

# Review of the History of Distilled Liquor and Its Impact on the Kumasi People of Ghana

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## Abstract

*Socio-cultural changes in the pattern of development of a group of people often occur when there is an introduction of foreign cultures. The annexation of Gold Coast brought the Asante Empire under British rule, and from the beginning of the twentieth century Gold Coast witnessed a total transformation of the economy from its subsistence nature to a cash economy. Economic changes associated with diversification and rapid expansion of Gold Coast export mitigated for a demand in labour force. However, the research focused on the people of Kumasi and using the Winick theory of alcohol dependency sought to unveil the socio-cultural changes that occurred within the period under review. Furthermore, with the use of qualitative narrative, interviews, secondary and primary data, the research was undertaken and findings revealed some changes in customs, values, and lifestyle of individuals in the community. It further indicated the role played by colonial influence and administration's reliance on imported alcohol coupled with the introduction of a new kind of local gin (akpeteshie). It was also discovered that, European influence contributed greatly to changes that occurred in the social and cultural uses of distilled liquor in Kumasi. European liquor came to be identified with modernity and European lifestyle. Furthermore, the introduction of railway transport, road transport and creation of urbanization by colonial government policies promoted a new form of social drinking notable among the youth which was devoid of any form of restraint by elders and chiefs. In addition, there was the emergence of social classes who appreciated the European way of life and drinking because it depicted prestige wealth. On the other hand, the emergence of akpeteshie promoted social disorder and the decline in palm wine.*

**Keywords:** liquor, colonial, local governments, Kumasi.

*Introduction*

The chemical form of alcohol is ethanol, which in its pure state is colorless and a highly volatile liquid. Alcohol occurs naturally as a by-product of fermentation, i.e. the process of sugar eating yeast in fruits. An ounce of pure ethanol contains 224 calories which is 75 percent more than refined sugar and has a sweet flavor when diluted hence, making it attractive.<sup>1</sup> Large quantities cause slow brain activities, slurred speech and drowsiness and very high doses can be lethal. When the body metabolizes, ethanol is broken down into *acetaldehyde* which can cause headaches, nausea and lethargy, heightened sensitivity to loud noise and sudden movements that can persist for days after alcohol intake.<sup>2</sup> However, consumption has since been part of human existence for thousands of years as a result of a content of it in some foods. It has further shaped the social, cultural and religious lives of some societies. It was estimated by the World Health Organization in a 2004 report that around two billion people worldwide consume alcohol and factors such as genetics, social environment, culture, age, gender, accessibility, exposure and personality influences people of different origin to drink. The social and cultural development of a community evolves over time, therefore, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory looks at sociocultural development as an important contribution made by the society in developments that occurs in the lifestyle of an individual. However, social interactions play a fundamental role in the development of cognition which could cause some social changes and alterations over time in behavior patterns and cultural values and norms. The research focused on the changes that occurred in the development of the socio-cultural system of the Asante who were located at the interior part of Gold Coast. The socio-cultural development traced the processes that led to the increase in complexity of the society more especially; it focused on the changes that influenced the customs, lifestyles and values which characterized the society within the period under review as a result of distilled liquor.

Traditionally, alcoholic beverages have been consumed in Gold Coast and other West African societies.<sup>3</sup> Locally, distilled liquor also known as *akpeteshie* in Gold Coast was a spirit distilled from palm wine.<sup>4</sup> This drink was of historical significance because as a local gin, colonial administration barred it in an attempt

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<sup>1</sup> Iain Gately, *Drink: A cultural History of Alcohol* (Canada: Penguin Group, July 2008).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>3</sup> H. D. Zakpaa, E. E. Mark-Mensah and O. A. Avio, "Effect of storage conditions on the shelf of locally distilled liquor (Akpeteshie)," *African Journal of Biotechnology* 9 (10) (2010), 1499-1509.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, 1410.

to control West African liquor traffic in the early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Gold Coasters came to imbibe *akpeteshie* which was a strong liquor with a harsh taste and had the potency of being injurious.<sup>6</sup> The name was derived from a *Ga* word that meant “hide out” because distillation and consumption was secretive as a result of the ban on the drink by the colonial administration.<sup>7</sup> One other name for *akpeteshie* was *bome kutuku* (box me) and that described the beating sound the arrested culprit received from the colonial police.<sup>8</sup> The Distillation of substantial quantity of *akpeteshie*, became possible after Ghanaians were able to produce air-tight metals tubing for makeshift home still from the engines of European motor cars in 1920.<sup>9</sup>

In Gold Coast, alcohol served as link between the physical and spiritual world and this was believed to ensure the natural progression of the life of an individual or community. Gin and other imported drinks did not completely displace the local beverages however they coexisted, complemented and competed with each other.<sup>10</sup> However, when the slave trade ended, trade in imported liquor continued reaching large volumes in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, it reached its peak between 1880 and the World War I when Gold Coast imported millions of gallons of gin.<sup>12</sup> Gin was imported from Germany and the Netherlands in vast quantities between 1880 and 1914.<sup>13</sup> Locals used it for conspicuous personal, communal and ritual purposes, even as currencies.<sup>14</sup> Furtherance, imported liquor became embedded through the life cycle of Gold Coasters, from naming ceremonies, entertaining guest at weddings and chieftaincy enstoolment to funeral obsequies and pouring libations to ancestors.<sup>15</sup> The pattern of consumption affected the social, economic and political development of Gold Coast prior to the influence of imported liquor and also the production of locally distilled liquor.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond E. Dumett, “The social impact of the European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana (Gold Coast and Asante) 1875-1910,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5(1) (1974): 69-101.

<sup>7</sup> Emmanuel Akyeampong, “What is in a drink? Class Struggle, Popular Culture and the Politics of Akpeteshie (Local Gin in Ghana 1939-6,” *Journal of African History* 37(2) (1996), 215-236.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, 93.

<sup>9</sup> Dumett, “The social impact of the European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana,” 93.

<sup>10</sup> Simon Heap, “Review of *The King of Drinks; Schnapps Gin from Modernity to Tradition*, by Dmitri van den Bersselaar,” *Journal of African Studies* 49(2) (2008), 320-321.

<sup>11</sup> Simon Heap, “Review of *The King of Drinks*,” 321.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>13</sup> Dmitri Van den Bersselaar, “Modernity rejected? Marketing schnapps gin in West Africa, 1945-1970,” *Lagos Notes and Records* 12 (2006), 43-66.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

The Asante formed part of the Akan states that were the dominant ethnic groups in Gold Coast and fell within the *Kwa* sub family of the greater Niger-Congo language family in West Africa.<sup>16</sup> Nonetheless, most scholars agreed that, they moved into the forest zone of what is today Ghana approximately about 700 to 9000 years ago and the consolidation of their systems took place during the seventh and the eighteenth century.<sup>17</sup> The Akan's were divided into roughly, thirteen linguistic sub groups which had Asante in the central forest zone and the Fante-Agonas of the central coast.<sup>18</sup> They also had strong kinship structures, matrilineal inheritance and seven or eight clans that also trace their inheritance through the matrilineal line. Their political structure was centralized with regional devolution of authority from the King (*omanhene*) to divisional chiefs (*odikro*) to village headmen who ruled with advice from the heredity council of elders (*mpaninfo*).<sup>19</sup>

Asante as part of the Akan state was the largest and most powerful state to be established in Gold Coast. Their culture was further characterized with religious beliefs and customs which included the worship of Supreme Being and smaller gods, veneration of the ancestors and rites of passage.<sup>20</sup> Though, palm wine was of essence to cultural practices, imported liquor and local gin over the period of the early twentieth century gained a different cultural term which influenced the already existing norms of Asante. More especially, imported liquor in Africa became a supplement to beer and palm wine as a result of its newness and level of concentration.

The Trans-Atlantic slave trade saw the introduction of foreign liquors in Africa, and Gold Coast was no exception, however, over indulgence in the consumption of distilled liquor from the early twentieth century became rampant. Moreover, this incorporated the usage of imported liquor into the cultural and social settings of Gold Coast. The colonial administration indicated the situation of African liquor traffic and embarked on solutions to curb the situation. One of such was the Saint Germain convention which sort to increase liquor tariffs, ban trade spirit and commercial distillation of alcohol. These measures taken by the colonial administration caused an increase in the prize of imported liquor and lead to the production of illicit gin which was less costly. However, the period under research

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<sup>16</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of the European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 93.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, 75.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, 76.

<sup>20</sup> W. H. Debrunner, *A History of Christianity in Ghana* (Waterville Publishing house, 1967), 1-375.

further witnessed an influence of the colonial administration in the governance and social spheres of the indigenes. Dumett (1974) in an article indicated that, it could not be estimated as to how much imported liquor was incorporated into the ritual arena of Gold Coast.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, other authors mentioned that, the intoxicating nature of European liquor and economic changes that occurred in the early twentieth century might have led to some changes and development that occurred. It is in this view that the research was carried out with the aim of unearthing the impact of the consumption of distilled liquor on the socio-cultural development on the people of Kumasi. Furthermore, the research hopes to indicate and find out the extent to which these changes occurred and how it affected the customs, values and the livelihood of individuals in Kumasi community.

The general objective of this research however, was to find out the socio-cultural developments that occurred as a result of the consumption of distilled liquor in Kumasi from 1900-1930. The specific objectives included the identification of the social, political and economic impact of distilled liquor on the people of Kumasi. It also aimed at highlighting the role of the colonial and local government in the consumption of distilled liquor. Finally, to indicate the socio-cultural changes that occurred as a result of the consumption of distilled liquor. The research focused on the interior part of Gold Coast, specifically the people of Kumasi. This was because, during the period under review, the Asante Empire had been annexed by the British and transport routes had been constructed to facilitate trade which allowed large volumes of liquor to be transported into the interior. Furthermore, the period 1900-1930, witnessed significant changes in the economy of Gold Coast and also recognized the Saint Germain treaty. It also indicated the emergence of a new kind of drink, that was known as *akpeteshie* and also some temperance movement that sort to limit the intake of both imported liquor and local gin in Kumasi.

### *Theoretical Framework*

The Winnick's theory of alcohol dependency referenced by Theresa Myadze was used as the framework for the research. The theory supposes that, the incidence of dependency increases with access to the dependence substance, disengagement from negative proscriptions about the use of alcohol and the role

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<sup>21</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of the European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 84.

strain or role deprivation<sup>22</sup>. The theory assesses culture as a determining factor of pattern of alcoholic consumption among blacks.

