



# WOMEN AND TRADITIONAL BEVERAGE INDUSTRY: A STUDY OF THE PROCESSES OF *BURUKUTU* PRODUCTION IN INYE, NORTH CENTRAL NIGERIA 1960-2015

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## ABSTRACT

*Burukutu* is one of the major beverages in north central Nigeria. Research has shown that it is as old as the people. It is the only alcoholic beverage that existed in Igala land before the introduction of other drinks such as Odogoro which came from the South-South. It is used in prestigious occasions and it accords high respect in anywhere it was served. Unlike the modern alcoholic drinks which have dangerous and negative side effects, *burukutu* has no such thing. Instead, it is medicinal, and has in fact financially empowered the women to be buoyant and independent. This paper aims at showcasing women's role in the production process of *burukutu*; a local beverage as the health benefits of *burukutu* drink in Inye have not been extensively studied and researched. It also reveals the importance of this beverage. The paper adopts the historical method in sourcing for materials- primary and secondary sources. Primary sources such as oral interviews were judiciously used where the women involved in its production were interviewed. The Secondary sources used in this work include journals, articles, texts, magazines etc. It was observed that *burukutu* is not only a local beverage but also serves as a blood tonic, energy drink, power booster and also enriched the producers. The study also notes that excessive consumption of this beverage can cause liver damage, high blood pressure and other health hazards. In conclusion, although *burukutu* has financially empowered its producers and sellers, its health benefits are as well valued by the consumers. This work examines the processes involved in brewing *burukutu* in Inye from 1960 – 2016 as it documents the medical, economic, social and cultural impacts of *burukutu* in Inye.

Key words: Inye people, *burukutu*, economic impact, medicinal impact

## INTRODUCTION

Cereals have been malted for centuries for weaning of foods and brewing traditional alcoholic and non- alcoholic opaque beverages in Africa long before the advent of Western style malting and brewing technologies. In Africa's developmental history some beverages have evolved with the people and served as their cultural identity and socializing drinks. African traditional beverages are known by different names in different parts of Africa. These names include *Ikigage* in Rwanda, *Tchoukoutous* in Benin and Togo, *Dolo* in Burkina Faso, *Burukutu* and *Pito* in Nigeria and Ghana, *Amgba* in Cameroon, *Doro* and *chibuku* in Zimbabwe, *Bill bili* in Chad, *Kaffi* in South

Africa, *Bouza* in Ethiopia,<sup>1</sup> *Pombe* or *Bwalwa* in Tanzania, *Bejalwa ja Setswana* in Botswana, *Yalwa joule* in Lesotho.<sup>2</sup>

*Burukutu* is a traditional beverage brewed from red or white Guinea corn (*Sorghum bicolor*) variety, millet (*pennisetum glaucum*) and or maize malts.<sup>3</sup> It is composed of varying levels of macro (total fiber, ascorbic acid, B- carotene, retinol, and minerals: potassium, calcium magnesium, iron, sodium, and manganese) nutrients. In addition, it contains some functional phytochemical ingredients that can prevent the onset of certain chronic degeneration diseases<sup>4</sup> in humans including hypertension.<sup>4</sup> *Burukutu* is slightly bitter sweet sour nutritious beverage with a fruit flavor<sup>5</sup> produced and consumed daily<sup>6</sup> among the indigenous people of the northern Guinea Savannah of Nigeria and other African countries including Ghana, Benin, Kenya, Ethiopia and Burundi as one of the major traditional and local alcoholic drinks. Its sour taste results from the action of the lactic acid bacteria.<sup>7</sup>

In the conversion of Africa traditional cereals into alcoholic or non- alcoholic beverages, alcoholic fermentation is usually initiated by pitching sweet wort with a portion of previous brewed or dried yeast harvested from previous beverage.<sup>8</sup> Its brewing process involves malting, mashing, boiling, fermentation and maturation.<sup>9</sup> The production of *burukutu* is a laborious and complex technology exclusively and usually brewed by women;<sup>10</sup> providing these women with lucrative jobs.<sup>11, 12</sup>

