

The Practices and Roles of the Nandi Traditional Religious Practitioners

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Abstract- The practice of traditional medicine has been affected by challenges such as arrival of Europeans which marked a significant turning point in the history of this age, long tradition culture which threatened its survival. However, the practice of traditional medicine among the Nandi could have been affected by challenges such as modernization, stigmatization, and urbanization. The paper examined the practices and roles that the traditional Nandi specialists play in their community. The study identified the different practices observed by the Nandi people such as: worship of God, observance of rituals, observance of morality and moral values, observance of rites of passage, environmental preservation, and the administration of herbal medicines. The religious specialist who performed the above practices are non-other than elders, diviners, herbalists who had special responsibilities that they played for the wellbeing of the community. The herbalists for instance were mandated to conduct healing to individuals who had different health complications. They were to examine a patient to find out the cause of illness and prescribe appropriate medication to them. The elders on the other hand were to lead community to perform different kind of rituals like appeasing of ancestors, worship of God among others. They were also mandated to give guidance to the initiates before they could transition to adulthood. Diviners also were not left behind as they had a vital role especially in conducting exorcism to members who were possessed by the evil spirits, examining patients with chronic illness to find out whether they were suffering from a curse or witchcraft before appropriate step was taken. All members of the community were expected to abide by the rules that govern each practice that was led by the different specialists mentioned earlier.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to WHO (2019), 80% of the people living in developing countries rely on indigenous medicine. In addition, Romero-Daza, (2002), observes that, prior to the introduction of the cosmopolitan medicine, traditional medicine used to be the dominant medical system available to millions of people in Africa in both rural and urban communities. Indeed, it was the only source of medical care for a greater proportion of the population. Furthermore, WHO (2005) also argued that over 75% of the Kenyan population depend on indigenous medicines. This has been attributed to the religious significance and the benefits the traditional practices on medicine holds in the society which include but not limited to the following; healing of patients attacked by different kind of disease, protection from physical and spiritual attack. The practice of traditional medicine has been affected by challenges such as arrival of Europeans which marked a significant turning point in the history of this age, long tradition culture which threatened its survival as observed by (Hillenbrand, 2006). However, the practice of traditional medicine among the Nandi could have been affected by challenges such as modernization, stigmatization, and urbanization, unsustainable harvesting practices of medicine, Christianity, formal education, population increase, political interference and corruption. This paper identifies the practises and roles of Nandi traditional religious practitioners.

II. THE PRACTICE OF WORSHIP OF GOD (ASIIS)

When we refer to the word 'God', according to the study, we are talking about the living eternal being who is the source of all living and whose life existed and is the one whose power sustains the universe. He is an all-knowing being who knows and sees all things at the same time without any modern

instrument. He knows the end from the beginning. This great being has revealed himself in many different ways and human beings in particular have always felt His presence and responded to him in worship.

The Nandi like any other communities were religious and believed in a supreme being, (FGDs, 27/11/2022);

“our religion was influenced by a reference to a deity called Asiis. The symbol of Asiis is the sun, though the sun is not god. Asiis was the provider to our family. Every morning an elder would wake up in the morning and face the East and uttered words of thanksgiving and also in the evening he would face the sun at the west and thanked God for the providence and protection.”

The above sentiment is supported by Geertz (1973), who argued that religion is a system of symbols which acts to establish powerful, pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and conceptions seem uniquely realistic.

The above respondents further indicated that the Nandi believed in existence of many gods. At the apex of religious structure was God, *Asiis*, followed by the spirits and thirdly the ancestors. *Asiis* was the origin of all life both in the physical and the spiritual worlds. The living dead were direct representatives of *Asiis* in this world and the spiritual beings who lived in trees, rocks, rivers and lakes were agents of the ancestors who influenced the moral behaviour of community. The ancestors and spirits were also seen as intermediaries between the living people and their God *Asiis*. In addition, (Elders, 10/8/2022) pointed out that;

“The gods were worshipped at various places. Libations were poured on the ground in form of milk and beer. At community level, an elder from Talai family led the ceremony in a community shrine known as kapkoros where

they made their prayer requests and offered an animal as sacrifice.”



Figure 1: Kapkoros, a place where the Nandi worshiped their god)

Source: Research 2022

Idowu (1975) Concurrs with the Nandi religious leaders by stating that Africans are religious in all things they do, religion forms the foundation and the all-governing principle of life for them. He further argues that God, Ancestors, Spirits are all powers that impinge on human life in one way or another, in that way they are all moral agents that control human behaviour.

The argument is in- line with the Nandi’s belief in God, Spirits and Ancestors. However, the above scholar researched among the Yoruba community of Nigeria and the current study researched among the Nandi community of Kenya in Uasin Gishu county.

III. PERFORMANCE OF RITUALS

The study found out that different rituals were performed among the Nandi by different specialists as discussed below for various reasons. Tasha (2017) supports this by saying that African traditional societies also involved herbalists, surgery, dietary therapy and psychotherapy, in addition to traditional exorcism, rituals and sacrifices

3.1 Barrenness and other problems

According to (Elders, 10/09/2022);

“A ritual is done for a barren woman and those with various problems by elders in Simatwet (sacred tree). A woman can be barren due to various reason some of which include curses from elders in one did not observe the taboos or disobeyed the elders, history of the family; a woman might have come from a family where one can be born barren. Elders (both men and women) led by a leader from the Talai clan went to the shrine (Kapkoros) once a year to pray for their god (Asiis). Before this occasion, they fasted for three months to cleanse themselves in case of any sin committed by an individual or a community. These elders sat down around the sacred tree where fire was lit and a sheep was slaughtered to signify that the blood was to connect them with God through the spirits and ancestors. In the morning all of them knelt down facing the east to god (Asiis). The prayer requests made in this particular shrine included; requesting god for good health, harvest, fertility, protection and blessings. They all carried a tree known as Korosek and arrows which everyone spited into it and threw it into the fire to burn.”



