

and the military. Chapter Seven explores how, when their interactions with French labor unions proved dissatisfying, black migrants from Africa and the Caribbean turned to community organizations and political activism to contend with racism, inadequate housing, low wages, and poverty. Chapter Eight fits black activism into the seminal protests that rocked France in 1968, and shows how that period constituted a turning point for African and Caribbean migrants, although in different ways.

Germain concludes that until the early 1970s, class and cultural divides, as well as differing political statuses, kept the African and Caribbean communities in France largely separate. However, in his ninth and final chapter, entitled ‘Music, Le Pen, and the “New” Black Activism, 1974–2005’, Germain asserts that an all-encompassing black consciousness did eventually develop in France in the succeeding forty years. This was due to the maturation of a generation of black children in France, collaborations between African and Antillean musicians, and the rise of the racist Front National, which stigmatized immigrants of color and simultaneously provoked new forms of activism and solidarity within a heterogeneous black community.

Germain’s study is a welcome addition to the sparse historical literature on black experience in France in the postwar period. His eye for unusual sources, his careful attention to class and gender, and his irreverence for the black intellectuals who are lionized in existing scholarship (he notes that Frantz Fanon beat his wife), are compelling and refreshing. His interviews capture the voice of a generation that is now aging and passing away. (To that point, it would have helped to have a full list of his interviews in the bibliography.) But a reader who is not already familiar with the history of departmentalization in the French Caribbean, decolonization of French Africa, or the upheavals of 1968 will likely need additional scaffolding that is not provided by the lean chapters here. Indeed, some chapters felt like they should be book length studies, while the sources Germain uses sometimes beg for deeper problematization (such as how to gauge reception of films and music in the broader French public).

One thing conspicuously absent from the text was attention to the role of religion, and Islam in particular, in community formation and resistance to marginalization, exploitation, and abject living conditions. Germain cites some Catholic press (mostly in reference to Caribbean migrants), but he does not say much about whether Islam or Catholicism were important forces in the African migrant community. Nonetheless, this book covers new and exciting ground and suggests promising avenues for further research.

ELIZABETH A. FOSTER
Tufts University

NIGERIAN SEAFARERS AND NATIONALISM

Nation on Board: Becoming Nigerian at Sea.

By Lynn Schler.

Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2016. Pp. xv + 241. \$80.00, hardback (ISBN 9780821422175); \$32.95, paperback (ISBN 9780821422182).

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Key Words: Decolonization, empire, postcolonialism, labor, Atlantic World.

‘They weren’t ready yet.’ Towards the end of *Nation on Board*, Lynn Schler recounts an interview with a British former shipping executive. Commenting on the decline of the Nigerian National Shipping Line (NNSL), the executive notes that ‘the process of establishing the NNSL was too hasty, and the buyout of the technical partners happened too early’ (162). The fate of the NNSL was sealed, it seems, by the absence of proper political, economic, and structural conditions that would have otherwise supported a national shipping line in newly independent Nigeria. By contrast, a former engineer with the NNSL provides a different perspective for this failure. Emphasizing the importance of ‘time consciousness’ in shipping, the engineer singles out ‘Nigerian culture’ and its supposed absence of time awareness as responsible for the demise of the NNSL (162–3). Accounting for failure is a central theme in Schler’s rich and unique examination of the rise and eventual collapse of the NNSL. By telling this story, *Nation on Board* provides an important lens onto decolonization and the hopes and disappointments of the postcolonial in Nigeria from the perspective of the often hidden world of those who labor at sea.

Histories of nationalism in Africa, Schler contends, remain ‘largely concerned with expressions of anticolonial agitation that brought about European decolonization and the establishment of independent, modern nation-states within the borders of former colonial territories’ (11). Seeking to move beyond the physical and conceptual boundaries of the nation-state, Schler turns to the experience of ‘working-class’ African seafarers in order to highlight the complex relationship to nation and national belonging that emerges from the vantage point of the ocean.

