



The Ziguéhi Movement and the Afterlives of Kung fu Films in Abidjan*

Alessandro Jedlowski

To cite this article: Alessandro Jedlowski (2021): The Ziguéhi Movement and the Afterlives of Kung fu Films in Abidjan*, Ethnos, DOI: [10.1080/00141844.2021.1907432](https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2021.1907432)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2021.1907432>



Published online: 28 Mar 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



The Ziguéhi Movement and the Afterlives of Kung fu Films in Abidjan*

Alessandro Jedlowski

Laboratoire Les Afriques dans le monde, Sciences Po Bordeaux, Pessac, France

ABSTRACT

Kung fu films made in Hong Kong and Taiwan are one of the most influential film references for male youth audiences around Africa, but despite their influence, their circulation around the continent has only rarely been studied. This essay addresses this gap by analysing the long-term impact of kung fu films on street gang culture in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Kung fu films began to circulate in the country the 1970s. They were screened in Abidjan numerous popular neighbourhood theatre halls along Indian films and American B-movies. Their emphasis on fighting bare hands, the discipline of the body and the revolt to forms of authority perceived as oppressive made them popular among young viewers, who took explicit inspiration from them and began practicing martial arts. The street gang movement which emerged from these influences, known as the 'Ziguéhi', became one of the most influential in recent Ivorian history.

KEYWORDS Kung fu films; West Africa; masculinity; technologies of the body; African popular culture

Introduction

I was a teenager watching a Bruce Lee flick with my friends at the cinema in Abidjan. Bruce Lee was our hero then. At some point in the plot, one of the bad guys was coming to attack Bruce Lee from behind while he was unaware, and suddenly one of the spectators in the theatre leapt to the stage and dug a knife through the bad guy's projection on screen. That was my first lesson in cinema.¹

Paying a tribute to the influence that kung fu films had on his career, Ivorian filmmaker Philippe Lacôte points at a blind spot in the history of African cinema and of African popular culture in general. If, as I realized during more than ten years doing research on film cultures in several sub-Saharan African countries, kung fu films are one of the most successful media products in Africa, the analysis of their circulation and reception in the continent has attracted very little research, and even today, despite the

CONTACT Alessandro Jedlowski  alessandro.jedlowski@gmail.com

*This essay is dedicated to the memory of Henrike Grohs, director of the Goethe Institute of Abidjan at the time this research was conducted, and a dear friend who inspired the research presented here.

All interviews and newspaper articles quoted in the essay have been translated from French by the author.

exponential increase in the study of Africa–China relations, the cultural traces left by the encounter between ‘Chinese films’² and African viewers remain widely understudied (but see Joseph, 1999; Stern 2009; van Staden 2017). It is important to underline here that there are different genres of Asian martial art films, whose name depend on the kind of martial art practiced in the films. Within this landscape, Kung fu is a film genre that has a long and complex history, that began in 1940s Hong Kong with films inspired by the life of popular folk heroes and martial artists such as Fong Sai-yuk and Wong Fei-hung. The genre was revived in the 1970s in opposition to other martial art film genres which included fantasy elements. The most successful features of the films belonging to this new wave were realistic fighting and the casting of real martial artists as protagonists (i.e. Bruce Lee). As discussed in this essay, it is mostly the films belonging to this revival that marked the imagination of African audiences in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Lacôte’s quote also signals the power of films as ‘a system of action’ able to act on the world rather than simply encoding ‘symbolic propositions about it’ (Gell 1998: 6). In fact, the experience of watching kung fu films in a 1970s African metropolis like Abidjan did not only inspired directors like Lacôte; as this essay demonstrates, kung fu films also played a significant role in influencing the Ivorian youth (i.e. the spectator who stabs the screen in Lacôte’s example), turning the cinema space into a social laboratory where new modes of seeing the world and acting upon it were experimented. This happened in a particularly dense and dramatic period of Côte d’Ivoire’s history, that saw the continent move from early post-independence optimism³ to the economic crisis of the 1970s, later accentuated by the application of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs);⁴ in which the increasingly cosmopolitan tastes of those who were born during post-independence abundance were faced by sudden scarcity and economic decline; in which pan-African models of cultural and political intervention had begun to show their limits, but new modes of protest and action were yet to be found.

Within this context, as a few recent works have demonstrated,⁵ political transformations in Côte d’Ivoire have been at times prefigured, at times followed by the emergence of specific artistic genres and by specific patterns of popular culture consumption. If, as Karin Barber has suggested, ‘new genres are precipitated by new historical experiences’ (2018: 2), within the context of Côte d’Ivoire explored in this essay, it is equally possible to suggest that, at times, specific genres can contribute in precipitating new historical experiences. The history of the impact of kung fu films in Abidjan is an illustration of this dynamic.

In his analysis of the success of Bollywood films in northern Nigeria, Brian Larkin has argued for Indian films’ capacity of conveying a model of modernity parallel to the one expressed by western popular culture, a model that offers ‘Hausa viewers a way of imaginatively engaging with forms of tradition different from their own at the same time as conceiving of a modernity that comes without the political and ideological significance of that of the West’ (1997: 407). More recently, discussing a series of essays on the reception of telenovelas among African audiences, Alessandro Jedlowski and Cacilda Rêgo suggested that, contrary to Bollywood films,

telenovelas are particularly successful with African audiences not because they are able to offer a model of modernity that is “parallel” to the western one, but rather because they represent a fantastic world of ideal modern consumerism, an ideal world that creates value out of the erasure of its cultural specificities. (2019: 143)

The analysis of kung fu film circulation and consumption in Abidjan diverge from these theoretical models. Kung fu films’ relevance for African audience seems to rest on their capacity to provide the model for the development of new forms of masculinity and cosmopolitanism, which acquire a particular relevance in moments of deep historical transformation, such as those that, in Côte d’Ivoire, preceded the end of Felix Houphouët-Boigny’s regime in the mid-1990s, or those that followed the electoral crisis and the advent of Alassane Ouattara to power in the early 2010s.⁶

This research was conducted as part of a larger, ongoing project on media production and circulation in two sub-Saharan African countries, Côte d’Ivoire and Nigeria. As part of this project I spent several months conducting fieldwork in both West-African countries (in Lagos and Abidjan, in particular) between 2014 and 2017. Within this context, doing research on the circulation and reception of Kung Fu films appeared to be particularly challenging, as there is a general lack of archival documents about the political economy of film circulation and audience reception of this products. I thus focused on collecting the memories of people who used to attend cinema in the early years of kung fu films’ success (late 1970s and early 1980s), and I interviewed cinema owners active at the time. I also consulted the archives of the main Ivorian newspaper (*Fraternité Matin*) and collected visual materials that could be connected to the impact of kung fu films on Ivorian visual culture.

