



## **AFRICA IN MOVIMENTO / AFRICA ON THE MOVE**

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**TITLE: THE COCOA PLANTER, THE TEACHER AND THE MOTO-TAXI DRIVER.  
A TOGOLESE FAMILY HISTORY**

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### **ABSTRACT: T**

This paper presents the biographical trajectories and the working conditions of three Togolese men of different generations whose lives were profoundly affected by the rise and fall of cocoa economy, their political ideas and their proximity with the border with Ghana. The first, Yao, was an Ewe landowner who profited from cocoa economy and migrant labour during the late French colonial period and the first decades after independence. The second, Prestige (Yao's son), was an opponent of the Eyadéma's regime who in 1990s lost his job as a schoolteacher and after a period of exile in Ghana decided to return to agricultural activities in his natal village. The third, Paul (Prestige's eldest son), since 2006 has worked as a moto-taxi driver (*zemidjan*) in Lomé and Kpalimé, refusing to cultivate his father's land and trying to profit from smuggling. Comparing their biographical trajectories, this paper aims to analyse the historical relations between mobility, changing economic conjunctures and forms of labour exploitation in a frontier region that has had a crucial political and economic importance for the Togolese state.

### **AUTHOR'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

*MARCO GARDINI earned his PhD in Contemporary Anthropology at the University of Milano-Bicocca and at the University of Bayreuth, working on land disputes, accusations of witchcraft, migration and exploitation of agricultural labour in Togo. He is currently a post-doctoral research fellow at University of Milano-Bicocca and carries out research on old and new forms of slavery in Madagascar.*