

ANTHROPOLOGICAL  
CONSIDERATIONS OF  
PRODUCTION, EXCHANGE,  
VENDING AND TOURISM

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RESEARCH IN ECONOMIC ANTHROPOLOGY VOLUME 37

**ANTHROPOLOGICAL  
CONSIDERATIONS OF  
PRODUCTION, EXCHANGE,  
VENDING AND TOURISM**

EDITED BY

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Emerald Publishing Limited  
Howard House, Wagon Lane, Bingley BD16 1WA, UK

First edition 2017

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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-78743-195-9 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-78743-194-2 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-78743-240-6 (Epub)

ISSN: 0190-1281 (Series)



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ISO 14001



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# INTRODUCTION: PRODUCTION, EXCHANGE, VENDING, AND TOURISM

Volume 37 of *Research in Economic Anthropology* consists of four different sections, each reflecting one thematic element of the volume's title: production, exchange, vending, and tourism. Eleven original articles, each of which passed a rigorous peer review, fill the pages of the volume. Indeed, without the generous assistance of many anonymous referees (busy researchers themselves) *REA* would not have been able to reach the age of 39. Nor would it have the reputation for quality articles in (and relating to) economic anthropology that it has today. Therefore, before introducing this volume I would like to thank the 81 researchers who kindly served as referees for volumes 34, 35, and 36.

In alphabetical order, they are: Dave Abler, Galit Ailon, Maria De Lourdes Alcantara, Stephen Aldrich, Aaron Ansell, Greg Bankoff, Peggy Barlett, Jessica Barnes, Christine Beil, Lucas Bessire, Caroline Brettell, Jorge Carrillo, Janice Chernela, Andrew Chesnut, Joon Nak Choi, Edward Chuma, Martha Angeles Constantino, Erin Coughlan, Michael Cusumano, Geert De Neve, Cheryl Doss, Malcolm Dow, Rohan D'Souza, Thomas Dunk, Gary Feinman, Edward Fischer, James Fisher, Wiebke Foerch, William Garriott, Kathryn Goldfarb, Andres Gramajo, David Groenfeldt, Michelle Hegmon, Stefanie Herrmann, Lee Hoffer, Carter Hunt, Jerry Jacka, Ulrich Jürgens, Alice Kehoe, Henry Kinnucan, Gina Koczberski, Peter Konijn, Rena Lederman, Carolyn Lesorogol, Jerome Levi, Claire Loussouarn, Sarah Mars, Robert Marzec, Hirokazu Miyazaki, Brian Moeran, Kim Møller, Daniel Murphy, Benjamin Orlove, Tommaso Pardi, Kyeyoung Park, Angus Phillips, Aaron Pitluck, Christine Quittkat, Annika Rabo, Anthony Rausch, Maureen Reed, John Renshaw, Susan Russell, Beken Saatçioğlu, Ikuya Sato, Bettina Schmidt, Mallika Shakya, Robert Shepherd, Brian Silverstein, Patricia Sloan-White, Alex Stewart, David Stoll, Amy Todd, Dan van der Horst, Soumhya Venkatesan, Casey Walsh, Travis Wendel, Bruce Whitehouse, Tanja Winther, Emily Yeh, and Christian Zlolniski.

Part I of this volume, which focuses on production, is comprised of three chapters. In the first, Edwins Gwako examines the (illegal) culture of homebrewing, and selling, of beer among Maragoli women (and its consumption by men) in western Kenya. Importantly, through a quantitative survey approach backed by ethnographic data, he looks beyond the many obvious negative facets of this deeply embedded practice in an attempt to better understand

women's incentives for engaging in the production of such homemade beverages (which often contain highly questionable ingredients). Although it might seem that women brewers are perpetuating their own persecution by creating substances that tend to promote acts of violence against them, they appear as rational actors who are actively working to escape from poverty while seeking empowerment and protection from persecution and violence for themselves and their children. Gwako's findings call for increased social and legal protection for the women of the society.

Next, Deborah Sick reports on some discoveries from her own long-term ethnographic research on smallholder farmers in a rural part of Costa Rica. She finds that, although such small-scale producers have often been considered "problematic" by planners and "destined for extinction" by many others, producers in her research area have demonstrated a surprising degree of resilience, achieved partly through diversification strategies. The main crop of concern here is coffee, which, like the homemade alcohol churned out by the women subjects of the previous chapter, has had a variety of effects on the producers' lives. Interestingly, the recent income diversification that Sick finds is marked not by an increase in migration but by a decrease. Overall, regional pull factors emerge as the primary forces behind the changes that Sick identifies here. Rounding out the first part of this volume is Serge Svizzero's analysis of the prehistoric transitions to agriculture that ultimately gave rise to the smallholder production (indeed, all farm production) that was the focus of the preceding chapter. Like Sick's chapter, the focus here is on pull factors — those that compelled people to start to settle down and grow their own food. Notably, Svizzero argues against a push–pull model dichotomy, and for his hypothesis that the transitions to agriculture that marked the Neolithic Revolution are most likely to have occurred among complex hunter–gatherer societies occupying fertile, plentiful terrains.

The second part of this volume concentrates on exchange — a theme that actually applies in one way or another to most of the chapters in the collection. However, exchange is at the center of consideration for the authors of the four chapters here. Like the chapter that served to close Part I, the first chapter is an archaeological study. In it, Kathryn Hudson and John Henderson examine relationships between long-distance trade and centralized political organization in pre-Columbian American societies, arguing that the former was able to thrive in the absence of the latter in multiple instances over a very large span of time and distance. Theirs is, in part, an effort to move research on ancient American societies further away from lingering influences of Karl Polanyi and his associates on the field — specifically, from a focus on states and related institutions and toward greater illumination of the peculiar features of individual economies.

The next two chapters of this part of the volume share a concern with the elucidation of a specific market. The first, authored by Laurel Zwissler and grounded in ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Toronto and Pennsylvania,

takes a critical look at fair-trade retailer Ten Thousand Villages and seeks to understand a clash of value systems which would seem to be inherent in any business that is built upon concepts of benevolence, assistance, and mutual aid. The chapter brings to mind volume 28 of *REA*, which was very much concerned with fair trade. Here, Zwissler explores a “middle ground” between producers and buyers – the shop floor, where employees struggle to sell goods in a “fair” manner. Dilemmas (i.e., fairness vs. profits) abound, and call for constant negotiation (and re-negotiation). Next, Lisa Beiswenger and Jeff Cohen take a close look at a more bounded, more easily-defined market – one that occupies a specific physical space: North Market in Columbus, Ohio. Combining qualitative and quantitative analysis, they explore the functions of this marketplace, which of course include provisioning. However, there is so much more. Beiswenger and Cohen’s chapter shows one example of how public markets in the United States are adapting to suit the times and survive amidst the expansion of national chains by going far beyond the limitations of their original purpose.

In the final chapter of Part II, Rodolfo Maggio explores balancing acts in a suburb of Honiara, Solomon Islands – not circus tricks or street performances, but individual navigations between social relations and market transactions amidst conditions of scarcity. These transactions, as Maggio shows, are not only capable of damaging social (including kin) ties, but also can create new ties and relationships. What happens in Honiara household trade stores, especially regarding *kaon*, seems worthy of much greater attention.

Part III focuses on vendors and their activities – a topic that has been taken up in the pages of *REA* a number of times in the past. First, Shuru Zhong and Hongyang Di take a close look at street vendors in the city of Sanya, southern China (on Hainan Island). Despite Sanya’s geographic distance from China’s capital, the impacts of government policy are unmistakable here – vendors were unwelcome during the socialist era because of the capitalist undertones of their activities, and they are still persecuted today because of social stigmas and the idea that they are not “modern.” Yet, they persist for a variety of reasons. Zhong and Di’s research helps us to understand why this is true. Policymakers would be wise to pay more attention to their findings if they truly want to improve life for all residents of Sanya and so many other such cities of the world. The second chapter here, by Tamar Wilson, focuses on different vendors in a very different environment – Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, at the southern tip of Baja California. Once again, we meet vendors who have been very much at the mercy of state policy; many of the actors in Wilson’s study were pushed out of agriculture due to Mexico’s involvement in international trade agreements such as NAFTA, environmental degradation (that might have been prevented by better regulation), and a general lack of public support for peasants. The resilience of these vendors, most of whom apparently wanted to return to farming if possible, is another common theme between this and the preceding

chapter. Again, policymakers are advised to pay more attention to Wilson's research, and to others like it.

