IMAGES OF DISABILITY IN SAMIA ORAL LITERATURE

BY

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DECLARATION

I, BARASA SAMUEL, hereby declare that the work contained herein is original and my own, and has never been submitted to any University or Institution for any academic award whatsoever.

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ABSTRACT

The basis of this study was the prevailing view that the oral literature of a society communicates to its members the society’s stand points on the issues within their midst. This, it does by either explicitly commenting on them, or by using images that signal specific viewpoints and perceptions. This study therefore attempted to make an assessment of the images of disability portrayed in Samia oral literature.

The researcher investigated by studying folktales and proverbs on the subject of disability among the Samia people of Busia District in Eastern Uganda. The oral literature texts were carefully selected to represent both the physical and sensory disabilities while other texts that could not fit in either of the two categories were grouped as others. Views of sampled disabled persons were also analysed and these augmented the conclusions thereafter made.

Within the Sociological theoretical framework, and using the images of disability portrayed in specifically folktales and proverbs of the Samia, the study discusses the extent to which the highlighted perceptions of disability serve to consolidate the negative attitudes accorded to the condition. The study consistently highlights the implicit negative attitudes and consequently argues that the folktales and proverbs of the Samia are loaded with images that negatively portray the disabled. This sustains the stereotypical perception of the disabled and the consequent denial of their basic human rights in society.

A conclusion is drawn to support the view that oral literature is an active force in forming the people’s psyche and attitudes. This greatly affects their behaviour either as disabled or abled people in society. While the abled develop a strong ego that patronises the disabled, the disabled lose their self esteem and confidence.

In way of conclusion, the study holds it that any attempt to address an attitudinal problem such as disability stigmatisation, efforts should be directed towards the oral literature for that particular society. These efforts should inquire into the way the oral literature is transmitted in that particular society. Further, the efforts should be geared to checking on the ability of oral literature to highlight stereotypical notions to the members of that society.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION
In this study the researcher investigated the portrayal of disability in Samia oral literature. Specifically, he attempted to decipher the portrayed images of disability in the folktales and proverbs of Samia people.

In the light of the current global debate on the marginalization of the disabled persons in society, the aim of the research was to study how oral literature, which is the expressive arm of any society’s folklore, postures the disabled visa-vis those who do not manifest any disability. Specifically, the research sought to highlight any specific disfavours or favours to the disabled.

The composition and craftsmanship of oral literature is always very artistic, and requires inexorable wit. Both skill and wisdom in the composition are vital, for although the prime aim of the oral piece is usually to entertain the listener, critical comment is often made about the subject in question. The comment is usually subtle and wrapped up in images that appear innocent on the surface. When deeply analysed however, these images appear to be apt in triggering off a socio-psycho process of perception about the subject commented on. They strengthen the already existing viewpoint and may also determine the level and type of interaction amongst the members in that society.

1.2 Background to the Study
1.2.1 Oral Literature and Society
Folklore serves as the storehouse of all that which is either valued or dejected in any human society. Since society is not static, all these attributes are carried along and passed on to the members, both explicitly and implicitly. This is done through oral literature.

Oral literature forms such as folktales, riddles, proverbs, puns among many others, reveal the society’s perceptions, fears and hopes. In any human society, these oral literature forms are vital in delineating the society’s worldview. Since the literary production of oral literature is always
with in a given social context, the subject matter of these oral forms will always reflect, sustain, challenge or deconstruct the people’s social reality. For whatever function the oral piece will be crafted, it is the language of its package that will play the significant role. It is for this reason that Okaka (1998:12) states that “Oral literature is the store house of language which expresses the people’s social consciousness and reveals their thought patterns”.

The foregoing statements imply that a careful study of a society's oral literature themes, subject matter, characters and images in language not only reveals the general social mindset of that society which helps to preserve it as social unit, but also shows its cultural postulations. Further, these aspects also suggest that oral literature is a product of the general cultural aspirations and prejudices of a people.

Okpweho (1992:18) perhaps has this in mind when he explains the benefit of seeking answers to fundamental issues in our midst by studying oral literature. He explains, “…the more lasting benefit of the latest trends in the study of African oral literature may be in helping us answer some very fundamental questions about the nature of literature and culture … all knowledge aims at helping us understand who we are, the value of what we do, how we have reached the stage of civilization we have achieved and what steps we can take to improve our condition.”

Okpewho here shows that what we know and do is the product of our cultural direction and development, usually transmitted by the verbal performances of our literature. If for example disability is accorded a negative attitude by society as currently believed, then according to Okpewho, both the reason and remedy should be sought from the society’s oral literature.

Many scholars of oral literature attest to it being the signpost of the expectations and prejudices of a society. Finnegan (1970:404-406) for example states that “through the common daily utterances of the witty expressions of proverbs, sayings and puns, serious comments about human affairs are exposed”. On the other hand, (Wambi 1998: 5) believes that “riddles act as puzzles that jog the memory to generate intelligent and coherent responses”. For the folktales and fables, Kiyimba (2001: 11) argues, “they pass on moral lessons aimed at curtailing rustic
behaviour and upholding what is seen as right in that society.”

These usually implicit instructions help to guide the members of a society into having a uniform code of perceptions. The members are expected to fulfil common societal obligations and norms, and where they fail due to either infirmity or obstinacy, society’s attitude to them will always be recorded. Commonly, this will be implied in the name tags attached to them, and usually communicated in that society’s oral literature.

1.2 The Samia
1.2.1 Geographical Characteristics
The Samia people are found both in Kenya and Uganda. In Kenya they occupy the whole of Samia Location of Busia District, while in Uganda they occupy almost the entire Busia District and the southern part of Bugiri District in Busoga. The Samia belong to the Bantu ethnic group found along the Kenya-Uganda border. They are classified as the Kyoga basin people, together with many other tribes including the Basoga, Banyole and Bagisu, in Uganda; and the Bakhayo, Banyala and Banyore in Kenya with whom they live in close neighbourhood. They speak a common language called “Olusamia” which is characterized by [h] sound.

The Ugandan Samia fully occupy eight of the ten sub counties of Busia District namely: Lumino, Buhehe, Lunyo, Masafu, Masaba, Dabani, Bulumbi, and Busitema. They are however also found to share Buteba Sub County with the Iteso, and Busia town council with many other tribes. In Bugiri, the Samia occupy most of the southern part of the district, especially the sub counties of Banda, Muterere, Buluguyi and Sigulu Islands. Busia district, which is central district of the Samia, is bordered to the north and west by the districts of Tororo and Bugiri respectively, to the south by Lake Sitamakholi (Victoria) and to the east by Kenya. Busia town, located very close the Kenya-Uganda border, is both the major town and main administrative centre of the Samia people. According to the available information at the district, Busia district has a total area of 733 sq.km with a population of over 280,000 people.
1.2.2.2 Origin and Ethnicity

About their origin,Were (1984:50-52) explains that the Samia, that is the “Basamia proper” and Bagwe, were originally part of a large group of Bantu people in western Kenya, the Abaluyia. Kwamusi (1996:24) records that the word “Abaluyia”, also spelt Abaluya” or “Abaluhyia” is derived from the word “Olua” which means compatriot or fellow clansman. The root word “luyia” is derived from the verb “ohuyia” which means to burn. Oral sources have it that these people were called Abaluyia to mean “those that belong to burning”, since it was a common custom of the Abaluyia to sit around a bon fire in the evenings. At such moments oral narratives such fables, folktale folklore, proverbs and riddles were told. In the daily life of the Samia however, the word “oluyia” means a clan unit or an ethnic group. Were (1984:51) records that other groups of the people forming the Abaluyia include among others the Bakhayo, Bawanga, Maragoli and Banyore, all of whom were occupying their current locations by 1650.

Two schools of thought have been advanced by historians to explain the origin and migrations of the Abaluyia to their present lands. To some historians such as Were (1984), the Abaluyia are believed to have migrated from Misiri (Egypt), through Sudan and Uganda, to enter and settle in western Kenya. However, with the arrival and settlement of the Luo in the same area, most of the Abaluyia were displaced. The Samia fearing the Luo advancement and influence moved further west and occupied the area bordering the eastern coast of lake Victoria.

The other school of thought considers the Samia and indeed all the Abaluyia, to have migrated into East Africa through Western Uganda. Scholars such as Kwamusi (1996), Osogo (1988) and Maloba (1970) who believe in this school of thought, argue that the Abaluyia are Bantu and therefore their origin must be explained by the migration trends of the Bantu. Osogo (1970:190) maintains that the Abaluyia travelled through Bunyoro and some through Buganda to occupy the area close to Lake Victoria. Some settled on the islands of Lake Victoria such as Sigulu, Bwama, Jagusi and Lingira.

Samia elders reveal that the area occupied by the Abaluya was called Mumbo land. They argue that this was part of Nabongo (King) Mumia’s Wanga Kingdom, which stretched from Mumias in present day Kenya to Siira (River Nile in Uganda). According to them, the Samia were therefore a constituent chiefdom ruled over by various Chief such as Naswale, Ekaka and Obara among others.
One undisputable fact however that is the Samia of Eastern Uganda must have entered their present location from the direction of present day Kenya\textsuperscript{10}. At that time, they lived as a group of people occupying the area between the east coast of Lake Victoria and the Basoga people in the west. When the British marked out the present Kenya-Uganda National boundary in 1902 therefore, the Samia were divided into two groups, each occupying one side of the two countries. The Kenyan Samia occupied Samia Location and were put under Luo control in Kisumu District, while the Ugandan Samia occupied Samia Bugwe County which was placed under the then Busoga District Administration. Since the Colonial period was characterised by oscillations in district boundaries, in 1921 Samia Bugwe County became part of Budama sub-district which was then under Mbale District Administration. In 1954 it became Bukedi District, for which Samia Bugwe was a county, until 1997 when it became Busia District.

The Ugandan Samia are grouped into three sub-tribes: Basamia, Bagwe and Bahehe\textsuperscript{11}, all occupying Busia District and the southern part of Bugiri District. These three sub tribes have a similar historical identity and speak a mutually intelligible language “Olusamia” but with slight dialectical differences. These differences are more vivid among the Bagwe.

Some historians such as Maloba (1970) and Kwamusi (1996) have accounted for these variations as resulting from the migration trends of the Bagwe. Kwamusi (1996:41-42) for example, explains that the Bagwe were living in the western Kenya area of Malikisi, close to Mountain Elgon by the mid of the 17\textsuperscript{th} century. Due to hostilities from “Abasebe” (Massai) and Abamia (Iteso), the Bagwe migrated southwards coming into contact with the Bugisu and Banyole to settle into the present day Busia district.

This contact with the Bugisu and Banyole had two significant effects on the Bagwe. First it influenced the language they speak\textsuperscript{12}, and two, led to the similarity in names of places found in both Bugwe and Bugisu. These names include: Mbale, Magale, sifuyo and Masaba among others. Despite these differences however, the Basamia, Bagwe and Bahehe are usually treated as a single cultural and linguistic unit referred to as the Samia in this research.

1.2.2.3 Economic Organization

The main economic activity of Samia was subsistence agriculture with the main food crops being finger millet, maize, sorghum, peas, cassava and sweet potatoes. Finger millet was used to
prepare millet bread; a doughy mixture made from dried and ground millet mixed cassava. This was called “Obusuma”. Other than obusuma, millet was also used to prepare an alcoholic drink called “amalwa”. Both millet and cassava had the advantage of being drought resistant, and took time to go bad if dried and safely kept in granaries which were called “ebyaki”.

The Samia also practiced, though to a small extent livestock farming. They kept cattle, goats, sheep and poultry. Cattle and goats among other functions were used as bride wealth, while sheep, poultry and sometimes goats were essentially for ceremonial functions and cultural rites. Such functions included: child naming, which was called “Ohukulikha”, paying last respects to a dear one called “olunghanyo” or eating the first of a harvest called “ohulia obuya” among others.

Another common economic activity among the Samia was fishing especially on Lake Sitamokholi (Victoria) and river Sio. Fishing was an important activity because fish (engeni) formed the staple dish, to the extent that the Samia are informally commonly referred to as people of “Obumusa n’engeni.” Both skill and luck in fish catching were greatly admired by Samia to the extent that sometimes sacrifices of goats were performed to seek favour from the gods for a big catch.

The unit of production was the family and a man’s wealth was viewed in terms of numbers of wives, children, granaries and domestic animals. It is for this reason that both “Omusumba” (bachelor) and “Omukumba” (one without children) were usually ridiculed in society.

Further, physical strength and able bodied ness were enviable traits by individuals. These were considered vital to enable one accomplish such tasks as rowing a canoe, pulling nets and working on gardens.

1.2.2.4 Social – cultural characteristics, Religion and beliefs

Socially, the Samia were a patrilineal society, with each person owing allegiance to a single clan. Each clan was distinguished by its specific taboos rituals and totem, and marriage to or from a clan to which one can trace relationship was abominable. It was believed that such marriage would cause misfortunes and calamities such as bearing children with disabilities in the family.
It is said that the Samia are classified into 125 clans\textsuperscript{15}, although Wafula Bwaku lists over 200\textsuperscript{16}. Some of the big and well known clans include Abataboona, Abalundu and Abalyaali while those so small and almost extinct include: Abasipodo, Abamatwi, Ababolo, Abalimi and Abasabale\textsuperscript{17}. The clan system among the Samia was very strong and vital. Were (1968:188) explains this importance, “---the clan system was an effective political, social and economic unit: it chose its own allies or enemies, fought its own wars. Sometimes with the aid of its allies and legislated for its people.”

The Samia lived in initial residential units called “amadaala” which were a collection of huts varied in size depending on social status of the owner. It is important to note that the Samia had social classes. The unmarried men known as “Abasumba” were lowest in the social stratum and did most of the manual work. They sometimes acted as domestic slaves\textsuperscript{18}. “Abenengo” was the term used to describe the rich and respectable men in society. They usually owned large homesteads and often assisted “Omwami” in dispensing political authority. Omwami was the chief of village or Olukongo which was collection of homesteads or amaadaala. His residence was called “edooho” which implied a palace. Usually, though not necessarily always, Olukongo constituted a clan, in which case the Omwami was the clan leader.

Although the socio-cultural and political organization of the Samia was not as centralized as that of the Wanga Kingdom to which they belonged as a constituent tribe, they had a social cohesion which enabled the society to survive on till the advent of British rule in 19\textsuperscript{th} century. This cohesion resulted from the ability of clans to accept authority through compromise. Maloba (1970:31) observes that “the power and authority of elders was accepted and taken for granted. Customary law was a matter of habit. These factors appear to have made it easier for people to accept rule by clans which claimed possession of obwami (chieftaincy). Once the elders accepted the over rule of a royal clan, then the respective clan units would just have to accept.”

In terms of religion, the Samia believed in the existence of a supernatural being; the creator God, called “Were”. Below Him however, were “emisambwa” (spirits or small gods) who were worshiped regularly in specific family places called “omwerera”.\textsuperscript{19} Usually, Were was importuned for good health, achievement of wealth and “normal” children. To the Samia a normal child is one who is not disabled\textsuperscript{20}.
The Samia also had traditional beliefs of rain making. From various clans emerged distinguished rain makers or “Abakimba,” who usually received recognition during social functions and ceremonies. It was believed that neglect or mistreatment of one, during a function would annoy him and thus ruin the function by sending a heavy down pour. It was also further believed that omukimba (singular) would some times punish a village by withholding rain or sending hailstones to destroy the crops in that village. To date, people from Abalundu clan are still believed to possess powers or rain making.

It is important to note however, that despite the claimed powers of rain making among the Samia, famine was continuously experienced. The prevalence of the name Wanjala (for male) and Nanjala (for female) among all age groups is proof of this. It is only a child born during famine that is given this name.

As mentioned earlier, marriage among the Samia was Exogamous. Nangwala (1986:14 -15) explains the five traditional marriage forms among the Samia. There was marriage by forcefully capturing the girl (“ohukhwesa”), secret elopement of the girl and boy (“ohubayira”), marriage by inheriting your dead brother’s wife (“okhukerama”), marrying your wife’s sister or niece offered to you by your wife (“esibewo”), and the official customary form resulting from negotiations of parents on both sides. This was known as “okuhwa” and the most respectable because it involved specific ceremonies and rites.

The exogamous nature of marriage, made it difficult for the Samia to live in exclusive clanship on any given village or olukongo. The intermarriages between clans encouraged cooperation between them. Commonly, one would find that although Olukongo was dominated by a particular clan and some times named after that clan, there were also other clans of the in-laws, nephews and grand children among others living together.

As mentioned earlier on, the advent of British colonial administration brought massive social, economic political and religious changes among the Samia. Politically, the most obvious of these changes was the splitting of the formally one society into two in 1902 by the colonial boundary between Kenya and Uganda. To the Samia, this has remained a wound on their conscience which they have tried fighting since 1957 but with no success.
Further the political powers of a clan leader or *Omwami* were curtailed in the new political system. All political authority belonged to Central Government. The introduction of formal education also led to a new perspective in the social stratum where the unmarried men were no longer at its base\(^26\). The young ones in society no longer had time to be fully instructed on social issues. The Christian and Islamic forces also drew many away from their hitherto strong attachments to “*Were*” and “*emisambwa*”. These and many other changes greatly affected the character of the Samia society. What is true however, is that their oral literature survives on and this would form an interesting area of study to an interested scholar.

1.2.3 Disability situation in society
Many scholars seem to agree that the meaning and connotation of the term disability is not entirely dependent on one’s physical or mental limitation. Rather, this is dependent on one’s social environment. Smyke (1991: 110) for example states that:

“It isn’t that one is disabled but that one is turned into a disabled person by society.”

Armstrong (1999) also in her preface record that “disability is a form of oppression … The fundamental issue is not one of the individual’s inabilities or limitation but rather a hostile and un adaptive society.” Discussing the root cause of disability – discrimination in society, Hendricks (1995:43) observes that “disabilities and differences are nothing but social constructions. No one is different without a counter part having some other trails and nobody is disabled as long as there is no person to compare with who is differently abled.” The statements of these scholars illuminate the fact that society defines the standard or norm of what a disability is, and the attitude to accord it. Further, differentiating people by a comparison of their “able ness” is itself a patronising gesture. After all, there are many other features that can be used to distinguish one person from another.

