1795 they had suggested that a company factory be established on the Pongo to serve as the official contact point between Freetown and Timbo for legitimate products (Public Record Office 1794). Post-1815 antislavery activities and the disruption of riverine commerce forced the Fula to take a direct role in resolving local disputes and in guaranteeing continued outlets for their products. They intervened in the Nunez in 1823 to insure a free flow of trade, for the first time stationing a governor and garrison there during each trading season from December to April (Public Record Office 1823). Under the altered system, the Pongo became the principal outlet for Fula slaves, and the Nunez was designated a terminal for legitimate trade.\textsuperscript{5}

From the late 1820's coffee and from the late 1830's peanuts became new and important cash crops in the rivers' economies. These changes first occurred on the Pongo, where coffee and later peanut plantations provided old coasters with an opportune cover for continued slaving. British warships were forced to view slaves in factory barracoons as part of a plantation work force and therefore not liable to seizure. On the plantation, slaves worked during the rainy season; once it turned dry, both laborers and produce became marketable (Parliamentary Papers 1823:23). The symbiotic relationship between slave and legitimate trade which characterized the Pongo's commerce from the turn of the century would continue into the early 1850's.

The transformation to predominantly legitimate goods accelerated faster in the Nunez than in the Pongo once new markets for African products began to appear in Europe and in the Americas. Without long-entrenched slave-trading families to oppose their entry, a group of new Europeans — British subjects with commercial ties to Freetown markets — easily established a foothold on the upper river. While small, this group was encouraged by an apparent Fula design to transform the river's commerce and by a series of new treaties which permitted British warships to seize vessels equipped to carry slaves. At the same time, a

\textsuperscript{4} Vessels could enter and leave the Pongo River over the Cassinsin Bar, Mud Bar, Sand Bar, or Taborta River Bar entrances.

\textsuperscript{5} This was especially true after a successful raid upon property belonging to William Skelton, Jr., and John Serjeant in 1832 (Public Record Office 1832).
number of shallow-draft paddle steamers which could more easily sur-
prise the slavers that occasionally visited the river were introduced into
the antislavery squadron (Newbury 1965:133; Ward 1969:128–141; 
Pearsall 1959:213). A second group of newcomers entering the Nunez
trade were French subjects with commercial ties on Gorée and in Saint-
Louis, Senegal. Coffee first attracted the French to the Nunez, but with
rising demands for peanut oil by French soap manufacturers in the
mid-1840’s they rapidly shifted to peanuts (Vené 1837). Land was
cleared along the middle river for peanut cultivation, ending dependence
upon the uncertain and often interrupted trade with the interior.
Cooperative naval officers further advanced French interests by interced­
ing on their behalf. Moreover, the tariff reform bill of 1845 reversed
earlier French policy on Nunez coffee. After 1845 Nunez coffee received
a preferential tariff if its origin was attested by a French agent resident on
the river. In addition, by increasing the duty on sesame, the regulation
stimulated the use of peanut oil as a substitute cooking oil, and cultivation
on the Nunez increased as French demands for peanuts rose sharply. In
January 1846 the first French agent was appointed to certify produce
from the Nunez area (Demougeot 1938:206–207).

These Europeans symbolized more than the infusion of so-called
legitimate trade, for most represented, or soon would represent, the
interests of large trading firms along the Windward Coast. Until 1835
factories had received the majority of their trade goods from American or
other ships visiting the coast, exchanging them for whatever products
were available in return. Some would continue this practice into the
1840’s, but the arrival of companies that sought particular commodities
ultimately transformed commerce. Trading firms provided goods from
their larger entrepôts on the coast, and the importance of the occasional
visitor diminished. Companies advertised their interest in specific items
and stimulated trade and the cultivation of produce along definite lines.
At first coffee, hides, and wax dominated trade, but after 1840 they were
dwarfed by the insatiable French demand for peanuts. In addition, firms
were able to pressure colonial officials for increased protection of their
investments, thereby prompting colonial intervention in the commercial
system and the treaty-making process (Schnapper 1961:221–232).

TRADITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND THE TREATY
SYSTEM

Given the radical transition from slaves to legitimate products occurring

6 These included René and Durand Valentine, Antoine and Pierre d’Erneville, Charles
Boucaline, M. LaPorte, Auguste Santon, A. E. Carvallis, and subfactors who accompanied
them to the river.

7 This was particularly true among traders who had established commercial relationships
with Americans before 1840.
during this half-century on the Windward Coast, that the landlord-stranger relationship survived at all is remarkable. The traditional contract between the two parties had been an individual one, with obligations, restrictions, and lines of redress clearly defined. Once a trader had established a position in the commercial network, however, new options became available to him.