To further enlarge the scope of my analysis, I progressively reoriented my research toward the study of the political and cultural ‘afterlives’ of these cultural products in Abidjan, that is, toward the analysis of the traces they left on local popular culture and politics, and particularly on one of the most influential manifestations of the very rich street gang culture that developed in Abidjan since the mid-1970s: the Ziguéhi movement (de Latour 1999, 2003; Yao 2017). As Leslie Stern suggested,

although the films do not feed into local film cultures, they do intersect with other aspects of the local culture and survive as a kind of ghostly imprint. It is this afterlife of the movies that captures my interest, an interest focused less on the global mobility of films [...], and more on the fertility of the encounter generated in “local” places. (2009, p. 188)

To do so, I hanged out with a number of old members of the gang, some of whom are still respected figures of the local urban landscape. The historical context in which I conducted my research helped me to collect their experiences. As I will discuss below, thanks to the political transition that brought Alassane Ouattara to power, in the early 2010s, the political environment was favourable to the collective rediscovery of a movement that had been partially marginalised during the tenure of Laurent Gbagbo as president. Old gang members were thus keen in sharing their memories.

Through the analysis of this different kind of data, the research presented here investigates the outcomes of the encounter between kung fu films and Abidjan’s

male youth in the 1970 and 1980s, and its significance for understanding postcolonial Ivorian politics and culture.

Cinema-going Culture and Kung fu Films in Abidjan

Abidjan has been for long time a fundamental hub of film distribution in francophone West Africa. The two French companies *Société d'Exploitation Cinématographique Africaine* (SECMA) and *Compagnie Africaine Cinématographique Industrielle et Commerciale* (COMACICO), created in the late 1920s and early 1930s, kept the quasi-monopole of film distribution and film exhibition in the country (and throughout the entire Francophone West-African region) until the mid-1970s (Bachy 1983). Cinema was a popular form of entertainment in Côte d'Ivoire, and this is testified by the high number of theatre halls in the country (150 official cinemas in the 1960s, and many more informal screening venues). But, as in most African countries at the time, most of the films shown on the Ivorian screens were imported from abroad. Côte d'Ivoire was a particularly dynamic market, with hundreds of foreign films imported every year according to the figures published by the local censors board (and republished in the local newspaper *Fraternité Matin*, see Kouassi 1976, 1980; Mockey 1984). In what concerns Abidjan, in the period that interests us more closely (the 1970s and 1980s – the period in which kung fu films became globally successful) most of the theatre halls were located in low-income, popular neighbourhoods (like Treichville, Adjamé, Abobo, Markory, and Yopougon) (Images 1–3).



Image 1. The poster of a kung fu film on the doors of an old cinema in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire (photo by Alessandro Jedlowski).



Image 2. Bollywood film posters on the doors of an old cinema in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire (photo by Alessandro Jedlowski).

Throughout the 1970s the ownership of these theatres slowly moved from French owners to Ivorian and Lebanese entrepreneurs. This participated in structuring two parallel circuits of distribution. On the one hand a network of few elitist cinemas, still owned in most cases by French firms, based between the central, administrative neighbourhood of the Plateau and other wealthy neighbourhoods (such as Cocody), oriented toward an audience composed of local elites and expats, and programming mainly French and American films. On the other hand, a large network of cheaper theatre halls, mostly owned by Lebanese and Ivorian entrepreneurs.⁷ These cinemas were programming mainly Indian films, spaghetti westerns and, later, kung fu films; they were oriented toward low-income audiences and, as a veteran cinema-owner of Lebanese descent explained to me, they were strategically located in buildings close to crowded areas such as street markets and bus stations so that people could stop



Image 3. The poster of a kung fu film on the doors of an old cinema in Grand Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire (photo by Alessandro Jedlowski).

by while waiting for a meeting, or for a bus or collective taxi to leave town (pers. comm., August 10, 2014) (Images 4 and 5).

The way the main Ivorian newspaper of the time, *Fraternité Matin* (a newspaper mostly oriented toward the local elite), presented these two different social spaces in



Image 4. Newspaper article about popular cinemas in Abidjan on the local newspaper *Fraternité Matin* (photo by Alessandro Jedlowski).



Image 5. Newspaper article about the success of kung fu films in Abidjan on the local newspaper *Fraternité Matin* (photo by Alessandro Jedlowski).

its regular coverage of cinema programmes in Abidjan illustrates how popular cinemas were stigmatised as dirty, crowded, and dangerous places, that respectable Ivorians should carefully avoid:

In front of the cinemas that open at 10 am in the popular neighbourhoods, young people engage all day long in card games and lotteries, most or all of them are unemployed and are getting themselves introduced to banditry by playing the “Djangos” or the “Bruce Lees” endlessly. They imitate the spectacular feats of a “Shaolin” caught in an ambush. It is not uncommon to see these games end in hot altercations or bloody fights. (Mockey 1984)

On the left side of the social centre of Adjamé [a crowded, commercial neighbourhood in Abidjan], [there is] a big building in yellow and red: the cinema ROXY. All around there are merchants of radios. Mud everywhere, the *gbakas* [the small vans that are used for public transport in Abidjan] and their apprentices [the bus conductors] impose “their law”. A strong smell of urine welcomes you and lifts your heart. You have to hold back your breathing. (Kouebi 1991)

Within this context, kung fu films made their first appearance a bit later than elsewhere. That is, if the global ‘kung fu craze’ is normally dated around 1973,⁸ according to the few available figures for Côte d’Ivoire, it is possible to say that this film genre arrived in the country (mostly thanks to Lebanese film distributors) five to ten years later. Indeed, as reported by local newspapers, if in 1976 there were still no kung fu films available in local cinemas, by 1984 they had become 95% of the total number of films programmed in the popular neighbourhood cinemas (Kouassi 1976, 1980; Mockey 1984). The most successful among them were the Taiwanese kung fu films made by the prolific director Joseph Kuo (such as *7 Grandmasters*, 1977, and *Born Invincible*, 1978, whose poster in front of a popular neighbourhood cinema in the 1980s can be seen in Image 5), and, of course, the Bruce Lee series (in particular *The Way of the Dragon*, 1972, and *Game of Death*, 1972). Beyond them, commercial Hong Kong kung fu movies such as *The Hot, The Cool and The Vicious* (Tsao Nam Lee, 1979), *Shaolin Drunken Monk* (Au-Yeung Jun, 1981), and *The Shaolin Temple*

(Chang, 1982) also left a mark in the imagination of 1980s Ivorian youth (Alain Tailly, pers. Comm., October 25, 2015). Contrary to the American western films that fascinated colonial subjects in Africa and Oceania in the early twentieth century, kung fu films were hardly the only films available, and their success cannot be explained simply as a ‘consequence of distribution and the market’ (Pearson 2013: 160; see also Burns 2002). Rather, as this essay demonstrates, their success needs to be understood also in relation to specific forms of ‘material cultures that are displayed and the body techniques that are performed’ in the films (Hobbis 2018: 293), and their resonance with specific socio-historical conditions in 1970s and 1980s Abidjan.