The first supposition of the theory proposes that, higher dependency on alcohol can be positively associated with easy access. The readily availability of alcohol created an opportunity for easy access in Kumasi allowing the educated elites and chiefs gain access to drink. Furtherance, the cheap nature of Dutch gin motivated the youth to engage in social drinking within the period under research. Therefore, the economic changes that might have occurred made access to distilled liquor easy and affordable. Social norms also played a role in making access easy, because at ritual sacrifices, naming ceremonies, festivals or burial rites, drinks were made to entertain guest. More especially, beer industries continued to proliferate in African countries in the 1950' and 1960's with attractive advertisement that portrayed alcoholic beverage as a means of good health and modernization. Drinking that were opened sold alcoholic beverages and entertained wealthy people who could afford them. In countries such as Botswana, Uganda, and Kenya, people of low income consumed more of the locally made brews and wine, whereas high income group had greater ease when purchasing more expensive brews and other distilled liquors manufactured by large industries.

The second part of the theory states that the disengagement of negative proscriptions about the use of alcohol is emphasized on weak sanctions against the use of alcohol. The public and victims often did not recognize when drinking had gone beyond the recreational stages until it posed a threat to the community. Drunkards in the society were teased and ridiculed and the indifference towards their behavior may weaken the internal control of such individual who would then adapt to alcohol as a means of defending himself especially in times of stress. However, most African cultures condone the intake of alcohol after manual labor, but one may be reluctant to intervene in controlling another person's drinking behavior since it is believed that one should not be prevented from enjoying the fruit of his labor. On the other hand, relatives of a drunkard in the society may be motivated to seek treatment or view the problem as the control by evil forces that have possessed the person whiles it might be as a result of mental disorder.

The last supposition of Winick's theory is the role strain and role deprivation. Role strain refers to the felt difficulty in fulfilling the obligation of a role and role deprivation refers to the reaction to the termination of a significant role relation. Role strain involves depending on alcohol to help one perform a task

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<sup>22</sup> Theresa I. Myadze, "Alcoholism in Africa during the Twentieth century; A Socio-cultural perspective," *International Journal of Business and Social Science* 5(2) (2014), 1-9.

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on the farm, to relax an entertainer, host or hostess and helped one “be a man”. The role deprivation can also be associated with urbanization and industrialization that propels youth in the rural areas to migrate. When this occurs, they find themselves in new and changing environment and alcohol could serve as an antidote to the changing trends of their environment.

In each of Winick’s supposition, it can be realized that, alcohol contributes to the development of a society. It further depicts the changing trends in it uses and individual adaption to its intake. However, the theory could be used in the context of this research to explain the changes in the socio-cultural development of the people of Kumasi due to the production and consumption of liquor.

### *Methodology*

The research took the form of qualitative empirical research approach that involved a narrative deconstruction of event and evidence. This allowed for an in-depth understanding of text and data that were uncovered. Oral interviews were conducted using an unstructured interview guide. Four individuals were interviewed and that include: two bar owners, one from a distillery company (Kasapreko Distillery Limited) and a palm wine vendor. Two different interview guides were drafted with one that was meant for household retailers of distilled liquor (owners of drinking bars) and the other for local distillery companies. The questions asked were to find out the consumption and impact of distilled liquor on the socio-cultural development in Kumasi.

Secondary materials included journal articles, books, online materials, newspapers and reviewed articles. Journal articles included author who had written extensively on the research topic and had come out with relevant findings. Articles by authors such as Emmanuel Akyeampong (1996), Raymond Dumett (1974) and Lynn Pan (1975) were used.

Primary data was also collected from the public record office in Kumasi. This included written letters and reports by the colonial administration and minutes of meetings. Oral interviews were conducted and were recorded and transcribed, and secondary and primary data collections were utilized. Each interview was played and relevant contributions were deduced from them. Interviews were preferred because, it allowed the researcher obtain the necessary information through interactions with individuals who had fore knowledge. It also allowed questions that needed follow-ups to be duly addressed for better clarification. Some challenges were faced during data collection and this had to do with difficulties in getting individuals who had knowledge about the period under

review. However, inferences were drawn from few individuals who owed drinking bars, palm wine vendors and a distillery companies.

The following research questions were framed to guide the discussions:

- How did imported and locally distilled liquor affect the social, cultural and political settings of Kumasi?
- How did the sale of distilled liquor affect the social status of members of the society?
- What were some of the colonial and local policies against illicit production of local gin (*akpeteshie*) from 1900-1930?
- What socio-cultural development arose as a result of the consumption of distilled liquor in Kumasi from 1900-1930?

#### *Literature on the alcohol question thus far*

Review of literatures took the thematic form. It involved the use of journals, books and articles that were critically scrutinized to know the views and opinions of different scholars who had written extensively on the research topic. Literatures were reviewed under four themes which were the social and political impact distilled liquor, the economic impact of distilled, the role of distilled liquor in colonialization and reasons for the ban of illicit production of local gin (*akpeteshie*). These themes focused on a general historical overview of distilled liquor and its influence on the Gold Coast.

#### *Social and Political Impact of Distilled Liquor*

Centuries of association and dominance of Gold Coast by Europeans and Western influence changed much of the cultural practices and values of their fathers. As a result of this, most writers believed that, it led to the loss of some traditional values and gave way to the emergence of a foreign culture.<sup>23</sup> The first European power to arrive in Gold Coast were the Portuguese in the latter part of the fifteenth century and this gave way to intensive trading activities with the outside world.<sup>24</sup> According to Nti, (1998) the Europeans were in search of gold and slaves and in exchange for those commodities, offered some items from their

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<sup>23</sup> Emmanuel Akyeampong and Samuel A. Ntewusu, "Rum, Gin and Maize; Deities and Ritual Change in Gold Coast during the Atlantic Era (16<sup>th</sup> century to 1850)," *Afrique* (05) (December 15) (2014), doi:10.4000/afrique.1657.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, 1.

countries as trade items.<sup>25</sup> Pan (1975) also mentioned that, the importance of liquor as an object of commerce was such that, distilleries were established in the eighteenth century in Liverpool, England specially for supplying ships that came to Africa.<sup>26</sup> In the seventeenth century, the system of trade took the form of barter trade where goods were exchanged for goods before the introduction of currency in the Gold Coast. Rum, gin and schnapps served as currencies for purchasing European items, however, in some instances, gold, cowries or gold dust were used to purchase commodities.<sup>27</sup> Heap (1996) had indicated that in Nigeria the liquor-for-produce system prevailed and witnessed agricultural produce exchanged for gin by middlemen.<sup>28</sup> This occurred when local farmers brought their agricultural goods from their farms, and after bargaining the rate of exchange with European middlemen, the farmers returned home with distilled liquors or converted the liquor to social values that included using them for naming ceremonies, funerals and festivals.<sup>29</sup> Anin (2000) pointed out that until 1880 trade was conducted along the West Coast of Africa in a bewildering array of money and tokens such as cowries, but the use of cowries declined in the early parts of the nineteenth century when goods and services began to be expressed in gold weight values.<sup>30</sup> By the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, British silver coins were introduced which eventually became the common currency of the Gold Coast.<sup>31</sup>

According to Dumett (1974) the question of alcohol consumption in African societies in the nineteenth century cannot be ignored without looking at the trade in liquor with the Europeans in the 1890's.<sup>32</sup> Prior to this, Akyeampong (1996) also pointed out that, palm wine featured prominently in the social organization and rites of passage, but centuries of Afro-European trade gradually incorporated rum and later gin into the religio-cultural lives of the Akan, Ga-Adangme and Ewes within the nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup> Dumett (1974) explored the Asante traditional society and emphasized that it was not considered proper for women to

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<sup>25</sup> Kwaku Nti, "The Role of Alcohol in the 1905 Conflicts between the Anafo and Ntsin Asafo Companies of Cape Coast," *Transaction of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series 2* (1998), 49-55.

<sup>26</sup> Lynn Pan, *Alcohol in Colonial Africa* (Uppsala, 1975), 1-121.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Simon Heap, "A Bottle of Gin is dangled before the nose of the Native: The Economic uses of Imported Liquor in Southern Nigeria 1860-1920," *African Economic History* 33 (2005), 69-85.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, 72

<sup>30</sup> T. E Anin, *Banking in Ghana* (Woeli Publishing Services, Accra, 2000), 1-270.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>32</sup> Dumett, "The Social Impact of the European Liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana."

<sup>33</sup> Emmanuel Akyeampong, "What's in a drink? Class Struggle, Popular Culture and the Politics of Akpeteshie (Local Gin) in Ghana, 1939-67," *Journal of African History* 37(2) (1996), 215-234.

drink but was done on ceremonial occasions.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the raffia palm was used for ceremonial purposes before the coming of European liquor.<sup>35</sup> Akyeampong (1994) argued that, apart from women, young men in the society were excluded from using alcohol and also the elders believed it to have sacred powers.<sup>36</sup> But, in the mid nineteenth century with the expansion of European economic activities and monopoly over alcohol, their religious and political control over imported liquor was broke as young men began to migrate to the coastal towns and that facilitated the emergence of a pattern of social drinking that was free from any autonomy of the rural elders.<sup>37</sup>

Gradually, imported liquor began shaping the social lives of Gold Coast especially in terms of the role of alcohol in their cultural activities. Rum, gin and Schnapps were exchanged for palm wine in occasions such as naming ceremonies, funerals and festivals.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, the ability to serve spirit of good quality enhanced the status of the host and brought prestige.<sup>39</sup>

Akyeampong and Ntewusu (2014) also pointed out that, European liquors were introduced in ritual activities in the sixteenth century to 1850.<sup>40</sup> It showed the earliest import of European liquor by the Dutch into Gold Coast during the Atlantic trade.<sup>41</sup> This period brought in European schnapps rums and brandy which were used in ritual activities during war times.<sup>42</sup> They argued that these liquors impacted both the ritual and social uses of alcohol in the sense that these commodities were assimilated into the socio-political itinerary of Gold Coast.<sup>43</sup> Dumett (1974) supported this argument by adding that, it would be difficult to estimate the general amount of European distilled spirit which may have been consumed strictly for social purposes.<sup>44</sup> Brooks (1970) in his journal further commented on the central place of rum and tobacco in American trade with West Africa in the Atlantic trade era. He reported that, tobacco and rum were the foundation of American legitimate commerce and the chief source of profit. Cotton, guns and powder were the staples of the West African trade in the

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<sup>34</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of the European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 79.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>36</sup> Emmanuel Akyeampong, "The State and Alcohol Revenues: Promoting «Economic Development» in Gold Coast, 1919 to the Present," *Social History* (1994), 399-411.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, 395.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, 85.