Part IV wraps up this volume with two investigations of tourism situations. First, Riddhi Bhandari looks at tourism in Agra, India, which feeds voraciously on cash brought in by millions of people who flock there annually to view the Taj Mahal. She traces commercial relationships between capitalists and tour guides which also envelop tourists and which are full of risk but loaded with opportunity at the same time. Debt is managed in ways that are designed to keep the guides under control, but this is hard to achieve. A fine line – one between securing tourists' business and angering them – must be walked in this complicated network of relationships. Next, Lauren Johnson investigates the impacts of female sex tourism in Jamaica, a country marked by high levels of economic dependence on tourism and of unemployment. This, added to Jamaica's proximity to the United States and several other wealthy countries, makes for a situation loaded with opportunities but also with considerable risk. Men involved in this relatively un-stigmatized trade can earn much through their resilience, but they take the chance of viral (and other) infections – including HIV. It goes without saying that the state has tried to address these problems, but at the same time Jamaica needs tourism, and so it cannot risk hampering the industry. It is hoped that Johnson's ethnographic exploration of the situation will at least help guide local initiatives to improve the situation.

In sum, volume 37 of *REA* continues the series' nearly four-decade-long quest to shed light on the intersections of culture/society and economy – simply put, to better understand, anthropologically, human economic behavior – through investigations of the four key themes of production, exchange, vending, and tourism. The next two volumes of *REA*, which are intended to focus on morality in price-setting and on vulnerability, will likely both be published during its 40th anniversary year. Looking beyond, the series will continue seeking new ground for anthropological exploration. As editor, I would like to once again thank all the busy researchers who gave their precious time to serve as anonymous referees, and also those who have contributed articles to the series, for *REA* would not be what it is today without their efforts.

Donald C. Wood  
*Editor*

**PART I**  
**PRODUCTION**

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# CULTURAL ECONOMICS AND RAMIFICATIONS OF HOME-BREWING, SELLING AND CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL AMONG THE MARAGOLI OF WESTERN KENYA

Edwins Laban Moogi Gwako

## ABSTRACT

*Purpose – This longitudinally informed ethnographic work explores the interlocking socioeconomic and cultural roles, changes as well as effects of home-brewed alcoholic beverages in Maragoli society of western Kenya. The informants' emic perspectives enhance existing knowledge and understanding of the commodification of home-brewing of alcohol. The participants' experientially anchored views provide refined insights into how home-brews are influenced by the disintegration of livelihoods and women brewers' need to earn money independently from men's income to meet their financial needs. This work also documents alcohol-related maladaptive aspects including men's misappropriation of funds, malnutrition, domestic violence, sexual promiscuity, rape, prostitution, and disposal of agricultural inputs and produce to obtain money to buy brews.*

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**Anthropological Considerations of Production, Exchange, Vending and Tourism**  
**Research in Economic Anthropology, Volume 37, 3–32**  
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**ISSN: 0190-1281/doi:10.1108/S0190-128120170000037002**

**Methodology/approach** – *This study used a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods to enhance data quality, validity, reliability, and deep learning of the dynamics and ramifications of home-brewing of alcoholic products.*

**Findings** – *This study’s empirical results show Maragoli brewers’ ingenuity in their risk-averse efforts to: (1) optimize positive benefits and (2) reduce the unintended maladaptive consequences of home-brews.*

**Practical implications** – *This work demonstrates that brewers are not passive victims of their productive resource constraints. They exercise ingenuity in producing and selling alcoholic beverages to earn a living even though this venture generates unintended harmful outcomes. This calls for interventions by governmental arms, nongovernmental organizations, and community-based support networks to empower brewers and their clientele to venture into alternative enterprises and consumption of less harmful refreshments. Safety-nets should also be in place to minimize vulnerability and social fragmentation attributable to home-brewed alcohol.*

**Keywords:** Maragoli; ramifications of home-brews; gender roles; women’s ingenuity; risk-averse; Kenya

## INTRODUCTION

The brewing of indigenous beer in African societies, fermented mostly from sorghum or millet, was once local but is increasingly big business (Ross, 2013). BBC News (2005) highlights that local brews can provide much-needed money for poor families in Africa. The work of Maoura and Pourquie (2009) documents the nutritional value and impact upon human health. The commodification of home-brews in Africa recirculates wealth from men consumers to women brewers (Colson & Scudder, 1988; Dancause, Akol, & Gray, 2010; Dietler, 2006). Maula (1997) and Dancause et al. (2010, p. 1124) assert that “women adopt beer sales in response both to the appeal of participating in a business venture (‘pull’ factors) as well as to social or environmental pressures that necessitate earning extra income (‘push’ factors).”

Heath (1987) argues that “anthropological data, methods, and concepts have contributed significantly over many years to our understanding of the interactions between alcohol and the human animal” (p. 99). The production and use of home-brewed alcoholic beverages have received significant attention from socio-cultural anthropologists (Carlson, 1990, 1992; Dancause et al., 2010; Dietler, 2006; Holtzman, 2001; Karp, 1980; Kutalek, 2011; McAllister, 2003; Myhre, 2015; Netting, 1964; Roberts, 2000; Sangree, 1962; Subbo, 2001; Suggs, 1996;

Willis, 2001, 2002, 2010). In many societies in Kenya, “beer was brewed for community celebrations and rituals, and on occasion people got drunk, but not as an end in itself or to forget the pressures of daily life” (Sobania, 2003, p. 8). Alcohol brewing and consumption is measure that has been adopted by individuals in the face of collapsing livelihoods and, especially, women’s need to earn money independently from male income (Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis, 2006; Kutalek, 2011; Verma, 2001).

Among the Maragoli, *amatwa* (home-brewed beer also called *amalwa* in the larger Luyia subethnic groups) is one of the diverse income-generating activities in which women engage in order to meet their monetary requirements (Verma, 2001). However, a strong patrilineal structure limits the independence and enterprise of women in this society (Weisner & Abbott, 1977). Evidence suggests a relationship between alcohol and violence, and even documents that alcohol plays a role in causing violent and aggressive responses (Mutongi, 2007, p. 114; Parker & McCaffree, 2013).

The longitudinal ethnographic data collected from the Maragoli is used to examine how brewing, selling, consumption, and availability of beer influence people’s daily lives and endeavors. The chapter’s emphasis is on the lived and observed experiences of the study participants pertaining to beer activities, behaviors, ramifications, and multilayered strategies that are employed to minimize detrimental effects of beer consumption. In this regard, this study presents a historical and cultural background on the nature of indigenous use of beer as a prelude to gaining a contextualized understanding of multiple dimensions of alcohol brewing among the Maragoli.

## **BEER BREWING IN THE INDIGENOUS MARAGOLI SOCIETY**

Several studies have explored the brewing and use of home-brews in Kenya (Ambler, 1988, 1991; Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis, 2006; Bradley, 1995; Holtzman, 2001; Karp, 1978, 1980; Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990; Levine & Levine, 1977; Levine et al., 1994; Levine, 1982; Orvis, 1997; Osogo, 1966; Roberts, 2000; Sangree, 1962; Sobania, 2003; Subbo, 2001; Wagner, 1949). Ambler (1991) found that “No child was initiated, no marriage was arranged, no planting or harvesting begun, no important case decided without preparation, consumption or offering beer” (p. 166). Home-brewed beer was/is made from maize, millet, or sorghum and virtually any fruit, grain, or vegetable, which will ferment can be transformed into an alcoholic beverage. Tiriki women brewed beer for their menfolk’s beer parties, which were an integral part of initiated male sociability, and also of the initiation feasts. The women, however, were never included in the parties (Sangree, 1965).

Beer dominated every social aspect of the indigenous Maragoli way of life. Beer was not simply brewed for commercial purposes. Women brewed maize, millet, and sorghum beer and prepared locally distilled liquor by the natural process of fermentation (Were & Wilson, 1987). Heath (1987) notes that the act of brewing and actual use of local brew symbolized an enormous range of things among the Maragoli. The brewing and drinking of home-made beer had social and ritual relevance which Karp (1980) calls “the role of beer as a mediating symbol” (p. 116). Such a role included various occasions for observing ancestral cults involving supplications and offerings. Occasions for ritual undertakings were very important and all initiated adults were required to participate and to refrain from working in their gardens during the ritual period (Wagner, 1955, pp. 52–53).