Figure 2: Simatwet, a sacred tree where the Nandi offered rituals to their god

Source: Research 2022

They further noted that they went aside to monitor the behavior of the smoke, if the smoke goes directly up, the god (Asiis) has accepted their prayers. If the smoke doesn't go directly, then it is a sign of bad omen, therefore, elders went back home and prayed and fasted again after one month, they would go back with the very specific items and the god (Asiis) was believed to have mercy on them and accepted their prayers.

The elders believed that after these prayers those having problems such as barrenness, poverty, sickness would get healed if they took to their homes remains of firewood from the lit fire and continued lighting it there as the healing power followed them.

The traditional medicinal specialist had to bless the congregation to allow them go back home, but before that, a boy and a girl were made to sit at the door of the shrine holding milk and beer. The religious specialists held on their hands “Kipkaliangit” which used to dip into beer and milk in order to sprinkle it to the people as they come out of the shrine. A trumpet was blown as they put a climbing plant known as *sinendet* across their necks to alert the community that a breakthrough has been found they sang songs of blessings praising god (Asiis) to be great and when the rest of the community members heard the song, they celebrated and made merry because god (Asiis) had answered their prayers. The practice according to the diviners and elders was done to bring about good will to the community.

The above argument is supported by the works of Ndungu & Mwaura (2008) who indicated that if the event of the infection was physical he will give a few spices to fix it, but if it is mental, he utilized strategies, articulating words to pursue a way and underhanded spirit answerable to the issue, or played out a purging custom which included the whole family. This according to the researcher agrees with the sentiments of the traditional elders of the Nandi community. However, the scholar does not bring out the actual procedures of how the rituals were conducted.

The encyclopedia Britannica, (2007), agrees with the findings by saying that the medicine person carries a kit of objects, feathers of a particular bird, shaped or marked stones, pollen, hallucinogenic or medicinal

plants among other items that are associated with healing. In cases where the nature of offending substance is metaphysical, the healing ritual is applied in order to achieve mental and spiritual health.

3.2 Exorcism

The study found out that among the Nandi, exorcism was done at various levels; family and community level. At family level it involved the use of four leaves from *immani* tree which was taken and put on four pieces of broken pot filled with water, the first pot is put in the children's room (*itok*), the second one is put in the boys room (*kaplengu*), the third one in the sheep's hut (*injor*), this was done in order to chase an evil spirit away whenever it happens to visit the family, and finally the last one was thrown by an elder west where the sun sets because it was believed that when the sun sets, it goes with the evil spirits. (Elders, 10/10/2022).

At community level, according to (Elders, 10/10/2022);

“in cases of an epidemic like Corona virus that occurred recently, we reached an elder from Talai clan. This fellow from the talai were considered pure as they were free from evil practices and that is why they are normally used to conduct such activities. Their work was to exorcise the Corona virus which was considered to be an evil spirit. The exorcism of such evil spirits is done at the river by it is believed after the practice the spirit will be carried away by the river. This practice is to be attended by aged men who had knowledge on how it should be conducted. At the river, a sheep was slaughtered and the aged men were to be on both sides of the river holding the fetishes from the sheep. At this point immediately the elder in charge of the ritual utters some words of destruction to the evil spirit they are to agree in one voice to send of the evil spirit as they threw the fetishes into the water to be carried away. This was an indication that the evil spirit has gone for good.”



Figure 3: Elders from Talai clan conducting exorcism of COVID-19 in a river

Source: Research 2022

The above findings contradict with Avorgbedor (2000) in the manner in which it was conducted. The scholar said that exorcism is a practice of expelling demons or evil spirits from people or places that are possessed or are in danger of being possessed by them. He further indicates sometimes an effigy made of clay or works would be used to display the demon and would ultimately be destroyed. Exorcism may be accompanied by dancing to the beating of drums, singing, and sometimes flogging the individual or touching him/her with strange objects such as animal tails and strange objects to chase out the spirits.

Furthermore Westerlund (2006) also differs with the findings of the study. He points out that medicine men offered medicine for protection if the cause of the disease is perceived to be an attack from evil spirits; the person will be protected by the use of talisman, charm, amulets, specially designed body marks, and a spiritual birth to drive the evil spirit away. He adds that these are rites aimed at driving off evil and dangerous powers, spirits, or elements to eliminate the evil or dangers that may have befallen a family or community.

The study further identified that the diviners among the Nandi community, practiced palmistry which is the art of reading palms in order to foretell the future of an individual. They use a strange language while conducting their work, thus they are in touch with the spirit world. They are able to say who bewitched an individual, which spirit needs to be appeased, which types of medicine to use to cure people as well as the ritual to be performed. They could also tell if one's

journey could be safe or not for example according to one of the diviners,

There was a woman who whose palms I read and I told her not to go for the journey she had planned to but she ignored. The moment she set herself on the journey she met with a black cat which crossed her way and disappeared never to be seen, she assumed and continued with her journey, on her way she experienced a very bad accident that almost costed her life. When her family consulted another diviner, he told them that the ancestors from her father's house were angry, and wanted to be appeased. The in-laws were to take a live animal to be sacrificed on her late father's grave yard, because the problem was worse the in-laws adhered to sentiments given and took the animal, since that time peace prevailed.

