Creating Regional Continuity through Gendered Historical Network Memory

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The claim that Mara women’s knowledge of the past was constituted in widespread social networks still does not explain how or why these memories actually affected the history of this region. What is the possible historical significance of folktales told to girls at night by their grandmothers or gossip shared by women as the farmed or attended funerals together? What makes this question even more insistent is the incredible diversity of the Mara Region, with different languages, economic subsistence patterns and cultures practiced within small groups in close proximity to one another. Women who married into other communities and went to live with their husbands’ families often needed to speak new languages, conform to new cultural expectations and learn new skills. However, their successful adaptation was facilitated by the underlying similarity of key cultural assumptions, particularly around marriage and kinship. The familial links that these women provided fostered a further exchange of resources, ideas and people critical to the prosperity of the region and survival of particular communities in times of need.

Since married women were the main points of connection between diverse communities it seems logical that their stories and lives would provide the key to understanding regional connections. But just how women forged and maintained lasting and significant connections across ethnic and linguistic boundaries through their seemingly innocuous tales remained a
mystery. In my first interviews, when I began to hear the individualized and very particularistic nature of women’s memories that lacked a larger meta-narrative, I began to despair. Indeed, just as men had warned, it seemed that women did not know history nor pass on critical narratives about the past. Was there any historical meaning of women’s stories passed on by grandmothers for the history of the Mara Region?

A breakthrough came for me when my interviews were derailed by a funeral within the family of my friend and assistant for that week, Perusi. Our interviews came to an end when the presence of everyone in Perusi’s family was demanded at a funeral in a neighboring compound. Being focused on my own work, I was frustrated that we would not be able to continue and saw the funeral as a digression from my “real work” in the village. Little did I realize that I would now be able to experience women’s exchange of social network memory within its natural context. Here I could see women not just telling the stories but also putting them to work as the glue that held the region together and allowed for mutual support and resource sharing across ethnic boundaries. This experience allowed me to begin to glimpse how these pieces might fit together into a larger historical pattern. At this funeral I observed women using their historical knowledge to create, strengthen, enact, enforce and enable those ongoing connections. The narrative work that women performed over the long term created and maintained the underlying structures for the ongoing interaction of Mara society that transcended obvious differences through webs of regional connection.

One of the first things that I observed at the funeral was women’s careful attention to creating and strengthening relationships, along with its inherent obligations. When we got to the
funeral site I observed that about twice as many women as men were sitting toward the front of the compound on reed mats. The men were sitting in smaller groups on rice-straw bales and chairs in the back. Women were constantly talking to one another while men were more quiet and isolated, often playing with their cell phones or looking bored. As we sat under a mango tree waiting for things to develop Perusi began introducing me to the women sitting around us. Each woman was introduced, not by her given name, but by her relationship to both Perusi and to common experiences that might establish a connection with me. For example, Perusi might introduce someone by saying something like, ‘this is my father’s sister’s daughter from Butata who married the evangelist from the Chitare congregation and came to study at the Bible school.’ As people entered the homestead women sitting near to me would lean over and identify each person as they appeared by a marking a relationship and sharing a story. The women then began to call me their “sister” or “daughter,” “niece,” “aunt,” or “cousin” based on their identification of me as Perusi’s “sister,” which thereby determined their relationship to me. By pulling me into their social networks these women created new connections that included me in the narrative.

In these exchanges, existing relationships were strengthened by setting them within a diverse regional map of overlapping networks, where each woman had a different set of networks that overlapped with her neighbors’, depending on who they were talking to or about. Women established connections based on kinship (whether blood or fictive), but also through church, friendship, school or government ties. Most people that Perusi introduced were given little individual subjectivity other than their place in a relational field. People introduced by their church connections were often the only ones where a personal name was offered (a factor that
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will be important in Chapter 5). When Perusi and I did interviews together, even out of her home area, she always managed to make connections with the women we visited and establish a link in the web.¹ In one community of the South Lake we took time to visit her relative whom she had not seen in years. The woman had us sit for two hours in her home while she butchered a goat and made a meal for us, an obligation that was necessary for reestablishing and maintaining their connection.