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s kung fu films continued to be distributed in popular neighbourhood cinemas across the country but they also began to circulate in VHS tapes, mostly for screening in the countless video clubs that mushroomed in the country throughout the 1980s. As discussed in several studies of martial art films (cf. Tasker 1993; Morris, Li and Chan 2005), this genre’s success was multiplied by the explosion of video consumption across the world (through video stores, rental shops and video clubs), and the special relationship between kung fu film and the video format had an impact on the reception of this genre: ‘the fact that these films could be acquired cheaply also means that they stayed around for a long time, [...] certain genres became successfully embedded in community practices and patterns of taste’ (van Staden 2017: 55). Furthermore, the success of kung fu films among African Americans (cf. Kato 2007), and its consequent impact on African American music (i.e. Hip Hop) and popular culture (i.e. Blaxploitation films), had a role in perpetuating the fame of this film genre among the Ivorian youth well beyond the period of the ‘kung fu craze’ (Cha-Jua 2008; Eperjesi 2004; Kim 2003). Indeed, also thanks to the influence of African American culture (and particularly Hip Hop) on the Ivorian youth,⁹ kung fu films kept on resurfacing in the Ivorian popular culture over the past thirty years, and today many of the Ivorian men I met in Abidjan, belonging to different generations, share a strong affection for this genre.

Street Gangs and the Cinema Space

Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, popular neighbourhood cinemas in Abidjan progressively became key spaces in the emerging phenomenon of street gangs. According to the studies conducted by Éliane de Latour (1999, 2003) and Severin Kouamé Yao (2017) the phenomenon of street gangs emerged in Ivorian economic capital and other major cities precisely around the same period in which kung fu films made their first appearance in the country. Their emergence is the consequence of the interaction between several factors, including the country’s worsening economic situation which led to the application of SAPs toward the end of the 1980s and to the political turmoil that followed it (Akindès 2004). But the emergence of street gangs is also the manifestation of a generational gap that was beginning to emerge at the time, between those who had directed the country since independence, and those who, being born in an already independent Côte d’Ivoire, were now claiming a role in the control of the economic and political resources of the country – a generational conflict that

found its most dramatic consequences in the political crisis of the late 1990s and first decade of the 2000s.¹⁰ Within this context, the cinema space became a '*lieu d'apprentissage*', as de Latour (1999: 72) puts it – a place where the unemployed youth spent most of their time learning how to fight and how to love from the stars they were watching on the screen.

Popular cinemas were certainly not the only places where the youth would gather in these periods of crisis. The campus of the Université de Cocody (later renamed Université Félix-Houphouët-Boigny) in the high-end neighbourhood of Cocody, for instance, was a key space of political mobilisation and cultural production throughout the 1980s and 1990s, when educators and university professors emerged as the front figures of political opposition to Houphouët-Boigny's regime, and students' activism began to have an impact on the country's politics (Konaté 2003). On the opposite end of the city life spectrum, bars, nightclubs and brothels in popular neighbourhoods such as Treichville (until the 1980s) and Yopougon (from the 1990s) were a staple of Abidjan social life – the places where the urban population could find distraction from the hardship of an increasingly critical economic situation, while (re)inventing the cultural forms capable of telling the nation in times of crisis (Konaté 2002) and producing the eruption of unpredictable forms of political consciousness (N'Guessam 1983).

But the cinema offered something else: it provided the audiences with the possibility of briefly forgetting the harshness of the political and economic situation, while giving them the opportunity to learn about new strategies for 'worlding' their experience of the city (Simone 2001) and for experiencing the world through mimesis and 'camouflage' (Krings 2015; Lombard 2016). Emphasising the centrality of the cinema experience in 1970s Abidjan, the Ivorian star actor Isaac de Bankolé recalled that, as children, he and his friends did whatever they could to attend film screenings, and spent their afternoons reproducing the gestures, movements and styles of their heroes:

I remember that, close to the house where I grew up, there was an open-air cinema. Close to it there was an old mango tree, and kids used to climb it in order to watch what was going on inside. Those who were best at climbing will then tell the story of the film to the others, re-enacting the gestures of the actors they saw on the screen. (pers. comm., August 10, 2014)

Young men used to go to the cinema in the morning, to watch the 10am show, and would stay there until the evening: 'we spent all our time at the cinema, watching karate films. Everything [about the Ziguéhi movement] started from there' (Kipré Jean Omer aka Sahin Polo, pers. comm., September 14, 2015).

As scholars have shown in relation to areas such as the Belgian Congo, the British Central Africa, or the Pacific (Burns 2002; Gondola 2016; Pearson 2013), in late colonial times American western films were extremely successful with non-western audiences. This was true also in Côte d'Ivoire, as testified by one of the etymologies of the word '*nouchi*' – a term that is generally used to define the Ivoirian pidgin (a mix of French, English and various African languages spoken in Côte d'Ivoire, including languages belonging to the Beté¹¹ and Mande¹² groups) commonly considered as the official language of street gangs; but also a term used to identify, in general terms, the members of certain Ivorian street gangs themselves. One of the most recurrent

etymologies for this term considers it to be the result of the combination of two Dyula terms:¹³ 'nu' (nose) and 'si' (hair). Nouchi would thus mean 'nose hair', referring to the moustaches of cowboys in American westerns (see also Newell 2009; see Yao 2017 for other interpretations of the etymology of this term). However, if as this example shows, American films were indeed very popular in Abidjan throughout the 1950s and 1960s, it is kung fu rather than western films that became the fundamental reference for one of the most influential groups to emerge from the complicated geography of street gangs in 1970s Abidjan: the Ziguéhis.

This group coagulated precisely around the cinema space, as young men started practicing directly within the cinema theatres (during and after the films) the martial arts movements they learned from the stars on the screen, thus experimenting with the violence they would later export to the streets of the entire city. As one of the Ziguéhis I interviewed told me,

the cinema was the first place where to show that you were tough. You had to be able to fight! People had to be afraid of you! After a while, we didn't pay the entry ticket anymore, they were keeping the seats for us. And all the people selling things around the cinema had to give us a percentage of their income. (pers. comm., September 14, 2015)

Like for the Congolese youth's fascination for western films studied by Gondola, one of the aspects of kung fu films (even if, as I will highlight below, not the only one) that fascinated the Ivorian youth was connected to the display of violence and performative masculinity. But kung fu films offered a somehow different model if compared to American western films. In fact, 'kung fu's heroes relied as much on intellectual capabilities and inner virtue as they did on pure physical strength to achieve their goals' (Ongiri 2002: 36), and it is indeed the figure of Bruce Lee as not only the strongest, but also the smartest fighter that my interlocutors underlined when describing some of their favourite scenes, such as the one in which Bruce Lee beats Chuck Norris in the legendary fight that takes place in Rome's Colosseum (in *The Way of the Dragon*, 1972) or when he fights and wins a fiery fight against basketball champion and kung fu fighter Kareem Abdul Jabbar (in *The Game of Death*, 1972). As Leslie Stern emphasises, kung fu films

incorporate an element of the ethical in the sense of work on the self. A dedicated training of the body is seen as inseparable from character training. Concentration, focus, meditation, mental agility, the discipline of routine exercise, are all seen as prerequisites for action, for physical prowess. Inner focus or spiritual cathexis enables economic and efficient combat. (2009: 208)