Findings further revealed that in case of a frequent attack from ancestral spirits, a sheep would be slaughtered to tell if that home is at peace with the ancestors. The diviner would simply read the intestines of an animal and would be able to tell if all is well with the family or not. But if there is something bad, the diviner would use the fetishes from the same intestines to cleanse the home and family members.

It can be noted from the above discussions that different communities have different ways of warding off the evil spirits. In as much as the end goal is similar; being free from the attack from the spirits, the procedures differ a great deal.

Cumes (2017), disagrees with the above findings when he said that the spirit world is consulted to identify the cause of the disease or to discover whether there was a violation of an established order from the side of the sick person which is established through; cowrie shells, throwing of bones, shells, money, seeds, dice, domino-like objects or even dominos themselves or other objects that have been appointed by the diviner and the spirit to represent certain polarities on strips of leather or flat pieces of wood.

3.3 Curses

Diviners, (3/8/2022), claimed that;

“Among this community one could get cursed due to various reasons for instance, if one kills a person and denies the action, marrying from the same age set, using someone's medicine to cure a disease without their consent, disrespecting their places of worship. Curses can manifest in different forms like chronic diseases, madness, barrenness, poverty, bad luck among many others.

They further pointed out that in case one becomes mad because of a curse, diviners were consulted who in turn consulted the spirit world who could give out instruction of the requirements for the ritual to be performed.

Tabi (2006), agrees with the above finding when she noted that in some Ghanaian communities, especially in the Akan communities, traditional healers and practitioners are of the opinion that disobeying taboos is one of the ways that could lead to severe illness to the person(s) or community.

This argument is supported by Olupona (2004) who states that the ‘spirit world is consulted to identify the cause of a disease or to discover whether there was a violation of an established order from the side of a sick person. This is established through the use of cowrie shells, throwing of bones, shells, money, dice, domino-like objects or even dominos themselves, and other objects that have been appointed by the diviner and the spirit to represent certain polarities on strips of leather or flat pieces of wood.’

Insoll (2010) agrees with the above scholar by saying that if a disease is perceived to be caused by an invocation of a curse or violation of taboos, the diviner appeases ancestors, spirits or the gods according to the severity of the case .The individual is often required to provide certain items for sacrifice and/or libation ,such as spotless animals (dove, cut, dog ,goat, and fowl), local gin, cola nuts, eggs and plain ,white ,red or white cloth as specified by the gods .He further indicates that the used items may be thrown in the river, left to rot or placed at strategic places, usually at the crossroads at the outskirts of the

community, depending on the nature and severity of the case.

They further insisted that the practice of averting the curses were done specifically by specialists (diviners) because they had a unique power. They were to access the condition of a patient and the cause of the curse. This finding agrees with Mbiti (2015), who indicated that the religious specialists had a duty to remove curses, control the spirits of the dead and would discover the reasons for developing issues through divination.

In the forgoing it can be noted that the office of the diviner was very important among the Nandi community for they ensured the wellbeing of the society.

3.4 Appeasing the Ancestors.

Appeasing of ancestors is a common practise among different communities in Kenya. However, the method of doing it differed among the Nandi. The study found out that ancestors were appeased in various manner based on the type of the ancestral spirit. (Elders, 10/8/202), pointed out that;

...the spirits could either be good or evil depending on the way they lived before death. They are believed to influence the life of the living in a good or a bad way. The spirit of an ill-treated person before death could cause evil to the living members of his clans on earth. In the event that the spirit comes back to haunt the clan or family a ritual was performed to appease the spirit or send it back to whoever killed him if they haven't sought for forgiveness in the case of murder.

This agrees with Mbiti (2015) when he said that spirits are ubiquitous and have a daily influence on the events of the living; and could therefore govern people's life. In addition, (Achebe, 2009), in his book: *Things fall apart* reinforces the idea that "the homeland of the ancestors and the country of the living were not too far apart. There was interaction between them, particularly at festivals and when an elderly man passed away, since he was connected to the ancestors. "a man's life, from conception to

death, was a sequence of rites of passage that drew him closer and closer to his forefathers''

The study further found out that a Sheep was suffocated to death while the elders were uttering some words so that when the sheep dies, it goes with the spirit. Thereafter the dead sheep was slaughtered and roasted. It was eaten by only those who attended the function to mark the end of the attack. In case a family member is killed through an accident or through an attack, those who did the killing brought a cow at night to the home of the deceased so that when members from the deceased family wake in the morning, they would realise that there is a family seeking for forgiveness and they would give room for negotiation in which the case was settled when they were given nine cows as a compensation.

Elders, (20/11/2022) said that;

Whenever there was an attack by an ancestor, which could be through a chronic disease like nonstop coughing, and we would get three small branches of (immaniat) tree and perform a ritual with it by calling the names of different ancestors. When a name of concerned ancestor is mentioned, the sticks will remain standing then we can make a prayer request for the ancestor to leave the family in peace. Milk and beer are poured to the three standing sticks to signify the end of the attack which eventually leads to celebrations.



Figure 4: Leaves from an *immanat* tree used by the elders to perform a ritual

Source: Research 2022

Idowu & Cornwall (2001), agrees with the findings when they mentioned that rituals are sometimes performed in order to consecrate some herbs without which the medicine is meaningless. Divine and ancestral sanctions are considered necessary before and during the preparation and application of medicine.

Adjaye (2001) differs with the manner in which the ancestors were appeased when he pointed out that libation involves pouring of some liquid, mostly local gin on the ground or sometimes on objects followed by the chanting or reciting of words. It is usually regarded as a form of prayer. The liquid could also be water or in modern times, wine, whisky, schnapps, or gin. Some cultures also use palm wine, palm oil, and coconut water, while some others use corn flour mixed with water.