<sup>40</sup> See Akyeampong and Ntewusu "Rum, Gin and Maize."

<sup>41</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>44</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of the European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 76.

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the main stock in trade of European merchant from all countries. The quality and competitive price of American tobacco and rum ensured their entry in West Africa.<sup>45</sup>

From, Brooks (1970) rum was an essential trade commodity which enabled European merchant to get profits.<sup>46</sup> The quality of rum was of importance because the quality the rum the more expensive they were. The types of rum were distinguished according to its color which could be colorless or white and a brownish color or golden color. Rituals were made to the war deities of various ethnic tribes in Gold Coast and some gods delighted in rum with golden color mixed with the blood of human beings or animal sacrifice.<sup>47</sup> Further, comment made by Akyeampong and Ntewusu (2014) were that, political centralization and social hierarchies in pre-colonial Gold Coast placed premium on the prestige of owning European liquor, which came to inform relations of power and patronage. These considerations of prestige were extended into the spirit realm and colorless gin and schnapps came to serve alongside water as ritual fluids for deities.<sup>48</sup>

The act of warfare in Gold Coast was of significance and demanded several consultations with gods to determine the outcome of the war. Missionary activities also accounted and acknowledged these rituals in the nineteenth century but, this created a great opposition to the sharing of the gospel. Dumett (1974), looked at missionary accounts in the use of alcohol in the social life of the Gold Coast, he stated that missionaries such as Church Missionary Association witnessed the use of imported liquor in rituals, funeral rites and for other customary purposes.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, during funerals, rum was poured for libation and bottles of alcohol were put in the coffin of the deceased.<sup>50</sup>

One important social impact that various writers have different views is on social violence as a result of the use of imported liquor. According to Myadze (2014) problems with alcohol abuse are not cultural or age specific therefore, in Western countries, high industrialization saw the rise in social drinking.<sup>51</sup> However, in British West African countries, anti-liquor crusaders noted that, the importation of liquor caused violence and crime due to excessive drinking and

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<sup>45</sup> G. E. Brooks, *Yankee traders, Old Coasters and African middlemen: A history of American legitimate trade with West African in the nineteenth century* (Boston University Press, 1970).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>47</sup> Akyeampong and Ntewusu, "Rum, Gin and Maize."

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 72.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>51</sup> Theresa I. Myadze, "Alcoholism in Africa during the Twentieth century; A Socio-cultural perspective," *International Journal of Business and Social science* 5 (2) (2014), 1-9.

hence advocated for its ban, but Dumett (1974) argued that, from 1800's to the early twentieth century, violence and crimes based on alcohol in Gold Coast were rarely recorded and this was because, the Akan's were generally law abiding people. But Myadze (2014) went on to identify four categories of drinkers; these were the social or controlled drinkers, heavy drinkers, alcoholics and chronic alcoholics. She mentioned that, alcoholics and chronic alcoholics were likely to engage in violence when intoxicated.<sup>52</sup> But, heavy drinkers are also likely to engage in violence when occasionally intoxicated.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless in the coastal towns which were the major import route, some amount of violence might have occurred during traditional festivities.<sup>54</sup> Nti (1998) raised an instance of violence in his article where the riots between two Asafo companies on 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1905 ensued as a result of excessive alcohol intake.<sup>55</sup> This occurred because of the refusal of the Ntsin Company to allow the Anafo company dance on the coffin of a deceased colleague which was a custom practice. But, during such an activity, it allowed the company insult people passing through the street with abusive words. The Ntsin wanted to avoid that so they only allowed the family of the bereaved to pass through their route. As a result of this action by the Ntsin Company, the Anafo Company drunk with rum marched to Ntsin and trespassed on their company land.

Socially, urbanization and economic development in Southern Ghana from the turn of the twentieth century opened up new employment opportunities. According to Akyeampong (1996) the declaration of Gold Coast as British colony together with European emigrants enabled the British administration gain roots to invest capitals in various sectors of the country such as the mining sectors in Tarkwa, Obuasi and the construction of railways contributed to the transportation of goods and services.<sup>56</sup> He pointed out that rural-urban migration became a temporary economic measure to single young men to earn cash to pay off family debt or acquire dowry.<sup>57</sup> Europeans and educated elites established drinking clubs and spots in these towns which made drinking prominent in urban life.<sup>58</sup> This made access to liquor quiet easy and socially common among the youth,

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibidem*, 3.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>55</sup> Kwaku Nti, "The Role of Alcohol in the 1905 Conflicts between the Anafo and Ntsin Asafo Companies of Cape Coast," *Transaction of the Historical Society of Ghana, New Series* 2 (1998), 49-55.

<sup>56</sup> Akyeampong, "What is in a drink?," 222.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*.

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nevertheless Dumett (1974) argued that the volume and value of liquor that were 1,905 tons, valued 17,470 Euros transported by railway into Tarkwa, Obuasi and Kumasi had a proportion consumed by Europeans therefore, consumption were not only by the indigenes.<sup>59</sup>

Interestingly most authors elaborated on the social uses of imported liquor which were incorporated into the traditional, cultural, as well as to elevate the prestige of families within the societal settings. Nonetheless most literatures generalized these social changes, some failed to identify some social changes and practices which occurred as a result of the influence of imported liquor in Kumasi. However, one does not point out the causes and effect of the consumption distilled liquor and changes in the socio-cultural development that occurred in Kumasi. However, authors strongly believed that, locally brewed drinks paved the way for a strong attachment to European beverages. Furthermore, there were limited explanation as to the extent to which distilled liquor influenced the political and social system of Kumasi, although some writers made reference to increase in the taste of foreign goods, creation of conflicts as a result of the intoxicating nature of imported liquor and usage in rituals they do not give specific fact to how it affected the development, and cultural patterns.

### *The Economic Impact of Distilled Liquor*

Trade in diverse goods and services enhanced economic activities in Gold Coast. Adu-Boahen ((2014) mentioned that slave trade served as a source of economic income to both Europeans and Gold Coasters during the Atlantic slave trade.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, when it was abolished within the nineteenth century it paved way for legitimate trade which included European liquor that was not “new” to Gold Coast. Myadze (2014) pointed out that, the level of alcohol consumption varied from culture to culture and changes in increase or decrease in demand of alcohol depends on the societal definition and reaction to it.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, Akyeampong (1994) argued that, the British government in Gold Coast regarded the local demand for alcohol for religious and cultural purpose as a solution to its quest for financial sufficiency.<sup>62</sup> He further pointed out that the declaration of Gold Coast as a British colony in 1874 demanded the British to finance the administration of the colony. Prior to this, between 1883 and 1895 about nine

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<sup>59</sup> Dumett, “The social impact of the European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana,” 98.

<sup>60</sup> Kwabena Adu-Boahen, “The impact of European presence on slavery in the sixteenth to eighteenth century Gold Coast,” *Historical Society of Ghana, New Series* 14 (2014), 165-199.

<sup>61</sup> Myadze, “Alcoholism in Africa,” 4.

<sup>62</sup> Akyeampong, “The State and Alcohol Revenues,” 396.

million gallons of liquor were imported into Gold Coast; it was significant to note the argument of Dumett (1974) that these imports at the turn of the century were absorbed into the traditional religio-cultural system.<sup>63</sup> In view of that, Akyeampong (1994) with statistical data on custom duties included liquor revenue which stated that liquor duties contributed almost 40 percent of Gold Coast economy before World War I. Dumett (1974) also added that in 1879, liquor constituted 19 percent of the total imports.<sup>64</sup>

According to Dumett (1974) British economic exploitation of their colonies were attained to its fullest potential.<sup>65</sup> He cited Southern Nigeria as the first West African colony to earn a million pound in revenue in 1906 with majority from liquor duties. In Gold Coast, Akyeampong (1994) pointed out that, huge alcohol imports were made possible by a growing indigenous cocoa industry, which allowed Gold Coast emerge as the world's leading producer of cocoa in 1911.<sup>66</sup> This increased the purchasing power of indigenes and encouraged social drinking among railway miners. Akyeampong (1996) pointed out that, after the Saint Germaine Convention in 1919, British government decided to cut down importation on cheap gin, rum and schnapps that were brands of Dutch and Germany and promoted whiskey that was much more expensive.<sup>67</sup> The expensive nature of imported liquor caused a decrease in consumption.

The expensive nature of imported liquor promoted the emergence of *akpeteshie* as another form of gin.<sup>68</sup> Women especially engaged in the sales and distillation because it was less expensive and lucrative as compared to the expensive nature of imported liquor. Dumett (1974) added that, illicit distillation of *akpeteshie* began on a large scale after the imposition of an unusually high restriction tariff on imported spirits by the Gold Coast colonial government in 1929.<sup>69</sup> According to Willis (2001), in Western Tanzania, the sale of locally made grain were for cash and consumption in commercial clubs and these played a major role in altering the relationship between the young and old men and women in the society.<sup>70</sup> That was because young men began to lose respect for elderly men and women as a result of economic autonomy that was found in the cash

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibidem*, 397.

<sup>64</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 77

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>66</sup> Akyeampong, "The State and Alcohol Revenues," 397.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*, 218.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*, 224.

<sup>69</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 93.

<sup>70</sup> Justin Willis, "Beer used to belong to older men": Drink and Authority among the Nyakyusa of Tanzania," *Journal of the International Africa Institute* 71 (3) (2001), 373-390.

*Review of the History of Distilled Liquor and Its Impact on the Kumasi People of Ghana* economy.<sup>71</sup> Comparatively Akyeampong (1996) also cited that, women in Gold Coast distilled and retailed *akpeteshie* and it became a family venture that involved both men and women.<sup>72</sup>

The economies of Gold Coast for some centuries were administered by the colonial government up until independence. Economic policies were jarred towards the increase in tariffs on trade import and also control of the West Africa liquor traffic. According to Akyeampong (1996) illicit gin production emerged because people could no longer afford liquors which were at exorbitant prices.<sup>73</sup> However, little information has been provided on how the economy of the colony influenced the socio-cultural development of Kumasi, therefore, the research sort to bring out factors that accounted for any new development.

