

Afofoh-Odongtol: Coloniality and the Illiciting of the Indigenous Brewing Industry in Cameroon 1884-1960- 'Unsilencing' the Archive for Pedagogic innovation

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Abstract

This paper is coiled from a four-part research project¹ which recognizes the “mass silence” in Cameroons historiography about indigenous technologies and the potentials that its “unsilencing” can have on instructional design, implementation and specialization at the Department of History of the university of Buea in Cameroon within its recently introduced Heritage Studies and Management programme. The project seeks to investigate the politics of the local brewing technologies in Cameroon between 1884 and 1960. It departs from the perspective of the unrecognized existence of indigenous gin brewing in most precolonial African societies² and hinges on the premise that the local brewing industry did not only exist but was up to a good start until colonial policies affected its sustenance and development. Generally, the project first seeks to provide evidence (places of practice and brewing technologies used) of indigenous brewing industries that flourished in Cameroon in the late 1880s through to the 1920s and 30s. Thereafter it discusses the German, British and French colonial policies and practices and their impact on the indigenous breweries. While the project in its entirety relies on extensive field work around the country, with some historical, archaeological and anthropological tools, at this initial phase, and for the purpose of the Dar es Salaam gathering, we have engaged in “scrutinizing the contents of the “archives”³ in a bid to unearth the diverse voices that shaped the life of the brewing industry and its technologies in Cameroon. Already, such a reading of the archive has shed light on colonial policies, their motivations and impact and has enabled an early conclusion that colonial policies were inhibitive to the development and sustenance of local technologies while spreading the consumption of European made goods. Such an approach to policy has sustained the technological dependency of the global south on the global north and the elaboration of these findings are significant not only for pedagogic contents delineation but more importantly on theoretical and epistemological orientations of programmes on technological and material cultures of and in the global south.

Key Words: Indigenous Brewing, Colonial liquor policy, technology, Pedagogic contents

¹ We are currently sourcing for funding and would appreciate any useful contacts and suggestions in this regard. We can be contacted through the email address above.

² Literature on gin production in South Africa for example erroneously links the beginning to the British Soldiers in the Anglo-Boer War. See for eg <https://www.theginguide.com/south-africa-gin.html>

³ Osorio Tarazona, Alejandra, Drengk, David, and Animesh Chatterjee, “Rethinking Global History of Tehnology from alternative Archives” 88(2), 2021: 202-206. <https://doi.org/105771/0040-117X-2021-2-202>