Not only did women at this funeral identify past connections with other people but they enacted them by calling in obligations between clans who recognized a past connection through their observance of a *utani* (joking) relationship.² *Utani* is called a “joking relationship” because members of clans linked in this way can both insult and share informal intimacy with one another even if they have never met before. Some scholars have speculated that *utani* relations are based on historical connections between clans that were severed but still remembered.³ While we sat waiting for the burial a woman came into the compound wailing loudly in grief, as is common at a funeral when someone from a distance first arrives. However I was startled when the reaction from women around me was to laugh at her! When I asked Perusi to explain this she said that the woman was from nearby and had arrived earlier. This woman’s clan had a joking relationship with the deceased’s husband’s clan. At a funeral members of the *utani* clan made fun and acted contrary to expected behavior. This woman went around and rudely bothered family members, making everyone laugh. The *utani* clan representatives then declared that the casket would not leave the house for burial until the family paid a fine. They entered into public negotiations about how much the family would pay, with the *utani* refusing the family’s offers.
At one point the crowd was outraged and told the utani to show some compassion for the family and accept the offer so that they could bury their mother. The utani also brought soap, perfume and the shroud for the burial.

*Utani* clans have a historical relationship that is performed at funerals and other places where they come into contact with one another. Mara ethnography records that someone with whom you share an *utani* relationship is free to come into your household and take anything they want or enter your family’s wedding feast uninvited and take food.\(^4\) One elderly woman at the funeral said that when she was young this kind of thing happened at funerals a lot but in the 1960s it fell out of practice and was only recently being revived.\(^5\) The *utani* relationship is a way of keeping alive past memories of interactions between descent groups that do not figure into the unified ethnic narrative. Men also participate in *utani* relationships but at this funeral women performed those roles of reverse kinship, pointing out that kin are not always reliable partners. Women had a special interest in maintaining and periodically enacting these distant *utani* relationships to keep alive potentially valuable connections.

Another way in which women continued the work of maintaining relational networks at the funeral was to enforce discipline on those who neglected their network responsibilities, in this case a man. When Perusi’s half-sister came home from the funeral she reported on a neighborhood meeting to decide how much each household should contribute to the funeral expenses. The group was resistant to give anything because the husband of the deceased had not gone to village funerals himself in the past. He lived in the regional city, Musoma, and when he came home to the village did not greet people properly. The meeting was called while everyone
was waiting for the burial, delaying it significantly. In the end people only agreed to contribute
after the village government fined the husband for his refusal to attend village funerals.

Maintaining the relational grid takes constant work, even if you live away from your
home village. Women’s role here enforced those obligations, through what is often referred to
pejoratively as “gossip.” Perusi’s sister said that the deceased woman married in from outside
but was kind and when she and her husband came back to the village she would visit people’s
homes and attend their funerals, in contrast to her husband. The village showed up at the funeral
to honor her, even if they were angry at her husband, a child of the community. The women in
this village who had been talking with one another about the behavior of the deceased woman’s
husband over the years, found their opportunity to make him pay attention to his responsibilities.
His wife’s funeral was at his village home but her natal family came and asked to bury her at
their family home because the couple had been divorced. The husband’s brother who was in
charge of the funeral logistics refused to have the funeral moved and begged her family to stay
there for the mourning period instead of going home. He argued that it would not be good for
her children to be split between the two families and two places of mourning. Maintaining the
relationship with their in-laws was clearly a higher priority than acknowledging the personal
aspects of their marriage and divorce. Women’s stories were not silly gossip but tools for doing
the work of maintaining relationships when they were neglected.

A final role of women’s stories was to enable the next generation of women to adapt to
new communities while maintaining their home ties. As is common after a funeral, three related
women that Perusi called “mother” came to her house to relax and visit. In the course of the visit
they began telling me about how it used to be for women when they were young, ending up with
advice they were given by their father’s sister on their wedding day and stories their grandmother
told them. They said that when a girl got married her job was to learn the ways of her husband’s
household – how they cook, what they like to eat and their rules. She needed to learn how to
greet all of those people and do what they asked, learning how to talk to them. Above all she
must respect her mother-in-law and do nothing to provoke her. She was judged by the way she
kept her household, the discipline of her children, her own hard work and the quality of food she
produced. A good woman looked for guests to arrive, welcomed them in when coming from a
long trip by warming water for their bath and cooking food for them. Finally they were
commissioned to respect and show a good heart towards their new family while not forgetting
their mother’s home. These women took pride in fulfilling the obligations passed on to them by
grandmothers and aunts for the benefit of family and community rather than their individuality.