Between 1790 and 1808 only four trader families can be identified outside the system of obligations required by the traditional arrangement. All had established residences on the rivers by the mid-1700's. These included the Fernandez family of Bramaya, the Gomezes of Bakia, the Ormonds of the Bangalan branch of the Pongo, and Dr. Walker of Kacundy on the Nunez. Although free of the customary responsibilities, all had acquired positions as chiefs and had been absorbed into the rivers' political systems, which carried with them new sets of obligations. William Fernandez and Immanuel Gomez were paramount chiefs under the nominal control of the Susu rulers (Saint-Père 1930:35-36; Arcin 1911:141; Rivière 1968:742). John Ormond, Jr., who returned to the river around 1805 to inherit property belonging to his father, was chief of Bangalan town and subservient to the paramount of Bangalan district, also a tributary to the Susu (Mayer 1854:77). Walker was chief of Kacundy, where he played an additional important role as principal supporter and adviser to the Landuma king Calinguie.8

Traders who had arrived in the area at the turn of the century and who for the most part sought to avoid entangling alliances with the local elites found that the obligations of the landlord-stranger relationship did not preclude regional cooperation among themselves when established commercial patterns were challenged by outside influences. In 1794, Walker and David Lawrence of the Nunez drastically reduced prices for Fula products as a warning to Fula authorities against allowing James Watt to establish a factory at Timbo and a new path to Freetown (Watt 1794:70, 90). A year later in Pongo country, George Irving, Benjamin Curtis, William Skelton, Sr., and Mr. Ferrie, all bound by the traditional contract, agreed to share the cost of discouraging the Sierra Leone Company (Public Record Office 1795a). By lowering prices for interior products and boycotting caravans which traded with the company store at Freeport, they dealt the company factory a severe financial setback (Public Record Office 1796a, 1796b). While such activities were extra-legal and outside the customary agreements, other attempts to expel the company from the rivers' commerce clearly were directed through the landlord-stranger communication lines. Irving, Curtis, Skelton, Ferrie, and others warned their patrons that the company would "ruin the river."

8 According to James Watt, Calinguie ruled at Walkaria, Walker's town. Later sources identify Kacundy as the residence of the Mandiale ruling branch. Consequently I use "Kacundy" to designate the town that Walker founded.
In reply, their chiefs met in a closed conference which ignored the traders’ protests — perhaps to reemphasize the foreigners’ subservience — and renewed their earlier pledge to protect company property (Public Record Office 1795b). By stimulating cooperation among traders, the challenge of company monopoly from 1794 to 1802 brought changes to the indigenous-foreigner relationship. Extralegal activity came to be tolerated, but the chiefs firmly resisted direct political interference in their privilege to grant protection, no matter how much it might upset the trader community.

The appearance of missionaries between 1807 and 1817 and the introduction of military force as part of the transformation from slave to legitimate trade after 1811 brought significant changes in their wake. While the decision to admit missionaries and their schools fundamentally belonged to the chiefs, some traders discreetly but successfully lobbied for the schools because of the commercial training they would provide. Most successful in this attempt was Benjamin Curtis, whose brother Thomas had married the daughter of King Uli Kati of Thia, the capital of the Pongo region (Church Missionary Society Archives 1811). Curtis donated the site and the buildings for the first school at Bashia (Butscher 1806–1809).

Unfortunately for the missionaries, their appearance there coincided with the emergence of a new slaver coalition which not only opposed their presence but was convinced that the missionaries reported their every move to authorities in Freetown. This extralegal consortium of commercial interests included William Cunningham Wilson, Paul and Mary Faber, Stiles and Bailey Lightburn, and John Ormond, Jr., of the Upper Pongo, who joined in 1809 with Samuel Samo of the lower river and Charles Hickson and William H. Leigh of the Illes de Los. The group hoped to minimize trader conflict by establishing a quota arrangement for provisioning slave ships, thus gaining monopolistic control of the Pongo trade through collective effort (Trials of the slave traders 1813; Edinburgh Review 1813). The immediate effect upon the landlord-stranger relationship was to elevate Ormond to a new level in the political system and to link the traders, his partners, more closely to the local political process. This became abundantly clear in September 1811, when King Kati created a crisis by seizing the colonial sloop George at the advice of his son-in-law, Thomas Curtis. Kati called a conference of all chiefs, traders, and missionaries to resolve his difficulties with the Sierra Leone colony (Church Missionary Society Archives 1811). For the first time traders took part in the decision-making process, but a pattern was established which would be repeated in coming years. Chiefs invited them to participate in disputes with Sierra Leone officials or with the captains of British men-of-war, although they continued to be excluded from conferences on the missionary problem. Invariably the English sought to
deal with one chief rather than many, and as a result increasingly recognized Uli Kati as the representative of the Pongo chiefs (Church Missionary Society Archives 1814b). As a result, Kati was forced to defend not only his own strangers, but also those under contract with other paramounts. In return, he demanded and obtained military supplies and assistance against his English adversaries (Church Missionary Society Archives 1812b).