Disability is an identity that one is not necessary born with. Many disabilities are more often acquired than congenital, and perhaps this is why some activists today prefer to use the abbreviation TAB (Temporary Able Bodied) as reminder that one can acquire at any moment, any of the many types of disabilities. Disabilities range from physical, sensory or cognitive impairments to mental disorders and sometimes chronic diseases. In this research particularly, the conditions of impotence and inability to bear children are regarded as disabilities.
The disability situation in many societies has often attracted various opinions, but all suggesting oppression and disregard of the disabled by the “normal” members of that society. This attitudinal problem has always been inherent in every society and dates back to Biblical times. In both Deuteronomy 17:1 and Leviticus 22:19-24, it is recorded that God commanded the sons of Israel never to offer sacrifices of deformed animals, and those with blemish to Him. To date in some church denominations, church ministers of some rank must not be disabled.

The constitution of Uganda (Article 32[1]) identifies the disabled alongside the women and youth as special interest groups that need specific attention because of societal discrimination against them. Further article 35 of the same constitution outlaws any form of discrimination against the disabled. Despite this however, negative attitude towards the disabled still exist either directly or subtly.

In many Ugandan tribes, the names associated with disability are usually pejorative. In Samia language for example, disability is called “obulema” while a disabled is called “omulema”. Obulema is contextually used in daily speech to refer to a failing in something that ought to have been done or achieved, while as an adjective, omulema implies a failure. Further, a dumb is called “Omudimbe” the same word used for “a block head” while among the Baganda, he is referred to as “kasiru” which literally means the “stupid one”. Further, in many languages, there exist proverbs that negatively posture the barren woman and the impotent man. These two conditions are in many societies regarded as forms of disability.

Important to note here, is the fact that these negative innuendoes against disability may not always be direct but rather usually subtle and implicit. In Samia oral literature for example, disability may not directly be castigated, however an analysis of the society’s social-cultural and religious set up, will reveal an implicit dread of the condition.

The birth of a child with disabilities among the traditional Samia is viewed negatively. It is often associated with witchcraft, promiscuity by the mother during pregnancy or a punishment by the ancestral spirits. Disabilities such as hunch back are regarded so big a punishment by the gods (spirits) so much so that when one is born in a family, all possible measures are undertaken to correct the situation. Any one who can correct it is highly valued in this society. This is the context of a common proverb in this society: “Oli Woluyaali ngomulesi we sigifu”
(you are as honoured as the one who can cure a hunch back.)

As Degener (1995:9) observes, “The disabled people are the largest minority in the world and yet for long have been confronted with different kinds of disregard and mistreatment” Underlining their relationship with society, she argues that the disabled are “usually labelled non-productive members of society, often excluded from the mainstream of society and deprived of all that non-disabled people take for granted”. This societal label pointed out by Degener, is often implicitly communicated through images in oral literature.

Folktales and proverbs are text mediums of oral literature, constructed by society for oral interaction among its members. As Nketa quoted in Finnegan (1970:390) observes, about proverbs in Ghana, “... they are built over the years and reflect the thought and insight of Ghanaians into problems of life.” This view is not exclusive to the Ghanaians, but applies to many other oral cultures, the Samia inclusive. This then means that a critical analysis of the oral literature mediums will definitely reveal the society’s attitude towards its constituent members who are unable to take full participation in life of the community on an equal level with the others. This formed the theoretical stand point of the researcher in attempting to delineate what images of disability Samia oral literature portrays.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Like in any other human society, the folklore of the Samia people serves as both the store and purveyor of human thoughts, aspirations and identity. This is done through oral literature forms such as folk narratives, formulaic forms and oral poetry. The societal wisdom and entertainment conjured by these forms gives the people of the community a common identity and perception of societal issues.

The current global debate on the marginalization of some groups in society encompasses the disabled. It reveals that the disability condition in society always attracts a form of social oppression. Evidence shows world over that there exist numerous inequalities and inequities in how the disabled are attended to and the benefits extended to them. In nearly all societies, disability is regarded as a deplorable and unfortunate condition.
Unfortunately, to date, little attention has been paid to analysing the role of “social” language in propagating this general social disregard of the disabled. Many scholars of whom Bukenya (1994), Ebila (1995) and Benge (1994) are examples, have investigated into the interplay between language and society in forming perceptions, stereotypes and attitudes on social issues. All of them however have instead concentrated on gender relations and portrayals in oral interaction.

Drawing upon personal narratives of Samia disabled person and discourse analysis of the language in Samia folktale and proverbs on disability, this study attempted to delineate the portrayal of disability in society. Further in the light of the general assumption that Samia oral literature negatively postures the disabled, the study examined the multifunctional nature of the disability language in portraying these stereotypes and attitudes.

1.4 Scope of the Study
The study was done among the Samia people of Busia District in Eastern Uganda. To its west, Busia is bordered by Bugiri district of Busoga region, while to the north is Tororo district. To the south is Lake Victoria and to the East, is Busia District of Kenya. The study was carried out in Busia District because the District hosts all the three sub tribes of the Samia. Specifically, the researcher limited himself to Samia folktale and proverbs that have in them disability images. The definition of the disabled in this research encompassed the physical, visual, audio and mental impairments and the impotent men and women who are incapable of bearing children, since these usually suffer the same social ridicule as the physically disabled.

1.5 Definition of Terms
Orature: A coinage of “oral” and “literature”. The created verbal arts used in every society.
Disabled: A person with a physically visible or invisible impairment that causes difficulty to him/her in performing what the rest of the other members in that society perform.
Disability: The conditions of lack of ability to perform satisfactorily what the rest of the members in that society perform.
Samia: Group of people speaking any of the related dialects of Lusamia, Lugwe and Luhehe found in Busia district in Eastern Uganda.
**Proverb:** A piece of folk wisdom expressed with terseness and charm, and characterised by economy in word choice, sharpness in focus and poetic beauty.

**Folktale:** Oral narratives, whose characters are essentially human, and closely depict the experiences of the Samia people.

**Psychoanalysis:** literally theory that takes great interest in the processes of the mind (psyche) and how these shape the production and appreciation of literally text.

**Sociological Theory:** A literary theory that views literature as a mirror of the society of its production.

### 1.6 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

#### 1.6.1 General objective

The purpose of the study was to investigate the portrayal of disability in Samia oral literature and the society’s general attitude towards the condition.

#### 1.6.2 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the study were to;

1. **1.6.2.1** Select, translate, and make critical analysis of the folktales and proverbs of the Samia that carry images of disability.
2. **1.6.2.2** Make a critical assessment of the content and context of the selected folktales and proverbs to uncover the explicit and implicit attitudes that the society has towards disability.

### 1.7 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 1.7.1 Oral Literature and Society

These are closely related because oral literature is a product of the general culture of a society. It offers the society’s aesthetic pleasure by creating fictitious characters that are usually prototypes of real life characters in society. Oral literature is therefore indispensable to society.

Eminent scholars of oral literature such as Finnegan (1970), Okpewho (1992), Bukenya (1994) and Ngugi (1981) agree that oral literature preserves the traditions, histories, customs and cultures of society. They also agree that being a prevalent component of every society through which human beings objectively express their subjective cultural values and ideology on matters of life, oral literature guides members of a society into having a uniform code of perceptions.
None of these however, has specifically looked into disability images in orature. Instead, others like okpewho (1992) have encouraged African scholars to undertake deeper research into the shorter formulaic forms of oral literature in order to capture their witticism and role in society. This has resulted into little documented study of these forms, especially among the Samia people.

The social life of the Samia especially their origin and migration trends to their present location, and their socio-cultural organizations, are fairly well documented. Scholars such as Osogo (1998), Maloba (1970) and Kwamusi (1999) among others, provide useful information about the Samia and their way of life. Wafula particularly, has produced an exhaustive collection of the clans, proverbs, riddles and folktales of the Samia. The proverbs, riddles and folktales which deal with a range of subjects, disability inclusive, are taught in the lower classes of primary education in the district, and both the pupils and teachers enjoy their entertaining role during the lessons. To date however, no body from this society has studied the possible impact of the language used on the socio-psycho perception of some of subjects these oral literature forms deal with.

On his part, Bukenya (1994:1-2) acknowledges the role of oral literature as a constituent of societal knowledge. He states that oral literature “is useful in contributing to the total growth, development and self-fulfilment of a person if he is to be a valuable member of that society”. Ebila (1997:23) agrees to this and further argues that “the socialization process of any individual is entirely dependent on one’s societal perspective as the driving force”. Both scholars here show that oral literature, as the expressive arm of a society’s folklore is a sustainable medium of social cohesion, dignity and identity. Interaction through the oral literature mediums such as folktales and proverbs implicitly guides the members of the society into a specific and more-or-less universally accepted perception of issues in that society. Unfortunately, none of them demonstrates this in as far as it relates to the disability condition. Many scholars have instead concentrated on gender relations and portrayals in various societies.

Scholars such as Kabira (1994), Chesain, (1994), Kiyimba (2001) and Schipper (1991) have aptly analyzed the interplay between oral literature and society through oral mediums such as folk tales and proverbs and come to a more-or-less similar conclusion that oral literature often transmits negative attitudes and stereotypes against some of its members. In their case, these members are the women and to some extent, men.
Simiyu (1994) analyses how oral literature is a foundation of societal knowledge. He specifically discusses the interplay between oral literature forms such as narratives and proverbs and those who “consume” them. He concludes (1994:99) that “the audience and the text are one and the same thing”.

Interpreted from a psychoanalytic perspective, this conclusion reveals that one assimilates the narratives and proverbs into his/her own psychological process to search for successful solutions to the multiple demands within his/her ego (Mushengyezi 1999:40). As one (the audience) becomes wholly immersed in the world of the text, he/she begins to accept the “author’s” unconscious psychic intrusions shed onto the text. Since these oral texts are authored by society, the audience therefore takes up the society’s perception of issues there in. The “innocent” oral piece shall therefore provide the driving power behind the human actions and behaviours.

Oral literature propels action as a result of the environment and situation of its production. This view is agreed on by many oral literatures scholars. Soyinka is for example quoted by Okaka (1999:23) as observing thus:

> “Any art form is created and executed within a specific physical environment. It naturally interacts within that environment, is influenced by that environment and in turn acts together with the environment in a far more complex history of that society.”

Actions within oral literature are therefore a reaction to what exists with the world of created characters. This action is therefore exhibited through language. A critical analysis of this language will therefore reveal the historical context and composition of the oral piece. It therefore becomes appropriate to interrogate this language from a sociological point of view.

The relationship between the literature one consumes and his or her character has been extensively discussed. Okpewho (1992:16) emphasizes the usefulness of folk narratives by asserting that “Such stories give society a chance of feeling good about itself”. Wambi (1998:1-2) on the other hand states that “orature…has the potential to transform human beings and society to a higher degree of self expression. Orature…has the ability to meet their basic needs; self esteem or the sense of worth and self respect.” Here, both Okpewho and Wambi emphasize
that what one says and listens to in his/her environment, greatly shapes his or her way of life. Wambi demonstrates this view with Kisoga proverbs and riddles and concludes that oral performances in society are social signposts to which one can refer for direction on societal attitudinal queries. The researcher feels disability is an example of such queries.

Finnegan (1970:441) however, dismisses these two oral forms especially riddles as being “a social pastime for amusement, pure and simple”. To her, riddles are simply a literary expression of a special domain for children’s entertainment but not for serious scholarly consideration. Even proverbs, though better considered than riddles, she feels “their greatest value lies in literary service of apt-imagery and expression of abstract ideas.” She acknowledges that they express the wisdom of not just the history but also the future.

The views of the scholars cited above can be a signpost in the study of attitudinal problems in society. If riddles, proverbs and other mediums of oral literature are vital in forming attitudes on matters in life as Okpewho, Wambi, Kiyimba, Bukenya and many others cited above observe; and if these oral forms express the wisdom of the past and of the future as according to Finnegan, then one should be able to decipher the attitudes formed about disability in the Samia oral literature and also analyze the societal wisdom about disability therein embedded. Societal wisdom can only be traced out from what the societal members say and do as shown in their folklore. For this study the researcher studies what they say.

1.7.2 Societal Perception of Disability
Sufficient evidence exists to suggest that disabilities have always existed in every human society. Barnes (2008), Armstrong (1999) and Masagazi (1999) all view the disability problem in society as a life long issue. Armstrong (1999:1) argues that the task of dealing with the problem of disability is quite enormous, as it requires making correction on the “situational aspects of social experience of the disabled.” To him, the task is even harder since it requires the attention of every society for there exists no known society without people with disabilities.

The fact that disability is a universal concept to every society implies that there should be no negative attitude towards it. All people have lived with, and should accept it as a normal concept in life. Unfortunately this is not the case. In Uganda for examples, the national constitution
(1995) devotes article 35 to the protection of disabled persons against marginalizations. This has led to affirmative action measures such as designating a specific number of seats in the country’s legislative assembly and other political units to people with disabilities. Efforts such as these, set up to address the problem of disability discrimination and stigmatisation, are indicative of the gravity of the problem. One can therefore deduce that Ugandan societies just as many others, world over have negative mindsets that stereotype the disabled. The significant question here however is whether these are best measures to address the problem.

The question of whether disability is socially created has well been addressed by scholars such as Smyke (1991) Degener (1995) Armstrong (1999) and Hendricks (1995) all quoted in the background to this study. All suggest that society determines who should be referred to as disabled and the attitude such a person receives from the other members of society. Hendricks (1995:43) particularly goes beyond the physical limitation to the functional limitation of the disabled. He suggests that as long as another person “performs” differently, or does not “perform” “where others members do, the concept of disability shall always arise”.

From the foregoing, it is important to emphasize here that disability should not hereby be perceived as a functional limitation or a condition similar to illness. If this were so, disability would be an individual rather than a societal problem, as evidence suggests.

The disability problem in society does not end at the non-disabled discriminating and stigmatizing the disabled. Often the disabled themselves behave in a peculiar manner. Gartner (in Armstrong 1999:104-5) studies selected deaf Black Americans on Martha’s Vineyard, USA and discovers that “they regarded their inability to hear as a nuisance… The birth of a deaf child was a major misfortune.” This discovery suggests that the affected deaf black Americans consider themselves as unfortunate and thus cannot be accorded the same regard in society as the non-deaf. A child raised in such an environment will consequently develop a low self-esteem about him/herself.

Other scholars have noted the problem of “Withdrawal” amongst the disabled. Barnes (2008:5) observes that “Dominant cultures are oppressive…… in response, the oppressed disabled groups sometimes develop their own cultural norms and values”. The cultural norms and values that Bernes refers to here are in resistance to the societal oppression. These therefore, are not of the society in which they live, rather of the “society” of the disabled themselves. On the other hand,
the non-disabled (oppressors) develop a contemptuous and patronising attitude over the disabled. They usually feel uncertain and uncomfortable, and as a result, may avoid interaction with the disabled\textsuperscript{36}. The disabled consequently find the attitudes of the society in which they live harder to cope with and perhaps more disabling than one’s individual disability.

The general view in all the works of the scholars cited above, in addition to others, seem to emphasize one fact: society establishes a means of categorizing its members. Those who perform as the social norm dictates are complemented, while those, who do not, are ridiculed.

1.7.3 Societal Language and the Question of Disability

Language plays a significant role in the attempt to understand the disability question and many scholars seem to agree to it. Amuka (1994: 9-11) is a case to mention. In his article on literature and the constituents of knowledge, Amuka clearly shows what oral literature is, how it is transmitted in society using the “transmission triangle” and its long lasting effect among its consumers. He strengthens his views by referring to the Greek history of Plato. He states:

“when Plato banished poets from his court, the intention was to dismantle the psychological stranglehold the oral poetry of Homer and Hesiod had on the Greek mind and spirit”

In this, Amuka hints at the central role of language in capturing one’s mind. Unfortunately, he does not show exactly what the mind of Greeks was in the language of oral poetry to “stranglehold”. He therefore summarily states that “an individual is a microcosm of the social” and that “oral communication is imperative for personal and social knowledge and identity”. This study sought to demonstrate if the views of negative attitudes and stereotypes demonstrated by the gender problem do apply to disability problem. Further it inquired into what exactly it is in the language that captures one’s mind to give him or her a long lasting perception on a particular issue.

The study of the role of the language in assessing social problems is today strongly emphasized. Corker (1999), in her preface state that

“the idea that disability is socially created has in recent years been increasingly legitimated within social, cultural and policy frameworks and structures which view disability a form of social oppression. However, the growing recognition of the central role of language in the social
phenomena has been sidelined”. As a result of this little attention has been paid within disability studies to analyzing the role of language in the engineering of social and cultural change. Today many scholars have turned attention to studying societal language in attempt to understand better the problem of disability and social oppression. Chimedza (1999) is one such scholar. He studies the disability problem in Zimbabwe and how the affected attempt to attain social justice. He specifically studies the language of the media and states:

“The mass media shapes the image that society eventually has of the people with disabilities. They are a powerful socializing agent. Their negative portrayal of disabled people has great impact on how these people in the main are viewed by other people.”

This statement raises both a fact and question. The fact is that the mass media men and women have nearly a similar perception of disability and it is this, which they continuously portray in their works. On the other hand, the question is, how did they acquire this similar perception? One thing of truth however is, that nobody taught them this particular view about disability at mass media college. What this means then is that Chimedza has not traced the very source of this attitudinal problem: the society in which these mass media men and women have grown and lived; and their literature and culture as contained in their oral literature.

The effect of inadequate documented inquiry into the ability of societal language to cause attitudinal problems in society is obvious. Many times in attempt to find remedies to these problems, many of the interested parties have ended up with ineffective recommendations. Turyabahika (2000) for example studied the problems of a group of disabled people in Kampala. She collected samples of their views on what they consider their problems and quantitatively analyses them. She identifies negative attitude by the community as the main problem. She then recommends sensitizing the community and empowering the disabled as the solution.