### *The Role of Distilled Liquor during Colonization*

Most writers in their articles argued that, some factors mitigated the colonization of British West African countries most importantly, Gold Coast. Pan (1975) pointed out the fact that, merchant traders played a vital role in ushering in the colonial era by forcing the hand of their respective government in the acquisition of territories in Africa.<sup>74</sup> Howard (1976) further argued that, before 1900, guns, ammunitions, liquor, and unproductive goods were major trade items that encouraged inter and intra-tribal warfare.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, the importation of guns and ammunitions were reduced after Asante and Northern Territories had come under the chagrin of the British suppliers.<sup>76</sup> Olorunfemi (1984) added that, the slave trade also fostered the sale of arms, gun powder and ammunitions and were used by chiefs to raid and procure slaves which in turn the chiefs were actually paid in liquor by the Europeans.<sup>77</sup> However, liquor continued to constitute a large proportion of imports until restrictions were imposed in the early 1920's.<sup>78</sup>

On the contrary, Dumett (1974) argued that the liquor trade was not as damaging as others have argued because, the commercial importance of arms and ammunitions trade were also equivalent to the liquor trade as proven by numerous

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<sup>71</sup> *Ibidem*, 375.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>74</sup> Pan, *Alcohol in Colonial Africa*, 16.

<sup>75</sup> Rhoda Howard, "Economic Imperialism and Oligopolization of trade in the Gold Coast," *Journal of African Studies* 7(1) (1939), 71-92.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>77</sup> A. Olorunfemi, "The Liquor Traffic Dilemma in British West Africa: The Southern Nigeria Example 1895-1918," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 17 (2) (1984), 229-241.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*.

references in the records of the Chamber of Commerce of Manchester, London, and Liverpool, as well as by the regularity with which it was discussed in the West African Committee.<sup>79</sup> He further reported that, West Africans would have consumed their own home-distilled spirit in large quantities had the European rum and gin trade never existed.<sup>80</sup> According to this notion, heavy consumption of indigenous drink had long existed in African societies and the first Europeans merchants were merely supplying a preexisting demand for hard liquor.<sup>81</sup> Dumett (1974) believed that indigenous spirits existed in the Gold Coast and Gold Coast would have still consumed large amounts of alcohol with or without the trade in liquor.<sup>82</sup> However, Pan (1975) argued that, British tariff policies on imports enhanced the financing of their colonies and after the Berlin conference in 1884, alcohol revenues became the means of financing the various colonies by the colonial government.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, alcohol revenues paid for the upkeep of the Gold Coast by the colonial government. Prior to this, various means proved unsuccessful especially with the imposition of direct tax by the colonial government and the use of chiefs also proved unsuccessful.<sup>84</sup> As a result of this, Gold Coast derived about \$5million a year during the mid-1920s from duties on imported alcohol, and a third of the revenue of the country came from alcohol revenues.<sup>85</sup> She also indicated that colonial taxation also reflected to a certain extent because, items such as alcohol, tobaccos which were heavily taxed in Britain were those bearing heavy duties in the colonies.<sup>86</sup>

Howard (1976) also pointed out that, the emergence of European firms and trading companies caused underdevelopment as a result of exploitation of the African trading class.<sup>87</sup> He further cited, Elder Dempster and Woermann as shipping Lines that were able to take control of the West African trade because the introduction of steamed ships eliminated many smaller independent merchant shippers who owned sailing boats.<sup>88</sup> One other relevant point argued by Olorunfemi (1984) on the role of imported liquor in colonizing Gold Coast was the

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<sup>79</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 76.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>81</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 72.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>83</sup> Pan, *Alcohol in Colonial Africa*, 16.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>87</sup> Howard, "Economic imperialism and Oligopolization of trade in Gold Coast," 79.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibidem.*

European quest for merchandise.<sup>89</sup> Liquor served as an incentive for the export of African staples after the abolition of the slave trade with the introduction of legitimate trade.<sup>90</sup> Liquors were still very useful in trade and chiefs were said to exchange agricultural produce for gin, and laborers also insisted to be paid in gun powder or spirits.<sup>91</sup> In colonizing Gold Coast, it can also be established that Gold Coaster taste for foreign goods especially the demand for equal access to European liquor proved to be a factor for demand. Pan (1975) indicated that the idea of white superiority held by Africans and the ability to enjoy imported liquor further elevated one's status.<sup>92</sup> As a result of that, the demand for imported drinks increased as their colonial imperialist gained the upper hand in controlling the economy and development of the colony.

Generally, most writers identified the extent to which imported liquor played a role in colonizing Gold Coast within the nineteenth centuries and the impact it had on the people. The major points raised by various authors included imported liquor as a means of exploitations in trade especially in exchange for important Gold Coast merchandise that were worth more than alcohol, colonial taxation on imported alcohol, alcohol revenues and demand for European life style as a means of African status. Another was the sprung up of Europeans firms who played a monopoly to determine prices of goods including duty charges on liquor thereby limiting indigenes to play the middlemen role. Although there has been some debate between some authors with regards to the extent to which imported liquor was involved in colonization, it could be agreed that, imported liquor had an impact on people. The field of colonization sort to have a mandate to control, which could have created an assertion that excessive intake of imported liquors probably made the people of Gold Coast unfit to plan developmental strategies for the colony. However, attention was given to the extent to which imported liquor played a role in colonizing the Gold Coast but not how it affected the socio-cultural development of Kumasi within the twentieth century and the changes it had on the people.

#### *Reasons for the Ban in Illicit Production of Local Gin (Akpateshie)*

The abolition of the European liquor trade with West Africa received some forms of set-backs. Olorunfemi (1984) argued that, towards the end of the

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<sup>89</sup> Olorunfemi, "The Liquor Traffic Dilemma in British West Africa," 230.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>92</sup> Pan, *Alcohol in Africa*, 76.

nineteenth century, the liquor trade in West Africa was at the focus of an intense debate between two pressure groups, namely, the anti-liquor crusaders and the liquor merchants.<sup>93</sup>

The anti-liquor crusaders were made up of the Manchester chamber of commerce and the London based humanitarian societies who condemned the liquor traffic and claimed that, the liquor trade had led to the widespread of drunkenness.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, the liquor merchants regarded the trade in spirit useful as a result of the monopoly they played and therefore viewed the crusade against liquor trade as a major impediment to European trade in West Africa.<sup>95</sup> Dumett (1994) supported this argument and cited an earlier campaign in 1880's for the abolition of the trade by the Native race and Liquor traffic committee and the Aborigines Protection society who made it their task to gather mass information pertaining to the importation of American and European gin, rum and Whiskey.<sup>96</sup>

Nonetheless, Olorunfemi (1984) and Dumett (1994) similarly agree that, the trade could be equated to slave trade because the anti-liquor crusaders were commonly the humanitarians who were missionaries and had advocated for the abolition of the slave trade. Furthermore, these missionaries upon gathering information about the trade also equated it to slave trade and advocated for moderation in drinking through a temperate movement. Dumett (1994) stated that these Christian moralists termed it as "demon rum" and equated the trade in liquor to the slave trade.<sup>97</sup> But Olorunfemi (1984) argued that, British firms such as F. and A. Swanzy, the Miller Brother's and John Holt Company defended the trade as a necessary concomitant of legitimate trade and was of less evil as the abolitionist portrayed.<sup>98</sup> Bearing in mind the importance of the liquor trade to the British colonial government with its colonies, it became difficult to totally extinguish the imports of liquor therefore Olorunfemi (1984) commented that, until 1890's, attempts that were made were purely on "humanitarian grounds" to check large importation of European liquor into West Africa and this proved unsuccessful.<sup>99</sup>

In Gold Coast illicit gin which was *akpeteshie* became a leading drink in the early 1920s after imported liquor became expensive. Gold coasters were able to produce their own different type of liquor which was not different from the

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<sup>93</sup> Olorunfemi, "The Liquor Traffic Dilemma in British West Africa," 229.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>97</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 71.

<sup>98</sup> Olorunfemi, "The Liquor Traffic Dilemma in British West Africa," 230.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibidem.*

indigenous palm wine but was different in tastes and stronger than that of the indigenous drinks.<sup>100</sup> In 1919, *akpeteshie* was termed “illicit” because it was illegal and British efforts were directed to banning its production.<sup>101</sup> Prior to this some restrictions on imported liquor were introduced based on missionary and humanitarian advocates in British West African countries. In Gold Coast, the local chiefs, educated elites and missionary societies made alliances with the British colonial government to introduce restrictions on liquors by, increasing retail license fee on spirits from twenty euros to sixty euros, limited the hours on the sales of liquor and banned the sale of spirit on credit.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, Akyeampong (1994) further claims that, this did not deter Gold Coaster from having access to liquor but rather gave room for the distillation of illicit liquor.<sup>103</sup>

Another reason for the ban of illicit gin cited by Akyeampong (1994) was the colonial government rhetoric argument that the gin was harsh and detrimental to the health of the people.<sup>104</sup> Akyeampong (1994) mentioned that, the people felt it to be an excuse since the government was concerned about a decrease in revenue because illicit gin was cheaper than the imported gin.<sup>105</sup> Regions responsible for the distillations were the urban areas which were Secondi, Accra, Takoradi, Cape Coast and Axim and some rural areas.<sup>106</sup> Furtherance, stricter restrictions to prohibit the production of *akpeteshie* and efforts by the police did not deter culprits.<sup>107</sup>

On the other hand, Robin (2016) further indicated that the discovery of palm oil in the nineteenth century as an export product to Europe and Northern Africa could contribute to the revenue of the colony therefore the felling of trees for palm gin could hinder production of palm oil in Gold Coast.<sup>108</sup> He further raised the concern of the colonial government in relation to the cause of desertification as a result of felling of palm trees to tap palm the wine for the production of *akpeteshie* to urban centers in Cape Coast.<sup>109</sup> Another argument raised by Robins (2016) was that, illicit palm gin became an alternative for imported liquor because it was tax-

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<sup>100</sup> Akyeampong, “What’s in a drink?” 224.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>103</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibidem*, 226.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>107</sup> Akyeampong, “What’s in a drink?,” 227.

