Indigenous Knowledge of the Samia,
Samia County, Kenya

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A Thesis submitted to the School of Information Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Information Sciences (Publishing)

MOI UNIVERSITY

NOVEMBER, 2012
DECLARATION

Declaration by Candidate

This research is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in another
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DEDICATION

To my Loving Father, The late Mwalimu Habil Majanja Gaunya and Sister, The late Anne Achieng Blessing, though gone, your inspiration lingers on.
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I am indebted to my research supervisors, Dr. E. J. Kogos and Dr. B. W. Githiora whose invaluable advice and comments saw this thesis to its successful completion.

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I give all honour and glory to God Most High; He has been my all in all. I praise His Name.
ABSTRACT

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is knowledge that is been held in peoples mind and it faces a danger of extinction as its holders die without having conserved it in formats that can be retrieved. This study sought to determine ways to conserve and access indigenous knowledge of the Samia people of Funyula Division, Samia District, Kenya. The specific objectives were to: identify the existing indigenous knowledge of the Samia people; ascertain the IK that is still in use among the Absamia; determine means and ways of access to Samia IK; Determine factors that impact on Samia IK; and determine ways of conservation of Samia IK. The study used symbolic interactionism for its theoretical framework. Data was gathered using face to face interviews and focus group discussions with persons aged eighteen years and above, sampled using purposive and snowball methods. Narrative analysis method was employed to analyse the data. Findings reveal there is IK currently held by the Samia, but not in retrievable formats. The IK used by an individual in influenced by their surrounding environment; Costly to document and conserve Samia IK; Few people within the community still use and value IK; there is need to document and conserve this knowledge. Super-ordinates included: family life; land ownership and use; knowledge acquisition, religion and health. With “modernization” the current Samia generation seems to water down their ways of life in favour current trends. The researcher recommends that the government put in place policies and allocate funds to enhance conservation of IK from grassroot up to district level. Educationists to come up with strategies to incorporate IK into formal school curriculum to increase awareness and support. It is hoped the findings of this study will benefit the Samia community understand their background, appreciate, and embrace some of their traditional practices. The collected Samia IK may also serve as references for scholars, researchers and the general public.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION ...................................................................................................................... ii
DEDICATION ....................................................................................................................... iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ......................................................................................................... iv
ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... v
TABLE OF CONTENTS .......................................................................................................... vi
LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. x
LIST OF FIGURES .............................................................................................................. xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .................................................................................................. xii

CHAPTER ONE ...................................................................................................................... 1
INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................................................... 1
1.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................... 1
1.2 Background to the study .............................................................................................. 1
1.3 Increased interest in Indigenous knowledge ............................................................... 4
1.4 Samia District ................................................................................................................ 5
   1.4.1 Funyula Division ..................................................................................................... 6
   1.4.2 Abasamia ................................................................................................................ 6
1.5 Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................ 7
1.6 Aim of the Study .......................................................................................................... 8
1.7 Objectives of the Study ............................................................................................... 8
1.8 Research Questions ...................................................................................................... 9
1.9 Assumptions of the Study ........................................................................................... 9
1.10 Significance of the Study ......................................................................................... 9
1.11 Scope of the Study .................................................................................................... 10
1.12 Limitations of the study .......................................................................................... 10
1.13 Summary .................................................................................................................. 11

CHAPTER TWO .................................................................................................................... 12
LITERATURE REVIEW ........................................................................................................ 12
2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 12
2.2 Types of Samia IK ....................................................................................................... 13
2.3 Areas of IK Application .............................................................................................. 14
   2.3.1 Child Development ............................................................................................... 15
   2.3.2 Education ............................................................................................................. 16
   2.3.3 Health .................................................................................................................. 23
   2.3.4 Farming ............................................................................................................... 25
   2.3.5 Religion ............................................................................................................... 26
   2.3.6 Conflict Resolution ............................................................................................ 27
   2.3.7 Attire ................................................................................................................... 28
   2.3.8 Disaster Management ......................................................................................... 29
2.4 Theoretical framework .............................................................................................. 30
CHAPTER THREE ................................................................. 41
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY ................................................. 41
3.1 Introduction ..................................................................... 41
3.2 Research Design ............................................................ 41
3.3 Methodology ................................................................... 42
  3.3.1 Rationale for qualitative research ................................. 44
3.4 Study population ............................................................. 45
3.5 Sample Design ................................................................. 45
  3.5.1 Sampling techniques ................................................. 46
  3.5.2 Sample Size ............................................................ 47
3.6 Data collection ............................................................... 48
  3.6.1 Interviews ............................................................... 49
  3.6.3 Focus Groups ......................................................... 50
  3.6.4 Limitations of Focus Groups ..................................... 52
3.7 Data Collection Instruments .............................................. 53
  3.7.1 Interview Schedule ............................................... 53
  3.7.2 Notebooks and Tape Recorder ................................. 53
  3.7.3 Instrument Validation ............................................. 54
  3.7.4 Data Collection Procedures ................................. 54
3.8 Data analysis .................................................................. 55
3.9 Ethical considerations .................................................... 56
3.10 Challenges Encountered ................................................ 57

CHAPTER THREE ................................................................. 59
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION .......... 59
4.1 Introduction ................................................................. 59
4.2 Land ............................................................................ 59
  4.2.1 Source of Land .................................................... 59
  4.2.2 Land Use .......................................................... 61
  4.2.3 Value of land ...................................................... 62
  4.2.4 Cultivation of Land ............................................... 62
  4.2.5 Tools ................................................................ 63
  4.2.6 Crops ................................................................ 66
  4.2.7 Storage of farm produce ....................................... 67
4.3 Home Organization ....................................................... 68
  4.3.1 Olugala (starting a new home) ................................ 68
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.3.2 Role of wife in home</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.3 Home Security</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.4 Furniture</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.5 Clothing/Attire</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Family Life and Marriage</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1 Birth and Naming</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2 Initiation</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.3 Maturity (Boys)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.4 Maturity (Girls)</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.5 Girls visiting boys before marriage</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.6 Virginity (Obuchunji)</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.7 Protection for girls</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.8 Marriage</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.9 Death and Burial</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.9.2 Inheritance</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Knowledge Acquisition</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1 Education</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2 Wrestling</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3 Obukimba (Rainmaking)</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.4 Esibinje as a Class</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.6 Esiduori (Kraal) as a Class</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.7 Communicating Knowledge</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.8 Stories (Engano)</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.9 Riddles</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Socio-Cultural and Religious Beliefs</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.1 Religion</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.2 Drought</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.7 Totems</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.8 Sex as a Method of Enforcing Social Order</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.9 Omukhula (Water Factor)</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.10 Left-Right Pattern</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.11 Doors and Gates</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.12 Esisuri (Apex)</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.13 The Binary Left-Right Opposition</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.15 Planning the Environment</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.16 Offering of Sacrifices</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.17 Cleansing</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.18 Witchcraft (Obulosi/Obukhingi)</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.19 Protecting Girls from Pregnancy Using Witchcraft</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.20 Wizardry</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.21 Marrying a Night Runner</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.22 Rainmaking (Obukimba)</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Health and Hygiene</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.1 Medical Knowledge</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.2 Acquisition of Medical Knowledge</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.3 Impotency</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.4 Application of Indigenous Knowledge in Modern Healthcare</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8 Uses of IK</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.8.1 Authority .................................................................................................................. 172
4.8.2 Conflict Resolution ................................................................................................ 173
4.8.3 Disaster Management .............................................................................................. 176

CHAPTER FIVE ......................................................................................................................... 178
DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 178
5.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 178
5.3 Question 1: What types and nature of IK exist among the Samia? ...................... 178
5.4 Question 2: How was the Samia IK Accessed ........................................................... 179
5.5 Question 3: Did the Samia have systems in place to conserve their IK ............. 179
5.6 Question 4: Is there IK still used by the Samia People? ......................................... 180
5.7 Question 5: What factors affect the conservation of IK among the Samia .......... 181
5.8 Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 181
5.9 Recommendations ...................................................................................................... 182
5.10 Suggestions for further research ............................................................................. 184
REFERENCES ..................................................................................................................... 185
APPENDICES ....................................................................................................................... 192
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Number of Cows paid for Bride Price .................................................................93
Table 4.2: Cows paid and their significance .................................................................95
Table 4.3: Types of Medicine among the Samia .........................................................164
Table 4.5: Parts of animal (Cow or goat) .................................................................174
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Farm tools used by the Samia .............................................................. 65
Figure 2: Design of a Typical Samia homestead ............................................. 70
Figure 3: Busaa/kwete (local brew) during the brewing process ................. 77
Figure 4: A Fortified in Kansas America similar to the ones built by Abasamia though those in Samia were higher and were made of mad and ballast ............... 78
Figure 5: Weapons used by Samia ................................................................. 79
Figure 6: Layout of a Samia hut ................................................................. 143
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Nothing so aptly captures the significance of indigenous knowledge than an old African proverb that states “When a knowledgeable old person dies, a whole library disappears.” Indigenous Knowledge is a body of knowledge built up by a group of people through generations of living in close contact with nature. The knowledge is stored in people’s memories and activities. It is expressed in folklore, myths, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community law, local language, agricultural practices, equipment, plant species and animal breeds. The knowledge encompasses wisdom and teachings of a community and is communicated orally. The knowledge dealt with is include agriculture, medicine, religious and social values. This chapter provides a general introduction to the study of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) of Samia community; and also presents a background to the study, statement of the problem, aim, objectives, assumptions, significance, scope and limitations of the study.

1.2 Background to the study

Cultural heritage is a vital asset for every group of people. Each community from its inception has traditions, practices and knowledge that are inherent generation after generation. Each community has unique sets of values it holds dear but most of these face extinction due to modernization. Indigenous knowledge is one such asset. Puffer, (1995) views IK as a unitary system that brings a community together. It is the kind of knowledge a community provides as a basis for grassroots decision-making, much of which takes place at community level through local organizations and associations.
Steiner (2008) defines IK as the sum of facts known or learned from experience or acquired through observation or study and handed down from generation to generation. Communities identify themselves early with IK systems which have enabled them live in harmony in their environment. IK can be summed up as knowledge of a speech community accumulated over generations of living in a particular environment. It is a broad concept that covers all forms of knowledge – technologies, know-how, skills, practices and beliefs that enable a community achieve stable livelihoods.

Indigenous knowledge, in an African context, has for a long time been ignored and maligned by outsiders and insiders alike. Outsiders and insiders can originate from the same community. They become outsiders when they belong to a community yet do not adhere to or value the local knowledge in that community; whereas the insiders are those who understand and acknowledge the ways and knowledge of that community. Today, a growing number of African governments and international development agencies are recognizing local-level knowledge and provide a foundation for participatory approaches to development that are both cost effective and sustainable (Warren, 1992). Darkoh (1990) observes that despite many years of massive investment of capital, equipments and modern technology by developed countries and their various agencies in Africa, poverty is still being experienced. He emphasizes that, to achieve any sustainable development in a country, overall development should be people centered. That is, development should be for the people and by the people. Therefore, suggested strategies for self sustainability and reliance should be built on existing production methods, local population priorities and developmental realities. Indigenous knowledge is a prerequisite for sustainable
development. In the past, such technology was ignored and development solutions created that were not economically feasible or culturally acceptable for the society being aided. The role of indigenous knowledge in sustainable growth and development in Africa remains a critical issue that should not be overlooked.

Indigenous knowledge is important, respecting and conserving it is an essential asset for development. It allows better innovation and adaptation of technologies, adds to scientific knowledge, leads to increased understanding between researchers and the local people; increases local capacity to experiment and innovate; and empowers local people, (Warburton and Martin 1990). Understanding indigenous knowledge and using it as a base limits introducing IK related projects that cannot be completed.

Though indigenous knowledge is local to a community, this does not translate into that knowledge being consumed only by that specific community. Abasamia are a culturally rich community. This community has been self reliant in terms of agriculture, health, education and social wellbeing. Today, most Samias have embraced new technologies at the expense of their cultural ways of life. Little has been done towards its documentation, therefore, those who did not know of the Samia IK may never learn of it. This causes concern and brings to the fore reasons for documenting the Samia IK to enable its access both locally and globally.

The challenge is that the little that has been documented is not conserved in formats that are easily accessible to enable easy access and dissemination.
1.3 Increased interest in Indigenous knowledge

Knowledge is the foundation stone on which all who value it build. Before the colonialists came to Africa and Kenya in particular, communities had their own ways/systems of life. Knowledge acquired from ancestors in agriculture, health, religion and government helped communities prosper. Different scholars have defined Indigenous Knowledge (IK) differently. According to Johnson (1992), IK is a body of knowledge built up by a group of people through generations of living in close contact with nature. Johnson further defines it as knowledge that encompasses the wisdom and teachings of a community. Rajakeran (1992) sees it as local knowledge and unique to a culture or society. Lengisugi (2006) defines IK as an ethno-science, or traditional wisdom; as knowledge that evolves over time and was/is communicated orally from one generation to the next. The generic characteristics of indigenous knowledge include its uniqueness to a culture. It is knowledge used to guide, control and explain actions occurring in specific settings based on beliefs and is embedded in a natural environment.

According to Nakashima and Roue (2002), IK is a system of complex arrays of knowledge, know-how, practices and representation that guide human societies in their interactions with the natural environment. Thrupp (1991) notes that Indigenous Knowledge systems are adaptive skills of local people, usually derived from many years of experience that have often been communicated through oral traditions and learned through family members and generations. According to the Center for International Earth Science Information Network (2007), Indigenous Knowledge is local knowledge unique to a given culture or society. It is the systematic body of knowledge acquired by local people through the accumulation of experiences,
informal experiments, and intimate understanding of the environment in a given culture. Gorjestani (2000) argues that IK is not recognized by all who study it since it includes beliefs, values, and practices of a community.

It is from beliefs, values and practices that a community will improve its way of life. The young will be taught norms of a community and the old will be guided by those beliefs. African communities have used IK to attain their current statues.

From the preceding definitions by various scholars, indigenous knowledge refers to unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around specific conditions of women and men indigenous to a particular geographic area. That knowledge is stored in people’s memories and activities and is expressed in folklore, (stories, songs, proverbs, dances, myths), cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws, local language, health practices, agricultural practices, equipment, materials, plant species, animal breeds, among others. The knowledge was transmitted in media readily accepted by the community, like smoke, drums, dress and so on.

1.4 Samia District
Samia District is found in the larger Busia County in Western Kenya. It borders Uganda along Lake Victoria to the West, Bunyala District to the South, Siaya District to the South East and Busia district to the North. It occupies an area of 264.2Km² with a population density of 334 persons per square kilometer (Census 2009). The initial proposition indicated that it was to have three divisions, Sio Port, Nangina and Lubanga; Seven locations and twenty nine sub-locations. But, this has not been implemented and Samia district has only one division, Funyula.
1.4.1 Funyula Division

Funyula is both the district and divisional headquarters. It is a cosmopolitan urban area. Being a district headquarters, civil servants are drawn from all over the republic. Within this division, there is Nangina Mission Hospital, Funyula Police Station, a Post Office, Kenya Commercial Bank, various schools, a village polytechnic and many other institutions which have been instrumental in assisting the dwellers of this division earn a livelihood.

1.4.2 Abasamia

Abasamia are a sub-group of the larger Abaluhya community. The Abaluhya are neighbours to some of the nilotic groups like Luo, Kalenjin, Maasai and Teso. Though considered as one community, the Abaluhya consist of over 18 sub-groups in Kenya and 4 in Uganda, each speaking a different dialect of the Luyha language. The term Luhya refers both to the people and the language. Abasamia are respecters of institutions and hold close family ties. Their families are closely woven and once married always married. This means that the Samia do not advocate for divorce, marriage issues should be resolved amicably. They are hospitable and carry themselves with a lot of dignity. Some sub-groups that constitute the Abaluhya community are: Ababukusu, Abamaragoli, Abawanga, Abanyore, Abamarama, Abashirotsa, Abedakho, Abakhisa, Abesukha, Abatsosto, Abatiriki, Abakabras, Abanyala (of Busia and Kakamega), Abatachoni, Abakhayo, Abamarachi, and Abasamia. Those in Uganda are Abakhekhe, Abagwe, Abagisu and Abasoga, (Kenyanchui 1992). The Abasamia community resides both in Kenya and Uganda. Those in Kenya are found in Samia District of Busia County. They are Bantu by origin and their main economic activities are agriculture and fishing. This study will
be examining the IK of the Abasamia sub-tribe, of the larger Abaluyha community. A
detailed discussion of the Abasamia will be offered later in this study.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is a significant resource that can contribute to increased
efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the development process. It is the basis
for community level decision making in areas of food, medicine, education, natural
resource management and other vital economic and social activities.

According to Msuya (2007); Nkebukwa (2007); and Scheinman, (2002), there are
pertinent issues with regard to preservation and management of IK systems in Africa.
One of them is the threat of extinction of IK. Like other African communities, Samia
IK practices are not in written form. The knowledge has been and continues to be
transmitted orally from generation to generation. In this way it is easy to face
extinction due to lack of records.

The main area of concern of the Samia IK therefore is how to acquire and preserve it.
What measures need to be taken to ensure acquisition, proper conservation and
dissemination of this knowledge?

Among the leading factors that explain the possible extinction of IK is the fact that
concentration has been to IK that has direct cash value like medicine, ignoring areas
such as traditional dance, rituals language, proverbs, riddles and song among others as
they do not contribute directly to profitability.
Lack of documented records on Samia IK has led to its marginalization. The current generation spends most of its time on formal education and are more exposed to western education systems and less to IK. As such, there is no appreciation on the existence of IK. Any one practicing IK as a means of solving problems either agricultural, social or otherwise is viewed as backward or primitive.

Samia IK is threatened with extinction due to issues associated with acquisition, storage and conservation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to acquire, store and conserve the Samia IK for access and dissemination to all who have use for it; hence, the need to do a study that would address this problem.

1.6 Aim of the Study

To explore the different types of indigenous knowledge held by the Samia community and to determine how this knowledge can be acquired, stored and conserved. The study aims to offer an alternative means of conserving IK, different from what has been used traditionally.

1.7 Objectives of the Study

1. Identify the existing forms of IK, its access and use

2. To investigate the nature, extent and factors affecting custody and conservation of the IK

3. Find out the views of the Samia about the need and ways of conserving and utilizing the IK
1.8 Research Questions

1. What is the nature and types IK existing among the Samia?
2. How was Samia IK accessed?
3. Did the Samia have systems in place to conserve their IK?
4. Is there IK that is still in use by the Samia people?
5. What c factors affect the conservation of IK among the Samia?

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

The study was based on the following assumptions:

1. Samia community has IK that can be collected, critiqued and analysed.
2. The IK collected can be conserved for access in the future.
3. IK has immense value to add to the existing pool of knowledge.

1.10 Significance of the Study

It is the contention of this study that IK is a crucial source of information concerning any community from where it is sourced. However, it has been established that most of these IKs are gradually disappearing due to lack of proper recording, storage and thus accessibility. The study thus sought to undertake a recovery of IK held by the Abasamia and allow for its critiquing, analyzing and conserving. This is a significant step towards the salvation of the threatened treasure of IK. The study thus becomes significant as it contributes to the efforts being made to find and conserve IK.

The findings of the study are relevant to scholars of information science; cultural studies and other related disciplines because they will benefit greatly from the final outcome of the study.
The findings of the study will also go a long way in recovering, storing by documenting, analyzing and ensuring accessibility of the Samia IK. The success of this study will further offer an impetus for the study of IK in other communities that have not been documented.

1.11 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is within the confines of information sciences, though the findings may be used by other disciplines. The study will focus on IK in as far as its importance, recovery, storage and dissemination is concerned. To this extent, the study focused on the IK from the Samia community of Samia District.

1.12 Limitations of the study

Because of the large size of Samia district, the researcher focused on eight sub-locations from which the sixteen (two from each sub-location) discussion groups were drawn. The other limitation of the study was time. The study had to be carried out within a specified time as per the plan.

The geographical and time limitations were due to another related limitation - finances and other material resource. It was a big challenge as some respondents expected monetary gains. It became increasingly difficult to constitute discussion groups after some had been misinformed to the effect that they would be paid to participate in the interviews. The researcher went to pains to explain to the respondents that the research was purely academic and that there were no financial benefits that would be derived from the research on the part of the researcher. This helped and those who believed gave information.
1.13 **Summary**

This chapter discussed in detail the introductory items to the study. It focused on the background information of the study and particularly the study area. It is in so doing that the problem that the study set out to address came out clearly. Thus this chapter discussed the problem statement which states the rationale for undertaking this nature of research work.

The chapter further stated the study objectives, research questions, study assumptions, aim and significance of the study, and finally, the scope and limitations of the study. All these give the foundation upon which this research was conceived.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides literature related to the study, recovery, storage and dissemination of IK in Kenya and beyond. This section reviews the relevant literature on Indigenous knowledge that different researchers have documented. The review resources include books, journals, periodicals, magazines and Internet. It is divided into different sections including: Nature and types of IK, areas of IK applications such as education, health, religion, attire, and farming among others. It also discusses the theoretical framework on which the study is based and brings out what other researchers have written on the subject. Looking at other researchers’ works helps legitimize arguments and understand disciplinary traditions within which one is working.

Researchers have in the past looked at IK in difference disciplines. And, as the saying goes:

… we are all but recent leaves on the same old tree of life and if this life has adapted itself to new functions and conditions, it uses the same old basic principles over and over again. There is no real difference between the grass and the man who mows it. (Albert Szent-Györgyi)

This literature review thus deals with literary works that have been done in the past that are related to this study. They were used to enrich the study, identify the gaps and indicate how this particular research would be helpful in filling up those gaps.
2.2 Types of Samia IK

Various forms of IK were used by Abasamia before colonialists came to Kenya. They included family life, education, religion, politics, medicine, blacksmith, climatology, agriculture, fishing, pottery, basket weaving, conflict resolution and clothe-weaving among others. Different persons had different roles in knowledge management, roles they effectively played. With the arrival of the colonialists, people were initiated into the Whiteman’s ways of life and some started abandoning their IK in favour of foreign knowledge. The Whiteman believed that knowledge should be scientifically tested and proved. IK was neglected, undocumented and left to die with the old generation (Ikoja-Odongo, 2009). The research benefits from this work by Ikoja-Odongo, to the extent that its assertions help in nourishing the rationale for undertaking the study. However, this research departs significantly from Ikoja-Odongo’s work in that it does not ‘cry over spilled milk’ but goes on to do something about the situation; to investigate, dig out and analyse the existing IK of the Samia people.

This study focused on the Samia IK as the point of reference. For the Samia people, IK is viewed as self image, a mark of uniqueness, and a springboard to the future. Because of their rich IK, this speech community was self sustaining. In agriculture, like other activities, farming was carried out collectively. This enabled Abasamia have sufficient food for the community. Today senior citizens from the community can be heard making reference to those good old days when food was plenty and it lasted the household to the next harvesting season. The study went out to investigate and find out which IK was being employed by the Samia in this area (food security) and many other areas where IK was applicable.
Knowledge can be divided into two, tacit and explicit. Tacit Knowledge (TK) is hard to put into words. It is expressed through action-based skills and is not rule based. Choo (2000) defines tacit knowledge or organizations as personal knowledge used by members to perform their works and to make sense of their worlds. It is learned through extended periods of experiences and doing a task during which an individual develops a feel for and capacity to make intuitive judgments about the successful execution of the activity. TK resides in people’s mind and involves intangible factors like one’s beliefs and values. This knowledge is difficult to codify or extract from one’s heads. Mutula and Mooko (2008) define it as knowledge gained through personal experiences in a given context and can be shared, transferred, learned through imitations, observations, directions and instructions. IK is classified as tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge, according to Mutula and Mooko (2008) is communicated, shared and transferred through codified forms. Abasamia expressed themselves best through riddles and proverbs when they sounded warnings and/or gave advice or shared life skills. At times they told stories from which an audience listened, derived meaning and learnt from.

2.3 Areas of IK Application

The world over, indigenous knowledge is appreciated. On September17, 2007 the United Nations General Assembly adopted a declaration outlining rights of some 370 million indigenous peoples around the world.

Following two decades of debate, the “United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples” was approved. The Declaration outlines individual and collective rights to culture, language, education, identity, employment and health, thereby
addressing post-colonial issues which had confronted indigenous peoples for centuries. The Declaration aimed to maintain, strengthen and encourage growth of indigenous institutions, cultures and traditions. It also prohibits discrimination against indigenous peoples and promotes their active participation in matters which concern their past, present and future. The declaration was approved when 143 member states including Kenya, which is home to the Samia whose indigenous knowledge is the focal point in this study, voted in its favour. Eleven member states abstained and four voted against the text: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States.

The Samia applied IK in all disciplines of life. It became a way of life to train the youth in the ways of the community. Some of the major areas where the Samia IK was applicable are discussed in the subsequent subheadings.

2.3.1 Child Development

Among the Samia people, child development was a very critical area, as far as community responsibilities are concerned. Young girls and boys had to be natured in the ways of the community. It was the responsibility of the older members of the community to ensure that they used the existing IK to nature the youths correctly. This was to ensure that a respectable and responsible generation was born out of this whole process. For instance, young girls among the Samia spent nights in their grandmother’s hut (esibinje); such girls were considered morally upright and knowledgeable, it was believed they never indulged in premature sex and other immoral practices - they abstained till marriage. The truth was they were taught ways through which they avoided early pregnancies. The current generation lives by experiment and do not heed to advice from their seniors. This has led to unwanted
pregnancies, contraction of diseases and at times death when the victims attempt abortion. The boys were taken care of by their fathers and grandfathers who took care of initiating the male children into Samia-male ways of life.

2.3.2 Education

Indigenous learning was essentially an education for living. Its main purpose was to train the youth for adulthood within the society. Emphasis was placed on normative and expressive goals. Normative goals were concerned with the accepted standards and beliefs governing correct behaviour, while expressive goals were concerned with unity and consensus.

Education as an agent of socialization is the process of acquiring and developing knowledge, skills, attitudes and values desired by the society (Oluoch 1990:3). It is “… the sum total of experiences which mould attitudes and determine conduct of both the child and the adult (Ochola 1976:58). The Samia had structures where the young acquired knowledge from elders. These were the kraal for boys and esibinje for girls in which all disciplines were addressed.

Education is an expansive endeavor. It begins at birth and continues till death. It can be looked at as an influence consciously directed at modifying thought, feelings and other forms of behaviour. Indigenous education in its various forms had many-sided character intimately intertwined with social life. What was taught was related to the social content in which people were called upon to live. Among the Chagga of Tanzania, for example, there was some training in imitative play. It consisted of representations of scenes from adult life by means of which the young were made
familiar with the norms and ideals expected from full and responsible members of the society (Raum, 1965). Today, children at some point ape their parents or adults in their famous plays, *kalongologo* (cha mama). They ape elders on how they run their daily lives.

Before the advent of Europeans, there were traditional African education systems practiced in Africa. Although what was learnt varied from one African community to another, the social, political and economic systems of Abasamia were passed down to the younger generations through an indigenous system of education pertinent to the society. This education was moral, progressive, gradual, and practical. It was about actual life and its experiences using African philosophies of communalism, preparationism, functionalism, and holisticism.

The values, knowledge and skills of society were transmitted by word and example (Bogonko, 1992). Education was characterised by its collective and social nature because every member was learning and teaching at the same time. That education moulded character and moral qualities, developed physical aptitudes and combined manual activities with intellectual exercises. It was a life-long process through which an individual progressed by pre-determined stages from birth to death ultimately arriving at full membership in a group, emerging as a socialised person with knowledge of what was required and emotionally fit for life (Ibid). This is in agreement with the assertion that education and teaching then was characterized by four main features thus:
Education was vocation-specific to prepare the youth for specific roles in society which was collective and social in nature. It was closely linked to the community’s every day social life in both material and spiritual perspectives. It had a multiplicity of aims and methods and was used for moulding character and providing high moral qualities for the youth. Education reflected gradual and progressive achievement, in conformity with successive stages of physical, emotional and mental development of the child (Shiundu and Omulando, 1992).

The content of traditional African education grew out of physical and social situations of any given ethnic group. The diverse Kenyan environment is dominated by mountains, valleys, plains, rivers, lakes, grasslands and forests. A child learnt how to use it fruitfully as well as avert its dangers. Weather and climate were also learnt because they governed the nature of economic activities such as agriculture, hunting, gathering, pastoralism which were the mainstay of the localities. Names of trees and animals; their uses and dangers were learnt as boys herded livestock or tilled land and as girls helped their mothers in their daily chores. They also learned about myths connected with these categories of fauna and flora (Bogonko, 1992).

Abasamia needed such tools as hoes, pangas, axes, spears, pots and baskets to be able to exploit the environment. They also learned how to acquire these implements. Among the Samia, basket-weaving, pottery, blacksmithing, and musical instruments (drums, flutes, harps, horns and trumpets) from animal remains, trees, reeds, and other grasses were specialties for certain families or clans, but could also be learned by anybody interested in learning.
The success of any education system depends not only on the nature of its aims, but also on its content. Indigenous African learning grew out of the immediate environment, whether real or imaginary. From the physical environment children had to learn about weather, landscape and animal as well as insect life. It was a harsh environment, but children had to cope with it. Because life was a real struggle against the difficult aspects of the environment, certain emotional attitudes and sentiments were developed around them. Children had to have knowledge of the important aspects of the environment in order to overcome and exploit them. They had to make proper adjustments to the physical environment by using axes, hoes, spears and other tools, which the experience of the past had helped to evolve. They were taught how to farm, hunt, fish, prepare food, build houses and run a home (Ochitti, 1973).