While this recommendation can be of help, it cannot be used at the initial step of addressing such an attitudinal problem. Whether it is true that the efforts to recognize the plight of the disabled is a recent innovation as Turyabahika states, the negative attitude towards them, is perhaps as old as human history. The researcher feels this attitudinal problem was not explicitly imparted into the community at one specific time; instead, it must have been passed on continuously to every member through oral speech, which is the primary facilitator of human interaction.
As noted above, oral literature performances are constructed by society to ultimately infect the psychological mindset of the perceiver. It is this mindset that will determine how one reacts to situations around him or her (Mushengyezi 2000: 65). Using such formal measures as sensitizing the community to reverse their mindset in a day, or elevating the disabled to political position in name of empowering them, cannot therefore be an effective remedy to an attitudinal problem. The language of social interaction in this society should be investigated and the positive elements within it be highlighted as the initial step in finding the remedy.

Kiyimba is perhaps to date the only Ugandan scholar to have investigated disability images in the oral communication of any Ugandan society. In his “Perceptions of Disability in the Proverbial Idiom of the Baganda”, Kiyimba (2008) examines the broader meaning of selected Ganda proverbs and the prejudices they portray against disability. He concludes that “--- the use of disability-unfriendly images psychologically undermines disabled persons, and contributes to the wide spread denial of their legitimate position in society”.

This conclusion could apply to many other societies, in addition to the Baganda. However, Kiyimba in his article concerns him self exclusively with proverbs and not any other medium of oral literature. He also does not consider the condition of deafness or dumbness. It would be worthwhile comparing images from short fixed formulaic forms of oral literature such as proverbs, with those from the prose narratives such as folktales. Prose narratives in oral literature are usually characterized by fluidity, and this accounts for the existence of different versions of the same text. May be because of the fluidity characteristic of folktales, conscious effort has been made to delete the negative attitude. Further, since societies are themselves highly diverse, both in terms of cultures and social practices; and in terms of policy making and interpretation, it would be worthwhile comparing his findings with those from the Samia society.

1.8 Hypotheses
Two hypotheses were the basis of this research study. These were:
1.8.1. Samia oral literature is loaded with images which negatively portray disability.
1.8.2 The negative portrayal of disability in Samia folklore sustains society’s negative attitude towards the disabled.
1.9 Significance
In undertaking this study, the researcher considered that it would be of significance in two ways:

1.9.1. Since oral literature is still a useful medium of communication that provides useful insights into vital issues in society, the study would help to unmask ways in which oral literature works to transmit and sustain stereotypes against disability. This was to be arrived at by examining the lexical and semantic aspects of the folktales and proverbs as texts of literature and interviewing some of the disabled persons.

1.9.2. Specifically to the Samia, the study would provide an initial step in a documented analysis of the way oral literature interacts with their day to day lives to create long lasting perceptions on issues in life. In this case, disability was to serve merely as an example of the various issues of life.

1.10 Theoretical Framework
Majorly, the study was conceived within the sociological theory, a genetic approach which involves a consideration of the literary text in terms of its social origin. The theory, whose proponents included French scholar Hippolyte Taine and American literary critic and philosopher Kenneth Barke, stresses that literature is a result of “the race, the milieu and the moment” (Scott 1962:123). By this, the proponents emphasized that literature is the direct result of the situation of its setting. They believed that literature is a manifestation of society, one that contains “metaphors and references directly applicable to the existing society at the time of its creation “Adams [1971:942].

By these tenets of the theory, the researcher believed that the thematic concerns, conflicts and characters in the world of oral texts selected, mirror the society of their creation and therefore reflect the fears and concerns of their author(s).

To a small extent however, the researcher took on a psychoanalytic theory perspective that the author of a text sheds onto it his/her repressed fears and passions, latent in his / her subconscious. Considering that the selected folktales and proverbs are texts authored by society, the researcher therefore believed Wright’s view that “the author cannot hide anything away from his/her text”
It means then that society as the author of these texts unconsciously “sheds” its repressions on them, which influence the perceptions of their consumers.

1.11 Research Methodology.

1.11.1 Research design
This research design was basically qualitative. The researcher collected and selected Samia folktales and proverbs that feature disability. These were intuitively analysed and conclusions made.

1.11.2 Sources of data
Primary data was collected majorly from respondents among secondary and primary school children and resourceful persons among Samia elders. The former provided the folk tales, while the latter gave the proverbs. This was so because primary school children are often asked to tell folktales in their classes by their teachers, while elders are conversant with proverbs. A total of 10 disabled people were interviewed and their views recorded. These were male and female respondents. Unpublished collections of Samia folktales and proverbs added to the stock of proverbs provided by the elders.

1.11.3 Methods and tools used for data collection.
The instruments of primary data collection included a pen and note book, a solicitous questionnaire and an audio recorder. The secondary school respondents filled the solicitous questionnaire under the supervision of the research assistant, while the responses from the primary school pupils were either recorded by hand or on a recorder. This was so because the researcher assumed the secondary school respondents to have better writing skills than the primary pupils. For responses collected informally as at social gatherings, the researcher noted down any proverb mentioned bearing the subject of disability. All these responses were later summarily transcribed. Library research formed the major source of secondary data on the Samia people. Both published and unpublished library sources and resourceful Samia elders were interviewed and their responses arguments the literature on both the oral literature and culture of the Samia people. A map of Busia district was used to designate the area of study.
1.11.4 Procedure used in data processing and analysis.

After transcribing the recorded interview responses and translating all data collected, the researcher grouped all texts under three categories: Physical/visible disability, Sensory disability and Others. In the latter category, the researcher considered texts specifically on the subjects of barrenness, impotence and mental disabilities. For texts with over-reaching themes, the researcher grouped them under the category in which he felt they would make stronger implications.

The data was then subjected to the researcher’s initiative analysis. He analyzed both the lexical and semantic elements, and the cultural symbols in the selected texts. The conclusions were based on the analyses made and the postulated views of the disabled persons. Throughout the study, the researcher took on a majoly a sociological theoretical stance.

1.12 Constraints

A number of constraints were experienced during the study. These included the following:

The Samia of Eastern Uganda are identified under three sub tribes: Basamia, Bagwe and Bahehe, with slight language differences in dialects, pronunciation and intonation. Unfortunately, there is no standardized Samia orthography. This situation created a problem during the transcribing of the collected data.

Some words are onomatopoeic and have no direct equivalent in English. Such include “popopopo”, “okhudiekerer” and “akwaa”. Describing them merely killed the effect of their original meanings.

Among the Samia, folktales are normally told to children in a free natural environment of play. It is done for fun, and the listeners participate by responding in a specific way. In this study however, the researcher collected folktales by having them summarized out on the solicitous questionnaire, and where the respondent couldn’t write, the researcher recorded them on an audio recorder. This means that they were be collected out of context, and therefore the stylistic touches of the narration which are vital to their total interpretation was lost.

During the interviews with disabled people, many of them were hesitant on interacting freely with the researcher. They were also shy in responding to queries relating to their personal conditions of disability.
End notes

1. A lot has been written and social in the recent years suggesting that the disabled together with women and children are greatly marginalised, disregarded and mistreated. This has led to affirmative action and direct legislation about the disabled in many countries, including Uganda.

2. Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995 Articles 35(1,2) recognizes the view that the disabled are discriminated against and mandates paliment to legislate laws for their protection.

3. The names of the central government political units differ in the two countries. Allocation in Kenya is the same as a country, while a sub-location is the same as a parish in Uganda.

4. Busia District (in Uganda) comprises only one county: Samia Bugwe, two constituencies (North and South) and ten sub-counties. In 1997 it was upgraded from its sub-district status of Tororo District to district level.

5. Busoga is part of the Eastern region of Uganda. It extents from River Nile to River Kibimba. It is mainly occupied by people called Basoga and speak a language called Lusoga. Currently, it comprises the districts of; Jinja, Kamuli, Kaliro, Namutumba, Iganga, Mayuge and Bugiri.

6. Many Samia words have the /h/ sound in them; to the extent that sound /k/ is articulated as /kh/. This also affects the samia orthography thus leading to spellings such as “Bukalikha”, “Khwicha” “Kalukha” among others.


8. Interview with John ongilo, 56 years teachers at Bukwekwe primary school, Lumino Sub-county in BUsia District on 3rd July 2008.

9. This information is contained in a memorandum entitled “claim for restoration of Baluya Numbo land, cultural institutions and administration “ written by ten Baluya elders on 6th /01/2004, P.1-3,6.

10. Two specific features are used to justify this view. First, the Bagwe, who are subtribes of the samia, believe that they came from “e bugwe” or “ebukwe” which means east. Secondly,
most samia clans bury their dead facing the direction of Lake Victoria as a tribute to where came from.

11. The constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995) names the Basamia, Bagwe and Bahehe as part of the indiginiuos tribes of Uganda as 1st Febaury 1926.

12. There is an outstanding intoration similarity for some words in Lugwe adialect of the Bagwe) and some words in Lugisu and Lubyole. An example is the word "Khawenya" to mean "we want" instead of “Khudakha” which is used by the Basamia and Bahehe.

13. John Ongillo in 8 above that fishermen from commonly carried a white goat to sumba Hills in lake Victoria as sacrifice to the good of the lake to enable them have a big catch of fish.

14. In many Samia oral poems and proverbs, the bachelor and one without children are ridiculed. In one particular oral poem. The artist points out that a bachelor should always be the first to be suspect whenever a chicken goes missing in his neighbourhood. In yet other proverb a bachelor is said to be lucky for will survive by feeding on termite during periods of famine.


16. Gaitano Wafula Bwaku, 59 years, peasant of Masafu Sub-county has collected a lot of data about the Samia: the names of clans, samia proverbs and riddles, the famous rain makers, names of girls, fish etc. these collection are yet to be published.

17. Ibid P.56

18. See 13 above.

19. Interview with Gaitano Wafula Bwaku 59 years, peasant of masafu sub-county on 29th June 2009.

20. Interview with Feibbe Ajambo 37 years, house wife, disabled, Nangwe village Busia Town Council) on 2/7/09.

21. See 16 above

22. It is generally believed among the Samia rain makers from the Abalundu clan where Kerera was one of the most smost famous. Gaitano Bwaku identifies Kerera as one such rainmaker. The researcher was told that the last of these rainmakers from the clan was Petero Mumbe who till his death in 2006 was still regarded very efficient in the skill.

24. There are many villages named after the clans that occupied them. Examples include: Ebukobe (for Abakobe) in Masaba Sub-county, Ebusobo (for Abasubo) in Buhehe sub-county, Ebuyiye (for Abayiye) in Masafu, among others.


27. The Anglican Church of Uganda does not allow its ministers above the rank of Reverend to be one with a visible disability. Further a non-married man or woman cannot likewise be ordained. In the Roman Catholic Church, one suspected to be impotent because of his inability to sustain an erection cannot be ordained reverend father.


29. Interview with Feibe Ajambo, cited in 20 above.

30. In Alupe village Buteba sub-county, Busia District, a man called Martin hanged himself in January 2008 when he discovered the children hitherto thought his had been fathered by another man. This after his wife told him, he was incapable of making a woman pregnant.

31. See 16 above.


33. Sigmund Freud’s Psychoanalysis theory states that the author of a text unlocks from his or her subconscious all the repressed impulses, passions, dreams, attitudes, beliefs and fear onto the text.


35. The constitution of Uganda (1995) designates three parliamentary seats to people with disabilities.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CURSE OF PHYSICAL DISABILITY

2.1 Introduction
In this chapter we analyse the concomitant innuendoes in the proverbs and folktales depicting physical/visible disability. Specifically, we consider proverbs and folktales on the subject of lameness and cripples, hunchbacks and sight disabilities. Other physical conditions discussed include dwarfism, dental deformations or gaps in the teeth lining, and the conditions of having an abnormally large head or a swollen stomach. This condition is called “esidaada” in Samia.

Sight disabilities, unlike deafness and dumbness, are discussed under Physical and not under Sensory disabilities because they are visible. One will tell the disability by simply looking at the victim, which is not the case with dumbness or deafness.

2.2 Societal Deconstruction of the Physically Disabled
Degener (1995:9) cited in chapter one, observes that while the disabled people are the largest minority in the world, for a very long time, they have been confronted with different kinds of disregard and mistreatment. Todate, available evidence suggests that modern legislative policies world over may be benign, but are based on the assumption of the “Otherness” of the disabled person. They usually connote the view that the disabled are less of the real person or citizen, who consequently need special legislative protection.

The Ugandan constitutional policies are examples to mention here. Many Articles and clauses out rightly debar any form of segregation against the disabled. One such policy is Article 35 (i) which states:

*Persons with disabilities have a right to respect and human dignity and the state shall take appropriate measures to ensure that they realize their full mental and physical potential.*

Unfortunately, Article 32 (i) juxtaposes the disabled with children, as vulnerable groups that need special attention because of societal discrimination against them. By identifying the disabled along side the children, whose tender age is a constraint on both their intellectual and
material achievement, the highlighted implicit message here is that the disabled are under achievers. Consequently, the resulting disability policies are based on welfare and charity concepts to the weaklings, and deficient under achievers. This situation therefore encourages the perception of the disabled in an object status, and not self determined individuals.

This object status of the disabled was found in many of the proverbs and folktales analyzed. In many cases, the diction used directly attacks the victims, while in others; disability is viewed as retribution for wrongs committed by either the victims or their parents. This judgmental attitude greatly discomforts the victims and also highlights the high stigma society attaches to disability. Quite often, the lifestyle measures adopted by the physically impaired is ridiculed, and referred to with a lot of mockery. An example here is the locomotion manoeuvres of a cripple by crawling down because one cannot stand upright. Among the samia, such people will be referred to as *amahuddu kekhwesa* (the crawling tortoises). Another example is that of a support stick used by the lame or cripple to aid in walking. This is usually referred to as the “third leg”. The physical anatomy of a human being demands only 2 legs for locomotion. Referring to the support stick as the third leg therefore is to unconsciously suggest that the victim is non-human. Here society will have deconstructed the victim and excluded him/her from the social class of humans and participation in the affairs of that society, as revealed in many folktales and proverbs.

### 2.3 The Lame and the Cripples

The loose translation of the word lame in Samia is “*Obulema*”. Generally, it means lame in physical sense although in many situations, the word denotes failure and inability. A similar word “*Obuleemu*” means shortfall. Compounded together, the mood derived in the context of the usage of the word “*Obulema*” is that of weak, failure and lack, yet nursing a longing for something. Its usage therefore evokes feelings of pity and sympathy to the character in the proverbs. Many proverbs on lameness in this study depict this view.

1. Omulema amanya ngalwaka.

   *A lame person is the one who knows how he/she falls.*

The proverb expresses a fact that a physically handicapped person designs his/her peculiar way of falling or overcoming a hurdle. Implicitly, it is suggested here that a disabled person will have hardships in overcoming a problem, while for the non disabled, all will always be fine. This image has two effects: it elicits pity from the listener for the disabled victim; and at the same
time it encourages an attitude of self pity and lack of self esteem in the disabled victim. This image is highlighted in other proverbs.

2. Omulema adirira husideru

A lame person arrests his/her victim at the time of eating.

3. Omukinge, sakinga washye

One, who is being carried, does not carry another.

Both proverbs express a state of helplessness on the part of the disabled. In proverbs 2, the lame one can only manage to overcome his/her enemy when seated and having a meal, otherwise, the enemy will always be stronger. In proverbs 3, if one is offered a lift due to his/her physical handicap, he/she should not extend similar help, because he/she is helpless. Subjected to a deeper interpretation, the proverb insinuates that the lame lives on charity, and such a person cannot afford to be charitable to others.

This view was strengthened by the views of Okurut Boniface 28 years, of Tiira village in Buteba sub-county. Okurut informed the researcher that many times, young school boys have refused to ride on his wheelchair even if he requests to offer them a lift. This is despite the fact that the wheelchair is strong enough to carry a load of 3 bags of cement, which he usually ferries across the Kenya-Busia border. He thinks this is so because the boys have been made to believe that a lame cannot help another person.

The following set of proverbs depicts a psychological state of self dejection and low self esteem. The tone is that of indictment and ridicule which in turn makes the victims very uncomfortable whenever the proverbs are mentioned in their presence.


In the presence of a lame one, never bend your finger.

5. Omwimbikiti, akera enungo

A dwarf sets his height target low.

6. Obulema sibuba bwibule bwonghane

Lameness is not only congenital (it may befall one later in life).

Proverb 4 for example insinuates that a lame person is always thinking about his/her condition to the extent that even the simple action of bending one’s finger will be seen as mimicking his/her unfortunate circumstance of disability. Proverb 5 has the same effect as 4. A dwarf
(regarded as lameness in this study) will always feel uneasy of his low set height target. On the other hand, proverbs 6 expresses a general warning to all that lameness is not necessarily congenital since it can befall one at anytime. The proverb seems to be basis upon which it is taboo in Samia culture to laugh at a lame person. Children are severely punished and the older people seriously rebuked for any act interpreted as laughing at or mimicking the lame. The taboo is appropriate as it guards against a complacency of able bodied ness being seen as a permanent condition. The problem here however, is that the general wording of the proverb seems to suggest that a congenital disability would be more tolerable. Those who become lame later in life therefore will always feel uneasy and guilty as if the lameness was invited by the victim.

Some proverbs use images which are abusive and vindictive. They insinuate a case of retribution or payment for evils committed by the victims.

7. Odeba okutwe, niye akukinga
   *He, who insists on an extra ordinarily big head, carries it himself.*

8. Olya sididi, otafimbire enda
   *Eat a little so as not to swell the stomach.*

   *He who eats this and the other swells the stomach.*

Proverb 7 is directly abusive to the victim of a swollen or deformed head, stating that he himself insisted on carrying it. Proverbs 8 and 9 have the same effect, suggesting that the lameness is a result of the greedy character of the affected. Interrogated further in the cultural context of the Samia however, the social meaning of these proverbs could be different. The two conditions (a big head and swollen stomach) are deplorable among the Samia, and often will be used in situations of insult and abuse. The ordinary word for head is "omutwe" while "Omutwe Muhango" refers to a high head. The morpheme "oku" suggests bulky and heavy to the extent that it requires assistance to be carried. On the other hand, the verb "Odeba" especially as used in other proverbs carry connotations of persistently doing wrong or crime. The proverb therefore portrays the victim as being guilty.