<sup>108</sup> Jonathan E. Robins, “Food and Drink; Palm oil verses Palm wine in Colonial Ghana,” *Institute of Latin America Studies* 25 (2016), 1-22.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibidem.*

free and lucrative as compared to imported liquor.<sup>110</sup> The British government and the educated elites were much concerned with environmental hazards as early as 1909.<sup>111</sup> This led to the “dessionist” theory by the colonial government to reserve palm trees.<sup>112</sup> According to Robin (2016), illicit gin served as an anti-commodity to the production of some other vital products such as cocoa and oil palm in Gold Coast.<sup>113</sup>

The ban of distilled alcohol can be associated with the liquor traffic in Africa including Gold Coast. This included the treaty signed at Saint Germain convention on 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1919. This sort to control trade in spirits by determining what beverages could be considered as trade spirits and also to ban illicit alcohol production in Africa. Various writers raised argument on the reasons for the ban of illicit production of alcohol and these were the injurious nature of distilled alcohol, humanitarian reasons raised by missionaries, desertification as a result of the felling of trees for palm gin and demand for oil palm in Europe. Nonetheless, the arguments made by the literatures reviewed had failed to depict how these factors have affected the socio-cultural changes that might have occurred in Kumasi. Therefore, extensive research must be conducted to fill the gaps. It is on these bases this research was conducted.

#### *Data presentation and Interpretation of the findings*

This section contains a qualitative narration of data that was collected based on secondary sources. Secondary source included books, newspapers, and journal articles. Primary sources included oral interviews and archival reports such as colonial reports from the public records office in Kumasi and also from the national archives in Accra. It also took into consideration the objectives in chapter one and arrived with four themes. These were the consumption and impacts of imported liquor in Kumasi, the consumption and impact of local gin (*akpeteshie*) in Kumasi, government and colonial policies on illicit production of local gin (*akpeteshie*) and the impact of distilled liquor in the socio-cultural development of the Kumasi.

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<sup>110</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>111</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>112</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>113</sup> *Ibidem.*

*The Consumption and Impact of Imported Liquor*

The Atlantic trade in the sixteenth century through to 1850 when the Danes left Gold Coast witnessed trade in several commodities.<sup>114</sup> The importation of rum and especially schnapps and gin increased after the ending of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.<sup>115</sup> Changes in the economy of the second half of the nineteenth century brought imported goods within the reach of a large section of West Africa. Liquor trade brought in spirituous liquors such as rum, brandy, schnapps and gin as currency in trade by chiefs. After the departure of the Dutch, Gold Coast became a British colony thereby annexing all the regions in the 1900', including Asante who served as a continuous treat to the British.<sup>116</sup> Prior to this, the Asante empire was the prevailing power as a result of war of conquest that allowed most state become vassal states to the Asante and also swore their allegiance to them.<sup>117</sup>

However, the expanded accessibility of liquor as a result of the Atlantic trade had an impact on the ritual and social uses of alcohol.<sup>118</sup> American rum became a central commodity in the trade with West Africa in the late seventeenth century. Rum imported in Gold Coast came in two different types and these were the colorless or white and brownish or golden color.<sup>119</sup> These types of rum had distinct uses in performing rituals in Gold Coast. As a result of incessant warfare, rum was used to consult various war deities which were in existence.<sup>120</sup> These war deities were believed to determine the outcomes of war therefore there was a need to consult them and also seek for protection.<sup>121</sup> The people of Anglo-Ewe, upheld *Nyibla* that was the state's war deity and the Adangme had *Nadu* and *Kotoku* as the center of their social and political lives.<sup>122</sup> The King of Asante played a vital role since they were the dominant power, all war deities in his jurisdiction and their custodians reported to him.<sup>123</sup> These war deities demanded the sacrifice of human blood or animals and most especially delighted in rum with the golden color that was described as *kooko* (red) because it also had the color of blood.<sup>124</sup> This depicted that, imported liquor was not only for the consumption of Gold Coasters

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<sup>114</sup> Akyeampong and Nteuwusu, "Rum, Gin and Maize."

<sup>115</sup> *Ibidem*, 2.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibidem*, 4.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibidem*, 11.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibidem*, 12.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibidem*.

but played the role as a medium of connection between them and their war deities who had the mandate to determine the outcomes of war. Aside this, most chiefs and elders also focused on the medicinal benefit of the gin and rum which was taken with roots of some herbs.<sup>125</sup> This was effective in curing certain ailments such as digestive problems, urinary problems and also effective in curing bites of venomous snakes and scorpions.<sup>126</sup>

Another point worth noting was that, imported liquor became a symbol, of power and prestige hence, played a role in the political and social hierarchies since those noted for drinking them were seen as wealthy.<sup>127</sup> Pouring of liquor down the throat of a diseased during funerals and offering them to an indigenous priest were some cultural practices that involved the use of imported liquor.<sup>128</sup> Dumett discerned in his article two fold uses of European liquor which were, for rituals and festivals.<sup>129</sup> These two fold uses depicted the consumption of liquor in that, during funerals, commercial distilled liquor was poured as libation and large amounts were consumed after the together with drumming and dancing.<sup>130</sup> Birth rites, puberty rites, marriage rites and death rites which had various ceremonies performed witnessed the use and consumption of imported liquor. The *Adae* festival of Asante was also commemorated with a bottle of distilled liquor and libation was poured to call on the spirits of previous chiefs and ancestors for strength and guidance in the future.<sup>131</sup>

Political, judicial and legal contracts involved the use of liquor and most especially rum was used among assembled witnesses and this served as a binding force between the witnesses so they would uphold the validity of an issue.<sup>132</sup> Its consumption by these witnesses was a symbolic gesture to seal legal or business contracts.<sup>133</sup> But prior to these, it was unusual for a farmer or middleman returning from the coast to bring more than one or two bottles of liquor with him. Documentary sources had it that, the weight and high cost of head portage

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<sup>125</sup> Dmitri van den Bersselaar, "The King of Drinks: Schnapps Gin from Modernity to Tradition," *Brill* (2007), 1-298.

<sup>126</sup> Bersselaar, "The King of Drinks," 205.

<sup>127</sup> See Akyeampong and Ntewusu, "Rum, Gin and Maize," 12.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Robert Abbey, Northern sector warehouse manager (Kasapreko Company Limited, Kumasi, 24th February, 2017).

<sup>129</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana."

<sup>130</sup> *Ibidem*, 83.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibidem*, 83.

<sup>132</sup> Emmanuel Akyeampong, "The State and Alcohol Revenue: Promoting «Economic Development» in Gold Coast/Ghana, 1919 to Present," *Social History / Histoire sociale*, XXVII (1994), 394-411.

<sup>133</sup> Akyeampong, "The State and Alcohol Revenues," 395.

hindered the bulk distribution of commercial liquor to the reach of the protectorate and Asante.<sup>134</sup> Large volumes of commercial distilled liquors were sold in towns of the coastal belt where the population was dense in the colony and also among fishing and laboring classes of Elmina, Cape Coast, Salt pond, Anomabo, Winneba, etc.<sup>135</sup> However, bulk transportation occurred within the period 1875 to 1910 as a result of railway transport to mining enclaves in the states of Wassa and South western Asante.<sup>136</sup> The number of Europeans that resided in the mining areas rose significantly after 1903, 2000 Europeans lived in Gold Coast and Asante from 1910 to 1930 of whom some were employed by mining companies.<sup>137</sup> Therefore, the number of liquor transported on railway into Tarkwa, Obuasi and Kumasi were 1,905 tons valued £17470 and were shipped in 1908.<sup>138</sup> These roads were constructed for colonial purposes and Howard identified three types of roads which were in order of priority namely, feeder roads to railway, trade roads and political roads built to facilitate administration.<sup>139</sup> The railway generated a bulk of revenue for the colonial government and by 1920 the duties collected at Secondi on goods passing to Asante was £34,660.<sup>140</sup>

By the latter end of the 19th century, European colonial imposition in West Africa brought about the seizure of wars and Britain resentment towards liquor trade by foreign nations such Germany and America brought an end in the trade in German schnapps and American rum after World War I.<sup>141</sup> Dutch schnapps and gin stepped in by the early twentieth century to play cultural and ritual roles in Gold Coast but rum did not disappear from the scene entirely.<sup>142</sup> It could however be concluded that, imported liquor were largely incorporated into the ritual uses of the Asante in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. Therefore, Dumett further indicated that it would be difficult to estimate the amount of European distilled liquor which may have been consumed strictly for social purpose.<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, the introduction of a foreign drink gave way for some form of monopoly especially by the male elders in the society.<sup>144</sup> This however,

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<sup>134</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 81.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibidem*, 81.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibidem*, 98.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>139</sup> Rhoda Howard, "Economic imperialism of Oligopolization of Trade in Gold Coast: 1886-1939," *Journal of African Studies* 7(1) (1976), 71-92.

<sup>140</sup> Public Records Office, Colonial annual reports at Kumasi Cultural center, ARG 1/20/3/1/1.

<sup>141</sup> Akyeampong and Ntewusu "Rum, Gin and Maize," 13.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>143</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 84.

<sup>144</sup> Akyeampong, "The State and Alcohol Revenues," 395.

led to an ideology of the consumption of imported liquor among the powerful. Women and young men were not allowed to take in alcohol and religions such as Christianity and Islam restricted some Gold Coasters from taking in alcohol.

