

# Report on ale, beer and brewsters

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The brewing of ale and beer in traditional American societies was significantly done by women. It was their responsibility to perform the fermentation and conduct all processes that were used in the production of standard ale for consumption by the whole community. This traditional setting displayed the brewing of beer as a responsibility of women. However, men gradually assumed the responsibility of beer brewing hence displacing women (also called Brewster) from the brewing arena. The book, *Ale, Beer and Brewsters*, seeks to challenge male dominance in the brewing industry. It describes the social and cultural life of the Americans before 1350 when Brewsters were acknowledged for their excellent work in the manufacture and provision of liquor. In essence, the brewing process is a kitchen-rated process and should be left to the able hands of women in the society. An analysis of the introduction and expansion of the beer brewing industry unveils its effects at best and at worst in the context of the society described in *Ale, Beer and Brewsters*. This change of way in cultural responsibility has been constructive as well as destructive to the society in *Ale, Beer and Brewsters*.

Her case presents the challenges women faced in the society and in the whole process of brewing. The traditional society then, provided excellent economic options for women through brewing and selling of ale. The circumstances of brewing changed gradually challenging women involved in the process. This process was gradually transforming as women performed differently in different parts of brewing niches. For example, Denise prospered in her business for a long time up to her time of death which showed that the business was still viable save for the changing

circumstances. In traditional settings, adults and children drank ale and beer as part of their regular diet. This culture changed gradually and people started consuming liquor for the purposes of taste and intoxication. Due to the large consumption of beer and ale in the fourteenth century, its production increased massively and the art was done by thousands of petty producers and was no longer the proceeds of a unique craft.

Men's domination in the industry came gradually and started by the few who were attracted to the industry in the fourteenth century. Then, just a few men were involved in the commercial process of producing ale. Moreover, most of the men entrenched in the process did not do it alone but worked alongside women. Additionally, women who held strongly to their business frequently asked for the services of their husbands and other members of the family. As a consequence of these changes of events in the industry, numerous adverse transformations happened in the society. Single women and widows who supported themselves on the basis of their trade in liquor lost opportunities while others had to struggle amidst men in the industry. Owing to these circumstances, single and widowed women were the first to abandon the culture of brewing. However, married women also followed suit owing to the same pressures in the business. This adversely affected the economic setup of women from the traditional context.

The transformation of brewing from being a home based process to a by-industrial process scared women from the industry. This advantaged men to dominate the processes with professional brewing techniques and with massive production volumes. The production of ale became a commercial arena and the traditional aspect of its production together with its ties with

women was overshadowed. Moreover, in family settings, husbands had more responsibilities in brewing than women. As a matter of fact, it is quite challenging to trace the manner in which couples could have negotiated work in beer brewing differently from work in ale brewing. The Englishmen considered beer, liquor for aliens that was prepared by aliens. This explains women's limited involvement in the brewing of beer. Therefore, the dominance of beer in the English societies overshadowed ale brewing, which as a result influenced the alienation of women in the industry.

Women were linked to ale while men were linked with beer. A critical analysis on the relationship between women and beer brewing based on historical sources shows that women only brew beer for family consumption following their natural responsibility in the house. Additionally, regulators of the brewing process proved to be very hard on women as compared to how they imposed their rules on men. On the other hand, the marital status and gender was a significant factor which influenced jurisdiction in the traditional courts. This disadvantaged the women, especially widows and single women inflicting fear, loss of hope and opportunities in the industry. It is, therefore, evident that women were forced by the nature of the environment around them to abandon their responsibility in the industry and give way for men. On the other hand, the transition during the shift of responsibility was very influential in building cohesion in families. Wives and husbands could work together in the brewing process and enhance their relationship. Its creativity is displayed through various methods and specialization that has accompanied the process of beer brewing. Different versions as improvements of the traditional ale have been produced.

In conclusion, it can be argued that the traditional setup gave women value of economical existence. However, this is still retained by the composition of personnel in brewing industries with respect to gender. Women are not completely overshadowed with their familial responsibilities as far as local production of liquor is concerned. Moreover, local production of ale and beer is sparsely dominated by women who announce their involvement in the industry.

## **Reference**

Bennett, Judith M. *Ale, Beer and Brewsters in England. Revised.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.