

Jones similarly points to the elasticity with which Yoruba-language writers envisaged their readerships. Ultimately, however, her analysis focuses on ‘the exuberant sociability’ (p. 104) of Yoruba travel writers, whose travelogues ‘depict their personal and professional networks spreading across Nigerian space’ (p. 110).

In the final chapters, Hlonipha Mokoena and Stephanie Newell develop these intriguing insights into ‘the specificity of printed subjectivities’ (p. 390). Mokoena explains how the Zulu author and printer Magama Fuze used writing ‘to ensure his posterity’ (p. 377), while Newell explores ‘various forms of printed memorialization’ in colonial West Africa, showing how they ‘helped to produce a person’s life story, and thus actively contributed to the genre of biography’ (p. 414). The numerous images in this chapter reveal the visual impact of memorializing techniques. Similarly, Kelly Askew’s chapter on ‘Everyday poetry’ in Swahili newspapers and that of Olubukola Gbadegesin on Yoruba photoplays are strengthened by the inclusion of images, allowing readers to appreciate the creative, innovative and experimental elements of newspapers.

While it is not possible here to highlight the specific merits of each individual chapter, all are based on intensive engagement with, and sophisticated interpretations of, African newspapers. The volume as a whole will be generative of new empirical and theoretical research, adding an important historical dimension to the explosion of scholarship on contemporary African media.

Kate Skinner

University of Birmingham

k.a.skinner@bham.ac.uk

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Nina Sylvanus, *Patterns in Circulation: cloth, gender, and materiality in West Africa*. Chicago IL and London: University of Chicago Press (hb US\$90 – 978 0 226 39719 1; pb US\$30 – 978 0 226 39722 1). 2016, 210 pp.

Nina Sylvanus’s excellent multi-layered trans-historical study of Togolese wax-print fabric (or *pagne*) interweaves the role of African women in postcolonial developments, on the one hand, with a timely intervention in the ‘China-in-Africa’ debates on the other. The cloth constitutes women’s moveable wealth and is of social and aesthetic importance to them. Women, who work the value of cloth, are invested in it in multiple ways, having controlled its circulation in West Africa until Togo’s liberalization under structural adjustment programmes. The latter created the opportunity for copied cloths from China to be introduced. As the media in Western countries rages over China’s increasing capital ties with African countries, it is useful to revisit the long history of national marketplaces and capitalist accumulation in Africa in order to retain the African story that is constitutive of agency, as Sylvanus does in *Patterns in Circulation*. In the book, wax-print fabric is neither simply an artefact nor a commodity produced and consumed. What differentiates this book is that, while the content of *pagne* exposes internal relations and contradictions, its form is neither fixed nor stable. For a relatively short book, with an introduction, conclusion and five chapters, it abounds with stories carefully interwoven with theory.

Chapter 1 uses the stories of two women preparing for celebrations – Atsoui, for a wedding celebration, and Belinda, for a baptism – to illustrate how women, regardless of financial means, use *pagne* to construct particular self-images through the choice of pattern and colour as well as through sartorial tastes that include tailoring, accessories and orchestrated gendered bodily techniques. The

cloth contains histories and qualities that reflect a cultural hierarchy of value (for example, class and taste) that is intelligible to the public, and thus has the power to communicate self-making ambitions.

Chapter 2 further elaborates on how *pagne*, being an already culturally hybridized product, is an archive in itself. It documents a history of taste, assemblage and circulation that connects three regions of the world: West Africa and South-east Asia helped construct the market for wax-print technology and contributed to the development of its aesthetics, while Europe provided the early 'skilled counterfeiter' of cloth. Togolese women cloth traders became influential mediators and distributors of *pagne* by inserting themselves into the trade – by 'naming, displaying, and claiming it as property'. Through stories about the *Nana Benz* in Chapter 3, Sylvanus delves into the economic and political ascendance of Togolese women traders up until independence.

Nana Benz were successful market women with historical ties to influential pre-colonial trading clans and who formed credit relationships with major European textile companies in the colonial era. They came to capture the postcolonial national imagination for their vehicular power, and although they lost their economic position by the 1990s, they persist through the national brand and through memory, especially among a new generation of women cloth traders, *Les Nanettes*, who have been able to adapt to the neoliberal landscape. In Chapter 4, *Nanettes* such as Antoinette are presented as global actors, co-producing cloths with Chinese manufacturers and competing with traders from the Middle East who sell copies of Dutch wax cloth from India, Pakistan and China. Antoinette's collaboration with textile engineers in Hong Kong and China resulted in the first imitation of Dutch superwax ('*super-soso*') and a Chinese-made wax print (Mondial) being sold in the Lomé market. Her success incentivized other Togolese and Chinese traders to reproduce them. What differentiated these imitations from earlier versions was that the labels and names were also copied along with designs.