Historically, these alcoholic beverages have served as sources of food and have been widely used as socializing drinks and for their medical, anti-septic and analgesic properties.<sup>13</sup> In ancient times, people always consumed them when holding memorial ceremonies, while offering sacrifices to the gods or their ancestors, pledging resolution before going into battle, celebrating victory, before feuding and official execution, taking an oath of allegiance, while attending the ceremonies of birth, marriage, dowry, reunion, departure, death and festival banquets.<sup>14</sup> The consumption of alcoholic beverages is as old as man's history.<sup>15</sup> *Burukutu* is one of the traditional alcoholic beverages consumed in Igala land and in Inye specifically. The production technique of *burukutu* as currently observed in Inye was imported from Egume, the ancestral home of the Inye people. Oral tradition has it that in the process of migration from their ancestral home (Egume), the Inye people went away with some indigenous knowledge, among which was brewing of local beer (*burukutu*).<sup>16</sup>

This study is focused on examining women and traditional beverage industry: a case study of the processes of *Burukutu* production in Inye, North Central Nigeria. The study further examines the Inye people and culture, processes of production of the *Burukutu* beverage and its general impacts on economy and health. The primary and secondary sources of data were employed for this study. The primary sources includes key informant interviews with the beverage manufacturers as well as a participatory observation. The secondary sources includes published materials. Findings reveal that the local beverage *Burukutu* is a well-respected traditional drink, high in demand in most social meetings; more also, studies revealed that it has a lot of medicinal values.

## Inye People and Culture

Right from the earliest period, Igala people of Inye have been known to be a tribe that have held their culture and tradition in high esteem despite the emergence of Christianity and Islam in recent period. They believe in the supremacy of *Ojo Odoba* (God Almighty), the existence of *Ilei* (this world) and *Ojona* the (afterworld). The *Ojona* is the world of the ancestors and it also believed that *Ojona* is a continuation of *Ilei* (this world). The people of Inye are well- cultured, peaceful, trust worthy, reliable and God fearing; recognizing themselves as the children of *Onu-Inye*.<sup>18</sup>

Inye community observed many festivals and among which are *Ote Abegwu Eche*, *Ere Ane Eche*, *Ogwuja* and *Owa*. The most popular of the festivals is *Ote Abegwu Eche*. This colorful festival is dedicated as a mark of remembrance of the ancestors and is celebrated within seven days. It is also a period set aside to bring into the public glare the cultural practices of the heritage. The festival, inspiringly as it is, prompts the reunion of the celebrating descendants who are linked by blood and culture.<sup>19</sup>

The period of *Ote Abegwu Eche* is usually scheduled for dry season when most farming commitments are fairly eased out and farm harvests already stored for preservation. *Ote Abegwu Eche* is tagged so because it is during the celebration (festival) local liquor known as *burukutu* is especially brewed in large quantities each day for the seven days the festival would last. This is therefore the period food and drinks are not in short supply. The festival is climaxed with the introduction of *Ukpokwu* masquerades. Their presence evokes feeling of power, appreciation and satirical awe and fear. *Ukpokwu* are dressed in colorful regalia made in secret places and stored

in the innermost Chambers. *Ukpokwu* festival outfits include approximate robe with headpieces or varied carved wooden shapes replicating animals' heads, and indicating the type of masquerades and their roles in the troupe.<sup>20</sup>

The appearance of *Ukpokwu* at festival arena enlivens the celebration with intriguing fascination. They have compressive and admirable features and are good dancers. By culture and the tradition of *Igbafekoya*, it is a taboo to fight and unmask *Ukpokwu*. The consequences of violating sanctity of *Ukpokwu* are unfathomable and the acts attract the ire of other clannish masquerades on the land. *Ukpokwu* performs the role of policing and instilling moral discipline and curbing delinquent behaviors. They appear at odd times when security of the community is jeopardized and major moral conduct violated.