Morally, a child was governed by clearly spelt out groups of avoidances, prohibitions, and permissions, or simply a strict code of morality for group welfare (Ibid). Other areas of content included clan and ethnic group history, philosophy of life, law and custom and development of reasoning. Aspects of ethnic group language were learnt through narratives, community discussions, legends, poems, songs, proverbs, idioms and stories which were part of oral literature (Bogonko, 1992).

Approach to education was on communal basis beginning with parents as the first teachers, then family members, clan and cultural group, and eventually the entire community (Woolman, 2001). Education, school and life were considered as one and the same process of training for life which prepared the youth for their roles in the community. The methodology of African indigenous education comprised of listening to and observing elders at community discussions, imitation and emulation of adult
activities, and taking part in different aspects of social life. Important objectives of this education were shaping of character in the right direction and provision of acceptable moral qualities. Most of this education was accomplished through peer alliances and interaction with older people who had orientation in the various aspects of community laws, values and morals (Ibid).

At advanced levels, content of education included knowledge of clan history, geography of their clan in relation to others, properties of certain plants including their economic and medicinal worth. Riddles were used to help the youth develop a good sense of reasoning and judgment as well as gaining ability in philosophical thinking (Ibid). There was the gender and vocation-specific component of the curriculum. Boys imitated the survival skills of adult males including approaches to hunting and killing wild animals for meat and skins for shelter and clothing. Girls were introduced to family roles of women through engaging in pottery, basket weaving, firewood gathering, and preparation of food for the family.

This practical education of the youth culminated in a climax of preparation through their participation in varied series of initiation ceremonies or rituals for transition from childhood to adulthood. The initiation ceremonies and rituals had an in-built method of testing endurance and resistance to suffering (Shiundu and Omulando, 1992). During initiation ceremonies, final training for adult life was given to initiates. Boys were trained in duties of men: their roles and responsibilities to the family, defense of clan or tribe, and keeping secrets of the clan. Girls were trained in the duties and responsibilities of women: their roles in marriage and nurturing of children and management of a house. Both boys and girls were trained and given knowledge
on clan relationships. They were then absorbed into their respective communities as fully-fledged adults and were admitted to various social institutions in which their services would be required such as education and apprenticing of the youth.

Samia traditional education was conducted in two separate places for each gender. *Echibi*, (a special house set aside for the owner of the homestead), or kraal (*esidowori*) where elders instructed boys. Girls were instructed in *Esibinje* (communal sleeping place/dormitory) where *Omukade* (wise old lady) acted as tutor. Since she was an old lady, past menopause, it was easy for her to teach without shame or embarrassment. Her hut was a dormitory for all girls in a village. Ominde (1987:39) concedes that:

> ...at the age of adolescence, girls had a more elaborate and deliberate or conscious sex education than they receive today. Instruction on sexual relationships was formerly given by an older woman of the village, whose hut served as a communal sleeping place for the girls.

*Musibinje*, education was emphasized through *engano* (stories), *eminaye* (riddles), *engado* (proverbs) and *enyembo* (songs). *Engano* and *eminaye* were never told during the day. It was believed that if told during the day those being told would be retarded. The researcher’s assumption is, it was a way of ensuring that girls slept *musibinje* to enable them participate in the happenings therein; it was also a way of ensuring that people did not engage in story telling when they were expected to busy themselves with other chores in the homestead.

Characterization of Luyia tales seem to involve mostly animals and humans, and most themes tended to revolve around relationship between the two (Wamukoya 1982). Proverbs according to Wamukoya (1982) are created from extracts of speeches and
wise counsel by those considered to constitute the luyia elders. The Samia used proverbs in everyday communication to enable transmit information with the content there in. Proverbs were used widely in ordinary conservation. A judicious use of proverbs was usually regarded as a sign of wit. Proverbs were the condensed wisdom of the great ancestors. In a given proverb one or two moral ideas were contained in a single sentence or phrase. There are proverbs dealing with cooperation and personal human qualities, authority and domestic life; relationships between children and parents. These were used by the older persons in their dealings with children to convey precise moral lessons, warnings and advice since they made greater impact on the mind when used than ordinary words or sentences (Wamukoya 1982).

As Mwalimu Nyerere once put it, “the purpose of education, whether informal or formal, is to transmit from one generation to the next accumulated wisdom and knowledge of a society, and their active participation in its maintenance or development.” (Nyerere 1982). This is the sort of education which grows out of local environment in order to meet the needs of a local society. An education system whose goals are to enable a society effectively cope with its environment has to be dynamic so as to meet the changing needs of that society as well as the challenges of ongoing changes in its life. Therefore, every society living under normal conditions will strive to bring up its children to become useful members of that community. The ways and means of such upbringing will naturally vary from society to another, because of both objective and subjective conditions peculiar to each society.

The Samia taught and learnt through dance and folk songs. Music formed an integral part of their daily lives. Ceremonies, feasts and festivals were performed to the
accompaniment of music and dance. Among the Acholi (Ochitti 1973) like the Samia, much of the ethical teachings were given to children through folktales, most of which had happy endings and involved a triumph over difficulties, and virtues such as communal unity, hard work, conformity, honesty and uprightness were reflected in many of the folktales.

From the above, indigenous knowledge had a philosophical bearing which included communalism or group cohesion in which parents sought to bring up their children within the community for their own welfare and that of the wider community. Freedom of an individual was completely sub-ordinate to the interests of a clan or tribe and cooperation was preferred to competition.

2.3.3 Health
The other area where IK was very useful was with regard to matters of health. What is traditional medicine? The World Health Organization states that it is difficult to assign one definition to the broad range of characteristics and elements of traditional medicine. This medication commonly referred to as ‘alternative medicine’ counts and should be nurtured to form a basis or foundation on which modern health technologies can be built. Take for instance, a case of the Samia community handling the sick. Until very recently, the community did not accept that HIV/Aids existed. All there was, was ekhira; a condition that befalls one who has gone against the norms and cultural beliefs of the Samia. For instance, if a woman indulged into extra marital sexual affairs (okhuria embeba) then indulged with her husband before a cleansing ritual, the consequence of such an act were fatal. The husband started losing weight and some remedy had to be sought. A concoction (amanyasi) was prepared and given
to both of them (husband and wife) signifying *okhusasana* (reunion). Because of such beliefs, the community was not capable of dealing with HIV/Aids effectively; they still lived in the days when customs were the overriding factor. This scenario has since changed and the Samia now believe that HIV/Aids is real and it kills. They now come out openly and no longer view it as *ekhira*.

As already expressed, the Samia had a wealth of knowledge in medicine. Their knowledge ranged from gynaecological to paediatrics and orthopaedics among other disciplines. All these they used IK that had been passed on to them from their ancestors. This kind of knowledge, if properly conserved in formats that can be accessed can be used as treatment for varied alignments in the wider Kenya.

Abasamia had outstanding treatment for different alignments. *Esiyerekete* (measles) had different herbs for treatment, they included, *Omukhuwogo*, *amayombayombe* (*water lilies*), and *nasiunya*. Snake bites were treated with *obunywakesi*. There were times while breastfeeding, milk dropped into a baby’s ear. This caused pus to ooze from that ear. *Oluberiaberie* was used to treat the condition. Witchcraft was common among the Samia. To eliminate evil powers, leaves from *obukhala* (black jack) that had not flowered were ground, mixed with water to form a concoction that was given to a victim.

In the field of orthopedics, *Omuhuwaige* and *navirundu* were used. Leaves from these plants were ground to form a jelly-like substance which was applied on the affected part. Banana fibers which acted a bandage were then tied around the affected area to prevent the applied medicine from falling off.
In South Africa, the San community identified Hoodia cactus as a valuable plant that has multiple functions: it keeps away hunger and thirst when travelling afar; its sap is used for eye treatment; heal severe stomach pain and can reduce caloric intake (Jain 2008). Information on Hoodia cactus in South Africa has been documented in formats that can be accessed by many, and that is why its functions are known. Sangoma or inyanga refers to a person who practices traditional (herbal) medicine or has supernatural healing powers among Southern African communities. The herbal medicine that Sangomas produce is referred to a muthi. Sangomas are believed to perform healing embedded in the beliefs of diverse cultures in Southern Africa, that ancestors in the afterlife guide and protect the living, (Isilow 2007).

Indigenous people have names for plants and insects that have not yet been identified by the world’s botanists and entomologies. The Kallaywayas, wondering healers of Bolivia, make use of 600 medicinal herbs; traditional healers in Southeast Asia may employ as many as 6500 plants for drugs. Almost all trees and many plants have a place in medicinal lore, (Isilow 2007).

2.3.4 Farming
Agriculture was yet another area where IK was applied. This involves a number of farming technologies that have repercussions across the whole spectrum of conservation (Mwaura 2008). These practices include slush and burn, shifting, cultivation intercropping, selective cultivation and others that seek to optimize food production.
According to Batuuca and Nkanda (2005), agricultural innovations introduced in Uganda during the second half of the 19th century distorted traditional agricultural practices which used to sustain the lives of Ugandans. Since time immemorial, communities used IK to sustain themselves. The production of indigenous crop varieties was relatively easy. People only needed soil, rain, seed and labour which were locally available. Because of the big chunks of land the Samia owned, crop rotation and intercropping helped in high yields. Land was left fallow for a long time before cultivating after which it was fertile and ready for crop.

Traditional foods had a lot of ritual significance among the people of Uganda; mainly because they maintained linkages between the living, dead and living dead (Batuuka and Nkanda 2005). For instance, among the Bantu speaking ethnic groups in Uganda (Basoga, Baganda, Banyoro, Batooro, Bakiga, Samia, Banyore and Banyankole) who are the majority, the dead were buried in banana plantations. This implied that banana plantations were both a food store for the living and a home for the dead ancestors (Pretty 1995). Much of the wild game and fish have disappeared due to systematic environmental degradation of forests, bush and wetlands in a bid to open up large scale farming.

2.3.5 Religion
J. S. Mbiti, a renowned on African Religion and Philosophy, is known for his famous allegation that ‘Africans are notoriously religious.’ Religion is another area where IK was applicable in the African context, as in many other communities in the world. Religiosity was part of the indigenous African person. It was difficult to put a demarcation between religion and other aspects of the individual’s life. Christian
missionaries in particular at times found themselves at odds over the place of indigenous knowledge, beliefs and customs in the emerging Christian order. From missionaries’ point of view, total renunciation of the old order was a prerequisite for acceptance of the new.

Among Africans, traditional rulers derived their power from special ties with ancestral spirits and gods according to traditional beliefs. Their power was largely mystical, magical and was considered a channel through which life forces were distributed to the entire community (Batuuka and Nkanda 2005). Samia rulers wielded a lot of power in all aspects of life. It was as though they had the right to life and wealth. They were consulted at every stage and their responses were law. Failure to implement their orders was considered gross insubordination and was punishable.

2.3.6 Conflict Resolution

Conflicts are a threat to community’s survival. They are caused by competition of resources, injustices, hunger, poverty and bad governance. We are all different and react to issues differently. The Samia were taught to avoid deeds and issues that caused harm to a family and its generations.

Traditional conflict resolutions in Africa are generally socio-political and economic realities of life-styles of the communities (Jain 2008) As much as there is this generalization, resolution mechanisms are unique to each community. The customary courts rely on goodwill of the society to adhere to its ruling (Edossa et al 2005). In Ethiopia, the Gadaa system is in place to handle conflict issues in Oromia. In Kenya there are intra and inter ethnic conflicts which occur as a result of rivalry on the use of
natural resources – water and grazing land among pastoralists in Kajiado and Laikipia. Apart from the government intervening, the affected parties front their elders to resolve the conflicts amicably.

In Nigeria, Kola nut (cola *accuminata*) and fresh palm frond (*omu*) were/are key instruments of peace negotiations and conflict resolutions in Igbo society (Chimarack 2002). Among the Samia, *esibudi* (traditional brew) was used during process of conflict resolution. Elders gathered at one of the aggrieved party’s homestead. In his *esidwuori*, *esibudi* was placed centrally to panelists. Each person had a siphon dipped into the pot. *Enjehe enyingi sichikayira olwao okhureta* (many siphons do not stop yours from siphoning). This proverb means that issues were to be dealt with collectively. Everyone present had to participate in the discussion to enable them arrive at a solution. Some of this brew was poured on the floor in appreciation of their ancestors who were part of the meeting; in fact, they were considered the chair and also had to drink from the same pot. Though invisible, ancestors had their omnipotent and omnipresent roles well played. Cases were resolved without fear or favour. Those found guilty paid fines attached to the offence.

### 2.3.7 Attire

Traditional attire plays an important role in identification of culture, tribe or country and sustains indigenous culture. In Nigeria’s presidential politics, khaki signified military rule, while *agbada* denotes civilian rule. In the quest of an uncompromising nationalist identity, the Baganda rejected the style of their immediate colonizers, the Portuguese. Instead, they combined Western and African dress practices as a hallmark of their chosen cosmopolitan identity, one that was removed both from the traditions
of their parents and imperialism of their colonisers, (Kimani 2004). The Samia borrowed heavily from the Baganda. Women wear *gomess* (an attire made from twelve meters of material that only has its sleeves stitched and the rest is open. It is wrapped around the body with most of it overlapping around the waist and fastened with a three-meter material - belt) and men *kanzu* (dress-like long attire mainly white in colour) during honourable functions. These attires flow down to the ankles of the wearer. They are respectable forms of dress worn by women and men respectively. Before the *kanzu* and *gomess*, the Samia wore hides from certain animals like leopard or cheetah and hats made from animal skin mainly the baboon or chimpanzee. Only wealthy people adorned such skin, the rest wore those from goats and sheep, while the young went naked.

### 2.3.8 Disaster Management

Most African countries suffer from a range of natural disasters including drought, floods, landsides, windstorms, thunderstorms, lightning strikes and epidemics. Communities have an array of early warning indicators and well developed structures through which wisdom of a community was applied to quickly deal with disaster. The structures included a council of elders which had at its disposal speed and strength of numerous warriors that could be used to investigate a particular phenomenon or to pass on urgent messages.

Indigenous knowledge in disaster predication and early warning is based on keen observation of behaviour in animals, birds, insects, vegetation, trees, winds and water temperatures, clouds earth movements and celestial bodies, (Mwaura, 2008). In many areas of Kenya the presence of snakes and other reptiles as well as wild animals
around homesteads in search of water and food indicated prevalence and continuity of drought. Around Lake Victoria, arrival of a common swallow (*Hirundo angolenss*) in large numbers circling the sky is an indicator of the onset of rains (DMCN 2004).

In Swaziland, communities use a variety of methods to predict weather. Most indicators are based on environmental cues and animal behaviour. For example, the height of nest of the *emahlokholoko* bird (*ploceus ssp.*) is used to predict floods. The cry of the *phezuwembkhono* (*Cuculus solitarius*) bird signals the start of wet season in August-November.

In Tanzania, animals feature prominently in prognosis. For example, by reading signs on goat intestines, specialized Maasai elders could divine drought and famine, social conflicts, diseases, childbirth, peace or war in chieftdom. If the small intestines were without curd, drought or famine or hostility and war were to be expected in the chieftdom. If many goats than usual were seen mating in August-September this was seen as a sign that the season was going to have a lot of rain, (Edje 2004).

### 2.4 Theoretical framework

This study titled, Indigenous Knowledge of the Samia community, Samia District, Kenya, is based on the Symbolic interaction theory. People act based on symbolic meanings they find within any given situation. They thus interact with symbols forming relationships around them. The goals of our interactions with one another create shared meaning (West and Turner 2002).
2.5 Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interaction is one of many theories in social sciences. This theory states that facts are based on and directed by symbols. The foundation of this theory is meanings. Symbolic interaction examines meanings emerging from reciprocal interaction of individuals in social environment with other individuals and focuses on the question of which symbols and meanings emerge from the interaction between people.

Symbolic interactionism perceives individuals as a social entity which has lost its dynamism since 1970’s. New symbolic interactionism is a more different and synthetic perspective than that of the period of Mead and Blumer; it has entered a period that Fine (1992) calls post-Blumerist” era (Slattery, 2007).

Symbolic interaction theory has developed in the light of the theorists such as Dewey (1930), Cooley (1902), Parks (1915), Mead (1934, 1938) among others. Symbolic interactionists demonstrate differences in respect of their points of view. Although indigenous knowledge systems vary from one society to another, their goals are often similar. All interactionists agree that the source of data is human interaction. Moreover, there is a general agreement among the symbolic interactionists that perspectives and empathy developing abilities of participants are key subjects of symbolic interaction (Stryker and Vryan 2003; Berg, 2003).

Schenk and Holman (1980) state that symbolic interaction is a dynamic theory because according to this theory objects feature meanings within themselves and individuals formulate their activities in a direction of their evaluation of themselves, other people and objects around them; thus, it is the social actors that attribute meaning to objects according to this perspective.
The most important theorist of symbolic school is George Herbert Mead. Mead is a pragmatist and anti-dualist philosopher. He believes that mind and ego are products of society. Mead assumes that symbols develop mind and they are used as means of thinking and communication (Ashworth, 2000) Mead focused on how people interact in their daily lives by means of symbolic interaction and how they create order and meaning (Korgen & White, 2008).

According to Blumer (1969) humans form ‘meaning’ in two ways: (1) that attributed to objects, events, phenomenon, (2) and as a “physical attachment” imposed on events and objects by human. Blumer believes that meaning is a condition that emerges as a result of interaction of group members and not an intrinsic feature of the object (Tezcan, 2005). Consequently, meaning is created as a result of interaction between people, and it allows people produce facts that form the sensory world. These facts are related to how people form meaning. Thus, fact consists of the interpretation of various definitions. Thomas (1928) says “it is not important whether interpretation is accurate or not”; he believes that fact is based on personal perceptions and changes thereof. The Samia communicated in parables. Receivers translated the parables depending on the contexts in which they were used and got meanings of what was being discussed. Such were the teachings the old taught the young as they sat outside at night in the kraal or around a bonfire guarding the home.

There are three core principles in symbolic interaction perspective of Blumer: meaning, language and thinking. Symbolic interaction theory acknowledges the principle of meaning as the centre of human behaviour. Language provides a meaning to humans by means of symbols. It is symbols that differentiate social relation of
humans from the level of communication of animals. Human beings give meaning to symbols and express them by means of language. Consequently, symbols form the basis of communication – these are indispensable elements of a formation of any kind of communication act. As the last principle in symbolic interaction, perspective thinking changes interpretation of individuals pertaining to symbols (Nelson, 1998).

Objects, humans, conditions and events do not feature in intrinsic meaning. Meaning is attributed to these elements by means of human interaction. For instance, girls in esibinje listening to their peers story telling in the presence of their grandmother; they listened but all did not perceive in the same manner. Each interpreted according to their understanding though the concept was one. This session can be defined as a window opening to the outer world (Berg, 2000). As it can be understood from this example, humans form meaning as a result of their understanding and experiences. These experiences are not random or unrelated.

There are certain criticisms directed towards symbolic interactionist paradigm. One of these criticisms is that symbolic interactionism is largely deprived of a real social envision. In other words, symbolic interactionism does not put forward a society picture or theory. Since it sometimes describe society as a thing only in the minds of people (Slattery, 2007). This theory, as also stated by Udehn (2001), is an ‘American’ idea that stresses the freedom of the individual and limited role of the society.

The second of the problems of symbolic interactionist paradigm is stressed by:

... not taking into account human emotions and getting interested in social structure to a limited extent. In fact, the first one of these two incompetencies imply that symbolic interaction is not completely psychological and not completely sociological (Meltzer et al, 1975; Slattery, 2007).
This theory pictures meaning as something emerging by itself during interaction under a certain condition. It does not take into account the basic social context in which the interaction is positioned. Consequently, it does not produce the source of meaning. Moreover, symbolic interactionism does not perceive any social reality beyond the one human created with their interpretations and for that reason it denies explaining society on a more general level (Slattery, 2007).

In summary, the principal condition for formation of meaning is the existence of an event. As Blumer points out, the meaning of things directs action” (O’Shaughnessy, 1992). In order to understand human behaviours, it is necessary to understand definitions, meanings and processes formed by humans. Elements such as social roles, traditional structures, rules, laws, purposes, provide raw materials to individuals forming definitions (Aksan, N. et al 2009). In this context, symbolic interaction stresses social interaction, debate of definitions and taking emphatic role between people.

According to LaRossa and Reitzes (1993), people act based on symbolic meanings they find within any given situation. Therefore, people interact with the symbols, forming relationships around them. The goals of our interactions with one another are to create shared meaning. This theory values social interactions through specific social encounters, which are Language, meaning and message. For instance, the Samia and Luo share certain traditions and beliefs. They bury their dead at a particular space in a particular position. In this scenario, the right side reflects symbolic maleness, authority and power Iteyo (2009). It is imperative that all the
males must be buried on the right side of the door of the homestead, towards the gate. Here the male body must lie on its left side while the female one lies on its right; it symbolically indicates that the dead know how they are treated in death.

Naming among the Samia symbolizes seasons and times. For instance, children born during rainy season are Nafula or Wafula, efula is rain in olusamia; Ojiambo or Ajiambo those born in the evening, esijiambo is Samia word for evening.

Language in itself is a symbolic form, which is used to anchor meanings to the symbols. Studying Samia IK, the researcher communicated with respondents in olusamia, a language they understood best to gather details of their IK with a view to conserving it. Meanings were modified through an interpretive process whereby one first internalized the message to create meaning, which was then checked externally and with other people.

2.5.1 Language, Meaning, and Messages

Language, unlike other aspects of communication, distinguishes the communication of humans from that of animals. Language is vital to human communication, through language; people name and evaluate objects, sensations, feelings, and situations they experience. Through symbols, they create, manage, and share interpretations of physical world. For a society to function, people use words to create and coordinate their social, political, and economic activities. Because of the power of language, people externalize and internalize their thoughts and those of others (West and Turner 2002). Social interaction and cooperative behavior occur through social or shared reality, understanding others learning what others people know, (Berger and Luckman, 1996).
Language is not only a means by which people interact, but also vital to the cognitive processes used to define and evaluate one another (Berger and Bradac, 1982). Without knowledge of these cognitive processes, Hewes and Planalp (1987) reasoned, communication theorists would be unable to explain misunderstanding and its effects on other relational variables such as deception, conflict, and failure to coordinate efforts. As Selbold and Spitzberg (1982) concluded, such insights help unlock the mysteries of human communication.

Communication can hardly be treated without reference to interpretations actors bring in their attempts to symbolically interact. Without attention to ways in which actors represent and make sense of the phenomenal world, construe event associations, assess and process actions of others, and interpret personal choices in order to initiate appropriate symbolic activity.

Extending this idea, Hewes and Planalp (1987) concluded, “Effective communication requires not only that people share knowledge (inter-subjectivity) but also that they know they share knowledge”. Language allows people to function on two levels: that of their individual thoughts and the realization that others share similar meanings and interpretations. Without a shared language an interpreter will be required and in the process meanings might be altered.

2.5.2 Communication in Organizations

Since the dawn of time, people have worked and played together. One probably cannot remember a time when they were not part of several organizations. The Samia community is a composition of many individuals working together. Their activities were unified under one leadership and tied together with norms that protected and made them abide by rules and regulations that governed their community.
Organizations communicate with people outside and inside of them. Organizational networks bring news from around the globe. People communicate with the inside through conversation and by using professionally prepared documents, such as newsletters, circulars and notices. The Samia communicated with others and themselves orally through folklore, dress, dance, song, riddles, proverbs and other modes that were dictated by occasions.

The study of organizational communication centers on means by which people gain information, shape opinions, make decisions, coordinate efforts, voice expectations, assimilate into organizations, leave organization, create rapport with one another, conserve gained information or knowledge. The Samia are a specific organization and information generated from this organization is communicated to the outside of the community through symbols that communicate meaning to audiences. Through communication, people coordinate their actions to achieve individual and/or collective goals. This process begins early in people’s lives and continues as they mature. The Samia communicated with each other at different levels. The communication was either top-bottom, and vice versa, or horizontally, depending or issues at hand.

2.6 Rationale for the Theory
Knowledge, in this case, indigenous knowledge, is symbolized by words. Interpretation is by means of words. For instance, the structure of a Samia homestead has a fixed pattern whose blueprint has been passed on for centuries. It is like the constitution upon which all other legal issues are resolved. Indeed it is the platform where the spirits intermingle with the living, Iteyo (2009). The unborn, the young and the old must interact in this space (home) with the departed ancestors who are known
as the living dead. However, for the interactions to fare-well, there were rules of engagement. To some people they are taboos, others call them etiquette, yet to others, they are a cultural heritage. Whatever the case may be, the dead occupy the most exalted position according to Iteyo. That is why the dead must be buried at a particular space in a particular position. In this scenario, the right side reflects symbolic maleness, authority and power, he observes. It is imperative that all the males must be buried on the right side of the door of a homestead. Here the male body must lie on its left side while the female one lies on its right.

As discussed above, symbolic interactionism deals with language, meaning and message which are the tenets of this theory. Meaning contained in a symbol is not fixed. It depends on the context in which the message is given; it can be equated to idioms in the English language. In other words symbolism is a matter of interpretation. Symbolism can also be seen as a process of creating layers of action/knowledge. Some symbols are words, and words can be used with them to create meaning for knowledge to come to life through verbal communication. For example, for a hut to be described, words will be used for one to know or get meaning of the subject of discussion.

Abasamia are polygamous community, the eldest wife, (Omukhaye) lady of the home after a certain age rarely got her conjugal rights, but when ceremonies like marriage of their children, planting and harvesting time were at hand, she had to indulge sexually with her husband to enable all members of the family participate in whatever it was that they purposed to achieve to signify start of that function. This can be construed to mean respect and honour among the elders and the community in general
whereas someone else can look at it from a different perspective to mean neglect or denial of that woman’s conjugal rights. Unless one understands its symbolic meaning, interpretations can be vast and varied.

Language, meaning and message come into play when dealing with IK of the Samia. Samia people use proverbs, idioms, sayings, song, dance and dress as a way of communication. Words are not applied in their literary meaning, as they do not give the exact meaning to issues at hand. For example, when someone talks or gives instruction and the recipient does not heed or understand, the person giving instruction would simply exclaim, *wa gooba*? Loosely translated to: Did you escort?

**Meaning:** This was made in reference to a monitor lizard that is believed to be deaf; and if one chased this reptile to its hole, their hearing ability was interfered with. It is therefore upto the recipient to interpret the message in accordance with language and meaning attached to it. This way the message would be delivered in its true meaning and with the weight attached to it.

Among the forty-two tribes in Kenya there might be few or none who have direct translations of the phrase “thank you”. The Samia to some extent the Luhya say *otio/orio* the Samias in Uganda say *webare*, the Luo - *ero kamano*, the Kikuyu - *negwo* all these phrases are translated to mean, “that is it or it is that way”, thus bringing the issue of meaning which has to be determined by the context of the words or phrases used in a given message.
2.7 Summary

Indigenous knowledge can be summed up as the wisdom of a people for survival in their own environment. Different African communities have their ways of dealing with health, education, agriculture, religion and disaster. Their IK has gone along way in sustaining them and they have used that knowledge as a base of their livelihood.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction
To successfully carry out research, there are laid down steps to follow. The steps so outlined can be equated to what Munro said: Man is like an onion. His potential is exposed one layer at a time until all he is, is known by all. A research, being an art of scientific investigation, is here defined as a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic (Kothari C.R., 2004). It comprises defining and redefining problems; formulating hypotheses or suggested solutions; collecting, organizing and evaluating data; making deductions and reaching conclusions; and at last carefully testing the conclusions to determine whether they fit the formulated hypothesis (ibid). The problem that this study addresses itself to is to explore the different types of indigenous knowledge held by the Samia community of Samia District and to determine how this knowledge can be conserved and accessed.

This chapter describes the research methods and techniques that were used in the study. It covers research design, study population sampling procedures, data collection techniques, data analysis methods and ethical considerations to the study.

3.2 Research Design
The study was conducted through a qualitative research approach. The study examined the Samia indigenous knowledge with a view to have the knowledge conserved for access. Such issues are best investigated through a survey which according to Newmand (1977), often uses a sample of selected people but generalizes the results to the entire population being studied. Samia is a large district. Initially, it was hoped that it would have three divisions but this did not come to pass. Eight of
the twenty-nine locations were studied. Both Samias in Kenya and Uganda share similar knowledge. For this reason, the chosen division were representative of the entire community.

3.3 Methodology

The study used qualitative methods. Straus and Corbin (1998) say that qualitative methods can be used to better understand a phenomenon about which little is known. According to Tripath (1999) and Padgett (1998), qualitative research is less interested in generalization of findings and pay attention to specific features of social situations in which research is carried out that apply at a higher and conceptual level. Bryman (2008) states that qualitative research usually emphasized words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. Data in form of words from documents, observations, transcripts and theory can be casual or non causal and is often inductive (Bowen 2005). Reports from this method are rich with detail and insights into participant’s experiences of the world. It may be in harmony with the readers experiences (Stake, 1995), with makes it more meaningful. The population sampled gave an account of their experiences and observations as first hand information. Their narrations formed the basis of data collection.

Gubrium and Holstein (1997) suggest four traditions of qualitative research:

1) Naturalism: seeks to understand social reality in its own terms; ‘as it really is’; provides rich descriptions of people and interaction in natural settings.