In an era of economic and political insecurity, the rapid influx of 'hyper-counterfeits' into the national marketplace not only engenders a new regime of mass consumption and provides entrepreneurial opportunities; it also enhances anxieties around value systems and panics about China-in-Africa. Chapter 5 begins with rumours about dangerous and suspicious Chinese fabrics – mostly copies – to illuminate the breakdown of old value systems and ways of identifying and evaluating quality. To guard against fakes or bad copies, *Nanettes* have created brands that claim national heritage (for example, the image and name of *Nana Benz*), companies such as Vlisco have formulated markers and detailed instructions to detect 'true originals', and the Togolese state has joined the global intellectual property regime. However, consumers rely less on technologies of branding or regulatory regimes and more on their senses (touch, smell and taste) and the quality of cloth to gauge authenticity.

While Chinese copies have become imbued with (negative) magical power, the chapter recalibrates the influence of Chinese firms in the Togolese market by returning to the agency of cloth and African woman cloth traders. China's presence in African countries, when historically (re-)contextualized, is but part of a longer history of Africa's constant recreation of frontier capitalism. By foregrounding Togo's place as a commercial entrepôt, Sylvanus does not simply provincialize Europe, as she asserts, but also reassesses the power attributed to China-in-Africa/China-in-Togo. She concludes that the burning of Lomé market, once the commercial hub of the West African cloth trade, and the market women's protests against the government's slow response to restore it were indicative of a larger shift in global capitalist circulation and textile production. Sylvanus's book, therefore, provides essential reading not only for those

interested in wax cloth, but also for those interested in its long-standing role in patterning relations between women, market and nation.

T. Tu Huynh
Jinan University, Guangzhou
huynh.2.t@gmail.com
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Jennifer Hart, *Ghana on the Go: African mobility in the age of motor transportation*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press (hb US\$85 – 978 0 253 02277 6; pb US\$35 – 978 0 253 02307 0). 2016, 266 pp.

Ghana on the Go presents fascinating insights into some of the connectivities that have shaped twentieth- and early twenty-first-century urban Ghana. It is not simply a history of motor transportation, but rather an exploration into the shaping of motor mobility practices and associated legislation within a broader web of economic, social, political and technological changes. For the most part, it focuses on commercial transport, and encompasses a sweep of history extending from struggles between road and rail in the early colonial period, through the rise of the mammy wagon, to the emergence of transport unions and the expansion of trotros (converted cargo trucks) in urban centres in the 1950s, then onwards to private car ownership at the turn of this century and finally to debates over the likely impact of BRT (bus rapid transit) in contemporary Accra.

Drivers occupy centre stage in this story: we learn how skilful, entrepreneurial driver-owners in the 1930s and 1940s found their passengers and suitable apprentices and developed forms of expertise that went beyond driving to mechanical and social skills. For apprentices, the driving test was a rite of passage through which they could become a ‘master’ in their own right and confirm their status as respectable modern men, both sophisticated and metropolitan. It was also lucrative, through the ‘quick money’ of daily earnings. Gendered expectations meant that women were largely excluded from this work: driving was perceived as an essentially masculine enterprise, because it was said to require not only the physical strength to drive a vehicle lacking power steering, and to load and unload goods, but also the mechanical knowledge to maintain and repair vehicles as well as the confidence to enforce good behaviour among potentially unruly passengers. Long-distance cargo drivers received particular respect, because their work entailed even more specialized training and knowledge.

Hart directly links the change in attitudes, and the status of drivers, to the national crisis that beset Ghana as cocoa prices declined. This occurred gradually from the late 1950s. The increasing intrusion of political authoritarianism and the manipulation of legal structures that resulted, as regime after regime engaged in ‘scapegoating’, severely impacted on the social and economic lives of drivers. Events such as the union strike instigated by a new government requirement for drivers to have third-party insurance in 1957 led to drivers being vilified as public enemies and cheats. They were able to survive this long period of decline that extended through the mid-1980s due to their entrepreneurial skills and mutual support, despite the decline of union power in that period. The structural adjustment programme introduced in 1983 saw little relief for these men because increased imports of vehicles after the neoliberal reforms brought a massive expansion in car ownership and thus further reduced the occupational status of commercial drivers. With fewer barriers to entry, driver numbers expanded and men now worked longer hours for less income. Even the growing alliance