The family is also another strong socio-cultural institution in the area. From the onset the people have practiced extended family settlement and the marrying of more than one wife (polygamy). In recent period, Muslims in the area have continued with this practice while Christians have followed the practice of their faith to marry one wife.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, there are also other indigenous productions like processing of cassava into flour, garri, maize, and other food items, soap making and palm oil production among several others in the area. One significant point to be made here is that majority of these indigenous industries are dominated by women. Cashew production and marketing have also become an important aspect of the economic life of the people as the crop now has an appreciated financial value both at the local and international markets. This has helped to boost the economy of the place recently as many people are making millions of naira from cashew production on a daily basis.<sup>22</sup>

### Women in Inye

Women in any society are significant part of their communities as they contribute immensely to the development of that community in every ramification. Right from the family, women take care of their homes, children and husbands. They see to the daily welfare of every member of their homes- from feeding to carrying out the chores and general wellbeing of their families.

The economy of Inye from earliest times has been anchored on Agriculture. Crops like groundnuts (*opaa*), Bambara nuts (*akpas*), Guinea corn (*okili*), maize (*akpa*), millet (*okaa*), beans (*egwa*) and yam (*uchu*) are cultivated alongside with some cash crops such as palm trees, economic trees like Iroko (*Obeche*) and Mahogany. It should be noted here that women dominate in the production of these crops as they participate in the planting, harvesting, processing and sale of these crops. Inye women are entrusted with the cooking of all the meals eaten during festivals and ceremonies in their community.

Inye people also engage in hunting expeditions, fishing, blacksmithing, wood carving and making of ornaments to supplement their agricultural outputs. The women participate vigorously in the local economy. Since the earliest times, the women have been involved in the indigenous industries such as pottery, weaving with locally grown cotton, soap making and brewing of local beer (*burukutu*). Others are processing of cassava, maize, millet and sorghum into flour such as *garri*, palm oil production etc. Inye women also engage in both short and long -distance trade. This is an important aspect of their economic activities. They take many of these items to Aja ede market, which holds every four days for sale. Apart from the Ede market, which is located at the centre of the village, the women also trade in the Aforgamgam market which is about nine miles from Inye. Their Igbo neighbours also trade with them in the Ede market. Cashew has become an important cash crop and its production and marketing have boosted the economic life of Inye people recently.<sup>23</sup> It is the women and their children that pick the nuts from different villages for sale to the foreign business men. These women make a lot of money from it. Through the sale of these items, these women are financially empowered.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Millet

Millets are cultivated varieties of certain small-seeded cereal and forage grasses, which in a strict sense; belong to the genus *Panicum*, or to closely allied genera. Because of a resemblance in the seed the name is also applied to other grasses of different genera in this country, while in Europe and Asia even the sorghums are classed as millets. The millets are among the most ancient of food grains. There is historical evidence of their cultivation in China since 2800. Chinese legends attribute the domestication of millet to *Shennong*, the legendary Emperor of China. Similarly, millets have been mentioned in some of the oldest extant Yajurveda texts, identifying foxtail millet (*priyangava*), Barnyard millet (*aanava*) and black finger millet (*shyaamaka*), indicating that millet



consumption was very common, dating to 4500 BC, during the Indian Bronze Age.<sup>24</sup> Millet is one of the major ingredients in the production of *burukutu*. Millets (*Panicum*) are in the group of grains for fodder and human food. They are important crops in the semiarid tropics of Asia and Africa (especially in India, Mali, Nigeria, and Niger), with 97% of millet production occurring in developing countries. The crop is favored due to its productivity and short growing season under dry, high-temperature conditions.<sup>25</sup> The most widely grown millet is pearl millet, which is an important crop in India and parts of Africa. Finger millet, proso millet, and foxtail millet (*Thinai*) are also important crop. Nigeria is the 3rd largest millet producing country in the world after India and China, and the leading producer in Africa followed Niger and Mali. The areas of production in Nigeria are; Kaduna, Yobe, Kano and Borno states. It is an important food crops in Asia like India, and in Africa like Nigeria, Mali and Niger (the semiarid tropics), the production of this cash crop by the mentioned countries accounts for about 97% of millet production throughout the globe including China.<sup>26</sup>