2) Ethnomethodology: seeks to understand how social order is created through talk and interaction; has a naturalistic orientation.

3) Emotionalism: exhibits a concern with subjectivity and gaining access to ‘inside’ experiences is concerned with the inner reality of humans.

4) Postmodernism: emphasizes method talk; is sensitive to the different ways social reality can be constructed
Hoepfl (1997) has the following to say on qualitative research:

- Qualitative research uses the natural setting as the source of data meaning the researcher attempts to observe, describe and interpret settings as they are.
- The researcher acts as the “human instrument” of data collection.
- Qualitative researchers predominantly use inductive data analysis.
- Qualitative research reports are descriptive, incorporating expressive language and the “presence of voice in the text”.
- Qualitative research has interpretive character, aimed at discovering the meaning events have for the individuals who experience them and the interpretations of those meanings by the researcher.
- Qualitative researchers pay attention to the idiosyncratic as well as the pervasive seeking and uniqueness of each case.
- Qualitative research has an emergent (as opposed to predetermined) design, and researchers focus on emerging process as well as the outcomes or product of research.
- Qualitative research is judged using special criteria for trustworthiness.

The above traditions and characteristics of qualitative research as noted by Hoepfl (1997); Gubrium and Holstein (1997) relate to the present study as the research took place in a natural setting where people who had knowledge that was being sought were interviewed. The researcher went to homes of a selected population to interview them and get knowledge on the information they had stored. Participants in these sessions were relaxed and had interactive discussions as data was being collected. Discussions involved real life experiences in instances where participants lived then, otherwise, others had lived with their grandparents who had given them the
information that was being sought. Qualitative research as applied to this study was fundamentally interpretative with regard to particular information given rather than being generalized.

Glazier and Powell (1992); Pace (2004); Sadhu and Singh (1996) and Padgett (2004) stress the relevance of qualitative research in information needs research and consider the humanistic behaviour of the research and those being interviewed. This study aimed to find out the types of indigenous knowledge held by the Samia community and how it can be conserved and accessed. Such social phenomena are best investigated with minimal or prior expectations in order to develop explanation of these phenomena (Bowen, 2005). In this study, the researcher held dialogue with and recorded conversations in a natural setting on how IK was passed on from one generation to the next.

3.3.1 Rationale for qualitative research

Qualitative research implies a direct concern with experience as it is lived or undergone, (Sherman and Webb, 1988). It aims to not only understand the world but of participants whose world it is. Hence, qualitative research must occur in a natural setting (Boghan and Biklen, 1982; Marshal and Rossman 1995). The researcher lived among respondents for the entire data collection period and interacted with them to varying degrees. This enabled close interaction with respondents. Key interest was the process of how and why things happened the way they did and to get meaning of what would be found. According to Marshal and Rossman (1995), qualitative research has four purposes, exploration, explanation, description and predictions. This study set out to explore, explain, describe and make predictions concerning the Samia IK.
3.4 Study population
The study population comprised adult persons aged eighteen years and above. Persons in this age bracket were considered adults capable of having IK depending on their background and interest on the same. A total of 200 respondents from Buyingi, Wakhungu, Bukiri, Buburi, Nambuku, Edirakho, Esidonge, Ganjala sub-locations of Samia district formed the study population. From every sub-location, two discussion groups were formed with Ganjala forming three. Every discussion group comprised seven to ten adults of the Samia community. Seventeen such groups were organized during the data collection process. Acquiring knowledge depends on the interest and attitude of the person acquiring has towards what is being acquired. Therefore age was not a limiting factor. When missionaries came and initiated some people into Christianity, such persons delinked themselves from the community, its activities and way of life. They adopted the missionary way of life and considered those in the secular world sinful. On the other hand, those in the secular world considered Christians “people who had lost direction and forsaken the community.”

3.5 Sample Design
Mugo (2005) notes, the purpose of sampling is to use a relatively small number of cases to find out much about larger numbers and get a representative sample from the larger population for the study and be able to produce accurate generalization about a large population. Samia district with a projected population of 100,300 according to the 2009 population census has one (1) division, seven (7) locations and thirty-one (31) sub-locations. Because of the many sub-locations in the district, purposive sampling was used. Israel (2003), Kothari (2000), and Mugo (2005) argue that the size of a sample can be influenced by the purpose of study or population size. In this
instance, the researcher was interested in documenting the Samia IK with accuracy with a view to conserving it hence the selection of the population who had direct contact with IK or had acquired it from those who had it.

According to Slater (1990), choice of a method of selection of respondents in qualitative research depends upon the research objectives and research budget. She argues that qualitative research is interested in depth and detail not breadth. Slater adds that because of time and cost, a researcher can interview in depth and detail a limited number of individual respondents as the number will depend on financial and time constrains. She says that useful qualitative work can be done with as few as twenty interviews.

3.5.1 Sampling techniques

Different sampling techniques were used, which were in line with the aim of the study of seeking information from a chosen population. Stratified random, purposive and snowball sampling were used. The district has one division, seven locations and thirty-one sub-locations. The intended population was Abasamia. Data was collected from eight sub-locations hence the stratification and purposive sampling. Justification for using eight sub-locations was the fact that Abasamia share cultural norms and beliefs and information sourced from the eight sub-locations was applicable and representative of the entire district. The study used purposive sampling with a view to increasing the level of accuracy in estimating parameters.

Snowball method was used to identify possible respondents as suggested by the group discussion that was in session. The chosen respondents also knew who else apart from
themselves was a vital resource of the information being sought. However, some researchers had their reservation on the use of this method. Snowball sampling is often criticized as a biased form of sampling because selection is non-random. Salganik and Heckathorn (2004) assert “that in the absence of knowledge of individual inclusion probabilities in different waves of the snowball sample, unbiased estimation is not possible”. Additionally, reliance on referrals by informants casts doubt on representativeness of samples constructed using these procedures because the sampling frame is often biased towards the inclusion of units with dense networks of interrelationships. As Browne (2005) notes, the exclusion of units from these networks (for any reason) almost certainly prevents their inclusion in research. Also, where and with whom snowball samples start can be determinative of inclusive as well as exclusionary boundaries. Moreover, “it is difficult to assess who has been excluded when the group under investigation is hidden” (Browne 2005: 52).

3.5.2 Sample Size
A census was carried out on persons aged eighteen years and above in eight sublocations of Samia district. The population interviewed varied to enable them remind each other on the knowledge passed to them as it is not easy for one person to remember all knowledge with detail. What one respondent had forgotten was remembered by another. However, there were respondents who had more information on the IK than others, they gave elaborate answers and demonstrations on the Samia IK, how it was acquired, conserved and disseminated.
Samia district is divided into seven locations (strata): Nambuku, Namboboto, Odiado, Nangosia, Agenga, Nanguba and Bwiri. Persons of varying age groups are found in these strata. Purposive sampling was used to get respondents in each stratum of different ages to enable get information on how much they knew about the Samia IK. Different ages were able to clarify facts or refute them as each of them gave an account of a real life experience or that which they had heard from parents or grandparents who lived then. Each discussion group comprised 7-10 persons of varying ages and discussions were interactive with each member giving their bit on IK. Gender was not a limiting factor but men participants were more. Discussions were held in identified homes which were central to respondents. As explained by Kerlinger (2000), purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling which is characterized by the use of judgment and a deliberate effort to obtain representative sample. Fraekel and Wallen (1993) and Hoepfl (1997) observe that purpose sampling enables researchers choose a sample that they believe would provide data required and argues that purposeful sampling is a dominant strategy in qualitative research. This was reason enough to get persons who were rich in Samia IK and were willing to share that knowledge.

3.6 Data collection

Face-to-face interviews and focus groups were used in data collection. This is in line with the views of Busha and Harter (1980) who recommended that, the most appropriate method to obtain data in a survey is face to face interview. It is not always that selected populations will give a one word answer. Therefore, while interviewing, the respondents were given time to explain themselves in detail and even give significances and relevancies of that IK to the current society.
According to Hannabus (1996) and Odini (1991), the use of personal interviews yield a high percentage of returns as intended population can be reached. They add that information from interviews is useful for fuller explanation of the phenomenon under investigation. Bhandarkar and Wilkinson (2000) state that the interviewer can collect information about personal characteristics and the environment which is of great value in interpreting results. Also, Bailey (1994) states that the aim of the qualitative interview method is to describe and interpret the themes that exist in the interviewee’s life sphere. He also observes that interviews tend to have a better response rate than questionnaires. The information is also likely to be more accurate compared to that secured through other techniques as the interviewer who is present can clear up the seemingly inaccurate or irrelevant answers by explaining the question to the respondent. The interviewer is able to attentively check and use special devices to rectify the responses.

Discussion from the focus groups elicited constructive debates from the original evidence of data as was acquired from the users of the IK. This method enabled the researcher gain insights into the research topic from respondents, by probing for more specific answers, a question led to another. When questions or answers were not understood, it was possible to rephrase or seek clarification to answers given. The discussion constituted a learning forum; where respondents differed in opinion explanation was sought and accurate and informed answers arrived at.

3.6.1 Interviews

Hussay and Collins (2003) observe that interviews are a method of collecting data from selected participants who are asked questions to find out what they know, think,
and feel; about the study. Kerlinger (2000) says interviews if conducted properly, can yield more information than any other data collection method. During interviews, the researcher was able to seek clarification where in doubt. The respondents gave additional information which would not have been possible with other data collection instruments.

3.6.2 Rationale for using face-to-face interview

The use of face-to-face interviews was suitable for a number of reasons. The Samia like many other communities in Africa and Kenya in particular were an oral society and documented sources were a rare occurrence. Absence of documented sources left face to face interview as the most appropriate method of getting information from respondents. The study sought insights into the Samia IK and face to face interviews presented a platform as the researcher probed and sought clarification when in doubt or where answers were not clear. Further, these methods allowed for the control of the interview process.

3.6.3 Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion is a planned, relaxed, naturalistic dialogue among a small group of people on a specific topic. Information is obtained more quickly because only one interview is scheduled for a group, rather than one for each person. The group setting allows individuals to use ideas of others as cues to fully elicit their own views. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that, Merton et al. coined the term “focus group” in 1956 to apply to a situation in which an interviewer asks group members very specific questions about a topic after considerable research has already been completed. Kreuger (1988) defines a focus group as a “carefully planned discussion
designed to obtain perceptions in a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment”

3.6.4 Rationale for focus groups

Focus groups are a form of group interview that capitalizes on communication between research participants in order to generate data. Although group interviews are often used as a quick and convenient way to collect data from several people simultaneously, focus groups explicitly use group interaction as part of the method. This means that instead of a researcher asking each person to respond to a question in turn, people are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each others’ experiences and points of view, (Kitzinger, 1994). The method is particularly useful for exploring people’s knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why.

The idea behind focus group method is that group processes can helps people explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible on a one to one interview. Group discussion is particularly appropriate when an interviewer has a series of open ended questions and wishes to encourage research participants to explore issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities (Bryman 2008). When group dynamics work well, participants work alongside a researcher, taking the research in new and often unexpected directions. Discussion group members were all from the Samia speech community and used proverbs and idioms to express themselves as they gave answers to asked questions. Samia as a speech community expresses itself best
through phrases and proverbs which best explain content of texts being referred to. Explaining these phrases and proverbs would involve the use of very many words or sentences to clearly bring out their meaning.

3.6.4 Limitations of Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions have a considerable potential for research questions in which meaning is jointly constructed. Bryman (2008) outlines some of the limitations as follows:

- The researcher has less control over proceedings than with individual interviews. Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) note that there is a tradition among some focus group researchers to value the method because it provides greater opportunity than most other methods for research participants to have some ownership of the interview and the research process more generally. The question of control raises issues for researchers of how far they can allow a focus group discussion to take over the running of the proceedings.

- The data are difficult to analyse. Developing a strategy of analysis that incorporates both themes in what people say and patterns of interaction is not easy. Recordings are prone to inaudible elements which affect transcription.

- They are difficult to organize. Not only does one secure an agreement with people to participate, but also persuade them to turn up at a particular time; small payments or tokens are given as inducement. It is common practice to over recruit for each session on the grounds that at least two people will not turn up.
• Recordings are time consuming to transcribe than equivalent recordings of individual interviews. There variations in voice pitch and to take account of who says what is not easy.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

3.7.1 Interview Schedule

An interview schedule comprises questions or topics that an interviewer intends to explore during an interview. Questions in this schedule were semi structured and they allowed respondents give their own views. The schedule ensured good use of limited interview time. In keeping with the flexible nature of qualitative research designs, the interview guide was modified over time to focus on issues in question. The schedule had questions that touched on: types of IK among the Samia; nature of dissemination; institutions of dissemination and custodians of the IK among others.

3.7.2 Notebooks and Tape Recorder

Notebooks and a tape recorder were used to record data. Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) notes that the interviewer should record the respondent’s answers exactly as expressed and that no attempt should be made to summarize, paraphrase or correct bad grammar. They argue that recordings have the advantage of capturing data more faithfully than hurriedly written notes, and can make it easier for a researcher to focus on an interview. Patton (2002) observes that researchers sometimes need to rely on field notes written or recorded data during the interview. He further notes that a tape recorder is ‘indispensable’. Lincoln (1995) differs with Mugenda and Mugenda and does not recommend recording except for unusual reasons. Lincoln bases his
recommendation on the intrusiveness of recording devices and the possibility of technical failure. The likelihood of missing out on vital facts is high. During a conversation, it is not possible to capture the entire conversation verbatim except by use of a tape recorder. Utmost care was taken to ensure that the device functioned effectively during the interviewees.

3.7.3 Instrument Validation
A pilot study was carried out to test content validity and reliability of the instruments that were used. According to Wiersma and Jurs (2005) a pilot study is when an initial draft of questionnaires and interviews are tried out with a pilot run, which is done with a limited number of participants. Ten respondents from Sirekeresi sub-location were interviewed. They helped identify ambiguous questions in the interview schedule. Having pointed out the ambiguities, the researcher improved on them and tested the schedule with another group of five in the same location. When they understood the questions that were being asked, it was proof that the instrument would work for the entire process. The pilot study proved the reliability of the instrument and relevance of the questions.

3.7.4 Data Collection Procedures
The researcher obtained a research permit from the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. On receipt of the permit, she reported to the District Commissioner, Samia District and informed her of the intention to conduct research and its importance to the Samia community in particular and knowledge users in general.
Persons aged eighteen years and above were identified with the help of informants who then sensitized them on the need to document the Samia IK with a view to conserving it. Respondents were interviewed and their responses tape-recorded and carefully transcribed for analysis. During the interviews, the researcher constantly reminded respondents on the importance of having the Samia IK documented to enable the current generation learn and know the ways of life of their forefathers with a view to one day integrating the modern and indigenous knowledge as such knowledge is not confined to past but links the past with the present - our reality requires retaining.

3.8 Data analysis

Results from face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions were analysed using qualitative techniques. Johnson (2000) defines ethnography as “a descriptive account of social life and culture in a particular social system based on detailed observations of what people actually do.” Ethnography is a qualitative research method used by anthropologists to describe a culture. Culture has many definitions but usually consists of origins, values, roles, and material items associated with a particular group of people. Ethnographic analysis, therefore, attempts to fully look into a variety of aspects and norms of a cultural group to enhance understanding of the people being studied. Ethnographic methods are a research approach that look at, people in their cultural setting; their deeds as well as their words; the implicit as well as the explicit ways in which they interact with one another and with their social and cultural environment; what is not said as much as what is said; their language, and symbols, rituals and shared meanings that populate their world, with the object of producing a narrative account of that particular culture, against a theoretical backdrop, (Singh and Dickson 2002).
Qualitative data formed texts, written words, phrases describing people and events in social life. Patton (1990) defines qualitative data analysis as working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, search for patterns discovering what is important and deciding what to tell others. He further points out that qualitative researchers tend to use inductive analysis of data meaning that the critical themes emerge out of the data.

The purpose of qualitative research was to understand the participants’ perspectives of the Samia IK and to answer the research questions. The Researcher lived with the participants for a while. She learnt and understood their way of using parables during their conversation. Dey (1993) gives some of the characteristics of qualitative data analysis as, data is analysed as they are collected through the process of coding; this enables the researcher work simultaneously with both the process and product.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The Researcher adhered to regulations and guidelines prescribed by Moi University with regard to theses and dissertation preparation. Consent was sought from the Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology to conduct research and respondents were also informed of the intentions and possible importance of the results thereof. The study dealt with the Samia people touching on their privacy. For instance witchcraft, rainmaking techniques are not issues that are freely discussed among the Samia. Therefore, information availed about the identity of some practitioners remained confidential. The respondents were not forced to give or divulge any information that they considered confidential. Interviews were carried out at the respondents’ convenience and in their homes or agreed places. The norms of
science advocate a search for truth as the driving force behind the creation of new knowledge, (Bulmer 2001). According to this view, the objective was to search for truth about Samia IK. Truth was sought through cooperation with informants, established trust and created empathy between researcher and respondents.

The study was also guided by the principle of informed consent. This provides that persons invited to participate in a research are free to participate or not. As a result participants were informed of intentions and were left to be guided by their conscience and any aspect of the interview that impact on them negatively was to be avoided.

### 3.10 Challenges Encountered

During data collection process, some challenges were encountered. The district is large with only one division which was the area of study. Coming up with locations to be studied out of the seven posed a problem as varying age groups were to be sought to achieve the aim. Respondents in the discussion groups were drawn from far apart and getting them together at the agreed time and place was challenging. Some were old and very slow both in movement and speech. Most respondents had a false perception that researchers have huge amounts of money and they therefore expected to be rewarded heavily. Others out rightly refused and said “the researcher will awesomely gain from the information being given to her. She has to pay us well before we give her the information.” The researcher took time to clarify the position, that it was purely for academic purposes and that there were no monetary gains. This in itself was time consuming. In some occasions the respondents did not turn up thus necessitating the researcher to reschedule or make fresh appointments.
There were some respondents who thought that the research was not relevant to them as they had relinquished the old ways of life and now uphold Christianity and talking or discussing traditional ways of life amounted to backsliding. However, with detailed explanation, the researcher managed to get responses from them.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction
Not all persons know, understand and view issues in the same manner. Senior citizens are believed to posses wisdom. And as the saying goes, *what old men see when seated, young ones cannot see even if they climbed a tree* (Anonymous). The old who lived then were consulted so that the knowledge they held could be tapped. This chapter presents, analyses and interprets the findings of the study. Data was collected through discussions groups which comprised adult men and women from Samia district. Data presentation is descriptive and was analysed with the help phenomenology analysis.

4.2 Land
4.2.1 Source of Land
The study was keen on identifying the existing forms of IK, its access and use. There were key persons who assisted with this information. One such person was Mzee Petro Otomba of Namboboto sub-location. Mzee Otomba was born in 1918 and had been involved in issues of land ownership. Others were Mzee Ombito Magalo, Buburi, Mzee Kalori Juma, Wakhungu, and Humpheres Onyango Kuwereho of Ganjala sub-location among others. Land - *erambo* as was commonly referred to was acquired through conquest and inheritance from forefathers. Friends, relatives and community members also gave land as gifts to desired/preferred or needy persons. A group, if conquered was driven out of their ancestral land; a new group settled in and erected beckons (*ebifundikho*) signifying ownership. Once the invaded land was demarcated, chances of the conquered group returning were rare; others even
occupied the fortified (olukoba) that was left behind by the escaping group. A fortified wall was built around a village and protected insiders from outside aggression. The displaced group moved on to get settlement and at times also invaded another settlement in order to acquire land. They pitched tent but if there was resistance from those they found there, war erupted. If they conquered they settled, but if they were defeated they continued till they found settlement.

The strength of a group enabled them to acquire any amount of land they wanted. Whichever method that was used, a name was given to the acquired area. The mode of naming was not standard but it was up to the elder designated to make a decision in collaboration with other stakeholders. As families increased, there was need for other groups to leave the fortified and form their own dwelling place.

There were many clans among the Samia and all acquired land through one of the means above. For instance, Abajabi clan acquired land from their great grandfather called Openji. Openji conquered clans in Bunyala and acquired land in which his family settled. Later he went to Samia and Abakhulo another clan, welcomed him and his family.

When one felt unhappy or uncomfortable with the space they occupied, they requested a friend if they would join them or just attacked and conquered the place. Abasamia were a generous group and more often than not, they yielded to requests made by others to join them. They settled in new places, built houses and planted euphorbia (amahoni) fence. Engoba (fortified) would then be built as security measures. There was insecurity from both wild animals and invaders whose interest
was cattle and land. If the invaders conquered *olukoba* they drove away the occupants, withheld their cattle, captured the youth and at times girls and women. Inside a fortified there were many houses (*enyumba*) and cottages (*esimba*) belonging to elders and sons of that home. The gate to a fortified was closed with *amaingo* (logs).

4.2.2 Land Use

Land acquired was used and maintained communally by those who lived on it as the Samia were firm believers of harmony. Land belonged to the community (*oluya*). Grazing land was common to all who owned cattle within that area however others came from far and wide in search of pasture. Whenever one had land that he could not fully utilize, he called his distant relations or friends to join him in order to put the land to full utility. Insecurity was another factor that made people live in groups. Those staying in fertile land in isolation stood a risk of being invaded. They had to be alert at all times; their security forces in place, in which case, numbers were a factor hence having to solicit friends and relatives to come and settle in with them. Because of low populations and vast lands Samias managed to settle anywhere at will.

The other reason for people living together in fortified (*engoba*) was attributed to *amanani* (ogres). It was feared that if a person lived in isolation they would be attacked by these wild animals. A fortified was a sign of unity; people from different clans (*embiya*) lived and got a long well.

Every household in the fortified had cattle and everyone was responsible for their cattle. Grazing space was communal in front of the fortified, cattle were let loose and
left to graze till evening when they were driven back to the fortified. Many as the cattle were, every elder knew the number of his cattle sometime by colour or by putting a unique identifier, either by sniping the right or left ear.

4.2.3 Value of land

Mzee Odemba of Ganjala said that land was regarded the most important resource and once acquired was put to full use. To be considered wealthy, an elder with many hectares of land, enough food to feed his people -- children, wives and slaves (abasumba). A number of domestic animals, wives, and children - especially daughters were regarded as wealth (emiandu). When a man had a big family farming which was done by hand was easy. The larger the family, the bigger the land for cultivation and the more harvest.

Land was for settlement and agriculture which included farming and cattle raring. As much as land was vital, there were certain instances when land owners had to migrate, because of drought or disease outbreak. Abasamia also moved in search of water and pasture for their cattle. Apart from the above reasons, the Samia moved in search peace and comfort. Killer diseases like plague or nagana (enundu) were a cause of migration.

4.2.4 Cultivation of Land

Land cultivation was a joint venture. Men cleared as women tilled. People worked together in groups (obwoko) on rotational basis. A group of twenty people or more worked on one shamba (endalo). This continued till all members had their parcels
cultivated. On completing the day’s work they were served with food and beer. At harvest time the same happened. Neighbours were informed of the harvest exercise and they availed themselves to give a helping hand. Unity and brotherhood was cherished.

Young families tended the land together. Older men remained advisers, giving direction where necessary. Abasumba (servants) took over the roles of clearing land and helping women with tilling roles initially held by the now aged men. Farming was liberal and people cultivated according to their strength.

4.2.5 Tools

According to Obwora Wanga of Ganjala and Eli Wamalwa of Bukiri who were authorities in blacksmith shared the same sentiments that Abasamia had vast knowledge on how to manufacture farm implements. The Samia manufactured various farm and household tools like hoes (*embako*), axes (*eyauywa*), pangas (*embanga*), sickle (*olukhairo*) harvesting knife (*engeso*), bill-hook (*omwolo*), knives (*amakhande*), and spears (*amafumo*) among other tools. These tools were made from *obutare* (ore). *Obutare* was obtained from soil that was gotten from Agenga hills in Samia South. This ore was subjected to a process of burning in a foundry that helped separate soil from ore; then melted to form iron from which items like axes, *emiolo*, *engeso*, sickles, spears, hoes, were obtained. *Omukuba* – an object used to blow air into the burning ore to keep the fire burning was used for this process. The ore was burned red-hot and smote to shape desired tools.
Abakwere clan among the Samia were known for blacksmith skills. Achola, Asunda, Oduke, and Bala were among the blacksmiths in that clan. Aban’gare were also blacksmiths; Ojjiambo Sidiabare at Namboboto was known for smiting ore (okuhkhuya omukuba) a profession he performed diligently.

Hoes (ebako) were the tools for cultivation. A hoe blade was tied onto a handle (omwini) - a sizeable piece of wood. A rope woven from grass or a strip of skin or hide (skin from a cow’s head was striped into thin long pieces and left to dry) was used to fasten the blade firmly to the wood. The other way of making a handle was to use wood from omulongo tree. A hole was drilled into this wood; obudwa (stick substance from omulongo was melted on a piece of broken pot) used as super glue to fasten the wood to the blade. This substance was boiled till it turned black then applied around the handle. Having applied this substance, the wood was inserted into a curve (omusa) made on the hoe. The substance was left to cool overnight and the following day, a hoe, omwolo or whatever tool that was made was ready for use.

There were different types of hoes. Olube for weeding figure millet and also for carpentry - shaping wood into required objects, Nyan’goda for digging and Embako eyomuse for harvesting sweet potatoes. Below are some farm tools used then.
Hoes were made by blacksmith of the time. Ogono Bulu, Omumuremo, Siekala, Omuyideti and Were, Omusubo were the blacksmiths of the time. Were produced large pieces of metal which other iron mongers subdivided to attain desired products. Other items make included obudeyo (beads), emigasa (bangles) ebidiri (yoke), ebikhomo (bracelets) among other metallic items. Ebidiri were used by slave traders to contain captured slaves who were yoked and made to walk in a straight line; it left no room for escaping. These tools were purchased from the blacksmiths using sorghum, millet and other food stuffs. Equal measures of items being purchased were weighed in small baskets (endubi) which were measures of unit cost.
4.2.6 Crops

Crops planted depended on climate, but the Samia mainly grew crops that included potatoes, sorghum, millet, simsim, green peas, pumpkins, tobacco, and bhang (*marijuana or cannabis sativa*) *enjaga*. These crops were mainly for subsistence. *Cannabis sativa* was planted by elders for their own consumption and there were no restrictions on its use.

Abasamia planted crops for both subsistence and barter. The measure used was equivalent to whatever was being exchanged. At times relatives and friends donated their harvest to the less fortunate in society. One evoked the wrath of ancestors if they had plenty to eat and store while others went hungry. *Were* (God) blessed people on the recommendation of ancestors; if a person became stingy, ancestors were disappointed and their *emikisa, ekhabi* (blessings) were denied them.

Vegetable used by the Samia included cowpeas (*ekhubi*), pumpkin leafs (*esebebe*) and green grams leaves, *esaaka, omutere, nasigumba, esinyolonyolo, ederema, emboka* among other vegetable species. There were no butcheries. Every home had cattle and, at times elders slaughtered animals, either goat or cow for subsistence or for ceremonies. That for subsistence was smoked to last the family a number of days before they got the next stock; chicken and fish were also used.
4.2.7 Storage of farm produce

On harvesting, grains were stored in granaries (esiaki/ebiaki). A man and his wives had different granaries. A man’s granary was known as embongo. It was constructed in the center of the homestead next his echibi (a man’s hut). Embongo was a reserve in which mainly millet and sorghum were kept. In case of famine, the family was fed from this reserve. Otherwise the next harvest would be combined with the current, but the current is stored at the bottom of embongo so that first in fast out order is applied. The first wife (omukhaye) was mandated to share out food from embongo to her co-wives. When an elder hosted his colleagues, beer (amalwa/busaa/kwete) was brewed. Millet used for the production of this beer came from embongo. Elders believed that grains from their granaries were grade one and produced better results, whether as seed or flour for brewing beer distinguished guests.

Theft was taboo therefore the idea of putting reinforcement was not there, a granary was made from thin sticks woven together, smeared with cow dung (amasin’go) on its lower outer surface and floor to protect grain from falling out and rodents gaining access. They had no doors but a small window-like opening that served as a door. Grain stored lasted a year or more and were preserved (okhubuka) using ash from burning cow dung (amasingo), sheep or goat droppings (embulukusi). All the while, granaries were never locked. Anyone who climbed into someone’s granary without permission could not climb down. Taboo applied to all as unethical activities and contravening the norms attracted curses from ancestors. It called for all to adhere to the norms. There was no known case of someone not climbing down a granary but still none dared to climb without permission.
4.3 Home Organization

4.3.1 Olugala (starting a new home)

When a son was of age and ready to manage and run his affairs independently he started a home. His father identified a site to build. However, sons moved out according to age. A father set out with the son who was to start a home; pin pointed a place for the son to build. The son and his wife took a cockerel, a spear and set out for the identified site in preparation of starting a home. On arrival, the cockerel was covered with a basket, a spear pierced into the ground these items were left at the site overnight. Elders who accompanied the son and his father prayed to their ancestors and said:

*Omwana uno ni mukurikhwao. Nguno atusa olugala, omusuku naruwo hunyole ebidu bino nibiumao. Akhoyere okhumenya ano, engoho ino nende efumo lia kukang’ene bikone ano.*

**Translation**

This child is named after you. Here he is, ready to start a home here, if there is an enemy here, may we find this cockerel dead or missing. He is supposed to live here so let this cock and his grandfather’s spear stay here overnight. They then returned home.