Ancestors in Kenyan societies were not worshipped, but they were revered and understood as being able to play an active part in everyday lives of the living (Sobania, 2003). Maragoli people congregated at Mung’oma caves to observe *ovwali* (ritual fire in Maragoli) ceremony twice a year to seek blessings of their ancestors in agricultural activities (Bulimo, 2013). Regular offerings of gifts, libations, and sacrifices were conducted at three levels, namely, family, clan, and locality (society); each homestead had a small hut for these observances. Special ancestral stones were placed inside the hut, and before any beer was drunk in the homestead a little of it was poured on those stones and whenever they made a sacrifice some blood was sprinkled on those stones (Osogo, 1966, p. 143; Sangree, 1962; Sobania, 2003, pp. 34–35). This was important because it was believed that the *ekigingi* (spirits of the family ancestors) needed this food to eat, and would be displeased if not remembered on these special religious occasions. Kilbride and Kilbride (1990) observe that among the Luyia, ancestors, or spirits of the dead people are thought to play a significant role among the living. The *ekigingi* (spirits of the dead) provide warnings, often through dreams, about the proper course of action to avoid difficulty or to endure laborious activities, such as farming (Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990).

In the indigenous Maragoli society, brewing and use of beer was entrenched in religious, social, economic, and political rationalizations. For example, libations and sacrifices affirmed the continuity of the line of descent and ensured the ancestors’ support, protection, and spiritual potency, optimized productivity of diverse resources, and fundamentally, the health of the family, and the fertility of the wife or wives (Bulimo, 2013; Carlson, 1990; Were & Wilson, 1987). The Maragoli had a “habit of making sacrifices to ancestors in the event of illness” (Mutongi, 2007, p. 49). Before anyone partook of the first alcohol brewed from the new crop, an alcohol pot of the spirits was placed at the *siro* (king post) of the hut for an overnight stay to receive ancestral blessings (Bulimo, 2013). As Carlson (1990) observes, “... offerings and sacrifices presented to ancestors or gods is a means of recognizing their nearness and expressing the interdependence between two domains that are separated by a maximal status of difference” (p. 307).

Although beer was used to mediate between the spheres of the people's everyday life and the ancestral world, excessive drunkenness, violence, and destructiveness were never tolerated by the Maragoli; in fact, they even condemned such behavior. Moreover, such socially unacceptable behavior annoyed other well-behaved elders, and, in most cases, often resulting in the casting of curses upon ill-behaved persons. Thus, the Maragoli had societal morals and ethics which regulated drinking. The youth were not allowed to drink, as they were expected to herd livestock and continue training as soldiers to protect their society against external aggression (Were & Wilson, 1987, p. 51). Young married men who had no initiated children were only passively allowed to consume beer because drinking was considered the preserve of the elders.

Home-made beer was consumed during negotiations between clans for exchange of bride wealth to formalize marriages with the import of sanctifying the "new bond between families and lineages" (Ambler, 1991, p. 166). In this regard, the consumption of beer "gave symbolic weight to such deliberations" (Ambler, 1991, p. 166), which included, but not limited to, arbitrating, or resolving disputes (peacemaking ceremonies), making decisions pertaining to land, property damage, delinquent bride wealth payments, divorce settlements, assault, warfare, adultery, rape, incest, premarital pregnancy, and lifting curses. Typically, the spilling of a little beer occurred at the beginning of an assembly of elders who convened together to discuss community events and issues. Occasional invitations of Maragoli age-mates for a beer party provided opportunities to consume large quantities of home-brews. These instances reflected the household heads' organizational abilities to access and accumulate enormous amounts of ingredients and mobilize labor required to prepare large volumes of beer. Consumption was very often a male activity that brought together elders and other-initiated men who ate food and imbibed as neighbors from a single beer pot using special *zinjeke* (long straws) made from climber shrubs that grew naturally in the bushes. This display of wealth earned men considerable social respect in society.

Brewing and drinking of beer was used to mobilize work parties to complete specific agricultural or house building tasks, as a refreshment, or as opportunities for village elders to relax, after performing responsibilities bestowed upon them by their society (Levine, 1962; Orvis, 1997; Sangree, 1962; Subbo, 2001). Beer parties marked the completion of the grass thatching of a new house, agricultural task; housewarming parties were held before moving into a new homestead. Such occasions involved the sprinkling of beer across the compound to honor and welcome the presence of the ancestors into the new home while at the same time imploring them to bless the new residence.

Beer consumption was also integral to the welcoming, blessing, and naming of newborn members of society and their initiation into full adult status through circumcision (Osogo, 1966). A child was given an ancestral name during the first ancestral offering (Bulimo, 2013). Olenyo (2011) observes that "Nearly all Lulogooli [Maragoli] personal names have a denotative meaning,

The naming of the children and members of the community is therefore an important occasion, which is often marked by ceremonies in the community” (p. 212). Some names were gradually rejected because their holders had “been associated with societal vices such as: murder, suicide, drunkardness, divorce, alcoholism, robbery and so on” (Olenyo, 2011, p. 216).

Alcohol was also used during burials and other ritualistic ceremonies. Provision of beer to men digging a grave sustained their morale, work ethic, and teamwork (Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990). A significant percentage of mourners also consumed locally brewed beer and, thereafter, danced and threw their shoulders about to allay the grief of the parents and soothe the spirits of the buried member of the society (Osogo, 1966). Sangree (1962) writes that “when a man of property dies, a beer-drinking post-funeral meeting of the lineage and neighborhood was held to honor his memory and settle his estate” (p. 12). Thus, brewing and consumption of beer was a core aspect of the Luyia subethnic groups. The subsequent discussion focuses on the demographic and socioeconomic description of the Maragoli research setting.

## **STUDY SITE DESCRIPTION, RESEARCH APPROACH, AND METHODS**

This chapter draws on a longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork among the Maragoli of western Kenya from July 1995 through December 1996, and July to December 2007. The Maragoli are “horticulturalists who intercrop a variety of grains, trees, roots and vegetables, and who keep some cattle for milk, meat, and bride wealth” (Bradley, 1995, p. 161). High population density and declining land holdings have forced many Maragoli off the land in search of better economic fortunes (Gwako, 2014).

The researcher contacted the administrative officers in the area to obtain basic background information necessary for identifying a research site with representative characteristics of western Kenya, and to enlist their support in compiling a sampling frame of all households in the area. Thereafter, random sampling techniques were used to draw a random sample for detailed investigation of the production, use, and ramifications of home-brews.

Questions pertaining to brewing and drinking of beer were asked to only 53 households with confirmed history of indulgence in production, sell, and/or consumption of home-brewed beer. A total of 23 households, which engaged in brewing beer for commercial purposes, were subjected to in-depth interviews. The research team also conducted focus group discussions with four active women’s groups in the area. Thirty-four key informants provided more data on the dynamics of home-brews in their society.

Multiple data collection methods were employed to enhance holistic deep learning and understanding of home-brew dynamics by adding layers of

information and using one type of data to validate or refine another (Reinharz, 1992). These methods included participant observation, detached observation, close- and open-ended standard questionnaire interviews, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. Survey questionnaires were designed, pretested, and revised to improve reliability and validity (King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994; Kirk & Miller, 1986).

Qualitative data were obtained from focus group discussions with members of four active women's groups, in-depth interviews with elderly cultural experts, and participant observations. Focus group discussions were used as a friendly and respectful research method to obtain qualitative data and to engage discussants in debates on sensitive issues, such as rape, domestic violence, and decision-making processes (Morgan & Krueger, 1993). More data were compiled from archival documents, participant and detached observation in dispute resolution meetings, weddings, child naming rituals, circumcision ceremonies, and funeral rites. These culturally contextualized events yielded data and availed numerous opportunities for witnessing the unfolding of multidimensional and interlocking ramifications of home-brews. The results of this study are presented and discussed in the subsequent parts of this chapter.

## **BREWING AND CONSUMPTION OF BEER IN CONTEMPORARY MARAGOLI SOCIETY**

The results of this study confirm widespread brewing and consumption of beer in the study area. As shown in Table 1, there are persisting and emerging new trends in the production and use of beer among the Maragoli. The percentages in Table 1 and in all subsequent tables were calculated from a sample size of 76 women interviewees who provided multiple responses to open-ended questions. The results of this study indicate Maragoli people's continued use of beer to initiate, discuss, and formalize marriage arrangements in their social world. Nearly 97 percent of the study participants reported this persisting use of home-brews as a typical behavior among elderly male members of the society involved in marriage deliberations. They drink beer to cool off after heated bride wealth payment negotiations. Elders involved in such negotiations take intermittent breaks to drink beer to rethink serious issues raised in their deliberations. Data obtained from in-depth interviews affirmed that intermittent breaks in marriage negotiations are used to reevaluate the broad implications of the conclusions of the deliberations on the parents, extended families, and individuals getting married.