The six main chapters of *Nation on Board* focus on the process of ‘becoming Nigerian at sea’, as it was experienced by seafarers in two often oppositional registers. Becoming Nigerian is at one level about the transformation of a cosmopolitan ethos – albeit one shaped by the realities of race and colonialism – into a national one. For the NNSL, this rescaling down to the unit of the nation failed because of its inability to navigate the currents of international shipping and the postcolonial global order of states. Here the NNSL stands in for the larger Nigerian state and the failed aspirations of decolonization for the continent more generally. But the process of becoming Nigerian is also about the hopes and possibilities of self-determination that were embraced by seafarers under the banner of Nigerianization, which ranged from better pay to more egalitarian relations with management to the provisioning of African cuisine onboard Nigerian ships.

The book weaves between these two modalities, of expansiveness and hope on the one hand, and constriction and disillusionment, on the other, as it travels from the early recruitment of Nigerian seafarers on ships run by British colonial interests in the 1940s to the collapse of the NNSL in the 1990s. Throughout this period, Schler discusses the optimism and eventual disillusionment of independence, the forms of racism and hardship that seamen faced, as well as the possibilities of romance, private trade, and friendship that seamen forged onboard and at port.

The ‘oceanic turn’ in the humanities and social sciences has been deeply productive in exploring possibilities beyond the territorial boundaries of nation-states. From the Mediterranean to the Atlantic, Pacific, and the Indian Ocean, this scholarship reminds us that seascapes and maritime bodies are not mere divides to be conquered or traversed, but zones of interaction – spaces that generate new possibilities of solidarity and belonging as well as violence and exclusion. *Nation on Board* is a welcome addition to this literature.

In addition to excavating an under-explored archive of African seafarer experiences, Schler's book highlights the importance of moving between land and sea to locate the story of nationalism. Instead of assuming a division between territorial forms of belonging and fluid identities at sea, this book places those processes within the same frame and thus offers new insights onto histories of decolonization and nationalism in Nigeria and beyond.

This book is also about labor and corporations and their role in shaping African pasts and futures. Schler's mix of interviews and archival research makes vivid and visible the possibilities generated through seafaring and the gendered and raced forms of mobility within this world. At the same time, the sea and the ship as a site of life and labor is often under-explored. How did the temporalities of seafaring transform with Nigerianization, as well as with changes in shipping technologies such as containerization and mechanization? Did the NNSL ships include officers and ratings (unlicensed mariners) from other parts of Africa or the global south? If so, how were those dynamics (as opposed to simply those relationships between Nigerians and Europeans) also negotiated? Finally, the main shipping companies in the narrative, Elder Dempster Lines and the NNSL, appear as metonyms for the colonial state and the Nigerian nation-state respectively. How might the view from the shipping company go beyond this perspective to potentially transform our understandings of the colonial state and its postcolonial progeny? How do corporations such as shipping companies, banks, and oil companies constitute the discursive and material ways in which the state is understood in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere?

These questions are not just critiques but highlight the rich possibilities that this book opens up in its wake. *Nation on Board* is simultaneously an important contribution to African studies, labor studies, and maritime history. It furthermore provides an opening onto other spaces and other archives with which to reckon with decolonization and its legacies.

JATIN DUA

University of Michigan-Ann Arbor

MODERNIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN COTE D'IVOIRE

African Miracle, African Mirage: Transnational Politics and the Paradox of Modernization in Ivory Coast.

By Abou B. Bamba.

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Key Words: West Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, development, politics, modernity.

In this book, Abou B. Bamba deals with a question that has been largely neglected by historians of development and specialists of Africa: the way that African states, in this case, Côte d'Ivoire, used the competition between foreign powers and firms, here the United States and France, to bargain for development projects. This book is singularly distinctive for the rigor with which it brings together and analyzes the role of such important actors as