Early the following day, father and son went to the site where the spear and cockerel were left. If they found the items, he took them back home. It was only then that the father instructed his son and daughter in-law to start building their home. That showed God answered their prayers. There were many wild animals then and leaving a cockerel in such an open place without any meaningful protection amounted to throwing it to the wild animals that criss-crossed the area at night. Such a home was referred to as *olugala*. If the cockerel was found dead or missing, it meant the place was not habitable. Those were signs of a bad omen. The father of the boy had to think
of an alternative site after sometime and the process started all over again. In polygynous situations the first wife’s son moved first.

The homestead was planned in a way that the first wife’s house was build centrally with the second wife’s house to its left. Positions alternated till all wives had houses built for them. Apart from abenengo (the wealthy) who in most case were given wives as presents from persons seeking favours, other men just married or got them from conquests. When they conquered a fortified, they captured women and men who later became their servants (abasumba).
Figure 2: Design of a Typical Samia homestead

A Samia homestead

*Esikari* (hut structure) was built in a day and the man and his wife spent the night in it. Their children did not accompany them on the first night. The following day the man went to cut poles, grass and started building a hut (*enyumba*). This work was done with the collaboration of *oluya* (clan). They worked hard to ensure that the hut was completed in the shortest time possible.
There was division of labour in house building. A group of young men was responsible for digging holes in which poles that support the walls and roof were put. The roof was built separately and mounted on the already erected poles. Efito joining the roof were tied together with barks or sisal leaves. As the home progressed and the family expanded, sons built their esimba on the side of their mother’s house. If a man monogamous, sons built their esimba in the left-right order, the order in which a polygynist built for his wives around the first wife’s house. The houses in a home formed a ring-like shape, with echibi at the centre.

4.3.2.1 Echibi (Man’s house)

Apart from the houses he built for his wives and sons, omwenego had his own house (echibi). This was a special house built centrally in a homestead for purposes of hosting his visitors. A man did not frequent his wife’s house which was shared by children; expect to fulfill conjugal rights. A husband went to the wife’s house late in the night when children had slept; that was the only time he spent a night in the wife’s house. He left the house before daybreak. This helped control a family and children learnt of girl/boy relations and intimacy from their social setting. It can also be referred to as chambers in which a clan (oluya) dealt with issues touching on their well-being with an aim of solving them. Laws and regulations governing clan were formulated and issues discussed here were not divulged to the public without proper protocol.

Members of a given session only spoke when asked to. That was why it was felt that before an individual attained a certain age and his character examined, one would not
be elevated to the position of an elder/omwenengo. Unlike today, persons acquire certain statues in society because of their wealth and background. An elderly wise female whom male elders chose to represent women folk in the clan was let in. In most cases, she was on the receiving end and only spoke when asked. Young women were not allowed in echibi; they were considered not confidential enough. Issues discussed touching on the family and clan in general were classified information and were dealt with confidentially. However, information meant for the young women from this chamber was communicated through a representative on the governing council. While muchibi, beer (amalwa) was served and siphoned as they deliberated on their agenda.

Not all men owned echibi; only abenengo – wealth men who wielded a lot of power. It was authority passed on from father to son. However, the son did not inherit echibi, he had to build his own. Men with omukiki kwa bakhasi – chain of women (polygynous) also had echibi. This helped in family planning.

When a man stopped getting intimate with his wife/wives, (okhubarikha) he relocated to his echibi fully, he stopped visiting his wife/wives for overnight stays; but they continued cooking and sending grandchildren to take food in the echibi.

Apart from the above functions, echibi also served as a place where children who were ready to start family life were mentored. Wealth is equated to slippery stones (amakina mahiniro) which means it is an illusion and could not be relied upon, it easily withers. It was for this reason that boys had to marry while their parents were still able to pay dowry for them. Also, they had to be independent early in life to enable them consult where and when necessary.
4.3.2.2  *Esidwori (Kraal)*

This was institution where boys were trained in the ways of life and also a place where elders held meetings and where knowledge was imparted and advice given by the elderly to the youth. Those who did not have *echibi* used kraals (*esidwori*) to solve their problems. At times there were issues to be attended to regarding homes, clan elders met in the kraal of an identified elder to come up with ways and means to deal with the issues at hand. During such sessions *esibudi* was served – small quantity of beer.

4.3.2.3  *Esibinje (Dormitory)*

This was an old woman’s house in which girls from a ridge (*olukongo*) slept; it can be equated to a dormitory. Girls helped their parents during the day and come here to spend the night. It also served as an institution where girls were taught the ways of the Samia community. In *esibinje* knowledge was imparted by way of song, riddles, parables, and stories.

4.3.2.4  *Omwera (Shrine)*

A shrine comprising two small huts erected on both sides of a gate to a home. It acted as a sanctuary where ancestors dwelled and elders visited to give sacrifices and to remind God through ancestors of their needs and wants. The head of the home visited the shrine in the wee hours of the morning to pray to *Were Hagaba*, the giver of life, to give thanks for the night and ask for the day’s blessings, provisions and guidance. He went there early in the morning for prayers before people entered or left the compound. It was believed that there were people with evil hearts and bad intentions, such persons, if they visited before one sanctified themselves, all would not be well. An elder in a home was mandated with the care of his family and had to do that in accordance with customs and traditions of the community.
At other times, shrines were constructed at the centre of a home. In it, three stones were placed. Those stones signified the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit); sacrifices of all manners were made in this shrine. Brew and flesh from the sacrifices (either chicken goat, or sheep) were placed in the shrine for ancestors to consume. Prayers were offered to ancestors (ebikenyi) and not God; ancestors were considered protectors and guardians in everyday life; as they were mediators between the living and God.

A white chicken was slaughtered, its blood spilled on the ground and flesh eaten by members of the family; a piece was put in the shrine presumably for the ancestors. If there was beer, a sorghum brush (edete) was dipped in the beer and sprinkled on the shrine.

During planting season, omwera was swept to appease the gods for a bumper harvest; when misfortune came knocking, intervention was made through the shrine. Sweeping is not done literally but it referred to prayers that were offered. Prayers were made to Were Hakaba, the giver of life and all good things. Beer was brewed and poured in the shrine for ancestors to consume. Blessings were evident for whatever was being prayed for. The shrine was also visited before any event took place whether it was cultivating, planting, wedding in a family, going on a journey or start of a year, tribute was given to Were at this spot.

**Prayer:** Were Rachar Hagaba, we thank you for the past year and pray that you go before us as we plant, give us bumper harvest. Prayers were often answered and harvests plenty which was attributed to the devotion and trust in *Hagaba* (God the
giver). It was evidenced by the fact that granaries were never empty as previous harvests had to be removed before the current is stored.

4.3.2 Role of wife in home

At home, a wife was a personal assistant to her husband but in instances of polygamous families, the first wife also implemented the husband’s orders and was in charge of provisions in a home, sharing out food brought by their husband to her co-wives. When food - fish or meat, were brought, a man did not directly hand it to his first wife; he placed it in his echibi or kraal, whatever the case was, then the first wife picked it and shared it out accordingly. This meant the first wife was always on the lookout for her husband. She stayed in the homestead and became her co-wives’ keeper.

This lady, first wife, was accorded a lot of respect. In the event that her husband wanted to marry another wife, she was consulted and involved in the plans; there were incidences when she helped her husband seduce the woman he wished to marry. Upon marriage the new bride was hosted by the first wife till her house was built.

As the first wife advanced in age, she became a ceremonial wife and the man relocated from her house in terms of sharing a bed. She indulged in sex with her husband only if there was a ritual or rite to be fulfilled. For instance, during the planting season, marriage of their child, harvesting and any other major function in the family. Before any of the above took place, a man spent a night in the omuhaye’s house and became intimate; if they did not, it was a sign of a bad omen. Incase of marriage, that union would meet hurdles which would call for sacrifices to ancestors.
4.3.2.1.1 Meal time

At meal time, it was as though the wives competed in taking food to their husband. Each one strived to be the first to bring food. But even if the man did not eat that food, it did not go back to the respective wife. The man kept it in his hut on a makeshift shelf (olusereswa) made from sisal ropes and let to hang from one of the poles on the roof. All leftovers were stored here for children who were available; those willing to run errands for the elder. Those foods were also served to visitors who called in at odd times after meals or when women were out collecting firewood or fetching water and would not cook for the visitor.

4.3.2.1.2 Esibudi (Brew)

Elders were served to esibudi (brew from finger millet) brewed in small quantities and taken among elders in a locality. A young boy was sent to take messages to specific individuals inviting them to come along with their ebikuku/akhakuku (small siphon) or oluchekhe (ordinary siphon). Esibudi was not only served as a pass time (kokhubuchira ho) but also as a forum of discussing issues affecting a clan or home. During these sessions a known lair was not welcome. It was feared that such persons would leak secrets deliberated during esibudi. People in this gathering spoke with one accord and in very low tones. It did not matter how much one strained to get their conversation, they could not hear from outside the esibudi. They also spoke in parables and anyone not part of the session would not easily translate the parable as they depended on the context in which they were used and applied. One had to be part of the gathering to get meaning of the parable used. The beer consumed at such a meeting was brewed by the first wife.
Today people are not willing to share whatever they have. The root cause of this behaviour is lack, attributed by poor harvests; people have become stingy and only think about their siblings and close relations or friends. Because of scarcity of food, people eat in a manner that does not conform to norms of Abasamia, *bali sin’guu* (eat like hyenas), they are greedy and selfish.

**4.3.3 Home Security**

Raiders were always on the loose and attacked homes at will. To protect families against invasion, *engoba* (fortifieds) were built. Soil dug from the fortified was shoved out towards the homestead. It was a mixture of ballast, soil and water. They were built in the same style that stone buildings are built today. It had a gate that was closed using cross-bars (*amaingo*) and an improvised bridge that was erected during the day and removed at night. Many clans resided in the fortified and each clan had its leader. The leaders had authority to welcome those willing to stay with them on relation or friendly basis. Where there were no fortified walls, *euphorbia* (*amahoni*) was propagated around the home to form a fence.
In case of war, all able men took part in the security of the clan and its property. While at war *amafumo* (spears) and *engabo/ekhumba* (shield) were used. Wrestling skills were key in security issues. The skill was imparted by elders. The youth were taught that when at war, a shield should not be held beyond the knees of the holder. If it went beyond, it was likely to tip them over and allow the enemy harm them. It should be held firmly close to the chest. There were two types of shields, *engabo*, which was large and most reliable, and *ekhumba* which was smaller. While at war, one steered clear of his opponent. He watched the opponent’s movements and prepared to defend himself accordingly. If the opponent aimed a spear, one defended
himself with a shield or dodged; spears as sharp as they were did not pierce the shield which was made from cow skin.

![Spear (efumo) and Shield engabo](image)

Figure 5: Weapons used by Samia

Wrestling as an art was taught to the young boys who were able to defend the community against invasion or aggression while at war; a mark of red soil (omudoba) was put on the shields of comrades for identification. Today, different battalions wore different uniforms to enable differentiate them from the enemy. Instructions given were followed to the letter; this helped avert careless mistakes like spearing comrades or being eliminated or injured easily.

4.3.4 Furniture

Seats were 4-legged stools made from omusengese tree. This was a seat of authority and only brothers to omwenengo were allowed to seat on it during his absence. It was on this stool that an elder was enthroned. Apart from the function mentioned, this stool was also used by an inheritor upon the death of omwenengo who was the owner
of the stool. An appointed inheritor was literally made to seat on it. This person did
not only inherit the wife/wives but also served in the capacity of the deceased served.
Therefore this stool was used to accomplish/fulfill traditions (okhumala emisiro).
Other people sat on skins, mats, and grass or makeshift stools.

A man without a four-legged stool was incomplete. Such a stool was not owned by a
man who was still in his father’s homestead. That stool was a centre of authority, and
in a home there was only one centre, having two centers demonstrated conflict of
interest.

![Four legged stool – symbol of authority](image)

### 4.3.5 Clothing/Attire

Abasamia walked naked. The old and maturing youth were given a piece of skin to
cover their private parts only. When a boy grew pubic hair (okhukisula) that was the
time he was given a piece of skin to cover his manhood. Women and girls had esiboya
while men wore skin. Women wore two skins, eboya a flat piece of skin of even size
and esiboya thin at the top but widened towards the bottom; it was used to cover her
bottoms. Eboya had dual purpose, apart from being a dress, it was a protective
measure against snakes. If a snake was sighted; a woman gripped her eboya to stop it
from disappearing. This gave other people time to look for a stick to crush its head.
Esiboya was neatly woven into tiny strings from sisal fiber that formed an elegant
piece of attire, skirt. They also wore bracelets (ebkihomo), bangles (emigasa) and
obudeo (beads) around their waist to complement the attire.
Emituba (bark processed into skin) worn by men only covered the front part of their body. Omutuba was made from the bark of omudodo (*ficus naletesis*). The bark was crushed and the resultant product was cloth-like substance which was dried and used as cloth. Skins worn were from goat skin. To make this skin into cloth, while fresh, milk and ghee were sprinkled onto it and constantly rubbed in till it became soft. By this time the skin is sheared.

Skins from wild animals – leopard, cheetah, were used as ceremonial attire. A hat to match the attire known as eturu, was gotten from embworo, an animal from the chimpanzee family that is very hairy. This hat was worn by an elder when going to mourn an in-law or to a daughter’s wedding (esidualo).

Isaak Sidandi participated in elevating Abasamia from walking nude to wearing clothes. When missionaries came to Samia, Sidandi was their right hand man. He served as a bridge between missionaries and Abasamia. They gave him clothe to distribute freely to Abasamia, a job he performed diligently. When he met women with eboya or achipi, he cut them and in exchange gave them a meter of material to tie around their waist. Men were not left out. They were also given clothe which hanged from the shoulder down to the knees; this was between 1915 and 1920.

4.4 Family Life and Marriage

4.4.1 Birth and Naming

Every newborn must be given a name immediately after birth. Abasamia had different ways of naming and only named after their dead. When a child was born and it started ailing almost immediately or persistently cried, it was believed two persons were
competing to be named which meant the name given to that baby was not proper. To correctly name such a child, two chicken of different colours were thrown on a roof top of a hut in which the child resided by owengengo; the two were given names of two ancestors who wished to be named. He then beckoned both ancestors to come down; the ancestor who responded through the chicken, got down first and entered the house before finally walking out was to be named.

If the first chicken descended and the child was given that name but still cried that meant the ancestor had not accepted to be named; therefore the processes started all over again. This chicken, after the ceremony was slaughtered and that called for a celebration. An elder responsible for that ceremony invited people from the clan, roasted the chicken and divided into tiny pieces with an aim of serving all invited guests, beer was also served to crown the ceremony.

To avoid conflicting interests in naming, when a woman conceived, omulakusi (prophet) was consulted to find out which ancestor will be named. The prophet in turn consulted ancestors to reveal to him the person to be named. Other revelations came through dreams; a person wishing to be named came in a dream and presented his/her interest. It was the pregnant mother to whom ancestors revealed their interests in a dream long before the baby was born. Some babies bore birth marks of persons who wished to be named. In such a case, there was no doubt as to who was to be named.

4.4.2 Initiation

Teeth removal indicated transition from childhood to adulthood. Both women and men had six premolars removed (okhuwiya ameno). This action was predominantly Luo but because Abasamia shared many traditions with the Luo, it was inevitable that
teeth removal was practiced. Teeth were crudely removed with a sharp metal that caused much blood loss. Mzee Obwora was one of the advocates of this exercise. However, others in the other discussion groups felt teeth removal had no significance then and now and should not have been implemented at all. Medical practitioners came in handy with their herbs to stop bleeding. Patients were fed on milk and honey as they were not in a position to chew solid food immediately after teeth removal. The reason behind teeth extraction was, in the event that someone was taken ill and not able to open their mouth, food and medicine was given through that opening. Also, there are persons when dying may bite their tongue, without the six teeth this is not possible, thus averting the pain a patient underwent when they bit their tongue.

Painful as the act was, there was no adult Samia who wanted to retain the six premolars. Both men and women who had all teeth (*ameno malamba*) were not considered candidates for marriage let alone being included in the council of elders. No one wanted a wife or husband with a ‘full mouth’. A person with a full mouth was considered ugly and primitive, they were also a disgrace to the family.

### 4.4.3 Maturity (Boys)

To prove his maturity, a Samia boy, son (*omusoliri*) attained the age of 30 years and was subjected to a test. He uprooted elephant grass (*olubembe*) enough to thatch his hut (*esimba*) with his bare hands. Apart from uprooting this grass, he also had to be well versed with other responsibilities like grazing, garden work, slashing, among other men chores. When he passed that test, it was an indicator of maturity and sign that he was ready to have a family. Cottages were not a common occurrence and having one was an achievement many desired.
Wrestling was another way in which maturity was gauged. There were known strong men in a ridge who had wrestled with opponents and were the reigning champs. One such man was Mukoche of Sidonge. He is an advocate of the conservation of wrestling knowledge. Wrestling not only made him famous but also enable him have an edge of his age-mates. A boy on test was booked for a bout with the champion from the opposing ridge. Supporters from either ridge sat on their sides ready to cheer their wrestler. Opponents identified each other after being introduced and they straight away went for each other (okhwiya) each saying, chiya oboyé (go and tie) meaning he had consented for a bout. But, before that, they had to know where their mother’s hailed from (okhumanya enono ya ngi’na). Reason was, people boasted with their mother’s clan and could not wrestle a brother. If their mothers hailed from the same clan they were considered brothers. The champion boasted to the fact that he, the son of so and so (his mother’s clan) has beaten so and so and was the reigning champion, a man reckon with. Having known each other’s clan, they said chiya oboyé to which the opponent responded chiya oboyé.

Elders also converged for wrestling matches. Girls sung and danced with drums throbbing and a lot of dust engulfed the air; the more spectators cheered, the more the opponents engaged each other with each striving to put his opponent down and defeat him. The winning person proved his strengh and got many girls following him. It was proof that the winner was capable of giving security. In most cases it was the girlfriend of the loser who followed the winner. This was to humiliate and ridicule the defeated man because he had proved a weakling and not strong enough to protect himself or his family against aggression, strength was a virtue.
If after the wrestling the girl who followed the winner had been marriage before (*nasikoko*) she would not be allowed to stay. A first wife was to be a woman who entered a home with ululation (*olukalakasa*). Meaning, a wedding feast had to be planned. Such a party was never hosted for girls who had been married before or had babies out of wedlock.

Once a boy had proved his maturity, the next step was to look for a girl to marry. If confirmed that he had no girlfriend, his father discussed with his peers who had daughters so that he could get his son a wife from among them. The Samia preferred getting wives from known homes as they believed it was easy to get along with a girl/boy from such a home as the upbringing in most cases was upright. Elders observed homes into which their sons would marry from or their daughter get married to before any conclusive plans were arrived at. A person deployed for this job was known as *wangira*. *Engire* means way, in this context the go-between. *Wangira* was an important person who had to find out the behaviour of the parents of the girl and the girl herself to make a conclusive judgment. He/she played a vital part between the two parties during the time of courting, dowry payment all the way to marriage. *Wangira* was expected to be of impeachable character.

### 4.4.4 Maturity (Girls)

An adult girl was capable of grinding, collecting firewood, fetching water among other girl chores, she did not perform them for her family only but for the entire village. That was why when a girl attained marriage age, among the cows given for dowry; there was one for the mother (*eya ngina*). This was to compensate and appreciate the mother and clan in general for teaching and mentoring the girl.
4.4.5 Girls visiting boys before marriage

All participants during the interviews and discussions felt this knowledge should be conserved. To the researcher, these participants feelings were representative of the Samia as a whole. Today, there are many unwanted pregnancies they youth get involved in multiple relationship a behaviour that ends up in death when the victims contract HIV/aids. Girls visited their boyfriends; however, there were certain restrictions which mothers and grandmothers alike put in place and were law. They were advised against having sexual intercourse before marriage. Fondling was allowed but she was to prevent her boyfriend from going all the way or if he did, it was just on her thighs. Allowing a boy have an intercourse was considered disrespectful to the girl and sign of cheapness on the side of the girl. If a man loved his girlfriend, he waited till marriage. The girls who yielded to short-term pleasures ended up regretting as they lost those men in the long run to girls who heeded parental advice. Men also valued strong-character girls who did not yield to sex before marriage.

4.4.6 Virginity (Obuchunji)

Obunchunji was honourable and coveted by all. Samia girls, because of the knowledge they acquired from their grandmother in the esibinje (grandmother’s hut/dormitory), took care of themselves. They kept boyfriends but had to guard their virginity. When a girl visited her boyfriend for an overnight stay (okhubwoba) they fondled and went all the way but she did not allow the boy to have sex with her. They were in agreement and preserved each till marriage.
4.4.7 Protection for girls

Boys protected their sisters against other boys who teased or; seduced them. These boys accompanied their sisters when they went to collect firewood or fetch water. Even in marriage, a brother went with his sister to protect her while in her new home. This was just for a short time then he returned to their home. Among the cows given as dowry, *engombe ya bocho* (for a brother) was among them. That cow was not taken to the home but *muluya* (clan). Among the Samia there were no cousins, it might be a cousin who protected the bride and that cow was given to this brother.

4.4.8 Marriage

4.4.8.1 Elder’s Position and Order of Marriage

Seniority was reverend among the Samia according to Mzee Ayieko of Bukiri. During planting season, the eldest man in a clan and his first wife started the exercise, after which the others planted. First borns were always first and their things were done first. In marriage, if a younger brother found a suitor before his elder brother; either this girl would be given to the eldest brother or the eldest forced to look for girl so that dowry is paid for his wife before his young brother was paid for.

In instances where the first wife had a daughter for a first born with sons being born after the daughters, a second wife’s first born son was allowed to marry. But, the first boy from the first wife remained the heir (*oluban’go*) to the family. *Oluban’go* is a term referring to a son who inherits his father’s position in the family for continuity.

4.4.8.2 Looking for a Suitor

When a father identified and recommended a wife for his son, elders met and discussed the girl articulating both her strong and weak points. It should be remembered that as elders entertained themselves, they were also on a hunting
mission for girls from their host’s for their sons of marriageable age within their clan and vice versa. Girls were observed very keenly on how they went about their responsibilities. If there was a girl befitting a son, a father to a boy then expressed his wishes to his host.

Sourcing for a wife was a family’s collective responsibility. Those who assisted in the sourcing were known as wangira, directly translated to ‘of the path/way’. Wangira was a person who acted as a mediator between persons who were to start a relationship and end up as husband and wife. When a girl matured, her paternal married aunt sought for a young man whom she (aunt) knew had good morals and came from a reputable background. The aunt discussed with the parents of the girl intentions to get their daughter a husband. She said things like, “this home is respectable and peaceful, and the parents of the boy are people of good reputation. I want you to meet this boy”. The boy made the first move to know the girl. He visited her and stayed in the brother’s cottage (esimba). The girl with her cousins and sisters came in without knowing the suitor. They checked on height and general structure before giving their remarks. These were part of the lessons learnt from their grandmother while musibinje. If the two persons agreed with aunt’s choice then there was hope for a marriage.

4.4.8.3 Duties of Wangira

Wangira was sent to the girl’s or boy’s home from time to check on various things that the family wanted to know or if the parties had a word to pass to each other. At times Wangira went as far as meeting the girl while in the garden to evaluate her efficiency in digging and other chores. When he/she were satisfied that the girl was
good, a suitable choice for marriage, *wangira* reported back to the boy’s parents. Apart from soliciting for information, *wangira* also helped in negotiation during dowry payment.

**4.4.8.4 Making Intention Known**

When a girl was identified, and the parents satisfied with *Wangira’s* reports information was conveyed to the girl’s parents of their intentions. The groom’s father and his team visited the bride’s parents. They went to declare their interest in a relationship between the two families. Food and beer were served. Abasamia were a hospitable community and took care of their visitors to the best of their ability. In-laws (*abakhuwe*) were taken care of in a very special way and were highly regarded. In fact, they were the only known visitors. The kind of welcome accorded to in-laws determined whether a relationship was welcome or not.

In most cases, the girl’s parents were not quick in making a decision. Their reply was “we have heard your request, will look into it and send word about their decision”. During that period of consideration, they also had someone to investigate the boy’s home thoroughly. They were informed of the parents’ behaviour and especially their would-be son-in-law. If there was something unpleasant, the request was rejected.

Children obeyed their parents’ decisions without questioning. Some of the causes of rejection included:

- Incurable diseases – *endwaye*
- Witchcraft – *obulosi, obukhingi*
- Unbecoming behaviour, theft, gossip
- Bad past
- Impotency, among others
If a girl’s parents were satisfied and found no reason to object to the request, they sent word and made their acceptance known. This opened a window for proper engagement. On learning of the acceptance, the groom’s parents met and decided on a day to discuss dowry (ekhwe). They sent word to alert the girl’s parents giving them a day on which they were to visit. They took a cow to begin the dowry payment process. This cow was received with great joy and a woman ululated (okhukhuba olukalakasa) saying that the girl had won respect and honour and should fetch more.

4.4.8.5 Caring for an Engaged Girl

Mama Eserea elaborated much on the care of engaged girls and said; from the day of engagement, a girl was never exposed even to her fiancée. This was for fear that she might elope. It was shameful to a family if a daughter eloped before dowry process was complete and parents’ consented to her departure. During that period, a girl was under the care of her grandmother, other elderly women in the family or even the community. She slept in the esibinje and received teachings about expected roles.

This old woman was entrusted with the responsibility to shape up the girl’s character and talk to her about home management. In fact, this grandmother knew of the good and bad girls. At times the young men who wanted to marry approached her to help them identify girls whom she thought would make wives.

4.4.8.6 Payment of Dowry

Once the two families agreed on the marriage proposal, the groom’s father then planned for the first round of dowry negotiations. On this visit, a male cow (eunwa) was taken. This signified the maleness and authority that men wielded in a home. The
number of cows to be taken to a girl’s home depended on the capability of the groom’s parents or clan in general. Marriage was not a family but clan affair. Even if the father did not have enough, the clan donated wealth to be taken as dowry to assist their son. Able families took as many as three cows on the first visit. The male cows (eunwa) outnumbered the female (emosi).

Dowry was paid according to respect accorded to the bride. For instance, a girl whose reputation was wanting fetched very little. In most cases the groom was advised to elope with her to avoid losing his wealth, in case she took off with another man. At times dowry payment process was cancelled because of a girl’s involvement in multiple relations. When a boy heeds to the eloping style, he coaxed the grandmother to identify the bride to enable them carry her away unnoticed. Boys hired for this job went at dawn to the esibinje to grab the girl before others left for the shamba. Okhukwesa (pulling) was not an easy task. It called for strength, tact and speed. At times it turned chaotic and the opposing sides literary fought to the extent that blood was shed.

Having successfully pulled the bride, the father of the groom sent emissaries to the bride’s parents informing them of the presence of their daughter in his home. Girls known to in multiple relations and boys who were not wealthy are the ones who resorted to pulling system. The emissaries went with a token to appease the bride’s parents. While there the emissaries said: (engombe yengwe eyakotere yiri ewefwe mtaikonya haba). Your lost cow is in our home do not go search for it. The bride’s parents then dispatched Abekhasa (companions, girl cousins sent to keep the bride company). This was to help the bride acclimatize in the new environment.
The bride’s parents had to start making arrangements to receive their in-laws. Every major ceremony was graced with beer. *Okhusiha amalwa* (bury brew), was a fermenting process that took four to five days before the brew was ready. The brew was prepared in a big pot (*oluchio*) specific for this kind of brew. When ready and before the visitors arrived the brew was covered till visitors arrived to open the lid (*okhufudula*) to signify the start of feast. This showed that the brew was meant for them and no one had tested it before their arrival.

After the feast, the bride remained in her home for a week. At the end of it, girls from the clan were commissioned to accompany her to her new home. A bride traded with care and was not permitted to do things like:

- Open her mother in-law’s door
- Cook in her mother in-law’s kitchen
- Shake her father in-law’s hands or elder his age
- Serve her father in-law
- Place a pot in her mother in-law’s *esijivi* (place where a pot with drinking water is put). When she fetched water, she put it outside for her mother in-law to place it in its rightful place.
**Table 4.1: Number of Cows paid for Bride Price**

The cows paid included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Cow</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eyolubakiro</td>
<td>This cow was slaughtered and eaten almost immediately it arrived in the home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyangina</td>
<td>A cow and calf also known as <em>eimala omwana khulubere</em> (remove a child from the breast).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyikhenga muchindi</td>
<td>A cow paid after the first two have been paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyasamwana</td>
<td>For a chosen paternal uncle not necessarily the biological father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyambocho</td>
<td>Given to a selected brother; whether cousin or biological brother.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyakhocha</td>
<td>This cow came with a price. The uncle had to pay (<em>omutulu</em>). A sack of fermented stuff to make beer and a goat was given to the people who delivered the cow the girl’s maternal uncle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekhwe</td>
<td>Dowry proper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First, family members of the groom met to decide on dowry payment procedure and fixing of dates they would start making the payment. Upon agreeing they informed the girl’s parents. From the boy’s family, people who were to go for this first payment were the father, bother, uncle and a reasonable, respectable elder from the clan. *Wangira* was then re-sent to alert the girl’s parents of their intent and the date decided upon.

In instances where dowry payment is initiated (*okhutekula ekhwe*) and the parents of the groom were not wealthy enough, an elder in the clan was requested to give a cow. The first payment of dowry was a heifer (*ewunwa*). If the heifer was a calf, then a goat had to accompany it to make it equivalent to a full heifer. On reaching the home,
they were met with a woman chosen by the family of the girl to welcome them with ululation (*olukalakasa*), mentioning the clan in praise of the bride.