The condition of a swollen stomach among the Samia is called *esidaadaa*. Biologically, it is a disease caused by kidney failure. In ordinary usage however, "Ohwifimba enda" (swelling the stomach) suggests gaining undue advantage by unscrupulous means. Today, the expression is used to relate to corruption and embezzlement.
The social meaning of proverbs 7-9 therefore, goes beyond the physical act of developing a deformed head or swollen stomach due to one’s insistent or greedy character. Rather, they communicate the societal position of condemnation and rejection of the affected. Proverb 10 is perhaps the most abusive.

10. Okukhola esireka, ng’enghu yaleka odyekera.

As despising as a hyena to a limping one.

*Enghu* (hyena) is known among the samia as a very greedy animal. In many folktales, the hyena is created as one animal that will follow somebody all the way along, thinking that the swinging hand will fall off the body so that it can pick it up for a meal. Literally, the proverb means that a hyena will always despise one who limps because he/she can not run as fast as it does. It is important to note here that “*Ohudyekera*” (limping) appears to be a crime in the cultural set up of the Samia. Often a mother will rebuke her child for “limping” instead of running when sent, while the elderly often bemoan their “limping” as if they never ran or walked when still youths. The mother who rebukes the child in this case suggests that it is naughty and disobedient, while the bemoaning elder, hints at his/her sluggishness and failure to “perform” the right thing. The image of such a cowardly animal daring a human being because he/she is limping, is therefore a brain child of a society that condemns limping as a failure on the part of the beholder to do what is expected of him/her.

This grim humour of rejection because one is limping is expressed in many folktales. In tale 4, a girl called Odyekere has an encounter with a hyena. She has been advised by her father never to go deep into the forest because when attacked by animals, she will not be able to run fast enough to escape. One morning she disobeys her father's advice and goes out to graze the family's only goat. She is attacked by a hyena and the animal quickly discovers that she is lame. It ignores her, takes the goat and eats it up unbothered about the girl’s presence. Ordinarily, hyenas do not eat people, so it does not have to eat up the girl in the story. However, it is significant that it eats the goat in her very presence. Normally when a hyena snatches a goat or sheep from a herd, it carries it away to eat it from its lair for fear, perhaps, of being pursued by the herd owner. In this tale however, the hyena eats up the goat and unconcernedly looks on as the lame girl walks away, as if to say she is useless, harmless, weak and worthless.

Further, the tale depicts an in built negative perception about the girl, exposed by the hyena. The word “*Ohudyekera*” is a verb meaning to limp. “Odyekere” is a corruption of the verb *ohudyekera* to form a noun, “one who limps”. By using this created noun as the name of the girl
in the tale, society (as the author of the tale) therefore directs the listener to the tale, not to the
girl, but to her condition. In other words, the girl’s identity is therefore lost and replaced by the
object representation of her lameness.

Images of the crippled and the lame, as weak and vulnerable victims, are found in many other
tales. In folktale 11, a woman called Nanyanga is lame and walks with a limp. She however lives
a happy life with her husband. One day, her husband sets a trap to catch a fox that has kept eating
their chickens. The trap instead catches and badly injures a baby elephant which however
manages to slowly limp home. Unfortunately, it dies due to great pain. Mother elephant decides
to find out who set the trap that had led to death of its dear one. She therefore hid in the bush
behind where the trap had been set. When she sees Nanyanga limping going by, the elephant
interprets this as a mimic of the limp of her baby after being caught by the trap. It pounces on
and tramples Nanyanga to death thinking it must have been her who set the trap.
Here, Nanyanga’s only crime for which she dies is walking with a limp. The mood in the tale no
doubt is sad, sombre and gloomy. Nanyanga’s innocent death is pathetic, elicits pity and
sympathy and moves any listener to tears. This innocent death of the woman however ratifies
the view pointed out above that limping is criminal in this society and designates the beholder as
a social reject. No wonder even baby elephant dies after developing a limp.

In yet another folktale (tale 3), the mother of a crippled boy knows that her crippled son cannot
be accepted as husband by any woman in society. Afraid of him living and dying a bachelor, she
arranges for his marriage with a girl whose parents she has managed to convince. She lies to
them that her son works far off and has tasked her with finding a wife for him. The
circumstances which follow are unfortunate as the girl tries to find out who constantly supplies
the meat in the home. When she discovers this is done by a cripple, who is also meant to be her
husband, she carries the drum cage housing of the cripple to her people, lamenting. The whole
society becomes amazed at how a cripple can also have a wife.

The tale depicts the crippled character as an unfortunate human being who has been confined in a
drum cage since childhood. This confinement makes him unable to choose a marriage partner for
himself. When one is secured for him by his mother, the marriage is only for the purpose of
saving him from the social burden of “living and dying a bachelor”. This is a “crime” greatly
deplored in this society. The situation in the tale therefore highlights the social sentence society
passes on the cripples. They are failures who must be excluded from participation in the mainstream of social activities such as marriage.

Significant to note is that there is no suggestion in the tale that queries the potency of the character. Despite this however, the married couple never live as husband and wife instead the husband must stay in total hiding as if to question his ability to perform as a married man.

Images of restriction and alienation of the disabled are also portrayed in many proverbs, such as the following.

   11: Obukisa khaba sibulema
   *Poverty is not lameness*
   The proverb compares poverty and lameness. It is commonly used in situations where one suggests that his/her lack of money at the material time, may not necessarily mean that he/she shall remain in the same condition just as a lame carries his condition for ever. True, many times lameness may be permanent, but this is not exclusive. Even if it were so, to continuously remind the victim of the permanence of his condition would be devastating and heart breaking to him/her.

   12: Kanjukha, kutomere
   *Better for a tree to shed off leaves than totally dry up.*

   13: Alema, atafiire
   *Better a lame child than a dead one.*

Both proverbs express general truths about life. In proverb 12, a tree would rather shed off all its leaves and even become etiolated than it dying off. Used in the context of lameness, both proverbs mean that it is better to have a cripple than a dead one.

The image of a dead one used in both proverbs however, is inappropriate. Living, in whatever state, would logically be better and preferable to being dead. It is therefore needless to compare any one alive with the dead. The resulting effect here therefore, is that a cripple is worthless and simply serves the existence, a filling of space since he/she is only better than a dead one.

   14: Esinghaadi, sikwa amakusi
   *Fish with part of it destroyed or eaten up, always loses value.*
In the context of disability, a cripple or an amputee can be referred to as “Esinghaadi”. The Samia highly value fish since it is their favourite dish, to the extent that any cultural function shall be accompanied by specific fish types. Any fish whose body part is destroyed or eaten up by water creature is therefore usually rejected. Often in markets where fish is sold, such fish can only be sold at a giveaway price.

The word *esighaadi* is pronounced with a stress on /ghaa/. This sound, in Samia expresses disgust, contempt and disapproval. The tone in the proverb is that of contempt and ridicule of a cripple or amputee simply because of the physical impairment or amputation. It is perhaps due to a similar thinking in the Samia society that has led to such derogatory proverbs as 15 below.

15: Sirimukhombe, simanyibwa omweneshio. (Koti nghina w’owolwanda asaba ehwe).

*What is inside a hole is only known by the owner (Like the mother of the unfortunate girl asking for bride price).*

When a girl is unfortunate as to have a blocked vaginal canal, (*Olwanda*), she will always inform her mother. At the time of setting bride price on her, her mother will ask the girls’ father to set it low. It is at this point that those unaware of the girls’ condition will wonder why the bride price is set so low.

In traditional Samia culture, bride price was set on a girl exclusively depending on the wealth status of the suitor. This was because society expected every female to fully serve the societal obligations of getting married, producing children (preferably males) and executing duties of a house wife. A girl whose husband paid so high in bride price was always envied by other girls in the village, and this gave great pleasure to her mother.

In proverb 15 however society judges the girl as a failure in her obligation as a sex partner to her husband, since her “sex canal” is blocked. To this society, this is “lamesness”. The “lame girl” must therefore not have equal opportunity with “the normal ones” in competition for the glory of receiving the highest bride price paid on her. The mother of the girl proves herself a perfect allay in the syndicate against the “lame girl” by herself advising the husband to lower the bride price. This is not surprising, since she is part of the socio-psycho perception of the society which considers the disabled as social rejects.
2.4 The Hunchback.

Samia society has a social hierarchal structure that accords a value system and respect to its members accordingly. Ones’ physical build up usually serves as the starting point for the respect, ridicule or stigma he or she receives.

The calamity of being a hunchback among the Samia is very tormenting. Both in ordinary conversation and in oral literature forms such as folktales and proverbs, a hunch back is referred to as “Hasigufu”. The word “esigufu” means hunchback while the prefix “ha” signals the size of the object referred to as being very small, little or minute. Adopting “Hasigufu” as the name for hunchback server to emphasize that one’s identity is derived from his/her physical deformity. This image, which is common in many folktales and proverbs, is both demeaning and a direct abuse.

Kiyimba (2008:19) is aware of this insult when he observes that;

“The use of the image of the hunchback to signify inconvenience and to generate humour without due regard for the feelings of the hunchbacked people in society is the ultimate reflection of insensitivity on the part of society towards the disability”.

This insensitivity is evident in many Samia folktales and proverbs. Commonly, hunchbacks are portrayed as passive and worthless characters in the events relating to them. Only in circumstances where they have to accomplish some errand for some one, or where they save another from near calamity, do the hunchbacks appear astute. But even then, the prevailing situation usually has a melodramatic effect as if the accomplishment or achievement was divinely planned, as in tale 7

In tale 7, Simbi the village beauty rejects all the suitors who seek her hand in marriage, claiming none of them is handsome enough to marry her. One day, a very handsome, young man comes to ask Simbi for marriage. Simbi unaware that it was an ogre, who had turned himself into a man, accepts to marry him. When the marriage formalities have been accomplished, Hasigufu, Simbi’s young brother insists on accompanying his sister to her husband’s home. Simbi, and indeed every body else, refuse to accept this. Using his wit, Hasigufu manages to go. At night the ogres gather to eat up the girls but Hasigufu discovers this and begins to cry. When the ogres asked what the problem was, Hasigufu said he was thirsty but only drank water from the lake. Simbi’s husband suggests that he takes Hasigufu to the lake to drink water (and then abandon him there)
but Hasigufu insists the water must be carried to him in a basket. As the ogres go for the water, Hasigufu helps the girls to escape and run back home.

The tale apparently suggests a positive message to society about hunchback Hasigufu; never to despise another person just because of his/her disability condition for he/she can be useful. This is however beside the point. Simbi should have felt at ease having her blood brother accompanying her to her husband’s home. Instead, she greatly opposes it for she sees Hasigufu as an embarrassment. This seems to be the popular view among all in the world of the tale. Everybody dissuaded Hasigufu from accompanying the girls. No doubt the the girls are saved from the precarious danger of the ogres, but this does not appear to be done solely by Hasigufu’s effort. In many Samia folktales, many victims both male and female are eaten up by ogres. It is therefore inconceivable how the ogres could have failed to eat up the girls in this particular tale just for the fear of Hasigufu. It would appear therefore that the girls are saved not solely by Hasigufu, but by divine intervention. What the tale however consistently insinuates is the image of hunchback as a useless and embarrassing creature to society; one that even ogres would hesitate to eat up, just like maggots would hesitate to eat up Kyeyune in Ruganda (1987:54).

In yet another tale, (tale 5) hunchback Sakoma remains unmarried despite her beauty and sweet voice. She works with her herbalist father to cure various illnesses. One day Sakoma and her father find a young man half dead in the bush. Sakoma treats and cares for him. Later the two develop a love relationship. The Youngman feels sorry and pity for Sakoma’s deformed back and endeavours to have her cured. He undergoes a lot of trouble, but later a medicine man manages to cure Sakoma of the hunchback and they finally get married.

Like in tale 7 discussed above, hunchback Sakoma in tale 5 has a positive attribute. She saves the life of the young man. However, the continued use of images of the hunchback being embarrassing in society is obvious. The young man, though truly loves Sokoma, can not marry her until her embarrassing physical deformity is cured. He therefore allows himself to under go a lot of burden, expense and inconvenience because of the fear of social ridicule against marrying an “out cast.”
The pity and sympathy the young man feels for Sakoma highlights the general negative attitude by society towards this disability. Even in every day life today, many people still hold it that the hunchback is an embarrassing figure whom one (a non disabled) cannot publicly associate with. In the interview with Anjellena Nanjala a hunchback, she revealed that she had lived all her life as a single mother. She informed the researcher that after a man had made her pregnant during her teenage years; he rejected her and publicly denied having any affair with a “Soko-mtu” (sub human!)

In many other folktales hunchbacks are portrayed as evil people in society. In late 10, Kudende the giant ogre has eaten up many people including an old, hunchbacked witch. A brave and courageous young man, Nasitandu, manages to kill the ogre and all the people the ogre has eaten up are retrieved from it little finger. The old woman is not willing to leave behind her apparatus of witchcraft, yet she is also afraid of people discovering that she is a witch. Held up in this dilemma, the old woman fails to come out before the ogre finally dies.

Whichcraft among the Samia was a great crime and when proved that one practiced it, he/she was usually was banished from the village. By creating the hunchback in this tale as a witch, society propagates innuendoes of hunchbacks being social out casts and evil doers. In an interview with Nanjala Anjellena 61 years, a hunchback from Bumunji village, Buhehe sub-county, she revealed that many young women hide away their children whenever she happens to be around. The young women allege that hunchback Anjellena casts evil spells to their children which make them sick. This situation among the Samia is referred to as “Okhubba ebikhokho”.

A number of proverbs use images which portray a hunch back as a criminal, making the disability appear a social taboo and as if it were a result of one’s wish. In other words, the images use grim humour to ridicule the victims and also suggest that the disabled are an inconvenience to the rest of the members of society. Proverb 16 below for example suggests that all possible means should be employed to remove such conditions from society.

16 Oli woluyali, ngomulesi wesigufu

You are as honoured as one who cures a hunchback.
The word “Oluyaali” in Samia means honour. Traditionally, it is believed that many illnesses and conditions including madness, barrenness and impotence can be cured. For one to be greatly honoured particularly because she/he can cure hunchback, signifies the urgency of the scheme. Being a hunchback must therefore be a greatly deplorable condition in this society. Whoever can rid society of this condition therefore is a hero who deserves great honour.

Proverb 17 below also shows the disgust society has towards the hunchback.

17. Ow’okutumba, yehonya yengene.

One with a hump helps himself/herself.

The general meaning of this proverb is that a hunchback does not share many things with others. The reason for this is that if you lend him/her your clothes, the hump on his back will tear or damage them. If you share a bed, he/she will occupy the bigger part of it and thus inconvenience you.

The tone in the proverb is sarcastic and mocking. First the word “Ow’okutumba” denotes an exaggerated size of the hump. The ordinary word for hump is “etumba”. The prefix “oku” alludes to size, very big. This is in contrast to “hasigufu” explained above.

One contrast to note here is that when it is the identity of a hunchback being referred to, society adopts the more demeaning “ha” prefix that denoted him/her as a midget; a very small, minute creature, perhaps unnoticeable. On the other hand, when reference is made about the deformity, the hump (okutumba) is magnified as if it were bigger than the person him/her self. All these highlight society’s insensitivity and stereotypical perception of the hunchback.

Inconvenience by the hunchback is further expressed in the following proverbs.

18. Oli mudinyu ng’omusigufu yeyalisa khuhasero.

You are as unfortunate as a hunchback sleeping on a small skin.

19. Okutumba kuli khuwasho sikukhukayira okhukona endoolo

A hump on your friend does not deter you from enjoying your sleep.

Proverb 18 expresses sarcastic sympathy that alienates the hunchback who tries to sleep on a small skin where his hump can not fit, while 19 propagates an “I-don’t-care” attitude towards such people in society. Society seems to be encouraged not to worry about the problems (the hump) of another person. The tone is that of giving instructions to the societal members to be oblivious and not deny them selves the comfort of rest and sleep (Ohukona endoolo) simply
because of a hunchback in their neighbourhood.

### 2.5 Sight Impairments

Among the Samia, like in any other society, sight impairment is very common. Often in ordinary conversation, a proverb featuring this subject is used to make a general observation about life even if not necessary about visual impairment. Proverbs 20 below serves as an example.

20. Omuwofu akula egalubindi sibamwalabira, yesi bamulanga ow’emoni chine.

> A blind one who buys spectacles deserves on rebuke; he will also be referred to as a four eyed.

No doubt spectacles (*galubindi*) may not serve a visual purpose to the blind. However these may be useful in one way or another. The proverb is usually used to emphasize that there is usually value in anything even if this value does not appear obvious. The proverb however raises more humour than sympathy.

The social situation among the Samia is that one who wears spectacles is perceived as an intelligent and highly honoured person in society. It results from the old custom of the diviners “*abakesi*” (the clever ones) drawing chalk circles around their eyes to announce to society that they could “see” what the ordinary people could not. Because of this extra ordinary power in telling events, a diviner was generally referred to as “*Owemoni chine*” (the four eyed). Among the young, boys find it is fashionable to wear spectacles or any thing similar, such that they could be referred to as the “four-eyed”.

The image used in the proverb however ridicules, mocks and stereotypes the blind. A blind man who wears spectacles so as to be referred to as “the four-eyed” mocks himself. This is because one is simply hiding his deformity. The fact that the blind should hide his visual impairment and live in fantasy of being regarded one with good vision, highlights the bad taste of humour society uses to stereotype the blind.

The following proverbs have a similar effect.


> A blind man’s cow grazes while tied on a rope.

22. Emoni yowasyo haba siyihubonera.

> Another person’s eye can not see on your behalf.
Both proverbs express what would appear to be general truths about life. Proverb 21 reminds the listener that while a blind man’s cow is grazing, he needs to hold the rope on which it is tied because if let go, he may not be able to trace it. Proverb 22 expresses a biological truth that another person’s eye serves only that person with the visual purpose. At this literal interpretation, the proverbs have no problem with the visually impaired individual. The problem however comes when these proverbs are interpreted in relation to the socio-cultural context of the Samia. A man’s wealth among the Samia was viewed in terms of the numbers of wives, children, granaries and domestic animals one had. The expression “Ey’omuwofu…” in proverb 21 would literally translate as “the blind’s only/lone…” since the prefix “eyo” in Samia implies one. Further the word cow used in the English translation is not stated in the Samia text although the expression “yayira khumukoye” (grazes while tried on a rope) implies a domesticated animal.

