

# Tools, Equipment and Materials Used in the Production of “*Toghu*” Contemporary Fashion and Accessories in the Grassland Region of Cameroon

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## Abstract

The twenty first century contemporary Cameroonian society aligns with a progressive change in aesthetics, fashion and accessories. A good observation of the tools, equipment, and materials use in *Toghu* production is very pertinent in our contemporary Cameroonian society. There is a paramount importance to examine the tools, equipment and materials used in the production of *Toghu*. This arises given the need to identify, analyze and preserve important episteme for future generations. The focus of this article is to elucidate the different modern tools, materials, and equipment used in the production of “*Toghu*” within the contemporary fashion and accessories in the Northwest region, particularly grassland of Cameroon. Our aim is to show how these tools, equipment, and materials aid producers and productivity in the grassland and Cameroon as a Nation. The descriptive research design method will be employed for effective presentation and documentation of data tools and equipment used in *Toghu* production. The efficiency of materials with the various techniques suitable for the mass production of fashion and accessories are explored in this study. Sustainable ways to adapt to the changes of time, recreational patterns with the modification of tools and fashion techniques in combining industrial technology are considered in this article. We shall investigate how the use of tools in *Toghu* production fosters ability and skill development among artisan and young people. The article will contribute to the mastery as well as preservation of traditional craftsmanship with the transmission of knowledge to future generations. The research presents knowledge of some similar tools, equipment, and materials used for the production of cloth and clothing accessories. Equipment such as sewing machines with norms 301, 302, and 504 are

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used for production. Tools like a tape measure printed *Tough* fabric, black velvet fabric, and many other as found in the article are used for the production of contemporary fashion *Toghu* products in Cameroon. Each serves a distinct purpose in the creation of any final product.

## Keywords

*Toghu*, Tools, Equipment, Materials, Production

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## 1. Introduction

The significance of “*Toghu*” extends beyond the aesthetic, symbolic and values, as it also plays a crucial role in the social and economic fabric of the grassland communities in Cameroon. The site Bamenda, also known as the grassland region of Cameroon, is renowned for its vibrant cultural artifacts, which have long been defined by the rich embodied traditions, customs, and artistic expressions that have been evaluated and thrived within these communities from one epoch to another. One striking aspect of this cultural heritage is the traditional clothing known as “*Toghu*” or *Atoghu*, which has become a powerful symbol of identity, cultural heritage and community pride of the Grassland people of Cameroon. “*Toghu*” is a distinctive embroidered garment originated from the Grassland of Cameroon. Traditionally worn by royalty, notables and participants in ceremonial events (Bitoh, 2023). *Toghu* is characterized by its visually striking combination of a deep black velvet base adorned with vibrant, hand-stitched embroidery. The garment’s design typically features bold geometric motifs, including circles, flowers, diamonds, spirals, full moon design, tiger teeth, snake design and star-like figures, often arranged symmetrically to enhance visual rhythm. These motifs are embroidered using brightly coloured thread most commonly yellow, red, white, and green creating a sharp contrast against the rich black background and giving *Toghu* its recognizable regal aesthetic (Alubafi & Kaunda, 2019). “*Toghu*” clothing, with its deep-rooted cultural preservation, is evaluated from the rich embodied fabric right down to the tools, equipment, and materials which need to be documented and preserved for cultural conservation of the people in the grassland region of Cameroon.

The kinds of tools, equipment, and materials used for the production of “*Toghu*” in contemporary fashion and accessories are the main focus of this paper. In spite of increased patronage of fashion, the tools, materials, and equipment for the production of “*Toghu*” clothing are not well known and documented in the grassland region of Cameroon. This article is titled towards an identify of the different modern tools, materials, and equipment used in the production of “*Toghu*” in contemporary fashion and accessories in the grassland region of Cameroon. According to Onyene et al. (2007), the use of accessories in modern machines creates uncommon innovations in fabrics, such as designs that may attract customers based on how they are used for production.