When the two parties met, they discussed their children’s affairs of marriage exhaustively. Each party prayed and expected that the engagement would be blessed just as they expected the marriage to be. Bride-price was then debated and finally agreed upon.

This marked the start of dowry payment and signified marriage approval between the two parties. From then on, when in-laws (*abakhwe*) went into the girl’s home to pay dowry, food and drinks were served and were sent off with a cockerel (*edayuwa*). The cockerel given at all occasions was immediately slaughtered on arrival at the groom’s home. The groom was not allowed to eat of it. Sheep were not accepted for dowry as it was considered dirty. It was used to *okhumala emisango* (make sacrifices).
Table 4.2: Cows paid and their significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of cattle</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Eya simwana</em></td>
<td>Bride price given to the father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><em>Ekhwe</em></td>
<td>Dowry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Eya mbochong’ene</em></td>
<td>For a brother in appreciation for security rendered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Eyang ‘ina</em></td>
<td>For the mother for having raised the girl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Eyokhwenda abahaana</em></td>
<td>Given after the bride had been taken by the boy. Permit her to the boy’s home freely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Eyakhochang’ene</em></td>
<td>For the maternal uncle. It was taken directly to the uncle’s home for a father figure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Eyokhwedyera</em></td>
<td>The bride’s brothers went dancing in the new home after the good news of their sister being found a virgin. It was given to them as sign of congratulation for having looked after their sis properly. Otherwise it was not given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Eyikhenga muchiasie</em></td>
<td>Final cow given before after the bride has gone to the groom’s home. It erases the girls foot print from her home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On the first day of the dowry payment after engagement a bull referred to as *engombe eyolubombwa* or *eyo Olwami* and a goat referred to by the same name were taken. As they entered the home, a woman gave a traditional yell *olwami* or *olukalakasa*. On this day, in-laws were only given a cockerel to carry home and there was no food prepared for them. They had also to take back the rope and stick used to escort the animal(s). Dowry payment was not a one person’s affair. Relatives of the boy also participated as the woman to be married would serve the entire clan. In Samia a woman belonged to the clan. This was important because if a man decided to mistreat his wife the clan would step in to mediator. If he persisted with unbecoming
behaviour, his wife would be snatched him and given to a younger brother or a cousin from the same clan.

At times a girl never got to know whose dowry was being paid. In the evening when the girls gathered *musibinje* they asked their grandmother about the dowry that had been brought. The grandmother would not withhold such information; she truthfully gave information to the girls and even goes further to name the suitor.

The bride was obliged to get information about the groom. She also had a choice either to consent or reject. Refusing a suitor was not always the idea of the girl. A grandmother in whose *esibinje* the girl slept and fellow girls would engineer her to refuse. It was usually as a result of what this nanny knew about the family of the boy or about him as a person. The nanny might have information that the boy is a night-runner (*Omulosi*), thief, sorcerer (*owe bikhokho*) and so on. Activities that did not conform to norms of the Samia community were direct disqualification and cancellation of a marriage plan. However, if the girl allowed the second dowry to materialize, that signified acceptance.

### 4.4.8.7 Keeping Accounts

Record keeping is vital in all transactions. On returning home, the father of groom kept sticks equivalent to the number of cows paid to his in-laws as dowry in a special place. This was the equivalent of folders today. Every time they sent dowry, a short stick was cut and marked to denote the number of cows already paid. The sticks were carefully kept in loose or bundles. In case of divorce, those sticks helped refund dowry. Sticks also served as an account of what a girl brought in as wealth (*emiandu*) or which boy gave more dowry.
4.4.8.8 Wedding (Esidyalo)

This was a big feast marking a wedding ceremony. It was prepared by the father of the bride after their daughter had slept at her husband’s house for two to three days. A lot of beer was brewed and if she hailed from a wealthy background, (abaami/abatuki) they slaughtered three to four cows with six to eight goats.

4.4.8.9 Leaving for Esidyalo

All the bride’s relatives chosen for the festival assembled in the home. They put on their best for this great occasion, such were skins skillfully crafted from calves. When they were ready to set off, the bride and her bridal party wore amaboya (small skin covering their private parts). She was made to stand on a skin spread at her mother in-laws house. Two girls one from the bride and the other from groom’s side stood on either side of the bride. They too stood on the skin.

As they stood on the skin, the groom’s mother brought ghee and simsim, gave it to a woman from the groom’s relation. This lady smeared the bride from neck, to chest, shoulders and whole back. After doing so, they all left for the big feast (esidyalo). This were considered blessings that would wade any evil powers that might be lingering in their midst.

Having stepped off the skin they were not allowed to go back to the house for whatever reason. Stepping off the skin symbolized the start of the journey. As they went they sang:

Ninduwo mba onwikho, oti mbwereo nimba hayoni numukukuna,
E! nambwe ano E!nambwe ano chyang'wa munyuma...
Every group sang its own song as they all went to the feast.
4.4.8.9.1 Arrival at the Bride’s Home

On arrival, the bride’s brother welcomed them with a shield and spear running from one end of the home to another (*nasola*), and finally come to receive them. There were many people for this festival (*omuyimo*). People sung and danced with jubilation. Both sides sung and danced and singing was crowned with ululations. Elders sat in a corner taking *busaa/kwete* and generally observing the happenings of the day.

After the festival, the bride stayed at her home for three days. On the third day she prepared herself to return to her husband. A group of women got themselves ready to escort her. A goat, *eyenuni* (of *simsim*) was given as a gift to the girl in her new home. This was in reference to the *simsim* they girls sprinkled on themselves before departure.

When the bridal party was ready to depart, girls from the groom’s relation were smeared with *simsim* while standing on a spread skin in front of bride’s mother’s house. The bride was then given a spear and wore a traditional cap (*esimwata sy’olusimbi*). On this cap were feathers from a small colourful bird called *esimbikhira*. A girl from the bride’s clan was chosen by the clansmen to escort the bride. She too was given a spear and *obuyoni*. All the girls accompanying the bride were smeared with ghee and *simsim*. Exact replicas of the activities in the groom’s home were done. This signified that relations were regarded with equal measure.
4.4.8.10  New home

Before setting off, the newly wed (omweya) had to be slaughtered for a goat known as eyohudisa - anoint. Customarily the goat was tied at a granary and the brothers and sisters in-law brought a small goat that was not befitting the purpose. This was done deliberately to gauge whether the bride would accept it. They knew the bride could not accept but for the sake of fulfilling a custom they did so. This signified that the bride had a say in the decisions reached in her new home.

As they brought the goat, they told the bride that that was the goat they wanted to slaughter for her. They brought the goat near the house where the bridal party was, on seeing the small unworthy goat, she ran to set it free. Her brother in-law pretended to beat her with a small stick prepared for that custom. The Samia disciplined their wives by beating. In case she died before beating her, she was beaten in death. Her husband struck her corpse gently.

After the mock beating, he left the bride to set the goat free and a bigger goat befitting the purpose was brought. It was slaughtered, a piece of skin cut and put on the ring-fingers of both the bride and groom. These were their wedding rings.

*Esihamba* - piece of skin with a little flesh was cut from the goat’s tail, dipped in obuse (bile) and put on a stick. This was a traditional ceremony conducted by the groom’s grandfather. He took the *esihamba* and put it around the bride’s neck. He then tapped the bride’s head telling her that if she changed her mind and married elsewhere different from that clan a curse would befall her, and she would become a reject because of the blood that was shade on her.
Other restrictions included bathing at the river before the ohudisa ceremony. Water was brought for her to bath at home. The reason behind it was the piece of meat round her neck, it was feared would rot. Honeymoon period was delicate and tricky, it was believed was bound to happen to the bride if allowed to move out of the home.

4.4.8.11  Okhudisa (anoint)

When it was felt that sufficient bride price had been taken, the family members of the boy urged him to bring the girl home and that other demands would be met while the bride was already in the home as dowry is never completed – ekhwe siyibwechanga

A honourable way was to send a brother to ask for the release of the girl for marriage, - “mutube omukhasi weefe khudise” (give us our wife we anoint). If all went well, the family members met to discuss the request made for them to allow the girl go to her marital home. If there were demands that were unmet, they were notified. When all is put in place, the father of the girl announced the news to the clan for the appointed day and date to prepare for esidyalo (wedding feast) for their daughter. The message went: ndakhakoye amalwa akesidyalo syomuhaana weefe nende omulebe (I will brew beer for the wedding ceremony between our daughter and so and so, son-in-law clan mentioned).

On that day before the ceremony, girls from the bride’s clan assembled in her home and the father slaughtered a goat for them. The goat was cooked by the bride’s mother and consumed before they set off to the groom’s home. Before departure they sung these songs:
“Ng’ina mwana wefulungule mufwebeya”
“Ng’ina mwana wefulungule mufwebeya” x 2

Ng’na mwana yedeya Aaaa yedeya”
Ng’na mwana yedeya Aaaa yedeya” x 2

“Leta siwabihira omwana, leta siwabihira omwana, leta!”
Olete siwabikhira omwana, leta siwabihira omwana x 2

Munaye eee munaye, lero njolere x 2 and when they reached
the gate (musilibwa) they sung:

Ee gangama, Ee gangama leha ohuhola otyo
Ee gangama x 2

They went on singing till they arrived at the groom’s home. On arrival, they stood at
the gate demanded to be given a traditional hoe (embako yesilimi). It was customary
that they be rewarded before entering the home. On being rewarded they entered the
home singing:

“Husenere olwanyi, yee husenere olwanyi
husenere olwanyi, yee husenere olwanyi na amakulu…”
(We have stepped in this homestead, yes we have set foot)

4.4.8.12 Entry into the Groom’s Home

While at the gate, a bride had to put her hands on her head as sign of being courteous
to the home that she was to belong. A mock careless welcome to the groom’s house
was made. She pretended to refuse getting in and a little force was applied. The
groom took a stick and pretended to beat her. She responded by using unpleasant
words to the groom. It was improper for a girl to easily give in. that signified
desperation. Use of a cane on women was not uncommon. Women were beaten when
a circumstance called for it. That did not translate to not loving once.
Boys were charged with the responsibility of escorting their sisters when they got married. On the day they escort their sister, they did not enter the home directly. They remained at the gate of their in-laws and sung:

\[
\begin{align*}
Dera & \ e \ dera,\ dera \ e \ dera  \\
Kade & \ nondekho \ omuya \ mwene \ akaada  \\
Kade & \ nondekho \ omuya \ kada  \\
Halukuku & \ khamabere.
\end{align*}
\]

This song was sung while boys stood at the gate. This was to entice their in-laws to make payment to enable them enter the home. All this while, they were with their sister. They went further to sing:

\[
\begin{align*}
Ogangama, \ ogangama \ lekha \ okuhola \ otio.  \\
Ogangama \ emboo \ yibere \ khuno \ ogama
\end{align*}
\]

It was at this point that the group identified what they wanted to be given to let them in the compound. Rewards in material form were given. Boys spent the night at their in-laws. In the morning they were given a cockerel which was slaughtered by the mother of the bride upon their return; to prepare a meal for the troop that escorted the bride.

There were, however, times when a girl was pulled. On knowing that dowry negotiations had been finalized and part payment made, the boy was free to get his wife by whatever means. Okhubaisa/Okhukhwesa (elope/pulling) was done either in early morning or late evening. When a bride was pulled those who pulled her ensured that their brother had easy time at night. Some girls were very strong and they did not easily allow a man to have intercourse with them. They gave their husband’s very difficult time that brothers had to come to his rescue. Boys who assisted in pulling the
bride kept vigil outside cottage; having pulled this girl against her wishes they anticipated trouble. In case she overpowered her husband, those boys stormed in to rescue their brother by pinning her down and letting her husband have sex with her in their presence. They did that till their brother attained satisfaction. Subsequent rounds would not be a struggle as the girl now felt helpless and it was even pointless struggling as the boy had already gained entry and if she was a virgin, she will have lost it.

On the following day after spending a night in the groom’s home, women from the ridge (Olukongo) assembled to go and dance where their daughter had been married - okhuhina olume. Among the dancers there were spies (namwaya). They not only went to dance but to get details about their brother in-law; they came to ascertain whether their sister married a man or fellow woman; it was a spying mission. The dancers’ mission was two-fold; to get information on the man’s functionality/capability and to ascertain whether their daughter was a virgin (omuchunji). They demanded to know through song and dance whether their brother in-law was man enough or had shortcomings. Questions were asked in proverbs to uphold the relationship that existed between them and that home; is he able to fire life bullets? Does he have a male nerve or was it cut? Was he able to carry the log or it fell on him? If the groom was not able sexually the bride revealed it to her grandmother who had come along with the dancers. The bride remarked, ‘even our home has ugali’(kata ewefwe obusuma buriyo), which implied she was there for sexual satisfaction and not food.
The bride narrated the happenings of the night to her grandmother. A grandmother because of her age and the fact that she was considered or likened to a co-wife had no fear or restrictions in the bride’s house. She went for the beddings (esero) on which the two had spent their first night. The aim was to check whether it was soiled; if it was, then the girl was a virgin, pure and her virginity had been broken (omubiri kuturire). The grandmother picked the skin, gave an ululation saying:

Ndarinda, ndekesa, na rebe ariabwene (I mentored, I trained so and so - name of clan - is whole).

The soiled beddings were a symbol of honour and they sung praises to both the girl and grandmother whom they praised for having done a good job. A goat was given to the grandmother or aunt that took the soiled beddings. This goat was known as embusi yo lume (goat of the dew). This was an appreciation to the girl for having kept her virginity. Her father in-law gave a cow. The gifts trickled down to the grandmother as she was the one responsible for the girl’s upbringing.

The boys also had their complaints. There were girls who did not know what do in bed. They slept as if to say “if you finish you cover me” – nomala umbwikhi. This was an insult to the family and the grandmother who was supposed to have mentored the girl. Taking care of a man in bed was part of the lessons given musibinje by a grandmother and their every girl was reminded to participate fully. A grandmother gave practical lessons in full view of the girls and one was free to ask questions where they did not understand. Therefore, there was no reason why a girl should sleep like a log in bed with her husband. Such was evidence that the girl slept in her mother’s house and not musibinje with her grandmother and missed out on those lessons.
A bride was not allowed to eat any food from the groom’s home till she was given a cow known as ‘Eyokh Wedyera’. This cow was an appreciation to the girl’s parents for having taken good care of their daughter. If the bride was not found a virgin, this cow was not given. The pleasant or unpleasant report was sent back to the bride’s parents by women who brought her food. A favourable report was demonstrated using ashes to powder the parents of the girl from head to waist as they sung:

\[
\text{Esindu silya nisi? Esindu silayi nekokhe} \\
\text{Esindu silya nisi? Esindu silayi nekokhe}
\]

*Translated*

What is good? Ash is good

What is good? Ash is good

If she was not found a virgin, the women went back home sad and shamefully singing:

\[
\text{Mwelolyanga busa omukhaana weng’we nolinga busa...}
\]

*Translation*

You show off yet your daughter is useless.

**4.4.8.13 Erectile dysfunction**

A boy may marry but is not able sexually (yachokana); it was up to his family to look for ways to avert the situation. Some boys are shy and would not divulge this information to anyone. At night as he went to bed with his wife, his relations stayed outside the esimba to confirm their suspicion. On sensing that their son/brother cannot get an erection, boys entered their simba, took him to his mother’s kitchen, looked for the pot that had cooked ugali, scrapped amalondolo (crust) and gave them to their brother to eat. After which he returned to his wife; if he was lucky the situation improved otherwise they sought medication.
When *amalondolo* and other medication failed, a groom paid *eyesino* – a cow given to allow the bride get another man from the groom’s relation to sire children on his behalf. Children gotten from this union belonged to the husband. This kind of disability was treated with a lot of secrecy and remained with a few in inner circles of the two families.

Sexual inability was not always attributed to impotency. Jealousy and bad intentions from persons with ill motives at times had a hand in it – *okhukhurira edala* (control a home). When a home or house is controlled by outside forces; everything siblings try their hands on never materializes. This takes us back to issue of *abalosi* (witches) who are known for messing up families for fear that they would prosper.

If a groom was not functional; not able to give a bride her conjugal rights, a marriage was likely to end. But, if a father of a groom knew of a past experience in the family remedy had to be sought. Or, if parents of a bride had used up the dowry and were not in a position to refund it, the two families had to reach an agreement.

Services of a witch (*omulakusi*) were sort to ascertain the root cause of such a misfortune in a family. In most cases it was believed that it was the hand of a jealousy person who wanted to destroy a family. A witch having seen the problem gave a solution to correct the situation. In instances where medication failed, a cow was paid (*eye sinde*); this cow was paid by a groom to allow his wife have extra marital affair with a man from the groom’s relation in order to have children and continue the family. Children sired from such a relationship belonged to the groom. This prohibited the bride to move freelance (*okhukenda sinyoki*), the affair was discreet and with a specific man. Women who were not discreet were likened to hawkers.
On paying this cow, the bride’s parents requested that their daughter be released to them for advice. While at her home, her family comprising of the group that received the groom’s parents sat her down and said:

“Your husband has given us dowry and we shall not return it. Stay with him but choose one of your brothers in-law and get children with him. It did not have to be his biological brother; cousins were also considered brothers. You shall not despise, disrespect him or discuss this issue with anyone. If you do, never step here, you will cease to be family. These were strong words that had to be adhered to. The groom was informed of what his wife was told and too cautioned against interfering with the wife’s man-friend. He is the one taking care of your compound (olwanyi), ‘he has enabled you be counted among man’.

Children sired from this relationship belonged to the husband and were changed while unborn to resemble him. When a pregnancy reached three months, there were three methods to be applied to ensure that the child resembled the groom. A bride either, sat on her husband’s stool, wore his clothes upside-down in this case the skin or timed him as he approached the gate, she went to met him with a winnowing tray and removed chuff from grain in front of him – okhusesa emberi waye.

These acts were also kept secret and no one was allowed to discuss them or even question the bride’s movement. The man who sired children with this woman was respected by the husband to the woman; however this man made no mention of his role in that family. He was an important person and was also included on the list of invited guests to grace the day should the family host a function.
4.4.9 Death and Burial

A soon as a person breathed their last, wailing filled the air; this was a signal that someone had passed on and as was tradition, it would not take long before burial. This was because the sick had his/her relations by their bedside all the while. Close relations who were far off were informed of the bereavement and they responded by setting off to be in time for burial. As soon as relatives were informed grave diggers were on hand to start the digging process. However, if death occurred past mid-day, burial took place the following day.

On the day an elder died, a chicken (engoho yo mukulukha) was slaughtered. This chicken was burnt (okhusamba) to anoint the fire (amagenga), lit to help keep mourners awake and warm as they mourned their dead. If the dead man was wealthy, a cow was slaughtered on the burial day. This was for the purpose of getting a skin in which to bury him. The dead were buried differently according to their ages and status in the society. Small children were buried in the mid-morning (musanya), while the elderly were buried in the evening (musijiambo).

When a wealthy man fell ill and showed signs of not recovering his wife/wives were not allowed to take care of him. A grandson (omwichukhulu) was charged with that responsibility. Women were considered emotional and it was feared to sick would easily tell from her behaviour. Food was cooked according to instruction from the sick and passed on to the grandson who in turn fed the patient. Owmenengo was buried in the centre of his house with his body wrapped in a bull’s skin. Before burial, if he had more than one wife living, his body lay in state in all the houses and finally buried in the first wife’s house, head facing direction of their origin to allow him trace and join his ancestors.
People were buried naked except for elders who were wrapped in a skin. But this skin was removed at some point. A cow from his own herd was picked, preferably the biggest, slaughtered and his body wrapped in that skin. Flesh from the cow was feasted on by mourners. The Samia buried their dead immediately they died. At the time of burial, a brother entered the grave and removed the skin. He then took two leaves, ebombwe and omutumba and entered the grave with them. And said:

_Otekala amatwi muloba muno dawe, owaambane okhukoonya abaana bao nende abeekho bao. Wederembse musilindwa sino. Soli owambeli okhufwa dawe. Okhufwa khwutulira bosi_ (Do not close your ears in this grave. Cooperate to help your children and relatives. Keep calm in this grave. You are not the first to die. Death is for all).

In the evening, those who helped dig the grave were given a cockerel. They hit it hard on the grave till it died. It was then roasted on the fire lit there (_amakenga_). _Amakenga_ lasted for different days. Graves were associated with demons and therefore to dispel these demons the cockerel had to be killed in that manner.

Mourning period differed and depended on gender. Boys and men four days, women and girls, three days; while people who had twins, it depended on the gender of the child; boy 8 and girl 6 days. Days for the two genders were doubled.

Humped persons (_Abesigufu_) were buried by grandsons who were paid to do so. Grandsons demanded a male calf (_eunwa_), goat, cockerel, and hoe. They then took an axe and pretended to chop the hump. Relatives run to rescue the dead from the grandsons but unfortunately found him dead. Much noise was heard as they lowered the body to the grave. The noise it was presumed chased away the spirits associated with such a deformity and it would not recur in the family.
A barren person was buried differently. Whether it was male or female, a door was improvised behind the house to remove the body. Before the body was lowered, they brought *Kigelia Africana or sausage tree* fruit (*etaabi*) and placed it next the body to represent a child. They prayed and said: *omutabi kuno nkwomwana wao* (this *sausage tree fruit* is your child). It signified that the dead was a parent just like others.

On the eve of fourth day, another cow was slaughtered (*eyebwosio*). It was divided amongst close relations who in turn shared it with others. One fore leg was left in the home – *eye sirindwa* (of the grave). It was from this portion that children of the dead man and their mothers ate. This meat was taken to the first widow’s house in instances of polygyny. During the entire mourning period the bereaved family and other mourners were fed by neighbours who brought cooked food from their respective homes.

### 4.4.9.1 Mourning period and shaving of hair

After burial relatives of the dead stayed in his/her homestead and mourned for three or four days depending on the gender of the deceased. Women were mourned for three days and men four. All this while, houses were not swept and no one took bath. At the expiry of the period, relatives shaved their hair and went to bath at a river. This was a way of cleansing themselves and asking their ancestors that the evil that had befallen them should not strike again and take another of their relation. They delinked themselves with what they imagined had caused death by shaving their hair, sweeping the houses and bathing. The dirt they had before bathing was believed to have been infested with the evil that caused their relative’s death hence the shaving and bathing that washed them away. After this ceremony, relations from afar left for their homes while those from nearby remained till the next day - *okhukonia amachi*. 
Hair shaving ceremony for the widows, children and close relations, *(okhukwera abana)* took place two days after burial. A niece to the dead shaved all who were to be shaved. A cow was slaughtered and its blood boiled to make clots *(amalika)*, porridge *(obusera)* was also cooked. Aloe vera *(ekakha)* was used to scoop blood for concerned parties to lick, smear some onto their ears and on chicks before a banana fiber was tied around their necks. The act of licking blood and porridge was referred to as *okhukwera*. This was a way of cleansing the family and rid them of evil spirits that came with death. Banana fibers put around the neck to signify sorrow and were not removed till the end of the mourning period.

*Amasika okhweya* (wipe tears) – the end of the mourning period. The ceremony that followed was *okhukuda enjiki/emikuto* (knock doors). During this ceremony, girls born in that home brought food from their marital homes to feed their relatives in their maternal home. It was during this ceremony that plans for memorial service *(olung’anyo)* were made. During *olung’anyo*, if it was a man who died, an inheritor was crowned *(okhubeka omusaacha mulwanyi/okhubukula olwanyi)*.

A widow was left with her brother in-law whose responsibility was to ensure that there are enough logs *(amakenga)* to keep fire alight. A mourning wife not yet inherited had banana fibers *(amakhola)* tied around her waist. A woman with *amahola* was not allowed to shake hands or visit people; if she had issues in another home, she dealt with those issues at the gate. The fibers remained on her waist till she was inherited; it was therefore her duty to ensure that the fiber did not get soaked when she went to bathe. Usually she removed and hid it. This stopped her from getting involved with men before an opportune time. A man identified to inherit her was the
only one permitted to cut those fibers. If any other man who was not a possible inheritor indulged with her *amanyasi* had to be taken least he died or was consumed by *ekhira*

### 4.4.9.2 Inheritance

Abasamia believed in family continuity. When a man died his wife/wives were inherited by the dead man’s close relations. An inheritor was younger than the deceased man. At times immediate family members rejected an inheritor from outside the nuclear family on grounds that their wealth was to be confined to the inner circles.

A date was set for this ceremony usually a week after burial. In incidences where a man had many wives and his first wife had grown children, one of those sons was allowed to inherit their father’s youngest wife. Slaves (*abasumba*) were not allowed to inherit though they were considered and treated as sons to the owner of the home. Bachelors were not allowed to inherit as they were not responsible enough to take care of families. Observations reveal that men who were professional inheritors never kept/maintained a marriage. They became contended with the love accorded them by the widower and forgot about starting their own family.

Activities that went with the inheriting process were rather nasty. A mother and son to inherit her were holed up in a house because of their new found relation. This was after being removed from *oluyanja* (open field) where the widow was unclaimed. Before being removed from *oluyanja*, a widower showed that she was ready to be inherited. She removed one of the supporting logs on the veranda of her house (*okhutekula ekutu*) which had been put by her late husband. It signified he had been
removed. Before that, She sat in the house till darkness fell; removed all her clothes, run out of the house, pulled down the log and run with it the gate. After throwing it, she strode back nude and unperturbed of the presence of many people in the compound. At the time, all respected persons and children were locked away just in case they saw their mother or daughter in-law naked performing those rituals. Her brothers in-law and co-wives participated in the custom which was only performed by women who had been faithful to their husbands otherwise one died. On reaching the centre of the compound she threw herself to the ground face upwards and started counting stars (*okhubala enginigini*). While her husband was alive; she lay in that position making love to him. This woman imagined being with her dead husband and did all that they used to do till she reached orgasm. This exercise empowered her to count stars with her inheritor.

### 4.4.9.3 Wife Inheriting Ceremony

The wife/wives with banana fibers around their necks or waists had them cut on this day by those to inherit them. All members related to the dead person were supposed to be present to witness the ceremony. The ceremony took place in the morning hours with grandsons escorting inheritors and the wives to be inherited to their respective houses in which banana fibers were cut. The grandsons left to accord the two their privacy. They remained locked up till morning. In the morning a woman who had banana fibers cut from her neck or waist did not leave her houses because she was naked. A goat was slaughtered for each of the inherited women and skins (clothes) given to them to enable them leave their houses. If a man was to inherit two or more wives, he started with the eldest one and moved in a descending order, this happened on the same night.
4.5 Knowledge Acquisition

4.5.1 Education

Mzee Thomas Mukhombe was a renowned educationist of colonial times. He expressed concern on the importance of IK and reiterated his wish that it could be tapped from those who hold it and made accessible to users at all levels of development. This view was shared by all participants in the study. Ayeko who was a teacher in all the East African countries wondered why the initial syllabus was abandoned – where children in lower primary were taught in mother-tongue.

Among the Samia, education was conducted in two separate places, kraal (Esidwori) for boys and dormitory (Esibinje) for girls. Abasamia taught their youth various courses ranging from grazing, building, hunting, fishing, weaving, pottery, blacksmith, rainmaking, health, farming, security, wrestling and family life in general. Knowledge in the above disciplines was imparted by elders who had acquired it from their elders; it was passed from one to many or many to many. There were no formal schools but knowledge went from generation to generation using elders; first hand information passed on from father to son, mother to daughter, grandparents to grandchildren, elders to community and clan to clan. A child not educated in the ways of the tribe became a laughing stock.

Instructions were both verbal and practical. Children who were close to elders tapped and gained so much from their elders who had time to tell them stories during the day while their older siblings and parents went out to work in the fields. Once knowledge was imparted, children strived to live according to the teachings learnt. Elders had ways of rewarding the youth and children. An elder deliberately left their walking
stick only to ask a child to collect it for him. If the child showed reluctance, an elder gauged that child was not willing to be sent and may not be helpful to others once knowledge had been imparted to them. Such a child lost the confidence of this elder.

Another test from elders to children was removing jiggers. A grandparent would ask his/her grandchild to remove jiggers from his/her foot. Old people always had gifts like left over ugali, roast sweet potatoes, milk or nuts which were only given to children who helped the elderly accomplish their needs. In some instances, there were no jiggers to be removed but just wanted to establish whether that child could accomplish assignments when called upon. As a child grew with elders, it was clear it amassed a wealth of knowledge as compared to those rebellious (ogendiekha) children who had no time for elders.

Family relations were also taught during such sessions. Some children were inquisitive and wanted to know why people who were not their family members lived within them. Elders had to explain their family tree to make them understand better. For example after war, a side that conquered came back with persons they held captive. Those captured became part of the family and even acquired clan names of their captors and were assimilated into the ways of that clan. When time came for such people to marry, they were accorded the honour of paying dowry for them and doing all that a father would do for his biological son. Some people, because of hunger left their homes to join others in search of food. These people, like the captives, were assimilated into the clans they joined.
Girl chores included, fetching water, collecting firewood, grinding flour, looking for vegetables among others. Grinding was done on *olukina* (girding stone) using *esio* (small stone which acted as a mortar). In a kneeling position, a girl ground millet or sorghum which transformed into flour. Cooking was another subject taught. Girls of age, say twelve and above years were supposed to cook for the family in turns. In a home were boys, girls and *Omwene engo* (owner of the home). All these groups had their food served and stored separately. Children fed with their mothers. But a husband’s *ugali* was cooked by his wife/wives

4.5.2 Wrestling

Boys spent most of their time with their fathers to enable them get education. *Amalengo* (wrestling) was taught in the evening hours, between 3.00 and 4.00 p.m. People from different *engongos* (ridges) gathered at an agreed place ready to cheer their competitor. A fronted wrestler appointed his opponent. When appointed, that person responded to the affirmative. Supporting groups from either side then sat down leaving the two opponents in the ring. During this time, a person wrestled to the ground is defeated. Another opponent is then appointed from the opposing team.