White (2005), agree with the above scholar when he pointed out that the person pouring the libation would be pouring the drink or liquid on the ground as he is reciting the prayers followed by responses to each prayer point by observers.

According to (FGDs, 27/11/2022);

in case a child is born and cries continually, chances would be that a certain ancestor's demands that the child be named after him, elders will be consulted who in turn will consult the spirit world until a solution is reached. The child will be named after an ancestor who wanted to be reborn in that child. and in return the ancestor will go in peace as the child will stop crying.

This finding differs with Towet (1979) who pointed out that if a snake visited a Kipsigis family with a pregnant woman, it would not be killed. The Kipsigis gave it milk courtesies, then a hole was made in the wall for it to pass through while uttering some words. 'ruutenasituniruuteu, ingochepyosoananboiyon ne bogaihais' which meant 'go in peace and return in peace'. This was so because the Kipsigis believed that the ancestors took the form of living things or animals.

IV. OBSERVATION OF MORALITY AND MORAL VALUES

According to the findings of the study, the Nandis believed in their god (Asiis) as Supreme Being who provided their morality and they were expected to abide by it. In the event of disobedience calamities befall them such as strange sickness, drought among others. The elders of the community were bestowed with the responsibility of appeasing their gods through specific sacrifices done in specific places at specific time.

The above sentiments agree with Mbiti (2015) when he pointed out that 'in many African societies their morals were given to them by God from the very beginning. This provides unchallenged authority for morals. This offers the morality uncontested authority. It is also assumed or believed that some of the dead and spirits watch over the living to ensure they abide by moral precepts and punish them when they are wilfully broken.'

They study further indicated that the Nandi used their religion to uphold their morality. They believed that the spirits and ancestors had a hand in shaping the behaviour of the living. The concept of morality, religion, values and beliefs are closely intertwined, and as a result, they have a significant influence on how individuals behave in society. Mbiti (2015), supports the argument by indicating that Africans are notoriously religious in all they do, for him, religion serves as both the basis and the ultimate moral code. Religion and morality go hand in hand because morality is the result of religion. God, ghosts, and ancestors are all forces that indirectly or directly affect human existence; as such, they are all moral agents that guide people's actions.

FGDs, (27/11/2022) argued that;

in a conventional structure, a person cannot survive alone except in a corporation and does not respect moral laws alone in the society. He or she is dependent on others for their existence.

Waldron (2010) supported the argument when he said that the concept of health is a communal affair, African illnesses and healing are shaped by social, cultural and spiritual variables within the person.

Erah (2008) concurs with Waldron when he pointed out that African healthcare system could be described as pluralistic or holistic, where good health and illness are seen arising from the actions of the individuals and ancestral spirits.

It is crucial to comprehend Nandi's religious views in order to comprehend Nandi morality, which is based on right and wrong, and it is also necessary to comprehend these beliefs in order to comprehend the practices of Nandi traditional medicine. The majority of morals have to do with social behaviour, which refers to societal life as a whole as well as an individual's behaviour within a group, community, or country. Morality placed more focus on good behaviour in society since it holds that a person may live only in the context of others.

V. OBSERVANCE OF RITES OF PASSAGE

The Nandi observed several rites of passage which promoted the well-being of this community but the following have remained persistent up to date; initiation rites, marriage rites and death rites.

5.1 Initiation rites

It is a stage in life when a person is moved from childhood to adulthood. The Nandi community was brought together by rituals (*tumwek*). People from different places (*pororiesiek*) attended these rites of passage. The initiation was an institution of the Nandi culture which included a physical operation and a period of seclusion. This rite was done to both boys and girls but due to modern technology and Christianity, girls were stopped. The practice is only done to the male child and this involved removal of part of the male genital's organs. It involves the shedding of blood and endurance of pain. The shedding of blood according to the (Elder,20/11/2022) of the Nandi community signified a unity with the ancestors (*oiik*).

They further argued that;

the rites of passage are essential because through it; a child becomes part of the society, and children represents their individual families within their age group/sets (Ibinda). The age set is a 'school' of fellowship where each individual within the age is equal to the other. They call

each other the name (Pakule). During gatherings that is associated with this practice, women are supposed to fetch firewood, grind millet and sorghum, fetch water and cook for the entire community and visitors. The initiation rites (tumdo) forms a transition from immaturity to maturity of the initiates. It involves the shedding of blood which unites them with the ancestors. It unifies the initiates with fellow initiates into one age set known as (Ibinda)which depends on different age sets that recurs repeatedly in order, such as; Kipkoimet, Kaplelach, Kimnyigei, Nyongi, Maina, Chumo, Sawe).



Figure 5: Nandi male initiates
Source: Research 2022



Figure 6: The house that the initiate use while undergoing training

Source: Research 2022

Omare (2006), is of the contrary opinion to the above argument when he pointed out that that rites of passage in almost all African communities bound the initiates to the natural environment.

The (FGDs,27/11/2022), noted that in the Nandi community, initiates were secluded and taught moral values such as obedience, respect responsibility, hard work, patriotism, loyalty, and hospitality among others. Omare (2006) agrees with them when he said that the initiates are secluded, taught and oriented to their future role s which varied between communities.

They further noted that initiates were also taught using proverbs such as ‘do not wipe your mouth on the ground like chicken (*makibuchekutingonykouiingok*)’. This proverb was used to discourage them from being greedy. Another proverb said that ‘all people have enough teeth but not all have property (*yameebichkelaat, amayomei, chi tugun*). This proverb was used to encourage them

to be contended with what they have and work hard to acquire property. They also indicated that the initiates were taught by elders of the community on forms of behaviour such as respect of elders, self-respect and among others as discussed above.