Hegel (2010) emphasized that human activity, including tool use, contributes

to the development of spirit, the embodiment of human culture and understanding. Thus, sewing tools are not used in making garments only but also contributing to a larger cultural narrative. He noted that sewing tools are part of a large system of human activity and cultural development. Hence, the act of using tools in this context alongside the hidden knowledge and sense meaning of tools with the products they recreate all contribute to the progress of human understanding and culture. Clothing and accessories construction require a variety of tools for production. one of the basic main tools for recreating designs on “*Toghu*” clothing is the hand sewing needle, which is used to recreate beautifully embroidered designs on the fabric through the use of open chain stitches.

Bitoh (2017) explained this by saying, other types of stitches found on the *Toghu* clothing include chain stitch, feather stitch, short and long stitch, ladder chain stitch, lazy daisy stitch, running stitch, blanket, coral stitch, and fly stitch, which are used to enhance the beauty of the *Toghu* clothing with the help of a hand sewing needle to create beautiful designs on the *Toghu* clothing or with the use of an embroidery sewing machines. Labanya and Vatsala (2004) added that a sewing hand needle used for hand sewing is a long slender tool with a pointed tip at one end and a hole or an eye to hold the sewing thread. The earliest needles were made of bone or wood, and modern needles are manufactured from high carbon steel wire and are nickel or 18k gold plated for corrosion resistance.

The efficiency of materials and techniques suitable for mass production of fashion and accessories are explored. Sustainable ways to adapt, recreate and modify tools with fashion techniques in combination with industrial technology are considered in this study. Hegel (1983) says philosophy doesn't explicitly address sewing tools as specific objects of analysis. However, his main ideas about technology, human activity, and the development of spirit (culture) can be applied to understand the significance of such tools. He understood technology as a way for humans to realize their purposes and express their understanding of the world. Sewing tools, like other tools, are a means for humans to achieve a practical goal, but they also represent a manifestation of human creativity and cultural development.

Many materials and techniques are experimented with the production of “*Toghu*” in contemporary fashion and accessories in the grassland of Cameroon. Some of these materials and techniques are more appropriate, especially in industrial fashion. Tools such as scissors, measuring tape, needles, French curve, ruler, pen, pencil, tailor's chalk, soap, tensile, tracing wheel, pins, bold marker, seam ripper, eraser, candle wax, carbon paper, and pattern drafting paper, just to name a few, were used for cloth and accessories production in the grassland of Cameroon. Materials such as fiber, sewing thread, synthetic wool threads, black velvet fabric, printed “*Toghu*” fabric, macro-cellular, shoe gum, lining, zips, leather fabric, foam and fibre, feathers, soles, lasts, and ornaments were used for the bags, footwear, and other accessories (Mohammed, 2012). New equipment and tools in clothing application have made clothes making quick and effectively easier in this era than previous ages. New equipment and tools and gadgets are implemented such that we are able to understand the advancements of old equipment and tools.

Mohammed said, several modern tools have made sewing interesting. However, other accessible equipment, like textile machinery suitable for the effective and efficient production of fashion and accessories have facilitated the production of “*Toghu*” in contemporary fashion. The traditional tourism and contemporary fashion shows trade fairs, slow shows, and increased patronage of textiles. This suggests that modern technology such as the use of sewing machines including domestic sewing machines, flat-bed sewing machines, post-industrial sewing machines, shoe lasting machines, shoe bander machines, shoe lasts, manual adjuster machines, and over-lock sewing machines, were used for cloth and accessories production. The increased patronage of textiles suggests that modern technology in the use of sewing machines, will increase efficiency and trigger innovation in the grassland of Cameroon.

However, information about appropriate sewing machines and tools suitable for textile production is limited in the current competitive fashion market. Although interest in fashion has grown, information about the forms, tools, and materials required for quality production is lacking. Reynolds (2002) states that clothing and textiles, which in recent times have undergone innovative transformations with new equipment and tools, make the fashion industry challenging with great prospects. Tools in *Toghu* production are essential for creating intricate designs and patterns, allowing artisans to express cultural narratives and traditional wisdom. They facilitate the meticulous application of motifs, ensuring the aesthetic and symbolic significance of the textile is preserved.