Beer plays a significant role in Maragoli funeral rites. It is consumed after an individual is pronounced dead and during the mourning period. This was reported to be the case by about 93 percent of the interviewees who indicated that the elderly men who convened in the homesteads of the deceased

**Table 1.** Persistence and Change in Brewing and Consumption of Home-Made Beer.

Aspects Reported	Frequency of Mentioning	Percentages
<i>Persistent indigenous dimensions of beer</i>		
Used during marriage arrangements	4	97.3
Used during funerals and burials	71	93.4
Women are main brewers	68	89.5
Used during initiation ceremonies	67	88.1
Used in ancestral worship and sacrifice	64	84.2
Used during peace-making ceremonies	64	84.2
Used for mobilization of work groups	62	81.6
Some elders still organize beer parties	60	78.9
Serves as leisure activity	56	73.7
<i>New dimensions of beer</i>		
Brewing and drinking is highly commodified	75	98.7
More youths drink	73	96.0
Men indulge in commercial brewing	71	93.4
Brewing and drinking of local beer is illegal	69	90.8
Brewing involves adding addiction enhancements	66	86.8
Mobilization of labor requires more than beer brewing	64	84.2
Christians do not allow use of beer in funerals and burials	61	80.2
Some people indulge in drinking as if it is a career	59	77.6
Declining role in marriage arrangements	56	73.7
Declining role in peacemaking ceremonies	30	39.5
Declining role in ancestral worship and sacrifices	25	32.9
Consumption is more frequently associated with violence	24	31.6
More fund-raising and fewer beer parties nowadays	21	27.6

person(s), preferred to drink beer as they made burial arrangements. During the burial ceremony, the grave is dug in the early hours of the morning by men who “take turns digging and while at rest drink beer, which has been provided by the host family” (Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990, p. 101). As Belliard (2011) asserts, beer gives force and strength and is very helpful for working faster.

Nowadays, the burial date is typically announced in advance over the radio and in the daily newspapers. Funerals are usually attended by huge crowds of relatives, colleagues, and friends who make donations of money and foodstuffs for use during the mourning period. The donations are mostly used to buy food, kerosene for lanterns, and to offset hospitalization and funeral expenses.



However, in-depth interviews and participant observations revealed that a significant proportion of the donated cash is spent on purchasing beer for those who hang around to keep the bereaved family company.

The findings indicate that Maragoli women are still the main brewers as per the articulations of nearly 89 percent of the study participants. Beer brewing was mostly the preserve of women in indigenous sociocultural settings (Sangree, 1965). This is no longer the case because men, as reported by about 93 percent of the respondents, have ventured into this activity due to the fast cash generated from it. Most of the female brewers argued that given their low educational levels, they find brewing an excellent strategy for generating income, because it only requires minimal initial capital outlay and yields quick cash returns. Brewing does not require specialized skills, and with the readily available ingredients, as well as a guaranteed ready market, women brewers find it a fast and convenient income-generating activity.

Women brewers have direct access to cash from beer-brewing activities, but their husbands and/or male relatives can demand a share of these earnings (Holmboe-Ottesen & Wandel, 1991). Overall, home-brews allow women to earn money independently from male income, an aspect that has received less significant scholarly attention (Holtzman, 2001). King and Burgess (1993) and Kutalek (2011) document that if women earn money, the nutritious standards of their family members improve because they prioritize food than men do, and are more likely to invest earned cash in their children's education.

Social and cultural practices, such as initiation rites, ancestral veneration, sacrifices, and libations, influence brewing and drinking in Maragoli society as indicated by approximately 88 percent of the study participants. Male circumcision is one of the practices associated with high levels of activity, beer brewing, and consumption. Bulimo (2013) and Wagner (1949) provide a detailed description of this highly regarded occasion that brings Maragoli people together to celebrate the elevation of the male members into higher status. Although a significantly lower amount of beer is consumed nowadays, as compared to the time Wagner conducted his fieldwork, home-brews remain an important aspect of what brings the Maragoli people together to mark this rite of passage. About 84 percent of the study participants also indicated a persisting influence of sociocultural practices in the contemporary use of alcohol in ancestral veneration and sacrifice. This is particularly the case among the conservative elderly members who believe that the ancestors and *wele* (god) will not be at peace with them unless they are offered some beer to drink. These conservatives hold the view that failure to give beer offerings to ancestors and god will unleash their wrath and misfortune on the individuals, their families, clans, or the entire society.

Nearly 84 percent of the study participants reported that brewing and consumption of beer is still used during peacemaking ceremonies organized by the council of village elders to reconcile individuals, families, and clans experiencing conflicts or strained relations. Thereafter, participants drink

together from one beer pot using long straws to revitalize and reinforce kinship and group solidarity. Several informants indicated that persons who drink together immediately after being reconciled heal faster from the wounds of their past unpleasant experiences.

The Maragoli still use beer to mobilize work groups as per the testimony of approximately 82 percent of the study participants. This is viewed as a cost-effective way of accomplishing tasks including land preparation, weeding, plucking tea, and building a house. Typically, only very close friends agree to such an arrangement as most people prefer cash payments as observed by about 84 percent of the interviewees. It was noted that mobilization of labor requires more than the brewing of beer “as an incentive for kin to engage in labor parties” (Suggs, 1996, p. 598). On this same subject, Suda (1996) writes that “relatives who may be willing and able to help with household and farm work are increasingly beginning to expect to be paid in cash and rarely in kind” (p. 79).

The interviewed women also indicated that some of the elderly male members of the society continue to organize occasional beer parties which are usually attended by their peers. This was reported by nearly 79 percent of the study participants who noted that it brings elderly age-mates together to socialize and reflect upon the changing dynamics of their society. In fact, some of the elders viewed beer drinking as their main form of leisure activity and a major avenue for establishing and reinforcing trusting friendship transcending other social obligations. It is, therefore, not surprising that nearly 74 percent of the study respondents indicated that the brewing and consumption of beer continues to serve as a leisure activity among the rural elderly residents experiencing fewer recreational options.

Kratz (1994) notes that “any practice that constitutes and carries the force of tradition has considerable scope for individuality and change as well” (p. 291). This is evident in Maragoli where older members clearly recognize changes in the production and use of home-brews. Beer brewing has become a commercialized activity, as illustrated by the responses of close 99 percent of the study participants. Ambler (1991) noted a similar trend among the Kikuyu who increasingly viewed beer “as a commodity” (p. 178). Home brewing of alcohol is a demand-driven activity that produces a commodity which is mostly “marketed as a drink to be drunk for drinking sake” (Suggs, 1996, p. 599). Brewing as an increasing economic activity attracts both men and women’s involvement as per the testimony of about 93 percent of the sample.

The increasing commodification of beer-brewing evident in Maragoli society has been noted in other communities in Kenya (Roberts, 2000; Subbo, 2001; Willis, 2002). Because of commodification, alcohol consumption among the Maragoli is no longer the preserve of the elderly. As observed by 96 percent of the respondents, the youth are more frequently involved in drinking due to the commercialization of alcohol. Most of the youth have intermittent access to money earned from engagements in the rapidly spreading cash economy.

Consequently, the indulgence of the Maragoli youth in drinking is a privilege they have earned through the penetration of the cash economy.

As reported by approximately 98 percent of the respondents, the Kenya's laws prohibit the brewing and drinking of beer. However, production, sale, and consumption of beer is widely practiced in both rural and urban areas. This can be attributed to weak legal policing and failure to enforce laws against home-brews by corrupt officers who are either consumers, brewers, or sellers of the same. In most cases, the law enforcement officers accept bribes (in cash and kind) to turn a blind-eye to illegal brewing, selling, and consumption of home-brews.

Brewing increasingly involves the addition of liquid chemicals and other elements extracted from opium and dry battery cells. Approximately, 87 percent of the respondents indicated that the addition of these elements enhances addiction to sustain a steady flow of cash-paying customers. Ethnographic investigation in Maragoli confirmed that addicted individuals indulge in regular and predictable use of alcohol. About 78 percent of the study participants noted that beer drinking itself is tantamount to a career. In some cases, alcoholics end up being nuisances by engaging in violent acts, causing inconveniences to other people as per the observations of nearly 32 percent of the sample. Such behavior is a contributing factor to the prohibition of the consumption of alcoholic beverages during funerals and burials of deceased devoted Christians, as observed by about 80 percent of the subjects. Nearly 74 percent of the study participants also indicated that devoted Christians prefer their children to get married in church weddings because the consumption of alcohol is highly discouraged in such contexts.