Wrestling demanded tact and if rules of the game were not adhered to, results were disastrous. Acquiring the skill demanded that you put the right foot and hand first. The hand put forward determined the outcome. Such skills were passed on by those who had participated before and gave real life experiences as examples. Many persons gave instructions to many youths giving accounts of themselves, what they learnt from others, their successes and/or failures and in other instances one person instructed many.
Referees officiated over the bouts. The role of the referee then was similar to that practiced today. There were rules to the game, a person once wrestled to the ground was not hit any further. A wrestler was not supposed to strangle or harm his opponent. Strange as it may seem, wrestling was in essence a way of getting persons respect each other. If one wrestled an opponent and defeated him, the defeated person will never tease the victor, instead he will accord him the respect deserved. Thus, through wrestling people earned respect from peers.

4.5.3 *Obukimba* (Rainmaking)

Specialized skills were also imparted from a person to another; either self interested in the trade, or chosen by elders. Some clans were talented in a certain arts and they imparted that art if requested. For example, Abakangala were rainmakers. For this art to be passed on, an identified person from the lineage (*enyumba ya bakimba*) of rainmakers was given a mantle; after which sacrifices were made to the gods for endorsement. Upon acceptance, knowledge was disseminated to the appointed persons. However, not everyone who wanted to become a rainmaker got an opportunity. It was a sensitive art and persons with ill intentions were never appointed to take up the skill. In some cases some were bent towards harming others through it. Those given the mantle underwent rigorous vetting from elders.

Animals and chicken were slaughtered during the occasion of endorsing one to become a rainmaker. A cow to be slaughtered was not an ordinary one, it was spirit infested—*engombe yo musambwa*. This was a sacrificial lamb which in most cases was chosen by ancestors. Meat from this cow was divided into various parts. The senior most person in the clan was given the front leg, another was given the hump in
order of seniority till all the whole cow was divided. The first front leg and the hump were given to the first house. Omwene engo (owner of home) gave instructions as to how the meat was to be shared out, and he remained with ekumba lia sena (front leg). At times all the flesh was removed and a bare bone boiled to make soup for the mzee (old man in reference to the owner of the home).

4.5.4 Esibinje as a Class

Young girls from a ridge aged fifteen years and above slept in esibinje (grandmother’s hut/dormitory). In the dormitory, their grandmother educated them on the general ways of life. She was an old woman who had attained menopause and her husband had ceased visiting her house or he had died. Girls were taught how they ought to handle their husbands when they got married, take care of the house and home, respect their in-laws and the clan in general. Among the Samia a wife belonged to the clan and in most cases, it was the determining factor whether a girl was fit to be married in that clan or not.

Having assisted their parents’ with various chores during the day, girls converged at their grandmother’s house. They started off sitting outside esibinje and telling stories in the moonlight. Grandmother narrated tales, said riddles and proverbs to educate the girls of what happened before they were born and the norms and values of the Samia community. Most of the stories told were educative and also served as warnings on occurrences that might repeat themselves; history repeats itself so goes the saying. Tales, riddles, proverbs and songs had social and moral roles among Abasamia. Because there were no formal schools then, where children would be taught, such gatherings formed classes. These activities were upheld, practiced and were a lifelong
process. Stories told had various themes ranging from obedience, respect, honesty, 
deceit, greed and so on.

Girls’ teachings touched on several areas musibinje. They were warned against 
visiting their boyfriend immediately after menstrual period (obusinga). It was 
believed ovulation took place after the cycle. This educated the girls on different 
stages of hormonal change in their body and also to guard against pregnancies before 
marrriage. A girl who conceived before marriage was, a laughing stoke for village spit, 
a letdown to her family and clan. Such girls were married off to old men who had 
wives or widowers. That was demeaning and no girl wanted to get married without a 
befitting ceremony (esidialo) and to an old man or as a second wife.

Grandmothers who administered ebibinje were educated girls of the consequences 
that awaited them on messing up their girlhood and getting their virginity broken by 
men who lusted for them and were not interest in marriage. This did not mean that 
girls never had boyfriends or they never visited them. On the contrary, they had them 
and even visited. Grandmothers did exemplary jobs and instructed their 
granddaughter never to allow any man have an intercourse with them. They fondled, 
grew all the way but never ‘gained access’, if allowed, that boy was to marry her. Her 
advice was to allow her boyfriend finish on her thighs in which case both will have 
satisfied their sexual desires without jeopardizing the girl’s position in society.

Grandmother gave lessons on how girls were to take care of their family and husband. 
A husband was equated to a king/lord (omwami) and was given the best in all aspects. 
A husband was to be loved, respected, fed and taken good care of in and outside the
house. Family life was vital to a community which was also charged with the responsibility of ensuring that girls who were key players in family upbringing were well equipped with the needed knowledge. Because of her advanced age, a grandmother discussed issues freely and even demonstrated to girls how to treat their husbands in bed and everything that went with bedroom stuff. A grandmother emphasized the fact that while in bed a girl was not to let her husband ‘weed’ alone, she was to participate fully to facilitate total satisfaction. Girls who did not sleep musibinje were considered illiterate in the ways of the community and were in most cases isolated.

Girls were taught of the implications of conceiving before marriage. Therefore intimate relations between girls and boys were rare. Dowry paid was not anything to talk about for such girls; as the man felt he was only doing that family a favour. He was considered a saviour who had redeemed the girl’s family of evil spirits (okhumala esikhieno mudala) and shame. The man and not the family decided what to pay as dowry if any.

In many parts of Africa, proverbs, riddles, folktales and songs are the main networks forming and molding cultural and social behaviour of her people. It is not surprising, therefore, that most of these narratives, in spite of their age-old associations have continued to uphold their social currency and instructive value, defying any change in time. This demonstrates that oral narratives are a dynamic art-form which can cope with new developments in society in general.
Proverbs and riddles were used to build and test intelligence of the young and to instill in them a sense of acceptable social conduct. The intension and ultimate goal of traditional educational setup communicated by way of storytelling and proverb use was; to teach the young about social behaviour and, create in them a sense of ethnic identity.

Children took turns to tell stories which were told to them by their parents or other children. Participating in story telling enabled children develop skills that enabled them create and retain stories so as to have a story to tell when their turn came. Depending on the aspect of life being tackled, for example, morals, the narrator used simple conversational language; which enabled them engage in conversation with the audience. The stories were usually applied by using real life examples and familiar features like rivers and hills. Songs were sung alongside the tales, which usually were at points of crisis or success. If the audience knew the song they sung along with the narrator; this showed the audience was attentive and followed the story thus making the session interactive.

Night time was the natural and most ideal time for storytelling. Young children and old engaged in story telling during day as pastime while able bodied adults were occupied in the fields. Youths and adults had to wait till evening when they had free time. To prepare for the evening sessions of storytelling, girls gathered adequate logs for firewood which kept a fire burning throughout the storytelling session and the entire night. It was also common for all girls and boys to assemble in the courtyard of *esibinje*, especially when there was moonlight; to sing before they embarked on storytelling.
Stories were started with *khaale* (long time ago). This was to draw attention of the audience. Indigenous Samia plots and themes were based on history. Animals used demonstrated action; they included fox – greedy and stupid, hare – trickster, sly but very clever (*ojuolijuoli khamakesi mangi*), hyena – greedy, foolish and destructive, snake – cunning and vicious, chameleon – slow, unpredictable and wise. Characterization of these animals and reptiles revolved around themes of relationships. These animal characters were treated and described as though they were human; they seemed to mimic human language and sometimes literally speak.

Songs were a means of expression to mark an occasion whether social or otherwise with the significance it deserves. Sometimes songs marked a start of planting or harvesting seasons, ritual or ceremonial occasions. There were songs sung only during initiation, harvesting, marriage or ritual connected to birth of twins, among other many uses. Songs sung when a woman gave birth to twins were very vulgar. This was in the hope that it would put a stop to begetting twins in future.

### 4.5.6 *Esiduori* (Kraal) as a Class

This was an institution where boys aged twelve years and above received education on different issues of life. Kraal, apart from being a centre of education was a cattle shed and storage for food. When an old man was served with food that he could not finish, he kept the leftovers just in case he got visitors or for his children and grandchildren who ran errands for him; and *abasumba* (servants) who grazed family cattle. Food stored included *ugali*, sweet potatoes, milk, smoked meat and fish. Boys were educated on how to fend for themselves and their families.
Though boys had general knowledge on farming, wrestling, building and so on, everyone had education that was hands on; what was learnt depended on the student’s interest; not all children in a family learnt similar skills. At times elders identified a skill and natured it. Children who showed interest in a skill were encouraged to actualize it by giving them time to learn it. Those interested in fishing, for example, were taught how to weave traps (okhulukha emikono), place those traps in appropriate areas to catch fish, make temporary ponds (okhuteresa amavumbi) so that the fish that swam into the trap could not swim out.

In a house different persons were skilled in different areas and professionals were consulted at different stages. For instance on a roof amadian’ga formed the base before grass was thatched. These were ring like items made from amagego and placed in both the inner and outer sides of the roof. The skill of roofing is referred to as okhubala esirama (direct translation, counting the roof). Counting as used denoted how the professional measured how many spaces were to be left between one reed and the next and the right sizes that were to be used. After placing amadian’ga, amanyakanya (dried barks) were used to tie the reeds together.

No human being is a jack of all trade; therefore a father identified other persons who had skills that they did not possess to help their children. A child interested in hunting skills followed hunters as they went out hunting. He observed closely what experts did and emulated them. Every hunter owned dogs which helped in catching prey and also acted as security while out hunting. The first step towards knowledge acquisition in hunting was to learn the techniques of dog keeping. Ensuring that the dogs were well kept and not tick infested.
At times the identified professional lived among the clan that needed a skill. For instance, Abang’ale clan were known for blacksmith, therefore, those interested in blacksmith identified an expert who went to live among them for some time to impart knowledge to those who needed it.

4.5.7 Communicating Knowledge

Fire was lit from animal waste which smoldered emitting smoke and repelling mosquitoes, other flying and crawling insects. Omwene engo used such forum to address his children and grandchildren. It can be equated to a guidance class situation, where advice and teachings are given. Apart from the mentioned roles, esiosio was used as a place for general conversation (olubucho). It also facilitated the owner of the home and his sons to stay up late while guarding cattle and the homestead against invasion from forces and wild animals. Having sat at the esiosio till the wee hours of the morning, Omwene engo then relocated to the veranda (amatakola) for a nap. During such sessions, stories were told; riddles and proverbs were also used. Proverbs were used by the Samia to help in upbringing.

For example,

\textit{Sirihaya yakenda khukwa manani}

\textbf{Translation}

A rude person walked the ogre’s path

\textbf{Explanation}

Persons were warned against issues but they defied elders and continued with their awkward ways. For instance, mature girls were advised against frequenting their boyfriend’s simba and indulging in sex. It was feared they would conceive before marriage. In case a girl conceived, it was not easy for her to get a boy’s hand in
marriage. She would be unceremoniously married off to an old man or be married as a second or third wife.

_Nandakererwa yachia nokwo ebukhwe_

_Translation_

One who does not heed advice visits his in-laws with soiled clothes or in an awkward state.

_Explanation_

Abasamia regarded in-laws highly. If in-laws were to visit, the host strived to deliver the best. Advice was sought on how best to attend to the in-laws to avoid embarrassment. People who did not heed advice were treated as outcasts and were in most cases isolated; nobody was willing to associate with them. Good boys ate with their father and even stayed out with them. Those considered errant were left with their mothers and at times discriminated against. These groups of people, it was established were not easy to start families. Such persons were referred to as _ogendiekha ndumbi, tang’ire, sirikhayi_ (an obstinate person who never heeded advice).

_Okudimbisa kumurinda_

_Translation_

Delay is no excuse

_Explanation_

There are persons, who when given a task, apply delaying tactics so that someone else may perform that task. It did not matter how long one delayed with the assignment, they had to accomplish it anyway.
**Njuyakhana yayia ameno**

*Translation*

Hurry hurry has no blessings

*Explanation*

When you gather information about an incident, do not be in a hurry to communicate it. It might be information requiring details you do not have to authoritatively clarify. or it might be classified information that is not meant for the public domain.

**Otakhwenya akoba okhubanja**

*Translation*

He who dislikes you escorts your creditor

*Explanation*

There are instances when people who do not agree on whatever issues never get on. In such instances, the aggrieved person will always incite others against their enemy.

**Eyiboche khulwanda yesika omunwa mwomo**

*Translation*

A bird pecking on rock relays on its beak

*Explanation*

There are people who are fond of starting fights with others or bulling them. Such persons have no strength, but rely of their mouth for verbal fights. They become so abusive that they haul insults at their opponent about issues that are none existent. In most cases the person being abused becomes embarrassed. Even if he/she is beaten the public will have information that is not true and cannot be erased.
Esikhaya eyaywa omuyaka kurisikwisia

Translation
That which cannot be cut by an axe will be brought down by wind.

Meaning
Children/people who do not heed to advice usually learn the hard way when they land into trouble and have to learn from the problem they have encountered - experience is the best teacher.

Example
There are people in life who never heed to advice. Boys or girls when they want to get married have to know the background of each other. A wangira comes and gives their reason for not sanctioning the relationship. They insist and get married only to realise that one of them is a witch or a thief. This way the one who does not practice witchcraft will start regretting and cursing the day they were born. Either they have to stay in that relationship or walk out. Either way, the repercussions are grave.

If applied today, parents will discourage a child against certain behaviour, say night movement. They would tell the child that there is a curfew and everyone is supposed to be at home by 6.00 p.m. The child because he/she feels is of age will defy this advice and stay out late. As he/she moves beyond the prescribed time, they are arrested and looked up. It is only then that they recall the parents’ advice and regret their indiscipline.

Nalukhwi lwotenyere lukhurisia omwosi

Translation
The firewood that you collect causes smoke to choke you.

Meaning
You reap what you sow
**Example**

Parents are supposed to give parental direction to their children. If left without direction such children cause a lot of problems to themselves and others including their parents. Had parents played their part well, such problems would have been evaded. If parents did their part and the child did not listen, then *sirikhaye yakenda khukwa manani* applies.

**Okwabangi kufuna obulao**

**Meaning**

Group work is done by those absent

**Translation**

When work is given to a group and one of them does not attend the sessions meant to make arrangements to accomplish the work; those present will give the absentee partner wrong information that is not reflective of the situation on the ground and he will end up carrying the heaviest load.

**Silayi siomwene sisiokhwenarisia**

Meaning: Do not get accustomed to goodies that you cannot afford.

**Translation**

There are persons who never accept their position in life. They get accustomed to good life which is not their way of living.
Omulayi sarioyera bosí
You cannot please everyone

Kenyamba omungiyu babachira omusamufu
When wind if broken in public, it will be associated with the shaggy or unkempt person

Translation
Evil/bad deeds are associated with shaggy or unkempt persons to the extent that it is believed the neat one cannot behave unethically.

There are very many proverbs used by the Samia people and this research cannot exhausted them.

4.5.8 Stories (Engano)
Most stories were told musibinjie and were based on the happenings that took place several years back. The happenings may have had positive or negative impacts on a community. Therefore, when stories were recited, they educated listeners and helped avert situations that would befall them as a result of not knowing what happened then. History repeats itself. Grandparents recited what happened to them and it was a way of sounding warnings to their grandchildren. Engano were both educative and remedial. They also served as reminders of events/happenings that took place long ago. Characterization of Luyia tales seem to involve mostly animals and humans, and most themes tend to revolve around the relationship between the two (Wamukoya 1982). For example many people never saw or encountered amanani (ogres). There is
a story that has been recited over and over. The story about a girl who escaped on the
eve of her marriage. The ogre caught up with and married her. This instilled fear into
girls who were to get married and stopped them from doing anything silly.

Stories told had significant meaning(s) that were deeply rooted in the cultural norms.
One had to dig deep to gain meaning of the story. That is the role the old took to
ensure that their children and grandchildren understood the underlying meaning of the
stories told. Stories were told at night but the young children were allowed to tell tales
during the day as pass-time while their parents were out in the fields. Scaremongering
was an effective way of storytelling as elements of amanani (ogres) in the content was
evident. For example, there is this story of how an ogre was eves-dropping to a
conversation between a boy and his girlfriend. They agreed that the boy would put a
leave on the path the girl was to follow to the boy’s home. They did not know that an
ogre was listening. As soon as the boy plucked the leave and put it on the path to
home, the ogre changed position of that leave to the path leading to its home. It was
believed that the ogre either consumed or married the girl. No further information was
given as to what happened as the story ended abruptly.

This story teaches that people should not speak loudly for unwanted persons to hear
what is not meant for them. That habit discloses secrets and plans to persons with bad
intentions. They may either hijack or ruin the plans. In other words, people were
supposed to choose a forum in which to discuss issues of whatever nature.

Ogres are fearsome beasts. A story told about them would instill fear in a listener and
send shivers; psychologically, a listener would not want to encounter an ogre.
Therefore, if there was a girl among those *musibinje* who had a date with her boyfriend; she would not leave the house for fear of an ogre having eavesdropped on their conversation. It taught girls to desist from nocturnal movement.

Apart from reminding people of the past, these stories also educated and disciplined listeners. Children were told never to pass human waste on the road. Stories and riddles were said around a bon fire. A person with the behaviour of throwing their waste anyhow would have smoke go their direction. This spoke volumes and no one was happy if people knew of the bad behaviour they inhibited.

There was this other story about *ojuoli-juoli khamakesi mangi* (wise hare). The Samia told the story of *ojuoli-juoli* who wanted to go to seek a wife in heaven. He dared the space around him and natural limitations to dream of a bride from above. Not knowing how to reach the heavens, he approached friends for help to no avail. After a lot of search he asked a spider, who agreed to help. On an appointed day, the spider wove a ling web from earth to heaven. They used it to climb up to the place. They were joined by a frog and the three set out on their mission. On approaching the home, *ojuoli-juoli* warned them that when they would be served, they should listen very carefully. If the hosts said, “Send these - food, chairs or anything else to *omukhwe* (son in-law), whatever is brought would all be left for *ojuoli-juoli* alone. However, if they said send the same to *abakeni* (visitors), then they would all share whatever it was.” It turned out that chairs were brought for *omukhwe* and *ojuoli-juoli* claimed them and tried to sit on all of them: two for his legs, two for his hands and one for his buttocks. The spider and the frog sat on the floor. When the hosts brought food, *ojuoli-juoli* was quick to enquire, “Is the food for *omukhwe* or *abakeni*?” They
replied for omukhwe. ajuoli-juoli ate all the food and left his friends hungry. At night, the two conspired and returned to earth using the web, then cut it. On waking up the following day, ajuoli-juoli discovered he had no means of returning to earth. He jumped from heaven and landed on hard rock that turned him into a rocklike substance.

The story goes on but the bit given above will do for my discussion. The Samia etiquette demanded that those going on a marriage errand must be an odd number. The pattern was supposed to identify the actual suitor by the space/position he occupied. He was to be in the middle. The mother in-law would know him without questioning. ajuoli-juoli defied this cultural requirement and occupied all the seats, thereby throwing heredity and traditions out of balance. It ended in a fiasco. He also became very greedy and individualistic by seeking to occupy all the chairs when he only needed one. It was that greed that drove him to seek a wife outside the known territories of the earth. He is punished for over-reaching the environment to go overboard and disturb the balance of nature with very adverse consequences. He abused the environment by going too far to reward his ego. The home where they went in heaven was understood to have taken a Samia format, with mother in-law’s house elevated above. Its door must have faced the gate next to which there were several huts called esimba for the boys. This was the venue where the suitors were ushered in as they awaited for formal negotiations later in the mother in-law’s house. All the chairs and food would be brought down from the mother in-law’s house to the simba.
Apart from being educative, myths and stories served to eradicate unbecoming behaviour. People were not allowed to sit on the grinding stone. They said, if a child sat on it, and an uncle ate of the floor that was ground there, that uncle died. In reality, Abasamia walked naked and the reason why they were prohibited from sitting on the grinding stone was for hygienic purposes.

Girls were not allowed to climb trees for fear of breaking their virginity. There is no logic in that theory. The truth was, girls had no inner-ware and climbing a tree would expose them to those standing beneath. Apart from losing their virginity, girls were also told that they would be barren if they climbed trees or rooftops. All these reasons given were all to prevent the girls from exposing their bodies.

### 4.5.9 Riddles

Riddles were educative but they also sharpened children’s intelligence. For example if a riddle was said the previous night and is repeated, a child who answered it will display an ability to remember what was learnt. This is where the old graded children. The sharp and first learners and those who did not grasp quickly enough – slow learners were made to interact with fast learners to act as remainders of the slow ones.

When a topic was introduced, a teacher does not move at an anticipated pace as the understanding of pupils in a class vary. A teacher will be forced to repeat the topic, to enable slow learners understand. In such instance, fast learners come in handy as they remember what was taught the previous day.
For example:

Question: *Munaye*

Response: *Kwichi:*

Riddle: *Halahala:*

Answer: *A khosi khabanyaka*

*Explanation*

This riddle meant that as you were out there not conforming to cultural norms, the moon light shone on you and people saw what you were doing. There were no secrets. All that is done in darkness/secrecy will be brought to light some day.

Apart from being a form of teaching, riddles, storytelling and proverbs set parameters for individual and served as warnings for those with bad intensions.

**4.6 Socio-Cultural and Religious Beliefs**

**4.6.1 Religion**

Abasamia believed in God (*Were Khagaba Rachari omulongi wekulu nende esialo*) the giver of life, maker of heaven and earth. Before an elder or member of a family set out on a journey, God was consulted through ancestors for journey mercies. Shrines (*omwera*) built on opposite sides of a gate in a homestead acted as sanctuaries where petitions, prayers and supplications were presented to God. Early in the morning before outsiders visited, an elder went to a shrine to offer sacrifices and intercede for those to travel. A chicken was slaughtered and blood sprinkled around the shrine; to draw God’s attention to prayers. Similar prayers were made before planting, harvesting and any other ceremony that Abasamia set out to do. Sacrifices were made to enable them get bumper harvests and general blessings for the family. God answered their prayers and Abasamia never lacked.
The person offering prayers did so while facing the direction from where the sun rises – East. Prayers were offered early in the morning at around 4.00 a.m. This was before anybody stepped at the shrine. It was believed that God gave blessings early and those blessings were to be received as they came.

Amalwa was brewed when a ceremony was planned. Some of it was poured around the shrine. This was asking for God’s blessings and protection against external forces. Such sacrifices appeased God as the host prayed that no quarrels or fights should erupt after or when visitors got tipsy. While sprinkling beer around a shrine, the owner of the home first sprinkled on the shrine on the right calling on his dead grandfather’s name, then to the one left as he called his dead grandmother’s name. It was believed that these persons resided in the respective shrines after death and had to be alerted when their attention and assistance was needed. These ancestors were mediators between the living and God.

After that he would say:

Khagaba, let people come and feast peacefully, there should be no chaos. Some beer from that sprinkled was spared and poured into olukio/endengekho – large pot in which beer was served, and formed the base before olukio was filled.

In a shrine were two stones signifying engurikho (maiden name) of elders in that home. When a married girl named after her grandmother or grandfather was bid farewell, she was given one of those stones. This meant her namesake had accompanied her to give protection while in her home.
Apart from the two shrines at a gate, a third was built in the centre of a homestead. It had two stones, feathers from a white cockerel, a small pot (akhabindu) in which beer was stored. This shrine served to attract/tap wealth. It was referred to as enyumba ye misambwa – house of spirits. This house, small as it was never leaked however much it rained, it protected wealth (efunyi) that was tapped and even increased it.

The Samia prayed to Were in praise, asking Him for what they needed, thanksgiving, forgiveness and in memory of the dead to rest them in peace. Prayers were conducted either individually, communal or as a family in a homestead, depending on circumstances. Every family had a shrine (omwera) erected in the homestead as this was the dwelling of the ancestors through whom prayers and supplications were made.

It was believed that God at times got angry and punished in different ways such as an epidemics, drought, famine, army worms, hailstones, wind-storm, rain storms, poor harvest and even death. When this happened a community realized and had to get a way out of the problem. They looked for ways to appease God. They either prayed directly or indirectly through ancestors whom they strongly believed were near Were in heaven (emagombe) than anything else.

During the planting season, a clan was informed to be prepared for the activity. An elder was identified to head-start planting. He asked his first wife to prepare seeds ready for planting. On the night preceding the planting day, the elder had to be intimate with his first wife. Seeds remained in her house till they set off for the
shamba. Some beer and food were prepared to be consumed after planting. Early the next morning, an elder took a white cockerel to the shrine with a little of each assorted seeds and asked ‘God to bless the plantation (*ate ekhabi hutaka*). Everybody from the clan went to start planting in the elder’s *shamba*. This went on for three days, after which a cockerel was slaughtered, cooked and some of the cooked food was again put in the shrine for ancestors to consume in appropriation to said prayers.

In case of a good harvest, arrangements were made and the entire neighbourhood informed of it in readiness for celebrations and thanks giving to God. Beer was brewed from the new harvest and an animal slaughtered for this occasion. Some beer was taken to the shrine to enjoin the *emisambwa* (spirits) in the festival.

### 4.6.2 Drought

There were times when rains did not come in time for planting; a rainmaker had to be consulted. If still there was no rain, elders came together to ascertain the cause and explore ways of getting rain. They offered sacrifices to their ancestors in order to get answers to their problems. An elder would be heard saying: *emisambwa mikhongo chidakha okhulia* (the big spirits want to eat). A selected elder slaughtered chicken, let out all blood into the ground and roasted the flesh for those present to eat. This was paying homage to ancestors who in turn communicated to God their needs. Rains came, fields were planted and there were bumper harvests.

### 4.6.7 Totems

A totem is an animal or item regarded as holy to a family or clan. Wild animals were not common occurrence; but when need arose, crocodiles left water for land in search of human blood. For a wild animal, a crocodile for that matter, to be sighted during
the day, there had to be a reason. Some clans among Abasamia kept totems. Those whose totem was a crocodile were referred to as *abalokera gwena* – those who practices witchcraft using a crocodile. This reptile was treated with a lot of honour and its wishes were always fulfilled. To prevent this crocodile for killing people, once it left the waters, a member of that clan charged with the responsibility of caring for it took chicken, removed all its feathers and threw it into the river where those crocodiles resided. Once the crocodile fed on that chicken it disappeared into the waters. When blood-thirsty, its representative among humans had to give that blood; no one else gave chicken or any other prey to the totem. Non-representatives never dared give blood as the totem would not take; instead it would opt to seek its own prey, in which case it would pounce on a human being or animal.

Victor Ogama disclosed that Abakhulo clan of Abasamia community had three totems; a crocodile, leopard and python reverently known as *okuro*. *Okuro* referred to both the leopard which lived at Ageng’a hill and the python in Munana river. These totems were representative of Abakhulu ancestors. In case of disputes or a phenomenon, like elders were dying in quick succession, rains had not come, unrest in the clan, it meant ancestors were unhappy. These totems were mediators between Abakhulu and their ancestors they were therefore presented with the grievances which were in turn presented to ancestors who presented them to God for a solution. This clan had other items which they considered holy. They had a drum and a spear which they kept and had been passed on from generation to generation for safe custody. Special attention was accorded these items; and only those with upright morals had the honour of being in charge of them. If the person charged with the responsibility was involved in malpractices, the items relocated to a place of their choice.
For instance, when Otoro died, he passed on the spear and drum to Mugan’ge his eldest son. Mugan’ge became disgruntled and did not conform to the norms of the clan; he even torched his mother’s house in which the items were kept for safe custody. The house was razed to the ground; the following morning the spear was found outside the ruins in upright position. The drum produced sounds without anyone beating it. This drum was not often played, when it was, there was an issue to be addressed.