### Cultivation of Millets

Millets are generally grown in the very dry Savannah areas where the annual rainfall is insufficient to support the guinea (sorghums) crops. The millets are therefore, short season crops. When grown in the guinea corn area, they are used to fill the gap of food scarcity before guinea corn matures. The first step in planting millets is land preparation, clear felling, ploughing followed by harrowing with added manure on crop residue. Seed at the rate of three to five are planted. As a sole crop, the spacing is 30cm by 30cm but as an intercrop in guinea corn the spacing varies. It could be as much as 2cm to 2.5m apart and seeds area is at depths of 2cm to 3cm. Planting is done when early rain provides adequate moisture for seed germination in the soil. In the millet growing areas, planting is done anytime from April to end of June.<sup>27</sup> Post planting operations such as supplying, weed controls, fertilizer application and detilling are carried out. Seed germination takes 4-5 days and supplying of vacant stand should be carried out within seven days of germination. Early weeding is adequate for the crops to mature. Manures are applied at the time of planning. Inorganic fertilizer mainly N, P O, K O and boron are applied at the six to eight leaf stage and at the time of initiation of heading.<sup>28</sup> There are many varieties of millets, but generally they mature within three to four months of planting with the exception of varieties of *pennisetun spicatum* (Dauro and maiwa) which takes about six months to mature and are grown mainly as an intercrop in guinea crops.<sup>29</sup>

At harvest, the stalls are cut at ground level with a sickle, bundled, stacked in the field to dry followed by thresh. Grains are separated from the chaff by winnowing. Grains are then thoroughly dried for storage and use. Threshing yield between 50 to 60 percent grains depending on variety.<sup>30</sup>

### Ingredients and Equipment for the Production of Burukutu

The main ingredients for the production of *burukutu* are water and germinated finger Millets. The equipment required for the production of *burukutu* are: milling machine, sterilizing equipment, boiling pans, large metal drums, plastic buckets, fermentation bins and jars, filter and sieves.

The production of *burukutu* involves series of processes. Stage one involves picking, where the grains are spread on flat trays then foreign particles and sands are removed.

Stage two is washing, where the grains are washed in clean water to remove every dirt. Stage three is the soaking and draining stage which involves soaking the grains with water for six hours later packed in baskets to drain. Three hours later, the millets in the basket are again poured back into another basin of water and removed immediately into baskets in order to drain well.

Stage four is germination. After it is well drained the millets are poured and spread out on a cemented floor, sack, malt or tray, covered with banana leaves and allowed or left to sprout. During the sprouting process, the grains are watered on alternate days and turned over at intervals, left to sprout for eight days, but it could be used on the fifth day. However, day eight usually produce more alcoholic drink.<sup>31</sup> On the fifth day of sprouting, the plumule attains a certain length.<sup>32</sup>

Stage five is grinding. Small quantity of sprouted millet is wet milled with the aid of milling machine to a smooth paste.