Nearly 39 percent of the sample noted that the centrality of beer libations in invoking ancestral moral guardians in peacemaking ceremonies is disintegrating as an increasing number of individuals prefer resolving their problems through the Kenya government's formal judiciary system. Almost 33 percent of the interviewees also reported a decrease in the role of beer in ritual and ancestral recognition. Sangree (1962) notes that "a mystical attitude of almost religious reverence is still widely held by the elders towards locally brewed beer, undoubtedly because of its traditional use in ritual and ceremonial occasions" (p. 16). The Maragoli elders constitute a minority of the population of their contemporary society where a growing number of people pay minimal attention to the power of the ancestral spirits and have essentially lost what Sangree (1962) calls "the traditional feeling of reverence towards beer" (p. 17).

Another new trend is the use of beer to attract and induce people to participate in raising money for students to pursue further studies, either locally or abroad. About 28 percent of the respondents observed that the use of beer in fund-raising events was on the increase in the rural areas. It is clearly evident that the fermenting and use of home-brews has multiple and interlocking consequences in Maragoli society. The subsequent discussions focus on women's perspectives regarding the effects of drinking on the household members.

## EFFECTS OF BEER CONSUMPTION ON THE CONSUMERS' HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

The sampled women expressed diverse views and experiences about the dynamics of alcohol and its effects on consumers in their society (shown in Table 2). These findings are consistent with other studies demonstrating that the production of beer can lead to considerable problems within families and communities (Carlson, 1992; Garine, 2001; Kutalek, 2011; Mutongi, 2007, p. 114; Sobania, 2003, p. 70; Subbo, 2001; Willis, 2010). Some of the study participants had personally experienced the maladaptive aspects of home-brews. A significant number of the participants articulated multidimensional effects of drinking on the nutritional status of the household members. These included an inadequate supply of cooking oil (cited by about 93 percent), inadequate supply of salt (expressed by nearly 92 percent), inadequate supply of sugar (reported by slightly above 89 percent), and inadequate provision of other foodstuffs that are necessary for the sustenance of a balanced nutritional status of household members (voiced by approximately 85 percent). In most cases, failure to provide a nutritionally balanced diet resulted in the malnourishment of some of the household members.

Malnutrition has detrimental effects on the health status of the household members. This is made worse by lack of money to purchase prescribed drugs, as indicated by nearly 83 percent of the interviewees. In most cases, there is no money to pay for the required cost-sharing fee at the health centers before one can be treated, as indicated by about 79 percent of the study participants. Moreover, the male household heads divert significant cash into drinking; thus, leaving the other household members with little or no money for intermittent medical services. This results in the poor health of household members, as reported by approximately 74 percent of the respondents.

Diversion of a significant amount of household resources into beer drinking also affects the general well-being of the household members who end up having inadequate clothing as noted by close to 76 percent, inadequate beddings as reported by about 69 percent, and inadequate furniture for household use as expressed by approximately 54 percent of the study participants. Other affected areas of well-being include inadequate supply of kerosene for lanterns as reported by nearly 43 percent, unhygienic or absence of pit latrines as expressed by about 29 percent, and inadequate provision of shelter for the household members as stated by 21 percent of the sample.

Most study participants associated drinking with denial of their rights in decision making at the household level. It implies that women's "major responsibilities for the household's well-being do not always mean decision-making power within the family" (Karl, 1995, p. 3). This is the case among the Maragoli where slightly above 68 percent of the interviewees said that they were denied rights to decision making regarding use of household labor. About

**Table 2.** Effects of Beer Consumption on Household Members.

Responses	Frequency of Mentioning	Percentages
<i>Affects nutritional status of members</i>		
Inadequate supply of cooking oil	71	93.4
Inadequate supply of salt	70	92.1
Inadequate supply of sugar	68	89.5
Inadequate supply of other foodstuffs	65	85.5
<i>Affects health status of household members</i>		
Inadequate money for drug purchase	63	82.9
No money for local clinic cost-sharing fee	60	78.9
Poor health status among household members	56	73.7
<i>Affects general well-being of household members</i>		
Inadequate provision of clothing	58	76.3
Inadequate provision of bedding	53	69.7
Inadequate provision of household furniture	41	53.9
Inadequate provision of kerosene for lanterns	33	43.4
Unhygienic or absence of pit latrines	22	28.9
Inadequate provision of shelter	16	21.0
<i>Denial of rights to decision making</i>		
Regarding use of household labor	52	68.4
Regarding use of money	51	67.1
<i>Affects children's schooling</i>		
Failure to pay children's school fees	68	89.5
Failure to purchase required school textbooks	64	84.2
Inadequate provision of school uniforms	62	81.2
Early school drop-rates due to poor parenting	57	75.0
Routine physical and emotional child abuse	37	48.7
<i>Affects spousal relations</i>		
Regular quarrels among spouses	74	97.4
Domestic violence and physical spousal abuse	70	92.1
Sexual harassment and rape	58	76.3
Enhancement of the probability of divorce	46	60.5
<i>Selling of household property</i>		
Radios	33	43.4
Food from granaries	28	38.8
Sometimes even clothes are sold	17	22.4
<i>Irresponsible and sometimes immoral behavior</i>		
Bad role models and mentors to children	43	56.6
Promiscuous and generally loose sexual morals	41	53.9
Transmission of STDs and most likely HIV/AIDS	23	30.3
Incestuous affairs	14	18.4

67 percent of the interviewees also indicated that they were excluded from decision-making processes pertaining to the use of money. This concurs with the observation by Karl (1995) that “in most cases women do not have equal control over the management and allocation of family income” (p. 3). It was clear in the focus group discussions that, while the husbands in Maragoli tend to monopolize decision-making processes, the wives are the major sources of household labor and, indeed, play a significant role in the generation of money. The broad negative implications of this denial of rights to decision making on women’s agricultural production are shown in Table 4.

Excessive expenditure of household money on beer consumption affects the children’s education and strains spousal relationships in varied ways. For instance, about 89 percent of the subjects indicated that the children’s school fees are at times not paid promptly, thus resulting in their expulsion from school. Dibuk (1993) notes that such drinkers “forsake paying children’s school fees because their money is spent on beer” (p. 18). Observed disruption of school-based learning is made worse by the parents’ inability to purchase the required textbooks because of excessive expenditure on beer as per the expressions of about 84 percent of the sample. Pupils are also expelled from school because they do not have school uniforms (articulated by nearly 81 percent of the study participants), especially in cases involving alcoholic parents, who consistently fail to cater to this requirement. Seventy-five percent of the interviewees reported that some children dropped out of school because of poor parenting, role modeling, mentoring, inspiration, and guidance. It was reported by nearly 49 percent of the sample that drunk parents consistently engaged in physical and emotional abuse of their children.

Alcohol abuse also strained spousal relations. Nearly 97 percent of the respondents disclosed that their families experience regular and predictable quarrels. About 92 percent said that domestic violence and physical spousal abuse are something they frequently encounter in their domestic spheres. Domestic violence is largely a power play with the men exerting their authority and citing culture as a reason permitting them discipline their wives (Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis, 2006).

Among the Maragoli, violence against women which in most cases involves wife-beating and battering is viewed by men as a normal customary practice (Kilbride & Kilbride, 1990). *Women in Law and Development in Africa* (1990) indicates that “domestic violence and rape are not criminal offences in Africa and the police and courts are unsympathetic towards women” (p. 13). Ambrose (1995) also observes that “on numerous occasions, women are frustrated by police when they make an attempt to exercise their fundamental human rights” (p. 59). The persistence of this practice and its disruptive impact on the smooth running of the family was captured in the most widely read Kenyan English language newspaper (*Daily Nation*, Cutting Edge, March 4, 1997), which posed the following question: “What can you do when a violent drunkard is destroying his family but because he has not actually caused any bodily harm (yet), the

police cannot act? His traumatized kids sleep out, scarcely eat, are rarely at school, and his wife has fled in fear. Is there an organization which could advise?" This situation candidly sums up a typical inequality in gender-power relations inherent in the married lives of some couples in patrilineal African societies. [Amuyunzu-Nyamongo and Francis \(2006\)](#) argue that "male power in most Kenyan communities has been steeped in patriarchy that traditionally has been reinforced through rites of passage, bride wealth payments, and patrilocal residence" (p. 221).