After Gold Coast was declared a British colony, the means of financing the colony had become a problem which needed a solution.<sup>145</sup> However, since alcohol had been imbibed into the cultural and religious arena of the people this served as a solution to financing the colony. Custom duties on imported alcohol became the central role for financing the colony.<sup>146</sup> Alcohol revenues were not only used in the Gold Coast, but also in Nigeria by the British colonial government.<sup>147</sup> Prior to this, the attempt to levy the poll tax in Gold Coast failed because, the British ignored the concession for internal development and refused to pay the agreed earnings to the chiefs who assisted in the tax collection.<sup>148</sup> The urgent need to finance the colony by the British administration in the second half of the century led to increasing imports of spirits thereby, making alcohol duties one of the most important constituents of the colonial government.<sup>149</sup> Amid 1883 and 1895, nine million gallons of liquor were imported into Gold Coast and documentary evidence indicated that, they were absorbed into the traditional religious cultural system.<sup>150</sup> The higher alcoholic content together with the cheapness of European liquor unquestionably accounted for its increase and popularity within the period.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, an important conduit of influence by imported liquor was the European commerce and wage-labor employment that provided opportunities for young men to earn cash between 1875 and 1910.<sup>152</sup> This led to the migration of young men to coastal towns and the development of some towns by the colonial government which called for the emergence of another pattern of social drinking.<sup>153</sup> Retail prices of gin in the coastal towns were 1s 3d for a glass and 3d per glass for rum, notwithstanding, some merchants diluted some imported liquor with water before it was sold.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> *Ibidem*, 396.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>151</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of the European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 93.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibidem*, 97.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibidem*, 93.

Year	Import Duties	Liquor Duties	Railway Revenues	Total Revenue	% of liquor contribution
1910	610,602	384,538	248,981	1,006,633	38
1911	663,071	421,970	294,650	1,111,632	38
1912	735,470	470,144	329,399	1,230,850	38
1913	779,593	502,429	357,329	1,301,566	39

*Table 1 Contribution of Custom Duties Including Liquor Revenues, and Railway Revenues to Total Government Revenue, Gold Coast 1910-1913<sup>155</sup>*

Liquor duties were contributing almost 40 per cent prior to World War I to the total revenue of the colonial government. From the table, the government leading sources of revenue came from railway revenues and custom duties on alcohol. Retail and whole sale license for spirits, wine and beer also contributed roughly 4 per cent of the total revenue.<sup>156</sup> These retailers were bar owners who entertain customers of all kind be it a European or Gold Coaster. With an interview with S.Y Asomani he mentioned that;<sup>157</sup>

Since I opened my bar the patronage was high and all sorts of people came to drink and have a good time. Prices were affordable and in a day I could sale roughly for four crates of different liquor...

Consumption rose from the period of 1890 to 1910 and this was as a result of the economic change that occurred. These changes were associated with diversification and the expansion of Gold Coast exports.<sup>158</sup> These export commodities included rubber, cocoa and gold. Furthermore, the mining sectors such in Obuasi and Tarkwa were developed mechanized mining was introduced.<sup>159</sup> When the greatest change took place, export from the Gold coast rose by 625 percent.<sup>160</sup> This greatly led to a tremendous increase in cash earnings by peasant who depended on subsistence cultivation and also led to the creation of work for the youth who decided to migrate to the urban areas in search of jobs.<sup>161</sup> The massive change did not only lead to the demand of imported liquor but also demand for other consumer goods and imported merchandize.<sup>162</sup> However, the

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<sup>155</sup> Source: Public Records Office (PRO), London, CO 554/41/19073 and Report of the Commission of Inquiry Regarding the consumption of Spirits in the Gold Coast, (London, 1931) and Emmanuel Akyeampong, *The State and alcohol Revenues*, pp.397.

<sup>156</sup> Akyeampong, "The State and Alcohol Revenues," 397.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with S.Y Asomani, Kumasi, 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2017.

<sup>158</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of the European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 94.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibidem*, 94.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibidem*.

pleasure coupled with the status a host might receive for serving rum or schnapps on a formal event further encourages people to increase their earnings.<sup>163</sup>

Nevertheless, from 1919, record of liquor traffic in Africa led to the Saint Germain international convention on liquor which sought to reduce the liquor traffic in African colonies.<sup>164</sup> This led to the ban of “trade spirit” and each colonial government was left to define what trade spirits were.<sup>165</sup> Dutch gin and Geneva which were cheap and affordable to the people were banned and replaced with British whisky.<sup>166</sup> However, British whiskey received low patronage because it was expensive and moreover, people had come to enjoy Dutch gin, rum and schnapps which had been incorporated into the ritual and social arena of the southern and interior people in Gold Coast.<sup>167</sup> This greatly affected the colonial government revenue and as a result of this they readmitted Dutch spirits. Akyeampong indicated that, the Gold Coast colonial government justified the rival of liquor revenue by linking them to the need for internal development as argued earlier in the 1850’s.<sup>168</sup> Governor Fredrick Gordon Guggisberg from 1919- 19127 initiated his ten-year development plan which also largely depended on internal source for revenue and these sources included custom duties of which spirits were the leading contributor.<sup>169</sup> Alexander Ransford Slater who also continued from 1927-1932 however reverted to commerce and other extractive industries such as mining and neglected the socio- economic infrastructure of Gold Coast.<sup>170</sup> He also depended on liquor for revenue and implemented government liquor policies that affected the economy and the population at large. His administration did not portray any development even though there was increase in liquor revenues, this created the strong impression among the chiefs and educated elites that peoples demand for liquor were being exploited.<sup>171</sup> Educated elite that came from educational background and held legislative representation in the colonial government called for a commission of inquiry into the consumption of spirits in the Gold Coast.<sup>172</sup> The commission submitted its reports in 1930 and

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>164</sup> Akyeampong, “The State and Alcohol Revenues,” 398.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>168</sup> *Ibidem*, 398.

<sup>169</sup> Akyeampong, “The State and Alcohol Revenues,” 399.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>171</sup> Emmanuel Akyeampong, “What is in a drink? Class Struggle, Popular Culture and the Politics of Akpeteshie (Local Gin) in Ghana.” 1939-67, *The Journal of African History* 37(2) (1996), 215-234.

<sup>172</sup> Akyeampong, “The State and Alcohol Revenues,” 400.

recommended that, importation of gin should be gradually prohibited by means of reduction in imports over a 10-year period and also, duties on all spirits are increased.<sup>173</sup> The consumption of imported liquor indeed declined between 1909 and 1929, as shown in Table 2, and the colonial government had to seek other alternatives to fund the colony.<sup>174</sup> However, in the attempt to control liquor consumption, it led to the emergence of the production of illicit gin (*akpeteshie*).<sup>175</sup> The duties on spirit imported into Gold Coast was increased gradually from 2s 6d in 1897 to 27s 6d in 1929 partly to raise revenue and also to limit the demand for imported liquor.<sup>176</sup>

Year	Gold Coast (imported)		Britain (Home and Imported)	
	Gal.proof	Per head	Gal. Proof	Per head
1909	*	*	31,063,000	0.70
1913	835,780	0.68	31,794,000	0.70
1928	484,600	0.26	12,067,000	0.27
1929	302,282	0.16	12,037,000	0.27

*Table 2. Spirit consumption in the Gold Coast and Britain, 1901-1929*

*\*Not available*

*Source: Gold Coast, Report of inquiry regarding the consumption of spirits and Emmanuel Akyeampong, The State and Alcohol Revenue: Promoting “Economic Development” in Gold Coast, 1919 to Present (social history), 402.*

It was worth noting that, the influence of European liquor affected the social, political and economic spheres of Asante. However European liquor was viewed as a symbol of modernity and its cheap prices before the 1929 allowed the elderly in the society loss their monopoly to give way to a new form of social drinking that was rampant. Economically, it could be concluded that the colonial government depended on imported liquor in the attempt to strengthen the colony and generate internal revenue for development. However, the large amounts of imported liquor changed the status quo which allowed the society to embrace a kind of life that undermines the traditional setting of the people.

*The Consumption and Impact of Local Gin (Akpeteshie)*

*Akpeteshie* was a drink produced from palm wine however, and after the turn of the century, Gold Coasters came to imbibe this drink, which was not known

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<sup>173</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>174</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>175</sup> Akyeampong, “The State and Alcohol Revenues,” 402.

<sup>176</sup> PRO, Co 96/692/6571. Report of the commission of Inquiry Regarding the consumption of spirits in the Gold Coast ordinance in force before 1929.

before the period of European impact.<sup>177</sup> Production began on a large scale after the imposition of unusually high restrictive tariffs on imported spirit by the colonial government in 1929. This was a harsh drink believed to be highly potent and harsh in taste therefore, the need arose to ban its production.<sup>178</sup> A laboratory analysis in 1930 revealed that, as much as 24 grains of zinc and copper in a gallon of spirit however, distillation of *akpeteshie* threatened the colonial government finances, raised the specter of crime and disorder and also contributed as a menace to public health because of its unrefined nature and harmful content.<sup>179</sup>

From the 1930's, *akpeteshie* production quickly became a lucrative industry in an era of economic depression, incorporating extensive production and retail.<sup>180</sup> Women in the urban areas took advantage of production to earn some cash for themselves and to support their husbands and women in the rural areas also smuggled them into towns at night to give to retailers.<sup>181</sup> Furthermore, some came to town to explore new retail outlets. Its cheapness made it a drink for commoners and laborers involved in manual work patronized it as a result of its invigorative appeal.<sup>182</sup>

The consumption of *akpeteshie* promoted the cutting down of trees. This was because the making of local gin was made from palm wine from the palm tree and the local gin demanded the removal of trees to be able to tap the liquid.<sup>183</sup> This posed a problem to the colonial government as palm trees were cut to promote desertification and a decline in palm oil production.<sup>184</sup> An important point worth noting was that, in the twentieth century, a series of chemical findings and technological improvements reshaped the fat and oil industry making it possible to produce edible palm oil for the world market.<sup>185</sup> The production of palm wine threatened the export of oil palm as palm tree owners were willing to exchange their farms to produce palm wine which was in high demand.<sup>186</sup> Furthermore, palm wine was untaxed and sale meant less tariff revenue from exported oil palm and imported liquor.<sup>187</sup> Palm trees were transformed into rum and gin through process

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<sup>177</sup> Dumett, "The social impact of the European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana," 93.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>179</sup> Akyeampong, "What's in a drink?," 220.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibidem*, 221.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>183</sup> Jonathan E. Robins, "Food and Drink; Palm oil versus Palm wine in Colonial Ghana," *Institute of Latin America Studies* 25 (2016), 1-22.

<sup>184</sup> Robins, "Food and Drink," 3.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibidem*, 1.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibidem*, 12.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibidem*.