These aspects appeared to be particularly relevant for the Ziguéhis I met during my research. Most of them, in fact, when trying to differentiate themselves from other street gang movements that existed in Abidjan at the time, underlined the emphasis that the Ziguéhis used to put on fighting bare hands, according to a number of non-written rules, largely inspired by kung fu films, which included a certain respect for the opponent and the idea that fighting was an art rather than a simple display of brute violence. Following these rules, the different groups that existed around the city used to defy each other in occasional collective fights aimed at demonstrating

one group's power over the others.¹⁴ These fights used to terrorise the people living in the neighbourhoods in which they were taking place, and participated in establishing the reputation of the Ziguéhis. In this respect, it is important to underline that the Ziguéhis had emerged in the late 1970s as a form of self-appointed vigilantes, who claimed to protect their neighbourhoods from external aggressors, and the emphasis on the moral codes they drew from kung fu films helped them in defending such claims.¹⁵ But in reality, they quickly extended their activity to several forms of racket, and they ended up extorting money in exchange for 'protection' from market vendors, bus conductors, cinema owners, prostitutes and several other figures that shared with them the hard life of Abidjan street economy. The episodic fights between gangs participated in consolidating their despicable reputation, and made their racket activities more successful.

The Ziguéhis and the Afterlives of Kung fu Films

To better understand the specificities of the Ziguéhi movement, it is useful to look at the origins of the term that was adopted to define it. The term Ziguéhi is a complicated one and it is almost impossible to unveil all the different layers of meaning that compose it. In general terms, the Ziguéhis can be defined as a particular group within the larger, more general phenomenon of the Nouchi. If the Nouchi are generally considered as bandits, who might use knives and other weapons to achieve their goals, one of the key features of the Ziguéhis, as mentioned earlier, is the training of the body and a particular code of self-discipline and honour, deeply inspired by Asian martial arts and kung fu films. As one of the Ziguéhi I discussed with underscored, 'we copied [kung fu film actors'] movements and their bodies' (pers. comm., September 15, 2015). Indeed, for the Ziguéhis, as for Kinshasa's township fighters analysed by Katrien Pype, the body can be seen as 'the ultimate site of social existence' (Pype 2007: 251), where the struggle for survival meets the quest for social recognition, and the strength of the muscles is completed by the agility of the mind and the depth of the breath. This is why, while Bruce Lee is considered by the Ziguéhis a model for his rapidity and intelligence, a more marginal character in the kung fu galaxy, like Bolo Yeung (remembered among the Ziguéhis particularly for his performance in *Born Invincible*), is equally popular for his capacity to combine the strength and the muscles of an experienced bodybuilder to the technique of a skilled martial artist.

As for the term itself, 'Ziguéhi', the people I talked to in Abidjan alternatively traced its origins back to two different etymologies. On the one hand, some people suggested it to be a Nouchi word coming from the combination of two Mande words, translating roughly into the 'modern warrior' (Kipré Jean Omer aka Sahin Polo, pers. comm., September 18, 2015). On the other hand, other people emphasised that the term came from the transformation of the Beté word for 'chameleon' (Alain Tailly, pers. comm., October 23, 2015). The plurality of these etymologies is an example of the cosmopolitan (in the sense of both inter-ethnic and pan-national) dimension of the movement, which, as the Nouchi language spoken by its members, mixed elements coming from the cultures of several of the ethnic groups composing the mosaic of the Ivorian

nation.¹⁶ It is in this sense that a number of the Ziguéhis I discussed with considered the movement not simply as an expression of popular urban culture, but as a powerful element of national cohesion, within a political context marked by growing ethnic tensions. In the first years of their existence, ‘the Ziguéhis worked for Houphouët without knowing it. They created the ingredient for national unity that he missed’, told me the Ziguéhi Sahin Polo (pers. comm., September 18, 2015), referring to the Nouchi language and the music and dance culture (the *gnaman gnaman* dance further discussed below, which took its name from the Mande word for trash or garbage) which were popularised by the movement (see also Konaté 2002; Newell 2009). These cultural forms participated in creating a new form of national popular culture, implicitly strengthening Houphouët-Boigny’s post-independence project of unifying the very diverse set of people and cultures that composed the newly born nation of Côte d’Ivoire. As Bruce Lee’s kung fu films, then, the Ziguéhis represented a form of nationalism ‘neither simple nor reactionary’, beyond ‘the nationalism of the bourgeoisie’ (Cha-jua 2008: 217): a grassroot nationalism connected to wider processes of social and cultural emancipation of the urban youth. Here, the relevance of kung fu films for the Ziguéhis suggests that their formulation of nationalism is intrinsically cosmopolitan, as in order to overcome localist, ethnic-based claims it produces stylistic modes that seek ‘wordliness at home’ (Ferguson 1999: 212).

The combination of the two etymologies mentioned above makes us capture the complexity of the Ziguéhi’s relation with both local and global cultural references. On the one hand, as a Ziguéhi mentioned during a discussion that followed the screening of a documentary film on the movement at the Goethe Institute in Abidjan in 2015, like the chameleon (and like the kung fu fighter), the Ziguéhi is careful in his movements; he ‘never turns his head but only his eyes’, meaning that he never loses sight of his target; he is strategic as ‘he does not need to attack his prey frontally, but he can catch it thanks to his technique, as the chameleon does with its tongue’; he is resilient and adaptable, as the chameleon that changes its colour to adapt itself to its surrounding.¹⁷ On the other hand, the Ziguéhis considers themselves as the heirs of ancient Mande warriors and hunters whose history they imagine as marked by honour, respectability and carefully mastered fighting skills. In the rituals that accompany the training of Dozo hunters in northern Côte d’Ivoire (who mostly belong to Mande speaking ethnic groups across the western African region) described by Joseph Hellweg (2011), the hunters are indeed compared to chameleons for their capacity of camouflage, disguise and adaptation. And in Beté proverbs, the chameleon’s strength is said to come from its capacity to move slowly and steadily (Thomas 1982). Through the reference to kung fu films these qualities are actualised and transposed in the modern urban context and in new forms of popular, national culture.