[Bradley \(1997\)](#) observes an increase in domestic violence and 60 percent of the women confirming having been beaten by their husbands. [Heise \(1995\)](#) argues that "violence against wives – indeed violence against women in general – is as old as recorded history, and cuts across all nationalities and socioeconomic groups. Every day, thousands of women are raped, assaulted, and sexually harassed" (p. 75). Heise further contends that violence against women is perhaps the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world. Violent acts represent fundamental violations of women's bodily integrity and undermines widely held goals for economic and social development. In most cases, violence against women is grounded on power imbalances between men and women ([Heise, 1995](#), p. 79); it is often about social control and a power bid ([Skaine, 1996](#)).

According to [Bradley \(1995, p. 159\)](#), "an atmosphere of scarcity, whether real or perceived, may create tension between men and women who must compete for scarce resources" and sometimes this may culminate in violent behavior. Sexual harassment, which [Skaine \(1996, p. 11\)](#) defines as "unwelcome sexual behavior by one person against another person," was voiced as one of the effects of drinking on household members. In this study, about 76 percent of the interviewees reported sexual harassment and rape by their own husbands which "are not a criminal offence in many parts of Africa" ([Women in Law and Development in Africa, 1990](#), p. 13). This is a clear illustration that women know that rape occurs even within marriage, and it may result in strained spousal relations as well as create a situation conducive to the pursuit of divorce by wives as per the testimony of approximately 60 percent of the sample.

The results of this study concur with the observation by [Dibuk \(1993\)](#) that "women often talk about how their own lives and those of their children are affected by men's drinking because it appropriates household capital" (p. 19). Frequent indulgence in alcohol consumption tempts some individuals to sell various household items raise money to buy beer. This documented by about 43 percent of the study participants who stated that their husbands had sold family radios. Nearly 39 percent of the interviewees reported disposal of household foodstuff from storage granaries and intermittent harvesting and selling of bananas, tomatoes, and onions directly from cultivated plots. Approximately, 22 percent of the subjects talked about extreme cases involving the sale of household members' clothes to obtain cash to buy home-brews.

Wide ranging aspects of irresponsible behavior were reported to be characteristic of alcohol addicts. Such individuals serve as bad role models to their own children, as mentioned by nearly 57 percent of the interviewees. Some of the alcohol addicts engage in promiscuous sexual behaviors, as per the observations of nearly 54 percent of the respondents. Close to 30 percent noted that such loose sexual behaviors facilitate the spread of various sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. Another 18 percent of the sample stated that some addicts indulged in incestuous affairs. This behavior caused their families social stigma, stress, and embarrassment. We now turn to the effects of brewing, selling, and consumption of beer on the household members of brewers and sellers in the research site.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF BEER CONSUMPTION ON PRODUCERS' AND SELLERS' HOUSEHOLDS**

The brewing, use, and sale of beer have multiple and interlocking consequences on the households. Views pertaining to the influence of beer production and selling on the households involved in this enterprise were compiled, and a summary of the results is shown in [Table 3](#). The findings affirm that the brewing, selling, and drinking of alcohol is a major informal sector activity yielding significant cash income. This is evident from the approximately 97 percent of the women who indicated that households engaged in the enterprise regularly generate money which the beneficiaries used to meet a variety of basic needs. [Bradley \(1995\)](#) observes that “Maragoli women who sell beer are notoriously independent” (p. 163). These women have what [Holmboe-Ottesen and Wandel \(1991\)](#) call “direct access to cash from beer brewing activities” (p. 115). In fact, an informant indicated that sometimes the family members of the brewers and sellers and, especially the husbands drink up the potential profits. If such behavior occurs too often, it leads to domestic violence as per the observations of nearly 95 percent of the study participants. Cases of physical injuries and burns associated with domestic violence, distillation of alcohol, and pouring of hot water to dilute their customers’ beer were frequent and noted by nearly 87 percent of the sample.

The testimony of 71 percent of the study subjects revealed that, in some of the alcohol brewing and selling households, husbands may reduce and, in some cases, completely withdraw their financial contributions from household expenses if they think that their wives make sufficient cash from the selling of beer. In such households, where the husband uses the wife’s beer-selling cash income as an excuse for withdrawing his share of cash contributions to the family’s upkeep, the wife finds herself with familial responsibilities that place excessive demands on her. Nearly 85 percent of the respondents noted that easy availability of alcohol in the brewers’ households contributed to alcohol



**Table 3.** Effects of Beer Brewing and Consumption on the Producer Households.

Responses	Frequency of Mentioning	Percentages
<i>Positive effects</i>		
Source of cash income	74	97.4
Source of cheap domestic labor	65	85.5
Source of cheap agricultural labor	54	71.0
<i>Negative effects</i>		
Encourages spousal domestic violence	72	94.7
Sometimes results in physical injuries	66	86.8
Alcohol addiction	65	85.5
Withdrawal of financial support by husbands	54	71.0
Promiscuous and loose sexual morals	51	67.1
Sexual harassment	49	64.5
Rape and incestuous sexual indulgence	47	61.8
Facilitates spread of STDs and AIDS	44	57.9
Use of child labor in transporting and selling alcohol	44	57.9
Child malnutrition	43	56.6
Physical and emotional child abuse	41	53.9
School dropout	40	52.6
Provides inappropriate environment for child socialization	36	47.4
Children learn to drink alcohol at tender ages	35	46.0
More frequent teenage pregnancies in brewing household	33	43.4
Generally, brewing disrupts smooth running of the family	26	34.2

addiction. This gradually stimulates early drinking habits (cited by 46 percent of the interviewees).

About 47 percent of the sample noted the inappropriateness of the beer-selling environment for children's enculturation. [Sobania \(2003\)](#) notes that "destitute young children in these neighborhoods, who see one or both parents drunk and passed out, can also be found drinking illegal brew in response to the seemingly hopelessness of their conditions" (p. 170). Thus, frequent exposure to the negative impact of drunkenness thwarts the moral development of the affected children. For example, excessively drunk parents intermittently indulge in sexual intercourse in broad delight when their own children are present and even observing the act.

Nearly 53 percent of the respondents observed that beer-selling and -drinking environments induce significant school dropout rates. Other negative effects are

child malnutrition as per the observations of close to 57 percent, and child abuse as reported by nearly 54 percent of the sample. One extreme instance of child abuse mentioned by about 58 percent of the sample is the use of children in transporting and even selling alcohol. Children involved in these undertaking gradually drop out of school and learn to drink at very tender ages. The observations of about 34 percent of the sample pointed to the fact that home surroundings that were overwhelmingly characterized by the production and sale of alcohol were disruptive to the smooth running of the family unit.

The beer-selling households have access to cheap domestic labor which is usually volunteered by the drinkers in exchange for beer. About 85.5 percent of the interviewees noted that the cheap domestic labor is utilized in fetching water from the nearby drinking water sources, clearing and maintaining the homestead yard, and splitting firewood. The same brewing and alcohol-selling households usually have access to almost free agricultural labor in return for beer. On this point, 71 percent of the interviewees indicated that a significant number of male drinkers perform various farming tasks in return for beer whenever they are short of cash. The farm tasks performed in exchange for beer generally vary with the agricultural season, but typically include land preparation, planting, weeding, and harvesting.

Other problems associated with drinking, as per the testimonies of nearly 67 percent of the study subjects, included promiscuous and loose sexual morals. The respondents indicated that excessive consumption of alcohol interferes with the drinkers' sense of moral judgment, and lures men and women into indiscriminate sex. Several informants indicated that drunk individuals also tended to be less sensitive in their selection of sexual partners and, especially men were less likely to use condoms for safe sex. This behavior places the affected persons at high risk of being infected with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. Moreover, awareness of HIV/AIDS is very high in the study area but the stigma related to this pandemic persists.

About 64.5 percent of the study respondents noted that beer brewers and sellers are also regularly exposed to prostitution in an environment that subjects them to high risks of sexual abuse and disease. In addition, women beer sellers are frequently sexually harassed by their regular male customers; the men sometimes succeed in having sexual affairs with some female sellers, who supplement their beer-selling income by indulging in transactional sex.

It is evident that incidences of rape have increased in an alarming rate (Chazan, Mortimer, Ravenhill, & Rothchild, 1992). The results also indicated that rape and incestuous sexual affairs occurred in the area as per the responses of nearly 62 percent of the sample. Beer-selling households also were reported by about 43 percent of the study participants as experiencing frequent teenage pregnancies. It was observed by nearly 58 percent that sexual indulgence facilitates the spread of STDs and HIV/AIDS. We now turn to the results pertaining to how beer dynamics affect agricultural activities.