The proverb therefore suggests that a blind man will always possess singular items. In the cultural context of the Samia who view a rich man in terms of numbers of items possessed, a blind man is therefore always a poor man. The stereotypical image of the blind men remaining poor in Samia society is further emphasized by the fact that it must be he himself grazing his only animal. He has neither wife nor children to assist.

Placed in the context of the “four eyed men” discussed in proverb 20, proverbs 22 is a rude dismissal of the blind as useless human beings in society. Sometimes a diviner, referred to as a” four-eyed man” discussed above, was blind. In this case he would employ the services of a young boy as his acolyte. The boy would “see” on his behalf and tell him the positioning of the cowry shells. Basing on what the boy sees, the diviner would then foretell the events as if he had seen the cowry shell positions himself. In proverb 22 however, this fact is ignored and emphatically stressed that one’s eye never sees on another’s behalf.

The image of the blind being relegated to the foot of the social hierarchy is further evident in proverb 23.

23. Owemoni ndala Mubawofu, nomwami.

A one-eyed person among the blind is King.

As in 22 above, society believes sight to be special and necessary to the blind, even if it comes in the form of being able to use only one eye. A totally blind person therefore is useless. It is for
this reason that one who at least can use one eye will be respected honoured, glorified and worshipped by those who are totally blind. He will be respected and honoured because he may be King (one meaning of Omwimi) but he will also be glorified and worshipped, considering the other meaning of the word “Omami” as Lord.

The foregoing discussion shows that the totally blind are relegated to the social dustbin. Proverbs 24, 25 and 26 carry innuendoes of helplessness and inability of the blind, and a view that the non blind can only interact with the blind when there is no choice.

24. Odehya esyemoni ndala, otafire obusumba
   Better you marry a one–eyed woman, than die a bachelor.
25. Olimalima, ngomuwofu.
   You move groping, like a blind.
26. Omuwofu natangisa omuwofu washye, bombi bakwa mulina
   If a blind leads another, both fall in to a hole.

The lexical component in proverb 24 greatly stereotypes the blind. The expression “esyemoni ndala” is both abusive and dehumanising. The prefix “esye” is used in ordinary conversation to refer to inanimate pronouns. When one says esikombe “esye chai” means “a cup tea”. The ordinary prefix relating to a human being is “owe”. Adopting the prefix “esye” in the proverb therefore dehumanises the blind. Further the expression “…otafire obusumba” (…than die a bachelor) suggests that one, who has failed to get a marriage partner, must wait until he is sure of two things: that he has completely failed to get one and is about to die that he should then marry the one-eyed woman. The proverb therefore highlights the general plight of both the bachelor and the blind as social rejects that compete with one another in the social dustbin.

Proverbs 25 and 26 carry the same image of the blind being unable and helpless. “Okhulimalima” connotes staggering, moving in circles and walking unsteadily. Stating that whoever is in this condition is like a blind man / woman greatly discomforts the blind.

Proverb 26 expresses an ultimate fact: no blind person can successfully lead another. It however may not be necessary to remind society of this obvious fact. Important to point out here however is the fact that the proverb is a brain child of a society that greatly disregards the blind and propagates complacency among the non blind to insinuate that the blind should lead themselves.
Honesty and scrupulousness are virtues usually applauded in Samia society, and the members are always encouraged to adopt them. Unfortunately, some proverbs seem to cheer up those who are not honest when dealing with the blind. Proverbs 27 and 28 are examples.

27. Ohomere, ngalya nomuwofu.
    *You have fattened, like the one who shares a meal with a blind.*
28. Alya no’muwofu,yelobosa
    *Whoever shares a dish with a blind person, chooses the better part of the dish.*

Proverb 27 mentions one physical feature (growing fat) usually appreciated by the Samia as a sign of good feeding and good care. Proverb 28 reads like a continuation of 27, giving reason that one who shares a dish with a blind person grows fat because he/she chooses the better part of the dish. All this is done at the expense of the blind one. The blind partners in the meal deal in both proverbs are unfairly treated and out rightly cheated. This view is suggested by the word “yelobosa” in proverbs 28, which suggests choosing out the best after a thorough consideration of all the choices available. In none of the two proverbs however do we find any overtones of remorsefulness for the injustice done to the blind highlighted.

The humour derived out of the two proverbs is in bad taste. It greatly discomforts the blind and portrays them as “inferior” partners in matters where they ought to be treated as equals.

Folktales highlight similar images about the blind as the proverbs. In many of them, the blind person is portrayed as a cowardly dependant who can only survive by the mercy of the non-blind. Often they are abused and insulted and depicted as fools.

In folktale 14, a woman who takes long to have a child seeks the services of a medicine man. She is given the medicine and told to bathe in a river 2 times every day for four days if she wants to bear a baby boy. She however bathes for three and half days, as she goes on a journey and fails to return on the fourth day.

She is then left in dilemma on what type of child she would bear: boy or girl. She manages to give birth to a baby boy. Unfortunately he is blind. He is named Chirimberi. After a very long period of time, the woman fails to conceive another child and the husband’s patience runs out. He marries a second wife and the prevailing circumstance force Chirimberi’s mother to leave that home. The new wife bears a baby boy. The two boys grow up together although Chirimberi is greatly mistreated by the step mother. Every morning he is told to go the garden and keep
away birds from eating the sorghum. While there, he keeps singing in a sweet voice, enumerating his suffering. One day _ehunjwe_ (type of bird) comes and takes him away to a place where he lives happily there after. The tale has a melodious song in which Chirimberi enumerates his suffering and is greatly loved by Children in Samia society. It is a song of hope for the mistreated child especially if the suffering is a result of the jealousy of a step mother.

Interrogated further however, the tale reveals the society’s implicit dread of the blind. It is significant to note that the mother did not complete the prescribed dose of the medicine. She should have bathed eight times (twice every day) but she did it only seven times. Among the Samia a man (or boy) is associated with the figure four while a woman (or girl), three. A boy is named after four days from birth, the mother begins to make him sit after four months and when he dies, funeral rites involving shaving off the hair and bathing in a stream are done after four days. The implied message in the tale could therefore be that Chirimberi had not been fully developed into a man, due to the under dose of the medicine. He is therefore below a “normal” human being.

In tale 2 Odyang the blind son of Kuda is called a fool by the mother when he reports that his uncle had come and was hiding at the eaves. The reason for this insult was because he was blind. The problem of stereotyping the blind as indeed all the other disabilities appears common in many Samia folktales. In no folktale do we find a blind successfully prospering to the level of a wealth individual. Instead, the recurring image is that of poor and suffering individuals, who survive out of others charity as portrayed in tale 14 discussed above.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the recurring images of the physically impaired in the folktales and proverbs of the Samia. We have highlighted that the stereotypical perception of the physically impaired persons is in built within the wider socio-cultural operations of the society. Children begin in their early stages of life to develop lasting attitudes about the disabled, and their consequent interactions are dependent on these attitudes. We also observe that the transmission act of these prejudicial notions and attitudes against the disabled may not be deliberate, but it is obviously steady and continuous.
End notes

1. Many proverbs in Samia use the verb “Odeeba” to show that a repetitive action always leads to some mishap. An example is “Odeeba, yosula engoma” (Constant hitting of the drum eventually makes the drum to burst).

2. Specific Social functions among the Samia attract specific fish types. For example when a group of people assists a man to build a house, they should be served with a meal with mud fish as sauce.

3. See John Ruganda (1978) The Floods. In the play a pompous and patronizing character Bwogo, feels Kyeyune, an elderly and demeaned character would be rejected by maggots when he died P.54.

CHAPTER THREE

SENSORY AND OTHER DISABILITIES

3.1 Introduction
In this chapter, we analyse the perceptions of selected proverbs and folktales that feature sensory disabilities such as deafness and dumbness. Some other special forms of disability: barrenness and impotence, and mental impairments are also discussed in the chapter. While these may necessarily not be impairments afflicting the sensory organs as dumbness and deafness do, they are discussed under this section because they are not physically identifiable. Unless one interacts with the victim, he/she cannot identify the impairment.

The plight of one having a sensory impairment in society has for long been existent. Such a person usually receives societal abuses and alienation, ranging from the pejorative nouns and adjectives used to describe him/her such as “omudimbe” cited in chapter one, to physical seclusion from the rest of the other members in society.

Bernes (2008:7) discussing the social exclusion of the sensory impaired victims observed that

………certainly ever since the ancient world of Greece and Rome disparate sections of the disabled population have found themselves thrown together whether through choice or otherwise. …this process of exclusion was fundamental to the development of the deaf culture.

This seclusion is evident till today. Many deaf children and those merely perceived by society as being deaf or mentally impaired are convicted to separate and unique schools. This works to make such people acquire their unique disability cultures, usually manifested in self withdrawal from the other members of society.

3.2 Deafness and Dumbness
The two are identifiably different conditions of disability; the former being the inability to hear while the latter is a condition of speech impairment.
Among the Samia however, the two are construed as the same condition, referred to as
“Obudimbe”, while the victim is called “Omudimbe”. In the oral literature of the Samia people (especially the folktales and proverbs) it does not feature the difference of the dumb and the deaf. It is for this reason that the two are herein discussed together.

1: Esyekala amatwi, sisiba noluyali

*That, which is deaf, has no honour.*

Just as the images featured in the proverbs on physical disability, the images on deafness and dumbness in the Samia proverbs are glaringly stigmatizing. They thus serve as premise for the view that Samia proverbs promote disability unfriendly attitudes. Proverb 1 above is an outright insult and reminder to the victim that he cannot fit in the category of those to be honoured.

Honour among the Samia is accorded to one depending on the societal perception of him/her. Often the wealthy individuals (Abenengo), chiefs (Abami) and those who perform distinguished duties such as diviners (Abakeesi) are given great honour. Others like bachelors (Abasumba) and the barren (Abakumba) among others are never honoured. Proverb 1 suggests therefore that the deaf belong to the latter group.

2. Nandawulira, kalikuhira emakombe.

*The deaf one will have his/her ears open while in the grave.*

3. Nandawulia, yacha nako ebukhwe.

*The deaf one carried it (faeces) to his in-laws.*

Proverbs 2 and 3 are simple statements of caution meant to urge the listener to always heed the advice given if one is to live happily and avoid embarrassments in life. In Samia Language, hearing and heeding advice are both referred to as “Ohuwulira” which is commonly translated as hearing. Often in conversations, one who does not heed advice will be referred to as Omudimbe. Proverbs which feature any of these two conditions therefore appear ambiguous in meaning unless the context of their usage is clear. In the discussion in this chapter, both the inabilities to hear and to heed advice are regarded as a condition of deafness. This is because whether used to mean hearing or heeding advice, Ohuwulira is always interpreted at the metaphorical level to mean either of the two.

Proverb 2 suggests a permanent condition of the disability till one dies and goes to the grave. The event of ears opening up while in the grave is useless and irrelevant, for ears whether used for hearing or heeding advice, are only useful to the living and not the dead. The tone in the
proverb is that of mockery of the deaf with an ironic hope that their disability will end when they die.

Proverb 3 may have no irony intended, but the unfortunate image of the great embarrassment is destructive to the self esteem of the victim. The context of the proverb is that the character had always been advised never to branch and make a long call while on his way to the in-laws. He however did not take heed. On this particular occasion, he branches and makes a long call. Unfortunately his trousers get into contact with the faeces and the victim only discovers this while at his in-laws place. The embarrassment and shame that result are overwhelming. Among the Samia one group of relatives highly respected are the in-laws. One will strive endlessly to please them and never cause embarrassment to himself. The character in the proverb does not only embarrass himself but also his in-laws by appearing irresponsible. The implicit message therefore is that the deaf will always cause embarrassments and shame to both themselves and the non deaf.

Some other proverbs reveal a state of callousness and unfeeling attitude that society has towards the dumb as in proverb 4.

4. Onyakhana ng’akhuya omudimbe alire.

*You waste time, like one who beats a dumb expecting him to cry.*

Beating somebody whether dumb or not will definitely inflict pain on the victim, whether one cries out or not. If the sole purpose for beating a dumb is to make him/her shout out as per the literal meaning of the proverb, then true, the one beating him/her is wasting time. This is because the dumb cannot shout and the intended outcome shall therefore not be realised. The social function of this proverb however, does not stop at this. *Okhukhuya* may be translated in English as either beating or caning. When employed as a disciplinary measure, as is often the case, *Okhukhuya* is accompanied by *Okhulira* (cry). Commonly one hears a parent threaten a child that it will cry to mean that he/she will be disciplined by caning. In this context, the proverb serves to remind society that one needs not to waste time disciplining, correcting (or even advising) a dumb. In relation to proverb 3 discussed above, proverb 4 serves to highlight society’s stereotypical perception of the dumb as those who
do not deserve intimate interaction with non-disabled. Such interaction could be guiding and counselling.

5. Ekofulo, nomusirikari mudimbe

A padlock is dumb watchman

The proverb makes an innocent comparison, personifying a padlock as a dumb watchman. True a padlock cannot speak just as a dumb watchman, and the duty of both is to keep safe the premises by restricting entry. However, a padlock is an object as opposed to a watchman, who is a living being. A watchman (*Omusikari*), whether he speaks or not still restricts entry and supposedly deters those intending to do evil in the premises. He therefore does need to be dumb to do this. This proverb seems to be the brainchild of a society that views the disabled (in this case the dumb) in an object form just like a padlock.

This far, it is agreeable that folktales and proverbs serve to illustrate the implied social law in any society. They unconsciously help to maintain and develop vital and virtuous aspects of human character and as well castigate those that are undesired. One virtuous aspect that requires development for one to be a reliable member of society is self-esteem. Whether disabled or not, a high self-esteem is necessary. It is however damaging for negative images of disability to keep re-occurring in the day to day language of interaction. The consequent effect of this is that one’s self-esteem may be affected as inferred from the following folktales.

In tale 9, Sityo the dumb falls prey to the manipulations of the unscrupulous society in which he lives. Famine occurs and the people begin to starve. Because the king cares for his people, he tries all possible ways to avert the situation. Diviners decide that the gods must be treated to feast. One hurdle however is, who is to deliver the items to the gods at the sacred grove. A dumb called Sityo is tricked by the king into “volunteering”. Thereafter, he is killed as he must not live to mix up with others for fear of leaking out the myths of the society.

Like many other folktales, tale 9 has a moral that it teaches: the dangers of one being impetuous. It shows that one should never rush into doing something until he/she is sure of its implications. Sityo raises his hand out of impulse but not reason, and therefore he has to pay for it by death. But this is not all. There was no need of killing Sityo, for being dumb, he would not have leaked out the myths of this society as feared. Further, the king fixes his gaze at Sityo and no body else
in the crowd. The two events in the tale portray the stereotypical thinking that Sityo, as any other
dumb, is useless and where need arises for a human sacrifice, she should suffice. Sityo’s raising
up his hand may not have exclusively been due to the external factor of the king looking at him.
Rather, it should be seen as a result of his inbuilt desire to be part of the rest of society, only
facilitated by the king’s gaze. This is a problem of the low self esteem, just as the blind who buys
spectacles yearning to be called a “four-eyed” discussed in chapter two.
This negative image of the dumb in this tale may have permanent effects implanted in the sub-
conscious of its “consumer”. Perhaps, it is for this negative presentation of such disability, that
the Samia never imagined that one can be dumb without necessarily being deaf. Hence they
never saw the need to have different words for the two conditions of disability.

Chirimberi’s attitude towards her deaf son in tale 12 defeats the normal order of motherly love.
The Samia are a patriarchal society and mothering a baby, more so a boy, should naturally give
the mother pleasure. This is however not the case with Chirimberi; reason being that the son is
deaf.

In the tale, Chirimberi’s cold and shocking treatment of her deaf son is not a result of her
spontaneously individual disappointment with bearing a deaf son. Rather, it is a result of an
overflow of the social attitudes and prejudices recollected from her subconscious about the
condition of deafness in her society. Chirimberi has a similar problem with the mother of the girl
whose vaginal canal is blocked (discussed in chapter two). She is part of the socio-cultural
system that considers a dumb as a calamity.

The Samia believe in the existence of ghosts (as pointed out in the background), although they
also agree that these can be exorcized. Special rites involving incantations by specific diviners
(wandaba) are performed during the exorcism. They however believe that the ghost of a dumb is
very hard to deal with, because it will not be softened by the incantations since it can neither hear
nor speak back.¹ This situation among the Samia has brought about an implicit dread of a living
dumb and even his ghost when he dies. Chirimberi’s mother cannot therefore show any affection
to her son simply because her dread of the condition of deafness lurks in her sub consciousness.
This is what Mushegyezi (1999:37) views as the unconsciousness greatly affecting human
behavior, interests and attitudes as expounded by Sigmund Freud in his psychoanalysis.
These tales and proverbs are authored by society. We are therefore able to observe the authorial unconscious psychic intrusions in them as a premise for our understanding of why people do what they do, and think what they think. What the created characters in these tales do or do not do highlights the society’s ideological orientation, as propounded by Sigmund Freud in Wright (1991:464) and also quoted by Mushengyezi (1999:39). Freud put it:

*When I set myself the task of bringing to light what human beings keep hidden within them...I thought the task was a harder one than it really is. He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If the lips are silent, he chatters with his finger tips; betrayal oozes out of him from every pore. And thus the task of making conscious the most hidden recesses of the mind is one which is quite possible to accomplish.*

Further the listeners to these tales will respond to them by first assimilating what they contain into their own psychological processes which are of course shaped by the attitudes of society in which they live.

### 3.3 Special forms of disability

Degener (1995:13) observes that what is regarded as a disability depends to a great extent on societal and the cultural perceptions of what is the “normal” in that society. The person regarded as normal therefore has the right to feel superior while those regarded as disabled have to bear the social tag of the “others” or the “different”. In many societies, Samia inclusive, the barren women and impotent men are the “others”, or the “different” because they do not conform to the society’s measure of normal women and men. “Normal” women and men bear children. For the barren women and impotent men, their condition in society is seen as unusual and therefore often receives similar ridicule as the crippled, the deaf and the dumb discussed above. It is for this reason that the two conditions are considered disabilities in this study.