Tools in general enable artisans to incorporate various symbols and motifs that reflect the cultural heritage of the grassland people. They help in conveying messages related to unity, identity, and traditional values through the designs (Azunwena et al., 2022). With the use of specialized tools, it enhances the efficiency of the production process, allowing for more intricate and detailed work. The precision of tools ensure that motifs are applied consistently, maintaining the quality and integrity of the fabric. The use of tools in *Toghu* production fosters skills development among artisans, as they learn to master various techniques. This mastery will contribute to the preservation of traditional craftsmanship and the transfer of knowledge to future generations (Bitoh, 2017). Tools play a crucial role in increasing productivity, which can lead to higher output and potential economic benefits for artisans and their communities.

The availability of modern tools encourages innovation in designs and production methods, blending traditional techniques with contemporary practices. This adaptability helps keep the arts of *Toghu* production relevant in a changing market, appealing to both local and global consumers. Tools play a crucial role in increasing productivity, which can lead to higher output and Pantanal economic benefits for artisans communities, thereby improving production capabilities and enhancing marketability, allowing artisans to reach broader audiences and increase sales. The tools, equipment, and materials are identified in the study. The researcher brings to bear how these tools, equipment, and materials components play a role in the production process *Toghu*.

## 2. Identifying the Tools, Equipment, and Materials Suitable for the Production of Contemporary Fashionable *Toghu* Products

The intricate craft of *Toghu* production in the North West region of Cameroon relies on a diverse option of tools, equipment, and materials, each playing a crucial role in the transformation of plain black velvet, black cotton or black piger, simulated and printed out to *Toghu*, like the Ndop fabric turned into the vibrant and symbolic textile. *Toghu* production in the North West region of Cameroon represents a sophisticated textile tradition, underpinned by the utilization of specialized tools that facilitate the transformation of raw materials into culturally significant garments and accessories. *Toghu* traditional materials are not only mainly used for clothing production alone but have also been utilized for accessories production and other byproducts in the grassland of Cameroon.

On this note, many fashion designers are showing greater interest in the Cameroon fashion industry, thereby using the *Toghu* cloth to create beautiful works of art. According to Hegel (2017), the philosophy of art understood as aesthetic thus has its foundation in more subjective approaches. Aesthetic judgment of beauty understood, involves a reflective movement. Reflective here suggests looking back from the objects to the kind of experience it elicits. The study exposes some similar tools, equipment, and materials used for the production of cloth and clothing accessories. Equipment such as sewing machines with norms 301, 302, and 504 are used for production. Tools like tape measure, printed *Tough* fabric, black velvet fabric, cutting scissors, ruler, hand needle, wool thread, candle wax or soap, tracing wheel, French curve, pins, pencil, bold markers, gum, sewing thread, drafting papers, eraser, seam ripper, and tailor chalk are used for production of contemporary fashion *Toghu* products in Cameroon. Each serves a distinct purpose in the re-creation of any final product.

Juchiewicz (2018) states that tools give human beings the possibility to spare themselves, meaning that humans do not need to be confronted with direct contact with external nature. Tools enable humans to interact with their environment without direct contact, which allows for greater safety and efficiency. Thus, tools enhance our capability and ability to solve problems and meet needs while minimizing risk. Ultimately, tools empower us to navigate and shape our world more effectively. Hegel (2010) analyzes the influences of tools on human culture by indicating labour as the first instrumental human action. Instrumental means of activity are responsible not only for producing artefacts, but also for creating social skills and making differences in the kinds of jobs of human craftsmanship. Juchiewicz (2018) affirms that without material culture and tools, it is not possible to conserve human culture at any level of its development; in this sense, tools are universal, because learning how to use them is the understanding of culture as well. Bitoh (2023) explains that the meticulous process encompasses drafting patterns for both cloth and clothing accessories, cutting, assembling pattern pieces, tracing motifs, marking, sewing, and embellishment, depending on the range of tools, each playing a crucial role in achieving the desired aesthetic character and

functional properties of the final *Toghu* cloth.