Interacting with this rich and complex cultural heritage, kung fu films have influenced much of the aesthetic and cultural expressions that emerged from the Ziguéhi movement. In the 1980s for instance, one of the best known and most popular icon of the Ziguéhi movement, Sahiri Gnédre Lazare aka John Pololo, participated in popularising a dance style, the *gnaman gnaman*, which consisted in a choreographed series of kung fu

style movements (Bassolé 1985; Kouamé 1985).¹⁸ This dance style, together with the music that was connected to it (the music played by Ziguéhi groups such as RAS and Kassiry, for instance) has been instrumental for the emergence of the much better known music genres that saw the light throughout the 1990s and the 2000s, such as the *Zouglou* and the *Coupé Décalé*, two Ivorian popular music genres which later became well known across Africa and beyond, thanks to the reputation of star musicians such as DJ Arafat or the group Magic System (see Kohlhagen 2005; Konaté 2002; McGovern 2010; Schumann 2013) (Images 6 and 7).



Image 6. Newspaper article about the Ziguéhi dance styles on the local newspaper *Fraternité Matin* (Photo by Alessandro Jedlowski).



Image 7. Newspaper article about the Gnaman-Gnaman dance style on the local newspaper *Fraternité Matin* (Photo by Alessandro Jedlowski).

The influence of the Ziguéhi culture, and of kung fu films with it, somehow faded in the late 1990s and early 2000s, when other cultural models and movements – including the just mentioned *Zouglou* and *Coupé Décalé* – became more prominent. One of the possible reasons for the partial disappearance of the Ziguéhis from the public space in the late 1990s and early 2000s is the connection that this movement developed with Houphouët-Boigny's regime. As the people I interviewed openly recognised, toward the end of the 1980s many Ziguéhis were hired by the government into a sort of paramilitary organisation (the 'volontaires de sécurité', also known as 'VS'): up to 770 Ziguéhis joined the special force and started being paid a monthly salary by the Presidential office.

New details about this controversial episode of Ivorian history are emerging today, thanks to the recent revaluation of the Ziguéhi movement, as evidenced by the interviews included in the documentary film *Les enfants d'Houphouët* (Polo 2016), whose

title is an explicit reference to the direct link that the Ziguéhis developed with the ‘father’ of Côte d’Ivoire. In any case, it seems that the ‘volontaires de sécurité’ were put together with a twofold objective: on the one hand, this group was created to avoid the Ziguéhis to join emerging political opposition movements that could threaten the stability of the regime; and on the other hand, it was aimed at developing a parallel security system that could help the government to keep control of the most troubled neighbourhoods in the period of political turmoil that followed the application of SAPs in the late 1980s and the introduction of multipartyism (Yao 2017).¹⁹ As a result, the political and social destiny of the Ziguéhis remained connected to that of their patrons and, if some of them managed to be hired in the army in the immediate aftermath of Houphouët-Boigny’s death, many others were forced to exile, arrested or killed after Robert Guéi’s coup d’état against Houphouët-Boigny’s dauphin, Henri Konan Bédié, in 1999. The public killing of John Pololo in January 2000 by the PC-Crise group, a special force created by the Guéi’s government to tackle those responsible for political agitation in the country, publicly marked the end of the movement and its (at least momentary) erasure from Ivorian public memory (Image 8).

The political turmoil that followed the 2010 elections and brought Alassane Ouattara to the presidency in 2011 transformed the balance of forces in the country (Akindès 2017), bringing back to power a number of political figures (including Ouattara himself) who had been close to Houphouët-Boigny in the late years of his regime, while simultaneously ousting those who, like Laurent Gbagbo (the country’s president between 2000 and 2010), had opposed Houphouët-Boigny’s regime until its end. Maybe also as a result of this dynamic the Ziguéhis have claimed a new space in the Ivorian social and cultural arena, and have managed to rehabilitate their role as key protagonists of the street gang culture that participated in transforming Abidjan and Côte d’Ivoire throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Together with them, kung fu films and Asian martial arts have come again to the forefront of Ivorian popular culture production.

If the publication of Alain Tailly’s successful novel *John Ziguéhi* (Tailly 2015) and the documentary film *Les enfants d’Houphouët* (2016), made by the Ziguéhi Kipré Jean Omer aka Sahin Polo, are the best example of the Ziguéhis’ attempt at rehabilitating their past,²⁰ low budget Ivorian martial art films such as *Ultimatum* (Diarrasouba 2012) are an example of how the rediscovery of the Ziguéhi movement is accompanied by a renewed interest in kung fu films. *Ultimatum*’s director Djakaridja Diarrasouba’s trajectory is a perfect example in this sense. His passion for cinema developed while watching Bruce Lee’s martial arts films on the screens of Abidjan’s video clubs in the early 2000s; he went on to study karate (he is today a black belt) and to experiment with filmmaking. The military crisis that followed the elections in 2010 and the wave of street violence that accompanied it inspired him to write a film about the rivalries between Abidjan’s street gangs. To write and realize the film, he asked old Ziguéhis in his neighbourhood to advise him and to coach the actors of the film during the shooting of the fight scenes between street gangs. The film thus progressively metamorphosed into a martial art movie, in which he and his fellow karate practitioners play key roles (Diarrasouba, pers. comm., 4 August 2014).



Image 8. A special issue of the Ivorian magazine Allô Police published ten years after the killing of John Pololo (photo by Alessandro Jedlowski).

Smartness, Masculinity and Adaptive Cosmopolitanism

If, as one of the Ziguéhis I interviewed suggested to me, the Ziguéhi movement ‘is a filter through which you can read the entire recent political history of Côte d’Ivoire’ (pers. comm., September 15, 2015), kung fu films and their influence on Ivorian youth are the red line that connects among each other the different nodal points that compose this history. It is then worth asking, what is it about kung fu films that made them so popular?

As mentioned earlier, the period in which kung fu films made their first appearance in Côte d’Ivoire was a period of intense social and economic transformations, marked by the emerging conflict between the generation that ruled the country in the immediate post-independence period and a new generation of youngsters born in an independent Côte d’Ivoire, eager to play a role in the destiny of the country. Similar to the

situation described by Gondola in relation to late colonial Congo, this was a context in which youth ‘maleness was constantly devalued and dehumanized’ (2016: 10), particularly in the case of the marginalised youth living in poor neighbourhoods which were the first to feel the impact of the economic crisis and the imperative to evolve toward ‘new figures of success’ (Banégas and Warnier 2001). Within this context, like the Congolese Bills before them, the Ziguéhis ‘created a behavioural lexicon drawn from local lore and global flow’ (Gondola 2016: 3), and they found their inspiration in the cinematic heroes of their time, no longer the white, hypermasculine Cow Boys of American westerns, but the elegant as much as lethal Asian kung fu fighters *à la* Bruce Lee, an icon better suited than the white Buffalo Bills of the past to inspire Ziguéhis’ revolt against the Europeanized elites of post-independence Côte d’Ivoire. In fact, as scholars working on the reception of kung fu films among African American and non-western audiences underlined (cf. Cha-Jua 2008; Kaminsky 1974; Prashad 2001; Ongiri 2002), the wide success that kung fu films obtained with these audiences can be connected to their capacity to express their ‘demand for acknowledgment and for an obliteration of hierarchy’ (Prashad 2003: 54). As van Staden pointed out, ‘black audiences in the United States saw parallels between their own oppressed position and Bruce Lee’s outsider persona’ (2017: 49), and kung fu films contributed in creating and circulating ‘visions of anti-hegemonic cosmopolitanism’ (Prashad 2001 quoted in van Staden 2017: 49). However, very much like the cosmopolitanism described by James Ferguson among Copperbelt miners, the Ziguéhis’ cosmopolitanism is not

the expression of something “deeper” (habitus, worldview, ideology) – [it is] neither [a] “culture” nor residues of once-distinct cultures; nor [is it the] manifestation of transition between distinct social types distinguished as traditional or modern. [It is] instead just what [it] seem[s] to be: [a] mode of practical action in contemporary urban social life. (1999: 221)