4.6.8 Sex as a Method of Enforcing Social Order

The Samia have been derided as people whose lives rotate around sex. This has made some people born in the community become too shy to identify with this cultural practice. Before a bride is taken to bed, the bridegrooms’ parents must have sex themselves and send a signal to the young couple in a symbolic language, but which must be culturally very clear. For planting new crops, the order of sex starts with the oldest couple in the hierarchy to the youngest. No couple could plant new seed, without undertaking a sexual ceremonial ritual the night before. When putting up a new homestead or moving into a new house, the Samia must have sex to complete the process. All these were made mandatory obligations that were strictly observed. Defying such taboos would invite a chronic and stubborn disease (ekhira) into the family. This is a dreaded illness, whose symptoms are likened to those of HIV/AIDS infections. For a long time, the Samia have confused the former for the latter sickness. What is common between the two is that they are diseases revolving around social ethics. The ethics dictate what is regarded as normal and therefore considered acceptable sexual practices. Leighpigg and Rivkifish (2005) argue that sex is very important in development. Population control and management, disease prevention,
maternal health promotion and child healthcare practices internationally depend on sex culture. This influences planning and reproduction, which in turn affects physical development. Gosine (2009) observes that when sex and sexuality are left out of international development agenda, it cannot reach optimum levels. He says that sexual proclivities of those on development sites have caused anxieties of the people, driven and shaped projects of international development. The Samia seem to have taken care of this need to integrate their sex and sexuality to development. This is also injected into their health management. To them staying healthy is a function of good sex practices in an orderly manner as discussed above. When life is infected by illnesses, it might mean that someone has not played his part appropriately in the sex chain. The remedy is to re-enact the whole play, and adjusted the part that went wrong. This world view is getting support from the most unlikely quarters. Dossey (1982) argues that the world cannot be understood entirely on the basis of modern physics in which the body is perceived as a clock-work of mechanism, in which illness is caused by breakdown of parts. Having been an internal medical physician for a long time, Dr Dossey recommends that medicine needs regular updating probably by infusing indigenous knowledge. On this basis we can question the theories that have governed our application of medicine. He wonders whether the brain is nothing more than a hologram in which every part contains a whole. That could explain why ordinary people have been able to raise or lower their blood pressure at will, or control heart-rate and body temperature. The major question arising out of this phenomenon is what part consciousness plays in the management of health and illness. He disputes our obsession with the idea that time is a flowing entity.
Among the Samia, when a man married a new wife (omweya) and one of his parents had travelled, he would have to wait for their return, so that his parents would be intimate before he would with his wife. To ensure this, elderly women kept the young lady away from her husband by making her sleep in a grandmothers’ house.

4.6.9 Omukhula (Water Factor)

Water system came in handy to give direction in setting up a homestead. In flat terrains, in which it would be hard for anyone to tell which side of the landscape is higher, the Samia watched the storm water. Its flow dictated who builds a house where and that rule was enforced by taboo practice. The bigger picture was determined by the location of the water body like a lake, river or pan that collected water. It was a rule thumb that a Samia homestead must be set facing the direction of such water bodies. The oldest couples settled at the highest altitude of the landscape, and the younger generations spread themselves in phases downhill in order of their ages so that the youngest couples occupied the lowest part of the landscape. That was why it was arguable that planning and use of land resources was to some extent by water, which in turn was controlled by hills or mountains. It was not left to chance to decide who will go where as the usage of the land surface was culturally predetermined. Supposing the left side of the farm is rocky or marshy, a son born in the order to inherit it did not make a claim for change. It was taboo for him to move above his senior brothers.
4.6.10 Left-Right Pattern
According to an individual home space, sons build their huts in an alternating right-left pattern starting with the oldest son at the top and the youngest at the bottom. A person familiar with Samia culture easily figured out which house belonged to whom. The same rules applied to polygamous families. Different wives took positions in an alternating right-left pattern in order of seniority where juniors come lowest and nearer the gate. All these may seem unimportant, but it helped the Samia find their bearings and navigate their movements in life.

4.6.11 Doors and Gates
Doors and gates had hidden symbolic meanings which the Samia community cherished. Sons in-law could not use the back passage (*esibiriri*). A small entrance at the back of a home used by insiders or neighbours to a family. Probably, it was meant to keep privacy to those who did not belong. The main gate was used by all in life, but in death, the practice changed. When a man or his wives died outside the home, their bodies would be brought in through the main gate. In Abonyo’s opinion (2005), that was because they were considered permanent residents of a home. Anyone else like siblings, sons or daughters in-law are to be brought in through a temporary opening, *eibiriri*, made in a fence. It is again arguable that this symbolically indicated that the deceased did not thrive to move out of his or her own homestead. Both the gate and the door are symbols of transition and privacy. The door is a sign of entry, however, like the gate, there is also an area beyond which certain individuals within or without a family cannot go at given moments. For example, it was a taboo for adolescent sons and daughters to go past the door to their mothers’ hut. It was the sacredness of the sleeping space that kept them off. In the event that sons and daughters came to their
mothers hut for a meal, they were served at the door. If a mother was away, she would ensure that food was left for the youth at some special space above the door, where it could be accessed without stepping into the hut. Gates and doors were noted as points and symbols of transition. They were markers of insiders versus outsiders. It was believed that they were delicate spaces that could be manipulated ethno-medically to cause illness or heal a sick person. Indeed they were guarded strictly because they were the points of exposure at which one’s enemy can deposit harmful charms to one’s detriment.

Figure 6: Layout of a Samia hut
4.6.12 Esisuri (Apex)

On the roof of every hut in a Samia homestead is a one metre stick pitched at the appex of a circular conical roof. It is an important symbol in the home. It pierces through broken pots and sits directly above the centre of the hut. Space below it is sacred. It was where a beer pot was mounted with seats around it for old men to have their drink. It was also the point at which a medicine-man administered herbs to the sick in a family. In the event that a man of that house died, esisuri, which others think is a phallic symbol, was removed to reflect his demise. Anyone passing by, if literate in the samia culture, would rightfully interpret. As soon as a woman or widow is remarried or inherited, a new esisuri was fixed on top of the roof. This symbolized the presence of the new man. Samia is a patriarchal community, esisuri is equated to a flag, it signifies authority, which was bestowed on a man.

4.6.13 The Binary Left-Right Opposition

The right is inherently associated with strength and good luck while the left is regarded weak and a sign of bad omen. The Samia figuratively refer to the left side as ‘omukhono mukhasi’ meaning the side of a woman. It is this weak side which typifies the women folk. In case children, against all discouragement, persist on being left-handed, the Samia organized rituals to cleanse them. On becoming adults, due to establish their own homes, certain rituals were done in advance for the left handed men.

At birth, a placenta (engobi) of a baby girl is buried on the left hand side of the door of the mother’s hut. Later, when she died, she was buried to the left of the door too although not on the same spot. For a boy child, the exact opposite was done. It was
possible for an observer to know the gender of the dead by simply looking at the grave site. When a young marriageable girl died before getting married, she was buried outside the homestead. The same applies to people who committed suicide. The space outside made statements to the rest that what the dead person did was unacceptable. It was supposed to have some deterrent effect on society especially the peers facing similar pressures.

4.6.15 Planning the Environment
The Samia environment and landscape was planned by cultural traditions that could not be changed. Even the exploitation of resources was not done haphazardly or randomly. It was done in orderly ways organized by water flow and sex patterns that were remotely controlled by weather and seasons. This way, the Samia never overexploit their environmental resources. Today, people have become individualized because of westernization and urbanization. This has removed people from their traditions and pushed them to become perfect consumers who think in first class singular. This is why resources are abused rather than be used. The stories, folktales, proverbs and songs were all used to uphold the ethics of using landscape and other resources according to traditions.

4.6.16 Offering of Sacrifices
Whenever there was any complication or misfortune or even series of diseases in a home, an epidemic in a clan, village, neighbourhood or community, omulakusi (prophet) was consulted on what was the possible cause of whatever was happening. In most cases, a prophet told them that the spirits of the dead needed a sacrifice.
In case of sickness, omulakusi took a cockerel and rubbed it on body of the sick and those present said, “Were Rachari, niwe hakhaba okabiranga ebindu nende buli omundu yesi yesi obulamu, obe nesisa khwifwe” (God the pure, you are the giver, you give life to everything and everyone, have mercy on us). After that the prophet went on mentioning names of certain forefathers pleading with them for favour, “Ewe lebe omwene erambo lino, mulangane mwiche mulye okukokho kweng ‘we nguno” (You, so and so, you are the owner of this clan, invite the others to come and eat this cockerel, it is yours.) He continued praying as he threw a piece in each of the cardinal points saying, “Ewe Were Rachari, engokho njiyo olye otuberese obulamu” (God the pure, here is a cockerel, eat and give us life.) He then addressed the good spirits (emisambwa milayi), “Ewe lebe, niwe omwibusi werambo lyeefwe, langa wane nenede wane mulye engokho yeeng ‘we jino mani mutulingale mutube ekhabi nende obulamu” (You so and so, you are the origin of this clan, call so and so, share this cockerel and bless and give us life).

4.6.17 Cleansing

Curses were caused by defying norms and cultures of a community. Reasons for cleansing were many. A boy may be tempted by his father’s wife, in instances of polygyny while his father was still alive - “Throwing stones into a father’s compound”. A curse was also evoked when a woman got a baby, rather than her husband wait for the stipulated time when the baby had gained black pigment, to allow them have sex, he went on and indulged with other women. In this situation, life of the new born baby was in danger just as the mother’s capability of begetting more children.
A mother, in anger would shake her breast for a child (*okhutesara olubere*); likewise a man would shake his manhood (*okhutesara emberi*) for his child. This was done in very rare occasions. In most cases it happened when a child went against all odds and annoyed a parent to an extent that a parent wondered whether he/she had sired this child. Continued pleas to have a child respect or listen to a parent fell on deaf. A parent was left with no alternative but to curse such a child. In other instances, despite the fact that Abasamia walked naked, parents were to be extra careful to avoid exposing their nakedness to their children and respected persons; if they accidentally did, it called for sacrifices and cleansing. Blood from a goat or chicken had to be shed to dispel the curse. One may wonder why sheep were never sacrificed. Sheep were used to block or chase away evil spirits/ghosts (*ebikhieno*) and were therefore considered a sacrifice not befitting their ancestors and God. Also, a sheep is generally a dirty animal as most of the time it has mucus on it its nose. Sacrifices had to be clean.

*Ehira* befell newly-weds if they ate from the same pot with their fathers-in-law. In instances when that happened, an elderly woman was on standby to administer *amanyasi* that prevented curses. These concoctions were added in virtually everything that was used by a family – cooking pots, drinking water pots and so on. If a bride had already fed from these pots, both father-in-law and bride had to take *amanyasi* to avert any incidences that may befall and affect them negatively.

When a man had secret intimate relationship with his brother’s wife; and the owner of the wife fell ill or died, he was not allowed to touch or move close to the body of the dead man. If he did, the crooked mover (*okenda bukhiamu*) died. He refrained from
seeing his brother’s body till given *amanayasi*. Once *amanayasi* were administered it enabled him be free with his siblings and would even participate in the digging the grave.

*Ekhira* presented itself as a health condition which incapacitated individuals. For instance when blood relatives married (*okhufuniha endamu*) their union was not blessed with children and would be characterized with many problems and misunderstanding. In a home, sisters or sisters-in-law to a lady who had gotten a baby did not eat food prepared for her. It was presumed these ladies indulged with their boyfriends or husbands and would pose problems for this mother. If this happened that was a curse and a mother would not beget other children. All those and many others constituted *ekhira*.

Apart from cleansing that took place because of acts that would evoke curses, sacrifices were offered to appease the dead. According to Abasamia, people did not wholly die; they were temporarily transformed into some immoveable state. They could talk and participate in human activities; they had power to listen and see everything that happened to their relatives. That is why when prayers were offered, they were directed to God through some ancestor.

Even those who died did not just die; there was a human hand involved. Such people were bitter and came back in ghost form to haunt the living presumably for having not protected them against evil persons that took their life. A sheep of a specified colour, on direction of ancestors was slaughtered to restrain that spirit to the grave. Other spirits that bothered relations were those of girls who had attained marriageable age
but death caught up with them before they got married. Such a girl was not buried in their homestead; her remains were interred outside a compound and was warned to remain in the grave as it was not their wish that she died before getting a home.

Ghosts were a nuisance and had to be appeased. A sacrifice was offered for a person who committed suicide to block his/her ghost from terrorizing the living. Suicide was not just committed, either there was someone in the lineage who earlier committed suicide and now beckoned his/her siblings to do the same or evil spirits sent to the subject to force it take its life (*okhutumirwa omusango*); either way, a sheep was slaughtered as a sacrifice. As a ceremony to block ghosts (*okhwikala ebikhieno*) was performed, a dead person was reminded that they took their own life and had no business returning to mingle with and bother the living; he decided, he/she should take responsibility and go for ever.

### 4.6.18 Witchcraft (*Obulosi/Obukhingi*)

Abasamia practiced witchcraft either to protect themselves against evil persons and their ill intentions or to revenge against evil committed unto them by others. Some merely had black hearts and wanted to ruin others.

Witchcraft (*obukhingi*) was practiced by a few who had double standards. They cast evil spells and were the same people who dispelled them (*okhuwingula*). It was because they knew how they caused problems and had solutions to them. African chemistry is not easy to comprehend; some wizards imposed a condition referred to as *esikhokho*. It is believed *omukhingi* was capable of causing snakes, frogs, bones or other crude items in a human being’s stomach. If not rescued on time, these foreign bodies caused death.
When one was bewitched and the culprit was not known, services of *Omulakusi* (prophet) were sought. *Omulakusi* consulted his ancestors who told him all he wanted to know about anything; this was because ancestors had a duty to protect their living relatives; and also gave the way forward, they were Omni present.

The Samia were/are people with extraordinary powers and did things that were not easy to comprehend. Theft was discouraged among the Samia. The lazy people who wanted to reap where they had not sown had no place in the Samia community. However, there is always a black sheep in a community – “every market has its mad man”. *Abalosi* (wizards) and *Abalakusi* (diviners) were empowered to disclose and punish persons with itchy fingers.

In instances where people stole food from fields, *jujus* were placed in the fields to catch the thieves. A thief would come, uproot potatoes but would not leave after gathering his/her loot. They stood there till the owner of the shamba came and released them after punishing them or making everyone in the village aware of the thief.

The same applied to men who took advantage of others’ wives. Once they indulged, the two cannot separate. It forced them to be exposed and the man (*thief*) was fined. He paid a cow and brew. Such were satanic powers but some people used them to discipline others or acquire wealth. Today, we have heard of instances where persons eat grass as punishment on being accused of theft.
Ebikhokho still exist among Abasamia. When ebikhokho are administered to a person, they have to seek immediate services of omulumikhi (exorcist), least the victim dies. Eloko (Sorcery) is another power that still exists among the Samia. Tools of witchcraft include snakes, tortoises, leopards, owls and so on. Items like bones, frogs, pieces of wood, hair, chunks of meat, virtually anything that a bad-eyed women used to inflict pain and suffering on their subjects were used. These items were lodged into a victim’s stomach and the pain experienced was immense. A witch (omulumikhi) specializing in ebikhokho was sought. How items are removed is beyond comprehension. Omulumikhi got hold of a patient with a firm grip; put his mouth at the spot a patient experienced pain and sucked that place. Within a short time, omulumikhi spits out some items; it may be one of those mentioned above. No incursion was made for the items to exit and no blood oozed out but the patient got relief and continued with their daily life.

There was an incident around Funyula location of Samia district, a born-again Christian kept a python which she used in the practice of sorcery, an act meant for persons believed to exist in the underworld. God wanted to expose this hypocrite; one day while attending a bible study session, one of her grandchildren interrupted the session to tell her grandmother that her beloved child Maria had been taken ill and was very weak. The girl after delivering the message turned and sped off with her grandmother in hot pursuit. The other faithfuls went along as a sign of solidarity with their sister-in-Christ. On reaching the house, they did not believe their eyes. They saw a 20 feet python sprawled on the floor and they could not wait; they took off. The truth was, the young girl had feed the python on hot porridge as she was in hurry to get back to school killing the python instantly.
4.6.19 Protecting Girls from Pregnancy Using Witchcraft

Girls in Samia were expected to abstain till marriage. It was disgraceful for a girl to conceive before marriage. To prevent unwanted pregnancies, mothers had knowledge on how to protect their daughters from getting pregnant (*okhuboya/okhufundikha omukhana*). This was done for a girl whose movement was not approved of or one who was known to have multiple relations.

The girl’s mother strived to access her daughter’s *obsinga* (menstrual), tied it and put it at a high place (*Okhwakikha*), in the roof of her house or in a hole (*mukhombe*) on a tree in the bush. These items were removed (*okhwakula*) when the girl got married to enable her get children. Such knowledge can also be referred to as *eloko* as it can be detrimental to the subject if anything happened to the hiding place or the person who hid them died or forgot the hiding spot. For instance, the house may catch fire or the tree on which the *ekhombe* is falls or is cut down, this girl who was being protected against unwanted pregnancy will be rendered childless for the rest of her life. The hiding place was secret to the person who hid the items.

Some mothers were not keen on their daughters getting married because of the services they rendered them while at home. They played major roles in agriculture and general house management. To deter a girl from thinking about getting married, a mother picked certain items from the girl, tied them up and places them *musijibi* (a place where a pot for drinking water is put). For as long as those items were there, the girl will never think about marriage.
4.6.20 Wizardry

There are those who are night runners or wizards, both acts are hereditary. It took the co-operation of both husband and wife to execute eloko (witchcraft/sorcery). A woman who came from a background without this practice and refused to embrace it was rendered barren. For a man to teach his wife eloko, he paid a cow (eyesinde) over and above the many cows he paid as dowry. This cow was additional dowry paid to assimilate a woman into nocturnal practices. This cow was driven to the in-laws at night. This was to make it impossible for the parents of the girl to return the wealth in the event that the marriage went on the rocks and the bride’s parents were not wealth enough to make the refunds.

There were instances when a person refused the night-running act. A mother to the boy/girl did her best to initiate the child in-law into this practice. A herb to hypnotize the subject was burnt and the ash spiced into food which was served to the subject. Once a person consumed food laced with eloko, they softened their stand and accepted the stand taken by the rest of the family. Food lacing was not a one day affair. It was like medication, it continued till the dosage was complete and the subject accepted eloko.

Another method of initiating a partner into act was to jump over them naked while they were asleep. Or, place a stone strategically in a compound along the path the target usually passed. Once the target knocked their foot on this stone, they acquired eloko.
Nightrunners used wild animals and reptiles in discharging their night-running activity. They skillfully captured and teamed leopards, crocodiles, pythons, tortoises, frogs, and even cows. In ordinary life, it was unimaginable to keep these creatures in ones house. Creatures of wizardry took first priority in the lives of wizards; it is them that gave wealth, power and satisfaction. They were fed as though they were small babies. Its owners had a way of communicating to and even showering them with praises.

Porridge was cooked and cooled. When feeding time came, a wizard sat legs straight and signaled the totem, it came crawling from its hiding place from within the house, went straight to the laps of the wizard and settled ready to be fed. All the while she is showering praises on it. As the totem settled on her laps, it opens its mouth and with a small calabash, she scooped cooled porridge from a bigger calabash and poured it in its mouth. This continues till it is satisfied. She then releases it and told it to go outside and bask. The totem heeds the request and leaves the wizard’s laps for the sun as directed. Apart from parents, children of this family also fed this creature. This was for purposes of acquainting themselves with it and, it was a way of initiating the children into the practice so that they would have no problem with it when they finally inherited it.

Wizardry creatures lived a long life, those that were killed; their killers died, became psychosis, physically challenged or lost their sight. Creatures used were captured while young and introduced to functions they were to perform. Those who used leopards for nocturnal activities rode on them as though they were horses.
When it was time to go on duty, a wizard remained nude, jumped on a leopard or cow and it took off at terrific speed. Even if a wizard did not ride on anything, catching up with them was impossible. A partner who had not been initiated or had not accepted was carried, put outside the house, jumped over twice before a night-runner left. The subject only woke up upon return of the night-runner.

For others, it was only their shadow that went to night run. If a shadow of a night-runner is captured and cut, the physical body of that person in the house bled. There was this lady from Uganda who got married in Ganjala area of Samia district. Her husband had been told of her nocturnal activities but he denied saying there was no way his wife could be associated with such issues. One day as they slept the girl started bleeding with deep panga cuts on her back. On enquiring the cause of her bleeding the girl could not explain to her husband and opted to disappear and go back to her home to get treatment.

Night-runners had weird characteristics; in a house where people stayed up late and were not in a hurry to retire to bed, they started swelling as though they had been bitten by some poisonous insect. Immediately they jump out and disappear in the dark. If he/she did not manage to jump out he moved near a fire place (mumaika) and released a heap of human waste an act that relieved them.

**4.6.21 Marring a Night Runner**

When a girl got married to a night runner (omulosi), there were two options. One was to accept the act and stay or end the marriage and return the dowry so paid (okhubolola). The most challenging was, some parents were unable to make refunds.
of dowry paid, in which case the girl had to stay in that union for life and run along with her husband. Eloko (witchcraft) had serious implications. The girls who refused it did not beget children, they were rendered barren. A family that was wealthy did not care about how many animals had been paid for dowry, even if it was an elephant task (erino tiengire) they would compensate. This was a metaphor for wealth considered to be out of reach of an ordinary person. Wealth was refunded and the marriage cancelled. The girl was allowed to marry elsewhere but thorough homework had to be done this time round least she ends up with another bad blooded person.

4.6.2 Rainmaking (Obukimba)

Like many parts of Kenya, climatic conditions in Samia were not constant; they kept changing. At times rains failed to come because of one reason or another. Today, Christians, believe that rain comes from God; scientists know that rain is caused by conserving forests and catchments. Abasamia knew that abakimba (rainmakers) brought rain, and that rain may fail to come because of wrongs committed by man. Wrongs committed included, stealing someone’s wife or property and interfering with boundaries.

Mzee Kalori Juma confirmed that during colonial era, he was a village elder (Mukuru), during his tenure, rainmakers were called upon to avert possible looming drought. Chicken were sought from villagers on orders of a rainmaker. Such were freely given as people feared consequences of refusing to give. One such rainmaker was Odun’ga, from Marachi location, Busia district. When his services were required he arrived in the evening and went straight muchibi where he smoked bhang (esikhwabi/enjaga) and drunk beer. The beer and bhang was not intended to get him high but give him courage.
Having consumed an acceptable quantity; the rainmaker left echibi and walked around the home to familiarize himself with the environment and its surrounding. Then he would be heard singing:

\[
Tindenti muyamo Odun’ga Kamuchongore x 3
\]

The song was to communicate with his ancestors who had given him the rainmaking powers and requested that they manifest themselves to enable him accomplish the assignment. Once he sung this song, clouds formed and within a very short time rains come down. It would rain the whole night and part of the morning. As it was mentioned in one of the discussion groups that persons with rainmaking powers were usually unkempt, Odun’ga Kamuchongore was no exception. However, no one dared comment on his outlook, if they did; it was tantamount to abusing the wind (okhunyeka omuyaka). When that happened, that area never received rain till the accused person apologised and paid a cow for a fine. The community had to intervene and get that cow as it now became everyone’s problem.

Abadongo, Ababuri, and Abatabona clans in Samia were known for their rainmaking abilities. But, Abakangala were known to be the original owners of the skill; others acquired it through them. Kanoti Okwaro, the Late Paramount Chief of Samia was a strong believer of indigenous knowledge. Whenever there was drought he summoned renowned rainmakers like Ojwangi KaNgira, Oluchu and asked them to bring rain least they are imprisoned. Being a Paramount chief he wielded a lot of power and such threats were taken very seriously.
Elders also met to avert drought situation by finding out from rainmakers why there was no rain in their areas. Rainmakers were believed to be the owners of rain and they would go to an extent of asking elders to pay a price before they released rain. Chicken, goats and food stuffs were collected from people in that locality and taken to the rainmaker who in turn released rain.

At times rains came with hailstones that destroyed the ecosystem; strong winds felled crops and trees. Those with knowledge about winds knew how to prevent its destruction. Cow dung was smeared *khulwanda* (large flat rock on the earth’s surface). Winds blew but on reaching the smeared spot it stopped. Among the Samia, *Abakangala, Abalundu, Abade, Abafoyo, Abahasokho* and *Abarindo* of *Emasafu* in Uganda, were rainmakers who also controlled wind. *Obukimba*, like herbalists was a family affair and knowledge in those fields was passed on from generation to generation. *Omusambua* (skill) just followed its roots. The irony of these practices is, such families despite these powers do not prosper. They are usually failures in life.

Rainmakers also controlled thunder. For a rainmaker to unleash thunder to strike someone, they had to know whom the subject is named after (*engurikho*). Rainmakers in Samia included people like Zablon Kadima’s family while hailstones were in the *Abasikoko* clan. During a drinking ceremony when an ululation is given the word *okoki* is uttered at the end of it, meaning *Nasikoko* in praise of the knowledge and power they hold.
Rainmaking skills were given *musiembekho*, (a place designated for rainmaking practices/cave). A candidate for this art was accompanied by ‘professor’ in rainmaking. One had to be very courageous to withstand activities *musiembekho*. Snakes reside there and the movement a rainmaker embarks on rainmaking process, snakes start running around due to high temperatures *musiembekho*. Temperatures rose as a result of air being blown into hot water to form bubbles. *Omukimba* blows air, his chicks expanded to a point one imagines they would burst. He does it with the concentration it deserves and within a very short time snakes start running around the roof of *esiembekho*, as hot air is let out through an opening at the top directly towards the sky, clouds form and give rise to rain.

Cowards were never taught the art of rainmaking. Many were not able to stand the presence of snakes within close proximity and also it is difficult to blow air into hot water making it emit smoke that would reach the skies. When a rainmaker performed his *amatiangitiangi* (magic) it should not start raining while he was still *musiembekho*. It should be planned in a way that as he gets to his home, it starts raining. Otherwise, if it rained on him, he lost his powers.

The young acquired rainmaking skills by observation. Elder took them along when going to make rain. Also, children close to skill holders and those who performed light duties for their grandparents with those skills were taught the skill. Easily irritable people were not taught this art. It was believed that if taught, they would use the practice against their presumed enemies. Because of their temper, they would cause rain shortage, lightening or bring hailstones to mess up crops. Short tempered persons are bent on revenge and do not stop to think before acting. At a slightest misunderstanding, they would cause havoc.
Abakimba were honoured among the Samia as they were believed to bring rain when it was much needed. They were given gifts which enabled them live well hence the saying *ariya ngomukimba* (he feeds like a rainmaker). Abakimba were never greeted. It was believed that greetings reduced their powers. If one persistently greeted a rainmaker, that was enough reason to miss rain in that village. The person who insisted on greeting a rainmaker would be held responsible. The home from which he hailed had to pay ransom to allow for rain.

Obukimba is still prevalent among the Abakangala, though it cannot be openly discussed. It was alleged that there was a period in Kenya when there was a long spell of drought and the country sought divine intervention. The then president, the late Mzee Jomo Kenyatta was forced to use indigenous knowledge from Abakimba. Obed Osore Nganyi, a rainmaker from Bunyore was summoned to State House, Nairobi, to alleviate the draught situation in Kenya. While at State House, the rainmaker requested to be escorted to Kirinyaga Hills where he would get rainmaking tool (herbs), a request that was heeded. On return, he was given a place of his choice within State House to boil those herbs. This was done in broad day light. Within two hours Kenya received rain.

Left: Obedi Osore Nganyi, 74, a rainmaker in the Nganyi community shows the pot and other items used by the rain magicians. Right: Thomas Osore Omulako, a rainmaker of the Nganyi Community illustrates the process of creating bubbles in the magic rain pot. Photos: Department for International Development / International Development Research Centre /Thomas Omondi
4.7 Health and Hygiene

4.7.1 Medical Knowledge

Abasamia had a well established institution of traditional medicine. Medicine was as varied as were diseases. There were many traditional medicine men too, each adopting their own approach of treatment, both in terms of skill and medicine used. However, they had a common ground from which they operated in that they all obtained their medicines from plants, especially roots, leaves and barks of trees.

Abasamia believed that medical knowledge (oburesi) was God given and not everyone was able to practice it. This was exemplified in the fact that when a practitioner knew a medication that cured any ailment, he administered it and patient got healed. God revealed types of herbs to medicine men in a dream and even showed them where to find those herbs.

When a person fell sick, a medical practitioner was consulted for medication. Omuresi usually gave reasons for a cause of a condition and condition itself to enable them given proper medication. It was believed he consulted ancestors who told him what a person was suffering from or who was behind the illness. In case a sick person is bewitched, the suspect was summoned and informed of the revelation from ancestors. The suspect was required to make peace with the patient and it was mandatory that they drink amanyasi (herbs for cleansing) to erode the hatred that had developed between the two and allow them reunite. For a reunion to be sealed and hatchets buried, blood had to be spilt. A goat, sheep or chicken was slaughtered. Concerned parties ate together from one dish. If it was chicken that was slaughtered, a gizzard was shared between the two.
Absamia loved each other and always strived to leave in harmony. If a person bewitched (*okhukhinga*) another, a council of elders was constituted and the accused summoned, and asked to state why he/she wanted to ruin his brother/sister’s life. If accused denied responsibility, he/she was made to prove his/her innocence by jumping (*okhuduma esilulu*) an identified object, which if he/she was responsible and agreed to jump they would die otherwise nothing happened to them.

Among the Samia, death was caused by an enemy. Diseases such as missiles (*enundu*) diahorea (*endira*) were prevalent and were killer diseases but the Samia overlooked that and believed that for every death, someone was behind it. Through such ignorance and beliefs, killers diseases wiped out people forcing the few surviving to migrate to presumed safer haven that were not disease infected.

Chronic diseases were treated by reputable herbalists, who performed their *amatiang’itaing’i* (magic) on a patient and gave instructions on what best a family should do to get their patient cured. At times it called for sacrifices. *Omuresi* communicated with ancestors who informed him of their dissatisfaction with the sick person; in which case, a goat, sheep or chicken was given as sacrifice. Depending on the belief and the extent of affliction, if the ancestors were appeased a patient recovered.

Herbs were not delivered to patients in their original form for fear that the knowledge would be tapped and the holders rendered useless. Herbs were crushed and dissolved to hide their identity. Medication was administered by either oral concoction or burning the herbs into ash which a patient licked. Otherwise herbs were directly put in
fire and when hot, was pressed against the affected area. For instance, a sprain was treated with *amataratara*.