### 3. Methodology

The study further adopted a descriptive research design to document and analyse tools, equipment, materials used in *Toghu* production in Cameroon. Data were obtained through field observation, photographs, and review of existing literature, the descriptive approach allowed for systematic identification and classification of traditional and modern implements used in both clothing and accessory production.

#### 3.1. Study Area

Fieldwork was conducted in the grassland region of Cameroon, focusing on the most craft hubs where *Toghu* production is mostly active. Particularly in Bamenda food market, old town, and mile 4 Nkwen which host numerous tailoring workshops, and embroidery centers specializing in both traditional and contemporary *Toghu*. These locations were selected because they are recognized centers of *Toghu* craftsmanship, with accessible artisan network and active markets for both traditional and modern *Toghu* garment.

#### 3.2. Equipment for *Toghu* Production

The incorporation of modern equipment has significantly expanded production capacity and improved efficiency. Commonly used machines include flat-bed sewing machine for joining fabric, overlock machines for edge finishing, and post-industrial machine for footwear and bag production. Specialized equipment such as manual adjusters, bender machines, and shoes last further support accessory production. These innovations not only accelerate output but also make *Toghu* adaptable to diverse contemporary fashion market. As shown in **Figures 1-6** below.

#### 3.3. Sewing Equipment Use in the Production of “*Toghu*” Contemporary Fashion and Accessories in the Grassland of Cameroon



**Figure 1.** Picture of a post-industrial sewing machine use for footwear and bags production.



**Figure 2.** An overlock sewing machine used in finishing.



**Figure 3.** An industrial flatbed sewing machine used in joining two or more pieces of fabric together.



**Figure 4.** Picture of a bender machine use for bending leather fabric together.



**Figure 5.** Footwear manual adjuster machine use for adjusting the sole of the shoe.



**Figure 6.** Foot last use for creating shoe design and lasting of the shoe.

### 3.4. Identification of Materials Used in *Toghu* Production

The materials employed in *Toghu* production combine traditional and industrial elements. Black velvet and Ndop cloth remain foundational fabric for ceremonial and cultural designs, while printed *Toghu* fabrics represent modern industrially produced alternatives. Other materials include synthetic wool threads, leather, zippers, soles, ornament, foam and shoe gum. Together, these materials broaden *Toghu's* application beyond clothing into footwear, handbags, and fashion accessories. As Reynolds (2002) noted, transformations in textile technology often expand possibilities in both production and design, reinforcing the importance of studying material alongside tools and equipment (See Figures 7-11 below).



**Figure 7.** Different colours of yarns used for *Toghu* hand embroidery.



**Figure 8.** Black velvet fabric used for *Toghu* embroidery work.



**Figure 9.** Different designs of printed *Toghu* traditional industrial fabric used in production.



**Figure 10.** A marked out piece of velvet *Toghu* traditional fabric ready for production.



Source: posh magazine (2019).

**Figure 11.** The *Ndop* cloth used for the production of contemporary fashion in Cameroon.

### 3.5. Integration of Tradition and Technology

The blending of traditional craftsmanship and industrial technology defines the evolution of *Toghu* in contemporary contexts. Hand embroidery ensures continuity of cultural symbolism, while modern sewing machine improve speed and precision. This integration fosters innovation, skill development, and economic resilience. Importantly, it demonstrates that cultural authenticity can be preserved while simultaneously adapting to the demands of global fashion markets.