The age sets were discouraged from marrying from the same age group because age set could assist the fellow age mate who was impotent. If they married from the same age set. It was assumed they were committing incest. This according to the researcher promoted a healthy society because the members are encouraged to observe the norms and traditions that led them to do what right and avoid doing what is considered to be wrong.

5.2 Rules Observed on Age-Set Systems

- i. One is not supposed to marry daughters from his age-set.
- ii. One cannot follow the age-set of his father (*kering*)
- iii. No age-set should be started when the same age-set is still alive.
- iv. One age -set should be on the ground (*in gony*)
- v. Women belong to age-set in which they are married to otherwise women do not have age -set
- vi. A ceremony (*saketabeito*) should be performed to hand over warrior ship to another age group
- vii. Circumcision was stopped before starting another age-set
- viii. In an age-set there were three age groups namely; *chongin, kiptatoyet, kiptaru and tetakat*.
- ix. People who were given responsibility to take care of circumcise boys were from reputable (respectable) backgrounds (*chi ne lolongean*)

Table 1: Age-sets

AGE SET	BORN	Circumcision
Nyongi	1886-1905	1915
Maina	1910	1920
Chumo	1920	1940
Sawe	1934	1949
Kipkoimet	1940	1950
Kaplelach	1960	1980
Kipnyingei	1970-1980	1990
Nyongi	To date	

(*Saketabento*)



Figure 7: Marriage circle

5.3 Marriage circle among the Nandi Age Sets

The diagram shows that Nyongi are sons of Chumo, Maina are sons of Sawe, Chumo are sons of Kipkoimet, Sawe are sons of Kiplelach and finally Kipkoimet are sons of Kipnyigei.

5.4 Male Initiation Rites

The study found out that the Nandi male before the coming of Christianity were initiated between the ages of 25 -30 years but nowadays because of education and Christianity the initiates are circumcised at the age of 14-16 year. The initiation ceremony and the period of seclusion has been limited to a period of three weeks to one month.

According to (FGDs, 27/11/2022), the teachings for the initiates in seclusions was not for public consumption but the teachings led the initiates to be well informed on the culture and norms of the Nandi society. The tutors (*matirienik*) taught the boys the rules and norms relating to the wild animals that cannot be hunted, plants that can be conserved for they are medicinal or totemic. These tutors also trained the boys to be future defenders of the community. The boys were encouraged to persistently do good and respect the elders *kondit* and this was checked by constant instructions on what a taboo, *kikire* and what is not accepted *etan*, the boys were to abide the rules and norms given by the elders of the community and observe them accordingly. They were to be contended with whatever little they had. They applied the virtue because it helped them

to be contended with their family set up and not to compare with others. The virtues such as sharing, kindness, honesty among others were encouraged while; vices such as anger, theft, lying are discouraged because it might lead to the breaking of the norms.

In the above virtues, respect to one's self and other people's property was encouraged and expressed in the proverb that says 'all people have enough teeth but not all have property (*yameebichkelaatamayomei chi tugun*). This meant that those who have wealth do so because it is through their hard work. Therefore, one is encouraged to work hard and be satisfied with what God has blessed him. (Elders, 25/11/2022).

Another proverb used among the community to discourage greed was that 'do not wipe your mouth on the ground like chicken (*makibuchekutingonykuingok*)' The chicken eats and wipes its mouth immediately, maybe to remove the remains of food. The proverb was used to encourage one to express gratitude.

Omara (2006) agree with the above discussions when he argued that the initiation included not only rite of circumcision but also initiation into the secret rite's rituals of the tribe and the teachings of the tribal customs. Rono (2002) also concurs with the ideas. The scholar noted that initiation involved instruction with reference to the tribe and the assumption of the societal responsibilities. Initiates were directed on what should not be done *etanutik* and warned on what is taboo *kigire*. During the seclusion period, the teachings included education and instructions on matters of sex (procreation and fertility), hygiene and medicine *sagitiek*

According to (Elders, 12/11/2022);

After initiation the men acquired the new age set (ibinda) and a group of socialization. Each age set had distinct features and behaviour, pattern i.e. the use of statements such as 'kaplelach 'who are full of milk in their bellies (kaplelachtumogeche mi chegomo' Other groups depended on economic provision.

Elderly females in this community played a role of which was significant. The mothers of the initiates (bot tarusio) were to stay in seclusion

too thus not to meet with their husbands (observe the rite of not have conjugal rites) because if they did their children will not heal quickly, also it was their duty to prepare enough food for the initiates. They also mocked their sons not to fear the ritual. This stage where mothers were allowed to talk to them was called (cherset). The mothers said that 'go through the ritual Kiptoo, don't insight the ritual and the children (akiwe we kiptoo, memutumdo, memulagok,akiwekolil)'

Mothers and aunties had a significant role in preparing food, brewing beer for elders and also guiding and counselling the initiates before the ceremony. The fathers and uncles played a role of cleansing if any of the initiates was involved in any misbehaviour such as sexual relations or killing. These elders taught the initiates on observance of their religion morality and tribal laws' symbols used signified certain knowledge.

The male initiation practice among the Nandi remains persistent despite few emerging challenges which can interfere with the yearly pattern of circumcision. This is attributed to the value that the male initiation practice offers to the Nandi community; it has ensured that their youths remain discipline.

VI. MARRIAGE RITES

According to Nandi (Elders 10/10/2022),

Unmarried male or female are seen as socially unfit in this community (kipsongoiyat). Marriage is allowed between members of two different clans who are not related by blood. Every person has a moral obligation to marry and get married so as to continue his kinship group. Those who did not marry or get married were regarded as outcasts.

