Acknowledgements

It was July 2015 and President Uhuru Kenyatta had launched his 'war on killer brews'. Police were raiding unlicensed distilleries across central Kenya, and television stations broadcast images of servicemen in fatigues pouring vats of illegally distilled spirit away into the sewers. Over the previous month, scenes of male alcoholism had been pasted across newspaper covers, raising moral outcry about the future of the region's young men, the unemployed, and the destitute, sometimes in accusatory tones. In many ways, this book began in those months, when I was in Kenya as a graduate attaché with the British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA). Between my MSc in Social and Cultural Anthropology at University College London and my PhD at the University of Cambridge, I was returning to Kenya for the first time since I left a career in international development in 2012.

Crucially, I met Tom Cunningham, then a PhD student at the University of Edinburgh studying mission Christianity in central Kenya. He re-introduced me to the work of John Lonsdale, whose writing I had read and generally misunderstood as an undergraduate in History some years earlier. It was this twinned experience – of the unfolding crisis of male destitution in central Kenya and a renewed appreciation for historical inquiry into moral economy, and of ideas about wealth, poverty, and virtue – that motivated and inspired the doctoral research that went into this book. During my time in Kenya in 2015, conversations with Neo Musangi, Trevas Matathia, Wambui Karanja, and Syokau Mutonga added further encouragement to my intention. Instead of Zambia, where I had been planning to study artisanal mining, I decided to return to Kenya for my PhD. These months were therefore decisive, and were it not for this experience, I would not have gone on to make the many friends and acquaintances that I did between 2016 and 2018. I wish to thank Tom for his friendship and support during the research and writing of this book. This project would simply not exist had he not inspired me to switch my research site – a move that involved following my better instincts as well as intellectual

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curiosity. In many ways, this project reflects our conversations about changing economic life and moral thought in central Kenya over the longue durée.

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