*Review of the History of Distilled Liquor and Its Impact on the Kumasi People of Ghana* of commodification and market exchange.<sup>188</sup> Since palm wine and *akpeteshie* became domestically produced it became popular on the local market hence, reshaping the economic environment.<sup>189</sup> This meant that, merchant now had to compete with local producers and consumers of the drink for a share on the local market.<sup>190</sup> Buyers of palm oil and kernel were also affected because they not only had to compete with local consumers of palm oil and kernel but also with those who drank for a share of oil palm resources. Oral interviewed indicated that some supplies of palm wine came from villages such Adeaso, Kofiase, Amangoase, Bepomu and Tekyamanteng and retailers received them already tapped from the tree and ready to be sold.<sup>191</sup> Also, palm wine was sold for all sort of occasion and was affordable.<sup>192</sup> One finding indicated that, the patronage of palm wine was as a result of its medicinal capability to cleanses the body system.<sup>193</sup>

Educated gentlemen or elite of the period however frowned upon consumers of *akpeteshie*. From its origins, distilleries, retailers and consumers were regarded as low class and filthy people and this was because, the drink made a pungent smell and people avoided the company of *akpeteshie* patrons. As a result of this, educated elite who were viewed to be wealthy in the society still patronized imported liquor even though they were expensive and this contributed to the development of social classes. Therefore, imported liquor were seen as a symbol of social status and prestige as compared to illicit gin that was viewed to be unhygienic. The cultural norm of women and young men taking alcohol was broken as a result of the temperate measures taken to ban the consumption of alcohol. Local gin further became the other of the day and replaced the imported liquor.

#### *Colonial and Local Governments actions against the Consumption of Imported Liquor and Local Gin (Akpeteshie)*

Colonial government necessity to raise funds to administer the colony enhanced the need to depend on internal strategies hence the imposition of custom duties on imported liquor in the second half of the nineteenth century. Increasing imports on spirits quickly made alcohol duties one of the most significant elements of the colonial government finances. However, it encouraged an increase in

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<sup>188</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>189</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>190</sup> *Ibidem*, 13.

<sup>191</sup> Interview with Regina a palm wine vendor, Kumasi, 9 March, 2017 and interview with Akosua Frimpong a bar owner (Kumasi 5 April, 2017).

<sup>192</sup> Regina, interview.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibidem.*

consumption causing liquor traffic because of an increase in demand. The need arose to reduce the liquor traffic in British West Africa colonies, therefore, in 1919, the Saint Germain convention with Britain as the pioneer raised the minimum tariffs on European liquor imported in Africa.<sup>194</sup> The convention banned “trade spirits” and outlawed the commercial distillation of spirits in African colonies. However, the convention left it to each colony to outline what is considers “trade spirit”.<sup>195</sup>

Preceding that, Saint Germain convention in 1919, in 1890, an international convention at Brussels prohibited European liquor to areas without a previous history of liquor consumption and this included the Northern territories of the Gold Coast.<sup>196</sup> This idea of prohibition zone was proposed by Britain, aside this, there were also efforts by British temperance societies who viewed the trade in liquor as harmful and called for abolition.<sup>197</sup> Other conferences were convened in 1899 and 1912 to imposed higher tariffs on spirits with 5s 6d a gallon by 1912.<sup>198</sup> The campaign for abolition of liquor trade to Africa were the native race and liquor traffic committee united committee formed in the late 1880’s and the Aborigines protection society who made it their task to gather masses of information largely relating to the importation of American and European gin, whiskey and brandy into West Africa and it consequence on individuals.<sup>199</sup> These anti-liquor crusaders upon their findings alleged that, the volumes of liquor unloaded by merchants on the coast each year were enormous.<sup>200</sup> Additionally, since the volumes of liquor imported were in large quantities, it had led to regular drinking and intoxication leading to addiction.<sup>201</sup> They also alleged that the consumption of European spirits led to the rise in immorality, crime and violence.<sup>202</sup> Also, regular drinking had reduced large number of men to state of inabilities and laziness which ceased useful commerce and hindered economic development.<sup>203</sup> Aside these, Dumett also mentioned that, other influencing factors such as vocal temperance movements based in Gold Coast and Britain and also Britain’s subscription to

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<sup>194</sup> Felix Ovie Forae, “Prohibition of «illicit» Alcohol in Colonial Nigeria; A study in the Tenacity of Ogor (Local gin) in Urhoboland, Southern Nigeria, 1910-1950,” *International Journal of innovative Research and development* 2(3) (2013), 13-33.

<sup>195</sup> Akyeampong, “What’s in a drink?,” 229.

<sup>196</sup> Forae, “Prohibition of «illicit» Alcohol,” 16.

<sup>197</sup> Akyeampong, “What’s in a drink?,” 229.

<sup>198</sup> Forae, “Prohibition of «illicit» Alcohol,” 17.

<sup>199</sup> Dumett, “The social impact of the European liquor trade on the Akan of Ghana,” 71.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>201</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>202</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>203</sup> *Ibidem.*

international conventions further enhanced the aim to curtail European liquor traffic in Africa.<sup>204</sup>

On the other hand, an indigenous or local temperate existed among the Asante to curtail the consumption of imported liquor and this was led by chiefs and male elders who endorsed the use of alcoholic drinks in religio-cultural framework but stressed on moderation in social drinking.<sup>205</sup> European missionary activities also played a role in embarking on temperate movements. By so doing, 26 missionaries and temperate societies came together to form the Unites Committee for the protection of demoralization of the Native Race by the liquor traffic in the 1880's and was presided over by the Duke of Westminster and chaired by the Bishop of London.<sup>206</sup> However, missionary temperate movements were not uniform in seeking prohibition. For instance, Wesleyan missionaries in 1914 sort for moderation of consumption but not a total prohibition, also, in 1920, other missions such as the Scottish missions and Roman Catholic missions excluded wine and beer from their demand of prohibition.<sup>207</sup> This was associated with some of their doctrines especially the use of alcohol in communion.

From 1928, alliance by the local chiefs, missionaries and educated elites who were part of the legislative council succeeded in pressuring the colonial government to introduce restrictive liquor laws that increased retail license of imported liquor fee from £20 to £60, reduced the hours for the sale of spirits and prescribed the sale of spirits on credit.<sup>208</sup> This action however, reduced the number of license by 52 percent in the first six months of 1929.<sup>209</sup> Temperate movement further achieved positive results in 1930 when a commission of inquiry recommended that importation of gin be gradually abolished by means of progressive reduction in imports over a ten-year period.<sup>210</sup> Therefore, import duty on potable spirit was raised 21.8 percent from 27s 6d in 1928 to 33s 6d in June 1930.<sup>211</sup> As early as 1909, colonial officials expressed concern about the felling of trees for palm wine, with the cheap Dutch rum and gin banned in 1919 at the Saint German convention, there arouse a new form of liquor.<sup>212</sup> This was the illicit production of local gin produced from palm wine or sugar cane. Prior to that,

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<sup>204</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>205</sup> Akyeampong, "What's in a drink?," 218

<sup>206</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>207</sup> *Ibidem*, 219.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>209</sup> Lynn Pan, *Alcohol in Colonial Africa* (Uppasala, 1975), 1-120.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibidem*, 219.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>212</sup> Robins, "Food and Drink," 6.

temperate attempts were made to convince the colonial government to reduce the liquor traffic through the increase on liquor tariffs to deter continuous increase in spirit imports.

Complains about cutting trees for palm wine gained colonial attention after the liquor ban. The acting governor, J.C Maxwell sort for an action in consultation with Britain and Gold Coast staff and experts identified a palm tree belt, hence a forest reserve scheme was proposed.<sup>213</sup> This however called for a legislation making it compulsory on all owners of oil palm groves to reserve a maximum of one third and a minimum of one-fifth of their holdings.<sup>214</sup> In Asante, the commissioner seconded the plan, however, this was because, most of Asante was outside the palm tree belt, but officers in districts with high concentration of oil palm fervently opposed the forest reserve.<sup>215</sup> Vigorous prosecution and the imposition of heavy fines were also meted out to culprit caught in illicit production of *akpeteshie*.<sup>216</sup>

Even though *akpeteshie* was a harmful drink, it became difficult for the colonial government to ban. This was because imported liquor became expensive as a result of the Saint Germain Convention and temperate movement as compared to *akpeteshie* which was much cheaper and lucrative. Also, the international convention regulating liquor traffic to the African colonies limited the extent to which Britain could reduce tariffs on imported liquor. Therefore, the lowest duty under the Saint Germain convention that the colonial government could levy on a gallon of imported gin was 24s in 1936 and this was not adequately low to contend with *akpeteshie*.<sup>217</sup> Furthermore, World War II in 1939 and military demands on shipping space, reduced liquor import into Gold Coast as compared to the huge imports that were first imported into the colony.<sup>218</sup> However, the colonial government considered legalizing *akpeteshie* by revising the Saint Germain convention and sort for consideration on how to legalize illicit gin. Therefore, a proposal was made to legalize illicit production of liquor by the colonial government and this proposal was supported by the district commissioners of Bekwai, Sunyani, Mampong and Kumasi. The district commissioner of Kumasi further commented that:<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>216</sup> Akyeampong, "What's in a drink?," 227.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibidem*, 229.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>219</sup> PRO, Kumasi, ARG1/1/1/262.

*I have the honor to inform you that, I welcome the proposal to legalize the local distillation of spirits, in order that some control may be exercised over the practice which cannot be prevented in this country.*

He further recommended that:

*The method of control, however, as outlined in the proposed legislation, is I think open to criticism. I do not think the Native Authorities and the local Authorities should be empowered to grant licenses to distill and fix the quantities to be distilled, and to prescribe standards of quality. This would I think, put control at too low a level, even allowing for the overriding instructions and limitations which would be imposed by the Chief Commissioner. In my opinion, it is the duty of the Central Government to decide what quantities of spirit should be distilled, as well as imported, in the Gold Coast and to say where it should be distilled, and to prescribe standards of quality. Local courts might be given powers to try cases of breaches of the liquor laws, and Local Authorities should be encouraged to try to prevent illegal distilling...*

Hence, in October 1942 the cabinet accepted in principle for the local distillation of spirit but however maintained that production be done by a government agency. Although, the colonial government approved the private distillation of local gin, distillation by the government remained unresolved because undertaking such an action would be bitterly opposed by missionaries.