Mbiti (2015) supports the above argument when he indicated that it is an obligation for a person to uphold communal values.

The study further found out that among the Nandi marriage is a rite of passage that an individual is expected to get in life. In the Nandi community

marriage is looked as sacred and ordained by God. It was important because new social relationships are created between families and relatives resulting to web of kinship being expanded, also it gave the couples an opportunity to learn new knowledge and skills for instance how to build a family and how to love and be loved resulting to a unique relationship of cooperation between a man and woman. Rono (2002) agrees with the findings above. He points out that if a girl was to be married suitors presented themselves to the parents and relatives after circumcision and they selected the right for the girl. This resulted into new relationships being formed. It also improved the status of individual in society because individuals could participate fully in the affairs of the community. Marriage was also regarded as a source of wealth for the man and family as a whole.

In as much as Rono (2002) agreed with Mbiti and the above findings, the scholar doesn't clearly bring out how marriage is conducted, as further findings revealed that marriage according to the Nandi is an alliance between spouses and between two exogamous families/clans. For example, *Kapkerio* would not marry from *Kapkerio* because they shared the same totem. Celibacy was discouraged amongst the Nandi community', argued one of the elders, he continued to narrate that if a person died without a child, a ritual had to be performed. The reason for this was to confuse the spirit of the dead so that it won't know the direction back home to disturb the living (Diviners 13/10/2022).

The respondents who were interviewed (FGDs, 25/11/2022) pointed out that marriage was one of the Nandi practices that promoted the well-being of the community. They said children in a family promoted stability of the family. According to them, children are a source of wealth, labour and security. Respect *kondit* according to them was central to all male/female relations. It was a major principle among the Nandi that a wife should maintain behavior that shows respect to her husband and elders.

There are rules and norms connected to marriage among the Nandi, when a woman gave birth she was not supposed to meet with elders of the community and even her husband for she is unclean. She was to

stay in seclusion for a period of three months and after this period, she was free to go back to her home and attend to her family and the rest of the members of her family. This argument concurs with argument by Mbiti (2015) who pointed out that it is an obligation for a person to uphold communal values.

The Nandi elders argued that this practice helped to promote the cleanliness which led to the eradication of diseases and reduction of immortality in the community. They continued to argue that this practice helped in family planning and protected the mother and the child from evil people.

Another respondent in his words pointed out that;
polygamous marriage healed the problem of childlessness in a family. A woman who was barren could be helped to have children through administration of medicine or performance of a ritual at a sacred tree, Simatwet. This brought forth fruits of children. Impotence was not seen as a problem in the Nandi community, this was because the age sets of the man, who were circumcised together (Pakuleiwei) were allowed to settle the case.

The study found out that age set system among others was one of the important tools used to ensure continuity of the family of an impotent member that belonged to their age set in the Nandi community.

VII. DEATH RITES

This was a final stage that marked a sorrowful event because the dead person is physically and permanently removed from the Family. According to elders of Nandi community, a dead person is treated with high regard because they believed death was not the end of life as the dead continued to live in a spirit form.

According to (Elders, 25/11/2022), they always associated death to something. In their words they said;

Death did not just occur, there could be something that has caused it. Sorcery, witchcrafts, evil magic, curses, breaking of a binding oath or taboo and old age were attributed to be the causes of death.

Mbiti (2015) supported the argument when he said that Africans believed that death did not just occur, something could have caused. Rites performed to the dead is discussed in details under performance of rituals in the earlier subtopic.

VIII. ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

One of the Nandi elder pointed out that;
we are advancing the preservation of the environment through various means. Trees and animals are used as totems to represent us and they are not supposed to be destroyed. This ensures that the environment is not destroyed. Some plants for example sinendet are planted within our homesteads. These plants are used for medicinal purposes but in the process, it ensures the preservation of the environment.



Figure 8: Medicinal plant that is planted in the homestead)

Source: Research 2022

Tatira (2000) supports the above arguments when he said that African religion can lead to preservation of wet lands. However, according to him it can be

achieved through instilling feelings of horror into the psychology of the habitants of an area by portraying the sites as the dwelling place of the spirits this differs slightly with the Nandi as they did not instil fear to their members to achieve the preservation of the environment instead they taught them the significance. He further said that the fig tree and mountains are the phenomena that are conserved by African community through African religion. Mawere & Kadenge (2010) agree with the above arguments says that local population has succeeded in conserving the natural environment by use of African religion. The scholar further observes that in Ghana, a complex of beliefs including tabooed species, sacred groves, sacred days and closed seasons prevents over exploitation of natural resources. Sibanda (2000), concurs with the above scholars on using African religion to conserve the natural environment. In his article he points out that Matopos National Park which was formed in 1926 by local population in Zimbabwe was to preserve the sacred shrine of Njelele; their traditional god. He identifies the Tonga people of Zimbabwe in the preservation of river Zambezi through African religion.

In as much as the above scholars agree with the findings, Dime & Oduroet. al., (2008), pointed out that similar to how there is an African view of God, there is an African knowledge of the physical world in which we live, including the cattle, trees, people, and cities, as well as the invisible, supernatural realm of spirits, powers, and illnesses. This brings out an additional aspect of knowing first the environment before having means of conserving it.

