with documented sources instead of citations that refer to personal communication (43n154; 75n16; 83n41; 95n79; 96n81).

The book benefits greatly from the co-editorship of Valentin Vydrine, whose vast knowledge and rigorous standards are unparalleled in the field of West African linguistics. The Brill series 'African sources for African history', in which the Bulman and Vydrine volume features as the fifteenth publication, boasts the commendable distinction of requiring that translations of oral texts be accompanied by the original African language transcript. Vydrine contributes a special note on Bamana language and transcription, and the technical detail in his transcript of the original language text is extraordinary. The translators (Vydrine, Bulman, and Amadou Togo) skated through the usual technical difficulties of translation with aplomb, and they have produced easy-flowing English while retaining some sense of the bard's style. Their abandonment of quotation marks — using colons to introduce spoken phrases — conveys the sense and rapid delivery of *jeli* discourse and might be something to emulate. During Sako's performance, the bard played no less than six different traditional melodies, and the consistently high editorial standards maintained throughout this book are exemplified by the inclusion of musical transcripts of those six tunes, provided in a special section by Sam Dickey. In a brief Introduction, the series editors (Dmitiri van den Bersselaar, Michel Doortmont, and Jan Jansen) make several evocative observations. They refer to 'the new stories about Sumanguru' and suggest that they emerged because of 'dramatic political changes that occurred during the 1990s in the Republics of Mali and Guinea' resulting in 'a conceptual space in the popular imagination [that] had been created for a powerful leader who was not in Sunjata's clique and whose message was music to the ears' (*x*). This is the sort of bold commentary that should stimulate future debate about African oral epic.

This reviewer is pleased to see that the editorial and production values of the book are high and that it includes, very importantly, a proper index.[10] In both substance and presentation, it reflects the high standards one has come to expect of other Brill publications.

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GUNS AND SOCIETY IN COLONIAL NIGERIA

Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture, and Public Order.
By Saheed Aderinto.
Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2018. Pp. *xvi* + 300. $80.00, hardback (ISBN: 978-0-253-03160-0); $35.00, paperback (ISBN: 978-0-253-03161-7); $34.99, e-book (ISBN: 978-0-253-03162-4).
doi:10.1017/S0021853719000616

Key Words: Nigeria, colonial, culture, social.

10 There are some minor errors and omissions. The editors' reference to Brett-Smith lacks citation (*viii, xi*); Sasuma Berete is identified as 'Sunjata's mother' (77n26); McIntosh citation should be 2000: 168 (89n58); Bühnen index entry should be 96n81 (165).

The idea that the power of objects extends beyond their immediate service function has shaped the research of historians of technology and consumption in recent decades. Saheed Aderinto's volume is one of a number of new books that have attempted to bring this insight to bear on the study of firearms in Africa, a subject long dominated by technological determinism. Like William Kelleher Storey's study of guns in South Africa, and my own on Central Africa, *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria* is informed by the view that firearms are much more than weapons of human destruction and tools of material production, and that a culturally sensitive approach must be adopted to explore the signs, values, and skills that infused this 'vital global commodity' (4).[1] Unlike Storey's and my books, Aderinto's work focuses almost exclusively on the twentieth century and the colonial period. This framework is both a strength and a weakness.

Chapter One, the only chapter of the book dedicated to the precolonial era, advances the contention that 'firearms did not play a significant role in hunting until the first half of the twentieth century in Nigeria' and that these foreign imports — and their military and symbolic functions — 'were monopolized by the military aristocrats and warriors' (32). The problem is that the evidence adduced to substantiate these broad claims is neither comprehensive nor entirely free from contradictions. Because of these ambiguities, Aderinto's view that pre-twentieth-century Nigeria witnessed the emergence of 'a gun culture' — as opposed to a 'gun society' (defined as 'the highest stage or synergy a society can attain in its use of guns') — should probably be taken with more than a grain of salt (7). The argument appears even more tenuous when it is extended to Africa as whole. To suggest, as Aderinto does in his Introduction, that nowhere in precolonial Africa were there communities who could not 'do without firearms in [their] daily social, political, cultural, and religious life' is, quite simply, incorrect, as even a cursory glance at the workings of, for instance, Central Africa's warlord polities in the second half of the nineteenth century reveals (7).