#### 3.3.1 Barrenness

Kwamusi (1996:59) notes that among the Samia, the barren woman, the impotent man as well as the bachelor were at the foot of the social hierarchical structure of recognition. Usually, these were dismissed as worthless non starters in society. Any of these conditions attracted a lot of stigma, and rigorous cultural rites were performed to cure or correct the situation. Specifically for the barren women, the “cure” often involved taking a bath with prescribed medicine at road
junctions and sometimes having sex with the medicine man. Even when dead, similar rites were
performed to cleanse the family of the curse of a man or woman who died childless or
unmarried. Such included opening a rear exit on the house, through which the dead body had to
be carried as they headed for its burial. For a girl above the age of 15, her body was buried outside
the compound and the funeral rites involved a mock marriage for her.

Where a couple failed to have a child, in the traditional Samia society, the woman was usually
seen as being at fault and therefore lived a tormented life. This usually made such a woman carry
out desperate operations in the “treatment” of her condition, some which were both demeaning
and dehumanizing. All these were done for her to escape the social torment and ridicule in
addition to the desire to have a child.

Many Samia proverbs are blunt in their ridicule of the barren women. Some are directly abusive
and accuse her of only eating and defecating such as proverb 6.

6: Okhwibula, khuhira ohunia

*Producing a child is better than defecating.*

7: Adehya omukumba, yepiima amani kayaba echo.

*One who marries a barren woman, must be sure of his strength to dig up pit latrines*

Proverb 6 makes an unfortunate comparison: bearing a child to defecating. This insinuates that
for the barren woman her children are the faeces she passes out. Proverb 7 goes further to warn
men about marrying such women because they eat a lot and fill up pit latrines faster and
therefore one must have physical strength to continuously dig up new pit latrines. Both proverbs
insensitively make fun of the barren woman and suggest that she is guilty.

“Okhunia” or defecating is idiomatically used among the Samia to mean “commit” or “guilty of”
When one says “Okhunia Omusango” he/she idiomatically means committing a crime.3 The
image of defecating used in these proverbs therefore highlight society’s sentence against the
barren woman; she is guilty of a crime. Proverb 7 suggests that the crime is grave. Though not
stated, the proverb implies that the barren woman eats a lot and therefore defects more. The
expression “Okhunia yibasieria “(defecating at the grinding place) is common in Samia
conversations to idiomatically suggest committing a major crime. It results from the common
practice of grinding cassava mixed with sorghum into flour. It is from this flour that *obusuma,*
the staple food is made. He, who therefore defecates at such a vital area and consequently halts this necessary process, commits a serious crime and must be castigated. Proverb 7 combines images of eating and defecating just as the expression “Okhunia yibashiera” does. This accuses the barren woman of having committed a major crime and thus must be castigated, like the one who defecates at the grinding place to make others miss a meal. The barren woman denies all the joy of carrying a baby.

Other proverbs insult the barren woman from a male centric perspective showing that she has failed all her duties as a good wife: bearing children and working on her husband’s gardens.

8. Mudambo kw’omukhasi, kukera wadehya omukumba mukata.

Failing to get a wife, leads one into marrying a lazy and barren one.

The wording of the proverb “mudambo kw’omukhasi…” (failing to get a wife…) suggests that a wife is only one who can pass the two tests: bear children and not be lazy. Even with these two tests however, it would appear that child bearing is more preferable because it leads the woman into passing the second test, not being lazy. This is as shown in the following proverbs.

9. Ayebula, saba mukata

A woman who bears children will never be lazy (for she will be forced to work hard and feed her children).

10. Omukumba syabwa lukhaana

A barren woman always remains girlish.

Proverb 10 suggests that the barren woman does not age, so she will remain young. However, the use of the adjective olukhaana (girlish) suggests an accusation of the barren woman being inept and full of mischief. Girls, as indeed all women in Samia culture are regarded to be mentally weak and inept in what they do. It is for this reason that they are usually excluded from “men’s actions which require a high mental aptitude and soberness, such as discussing bride price. It is however worse for the barren woman, for she does not mature. Girls are also known to be sly especially during their adolescence. By suggesting that the barren woman is always girlish, the proverb attacks the barren woman’s moral character. This is reinforced by the reference to her breasts remaining “standing” (proverb 11), her continued desire to attend village dances (proverb 12) and her inability to sustain a marriage (proverbs 13).
11. Yadonga dungerere, ng’embere chomukumba

_It has remained upright, like the breast of a barren woman._

12. Omukumba, siyakama huyoora

_A barren woman never stops attending village dances._

13. Omukumba n’ewungu alilyoyera niyo yilikabukha

_A barren woman is a hawk; it lands wherever it feels excited to._

Society uses these and may more proverbs to strengthen stereotypical nations about the barren woman. The barren woman is therefore a victim of social ridicule and contempt, and her position in society is precarious. The metaphor in proverb 13 is greatly damaging. “Ewungu” (hawk) to which the barren woman is likened is a preying bird, always causing misery and suffering to the hens. If she is a hawk, then the barren woman is equally dangerous to the children of others just as the hawk is to the “children of hens”.

Women who have joined the club of motherhood often taunt the barren with debilitating abuses. Alice Agola 49years, of Siduhumi village in Masafu Sub-county revealed such an abuse. She reported that when one time she referred to the child of her co-wife as “my son”, the mother of the boy shut her off remarking that her son was not a dog, after all the breasts of Agola would only be suckled by a puppy!

Some proverbs use images that suggest that the barren woman is always unfeeling, callous and rude to other people. Proverb 14 serves as an example.

14. Mboko yomwana, yikuda niyihomba

_A buffalo with a calf, nocks as it licks_

A buffalo is believed among the Samia to be a very fierce animal, but one with cub is said to be worse. It will gore to death anybody who dares it. It is for this reason that many Samia men and boys refer to one another as “emboko”. By this, they intend to show that they are bold and fierce like a buffalo. It is however also believed that a mother buffalo becomes very kind to its young one to the extent that as it knocks, it also licks the cub. Licking, especially of animals, is a sign of affection, love, care and feeling. A barren woman, the proverb suggests, will lack these traits. She will therefore never be gentle or loving to others as mother buffalo is to its young one.

Many other proverbs insensitively make fun of the condition of barrenness to the extent that the
victim will feel ridiculed as if she made a deliberate choice to be barren.

15. Nambula mwana, atuma ettango

*She who does not have a child, sends her thigh.*

16. Enjibula mbi, yikhira obukumba

*The mother of ugly children is better than a barren woman.*

17. Ayebula omulema, saba mukumba

*She who begets a lame child, is not considered barren.*

18. Ayebula omuderwa, yewonina obukumba.

*She who begets an only child, saves herself from barrenness.*


*Be fast, just as a barren woman burying a co-wife’s child.*

The above proverbs and many others remind the barren women of many issues. Proverbs 15 reminds her that she has to pay for her childlessness by doing all domestic chores herself, while proverbs 16, 17 and 18 remind her that she cannot laugh at any mother whether of ugly or lame children since she is worse off. Proverb 19 suggests that the barren woman will always be jealously and evil and will therefore hurry to bury off a co-wife’s child such that both can remain childless.

When looked at deeply, these proverbs say more about the barren woman. The word “ettango” adopted in proverb 15 is erotic and has lewd connotations. Indeed its usage in day to day conversation is restricted as is considered obscene. On the other hand “attuma” (sends) suggests a willingness to do something. The woman sending her high therefore suggest that she uses her thighs to overcome a personal need. This is a euphemism for prostitution.

The discussion on lameness in chapter two revealed that the lame are derided in society. *Enjibula mbi,* though translated in proverb 16 the mother of ugly children, is often used to refer to a woman who over spaces her children. Such a woman is sometimes ridiculed for not working hard enough to expand her husbands’ clan. Proverbs 16 and 17 remind the barren woman that both situations (lameness and over spacing) would be preferable to being barren. The result of this is that the barren woman is regarded useless.

In a society where the motherhood is more valued than basic humanity as the Samia people do, a barren woman therefore has no place of honour as stated in proverb 20.
20. Atebula, hasiyeta luhaye mudaala.

A barren woman never commands respect in a home.

A barren woman will therefore always long to have a child even if it were a still birth as implied in the following proverbs.

21. Ayebula esituulucho, haba sibamutusira mukutu

She who had a still birth does not leave the house for burial through the back door (As is the custom during burial of the barren)

22. Esituulucho, syosi basisikha muloba.

Even a still birth, is buried in the ground.

Because of the precariousness of the position of the barren woman in Samia society as suggested by the above stereotypical notions, such women will always do anything possible to try and salvage their image.

Many folktales on the subject of barrenness highlight some of these trials. In many of them, the barren woman undergoes great misery and suffering. In folktale 6, the woman, Adongo has her happy marriage ruined because of being barren. She has therefore to invite and permanently stay with her twin sister Apio, as co wife.

In tale 1, the barren woman undergoes a lot of misery and suffering in trying to gain status in that society. She alone visits many diviners as if she was sure she was the problem. When she is finally given the “cure”, it is tag of war; cutting off bark pieces of muvule tree near the leaves. Muvule trees usually grow very tall and getting off these pieces at the said point, must have been no easy task. She manages all the same. When in an outburst of anger she annoys the “her children”, they torment the woman by reminding her that she is “less” a woman, as they go back to the muvule. The woman’s future life is that of doom, misery and unhappiness since she cannot bear children of her own, after all outbursts of anger by a mother to her child for failing to carry out instructions should be a normal occurrence.

In all, society seems to view barrenness not simply as an unfortunate circumstances but a curse. It is for this reason that Kiyimba (2008:22) observes that “the proverbs in this society (Baganda)
lend authority to the stereotypical notions and stigma towards the barren”. The situation appears similar in the Samia society. It is this situation that provides the motivation and determination to the victims for all the hard tasks that they engage in to try and save their situation.

### 3.3.2 Impotence

While barrenness is” curse” impotence is a “crime”, Kiyimba (2008:21). Every man is under societal obligation to fully sustain an erection and also father children. Short of this, one commits a social offence tantamount to a legal crime. Society therefore, has neither tolerance nor kind words for such an offender as can be seen from the selection of proverbs on this subject.

23. Nashiekeranie, ng’omuchiri akeka.  
*You shamelessly copy what others do, like an impotent man marrying.*

An impotent man is called “*omuchiri*” in samia. The word “*muchiri*” has the morpheme “*chi*” which is onomatopoeic denoting quietness, silence or cold. This is in relation to his inability to “heat up” and erect. The proverb out rightly communicates the society’s stand on this “offender”, who copies yet cannot accomplish what others do. Similar notions of torment and ridicule of an impotent are carried in the following proverbs.

24. Atebula, hasalula  
*He who does not have a child can never be fierce.*

25. Syachiima, ng’ekunda ly’omuchiri  
*It is as quiet as the old homestead of an impotent man.*

Proverb 24 dismisses the impotent man and any other, who may have no children of his own as never to be considered fierce. As noted above, Samia young men aspire to be called fierce by continuously referring to themselves as “emboko”. This desire is permanently lurking in their sub-conscious. Society however seems to challenge every man to fulfill this by bearing children. It is only he, who begets children who graduates to being regarded fierce. The proverb however does not stop at tormenting the living impotent, rather even the dead.

The verb “*okhulula*” translates into English as becoming bitter or sour. In relation to ghosts, a ghost becomes “bitter” in Samia culture, by bothering the living. It is at this time that an exorcism will be required. From this interpretation, the proverb, “Atebula, hasalula” can also be translated as “he who dies childless, does not bother the living”. The proverb “torments” the dead impotent man for he has died “completely” and therefore his ghost cannot bother those who are
still living. He must remain as quiet as his old homestead in proverb 24. This deviates from the common belief in many African traditions Samia inclusive, of life after death. It would appear therefore like there is only life after death to one who bore and left children before his death. This is the same message carried in proverb 26.

26. Esihyeeno silonda omwikho

A dead man’s spirit only bothers those of his own lineage.

The proverb expresses a general thinking among the Samia. Cultural rituals and funeral rites of the dead are performed usually by close relatives only. Who performs which ritual usually differs, but in many cases children (especially sons) in that home usually take centre stage. For the rites of a dead man, his children must never sleep inside their houses for all the nights their father’s body remains unburied. After burial, they must go to bathe in a stream and must shave clean their heads. Close relatives presents may share in these rituals but for the sons, they must. Where the dead man’s sons (especially the eldest), are far away and unable to attend the burial, some of the rituals must be deferred till he comes. All these are done to avoid the ghost bothering them.

Indeed the state of impotence is greatly ridiculed and abhorred in Samia society that both men and women, young and old will always torment the victim. This is despite the fact that the subject is usually referred to with a lot of veiled diction as a way of minimizing public embarrassment of the victim.

So serious is the embarrassment that many impotent men will always want to prove otherwise of their situation. In the interview with Agolla referred to under proverb 13 above, she (Agolla) told the researcher of many men she knew as being impotent but who lived with wives and children pretending that it was they (the impotent men) who had fathered them.

Commonly veiled expressions to mean a state impotence among the Samia include: “Eyakwa nedebe” (one who fell with a tin), “Eyakwa humupapali” (one who fell off from paw-paw tree), “Yikondi ryakuda musikhiriro” (the one knocked down by a sheep at the slope) and “atachaaka” (one who does not start) among many others. This situation is more-or-less similar in other societies especially the Baganda as detailed out in (Kiyimba 2008).

All these expressions suggest injury and defect. Tins are known to have very sharp edges and one who falls as is carrying it is likely to get injured. One who fall off a paw- paw tree on the other hand is likely to harm himself, just as one knocked down by a sheep. On the other hand
failure to start suggests a fault or defect. Society seems to view impotence as both an injury and defect.

Among the Samia, like in many other societies, direct mention of the subject of impotence in public is usually avoided (Kiyimba 2001:216-7). This perhaps accounts for the very few folktales featuring the subject. As for the proverbs, the following are samples.

27. Yemalira ebyaye, ng’ayakwa nedebe yefirire  
_He has finished up all his issues, like the dead impotent man._

28. Enghombe yihusena, ekondi ritakhukudire  
_Better a bull tramples on you, than a sheep knocking you._

In proverb 27, the impotent man is mocked to be happy and resting, after all he has no links with the world of the living since he has left no child. Proverb 28 has the literal meaning which is simple and direct. It would be preferable for a bull to step on you, than a sheep knocking you down. It is important to note that while a bull steps on you (yihusena) the sheep knocks you down (rihukuda). When stepped upon, one may remain standing though injured but when knocked; one goes down, to imply that he is completely beaten. In this context one would rather sustain physical injuries than be impotent (as implied by the metaphorical meaning of being knocked down by a sheep).

29. Bulai bwa khuyu, buli khumukulu ng’enghombe ndade.  
_The beauty of the sycamore fruit lies on the outside, just like the castrated bull._

A castrated bull would be the equivalent of the impotent man. The humour in the proverb derides the good physical appearance of the bull, yet inside (other than the physical), it is useless as it can neither mount nor inseminate a cow.

The scorn that society heaps on an impotent man is overwhelming. The “crime” appears so grave that the victim is depicted as a “non-man” both when alive and when dead.

### 3.3.3 Mental Disabilities

Mental disabilities draw similar images in the oral literature of the Samia just as any other forms of disability discussed above. They are the same images of the ugly and dislikeable victims in society serving retribution for their own folly. For this therefore, they should be shunned as the following proverbs suggest.

30: Aserera omulalu, aba amutanga  
_He who befriends a mad one is doing her/him injustice._
31: Asooda omulalu, niye aba amutangana

*He who plays sex with a mad one is one to blame.*

32: Elalu siricha bihaya

*Madness does not come without reason.*

Madness is a mental illness that attacks one just like any other illness. Proverb 32 however, refutes this, suggesting that for every madness, there is always a reason, presumably external. Society seems to believe that one becomes mad either as retribution or one feigns the illness to enable him/her accomplish a sinister motive nursed for long. This meaning becomes apparent in the common contextual usage of the proverb to imply that the act of madness in question is in reality carefully thought and planned out.

Proverbs 30 and 31 on the other hand, build images of the mad person as an alienated member in society; one with whom nobody should have dealings. The proverbs sound strong warnings to the members of society never to associate with the mad ones, because doing so, offends him/her. It sounds ridiculous here for this society to appear to defend the mentally disabled yet consistently proverbs deride disability as seen above. Proverb 33 however, seems a contradiction to the societal restriction of association.

33: Omulalu, niye eyefafule.

*It’s only the one who has undressed him/herself who is mad.*

The proverb highlights a very familiar ground: sometimes apparent acts of madness are not, as echoed by Imbuga (1976:42)

> “When the madness of an entire nation disturbs a solitary mind, it is not enough to say the man is mad”

True, some times, not all those who appear mad are. The proverb however makes a deliberate exaggeration. Society seems to challenge one prove his madness by undressing in public. The proverb therefore serves to highlight the insensitivity of society to the mentally disabled, challenging then to prove their physically invisible condition of disability.

One other dominant image in the oral literature of the Samia about mental disability is that of a harsh and exploitative society to the victims. This exploitation is however executed with impunity just as the injustice dispensed out on Sityo the dumb discussed above.

34: Ayeobera omulalu enghoma ahine, habasamuhinira.
He, who drums for the mad one to dance, does not help him/her in the dancing.

35: Amakhiina komulalu kasangasa, naye abula eyekomba owaye abe omulalu

A mad man’s dance is entertaining, but none wishes his own to be mad.

Both proverbs above reveal that the “normal” members of society enjoy seeing the antics of mad people. On many occasions, you find a group of “normal” people gathered round or even following a nude mad man or women through the streets of towns. Where such a victim does not throw stones, people will even invite him/her to perform antics before them. The proverbs highlight the plight of the mad in society. Their condition is a serious defect, but the other members of society take advantage of it. There is no need for one to drum for a mad one yet he/she shall not participate in the dance. What is significantly ridiculous in proverb 35 is for society to assume that the dancing of a madman is entertaining.