Many fewer traders had established factories in the Nunez area during the early 1800’s, and most had allied with Mr. Fortune at Boke or with Chief John Pearce at Kacundy, who in 1796 had inherited Walker’s position (Public Record Office 1797a, 1797b, n.d.; Watt 1794:6–8, 11, 40, 70). Sources for the nineteenth century reveal little about the technicalities of the landlord-stranger relationship among these people, but we can assume that they differed little from those in the Pongo. Pearce and Fortune also provided substantial support for opposing branches of the Landuma ruling family and for two competing entrepôts on the river (Watt 1794:5, 7; Public Record Office 1816). Pearce kept the political capital at Kacundy until his death in 1818. Although his son inherited his commercial estate, he was unable to maintain its former influence against the challenge of John Bateman of Boke, a protégé of Fortune who championed the opposing ruling family and commercial center (Public Record Office 1816). In the resulting war, which lasted from 1818 to 1822, Nunez chiefs used the resources and rivalry of traders to change the political system (Royal Gazette and Sierra Leone Advertizer 1819; Public Record Office 1823), while traders exploited family rivalries to assist commercial change.

Under the new Landuma ruler, Macande of Boke, the landlord-stranger relationship remained the same into the 1830’s. Macande established stable duties for anchorage charges and customs, and partially as a result of this stability new traders moved into the river during the 1830’s, among them a dozen from French possessions to the north (see fn. 6; Public Record Office 1839). Macande’s death in 1838 was followed by a chieftaincy dispute which continued intermittently until 1852, bringing significant modification to traditional commercial relations. Contenders in the struggle demanded double and triple duties from new traders. Stores were destroyed in the fighting and trade was disrupted, and in self-defense French and British nationals applied to Goree or Freetown for assistance (Public Record Office 1839). By March 1839 traders were beginning to negotiate with opposing factions for collective rights and property protection (Public Record Office 1839). In January 1842 and April 1843, the captains of French and British men-of-war signed the first

9 The evolution of contractual arrangements between foreigners and the local rulers which accompanied the arrival of French traders and the development of a specialized cash-crop economy in the Nunez region is treated in more detail in Mouser (1973–1974).
treaties identifying special communities of foreigners and establishing specific obligations and restrictions between them and their African hosts (Archives Afrique Occidentale Français n.d.; Public Record Office 1843). These treaties, renewed and modified as the outcome of war shifted from one side to the other after 1843, increasingly released traders from obligations to specific chiefs and instead guaranteed privileges for all Europeans trading on the coast. By the late 1850's, the landlord-stranger relationship on the Nunez River had given way to a treaty system.

Such changes were slower to come to Pongo country. In 1838 a war along the upper river forced Benjamin Campbell and William Emerson, the sole merchants tied to the traditional contract, out of the area (Ward 1969:216). Not until the 1860's did new Europeans enter the Pongo trade. A British attempt to impose a series of treaties in mid-1851 was opposed by trader chiefs on the Upper Pongo, and the paramount, Bala Bangu, rejected the overture (Public Record Office 1852a). A year later, however, he signed a treaty with Britain without consulting his subordinates (Public Record Office 1852b). The result was a protracted war which lasted until 1855, during which private armies destroyed peanut and coffee plantations and temporarily crippled the river's economy (Arcin 1911:142-143). Rather than risk involvement in the conflict, new legitimate traders avoided the region; France did not bother to sign a treaty with the Africans until 1866 (Archives Afrique Occidentale Française 1866).

Before these changes ushered in a new era, the agreement between landlords and strangers was the accepted method of dealing with foreigners resident within a local political unit. The relationship stipulated the obligations between individuals, listing the rents and duties that made the arrangement operative. These responsibilities were never meant to be static, however. Outside influences and innovations and the passage of time brought a fusion of interests. Gradually strangers became advisors to the political elite and sometimes chiefs themselves, and after 1838 the process of accommodation and assimilation was modified by a treaty system. Yet such changes were not without precedent on either river. Rather, they were accepted with relative ease into a system designed to facilitate the influx of new ideas and institutions into a flexible society.

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10 I am indebted to George E. Brooks, Jr., who supplied me with a microfilm of selected manuscripts from the Archives Afrique Occidentale Français. Deveneaux (1973:96) notes that this process of “gradual erosion of the traditional authority of chiefs over settlers and Europeans” began more than a decade earlier in the Port Loko area.

11 The relationship between the chiefs and a new missionary group which entered the Pongo in 1855 is described in Vassady (1972: ch. 5).
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