What I experienced at this South Lake funeral thus capsulized the four ways that women
used historical memory to create or strengthen, enact, enforce and enable regional connections
with diverse people. This chapter will first explore the establishment of the region’s underlying
continuity, particularly in terms of kinship and marriage structures, that allowed women to cross
cultural boundaries as wives while maintaining ties to their home communities. It will then look
at the various ways that women remembered the past through names, bracelets, medicines,
greetings, genealogies and joking relations. Each of these ways of remembering established links
to regional networks critical to the community’s survival and the women’s well being. Finally, I
will discuss the historical knowledge in the form of stories passed on by grandmothers to their
granddaughters who slept at their homes and were prepared for marriage in a distant community.

It thus becomes clear that even though women’s knowledge of the past is not situated in the places we are likely to look for history, it nevertheless has played a significant role in the region’s development. This chapter creates the necessary basis for understanding how women’s memory allowed those networks to function, necessary for the following chapters which look at historical change in chronological order, starting with stories about grandmothers and great grandmothers and moving up to the present. Women’s memory, though in diverse forms, was critical to the unfolding historical process of creating an interacting region.

The Context of Regional Diversity and Underlying Similarity

Women became the key points of connection between the diverse peoples of the Mara Region not because they were biologically predisposed to social networking but because of their historically determined structural position mediating between communities as wives and daughters. The Mara Region was home to a diverse set of people, each entering the region historically at different times and practicing different economic subsistence strategies. However because these diverse peoples occupied different ecological zones in close proximity to one another they developed interdependent relations to gain access to expertise and resources not available in their own communities. While they deployed a number of strategies to solidify stable connections across linguistic and cultural boundaries, intermarriage and the movement of women into new communities was key to regional dynamics. The creation of in-law connections through common understandings about marriage and descent facilitated the exchange of knowledge, kept the peace and provided assistance in times of need. Similar regional
assumptions surrounding marriage developed, with significant variations, to make this possible, including patrilocality, matrifocality, bridewealth and the robust relationship of a woman to her siblings and natal lineages.

The sources for making this argument about the role of women and intermarriage in establishing regional connections and similarity over the long term are necessarily linguistic, archeological and ethnographic. Ethnographic information must be used carefully when it is applied historically. However one can observe regional patterns in lineage systems and marriage customs that suggest historical relationships between different areas and their cause. Although it is easy to reify these institutions as “traditional” and unchanging using ethnographic literature, they must be kept in constant dialogue with the historical sources as a set of flexible options that people deployed according to context and need.

The exceptional linguistic and cultural diversity within a relatively small area that characterizes the Mara region could well be an impediment to intermarriage. For example, one of the most historically significant markers of regional difference was the divide between those who circumcise and those who do not. All East Nyanza Bantu speakers practiced male circumcision, while those of the Interior or Mara-speakers (Ikoma, Ikizu, Ishenyi, Kuria, Nata, Ngoreme, and Zanaki) practiced what they called “female circumcision.” By contrast the initiation into adulthood of girls without circumcision among the South Lake or Suguti-speakers (Kwaya, Ruri, Jita) took place at the time of their wedding. Elders said that male circumcision and initiation was introduced from North Interior Kuria. Historically Interior people adopted circumcision as a result of interaction with pastoralist Southern Nilotic speakers, while Lakes Bantu speakers on
the western side of Lake Victoria did not practice either male or female circumcision. Luo-speakers (Western Nilotic) from the North Lake and Bantu-speakers from the South Lake, as well their neighbors to the south, did not practice circumcision at all, while Tatoga (Southern Nilotic) pastoralists in the Interior practiced both male and female. South Interior people and North Interior Kuria were warned against marrying a woman who was not circumcised and both saw their others’ practices as reprehensible. Prejudices against others was also enshrined in nicknames. Sukuma Bantu-speakers who live just south of the region called everyone in the Mara Region “Shashi,” referring to them as “those that circumcise.”