### 3.6. Implications for Artisans and Communities

The findings underscore the socio-economic potential of *Toghu* production. By combining traditional and modern methods, artisans can access broader markets, improve productivity, and increase income while maintaining cultural authenticity. This adaptability strengthens the best resilience of local craft industries contributing unmutes to cultural pride among grassland communities. Moreover, documenting these tools, equipment, and materials safeguarded artisanal knowledge

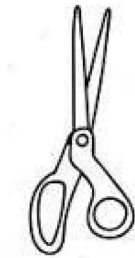
for future generation, addressing the gap noted in previous scholarship.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

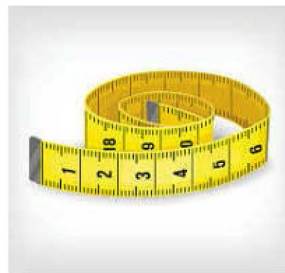
### 4.1. Tools in *Toghu* Production

The study found that a wide range of tools are employed in *Toghu* cloth production in the grassland region of Cameroon, spanning from traditional hand implements to specialized modern industrial machines. Hand needles, scissors, tracing wheel, tailor's chalk, French curves, and pins remain indispensable for embroidery and garment construction. These tools, while simple, are central to the precision and symbolic detail of *Toghu* embroidery. They allow artisans to reproduce culturally significant motifs, thereby sustaining the transmission of heritage through craft. This aligns with Hegel (2010) observation that tools are not only functional instruments but also carriers of cultural spirit and creative expression. As shown in page 11 and 12 below.

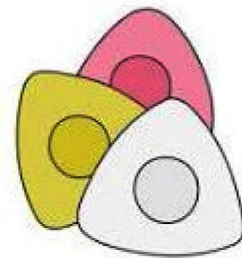
### 4.2. Indentation of Tools Used in *Toghu* Cloth and Accessories Production



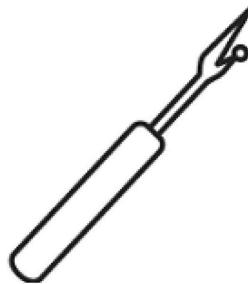
A cutting scissor



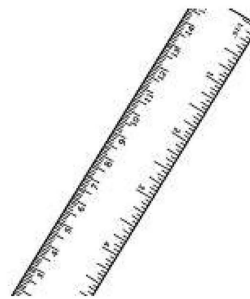
A measuring tape



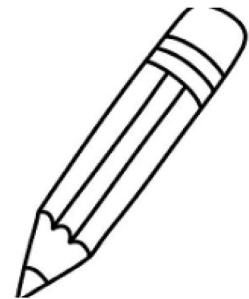
tailor chalk



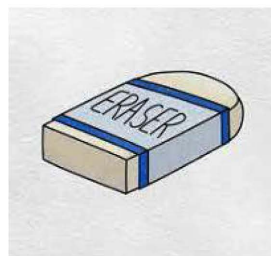
Seam ripper



Ruler



Pencil



Eraser



French curves

INGFORALL.NET



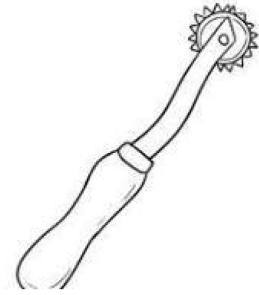
Pen



Thimble



sewing threads



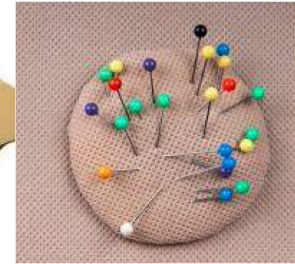
tracing wheel



Hand needle



Cardboard papers



sewing Pins

## 5. Conclusion

We started our write up by explaining the meaning of the term *Toghu* while highlighting the aim of the article to reveal the tools, equipments and materials used in the production of *Toghu* in a contemporary Cameroonian society. At this point, we affirm that similar tools, materials, and equipment are used for the production of cloth and accessories in the North West region of Cameroon. The tools have distinct use and functions in the processes of production for accessories, clothes and textiles. From the findings we realized that it is possible for an individual to progress from different tools, equipment and materials that were identified for the production of contemporary fashion products, as seen through observation and photography. The study revealed that machine tools and equipment are easy to operate and understand in performing their different functions in the production of various fashionable products as realized during the course of production. It certain that, each machine used in the production of *Toghu* plays a significant role in the study. The tools, equipment, and materials examined in the study are capable of producing quality finished products, given the final use of the different *Toghu* cloths and design, combined with creative artisan mastery skills and development.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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