### 4.7.2 Acquisition of Medical Knowledge

Persons with medical knowledge (*abaresi*) passed it on to identified persons or those who showed interest so that when the herbalist died, there was continuity of the knowledge. Some practitioners passed the knowledge freely, while others charged a fee for training. Families without medicinal background had to pay in order for someone to be taught. Students paid a fee (*omutulu*) which at times was a cow or goat.

Though there were no health institutions, health practitioners existed, and this had to be continued. Medical skills were passed from generation to generation; either from father to son or grandparent to grandchild. When a herbalist went to get herbs from the forest, his/her favourite child/grandchild accompanied him/her. It was this child who was directed on which herb to pluck, uproot, dig up roots or remove tree’s buck. While doing this, a child simply takes instruction without responding to the affirmative. It was believed that if one responded they would never see that herb again. After being with the knowledge-holder for long, a child would then be sent on their own to bring herbs.

Such knowledge was acquired through observation, practice, listening and accompanying a practitioner in search of the medicinal plants. IK was applied to ensure that Abasamia did not perish for lack health institutions. Keen observant children go the knowledge passed to them. Hands-on training is best as clarification is instant. Apart from a child showing interest, parents also identified talent in their children and urged them to take up certain professions.
Daudi Owasia was a reputable orthopedic among the Samia. His brother fractured his collar born while in Jinja. While in hospital a woman looked at the state in which the patient was and concluded that the patient needed alternative medicine. The Ugandan woman asked Daudi to pay ten cents to be shown medicine that would treat his brother. He complied. Daudi got the knowledge from the Ugandan woman. Upon his return to Kenya, Daudi continued treating needy cases. He later passed on that knowledge to his son.

Health like other professions, for instance, rain-making, blacksmith and pottery were talents owned by few individuals. A talented person was not capable to handle all health problems. There were specialists in a given areas like gynecology, orthopedic, cardiac problems, epilepsy, and STDs among others.

Table 4.3: Types of Medicine among the Samia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medicine</th>
<th>Disease</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abaki (currently it can be found around river Kagera in Uganda where natural forests still exist.)</td>
<td>Chest aliment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naleto kwach</td>
<td>Embusi ya budakhi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endusie (Bile)</td>
<td>Constipation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omukherekha (ash from burnt beans husks)</td>
<td>Worms (deworming)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omukhwaige</td>
<td>Cough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olukokhakokhe</td>
<td>Nashua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okite</td>
<td>Sexually transmitted diseases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khalulu</td>
<td>Malaria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasiunya</td>
<td>Rushes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amataratara</td>
<td>Swollen glands</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Omukherekha** – Dried bean husks are burnt to form ash. Cooled ash is put in a tin perforated with tiny holes which allow water to sip through. *Omukherekha* is then harvested into another container on which the perforated one is placed. It is used for de-worming and killing flukes from *shambas* in swampy areas or dried up dams.

Flukes

**Snake bite**

A piece of a hind hip born is cut and wrapped in aluminum foil and immersed in smoldering fire. The foil prevents the bone from getting burnt. It instead turns into a charcoal-like substance. When a person is bitten by a sneak, that bone is placed at an exact point of the bite to siphon out poison.

**Esikudo (Asthma)/ chest problem**

There were surgeons among traditional health providers. Patients with congested chest problems were pieced (*okhufudula*) with a sharp wire. Air was discharged from the pieced spot and a patient was relieved. After an operation, gee was applied on the wound for a number of days to ensure speedy healing. From description, this problem presented like pneumonia. A surgeon counted four ribs from the lower part of diaphragm. Before the fifth rib, in the depression, he pierced with a sharp pointed screw driver-like gadget; air was expressed which brought relief to the patient.

Odinga Mulaka was a known traditional surgeon.

**Fractures**

Orthopedics took care of fracture, dislocations and sprains. The general term used for the process of getting bones into place was *okhuwamba* (capture). In fractures two or four sticks were placed along the affected areas; tried with a piece of skin and a
patient left to lie. Before tying a stick to the fracture, an orthopedic chewed some herb to extract juice; he/she then spat the medicine in juice to the fractured area. Medication was repeated twice a day. This meant a doctor stayed with the family till a patient recovered.

Dislocations and sprains were treated differently; a doctor came observed a patient to ascertain the dislocated or sprained area. On the first day, a doctor applied medicine mixed with ghee to the dislocation or sprain and massaged. He then left the patient’s home as fractures take long to heal. Doctors had special sticks they used in the treatment of such conditions. While at their homes, this stick would be massaged and a patient wherever they are would be heard yelling and groaning in pain. When a patient improved and was able to walk, a doctor returned with that stick and gave to a patient as a walking stick which they used till they fully recovered. A cow was given to offset the medical bill.

Erumbu (syphilis), esyireketo (missles), omuyaka (malaria), endira (diarrhea) were among the other many diseases that affected Abasmai and were treated by medicinal herbs. Erumbu was treated with efubakiro, the herb was dried, ground and given to a patient to lick. Side effects of this herb were a running stomach which was proof that the medicine was taking effect. At times, medication was mixed with remnants of beer (amachekhe); there was no specified dosage, patients siphoned the medicine twice a day, on the direction of the doctor, using esikuku (short siphon).
Terminal illnesses (*esitanda*) existed but were not many. Terminally ill patients were believed to have been bewitched therefore *Omulakusi* (prophet) was consulted to diagnose and give therapy (*okhukhingula*). There were no laboratories then, but *Omulakusi* was able to diagnose illnesses by incising (*okhusalaka*) and administer medication. In most cases, terminal illnesses were attributed to *obukhingi* (witchcraft/sorcery).

**Embaya/ Obwari**

Children suffering from these diseases were made to sit naked on banana leaves and were hit on the head with *obwari*, magots oozed from the child’s nose and ears and drooped on the leaves. The process was referred to as *okhukhuba ebikhere*. A herbalist then chewed herbs and spat into all openings on a child. This was a method disinfecting the child and there was no possibility of the condition recurring.

When a mother was to travel with a baby, water and soil from a point of departure was put in a gourd. At the point of arrival again, water and soil from there was also put in same gourd and a baby made to drink it. This helped a baby acclimatize to the area being visited and not suffer from the effects of climate change. This is still practiced among the Abasamia.

**4.7.3 Impotency**

To treat impotency a patient participated in the preparation of medication. His (patient) saliva was mixed with the herbs prepared; he continually spat into the container with the medicinal herbs as the doctor continued to stir. After preparation, a patient licked the mixture as directed till the condition improved. This medication was
considered most effective that if it did not work then it was concluded that the man
was born with the condition.

Impotency was possible to detect at an early age. Small boys when they passed urine
gained a minor erection, if not then a child would most probably be impotent. A boy
with this condition had his urine come out in drops unlike the normal child whose
urine is continuous. Sometimes mothers contributed to the cause of impotency in their
sons according to Abasamia. When a son is born a mother was not supposed to clean
his private parts before four days elapsed. If by mistake she touched it, his manhood
went forever. It did not matter the condition of the area, four days had to elapse before
it is cleaned. Men with this condition were allowed to marry but had a price pay over
and above the normal dowry.

*Amanysi*

There were various forms of *amanyasi* for different problems. *Amanysi* is a general
term used for herbs that serve to remove curses, reunite people at loggerhead, appease
spirits and cleanse homes. Parents took their trusted children to knowledge-holders of
*amanyasi* to enable them acquire it. This can be equated to a classroom where one
teacher teaches many children. For knowledge to be disseminated students paid fees
in terms of animals. Cows or goats were paid for knowledge acquisition but for
medication given it depended on the magnitude of the consequence; in other instances
only a token of appreciation - a chicken was given (*eyesino*).
Some of the cases where *amanyasi* were used included when:

1. giving a new born baby its first bath, that water was mixed with *amanyasi* to protect it from water and air borne diseases,
2. people quarreled and/or fought and unity has to be restored,
3. a man has raped a relative or they mutually agreed to have sex,
4. a girl saw her father naked,
5. a boy saw his mother naked,
6. a girl shook her father in-law’s hands,
7. a bride cooked in her mother in-law’s house,
8. a woman delivered twins, to prevent a repeat or any other person from the home to beget twins.

Whenever there was an outbreak of any kind in an area, residents vacated. It was declared inhabitable and residents sought alternative dwelling; such diseases were considered bad omen. In the event that they decided to stay on, *amanyasi* were administered. The inhabitants drank, washed themselves in the concoction and also sprinkled around the entire village. This sent away bad sprits that presented themselves in diseases. As the *Omulakusi* (prophet) sprinkled *amanyasi* he was in constant contact with ancestors requesting them to protect their relatives from unfortunate predicament that had befallen them. If the disease persisted then the dwellers migrated.

If a woman got married and started messing around with male in-laws, she was barred from doing certain activities least her family perishes. For instance, she would not get intimate with her husband, hold a baby, or attend to her husband if he was taken ill and in the event that he passed on, she was not allowed to view his body least she also dies. To avert all these, *amanyasi* was administered.
Apart from the natural causes of illnesses, witchcraft was also a factor that caused illness. People bewitched others and posed conditions that presented as terminal illnesses on their subjects. Services of Omukhingi (witch or wizard) had to be sought for the patient to recover. Items found in a patient’s body were believed to be causes of illnesses imposed on a patient. To avert the situation, amanyasi was administered.

4.7.4 Application of Indigenous Knowledge in Modern Healthcare

In the Kenyan situation, authorities are aware that there is nothing wrong with traditional (alternative) medicine. But because those authorities are beneficiaries from the Whiteman, have to dance to their music and discourage IK and encourage people seek medication from hospitals when they are ill. Justification is, in hospitals tests carried out to diagnosis the cause of a problem. If authorities resist, they stand to lose all that donors and investors. In other words, Africans are still enslaved to the Whiteman.

Many hospitals in the country have accepted the use of alternative medicine in their institutions. A case in point in Nangina Mission Hospital in Funyula location, Samia district and Busia District Hospital, Busia County; stones manufactured to siphon snake poison are used. It is therefore apparent the Whiteman does not embrace competition and knowledge from people they have for long considered primitive.

Traditional orthopedics like Daudi Owasia from Samia, Kenya and Akochi from Samia Uganda admit their patients in government or mission hospitals within the county and treat them from there. The patient only pays for nursing care while medical fees are paid to the consultants.
Neem (*Muarubaini*) is locally accepted and used. It is believed it treats over forty diseases. Neem is easily and freely available. Many Samias grow this tree because of its medicinal value. For fast relief, chew three leaves of neem and sip some warm water.

_Ebiroya* (Botanical – *Jatropha curcas*, in English – *Physic nut or Purging nut, in Kiswahili – Mmbono*) is a tree grown in Samia and has various uses. In medicine, the ether extract shows antibiotic properties, the latex of *Jatropha* contains an alkaloid known as Jatrophine which is believed to have anti-cancerous properties. It is also used as an external application for skin diseases, rheumatism and sores for domestic livestock. Its roots are used as an antidote for snake bites.

A part from its medicinal value, the bark of *Jatropha* yields a dark blue dye which is used for colouring cloth, fishing nets and lines. *Jatropha curcas* seed cake is rich in nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium and can be used as organic manure. The leaves are used as food for the tusser silkworm and are also used for fumigating houses against bed bugs. Jatropha oil is used as an alternative to diesel oil and for making soap in some countries. The Oil is also used as an illuminant in lamps as it burns without emitting smoke and other hazardous gases. It is also used as fuel in place of or along kerosene in stoves. Indigenous trees grow without much tendering.
4.8 Uses of IK

4.8.1 Authority

The old among the Abasamia commanded great respect and wielded power, had great experience and wisdom. This established them as the elite class in the community. While prescribing to ethics and standards of conduct which became binding to all members of the community, they also played the role of guiding the youth in their endeavour to learn those norms. Having practices polygyny, managing a clan was smooth sailing.

A person was identified to take care of his/her peers. In most cases elders targeted individuals who had wisdom and leadership qualities. Such persons were loving and lived peacefully with others. A polite and disciplined person was designated leadership and advisory roles.

Both men and women qualified to join the elite class on the basis of age. Those were the people who formed the community of elders of Abasamia community. Some enjoyed greater respect and popularity than others. It all depended on the level of experience and wisdom an individual elder showed in public discussions, settling disputes or mediation of any kind and knowledge of both ethnic, history, local customs and traditions. These requirements were more binding on the men folk than women because men occupied more privileged positions and played major roles in public affairs of the community.

Abasamia believed in unity, in the evenings elders of olukoba (fortified) gathered together to discuss issues that affected them and educated each other. During this
meeting, *esibudi* (local brew) was taken as a form or refreshment. If anyone had unbecoming behaviour, that individual was summoned by elders in order to deal with that behaviour and to correct it. Obedience was vital to the community. People listened and heeded instructions. Punishment meted upon an individual was viewed as a corrective measure and was taken positively. That was because elders spoke in one voice and there was no way an individual or a group would afford to be disobedient.

### 4.8.2 Conflict Resolution
Abasamia did not have formal courts in which cases were arbitrated. When people disagreed, it depended on the cause and magnitude of the conflict. If it was a feud between husband and wife, both parents stepped in; if no amicable resolution was reached then the clan was involved. If still no solution was arrived at, the marriage was bound to break, though it only broke after extensive and exhaustive consultations with relevant parties. In the event that it broke, children from that union remained in their home –Samia is a patriarchal community. Children belonged to a man and were not allowed to live outside their home.

If siblings disagreed, it was the duty of elders to reunite (*okhusasana*) them by making them share a gizzard and drinking *amanyasi* from the same cup. If it did not work, then their father had to separate them by giving them land in different locations to start their homes there (*okhutusa olugala*).

*Sharing meat*

The Samia had a customary way of sharing meat from animals that were slaughtered for a purpose or victims of their hunting escapades. Meat slaughtered for purposes of
marriage function (*enyama yobweya*) was divided among the houses concerned, and the peoples of the clan (*aboluyia*). This was done to blessings sake.

*Enyam yemisambwa* – animal slaughtered for spirits, ancestor or sacrifice was shared by entire clan. *Enyama yoluyimo* – animal killed while hunting was shared by those who formed the hunting crew, either by house, if the catch was small and clan if big. The person chosen to share out the meat was an experienced wise man who knew the significances of each part and who was entitled to it.

Table 4.5: Parts of animal (Cow or goat)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Olusamia</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Eligible consumer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ekumba lyasena nende Olurikho</em></td>
<td>Shin</td>
<td>eldest elder in a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Esekwacha</em></td>
<td>Abomasum</td>
<td>second elder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Enderechi</em></td>
<td>Brisket</td>
<td>third elder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Enjukasi</em></td>
<td>Shank</td>
<td>Old men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Esinama syiedakho</em></td>
<td>Hind leg</td>
<td>Men (abasacja)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Enyonyokhera bakhasi</em></td>
<td>Rump</td>
<td>A man separated from his wife (<em>yi mukhasi wabwao</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Amabachwa</em></td>
<td>Sirloin</td>
<td>Mothers (<em>abakhasi</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Esisindi</em></td>
<td>Siliverside</td>
<td>Grandfather (<em>Bakuka</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Amachukhu, omutwe and Omwoyo</em></td>
<td>Lungs and heart</td>
<td>Grandchildren (<em>Abechukhulu</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Enda</em></td>
<td>Stomach</td>
<td>Niece/nephew (<em>Omwiwa</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Embafu</em></td>
<td>Ribs</td>
<td>Sons in-law (<em>Abakhwe</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Omukongo</em></td>
<td>Back</td>
<td>Mothers (<em>Abakhasi</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Esigwogo</em></td>
<td>Plate</td>
<td>Elders (<em>abakhulundu</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Omikhoba</em></td>
<td>Flank</td>
<td>Unmarried daughters (<em>abakoko</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Council of Elders

Where people live in a group misunderstandings are bound to occur. When conflicts occurred in a house, home, village, clan or fortified, it was the responsibility of the council of elders to arbitrate the aggrieved parties. The parties were summoned and each party made to present its case to the elders, who in turn passed a verdict. Depending on the intensity of the offense, payment of fines was instituted to the party found guilty. At other times reconciliation was by making the aggrieved parties eat from the same dish which symbolized reunion (okhusasana). Chicken was slaughtered and the two persons made to share a gizzard or heart. If payment was opted for, a goat was paid. In other instances conflict forced families to divide homes with one person or both of them being shown alternative ground to start their homes.

Elders were respected and they wielded a lot of authority. [Kuishi kwingi ni kuona mengi]. Their advanced age and the fact that they had been involved in those duties for long made them persons of integrity. To be a member, a man ought to have married and had undergone several stages of life; encountered problems and solved them. Leadership was demonstrated from the way a man led his nuclear family; which won him a place in the leadership of the community.

A council of elders comprised four or six members per village. Whenever a meeting was constituted, esibudi was brewed. Musibudi various issues were discussed, rains have delayed, girls/boys want to get married, planting and harvesting seasons, wives, rebellious children (okhukwa esikwaro/ogendiekha) not conforming to norms of the community were among many other issues discussed. No content of the discussions held in these sessions were let to the public domain. Any member known to leak elders’ secrets was fined and banned from enjoining committee.
Recommendations given to resolving conflicts included separating two persons by one moving home to a determined place. There was no land ownership and persons moved to places of their choice at will. At times a guilty person was made to pay fines which were of varying magnitudes. Quarrelling or fighting and maybe vowing never to foot in or eat with his presumed enemy called for reunion. Animal or chicken blood was used and the two made to eat from one dish. An elder appointed to officiate over the settlement of scores, took the gizzard or heart of the chicken, split it into two and shared it between the two persons. Saying, “You belong to one person and it is not in order to quarrel and vow in the manner you did. From now henceforth such an incident should never occur again”. The rest of the chicken is then served to those present and latter, all present joined into beer drinking.

4.8.3 Disaster Management

Disasters struck from time to time. Enundu (nagana) when it struck, residents of an area with the help of their leaders converged and looked for a way forward. Visitors were not welcome to an infected home for fear that the disease would spread. Elders had to go an extra mile to get medication. It was only if they recovered that relatives were allowed to visit. Such measures were taken because if relatives visited before the outbreak was controlled, they would pick the virus and spread to those they left behind. If a disease persisted, then inhabitants were forced to migrate to safer grounds.

During drought, skills of abakimba – rainmakers were sought. Rainmakers were called upon to perform their magic (amatiangitiangi) to bring rain. If a Rainmaker declined, elders pierced omutumba (sausage tree) to find out the cause of drought. An
elder who deliberately refused to pierce the tree died. It was evident that he had a hand in the drought being experienced. Every clan had their special item they turned to, to make sacrifices, such was omutumba kwe esiembekho. Esiembekho is a place where issues of rain were dealt with. A clan known for its rainmaking abilities had their sausage tree which they pierced to seek clarification from ancestor on rain issues; elders from that clan were mandated to pierce.

Spearing a sausage tree was not taken lightly. It happened on very rare occasions like when there was animosity, truth was determined and/or reconciliation needed. After spearing the tree, beer was served, and it was during the drinking spree that people owned up to their sins, repented, buried hatchets and started afresh. This ceremony was attended by male elders only.
CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

Berthold, a German author was a believer in IK and says that, *years tell us more than books*. Individuals who hold IK of their communities are corporate memories of that community. Some of these persons gave accounts of their knowledge which has been documented in this work. This chapter summarizes the findings of the study. The summary refers to the assumptions and research question that this study was based on. Answers to the questions are discussed here briefly to give an overview of the findings. Conclusion and recommendations of the study are also presented in this chapter as well as suggestions for further research.

5.2 Major findings to the Study

The researcher had the following major findings deduced from the study.

1. There is IK currently held by the Samia, but not in retrievable formats
2. The IK used by an individual is influenced by their surrounding environment
3. It is costly to document and conserve Samia IK.
4. Few people within the community still value and use IK
5. There is need to document and conserve this knowledge.

5.3 Question 1: What types and nature of IK exist among the Samia?

Knowledge is divided into two, tacit and explicit. Tacit Knowledge (TK) is hard to put into words. It is expressed through action-based skills and is not rule based. Choo (2000) defines tacit knowledge as personal knowledge used by members to perform
their works and to make sense of their worlds. It is learned through extended periods of experiences and doing a task during which an individual develops a feel for and capacity to make intuitive judgments about the successful execution of the activity. TK resides in people’s mind and involves intangible factors like one’s beliefs and values. Explicit knowledge, according to Mutula and Mooko (2008) is communicated, shared and transferred through codified forms. Abasamia expressed themselves best through riddles and proverbs when they sounded warnings and/or gave advice or shared life skills. At times they told stories from which an audience listened, derived meaning and learnt from. Therefore, from the above explanations, Samia IK is both tacit and explicit.

Various forms of IK were used by Abasamia. They included family life, education, religion, politics, medicine, blacksmith, climatology, agriculture, fishing, pottery, basket weaving, conflict resolution and clothes weaving among others. Different persons had different roles in knowledge management, roles they effectively played.

5.4 Question 2: How was the Samia IK Accessed

Samia IK was accessed by listening to folklore, song, riddles, stories told in esibinje and Kraal by elders and also instructions by persons charged with that responsibility.

5.5 Question 3: Did the Samia have systems in place to conserve their IK

The system that the Samia used to conserve their knowledge was through apprenticeship. Those with the knowledge identified a person in whom they saw the potential carrying on the mantle and they imparted the knowledge to them. In other instances the clan or family nominated the person to be trained. There were two
difference institutions which served as schools in which the young accessed IK held by elders. Girls from a ridge aged fifteen years and above slept in esibinje (grandmother’s hut/dormitory). In the dormitory, their grandmother educated them on the general ways of life without fear as she lived full life.

They started off sitting outside esibinje and telling stories in the moonlight. Grandmother narrated tales, said riddles and proverbs to educate the girls of what happened before they were born and the norms and values of the Samia community. Grandmother was a fundamental resource of IK. The stories told were educative and also served as warnings on occurrences that might repeat themselves; history repeats itself so goes the saying.

Though boys had general knowledge on farming, wrestling, building and so on, everyone had education that was hands on; what was learnt depended on the student’s interest. At times elders identified a skill and natured it. Children who showed interest in a skill were encouraged to actualize it by giving them time to learn it.

When these children were educated in the ways of life of the Samia, it was expected they would conserve that IK and be able to disseminate it to the next generation. The mode of teaching was rigorous and students had to be very keen and ask where they did not understand.

5.6 Question 4: Is there IK still used by the Samia People?
From the findings, Samia IK is still in use. For instance, the health sector is still vibrant and people use alternative medicine for both curative and preventive purposed. Rainmakers like other IK holders in the community still boost of their skills.
5.7 **Question 5: What factors affect the conservation of IK among the Samia**

a) Christianity and Christian beliefs

b) Costs involved in collecting recording and conserving content among others.

5.8 **Conclusion**

Samia IK is threatened with extinction due to issues of acquisition and problems associated with storage and conservation. The Samia IK is in the form of laws, medicine, education, and religion and disaster management issue among others. To document and conserve this knowledge requires planning and catering for the inevitable arising costs. A fundamental challenge in acquisition and conservation of IK of the Samia is the fact that those who know and use the knowledge are old persons who only can communicate effectively in the Samia language and therefore a translation of their communication will have to be considered. Being oral, this knowledge can be conserved through published articles/books on cultural practices, audio recordings of chants, songs or stories told, or production of films that portray the Samia IK among others.

Other challenges associated with the Samia IK is separation of the youth from their grandparents as a result of urbanization coupled with the youth’s negative attitude towards indigenous concepts and practices makes the transfer of this knowledge difficult.

People are more than a name – Samia means much more than the word and this works testifies so. Communal identity is best understood and established on the basis and strength of sound knowledge of a culture and its history. This work was an exercise in retrieving knowledge that is fast diminishing from memory of the Samia that once held it. It has brought out land acquisition because of conquests, bequeathing and other modalities whose base was polygyny; family life, role of different persons in the family and general home organization; education as a cornerstone for survival;
religion as a means of keeping in close contact with their departed ancestors and health to ensure that they lived to ages that Were Khagaba prescribed for them. Samia IK is untapped and this work is evidence that this knowledge can be collected, critiqued, analysed and conserved for access.

5.9 Recommendations

The following recommendations are put forward with a view to improving the generation, collection, preservation and use of Samia IK:

Appropriate Policies

Each community needs to have in place appropriate policies that encourage and provide guidelines on the innovation, conservation and preservation of IK. South Africa for example, adopted IK policy in 2004 (Saleti, 2007) which provides government stance on those areas.

The policies are expected to address among other things:

- Government appreciation of IK;
- Copyright and Patent issues;
- Use of IK;
- Trans-border IKS and how to share it;
- Statement on Protection of IK;
- Preservation of IK;
- Distribution of benefits accrued from IK.
**Researching in IK Systems**

There has to be deliberate efforts to conduct researches in the area of IK. This role can best be undertaken by Samia elites, scholars, universities and appropriate research institutes. Areas can include disclosing, recording, and preserving IK.

Issues such as:

- What specific IKS exist in Africa?
- How is the knowledge applied for productivity?
- What practices, traditions and norms surround the innovation, use and transmission of IK in Africa?
- How can specific community based measures be used to promote IKS?

**Establishing IK Databases**

Equally important, is the creation of databases on IK. Libraries and Information centres have this role to play. Other stakeholders such as private organizations, relevant ministries and government organizations, NGOs can all join hands in recording and preserving Indigenous Knowledge.

**Establishment of IK Resource Centres**

There are countries that have IK resource centres in place. For example, Nigeria where the following activities are carried out:

- Conducting and coordination of research activities on IK;
- Dissemination of IK information;
- Networking IK initiatives;
• Exchange of information on IK with other centres;
• Quality assurance on IK practices;
• IK policy formulation.

**Government and Samia people Involvement in IKS Development**

The Samia and governments need to take a leading position to intervene and participate fully in the creation, development and protection of Samia IK. The commitment is essential as it provides room for actors to invest in this initiative. The government on its capacity needs only to set policies, rules and regulations governing aspects related to use and protection on IK. The core IK activities such as researching, use and dissemination of IK can be done by individuals.

### 5.10 Suggestions for further research

The study looked at the Samia IK in general; however, further research should out in specific areas.

A similar study be carried out on other communities with a view to finding out the knowledge they hold.
REFERENCES


DMCN (2004). Traditional Indicators used for Climate Monitoring and Predication by some Rural Communities in Kenya. A contribution to the harmonization of traditional and modern scientific methods of climate predication in Kenya


Implementation. Online


APPENDICES
APPENDIX I: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION LETTER

REPUBLIC OF KENYA
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Joyce Majanja  
Moi University  
P. O. Box 3990  
ELDORET

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "Indigenous knowledge of the Samia Community of Panyuia Division, Western Province, Kenya" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake your research in Samia District for a period ending 31st January 2010.

You are advised to report to The District Commissioner, Samia District and The District Education Officer, Samia District before embarking on your research project.

Upon completion of your research project, you are expected to submit two copies of your research report/thesis to our office.

Prof. S. A. Abdulrazak Ph.D, MBS  
SECRETARY

Copy to:  
The District Commissioner
APPENDIX II: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION 2

REPUBLIC OF KENYA
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

THE DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER
SAMIA DISTRICT

DISTRICT OFFICER
FUNYULA DIVISION

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

This is to inform you that Joyce Majanja, who is undertaking her study at Moi University is hereby authorized to carry out research on “Indigenous Knowledge of the Samia Community of Funyula Division, in the District.”

The research will end on 31st January, 2010.

You are therefore required to accord her the necessary assistance.

JOSEPHINE A.A. ONUNGA
DISTRICT COMMISSIONER
SAMIA

C.C. THE SECRETARY
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (The District would like to have a copy of the Research Report on completion)
APPENDIX III: LETTER OF PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

The bearer of this letter Joyce Majanja is a resident of this Division (Funya) and has been permitted to carry out research on “Indigenous Knowledge of the Samia Community of Funya Division, Samia District, Western Kenya.”

Any assistance you accord her will be highly appreciated.

Thank you.

THOMAS M. KADIMA
for DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICER

SAMIA DISTRICT
APPENDIX IV: RESEARCH PERMIT

CONDITIONS
1. You must report to the District Commissioner and the District Education Officer of the area before embarking on your research. Failure to do that may lead to the cancellation of your permit.
2. Government officers will not be interviewed without prior appointment.
3. No questionnaire will be used unless it has been approved.
4. Excavation, filming and collection of biological specimens are subject to further permission from the relevant Government Ministries.
5. You are required to submit at least (3) due (3) bound copies of your final report for Kenyans and non-Kenyans respectively.
6. The Government of Kenya reserves the right to modify the conditions of this permit including its cancellation without notice.

REPUBLIC OF KENYA
RESEARCH CLEARANCE PERMIT

(CONDlITIONS—see last page)

PAGE 2

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
Prof. Dr. Mr. Mrs. Miss JOYCE
MAJANGA
of (Address) MOI UNIVERSITY
P.O. BOX 1940 NAIROBI
has been permitted to conduct research in:
Location: SANTA
District: WESTERN
Province, on the topic: Indigenous Knowledge of the Dima Community of
Vangula Division, Western Province,
KENYA
for a period ending 31st JANUARY 2010

Research Permit No. NCST/5/022/8/1079
Date of issue: 12.12.2009
Fee received: $1000

Aplicant's Signature
Secretary
National Council for Science and Technology
APPENDIX V: MAP OF SAMIS DISTRICT