In spite of these prejudices the only instance of strict marriage prohibitions was that with the endogamous blacksmith clans dispersed throughout the Mara. A South Interior man emphasized the importance of the division into blacksmiths (Turi) and non-blacksmiths (Bwiro, Biru) rather than that of clans. He said that the Turi came from South of the Lake (Burongo, Mwanza and Uzinza) during the time of the grandfather of his grandfather. Women from the blacksmith descent groups produced pottery and prohibited non-blacksmiths from practicing the craft. A Turi woman described the taboos associated with marriage to a non-blacksmith descent groups, including not even touching a blacksmith’s bed. It was breaching this marriage prohibition that raised the ire of South Interior elders against early Christian coverts in Bumangi (see Chapter 4).

Even though obvious cultural differences and tensions persisted, these diverse groups did not remain isolated but seem to have been interacting, intermarrying and exchanging cultural resources for as long as we have historical sources. One would be hard put to find a group of
“pure blood” evident in the fact that almost all genealogies, from men as well as women, I collected named “foreign” or “stranger” ancestors. In fact there seemed to be a preference for cross-ethnic marriages. All ethnic groups of the region formed as a result of a deep history of interaction and exchange, rather than isolation and separate development, which some early scholars described as constituting a “hybrid people.”

The earliest European travelers as well as later colonial officers in the Mara Region found it difficult to categorize these diverse peoples into the familiar “tribal” boxes because they did not fit the expected patterns of homogeneity. Colonial travelers and scholars referred to the Mara people as Bantu with “a dash of Hamitic or Nilotic blood” or “mixed with the Masai and Gaya (Luo),” while others saw them as “kindred tribes of the Maasai,” even though they spoke Bantu languages. What was even more confusing for colonial officers was that there were so many small ethnic groups. Each group claimed autonomy, even though sections of East Nyanza Bantu speakers could understand each other, speaking languages that might be considered dialects of the same language.

Historically the linguistic diversity of the Mara Region corresponded with different groups living in different ecological zones and practicing different subsistence patterns. Foraging Asi people in the oral traditions of the western Serengeti lived in the woodlands. As they increasingly interacted with pastoralists and farmers they were marginalized to these ecotones not easily exploited by others. Various Nilotic-speaking pastoralists groups moved into the region in the common era with Tatoga coming to occupy the open grasslands for their cattle. Bantu-speaking root crop farmers also came about the same time (300-400 CE) from across Lake Victoria. Out of these interactions Bantu farmers, the majority in the region, developed a mixed
farming, livestock and foraging economy but also maintained interdependent relations with pastoralists and forager peoples. We know from historical linguistics that they relied on their neighbors for things like spiritual access to the land and the skills of cattle keeping, and adopted age-set rituals, grain crops and homestead designs from them. As this agro-pastoral regional system developed only the Tatoga and Maasai on the eastern fringes of the region remained primarily pastoralist and absorbed the last of the forager peoples during the colonial era.22

As a result of these on-going interactions Mara communities coalesced into a unified region despite the vast language and cultural differences. In order to facilitate movement across ethnic and linguistic boundaries, particularly for women marrying as strangers in their husband’s village, a set of shared cultural assumptions and institutions emerged. Even the most obvious cultural differences between Western Nilotic Luo or Southern Nilotic Tatoga speakers and East Nyanza Bantu speakers were smoothed over by accommodation and assimilation on both sides. Bantu-speaking and Tatoga-speaking women described their own circumcision similarly, as a small affair in the homestead with sisters and close neighbors, in contrast to men’s more public celebrations. Echoed by others, one South Interior woman said that age-sets didn’t mean much to girls since they got help for their work among neighbors and family, and they took on the age-set of their husband at marriage.23 This was a crucial adaptation to integrate brides into a new community without stigmatizing strangers outside of the local age-sets. Similar assumptions and structures, particularly about marriage, facilitated connections across the region rather than divides. Because it was women who systematically connected people across the region, it is reasonable to assume that they were instrumental in creating those continuities.
Because the region’s people put a high premium on interaction, intermarriage became the primary way Mara people found to achieve stable and long lasting connections. Although loan words in the distant past demonstrate this profound exchange between cultures it is more difficult to explain the mechanism of cultural change. However, we have much more immediate evidence for drastic language shifts that began as late as the nineteenth century. Communities in the North Lake spoke dialects of an East Nyanza Bantu language known as Suba but began speaking Luo languages and adopting Luo identity with the arrival of people from what is now South Nyanza, Kenya. Both men and women say that women played a critical role in this language shift as Suba-speaking men married Luo-speaking women who spoke to their children in Luo. Suba-speaking men were interested in Luo brides because their bridewealth rates were much lower or non-existent.