Bii (2004), disagrees with the above findings when he said in his article that a forty- kilometre underground tunnel referred to as a tunnel of spirits (*chepoloi*) in Nandi district preserved through African religion. The tunnel is considered a religious site for the Nandi. It has caves, rivulets and conference hall. Indigenous trees of medicinal importance surround it. Marks (2006), agrees with Bii (2004), when he said that traditional medicine is based on African traditional religion as well as interconnections between cultures, spirituality, humanness and community. The above conflicts with the findings of the Nandi of Uasin Gishu county who preserved the traditional medicine through

observance of totems, taboos and planting traditional plants of medicinal importance in their homesteads.

One of the elders noted that most of the activities related to healing had clear influence from the natural environment. For instance, when one individual was on a journey (usually in the morning) and he or she met a hawk sitting facing the opposite direction or a rat crosses his path, that individual should not proceed on his journey as that was a sign of bad luck. This phenomenon reflected how cosmological understandings played a critical role on the Nandi's daily life undertakings and their knowledge of the natural environment. This demonstrated the inseparable and instrumental role that the social environment greatly motivated them to conserve their natural environment.

People from the Nandi community did not only depend on the natural factors to ensure certain tree species are preserved but they went further and planted some of those trees in their homesteads. People have been conserving the environment and are still conserving it until now due to several reasons and different methods have also been put in place

IX. ADMINISTRATION OF HERBAL MEDICINES AMONG THE NANDI.

The study identified that the Nandi had developed their own special way of treating various ailments as revealed by one of the herbalists;

We have created our own unique ways of treating various diseases based on their causes and the age of a patient. For instance, we use irakwet to boost immunity of infants, chepkemetiot is mixed with magadi and given to an adult patient to lower pressure and imaniat accompanied by a ritual is used to appease the ancestral spirits that is causing disturbance to a family.

Marlice (2003), agrees with the above findings when he noted that the practice of traditional healing is a method of healing founded on its on concept of health and diseases.

WHO (2002); WHO (2019), is in support of the above findings when it identified that over the course

of centuries, people created distinctive indigenous healing practices that were customized to and characterized by their culture, religion, and environment and that met the health requirements of their communities. Different ethnic groups and civilizations have created various healthcare systems and treatment philosophies that consider various ailments, symptoms, and causes. Benzie & Wachtel-Galor, (2011), Smith et al, (2014), also support the above sentiment when he noted that traditional medicine has been used in many countries throughout the world over many centuries. Today, these medicines still represent an important part of health care in some countries for example, more than 100 countries have regulations for herbal medicine, but practices of traditional medicine vary greatly from country to country and region to region, as they are influenced by factors such as culture, history, personal attitudes and philosophy.

The findings above claims that the Nandi traditional medicine is used locally. WHO (2005) disagrees with the above when it noted that the use of traditional medicine has expanded globally and has gained popularity in the few decades. Specifically, these practices have not only continued to be used for primary health care of the poor in developing countries, but have also been used in other countries where conventional medicines are predominant in the national health care system.

The study further identified that the Nandi attributed sickness and other misfortunes as a punishment from the offended ancestral spirits, curse from elders, breaking of taboos. Among the Nandi there are different health care practitioners aside their modern counterparts namely; *Orkoiyot*, *chepkerichek*, *kok*, *pakumei*, *kipaitiot*. The healers had the sole responsibilities of detecting the source of the misfortunes in advance. Such powers of discerning also included identifying the cause of the offence and how it could be remedied. In the same vein, they believed that some illness and misfortunes were attributed and associated to witchcraft committed by living persons. The traditional medicine has impacted locals of Nandi in rural areas where orthodox medicine is limited. The Nandi medicine is also cheap as compared to conventional medicine.

WHO (2001), conveys with the above findings when it pointed out that globally, traditional medicinal practitioners (THMPs) are the only point of contact for at least 80% of the rural poor. The findings agree with Abdullahi (2017), whereby he claims that various ethnic groups in Nigeria have different healthcare practitioners whose mode of practice is not unlike in other tribes. The Yoruba's call them 'babalawos' The igbos call them 'dibia' while the northerners or hausas call them 'boka'. Additionally, Abdi (2016) also conveys by noting that traditional herbal medicines have impacted the lives of people in Nigeria especially in the rural areas where access to orthodox medicine is limited. He continued to argue that apart from the lack of adequate access and the fear of expired or fake drugs, the prohibitive cost of western medicine makes the traditional western medicine attractive.

Healers were also expected to define its cause and recommended the appropriate remedy. For instance, witch-doctors detected witches and occasionally counteracted their power. There were Nandi specialists and diviners (to administer treatment that was believed to have been caused by evil powers. (Diviners; 3/8/2022).

Mbiti (2015) agree with the above sentiments when he indicated that a traditional healer or spiritual guide who assists the community is known as a medicine man or woman. They had knowledge of the chemical and magical properties of numerous medicines and are adept at performing rituals.

According to the findings of the study the Nandi harvested some plant leaves like *tomotet* and *cherekeriot* and gave it to patient's when they are fresh to treat teeth cavities, *sinendet* was harvested, dried and burned into powder form before it was given to infants to protect them from evil eyes. Additionally, *tebeswet* and *chemasineitet* was mixed with honey before it was given to a patient. Some herbs were harvested ground into powder form and stored in some containers for future use.

The above findings are supported by Tembo (2017), when he pointed out that the plant parts are harvested fresh, pulverized, and left to dry first, then soaked in

water or other solvents like local gin. Some plant materials are burnt as charcoal and used as powder.

In addition, the study identified that various methods were used to administer the herbal medicine to patients among the Nandi community, for instance *simetwas* was used for body massage, *momoniat* was given in liquid form to infants while *motondorwet* was given to adults, cutting some body parts like hands to insert the medicine.