In folktale 14, the exploitative nature of society is highlighted. Chief Nyanga wants as usual to exploit Obwibi, the mad man by making him do the entire work for him with no pay. Obwibi however manages to avenge his exploitation by carrying away the chief’s clothes. This greatly embarrasses chief Nyanga. The moral lesson passed on to the listener is that one should not bathe at roadsides or public places. Up to this point, the mad man appears victorious. But society does not expect this and therefore can not allow a mad man to have such a positive contribution. His continued laughing depicts him as a fool. Further he is stripped naked to prove it is him in the wrong but not the “sane” chief.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have highlighted concomitant images of disability in relation to sensory organs. We have also discussed societal posturing of special forms of disabilities like barrenness, impotence and mental impairments. In all cases, it is clear that the images are the same as in the other disabilities. Society is harsh and judgmental to the disabled, portraying them as worthless in society. In most cases except on barren women where some proverbs are directly abusive, the folktale or proverb appears to the have a surface value which is positive to the listener. It is this that serves as the bait for one to “shallow” the negative stereotypes of disability therein embedded.
End notes

1. Revealed in the interview with Nanjala Edisa, 52 years, disabled petty trader across the boarder, Nangwe village on 16/06/2009.

2. Revealed in an interview with Dulukasi Wandera, 60 years, peasant, Mawero village, Buteba sub county, Busia District.

3. Otten you hear a father lament that “omwana aniere omusango” to mean that his son has committed a crime such defilement.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction
The study set out to investigate how Samia oral literature portrays disability and the society’s general attitude towards the condition. This was done by analysing linguistic and literary aspects of the selected folktales and proverbs as sample texts of oral literature from this society. The analysis was from both sociological and psychoanalytic points of view. After a critical analysis of both the content and context of the selected samples texts, the following findings were discovered.

4.2 The findings
The study found out that the oral forms are not idle tales as such, but purposely well constructed art pieces. They inform the people’s cultural performances and assign the value system and world view of that society to its new members. The study discovered that quite often, this societal duty is unconsciously and subtly propagated and may pass on both negative and positive attitudes.

Specifically on disability, the study discovered and consistently highlighted the stereotypical notions society has towards the disabled. These are consistently wrapped up in the disability – unfriendly and negative images found both in the content and context of the art pieces sampled.

Society is generally harsh in dealing with the disabled. They are generally ignored, rejected and dehumanised. The “non disabled” look at them patronizingly and with contempt. The disabled are therefore, stigmatized and relegated to the social dust bin. It was however; found out that this grim rejection and dehumanization of the disabled may not necessary always be stated rather it usually subtle and lurking in the oral literature the society uses in daily communication. Where societal world view on some conditions is very harsh and judgmental to the extent that the victims seem to be alienated, they develop a unique disability culture basically “understood” by they themselves. In many texts, the study also revealed that society considers disability as a form of retribution to the victims.
The study further discovered that one’s ego or self esteem, personality development and socio-cultural relations are a result of the societal images with in one’s environment.

4.3 Conclusion
The study consistently pointed out societal stereotypes of the disabled people in the folktales and the proverbs of the Samia. While proverbs specifically are cherished by many for their ability to spice up communication by expressing apt truths, rarely are they interrogated for their lasting impact on the psyche of the listeners. We can consequently conclude that the negative images highlighted the folktales and proverbs serve to sustain a negative and stereotypical perception of the disabled in society. Society condemns the condition in much the same way as the victims themselves. This therefore greatly impacts on the general day to day intercalation between the abled and the disabled in society.

4.4 Recommendations
From this study it becomes clear that to properly understand a peoples popular attitudes towards a situation or condition in their midst, there is need to revisit the language of communication in their day to day oral interaction. As Corcker (1999:1) observes, “there is urgent need to recognise the central role of language in discoursing on social phenomena as we formulate policy frameworks and structures to deal with them”.
Today various topics attract a lot of debate on how to legislate them, and also cope with their concomitant challenges. Such topics include marriage relations, child abuse, sex and sexuality, and morality among others. It is hereby recommended that scholars investigate these problems using either more folktales or proverbs than those herein recorded or other forms of oral literature. This will help to expand the demonstration of the interaction between oral literature, society and societal members.

In this study, it is loosely suggested that oral literature pieces are authored by society. This view was however not thoroughly investigated as it was outside the scope of the study. We feel this would be an interesting area of study for future scholars of oral literature. They will help shed more light on such pertinent issued such as the role played by an individual author in affecting the societal view point on a specific subject.
Finally, this study has demonstrated that the oral literature of the Samia people negatively postures disabled. To date however, nobody contests the vital role oral literature plays in the proper moral upbringing of the young ones and the appropriate language and thought process foundations that results from using this facility. It is out of this recognition that the Ministry of Education and Sports in Uganda has decided that pupils should be instructed in their mother tongues up to primary four. It is clear therefore that the negative attitude towards disability can deliberately be changed by editing out on the oral literature pieces presented to the pupils in schools. In this way, society would be made a more comfortable place for the disabled.
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APPENDIX I
FOLKTALES (THE TRANSLATED VERSION)

1. The barren woman who later got children

A long time ago in a distant village lived a girl. She grew up and got married. Unfortunately, she stayed for years without bearing children. The woman visited many diviners to try and find out what the problem was, but all come to no success.

After a longtime of trials, one diviner told her what to do. She was to cut off the bark pieces of a muvule tree at where the leaves begin and secretly keep them in big pot; properly covered up. This, she did, and after a few months, she discovered that the bark pieces had turned into five children: three girls and two boys. One of the girls was a hunchback. The woman was greatly overjoyed and since then, lived a happy and comfortable life.

One day she went out to visit a friend. At the time she was leaving, four of the five children were away for various domestic chores, and only hunchback was at home. The mother instructed her to guard the home well. On her return however, she discovered to her dismay that the instructions on home guarding had not been carried out by hunchback. The woman was so furious that she lamented why she could not bear her own children rather than raising “these useless tree barks.”

This greatly annoyed hunchback and she refused to talk to her “mother”. When her sisters and brothers returned, she told them what their mother had said, and all became very angry. The woman tried her best to appease them but to no success. They all ran to the muvule tree, and hunchback sang as they went round it. In no minute they all became once again the bark of the tree.

2. Awori and Kuda, the ogre.

A long time ago, Awori was a very beautiful girl in a certain village. She was married by a handsome man called Kuda. They went to live in another far away village. They bore one child, Odyaga, who unfortunately was blind. Later, Kuda revealed his identity as an ogre to Awori and ordered her never to ever visit her relatives.

After a longtime without word about Awori, her mother decided to send Awori’s brother to check on them. When he arrived, Awori his sister was greatly worried about his safety since Kuda the ogre would surely eat him up. She decided to hide him at the eaves of the house.
When Kuda arrived from his walks, Odyanga the blind told him that there was not enough food at home for all including his uncle who was sitting at the eaves. Kuda sought clarification from Awori but she denied it saying Odyanga the blind was a fool since he couldn’t see anything. Kuda began playing his thumb piano calling on anybody around to join him in the dance. Awori’s brother however did not come out of his hiding.

The next day Awori saw off her brother with gifts of nuts, peas and dried meat to take home. His mother was very happy to see his son back with so many presents from Awori. After a few days, she decided to make the visit herself. Dissuasions by her son against making the visit fell on deaf ears. When she arrived, Odyanga reported as he had done about the uncle and the mother still refuted. Kuda again played his piano but this time his mother in law quickly joined in the dance. Kuda happily ate her up leaving only the bones.

The following day Awori pieced up the bones and her mother came back to life. She saw her off with the same gifts of peas, nuts and meat. But while on the way home, the old woman heard the beautiful melody of a bird calling on Kuda to come and see the visitor going away. The women stopped to dance and while dancing, Kuda arrived and ate her up completely even breaking her bones.

3. The married cripple

Many years ago, a woman bore a son who was crippled in both legs and arms. The woman became worried of his son living and denying a bachelor, since as a cripple no woman would accept to marry him. She therefore conceived a plan to keep him in doors all his lifetime. The mother ordered for a special drum cage in which she kept the crippled boy as he grew up.

After 25 years the mother considered his son mature enough to marry. Unfortunately, to the best of her knowledge, no girl would accept the hand of marriage with such cripple. She therefore took it upon herself to find a wife for her son. Soon she found one. She talked to both the girl and her father, telling them that her son had sent her. Asked where the son was, she answered “he works far away but he will soon be here”

Both the girl and her father consented and the girl came to stay with the mother in law as they wait for her will be husband’s return.

In this home, the girl was only fed on meat and every Saturday of the week, she was sent to take some meat to her parents. For a longtime this was the trend until both the girl and
her parents quarried from where exactly the meat comes. There was no son at home who
could be said to be the provider of the meat. The girl then conceived a plan to find out.
The next day, while in the garden working with her mother in law, the girl pretended to go
home to drink water. She arrived home and found the crippled boy had come out of his
cage hiding and was rubbing his feet on the ground in the house while singing. The girl
hid herself and watched him. As he rubbed his feet on the ground, the jiggers in the feet
flew out and instantly turned into meat. The girl dashed into the house but was not fast
enough. The crippled dived back into his drum cage and closed it tightly. The girl carried
off the drum to their place, with her mother in law in hot pursuit of her. The girl arrived at
their home and found her mother mingling. Her mother hit the drum hard and burst. The
cripple fell out and all were shocked to see the so called husband of their daughter. The
mother of the cripple arrived in time and carried him away home, amidst insults from the
mother of the girl. She queried how stupid this woman was to want her daughter to get married
to such a thing.

4. Odyekere and the Hyena.

Once upon a time, a man built his house close to a forest. The family had only one child.
She was a girl, but crippled in one leg and therefore always walked with a limp.
Every morning, the girl would take out their only goat to graze behind their house. The
girl was constantly reminded by her father never to go deep in the forest since it had many
animals. These animals could easily harm her especially since she could not run away
from them fast enough due to her limp.
One morning the girl was doing her routine grazing of the goat, when she suddenly saw a
hyena move towards her. She tried running away but of course the hyena was faster. She fell
down and the animal came up to her. Upon looking at her closely, the hyena discovered that
she was lame. It simply took the goat, ate it and watched on as the girl limped back home.
5. Sakoma, the hunchback
Sakoma was a very beautiful girl and also had a very sweet voice. Her father was a well known herbalist in the village. Unfortunately, Sakoma was crippled in one leg and was also a hunchback. Sakoma therefore spent much of her time at home assisting her father with collecting herbs and attending to the “patients”

One day, a young man who was traveling through the village was attacked by a buffalo. The young man put up a strong fight against the beast and managed to kill it, but it however left him greatly injured. He collapsed and became unconscious.

Sakoma’s father, who was collecting herbs from the forest found him. He carried him home and treated him. When the young man awoke, he found himself under the care of Sakoma, and when he inquired on where he was Sakoma told him the story. He became so found of Sakoma and soon, they developed a love relationship. He wanted to marry her but first, he had to got to a diviner who would cure her of the disability.

During the time when the young man was away, the king and his son were leisurely hunting in the forest when the sweet voice of the singing Sakoma struck them. Immediately, the prince declared that the owner of that sweet voice must be the girl he would marry. He rushed forward but when he saw Sakoma, both him and his father, the king declared her unfit because she was a hunchback.

Meanwhile, the young man came back from the diviner with instructions on how to cure Sakoma. He carried them out and she got cured. They then got married and lived happily there after.

6. The twin sisters who became co-wives.
Long ago in a certain village, lived two twin sisters, Apio and Adongo. Apio was lame. When they were old enough, Adongo found herself a husband. They stayed together but had no children. Although Apio was as good looking as her twin sister Adongo she had no man to marry her. She therefore stayed at their home for a long time.

With time, Apio was found to be pregnant, and soon gave birth to a nice baby boy. Meanwhile her sister Adongo was having a rough time with her husband since she had failed to give him a child.
Adongo could not bear the situation any longer. She therefore traveled to their home one day and sweet talked her sister, Apio into becoming her co-wife, with the hope that she would bear more sons to their husband. For the love she had for her twin sister, Apio allowed and the two sisters became co-wives.

7. Simbi the village beauty
A longtime ago there lived a very beautiful girl called Simbi.
Because of her beauty, many suitors came seeking Simbi’s hand in marriage. Unfortunately, Simbi rejected all saying they were not handsome enough to marry her.
One day, another suitor came. He was so good looking that when Simbi saw him, she was charmed. She told her father that she had at last found the man of her heart. Unknown to Simbi however was the fact that this was an ogre turned into man.
Marriage formalities were made and Simbi and the accompanying girls set off to the man’s place.
Before they left however, Hasigufu, Simbi’s brother insisted on also going. He was a hunchback and Simbi swore that if her parents allowed him to accompany the girls making the journey, Simbi would call off the marriage. Hasigufu was dissuaded but he did not heed. He therefore followed the girls at a safe distance, and only showed up when they had reached the man’s place.
At night when all were a sleep, many more ogres came around ready to eat up the girls. The husband of Simbi turned himself into an ogre and welcomed his friends. Hasigufu who was not asleep as all the girls were, discovered this plan and began crying. When asked what the problem was, Hasigufu said he was thirsty but only drank water from the lake and carried in a basket. The ogres quickly rushed to the lake with a basket to fetch the water. While they were away, Hasigufu woke up the girls and they all escaped back home safely.

8. Hakere the leper and the village beauty
There lived in a certain village a very beautiful girl. So beautiful was the girl, that every man desired to marry her. Even Ogema the king of this area presented himself as a suitor, but he was equally rejected.
The king was greatly perturbed. He could not just concede defeat like a common man. He swore never to rest until he had married the girl. In his kingdom, there lived a certain leper called Hakere.

Hakere had been adversely affected by leprosy, that all his fingers and toes were cut off. Because of his condition, no person was willing to stay close to Hakere.

Hakere heard about the king's desire of marrying the girl and offered himself as one who could win the village beauty for the king. The king promised him a bull if he succeeded.

Hakere then set himself to work using both magic and wit. At lunch time he went to the home of the girl carrying a finger of bananas. He found the girl and her mother having lunch, and after greeting them, he requested the girl to roast the banana for him. The girl allowed. After sometime Hakere rose to go and the girl went to the kitchen to get Hakere’s banana. The banana was red hot and struck onto the girl’s palm. It burnt her. She shouted to Hakere to take it upon which Hakere called her to take it to him. The more the girl moved towards Hakere, the further Hakere moved away. In no time, they reached the king’s court and the king took the girl as his wife.

Every time the girl tried to escape back to their place, the king would Hakere and immediately the burning sensation would begin again. In the end the girl stayed as a wife to the king. For his reward, Hakere did not take the bull. He preferred to take a fowl since he could not pull along a bull tied on a rope.

9. The great famine

A long time ago in another country, there was no rain for a very long period of time. This resulted into famine. People had no food to eat and no water to drink. They survived on wild fruits and roots. The king called in the diviners to explain what had gone wrong, since the rainmakers had failed to make rain. In their answer, the diviners reported that the gods were angry since one of the subjects of this country had eloped with a wife of an innocent man from another country. These two were now living as husband and wife in this country.

The king was unable to trace out who exactly this man was since many of his subjects due to famine wandered far away in search of food and water. The diviners therefore decided that the gods should be appeased with a big feat. The gods would eat meat and drink millet brew and when they urinated, and then the urine would turn into rain. The king provided the required items. One person was to deliver these items to the gods at a secrete grove and to safe guard
against him revealing the place to other people, he was to be put to death immediately after delivering them.

The king called all his subjects together and requested for any volunteer. No one could yield. The king looked at the crowd and saw Sityo the dumb. He knew he could not have heard what he had said. The king therefore looked at Sityo and said “any volunteer put up your hand like this”. As he said this, the king raised his hand. Sityo thought the king was asking him to raise his hand and so shot up his hand straight in the air. Sityo the dumb was therefore singled out as one who had volunteered and together with the diviners, carried the items to the grove. Thereafter he was killed as it was required.

10. Kudende the Giant ogre

Long ago in a certain village, ogres ate up all people and only remained Nasitandu and his sister. Nasituandu moved all his herd of cows and goats and all stayed in the safe custody of a big cave closed up by a big stone. Everyday he would lake out his herd to graze leaving behind his sister. On return every evening, Nasitandu would sing a code song and the sister would immediately open for him.

Soon, Kudende the giant ogre discovered this dwelling and desired to eat up this girl. He would come and sing the code song but the girl always discovered the hoarse voice and could not open. Later on with the help of a medicine man, the ogre learnt to fine tune his voice and this time succeeded in eating the girl. Upon this return from grazing, that evening, Nasitandu just knew what had happened.

The following day Nasitandu picked all the weapons available and headed to the camp of Kudende. Kudende was the chief ogre. He was married to many wives and had many children and servants at home. One of the children was blind. When Nasitandu arrived at the camp, Kudende and all his fellows had gone to harvest millet except the blind child. Nasitandu therefore ordered him to call on the father to come. The boy climbed on the top roof of the house and began calling. Kudende sent one person after another to come and check what the problem was. To his surprise none of those sent would go back to report to him. When all had been sent, he himself came. Nasitandu attacked him just as he had attacked all those earlier on sent and bravely fought on, cutting and spearing him. But before he died, Kudende asked Nasitandu to cut his little figure to allow all those that he had eaten to come out. Nasitandu cut the figure and all came out. Among them was an old woman, a hunchback. This woman had been a witch and
therefore feared coming out in full view of the others with her apparatus of witchcraft. She come out and then claim she forgotten her smoking pipe and then go back for it. Then the broon, then the plate and so on and so on. Kudende finally died before hunchback could come out.

11. Nanyanga and the elephant
Nanyanga was a girl from the Banyanga clan. She was lame and walked with a limp. She got married and stayed happily with her husband for many years.

Many times, a column of elephants would pass close to Nanyanga’s house as they went to drink water at a nearby stream. They were always harmless, and therefore caused no fear among the residents.

One day as the elephants came back from the stream, one of the young ones stepped on a trap that had been set by Nanyanga’s husband. The young elephant was hurt but limped home and a few days later, it died. The mother of the dead elephant came to find out who set the trap that had caused the death of its dear young one. She stood at a distance and watched if someone would set the trap again. Suddenly, the elephant saw Nyanga and her husband coming to work on their garden. As usual Nanyanga was walking with a limp. The elephant then concluded that the trap must have been set by Nanyanga, and thereafter hid in the bush and watched the young elephant limp home. She was now imitating the limp walking of the young elephant. The elephant was so angry that it walked up to Nanyanga and pushed her down. It stamped her with its heavy foot and she died.