Men’s narratives confirm that exchanging brides with Bantu-speaking people already inhabiting the land was a way for Luo newcomers to make alliances and gain acceptance. When the Luo Kakseru came to Shirati the leader of the Bantu-speaking Surwa people, who were already there, gave his daughter to the Luo leader, Kiseru, to marry and thus become friends. One Luo Kakseru man said that although they now consider themselves to be a Luo community they still pray in a Bantu Suba language at a funeral or in the ritual offering of an animal. However many said that few know the old language anymore and that they have been “swallowed up” by Luo. The same process of linguistic shift from Bantu to Luo took place in what is now Kenya before the settlers left South Nyanza, to come to what is now Tanzania.
In this exchange women were instrumental in overcoming the prohibitions against intermarriage, particularly around circumcision. If an Interior man married a Lake woman who was not circumcised she had to go through the ceremony before the birth of her first child so that she could be integrated into the community. As Luo-speaking people moved into the North Lake the local Bantu-speakers stopped circumcising and intermarried as they increasingly adopted Luo culture. A number of stories demonstrate the influence of women marrying across ethnic boundaries in changing local customs. According the research of a North Lake popular historian, Luo girls told the local Bantu-speaking men ‘if you want to marry us you have to stop circumcising and file your bottom teeth, so that you look like us and we can marry you.’ On the other side some South Lake people began circumcising males in order to attract brides from Interior groups. A South Lake tradition says that they began to circumcise males because women from other ethnic groups began to demand it. "If you are not circumcised you cannot get married, or "you cannot bring forth children.”

Another place that experienced significant recent language shift, largely brought on by intermarriage, was in the South where Sizaki people, speaking a Bantu East Nyanza language, intermarried with Sukuma since the end of the nineteenth century and adopted their identity. One woman who now lives in Ikizu said that Sizaki mixed with other people and began speaking Sukuma, “the language of the town” (Bunda), eventually losing their own language. The Sukuma first came to Mara and began intermarrying as traders of tobacco, alkali salt and, iron hoes from across the lake, for gourds and wilderness products. Many women in my interviews were comfortable speaking a number of local languages because they had married or lived with
maternal uncles in other language groups. Some of the Luo women, whose mothers came from or married into Suba-speaking communities, also spoke those Bantu languages.

Although communities throughout the Mara Region practice a wide variety of diverse and flexible lineage, marriage and inheritance systems, they shared a strong underlying matrifocality (the centrality of women in the family system). Scholars no longer understand matriliney and patriliney as a “totalizing system” but rather as a “cluster of characteristics” that are contested and change over time. Lakes people, whether matrilineal or patrilineal were the most matrifocal. North Lake Luo and South Lake Jita practiced patrilineal descent while South Lake Ruri and Kwaya were matrilineal, but both had low to nonexistent bridewealth rates (a characteristic of matrifocality). South Lake Jita and Ruri said that in the past many married without any bridewealth at all because they “did not want to sell their children.” Lakes people became increasingly patrilineal in relation to their connections to the caravan trade or to colonialism, leading to higher bridewealth.