## IMPACT OF BEER BREWING, SELLING, AND DRINKING ON WOMEN'S AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Women play critical roles in both food and cash-crops production in the developing countries (Bryceson, 1995; Buvinic, Gwin, & Bates, 1996). In Kenya, approximately 80 percent of the women live in the rural areas, where they engage in farming as a major economic activity and contribute over 70 percent of the agricultural labor force (Suda, 1996). Men in Kenya and other parts of Africa “valued their women for their productive labor” (Suggs, 1996, p. 597). Although “the participation of women as the majority group is essential to development in Africa” (Ambrose, 1995, p. 57), the realization of higher agricultural productivity is somehow constrained by the fact that women who provide the bulk of the required farm labor “cannot lend their labor or creative ideas fully when they are burdened with physical and psychological scars of abuse” (Heise, 1995, pp. 75–76). Table 4 shows the negative effects of the scars of abuse associated with the male household heads’ alcohol consumption on their wives’ agricultural production. Domestic violence is a principal cause of stress in the lives of married women farmers. In most cases, women farmers who suffer physical injuries resulting from domestic violence experience tension

**Table 4.** Effects of Beer Brewing and Consumption on Women’s Agricultural Activities.

Responses	Frequency of Mentioning	Percentages
Productivity reduced by physical injuries	56	73.7
Poor motivation due to frequent tension and stress	53	69.7
Malnutrition results in low energy	52	68.4
Weakened by diseases due to inadequate funds for medication	50	65.8
Beer consumption results in theft of agricultural produce	50	65.8
Diversion of agricultural credit into drinking	48	63.1
Husband resells fertilizer purchased for farm use	47	61.8
Sometimes husband resells household’s purchased hybrid seeds	45	59.2
Husband sold some of the hoes, machetes, and spray pumps	42	55.3
High potential agricultural plots either sold or leased out	36	47.4
Absence of husband’s labor from farming activities	36	47.4
Husband sells farm produce without consulting wife	34	44.7
Frequent conflicts regarding access to and control of farm income	32	42.1
Women weakened by excessive farm-related workload	29	38.1

and stress, which interfere with their meaningful and productive engagements in farming. Nearly 70 percent of the interviewees indicated that tension and stress usually discourage women's motivation to perform farm work.

Malnutrition affects women farmers' energy levels. As reported by about 68 percent of the sample, households lack nutritiously balanced diets almost on a regular basis because of the diversion of a greater proportion of money into beer drinking. This situation is usually exacerbated by the fact that malnourished individuals tend to be vulnerable to diseases, especially when they have little or no access to medical services due to lack of money. Nearly 66 percent of the sample noted that this trend was undermining women farmers and decreasing their farm productivity. This is notwithstanding the fact that women farmers are generally weakened by the excessive farm-related workload, as expressed by nearly 38 percent of the interviewees. Some of the respondents also indicated that some of the addicted beer drinkers at times end up stealing crops from other people's farms. In most of the instances cited by about 66 percent of the interviewees, maize and bananas were stolen from the women's plots at night and transported to near and distant markets for sale. This habit was reported as having a significant demoralizing effect on the affected women farmers. These results are consistent with the observation that "with consumption comes drunkenness, a decline in labor productivity, and increase in crime and prostitution" (Sobania, 2003, p. 170).

The diversion of agricultural credit into beer drinking affected female farmers' agricultural productivity. It was reported by approximately 63 percent of the study participants that their husbands, who are the holders of land title deeds, receive credit specifically intended for improving agricultural output (Gwako, 2002) but funds are utilized on drinking sprees. This demoralizes wives from investing their full labor in farm level activities. The same holds true for husbands who were reported by nearly 62 percent of the study participants as reselling fertilizer. Close to 59 percent of the sample also said that sometimes alcoholic husbands who need money for beer resell hybrid seeds purchased for planting. Farm implements were also sold to raise money for home-brews as per the testimony of approximately 55 percent of the sample. Such behaviors divert needed inputs for improving agricultural productivity.

The permanent selling and/or temporary leasing out of the households' high potential agricultural land to obtain cash to buy beer also impedes high farm yields. This was articulated by nearly 47 percent of the study participants who also noted that routine indulgence of husbands in beer consumption decreases the time and labor they invest in farming. Other studies have shown that men spend substantial amounts of their time and money drinking, even at the expense of household food security (Amuyunzu-Nyamongo & Francis, 2006; Holmboe-Ottesen & Wandel, 1991). This emerged as problem experienced by some Maragoli households as per the testimony of about 47 percent of the study participants.

In some households, women farmers have minimal incentives to achieve high farm yields because their husbands sell farm produce without consulting them. This habit was cited by nearly 45 percent of the interviewees, out of whom close to 42 percent also indicated that the accompanying scenario becomes even more compounded by conflicts pertaining to access and control of crop income. The paralyzing effects of men's excessive drinking on women's lives and agricultural production are clear and significant. These situations inspired some respondents to explore what [Stanley and Wise \(1990\)](#) call "various avenues to protect themselves and safeguard their interests" (p. 22). The deployment of varied strategic maneuvers by women farmers features prominently in the subsequent discussions.

## **EFFORTS TO REDUCE THE DETRIMENTAL RAMIFICATIONS OF HOME-MADE BEER CONSUMPTION**

Women typically employ a variety of strategies to improve their situation ([Clark, 1984](#)). This section examines the ingenuity employed by Maragoli women farmers to avert various detrimental effects of brewing, selling, and consumption of beer on their lives and endeavors. The study participants took actions individually and collectively to deflate the maladaptive aspects of beer from the "standpoint of women's lives" ([Scott, 1995](#), p. 133). Their strategic efforts illuminate the "understanding of women as agents who make choices, have a critical perspective on their own situations, and think and organize collectively against their oppressors" ([Mohanty, 1991](#), p. 21). The results of this study are consistent with the observation that "with the commodification of alcohol, women have frequently benefited from their role as brewers by developing a new source of economic power and independence" ([Dietler, 2006](#), p. 236) resulting from the extra income they earn from male consumers ([Colson & Scudder, 1988](#); [Dancause et al., 2010](#); [McCall, 1996](#)).

The innovative interventions articulated by the Maragoli study participants are shown in [Table 5](#). These findings are a clear testimony that women exercise agency "to participate in the events and processes that shape their lives" ([United Nations, 1991](#), p. 6). [Suda \(1996\)](#) points out that "in order to influence further changes in their life situations and also to accelerate the self-empowerment process, increasingly significant numbers of Kenyan women have taken the initiative to mobilize and organize themselves into self-help groups at the grassroots levels" (p. 82). This is one of the most effective strategies women farmers use to reduce the maladaptive aspects related to home-brews in their society. A significant number of the study sample (64.5 percent) observed self-help groups as a crucial and effective strategy for self-empowerment, which boosted the actualization of women's well-being in multiple dimensions.

**Table 5.** Participants' Solutions to the Effects of Alcohol Use on Women's Lives and Agricultural Activities.

Efforts	Frequency of Mentioning	Percentages
Joined women groups	49	64.5
Participate in formal and informal development committees	43	56.6
Use other people to sell agricultural produce	39	51.3
Safe keeping money with other people	38	50.0
Never disclose to your husband the amount of money you have	36	47.4
Prompt spending/investment of money as soon as one gets it	33	43.4
Christians preach and teach against alcohol consumption	27	35.3
Use songs to condemn spousal abuse and violence against women	23	30.3
Appeal for the enactment of laws that safeguard women's interests	21	27.6
Women's group support for victims of spousal abuse	18	23.7
Use cultural ethos to deal with alcoholic spousal abusers	15	19.7
Use of self-censorship	12	15.8
Encourage use of condoms for safe sex	8	10.5
Divorce	6	07.9

Abwunza (1995) argues that Maragoli women “united to improve women’s social, economic and political status, to wage war against illiteracy and ignorance, poor health, poverty and joblessness and to call for government assistance to women’s groups for technical, financial and other necessities for progress” (p. 29). Although not all women’s groups have registered major successes in accomplishing their original goals, most of them, however, achieved some measure of success. For example, the evidence provided by Abwunza (1995, 1997) clearly shows that the women’s group networks in Maragoli have been very instrumental in uplifting their members’ well-being and have served as useful avenues for providing much-needed cash in this densely populated area with limited opportunities for paid labor. Abwunza (1995) further reports that as a mechanism for enhancing both social and economic support, women strategically raise “money through singing in choirs or by digging land, selling food and crafts, building schools or churches or cleaning water resource areas” (p. 30). As result of their collective endeavors, Maragoli women have an acknowledged social power to influence various communal aspects of development. As active economic providers for their families and the community, the fruits of their collective efforts are visible in their accumulation of cash, food, blankets, lanterns, utensils, a day’s or two days’ work for one another, and their

ability to borrow, lend, and provide support to each other in times of need, whether occasioned by unexpected guests or by a death (Abwunza, 1995).

