



# **Nation on Board: Becoming Nigerian at Sea (New African Histories)**

*Lynn Schler*

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In the 1940s, British shipping companies began the large-scale recruitment of African seamen in Lagos. On colonial ships, Nigerian sailors performed menial tasks for low wages and endured discrimination as cheap labor, while countering hardships by nurturing social connections across the black diaspora. Poor employment conditions stirred these seamen to identify with the nationalist sentiment burgeoning in postwar Nigeria, while their travels broadened and invigorated their cultural identities.

Working for the Nigerian National Shipping Line, they encountered new forms of injustice and exploitation. When mismanagement, a lack of technical expertise, and pillaging by elites led to the NNSL's collapse in the early 1990s, seamen found themselves without prospects. Their disillusionment became a broader critique of corruption in postcolonial Nigeria.

In *Nation on Board: Becoming Nigerian at Sea*, Lynn Schler traces the fate of these seamen in the transition from colonialism to independence. In so doing, she renews the case for labor history as a lens for understanding decolonization, and brings a vital transnational perspective to her subject. By placing the working-class experience at the fore, she complicates the dominant view of the decolonization process in Nigeria and elsewhere.

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