Although Interior cattle areas also displayed an underlying matrifocality, the relatively higher emphasis on patriliney and high bridewealth with the rise of cattle wealth had serious consequences for the development of different gender dynamics and consequences (see chapter 4). Some of the interior communities like Ikizu, Zanaki and Nata transitioned from matriliney to patriliney but still practiced some form of bride service, the matrilineal characteristic where the groom worked for his mother-in-law before the wedding, even as they exchanged cattle for the bridewealth. In Interior communities maternal uncles and paternal aunts, among others, were regularly given their share of the bridewealth and had special duties to perform for the bride.
The underlying matrifocality of interior patrilineal cattle cultures, was also obvious in the “house” system where bridewealth from daughters was controlled by their mother for her sons’ marriages (see chapter 3). Tatoga pastoralists in the region has a strong tradition of women controlling their own livestock for bridewealth and milk, marked with their brand, as long as they stayed married there, as well as herding for a year as bride-service. North Interior Kuria, also shared matrifocal traits in the descent terminology with elements from the woman’s house.

In spite of its matrifocality, all Mara communities also practiced patrilocal residence at marriage, so that the woman was always the one removed from her natal family, going to live at her husband’s family home at marriage. In matrilineal systems that meant that women, the key actors in the descent group, were spread out among many other descent groups of the men that they married. Anthropologists have long been concerned with the social ramifications of these different descent systems. Some have argued that matrilineal systems are most often found where there is plenty of land and a shortage of people to work it in an unstable environment. In this case one wants to spread out the risks by making kinship connections in many different places where the conditions might be better in times of need. This can be achieved through patrilocal matrilineality. Conversely, studies of Luo communities in Western Kenya infer that patrilineality and patrilocality became more pronounced with colonial land shortages and cash crops. Whereas in the Mara Interior increased cattle and livestock wealth led to the same tendencies. Patrilineal societies put emphasis on concentrating wealth within one localized family. Anthropologists have also noted that while a strong female contribution to subsistence agriculture, such as the Mara, favors matrilineality, that is negated by the advantages of non-
soral polygyny in patrilocal systems, which is more favorable for women’s cooperative agricultural labor. A polygynous man collected women from a number of different places in his family homestead, rather than going to live with one woman’s family in a matrilocal system. Wives had more women to share the burden of farming in patrilocal system with polygyny.46

Insuring the stability of marriages with strangers through bridewealth was another critical regional characteristic central to the logic of patrilocality. The groom’s family gave cows or other goods and livestock to the bride’s family because they were losing a productive and reproductive member of the domestic unit. This was essentially a transfer of a woman’s kinship rights and responsibilities from one group to another. In North Interior Kikuria the term for bridewealth is ikihingo, meaning a “a thing from a tree or wood,” referring to the log of wood (umuhingo) that is put across the homestead gate to close the corral. Anthropologist Eva Tobisson argues that this is a “marker of resource management at the level of the two-generational family.”47 The exchange of gifts bound the families together since the return of bridewealth was required to dissolve a marriage and determined the paternity of a child regardless of the biological father.48 The process of marriage itself was a long drawn out affair with a number of different gifts exchanged on both sides that made for ongoing relations and obligations between in-laws.49 In fact in many Mara communities bridewealth was purposely not paid in full at the time of the wedding, which allowed for more connections, the ability of young men without money to get married and some ability to negotiate if there was abuse or the marriage began to dissolve.50
Another key element in women’s ability to form networks throughout the region was the widespread expectation that they would maintain critical relationships with their home lineages, again with significant difference between the matrilineal and patrilineal practices. South Interior Jita women said that they were still considered members in lineage meetings of their father’s family even after they married. They were not members of their mother’s lineage, but could be invited as “listeners” at family meetings. Women in the patrilineal Tatoga brought their children back to their natal home at key family life stage rituals and received gifts of livestock from their fathers and maternal uncles.\(^51\) Women in matrilineal societies were full members of their mother’s lineage meetings even after they married, but were still allowed to sit in on their father’s family business.\(^52\) As ethnography Huber described South Lake Kwaya society, a married woman had more consideration as a daughter and a sister than as a wife. A Kwaya proverb says, “married woman’s flesh belongs to her husband, but the bones belong to her own people.”\(^53\)