The book, however, improves dramatically as it goes on, drawing much of its strength from the finely textured analysis made possible by its comparatively limited chronological span. One need not accept the contention undergirding Chapter Two, that it was only in the first half of the twentieth century that Nigerian communities turned into full-blown gun societies, to be impressed by Aderinto's detailed exploration of the effects of colonial gun laws. By enforcing a sharp distinction between 'Dane guns' — the flintlock muskets which every Nigerian was allowed to possess in exchange for an annual license fee (which was eventually scrapped in 1948) — and all other firearms, to which only educated Nigerians and officially-recognized chiefs could aspire, the new regime of gun ownership ushered in by British rule became interwoven with processes of class formation. By around 1940, as Aderinto ably demonstrates, the comparatively more expensive and user-friendly shotgun had become a powerful 'marker of social class', central to the self-fashioning and consumerist strategies of emerging Nigerian elites (87).

Drawing primarily on Nigerian archival material and newspapers, the book's next five substantive chapters chart in great detail the numerous ways in which Nigerian societies

1 W.K. Storey, *Guns, Race and Power in Colonial South Africa* (Cambridge, 2008), and G. Macola, *The Gun in Central Africa: A History of Technology and Politics* (Athens, OH, 2016).

and firearms shaped one another between 1900 and 1960. In this reviewer's opinion, Chapters Four and Six, which speak to some of Aderinto's earlier research concerns, are especially noteworthy. Focusing on Nigeria's European population, the former examines the relationship between race and gun use, arguing that both recreational hunting and rifle-range shooting — a leisure activity from which Africans were barred — worked towards consolidating hierarchies of race and masculinity in the colony. For its part, Chapter Six explores anxieties about the perceived relationship between the proliferation of firearms and armed robbery. The reintroduction of the so-called 'hunter guard system', a form of pre-colonial policing, was one of the countermeasures adopted by many Nigerian communities and their leaders to deal with what was understood to be an unprecedented crime wave (203). The contemporary echoes of these developments (a subject also pursued in the book's Epilogue) will not be lost on readers. Other themes addressed in this rich social history are the politics and economics of the gunpowder trade between the 1920s and 1960 (Chapter Three); the modus operandi of the Nigeria Police Force and the role of firearms in public unrest and, specifically, the political and ethnic violence that accompanied Nigeria's decolonization (Chapter Five); and the tightening of the regulations pertaining to the possession of precision weapons that this violence brought about in the 1950s (Chapter Seven).

Despite its limitations, which are a product of its concentration on colonial circumstances, *Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria* remains an important book and a welcome addition to the scholarship on firearms in Africa. Engagingly written and underpinned by meticulous research, it serves as a well-documented demonstration of the benefits that accrue from studying processes of technology transfer from a socio-cultural perspective and of the inventiveness with which, throughout their history, Africans have appropriated externally-introduced commodities for their own purposes.

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AFRICAN MOBILITY AND MOTOR TRANSPORT IN GHANA

Ghana on the Go: African Mobility in the Age of Motor Transportation.
By Jennifer Hart.
Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2016. Pp. *xi* + 250. $85.00, hardback (ISBN: 978-0-253-02277-6); $35.00, paperback (ISBN: 978-0-253-02307-0); $9.99 e-book (ISBN: 978-0-253-02325-4).
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Key Words: Ghana, transport, social, urban.

Until fairly recently, Igor Kopytoff's call for paying attention to the social life of the motorcar in Africa remained unanswered.[1] Only in the last decade have social scientists

1 I. Kopytoff, 'The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process', in A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986).