And the key feature of this mode of action is adaptability – the same adaptability of chameleons, ancient Mande hunters and kung fu fighters, which allowed the Ziguéhis to be the flagbearer of Ivorian counterculture in the 1980s, only to become the most explicit defendants of the political status quo, after beginning their collaboration with Houphouët-Boigny’s regime in the 1990s.

If Bruce Lee’s non-white identity had a particular importance in creating a connection with South African audiences under apartheid (van Staden 2017) or with African American audiences emerging from the period of civil rights movements (Prashad 2001), in Côte d’Ivoire what seems to have marked the imagination of marginalised youth was kung fu films’ emphasis on specific technologies of the self, in which rigid disciplines of the body and of the mind were mixed together to develop a spectacularly efficient violence as weapon of the poor. As May Joseph underscores,

the choreography of kung fu trains the body as a weapon of vigilance. It hinges upon a technology of self otherwise relegated to the state through the police, the military, sports, national youth service, and other forms of regulative socialization. (1999: 56)

Contrary to what she observed in socialist Tanzania in the 1970s, under Julius Nyerere’s regime, though, the application of these techniques of the self in the Ivorian

context cannot be reconnected to a specific ideological project. In the ‘state-saturated’ context of Tanzania, Joseph sees kung fu films as able to

valorise an aesthetics of self-governance that is closely aligned to forms of control that produce and sustain [the socialist regime], [in which] the individual, articulated as youth, is produced through various institutional regimes and practices as the vigilant and productive machine of the state. (1999: 56)

But in Côte d’Ivoire, kung fu films’ technologies of the self are mobilised by a post-ideological youth whose main ambition is to obtain social and economic recognition (in the form of material wealth and social respect). In this sense, Ziguéhis’ pride in remembering and celebrating their collaboration with the Houphouët-Boigny’s regime clarify the Ziguéhi’s position. In the words of the Ziguéhi Sahin Polo,

a good street kid, doesn’t care about politics! [...] Everything a street kid looks for is to be respected. As a street kid you are very careful at how people behave with you, you look at every small gesture, even at the way people give you money when you beg. But what you are looking for, most than everything, is respect. Respect softens even the most violent of men. The way you speak to someone, the way you look at him. [Houphouët-Boigny] worked on our spirit: by meeting us and calling on our help, he made us understand that we were important.²¹

By claiming the Ziguéhis to be an ‘apolitical’ movement, Sahin Polo nevertheless points to the implicit political nature of their action: he underlines their reaction to institutional and popular forms of discrimination toward the poor, and describes the Ziguéhi movement as driven by the disenfranchised youth’s quest for social visibility and acceptance.

Within this context, kung fu films offered to the Ziguéhis a model to develop oppositional masculinities in a context of systematic marginalisation and devaluation of youth manhood – oppositional masculinities whose key features were strength, adaptability and smartness. As Katrien Pype (2007: 258) has shown in relation to Kinshasa, in the postcolonial context successful models of masculinity are embedded in the figure of the strongman – someone able to capitalise not exclusively his physical strength but also his spiritual connections (like the pastor) or his economic and social capital (like the politician or the star musician). Through their reference to kung fu films and Asian martial artists, the Ziguéhis provide a further element to complexify this landscape. In fact, while the Ziguéhis are often defined (by people who do not belong to the movement) simply with the pejorative term ‘loubards’ (bandits), they define themselves as the most culturally-savvy group in the landscape of local street gangs: they consider themselves as ‘yeré’, that is ‘smart people’ in Nouchi language. This points to the fact that they see their strength as lying not only in their muscles and in their capacity to fight bare hands, but also in their ability to fight with honour and to understand when not to fight. As Ongiri underlined, kung fu heroes here provide a model in which strength and hardness are combined with intelligence and self-control, making the audience see ‘the underdog win through a differently articulated body politics that stressed discipline, restraint, and self-determination rather than [the] cartoonish display of brute force’ (Ongiri 2002: 36) that was common in the Blaxploitation

films mentioned by Ongiri, or in the westerns that were popular in Abidjan and many other African cities throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

In ways similar to those that Sasha Newell described in his analysis of fashion style in Abidjan, the Ziguéhis adopted cosmopolitan cultural features to address local concerns. They made otherness part of their identity, and as chameleons, they demonstrated their cosmopolitan capacity not only to reject locality but also to transcend 'local class hierarchy by proving their access to a stylistic world beyond the purview of their supposed superiors' (Newell 2012b: 49). In reviving the iconic figure of the ethnic warrior through modern, cosmopolitan elements taken from kung fu films, the Ziguéhis made an attempt at creating a new modern, urban tradition that – together with the Nouchi language, a particular fashion style, and a specific music – could make them the protagonist of a renewed national cultural identity.