Stage six is fermentation. A good quantity of boiling water is poured into the milled millet and left to ferment for three days. Stage seven is boiling. On the third day the fermented slurry is turned into a cooking drum and left to boil until it dries up and looks blackish in colour, the end product is called ujuwn.<sup>33</sup> On the eight day, the rest sprouted millet is milled soft and liquid with the aid of milling machine, then boiling water is poured into

the milled millet and after three hours it is sieved and poured back into a cooking drum to boil for four hours. After then it is left to cool for at least three hours, the mixture is called *eboko*.<sup>34</sup>

Stage eight is seasoning. A combination of crushed ginger and sugar are added and the steamed solution is left to rest for 6-8 hours. This is to harmonize the seasoning and the sweetener.<sup>35</sup> Then an already made *burukutu* is collected and mixed with the already prepared *ujuwn*, it will start forming and would be left to form for four hours. It is added to the half prepared *burukutu* (*eboko*). It is the *ujuwn* that makes it full *burukutu* and alcoholic.<sup>36</sup> Stage nine is cooling. Allow it to cool or chill at 4 °C temperature. Stage ten is Serve: *Burukutu* drink is served chilled at 4°C with cocktail glasses. Ideally, it could serve as appetizer before meal or taken for relaxation.<sup>37</sup>

### Impact of *Burukutu* in Inye

This section examines the impact of *burukutu* to the Socio-cultural, and economic development of the area. These impacts were in the form of Medical, Economic, Socio-cultural.

#### Medical Impact

*Burukutu* beverage as observed contains certain macro and micro nutrients. It contains crude protein. The crude protein composition of *burukutu* beverage is within the lower limit of the limit of the recommended Dietary Reference Intake (DRI), Acceptable macro nutrient distribution range (AMDR) of 10-35% protein for adults. Hence, they are important dietary protein sources, which are very essential rolls in healthy diet and nutrition.<sup>38</sup>

The Millet based *burukutu* beer contains fat. Fat serves as a source of energy and insulation for the body. In addition, it is needed for growth and development as solvent for some vitamin including A, D, E and K, maintenance of cell membrane and providing taste and consistency to food.<sup>39</sup>

*Burukutu* beverage contains micro-nutrient composition of Dietary Fibres (DFS) which could be soluble or insoluble. DFS are very essential components of diets responsible for good health and well-being. The long fibrous structures of DFS enable them to trap harmful toxins and carcinogens in the digestive tract. In addition, it is attributed to having good water retention capacity and hydrocollodal gelling properties. It contains micro-nutrient such as total fiber, ascorbic acid, minerals: accordance with the recommended Dietary Reference Intake' s (DRI) acceptable macronutrient distribution, *burukutu* drink has a normal range of crude protein for the body, a low amount of fat. It is also low in Carbohydrates. They have a small amount of dietary fiber and are generally low in vitamins and minerals. However, they contain essential vitamins such as beta-carotene, ascorbic acid, and retinol which is very good for the eyes and skin. It is also one of the fermented African drinks that is a probiotic. It promotes gut health and prevents all forms of diarrhea. It also lowers blood sugar. Generally, vitamins and minerals are functional ingredients of food which positively affect human health and wellbeing. It is also a blood building beverage that is why it is abbreviated as BKT which means blood kitting tonic. It has been approved that people who consume *burukutu* never lack blood. Also, it is an energy giving drink. The Inye people who drink *burukutu* derive enough strength which helps them in their farms as well as sexually.<sup>40</sup> More so, it has been said that *burukutu* can prevent the onset of some chronic degenerative diseases like hypertension because of its sodium content. These health benefits notwithstanding, excessive consumption of *burukutu* could cause hyperkalemia that is excess blood potassium because of its potassium content with its attendant kidney injury and hearty problems. Excess consumption could cause hypoglycemia that is low blood sugar.<sup>41</sup>

#### Economic Impact

The impact of *burukutu* in Inye towards the economic development of the town has had a positive effect on the economic activities of the area. The production and sell of *burukutu* in Inye had made many women popular and rich; it has raised the Social status of women and made them independent On anybody. From 2008 analysis, it shows that 70% of women who produce *burukutu* in Inye have their own personal houses apart from their own husband house and also living above other women in the society.