12. Chirimberi, the mother
Chirimberi was a girl who got married in a certain home. Her first born was a boy and was deaf. Chirimberi was so disappointed. How could she have her first son being deaf? She was not happy. Soon she conceived and this time she gave birth to a “normal” beautiful girl. Chirimberi was happy. She greatly loved her daughter and gave her many favours over the deaf boy. One such favour was the meals she had.

At that time, the only meal available was cooked sorghum seeds mixed with cow peas. Everyday after making the meal, the mother would spend time sorting out peas from the sorghum. The boy was to feed on the hard unpalatable sorghum while the girl was always given the soft and easy to chew peas. This trend continued routinely for a long time.
With time, the girl became weak and sickly. She became bedridden and soon died. The deaf boy on the other hand became stronger and healthier day by day. The mother went to a diviner to find out what had killed her beloved daughter. To her utter surprise it was revealed to her that the diet of peas was the cause of the death.

13. Leper and the beautiful girl
There lived in a certain village a very beautiful girl. She was also very obedient to her parents. The father therefore decided to set a test for any man who wanted to marry the girl. In that village, there were many mosquitoes. The father of the girl therefore decided that whoever marries his daughter must be very stoic. The test therefore was that the suitor must be one who is able to sit through the night bare chest and without beating any mosquito biting him. Many prospective suitors came but all failed this test, until one day a leper appeared. He declared his ability to pass the test. He therefore sat down removed his shirt and the assessors began the watch. The leper was so clever. He began narrating to the assessors how he once had a very good friend who offered him a very huge cow with every part of very fatty. Every time he mentioned the part the part of the bull, he would skillfully strike the mosquito biting him at that part of his body. The assessors though he was only touching the mentioned part to emphasize what he was narrating. The narration continued till morning and the leper was declared to have passed the test.

The leper demanded to take his bride but both the mother and daughter cried and resisted. The father had to keep his promise and handed over the daughter the leper as his wife.

14. Chirimberi’s mother
A long time ago in a certain village lived a man and his wife. They took a long time without bearing a child. When the woman’s patience to conceive had run out, she sought the help of a medicine man. The medicine man gave the woman a charm and told her to bathe in a river twice everyday for four consecutive days.

The woman carried out the instructions up to the 3rd day. On the fourth day, she went on a journey thinking she would come back and complete the “dose”. Unfortunately, she was not able to come back till the following day. She began panicking because she had skipped the instructions. She wondered if she would really conceive.
She conceived all the same and gave birth to a blind baby boy. She named him Chirimberi (the first to come). Unfortunately she never got another child.

Her husband could not wait any longer. He married another wife who gave birth to a baby boy also. The two boys grew up together. Due to misunderstandings however, Chirimberi’s mother left that home. Chirimberi’s step mother mistreated him and daily tasked him with going out to scare birds away from the sorghum in their garden.

Everyday, Chirimberi would sing importuning his mother to come back and save him from the mistreatment he was undergoing.

One day, “Ehunjwe” (A type of bird) that had come to eat the sorghum in the garden listened to the plight of the boy. It came and gave some of its feathers to Chirimberi and together, they flew away to a place unknown till today.

15. Chief Nyanga and Obwibi.

Many years ago Nyanga was Omwami (chief) of a village in the far away lands (Enimba). He was respected by his subjects and everyday, Nyanga would ask any of his subjects to come to his home to do work for him. There was no pay for this. In that village, there lived a lunatic called Obwibi. Chief Nyanga often had obwibi and others do work for him.

One day, chief Nyanga was expecting visitors. He brewed a lot of amalwa (millet beer) and as usual called obwibi and others to come to his home to do all the work of fetching water to be boiled and added to the beer before drinking and splitting firewood for boiling the water.

On his way to Nyanga’s home, obwibi found somebody bathing in a stream across the path. Obwibi tiptoed and carried away the clothes of the man bathing. He and went the whole way laughing and enjoying himself. Little did he know that he had carried away Nyanga’s clothes. Chief Nyanga was so annoyed and called all his subjects to brief them of obwibi’s great mischief. All the people agreed that lunatic Obwibi was in the wrong and must be punished severely by making him walk naked all through the village. He was undressed and let go.
Folktales, the original version.

Omukumba yamala yebula


2. Awori nende enani kuda


Awori yabola ati odyanga muwofu musiru. Kuda haba siyamubona.

3. Omulema Yadekhya


Omukhaana buli ludaalo yalichanga emitanda kyenyama nechindi ayirakho ewabwe
Oludaalo lundi, omukhaana yenya okhumanya mbwe enyama yitulanga ena? Nebali mundalo nibalima,omuhanaYabacha masalanghene ati acha ohungwa amaachi. Neyola mungo yekisa yabona esindu nesituliire erywanyi nesisha na makulu nobukiingi bwenyende buduma ne bwekhola emitanda chenyama.


4. Odyekera nende enghu


5. Sakoma Omusigufu

Sakoma yali omukhaana omulayi muno muno, nende ekono elayi. Esy’ehabi mbi, yali nende esigufu, khandi yali omulema wo khukulu.

Ludalo lundi simwana sakoma yali yayanga amelese musichaha nabukana omushiani eyali ahwanire nende emboko nakwire eyo koti afire. Simwana Sakoma yamukinga yamuyira engo. Yamuba amalesi paka yawona. Neyawona badakhaana muno nende sakoma nebahaha okhukhola

6. Amahwana Balikhwa

Wamwe Adongo yachaka okhumunyeka obukumba nadakha okhumwirusa muulya omwo. Adongo neyabona nebidinyire, yerukha yecha eyiri mwananghina, apio yamwelomba bache bamenyre naye koti mwali khumwana. Olwokhu daha owmana wabwe, Apio naye yachaka okhumbewo yadzijinya yadehera wamwe Adongo.

7. Simbi Khalayi wolukongo


Amanani kosi kerukha lwangu lwangu okhucha khunyanja nende esiyonjo okhwenda amaachi kanyakhana buusa kola kawoma esiyonjo nende edosi kakingira mu amachi kaleta. Ebikha bikolera engo, kabukana Hasigufu nasingise abakhana neberukhe nebabwerewo.

8. Halere Omkhumbu nende khalayi wo lukongo


9. Enjaala yakwa

Omwami yenya okhumanya esyaleta enjala yino mushalo shaye. Abakimba bosí byabakhaya okhuleta efula. Omwami yateba wandaba esikera. Wandaba yabolata ati alíwo omundu eyali neyerukhe nende omukhasi wo washie ne bamenya mushialo muno. Mani khulwesho, were bali benya okhulya n’o khungwa be kute mani benyale. Amanyi kabwe niko akaliba efula. Ebindu bino (Ebyokhulya n’okhungwa) byali bidahiibwa babyire musiyembekho swa ba were, naye abiyira bidakha yitebwe atabolera abandu bandi shabweyo.

Omwami yalanga abandu baye bosí yateba anyala yayira ebindu. Mubandu abo becharamu nende Sityo eyali omudimbe mushialo esyo. Omwami yalingala Sityo namala akinga omukhono
kwaye akulu. Yateba abandu ati anahonye okhuyira ebindu eyiri ba were niye nanu? Sityo yabasa ati owmami yali al omuboleranga akinga omukhono kwaye akulu. Sityo yesi yakinga omukhono akulu.

Abandu babona Sityo nakingire omukhono bamanya bati afukirire. Bamuberesa ebindu yayira, neyakobola bamwita.

10. Kudendi Okunani


Nasitandu yacha enimba yetanya ebyoki yeche yete amanani.


Mubatulamu mwalimu Hasigufu khakofu akhakhingi. Yatya okhutula nemikhingo chaye paka okunani kwafa naye.
11. Nanyanga Nende Enjofu


Echuli muno nebukhiere muchuli, enjofu khulundu yecha okhulinda omundu yateka omutego okweta omwana kwoyo. Enjofu yabona nanyanga nadyekera yamanaya yiti yali yekera khumwana kwayo koti kwakenda omutego nikumalire okudira okhukulu. Enjofu yaduma yakwa khu nanyanga yamufuta paka yafa.

12. Chirimberi


Chirimberi yacha khuwandaba nadaha okhumanya esyieta omwana waye. Wandaba yamubolera ati ebyakhulya biyabechanga omukhana nibo ebyamwiita.

13. Hakere Yadehya Halayi


14. Chirimberi nende ehunjwe


Chirimberi nali eyo mundalo nalindire amoyoni khumabere, yembanga nalira nalanga nghiina yeche amwende.

Nyanga yindi ehunjwe yechya yabulira okhulira hwa Chirimberi. Ehunjwe yabukula khumoya kayo yaberesa Chirimberi, baburuha babwawo baacha bamenya eyo yibandu batamanyire.

15. Nyanga Mwami


Nyanga babulira etiima eringi muno okhubona mbwe Obwibi yali abukule enghubo chaye. Yalanga abandu bosie beche ababolere Obwibi amakosa kayali nakholere. Nyanga yabolera abandu, era abandu bosie bakhengawo bati obwibi yali aniere omusango okukhongo muno.

Bahengawo bamufalula engubo chosi yadonga nga luyebulwa nebamulekha akenda nabwao.
APPENDIX II

PROVERBS

Physical/visible disabilities (including deafness, blindness and dumbness)

Eyomuwofu, yayira khumukoye
*A blindman’s cow, graze while tied on a rope*

2. Obukisa, khaba sibulema
*Poverty is not a disability.*

3. Ali omulema, sokera lwala
*Never bend your finger, in the presence of a lame person*

4. Omwimbikiti, akera enungo.
*A dwarf, sets his height target low.*

5. Okhukhola esireka, ng’enghu yaleka odyekera.
*As despising as a hyena, to one who walks with a limp.*

6 Emoni yowasyo, khaba siyihubonera.
*Another person’s eye, can’t see for you.*

7 Esyekala amatwi, sisiba noluyali.
*That which is deaf, can never be honoured*

8.Omulema amanya nfalwaka.
*A lame person is the one who knows how he or she falls.*

9 Odeba okutwe, niye akukinga.
*He who insists on an extra ordinarily big head, carries it himself.*

10 Omukinge, zakinga wasye.
*One, who is being carried, does not carry another.*

11 Obulema sibuba bwibule bwonghane.
Disability may befall one later in life.

12. Oli w’oluyali, ngomulesi we sigufu.
*You are as honored as one who can cure a hunchback.*

13. Ow’emoni ndala mubawofu, n’omwami.
*A one-eyed person among the blind, is a king.*

You have fattened, like the one who shares a dish with a blind
15. Olimalima, ng’omuwofu.
You move groping, like a blind.
16. Abula okhukulu khowokhwemakho, abula nesipapa syo huta asi.
Whoever has no leg no leg to stand on, has no foot to put down.
17. Omuwofu natangiza omuwofu washye, bombi bakwa mulina.
If a blind leads another, both fall into a hole.
18. Oholere esihaya, ngomuwofu akula emonero.
You’ve made no profit, like a blind who buys a mirror.
You’re as rare as medicine to cure a gap in the teeth.
One who does not hear, his ears will open up when in the grave.
One, who does not hear, carried it (faeces) to his in-laws.
22. Odyeka dyeka emoni, ng’esihereho.
Your eyes are as watery as the garget for making local salt.
23. Ch’owabuhire eyo, ng’owemoni ndala nawabule ohutingaala.
You look as keenly as a one-eyed person.
Whoever shares a dish with a blind one, decides who eats what
25. Esinghaadi, sikwa amukusi.
Fish, with a part of it destroyed or eaten up, is always not expensive.
One afflicted by leprosy, does not walk about in a field recently burnt by fire.
27. Akadengeya, kahira olwaasa.
Better to have teeth which are not firm in your mouth, than have a gap.
Better a tree sheds off the leaves, than dry up.
29. Namutwe kwobeka, yokuyirira niyo yikuchira.
The head that you are sharing turns in whichever direction you direct it.
30. Obutenyaala, bwakere enghombe yeyakira omunwa.
Inability forced the cow to scratch itself using its mouth.

31. Ohwifimba hwehere, sihukayira enghombe ohungwa amaachi. However insolent a frog is, it will not stop a cow from drinking water at a river.

32. Oli moni, alibolera abula.
The eyed person will inform the blind.

33. Owemoni ndala, alibolera owachibiri.
The one-eyed person will signal to the two eyed.

34. Ali n’omunwa, sabolera washye okhuba wuwi.
One who is not dumb, does not ask another to raise an alarm.

35. Oluli huwasyo, siluhukayira hukona endoolo.
The sickness affecting another person does not stop you from having your sleep.

36. Olulimi lulayi, lwakonia wanangwe khumukotu.
A nice speech, enabled leopard to be accommodated for a night.

37. Omulema, adirira husideru.
A lame person, arrests his or her victim at the time of eating.

38. Omukofu, asabira emoni.
The old one, asks for help using his or her yees.

Better eat a little, than eat much and have your stomach swollen.

40. Onyakhana ng’akhuya omudimbe alire.
You waste your time like one who beats a dhumb expecting him to cry.

41. Owobutaka, engubo yefala yengene.
A bow-legged person does share clothes with others.

42. Ekofulo, n’omusikari mudimbe.
A padlock is the dumb watchman.

43. Owolusaya lwomu, akhanyula masalaawo.
One, who argues well, deprives you of your mother-in-law.

44. Wamubiri mubi, khaba yatabitire, bati abere ano.
One with a body considered bad by others is unfortunate. Even where he did not cross, they will say “he was here”.

45. Odehya esyemoni ndala, otafire obusumba.
Better you marry a one-eyed woman, than die a bachelor.
46. Alema, atafire.
Better he or she becomes lame than die.

47. Akeka omuhumbu, niye amwoka.
He who marries one disfigured by leprosy, bathes her himself.

48. Kuba o, mwoyo khukwahuta khumulema.
What makes you become attracted to a lame one is within yourself.

b. Special disabilities: Impotence and Barrenness.

48. Okwibula khuhira onunia.
Producing a child is better than simply making along call.

50. Enjibula mbi yikhira obukumba.
The mother of ugly children is better than the barren woman.

51. Nambula mwana, atuma etango.
She, who doesn’t have a child, sends her thigh.

52. Esyomoderwaa, siribwa namayoni.
Property of the lonely one is always eaten up by birds.

53. Omukumba, hasamanya mulakusi.
A barren woman will never know the home of the village diviner.

54. Ohwibula khungi, hwahonya wanambwa.
Begetting many puppies helped the dog.

55. Ayebula omulema hasaba mukumba.
One, who begets a lame child, is not considered barren.

56. Ayebola ababi, ahira omukumba.
One, who begets ugly children, is better than a barren woman.

57. Adehya omukumba, yepiima amani kayaba echo.
One, who marries a barren woman, must be sure of his strength to dig up pit latrines.

58. Yadongha dungerere, ng’embere chomukumba.
It has remained upright like the breasts of a barren woman.

He is as unfortunate as one who married a lazy barren woman.

60. Omukumba, siyakama huwoora.
A barren woman never stops attending village dances.

61. Omukumba, sabwa luhaana.
A barren woman always remains girlish
62. Ayebula esitulucho, hasibamutusira mukutu.
She, who had a still birth, does not leave the house for burial through the back door (as is the custom for barren women).
63. Esitulucho, syosibasisikha muloba.
Even a still birth, is buried in the ground.
64. Omukumba, yebula abawuyi.
A barren woman begets migrants (because those she calls her children will always go away).
65. Bita mubyangu, ng’omukumba askiha wamwalikhwanghene.
Be fast, just as a barren woman burying her co-wife.
66. Syachiima, nga ekunda ly’omuchiri
As quiet as the old homestead of an impotent man
67. Ayebula, salya.
A woman, who has begotten children, does not eat to satisfaction.
68. Atebula, hasaluluma.
The spirit of a man, who died childless, does not bother the living.
69. Nashiekeranie, ng’omuchiri akeka.
You shamelessly copy what others do, like an impotent man marrying.
70. Omusumba mwami, niyebula abandu.
A bachechor can be a chief, if he begot people (children).
71. Atebula, hasiyeta luhyae.
A barren woman never commands respect in a home.
72. Ayebula omuderwa, haba syaba mukumba.
She, who begets an only child, is not considered barren.
73. Were yamba, aba yebola olwibulo.
He who says “God gave me”, is praising himself for bearing children.
74. Bifa butaake, bitafire buli me.
Better the crops fail, than fail to plant at all.
75. Esihyieno silonda omwikho.
The spirit of a dead man only bothers those of his own lineage.
76. Yolya naye hasafa nawe, okhutusakho omwibule nawe.
The one you share a meal with can not die with you, expect the one you are born with.
77. Mboko yomwana, yikuda niyihomba.
A buffalo with a calf gores as it licks.
78. Mudambo kumuhasi, kukera wadehya omukumba mukata.
When you fail to find a good wife, you end up a marrying a lazy baren woman.
79. Olwibulo lwakhonya wanamboka.
Begetting children advantages many.
80. Olwibulo, luhira obwicha.
Begetting children of your own is better than simply having friends.
81. Ayebula yaala amafa.
A man/woman with children, is honoured at his funeral.
82. Omwana yiwibule, ahubba enghoma wakhiina.
Your child can drum as you dance.
83. Opilu yibula opilu.
A warrior begets another warrior.
84. Osangalire, nga eyebula nakhusa.
You are as happy as one whose children grow to maturity.

**Mental/cognitive disabilities**

85. Odaha omulalu,aba amutanga.
He, who seduces a mad one, is the one to blame.
86. Ayobera omulalu engoma ahine, hasamuhinira.
He, who drums for the mad one to dance, does not help him or her in the dancing.
87. Amakihiina komulalu kasangasa, naye abula eyekomba owaye abe omulalu.
The dancing of mad one is entertaining, but none wishes his own to be mad.
88. Osoola omlalu, niye aba amatungana
A man who has sexual intercourse with a mad woman is the one to blame.
89. Omulalu, niye abe yefaulule.
It is only one who has undressed him or her self that can be called mad.
90. Yoyirira omulalu omuwewetera, omulamu ab’aliwo?
By the time you take a mad one in secrecy, would there be a sane one?
91. Omulalu yakhukusira nghiina niwo womukulira.
At the very spot a mad one sells off her mother to you, is when you should pay him.