Tembo (2017) agree with the above findings when he noted that six major types of treatment common to the 72 or more ethnic groups in Zambia include drinking, eating, drinking as porridge, making small cut on skin and applying, bathing with herbs, dancing to exorcize spirits, and steaming with boiling herbs. However, the only difference is in the dancing to exorcise the spirits.

According to the findings, the Nandi of Uasin Gishu County put more emphasis on good diet to avoid illness. The young and the aged were specifically fed with millet *ugali* and milk as it provided them with strong immunity which kept them away from attack from diseases in most cases. Some special vegetables such as *nderemiat*, *sochot*, *sakiat* among others were used for the same purpose.

Kunleet. al., (2012) agree with the above findings when he noted that in the practice of contemporary medicine, illnesses can be avoided by diet, vitamin supplementation, and immunization. The study findings indicated that the Nandi traditional practitioners used interviews when finding out the history of the patient.

The study findings further indicated that the Nandi traditional healers first, identified the spirits, according to them sprits were in two categories namely: good spirits and bad spirits. The bad spirits brought about bad luck, sicknesses and bad omen, but good spirits brought about good fortunes. Medicine was put in their homestead in order to protect them from being attacked by diseases caused by evil spirits.

Mbiti (2015), healers will do oral interviews to learn more about the patient’s medical history, treatment history, and length of time in that condition. When a

patient is unable to speak for themselves, the healer may in certain situations ask other family members to speak on their behalf. The medical reports can occasionally be used for record keeping for future reference and as manner of reassuring other customers of their competence and reliability.

Omonzejele (2008) concurs with the above arguments when he pointed out that the healing process is holistic; thus, the healers do not distinguish between the natural and the spiritual or the physical and the supernatural. As a result, there are two main facets of health issues: spiritual and physical.

Westerlund (2006), noted if the ailment is believed to be the result of an attack by evil spirits, medicine men supplied remedies for protection; the victim would be preserved by the use of a talisman, amulet, and amulets, designed especially body markings, and a spiritual bath to ward off the evil spirits. These are rituals used to drive away bad and hazardous forces, spirits, or substances in order to get rid of any risks or ills that may have affected a family or community. His sentiments agree with the findings of the study but only differs in manner in which the protection was done.

The table below shows the Nandi traditional medicine, diseases treated and beliefs behind it.

Table 2: Medicine and Nandi traditional religious practices

Name of medicine	Disease treated	Religious beliefs
Irakwet	To boost immunity in an infant and healing	Protect
Cheroriet	Malaria	Heals
Kombotiet, kipskokosit	Chest infections	Healing
Kejjetwet, boroshiat	Pneumonia	Heals
Senetwet	Stomachache	Heals
Kagarwet	Mumps	Cursed away evil
Chepkeleliet	Strange pains in	Protected evil eyes

Chelelgatit and teldet	infants Remedy for barrenness	Heals	Songorwet	tummy Treated fungal diseases	Healing
Ikomie, soket	General sicknesses including diabetes	Heals	Motosiyet	Stomachache	Relieves constipation
Chebnowet	Clearing digestive system	Healing	Source: Herbalists, (5/9/2022), Diviners, (6/9/2022).		
Katabutiet	Stomachache and protected against evil eyes	Protection against evil eyes	REFERENCES		
Chepkermietot	Mixed with magadi to lower pressure	Healing	[1]	Avorgbedor, D. (2000). Bildung Dee Hoo! Sonic Articulations in Healing and Exorcism Practices of the Anio-Ewe. <i>The World of Music</i> . 42(2):9-24	
Sessiat	Headache	Healing	[2]	Hillenbrand, E. (2006). 'Improving Traditional –Conventional Medicine Collaboration: Perspective from Cameroonian Traditional Practitioners'. <i>Nordic Journal of African Studies</i> , 15(1):1-15.	
Kibongongnik	Deworming	Healing	[3]	Insoll, T. (2010). Talensi Animal Sacrifice and its Archaeological Implication. <i>World Archaeology</i> ; 42:231-244.	
Simet	Body massage	Massage	[4]	Matisi, Margaret Nanjala(2014). <i>HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL ARTICULATION OF SELECTED TEACHINGS OF REPENTANCE AND HOLINESS KINGS OUTREACH CHURCH</i> . Diss. MMUST	
Sigawet	Treating cancer, protecting germs in case of cut	Healing	[5]	Mawere, M., & Kadenge, M. (2010). Zviera as African Indigenous Knowledge Systems; Epistemological and Ethical Implications of Selected Shona Taboos. <i>INDILINGA African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems</i> , 9(1), 29-44.	
Tomotet, cherekeriot	Treated teeth cavity and as a pesticide	Healing	[6]	Mbiti, J. S. (2015). <i>Introduction to African Religion</i> . Waveland Press.	
Tangaratwet	Skin diseases	Healing	[7]	Olupona, J.K. (2004). Owner of the Day and Regulator of the Universe: Ifa Divination and Healing Among the Yorubas of South-Western Nigeria. In: Winkelman M, Peeks PM, Editors. <i>Divination and Healing: Potent Vision</i> . Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press.	
Tebeswet, Chemasineit et	All kinds of diseases	Healing	[8]	Precious Joan Wapukha, Margaret Nanjala Matisi (2022). "Panoramic Relationship between Ethnic Violence and Politics in Kenya" <i>Iconic Research and Engineering Journals</i> Volume 5 Issue 7 Page 76-83	
Itet	Skin rashes	Healing			
Chobiniot, cheptorotwet and tamurekiat	To cure infertility and cancer among women	Healing			
Motondorwet	Treated crumbs in women	Healing			
Peiwabtarit	Tonsils	Healing			
Momoniat	Clear infants'	Healing			

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