Also, because of the health Impact of *burukutu* many farmers who consume *burukutu* beverage gain more energy which in turn increases the farm product. It has also attracted buyers from different part of Igala land who comes to buy *burukutu* from Inye because of it quality which in turn led to expansion of Inye market.<sup>42</sup>

## Socio-Cultural Impact

*Burukutu* has been a socializing agent from the onset. From the early 1960s, *burukutu* is consumed among the young people of Inye called the *achokolobias*. This group of people gather to work together on the farm for each other and when they return they gather under a shade to relax and drink *burukutu*. In the process of drinking *burukutu* a lot of issues are settled which in turn promote unity among them and the society at large. The consumption of *burukutu* has attended the use of modern music instrument in the gathering. Even among the elders, after a stressful day, they gather to drink *burukutu*. Important decisions that will affect the society are taken and also issues between two or more people are settled and peace is restored.<sup>43</sup>

Culturally, some festivals such as *EreAneEche*, *Ogwuja*, *Owa*, and *OteAbegwuEche* cannot take place without *burukutu*. *Burukutu* is so important and significant to the people to the extent that a festival was named *OteAbegwuEche* (celebration of ancestral wine). The celebration of this festival had never been left uncelebrated any year and before the festival commences, lots of gallons of *burukutu* must be available for consumption. Other festivals such as *Ere AneEche*, *Ogwuja*, *Owa* cannot equally commence without the presence of *burukutu*. *Burukutu* serves as a bridge that connects them to their ancestors.<sup>44</sup>

More so, *burukutu* happens to be one of the major items required for the payment of dowry in Inye. No dowry in Inye is accepted without presentation of *burukutu*. The groom's family is expected to come with agreed gallons of *burukutu* before the wife is given out. The presence of *burukutu* on the occasion is a request for the approval and blessings of the ancestors in the marriage. *Burukutu* is as important to *Inye* people just like palm wine is to the *Igbo* community.<sup>45</sup>

**LIMITATION OF THE STUDY:** This study is limited to women in traditional beverage industries and limited to the *Burukutu* beverage alone. This opens up further gaps in other locally made beverages in other parts of the world.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study has given an overall understanding of the history of *burukutu* in Igalaland and specifically in Inye in the present day Ankpa local government area. Within the period of study, the present research was able to examine the process involved in the brewing of *burukutu* and the impact of *burukutu* in Inye from the sphere of medical, economic and Socio-cultural aspects. Moreover, the nature and the process of brewing *burukutu* in other states and ethnic groups were also discussed. More emphasis was laid on the medical impact in Inye. It was discovered that *burukutu* contains both macro and micro nutrients, such as vitamin A, D, E and K, protein, moisture, total Fibre, ascorbic acid, potassium, calcium, magnesium, iron and retinol. It was also confirmed to be a blood tonic and also reduce hypertension.

## Conclusion

The research work has examined the processes of production of *burukutu* and its impact on the consumer in Inye. *Burukutu* is very rich in protein, calcium, magnesium, iron, sodium bicarbonate, total fiber, fat, vitamin A, D, E, and K. Because of its sodium content, it makes it perfect diet for the prevention of the onset of certain health conditions such as hypertension. It is also a blood building beverage and it contains carbohydrates for energy. Furthermore, *burukutu* plays an important role in the celebration of festivals in Inye. It serves as connection between the people and their ancestors. It has been testified to have enabled male consumers to function well sexually. On the other hand, *burukutu* has raised the financial status of the women producers in Inye. If a clue is taken from the western way of preserving beer, it will be a great achievement to the Inye people and Nigeria as a whole.

## APPENDIX

During this research some non-English words were used, these words are defined in table 1 below:

Few Igala words used in the process of this research are explained below



**Definition of non- English words**

Igala Words	Meaning
Icha	Sprouted millet
Burukutu	Traditional drink made from millet consume among Igala people especially Inye. It could be alcoholic or non-alcoholic.

Ujuwn	Traditional intoxicant made from fermented millet
Eboko	Non – alcoholic part of burukutu

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