Notes

1. Quote from an interview with Philippe Lacôte in the catalogue of the exhibition 'Saving Bruce Lee: African and Arab Cinema in the Era of Soviet Cultural Diplomacy (A Prologue)', https://cdn-static-garagemca.gcdn.co/storage/tinymce_asset/80/file-037df681-a181-4a49-9e06-b66068a96f24.pdf (accessed on August 10, 2018). Philippe Lacôte is one of the internationally best-known Ivorian contemporary filmmakers.
2. Kung fu films were produced mostly in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the US (Hollywood), but for the majority of African audiences they are 'Chinese films', and as such their reception can be interpreted as part of the complex history of intercultural encounter between Africa and China. Also, these films tend to offer a representation of China as a 'mythical space', in which real and imagined elements are mixed together; in this sense, African audiences' confusion about the Chinese identity of kung fu films can be seen as 'a reflection of martial arts film narration' (van Staden 2017: 47) and of its invention of a mythical, often a-historical China.
3. Côte d'Ivoire became independent in 1960 and during the first few years of independence it became one of the most stable and successful countries in West Africa, mostly thanks to the prosperity of its economy based on the global export of cocoa.
4. The Structural Adjustment Programs are a set of policies promoted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank via the conditions attached to the loans provided to several countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America throughout the 1980s, as a consequence of the global economic crisis of the late 1970s. Their impact on African societies and economies has made the object of intense criticism. See Mkandawire and Soludo 1999.
5. See McGovern 2010; Newell 2009, 2012a, 2012b; Bahi 2013; Konaté 2002; Schumann 2013.
6. Houphouët-Boigny has been the first president of independent Côte d'Ivoire and, despite the existing diverging opinions about his legacy, he is generally considered as the 'father' of the Ivorian nation. He remained in power until his death in 1993. The end of his regime has been followed by political and economic instability (with several moments of widespread violence, as in 1999, 2002 and 2010), and by the fight between his three main political successors. Among them, Henri Konan Bédié (president between 1993 and 1999) and Alassane Ouattara (prime minister during the last years of Houphouët-Boigny's regime, and president of the country since 2011) are historically connected to Houphouët-Boigny's regime, while Laurent Gbagbo (president between 2000 and 2010) has been the main figure of the opposition to Houphouët-Boigny since the 1970s.
7. In an interview Alain Tailly provided a list of the most significant theatre halls in Abidjan's popular neighbourhoods in the 1970s and 1980s: the cinemas Lux, Roxy, Liberté, Egalité, Al Akhbar, and Vogue in Adjamé; the Rio, Plaza, El Mansour, Entente, and Vox in Treichville;

the Etoile, Amakébou, La Paix, and Ciné Cool in Abobo; the Kabadougou and Saguidiba in Yopougon. These theatres had an average capacity of 700 seats and entry tickets could be bought for as little as 50–200 CFA (Alain Tailly, pers. comm., October 25, 2015).

8. As Leslie Stern underscores, it was *Enter the Dragon* (Clause, 1973), 'a co-production between Warner Bros and Golden Harvest, that launched kung fu into a larger international arena. Between 1971 and 1973 it was estimated that about 300 kung fu films were produced primarily for the international market, some of which were never released in Hong Kong, and the overseas market grew from over twenty countries in the early 1970s to over eighty within a few years' (2009: 195).
9. African American rap and Hip Hop artists and bands, who regularly refer to kung fu films and Asian martial arts in their songs and performances (such as the Wu Tang Clan, the Migos or Kendrick Lamar), are very popular in Abidjan and their names popped up in several conversation with the younger generation of youth audiences encountered during this research.
10. During the tenure of Henri Konan Bédié as president, Côte d'Ivoire descended into a period of intense political and social turmoil, focused around the conflicts introduced by Bédié's use of the very controversial term of *ivoirité* (Ivorianness) – a concept coined by the regime to control access to power and resources in the country, on an ethnic basis. Ethnic tensions protracted themselves throughout the early 2000s, defining the political debate in the country. See Dozon 2000; Banégas 2006; Cutolo 2010.
11. The term Beté indicates a group of languages spoken in central-western Côte d'Ivoire, belonging to the larger group of Kru languages, spoken more widely in the region.
12. The term Mande indicates a group of languages spoken by a large population (30 to 40 million) spread across several West African countries, including Côte d'Ivoire.
13. Dyula is one of the languages that composes the Mande language group mentioned above.
14. The Ziguéhis were organized in groups, loosely connected to specific areas of the city. Some of the best know groups, across the different generations of youngsters that joined the movement between the late 1970s and the early 1990s, were the *Maples*, the *Black Power* and the *Black Tiger* in Treichville, the *Mafia*, the *Farem*, the *Boston*, the *Texas* and the *Sicile* in Marcory, and the *New Black* and the *Ninja* in Abobo. The names of the groups were largely drawn from film and music references, including Hollywood movies, African American music, and kung fu films.
15. Several people I talked to, described these aggressors as foreigners or rural migrants, recently arrived to the capital, and lacking the physical and moral stature of the Ziguéhis (as demonstrated by their use of knives and guns during the fights).
16. The population of Côte d'Ivoire include almost 60 different ethnic groups, generally subdivided in four major groups: the Mande (which include the already mentioned Dyula), the Krou (which include the already mentioned Beté), the Akan and the Gour.
17. These quotes are a rough transcription of the audio recordings of the discussion that followed the screening of the documentary film *Les enfants d'Hophouet* (Polo, 2016) at the Goethe Institute of Abidjan, on December 10, 2015. I thank Henrike Grohs and the staff of the Goethe Institute at the time for granting access to the records.
18. It is possible to watch an example of this dance in a video of John Pololo uploaded on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_AToNjNqa0 (accessed on October 30th 2020).
19. The multiparty system was introduced in Côte d'Ivoire by the Houphouët-Boigny's regime in 1990.
20. An early example of the fictional rehabilitation of the Ziguéhi movement is Eliane de Latour's film *Bronx-Barbès* (2000). More recently, as a result of the process of rediscovery of the collective memories connected to this phenomenon a number of short videos and public events about the Ziguéhis have been produced. The most notable among them are the event 'Ziguehi Series: Une réflexion sur la rôle des Ziguéhis dans la culture urbain d'Abidjan', organized by the Goethe Institute of Abidjan, in December 2015, and the participation of the Ziguéhi and film director Kipré Jean Omer aka Sahin Polo to the TEDx Abidjan Salon

‘#L’envolée des Lucioles’, held in Abidjan on September 10, 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-awWbedQRqQ>).

21. From Kipré Jean Omer aka Sahin Polo’s talk at the TEDx Abidjan Salon ‘#L’envolée des Lucioles’, held in Abidjan on September 10, 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-awWbedQRqQ>).