### *The Impact of Distilled Liquor on Socio-Cultural Development*

In the Asante kingdom, alcohol was not to be taken lightly because, it served as a means by which the living communicated with the ancestral spirit.<sup>220</sup> It was also believed to bring the living closure to the dead especially when libation was poured to seek or to make a request from their deities.<sup>221</sup> T.C McCaskie on his account dating 1817 provided that, King Osei Tutu Kwame ordered a large quantity of rum to be poured into a brass pan at various part of the town and the crowd passing by would be drinking, however, the day after, normality restored and severe punishment were meted out to those engaged in public drunkenness.<sup>222</sup>

From the early twentieth century urbanization and the growth of the market economy disrupted the socio-cultural framework in which alcohol had traditionally been consumed.<sup>223</sup> The booming economy of 1920 was conducive especially for Kumasi which was located at the peak of the cocoa economy.<sup>224</sup> Young men used

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<sup>220</sup> Paul Nugent, "Modernity, Tradition, and Intoxication: Comparative lessons from South Africa and West Africa," *Past and Present* (2014), 127-145, <http://past.oxfordjournal.org>.

<sup>221</sup> Nugent, "Modernity, Tradition, and Intoxication," 145.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibidem*, 141.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibidem*.

cash earnings from labor and trade to purchase imported alcohol bypassing elites controlled organizations and elders who regulated opportunities to consume alcohol.<sup>225</sup> In addition, the rise of bars and night clubs facilitated the individualistic consumption of alcohol free from the control of elders.<sup>226</sup> The emergence of social classes dominated the scene as the adoption of a European live style made one more “civilized” and elevated one’s status. The emerged modern elite life style in the town provided fertile grounds for social experiment among rural immigrants. Traditional ceremonies incorporated the use of imported liquor in performing certain rites while chiefs and elders required presents of foreign drinks. Dutch gin and schnapps came to be appreciated than palm wine because it signified modernity and portrayed those who were wealthy could afford. Modernity was depicted as an European way of life and palm wine became known as a rural drink and *akpeteshie* though cheap was also regarded as a drink for low-class or commoners who could not afford any better drink.<sup>227</sup>

During World War I, the stationary of foreign troops in towns and the need to entertainment these troops allowed people to brace an elite urban culture in which, European life style drinking bars, dancing, band and comic opera became central.<sup>228</sup> Drinking bars entrenched the concept of leisure space which began in the urban cities but later spread to other towns.<sup>229</sup> These bars served as places where one could purchase tots of alcohol without any restrains, however, this proved to be a threat to the social order because the youth in some situations refused to accept the authority of the chiefs and elders.<sup>230</sup> Bersselaar (2011) argued this general rise in consumer purchasing power occurred alongside a rapid urbanization and this contributed to the gradual decline of colonial and kinship constrains on liquor consumption.<sup>231</sup> A significant point further worth noting was that, large merchant’s firms that used to retail spirits withdrew from retailing and their place was taken by much greater number of smaller African enterprises.<sup>232</sup>

Distilled liquor, whether imported liquor or *akpeteshie*, had a tremendous impact on the socio-cultural development of Asante due to the European influence and life style. Changes in cultural patterns depicted the adoption of a foreign way

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<sup>225</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>226</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>227</sup> Akyeampong, “What’s in a drink?,” 232.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibidem*, 223.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>230</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>231</sup> Dmitri van den Bersselaar, “Who Belong to the Beer «Star People»? Negotiating Beer and Gin Advertisement in West Africa, 1949-75,” *Journal of African History* 52 (3) (2011), 385-408.

<sup>232</sup> Robins, “Food and Drink,” 13.

### *Review of the History of Distilled Liquor and Its Impact on the Kumasi People of Ghana*

of life which undermined the ritual uses of distilled liquor. Moreover, colonial government in the quest to raise funds to administer the colony relied heavily on custom duties on imported liquor and that increased its demand and brought differences between people who drunk fermented alcoholic drinks such as palm wine as well as illegal distilled liquor and the ones who drunk relative expensive branded drinks which were Dutch gin, rum and schnapps.

*Akpeteshie* on the other hand, thrived when temperance interest succeeded in pressing colonial government into raising tariffs on imported liquor in 1930. Even though measures were taken to prohibit illegal distillation it remained unresolved because the colonial government which was Britain had to deal with the world crises of a world- wide economic depression. Therefore, Urban and rural workers' inability to afford imported gin became the patrons of *akpeteshie* which reinforced an emerging popular culture. This new way of life elevated classes in the society where those who could afford the expensive European liquor were branded as middle class and the educated elite and on the other hand the commoners who could afford *akpeteshie* which was cheaper and believed to have the intoxication potency as European whisky, gin, brandy or schnapps.

### *Conclusion*

This section presents a summary of the findings and conclusion based on the data collected in the previous sections. It further highlights the socio-cultural developments that occurred in Kumasi from 1900-1930. Interviews, secondary data and primary data were used to identify the changes that occurred.

It was revealed that, from the early twentieth century, urbanization and the growth of the market economy disrupted the socio-cultural framework in which alcohol had traditionally been consumed. However, distilled liquor came in two forms which were imported liquor and local gin (*akpeteshie*). Imported liquor referred to Dutch gin, schnapps, and rum which were exported from Europe. *Akpeteshie*, however emerged as a result of the increase in prices of imported liquor and temperance movement were made by missionaries and the colonial administration in an attempt to control the African liquor traffic.

Prior to that, palm wine served as the traditional drink in performing traditional rites and alcohol was limited to the consumption of chiefs and elders in the community. Women were not allowed to take in alcohol and the youth were also restrained from drinking. Furthermore, alcohol was massively used for rituals and it was believed to serve as a link between the physical and spiritual world. War deities delighted in rum that was mixed with the blood of human beings or

animals as these sacrifices determined the outcome of wars in the Asante Kingdom. However, the annexation of Gold Coast brought the Asante Empire under British influence and that allowed for some changes in the socio-cultural development of the community. First and foremost, it was revealed that, changes in the socio-cultural development of Kumasi could be associated with the dependency of the colonial government on internal sources to raise funds to administer the colony upon declaring Gold Coast as a British colony. Imported liquor played a major role in financing the colony through the introduction of custom duties. That, prompted large imports of European liquor especial Dutch gin, whiskey and schnapps at a cheap price and hence promoted high patronage. Therefore, liquor duties contributed to almost 40 percent of the colonial government prior to World War I. European liquor were then incorporated into the ritual practices of the community especially with indigenes who lived at the coast.

Secondly, another major change was that, the cheapness of liquor coupled with the cash economy enhanced the purchasing power of the youth. Notable, railway enclaves constructed within the period under review further contributed to the transportation of European liquor into the interior part of Gold Coast of which Kumasi was not an exception. The early twentieth century witnessed diversification in the economy with rapid expansion in the exports of minerals such as gold and commodities such rubber and cocoa. That however, promoted the demand for labor for the development of rural town that were rich in mineral resource hence, the migration of the youth from the rural towns to colonial towns. Associated with this was the cheap nature of Dutch liquor, which promoted a new kind of social drinking contrary to the monopoly played by elders and chiefs in the rural areas. Indigenes became retailers of European liquor and the colonial government received licensed fees to fund the colony. Youthful migrants had the opportunity to earn money after being employed and this allowed them purchase alcohol which was free from any restrains of elders and chiefs.

Another change worth noting was the emergence of social classes as a result of the influence of European culture. European culture depicted a modern way of life which demanded a level of education therefore, individuals who could afford imported liquor were seen to be prestigious and westernized. That led to the development of social classes which could be identified as high class individuals, middle class individuals and individuals of low class who were influence. The high class individuals were people who had received European education and portrayed a western way of life. Some of these people held positions in the legislative council. The middle class on the other hand were people who worked to earn

income and could afford European merchandise and also engage in social drinking, some were young migrants from rural towns who came to seek for jobs in urban areas. Nonetheless, the higher alcoholic content and the cheapness of European liquor at this period account for its increase in popularity among the high class individuals and the middle class. That paved way for modern modes of drinking that was fashioned by the European way of life to slowly spread during the 1920's. *Akpeteshie*, though emerged at the later end of the 1920's encouraged illicit production of gin. Women became culprits of production and the low class or commoners of the society patronized it because it was cheap as compared to the Dutch gin and British whiskey. Interviews however indicated that, local gin received a transformation in relation to its taste. Local spices were added to it to make it appealing, however, the pungent scent and harsh taste made it difficult to receive patronage. Nonetheless, the alcoholic content was believed to measure up to the European liquor and most of all its cheapness encouraged individuals of low class to patronize the drink. This undermined the cultural beliefs of the uses of alcohol since the need for distilled liquor became rampant and people were willing to produce liquor similar to imported liquor.

In addition, Palm wine gradually existed the scene with just a few people who enjoyed it. It was seen as a rural drink and more especially it became the source of producing *akpeteshie*. Farmers decided to turn their palm oil farms into the production of palm wine by cutting them down. Nonetheless, *akpeteshie* portrayed a popular culture as distribution channels were developed in urban towns. It was revealed that, production was done on a large scale in rural towns and transported at night since the colonial administration were strongly against its production. Measures such as payment of court fines and heavy sentences were meted out to culprit by the colonial government to prohibit production. *Akpeteshie* became a debate as to whether it should be legalized because the colonial government realized it was too late to amend various policies especially with the Saint Germain Convention. The government was then faced with legalizing it by regulating production. However, missionary efforts to suppress production disallowed the government from taking the necessary steps. Illicit production of gin significantly posed a challenge to the colonial government because this led to social disorder as people were willing to go against the colonial government amidst the threats from the government. These changes further posed a challenge to the cultural norms of alcohol as women who were expected by tradition to desist from taking alcohol served as producers.

In conclusion, it could clearly be indicated that the consumption of distilled liquor by the people of Kumasi was greatly influenced by colonialization. The use of imported liquor as revenue, the diversification of the economy into a cash economy, the influence of European education and way of drinking, and the migration of the youth greatly undermines the cultural norms and social values of alcohol. The string of kinship structures and traditional constraints that militated against over indulgence and aberrant behaviors were broken. Therefore, changes that occurred in Akan drinking patterns could largely be associated with the consequences of complex interactions between indigenous culture and external forces. Finally, the emergence of *akpeteshie* signified the extent of the impact of distilled liquor on Kumasi as the increased prices of imported liquor led to the production of illicit alcohol.

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