Women farmers have been routinely excluded from the distribution of various forms of agricultural benefits, such as extension service and credit that are guaranteed with the land title deeds (Nzomo & Staudt, 1994; Saito & Weidemann, 1991). Women's group movements have been extremely instrumental in facilitating the dissemination of information about family planning, farming techniques, and loans (Gwako, 1997a, 1997b, 1998a, 1998b, 2002). Abwunza (1995) notes that "women gathering in groups share information, for example, details about government directives in old and new laws, or current wages for digging and prices of commodities. Confronting the difficult aspects of subsistence, they discuss agricultural assistance and innovations and mourn the loss of kinship support" (p. 36). This is further testimony that women are very intentional in mobilizing themselves for various purposes, including self-empowerment. Membership in women's groups is highly valued and desired by Maragoli women (Verma, 2001).

The concept of empowerment, as used in this study, refers to "a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to transformative action" (Karl, 1995, p. 14). Empowerment and ingenuity were evident in Maragoli society because women were largely involved in self-help groups at both individual and collective levels. These voluntary associations enhance the development of their members' awareness and ability to organize and bring about change and to alleviate the undesirable effects of beer on agricultural production. The concept of self-help groups in this study encompasses "groups that organize individuals to engage in collective action to ameliorate their conditions and, concomitantly, to change the social arena in which they operate" (House-Midamba, 1996, p. 297). These groups are widespread in rural Kenya and have the primary goal of promoting the women's "common social, economic, and political interests by organizing themselves and pooling their resources" (Suda, 1996, p. 82). It is, therefore, apparent that self-help groups in rural Kenya are based on the need of rural women to mobilize effective means for acquiring resources to support their activities.

Women also seek remedial measures through participation. Nearly 57 percent of the sample stated that this entails the involvement and election of women in various development committee meetings and at various levels of the national government's development planning committees. Such a representative usually consults with the women she represents prior to providing input in development planning committee meetings. Women also form and actively participate in informal pressure groups for purposes of articulating their needs to both the government and nongovernmental organizations. These pressure groups include mothers' unions and various professional associations that serve as convenient avenues of vocalizing their views against varied forms of oppression and the

offsetting of the negative impact of alcohol consumption on both their lives and agricultural activities.

Women farmers are becoming more careful in concealing their farm produce incomes from their husbands. For example, in situations where husbands gauge their wives' cash incomes through the amount of farm produce sold, their wives use proxies to deliver and sell the products in the local markets. This was cited by close to 51 percent as an effective strategy for avoiding their husbands' demands for cash. Fifty percent of the study participants indicated that they intermittently leave their money with other people to minimize their husbands' chances of getting access to it. About 47 percent of the study subjects refused to disclose to their husbands how much cash they had whenever such information was sought. Slightly above 43 percent of the participants indicated that they sometimes promptly spend the cash they earn to avoid misappropriation by their husbands. There are significant numbers of Christian groups in the area who encourage and actively preach and teach against alcohol consumption to discourage misuse of money. This approach was deemed effective by approximately 35 percent of the participants, who further noted that it involved the joint efforts of church leaders and their followers who frequently conducted Christian outreach missions in the area.

Women are repositories of society's traditional and cultural practices. This is particularly true in Kenya where women are excellent traditional singers and dancers, who are regularly called upon to entertain guests during major functions, such as national holiday celebrations, fund-raising events, and political rallies. Karl (1995) notes that "women play a significant part in the cultural life of their communities as the members of the community who preserve the traditional culture in song, dance, storytelling, art and ritual" (p. 4). Women have, however, become smart enough to use such avenues to articulate unpleasant experiences deriving from practices undermining their well-being. More frequently, as it was pointed out by approximately 30 percent of the study participants, women used such avenues to express their dissatisfaction with their husbands' beer consumption and the undesirable effects associated with the habit. During such occasions, women also sing protest songs directed at discriminative practices of agricultural credit-financing institutions and biased government policies.

Women do not only sing to entertain guests during national holiday celebrations, but they also call for the enactment of laws to safeguard their interests. As mentioned by nearly 28 percent of the sampled participants and frequently highlighted by key informants, the appeal for the enactment of laws protecting women's interests is also pursued by the various professional associations of women, such as bankers and lawyers. These professional associations engage in sensitizing women on their legal rights through seminars, workshops, and printed media on the premise that "if women know the law, they can use it to effect changes in their daily lives by confronting oppressive laws and customs that have resulted in women's subordinate status in society" (Ambrose, 1995, p. 64). About



24 percent of the study participants also indicated that women's self-help groups serve as good support networks for other women who are victims of spousal abuse. Suda (1996) observes that "women also join these groups to provide psychological and physical support to one another, especially during times of crisis" (p. 83).

Married women minimize the maladaptive impact of their husbands' excessive indulgence in alcohol consumption through use of varied cultural ethos as mentioned by nearly 20 percent of the interviewees. Ridicule, generally in the form of jesting and mimicry, is leveled against the individual or clique commonly felt to be indulging in undesirable behavior, and it serves as an important mechanism of social control within the community (Sangree, 1962). Occasionally, women compose and sing protest songs alluding to their spousal abusers and, in extreme cases, they may even refuse to give birth or name their newborn children after abusive alcohol addicts. About 16 percent of the sample mentioned the use of self-censorship as a strategy employed to minimize chances of physical abuse by their spouses. The application of this method usually involves reading the spouse's mood and refraining from behaving in a manner likely to trigger violent behavior. Thus, some Maragoli "women learn to censor their own behavior based on what they think will be acceptable to their husbands or partners" (Heise, 1995, p. 82). The least mentioned and used strategies include requesting the amorous husband to use condoms while indulging in sexual intercourse with the wife (mentioned by only 10.5 percent of the sample) and divorce option which was mentioned by nearly 8 percent of the study participants. However, not a single case of divorce associated with the husband's alcohol addiction was documented in this study. The findings show that Maragoli women use ingenuity to advance their individual and collective well-being.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter analyzed the role of beer brewing and drinking in the indigenous Maragoli society and highlighted the changes from brewing and consumption for ritual, ceremonial, and other culturally approved purposes to commercialized ventures. The commodification of beer motivates brewers to add addiction enhancers to attract and sustain a steady flow of paying customers. These ingredients have detrimentally affected the health status of the consumers. The ramifications of brewing, selling, and use of beer are major concerns in Maragoli society.

The findings illustrate Maragoli women's ingenuity in confronting and averting the maladaptive outcomes of excessive alcohol consumption habits. The women's strategic use of multiple mechanisms at different times demonstrates "how Kenyan women have been working for change in their lives" (Suda, 1996, p. 82).

Manifestations of empowerment and agency are, therefore, gradually becoming apparent as women make attempts to resist, “in favor of their own interests, actions of institutions and more powerful individuals who might limit their ability to act” (Bradley, 1995, p. 160). The diverse strategies used by women to foster their individual and collective well-being illustrate that, even though the authority to make decisions officially rests with the men, women may find ways of having their views accepted (Holmboe-Ottesen & Wandel, 1991). Although some women over imbibe, they are more actively involved in efforts to counter excessive consumption of alcohol. The impact of home-brews on Maragoli women cannot be understated. This study has demonstrated these effects in the context of changes within the Maragoli community. Another trend is an increasingly important collective action by Maragoli women and their own empowerment.

The research results also indicate that women have become highly sensitized to their rights as manifested in their strategic assertiveness to overcome the undesirable effects of their husbands’ alcohol addiction on both their daily lives and agricultural production. This assertiveness is also linked to women’s awareness of their contributions to the economy, which often subjects them to significantly heavy workloads in meeting the needs of their households. Equally significant is the evidence that women find ways and means of ensuring the protection of their group and children’s interests. Most of the Kenyan women know that the existence of formal avenues for seeking redress does not necessarily translate into actual protection of their rights, due to lack of good will, as clearly illustrated by cases of the Kenyan police, who often decline to intervene when either violent abuses or disputes are domestic. It is, however, encouraging that Kenyan women are actively working in different ways to overcome persistent barriers anchored in structures of inequality in gender-power relations. The study’s cardinal argument, as well as its findings, has challenged the notion that alcohol is only brewed for commercial purposes, and its consumption simply wrought violence, aggression, and other forms of social miseries against women, thus reducing women to helpless, voiceless, and powerless victims.

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