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Works cited

- Akindès, Francis. 2004. *The Roots of the Military-Political Crises in Côte d’Ivoire*. Uppsala: Nordiska Africa Institutet.
- . 2017. Introduction au thème. « On ne mange pas les ponts et le goudron » : Les sentiers sinueux d’une sortie de crise en Côte d’Ivoire. *Politique Africaine*, 148:5–26.
- Bachy, Victor. 1983. *Le cinéma en Côte-d’Ivoire*. Paris: L’Harmattan.
- Bahi, Aghi. 2013. *L’ivoirité mouvementée: Jeunes, médias et politique en Côte d’Ivoire*. Bamenda: Langaa.
- Banégas, Richard. 2006. Côte d’Ivoire: Patriotism, Ethnonationalism and other African Modes of Self-writing. *African Affairs*, 105(421):535–552.
- Banégas, Richard & Jean-Pierre Warnier. 2001. Nouvelles figures de la réussite et du pouvoir. *Politique Africaine*, 82:5–23.
- Barber, Karin. 2018. *A History of African Popular Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bassolé, A. 1985. Gnanman-gnanman, un rythme de chez nous. *Fraternité Matin Magazine* July 28.
- Burns, James. 2002. John Wayne on the Zambezi: Cinema, Empire, and the American Western in British Central Africa. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 35(1):103–117.
- Cha-Jua, Sundiata Keita. 2008. Black Audiences, Blaxploitation and Kung Fu Films, and Challenges to White Celluloid Masculinity. In *China Forever: The Shaw Brothers and Diasporic Cinema*, edited by Poshek Fu, 199–223. Urbana and Chicago: Illinois University Press.
- Cutolo, Armando. 2010. Modernity, Autochthony and the Ivorian Nation: The End of a Century in Côte d’Ivoire. *Africa*, 80(4):527–552.
- De Latour, Éliane. 1999. Les ghettomen [Les gangs de rue à Abidjan et San Pedro]. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 129:68–83.
- . 2003. Héros du retour. *Critique internationale*, 19:171–189.
- Dozon, Jean-Pierre. 2000. La Côte d’Ivoire au péril de l’ivoirité: genèse d’un coup d’État. *Afrique contemporaine*, 193:13–23.
- Eperjesi, John R. 2004. *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon: Kung Fu Diplomacy and The Dream of Cultural China*. *Asian Studies Review*, 28(1):25–39.
- Ferguson, James. 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gell, Alfred. 1998. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gondola, Ch Didier. 2016. *Tropical Cowboys: Westerns, Violence, and Masculinity in Kinshasa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Hellweg, Joseph. 2011. *Hunting the Ethical State: The Benkadi Movement of Côte d’Ivoire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hobbis, Geoffrey. 2018. Cowboys and Aliens: Body Techniques and Audience Reception in Malaita, Solomon Islands. *Visual Anthropology*, 31(3):292–306.
- Jedlowski, Alessandro & Cacilda Rêgo. 2019. Latin American Telenovelas and African Screen Media: From Reception to Production. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 31(2):135–150.

- Joseph, May. 1999. Kung fu Cinema, Frugality, and Tanzanian Asian Youth Culture: Ujamaa and Tanzanian Youth in the Seventies. In *Sport Cult*, edited by Randy Martin and Toby Miller, 41–63. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kaminsky, Stuart M. 1974. Kung fu Film as Ghetto Myth. *Journal of Popular Film*, 3(2):129–138.
- Kato, Matahite T. 2007. *From Kung Fu to Hip Hop: Globalization, Revolution, and Popular Culture*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Kim, Christine Y., ed. 2003. *Black Belt*. Harlem: The Studio Museum.
- Kohlhagen, Dominik. 2005. Frime, escroquerie et cosmopolitisme. *Politique africaine*, 100:92–105.
- Konaté, Yacouba. 2002. Génération zouglou. *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, 168(XLII-4):777–796.
- . 2003. Les enfants de la balle. De la Fesci au mouvement des patriots. *Politique Africaine*, 89:49–70.
- Kouamé, J.-B. 1985. Gnanman-gnanman: De l'ordure à l'esthétique. *Fraternité Matin*, July 27–28.
- Kouassi, Guy. 1976. Cinéma populaire. *Fraternité Matin*, July 8.
- . 1980. Le cinéma à Abidjan. III: Salles et Séances. *Fraternité Matin*, January 6.
- Kouebi. 1991. Cinémas de quartier. Films hindou, karaté et odeur de pipi. *Fraternité Matin*, September 16.
- Krings, Matthias. 2015. *African Appropriations: Cultural Difference, Mimesis, and Media*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Larkin, Brian. 1997. Indian Films and Nigerian Lovers: Media and the Creation of Parallel Modernities. *Africa*, 67(3):406–440.
- Lombard, Louisa. 2016. Camouflage: The Hunting Origins of Worliding in Africa. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 34(1):147–164.
- McGovern, Mike. 2010. This is Play: Popular Culture and Politics in Côte D'Ivoire. In *Hard Work, Hard Times: Global Volatility and African Subjectivities*, edited by Anne-Maria Makhulu, Beth A. Buggenhagen and Stephen Jackson, 69–90. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Mkandawire, P. Thandika & Charles Chukwuma Soludo. 1999. *Our Continent, Our Future: African Perspectives on Structural Adjustment*. Trenton: Africa World Press.
- Mockey, François. 1984. La censure cinématographique. Image et banditisme: Quels films pour notre éducation?. *Fraternité Matin*, January 20.
- Morris, Meaghan, Siu Leung Li & Stephen Ching-kiu Chan, eds. 2005. *Hong Kong Connections: Transnational Imagination in Action Cinema*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Newell, Sasha. 2009. Enregistering Modernity, Bluffing Criminality: How Nouchi Speech Reinvented (and Fractured) the Nation. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 19(2):157–184.
- . 2012a. *The Modernity Bluff: Crime, Consumption, and Citizenship in Côte d'Ivoire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- . 2012b. Le Goût des Autres: Ivoirian Fashion and Alterity. *Etnofoor*, 24(2):41–56.
- N'Guessam, Kouakou. 1983. Les 'maquis' d'Abidjan. Nourritures du terroir et fraternité citadine, ou la conscience de classe au tour d'un foutou d'igname. *Cahiers Orstom*, 19(4):545–550.
- Ongiri, Amy Abugo. 2002. "He Wanted to be Just Like Bruce Lee": African Americans, Kung fu Theatre and Cultural Exchange at the Margins. *Journal of Asian American Studies*, 5(1):31–40.
- Pearson, Sarina. 2013. Cowboy Contradictions: Westerns in the Postcolonial Pacific. *Studies in Australasian Cinema*, 7(2-3):153–164.
- Prashad, Vijay. 2001. *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- . 2003. Bruce Lee and the Anti-Imperialism of Kung Fu: A Polycultural Adventure. *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, 11(1):51–90.
- Pype, Katrien. 2007. Fighting Boys, Strong Men and Gorillas: Notes on the Imagination of Masculinities in Kinshasa. *Africa*, 77(2):250–271.
- Schumann, Anne. 2013. Songs of a New Era: Popular Music and Political Expression in the Ivorian Crisis. *African Affairs*, 112(448):440–459.
- Simone, AbdouMaliq. 2001. On the Worliding of African Cities. *African Studies Review*, 44(2):15–41.
- Stern, Lesley. 2009. How Movies Move (between Hong Kong and Bulawayo, between Screen and Stage ...). In *World Cinemas: Transnational Perspectives*, edited by Nataša Đurovičová and Kathleen Newman, 185–215. London: Routledge.

- Tailly, Alain. 2015. *John Ziguéhi*. Frat Mat éditions: Abidjan.
- Tasker, Yvonne. 1993. *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema*. London: Routledge.
- Thomas, Louis-Vincent. 1982. *La mort africaine: idéologie funéraire en Afrique noire*. Paris: Payot.
- van Staden, Cobus. 2017. Watching Hong Kong Martial Arts Film Under Apartheid. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 29(1):46–62.
- Yao, Séverin Kouamé. 2017. *Nouchis, ziguéhis et microbes d'Abidjan: Déclassement et distinction sociale par la violence de rue en Côte d'Ivoire*. *Politique Africaine*, 148:89–107.