During the colonial period as patrilineality increased in the Interior, a woman’s connections to her natal lineages decreased, with important consequences for her security. As will be apparent in Chapters 3 and 4 the colonial period brought increasing emphasis on the husband’s individual rights in his wife and isolated her from her wider networks. In Bumangi the women said they had no say in their mother’s or father’s lineages since they left for their husband’s family. “What would I go back to do?” they quipped.\(^54\) Another Nata woman stated that women could attend both their father’s and husband’s lineage meetings, if they were invited, but could not speak unless they were asked, saying that when you married your parents told you
that you cannot come back anymore.\textsuperscript{55} The same sentiment was echoed by South Interior Tatoga and North Interior Kuria woman as well.\textsuperscript{56} A North Lake woman said, “what would you go back home to do anyway, you are a stranger there now.”\textsuperscript{57} However, Luo wives in Kenya were also referred to by the name of their home area to emphasize their stranger status.\textsuperscript{58}

But at a personal level, women in both matrilineal and patrilineal societies continued to maintain close relations with their distant maternal uncles (\textit{wajomba}, Kiswahili) and paternal aunts (\textit{shangazi}), whom they counted on for assistance, both materially and ritually.\textsuperscript{59} A Tatoga maternal uncle gave gifts which included from making a shoe for his niece’s wedding to making the first pair of shoes for her son.\textsuperscript{60} While South Lake women said that they had some fear of their maternal uncles who used to control them, Luo women said that maternal uncles are ‘just to visit and get gifts from.’\textsuperscript{61} In the South Lake the maternal uncle was given two goats out of his niece’s bridewealth and he would give her a trunk as a wedding present.\textsuperscript{62} The bride’s paternal aunt (\textit{shangazi}, Kiswahili) was charge with overseeing the bride during the wedding.\textsuperscript{63} Maternal uncles in a matrilineal society would welcome a divorced, abandoned or widowed niece back and support her and her children.\textsuperscript{64}

The value put on the relationship bond between sisters and brothers in a region held together by women who kept their home ties is evident in this folktale about how a South Lake group became matrilineal.

One time a young man killed someone and had to pay compensation to the whole descent group for what he had done. So he told his wife about this and said that they had to give one of their own children to the descent group to make compensation. But the mother refused to have her child taken. So the man went to his sister for help. She listened to him and gave him one of her own children to help him. He then saw that it was his sister's children, rather than the children he gave birth to who helped him. So he went to his
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maternal uncles and they agreed to keep that pattern. It changed again when later a man had three boys who had nothing at all, no wealth. They went to fish and got wealth and filled up the homestead with cattle. Then their maternal uncles wanted to take that wealth but the boys refused. They said that the uncles could not have it. And so it changed that a man's wealth is now inherited by his own children.⁶⁵

An Ikizu woman gave an explanation for why South Interior people, who became wealthy cattle keepers at the turn of the last century, were once matrilineal. She said that it is a man’s sister’s bridewealth that allows him to marry, therefore her children come back to claim his wealth, since their mother made it possible.⁶⁶ In both cases the sibling bond is primary.

However, the lesson that even siblings can betray you is inherent in a story about the origins of utani relationships told by a South Lake woman. The utani relationship between clans was illustrated in the opening story for this chapter. Women learn to cast their net widely to find networks on which they can depend in times of need.

A woman had a house of her own and her sister lived elsewhere in her own house. But the first woman was hungry each day and each day she went to ask her sister for food. Then she became pregnant and was close to giving birth. She went to ask her sister for food again. Her sister said, I am tired of this, you need to go back and farm for yourself instead of coming to me all the time. Her sister's husband came home and said she must give her sister a little food. But the sister still didn't want to help. So the pregnant one went away to give birth and the rain started coming. She gave birth in the wilderness. People found her there with the baby. They were amazed that her sister did not help her and took the woman back to her sister. Her sister was making porridge and took it out to her. But the woman said, you are not my sister anymore because you kept me from eating. She said she would eat the fruit from the tree where she gave birth instead. The kinship between the two was broken. Each of them now has a different side and they are not sisters now but friends. The people blamed the sister for this split. So now we still see each other as joking relations but not as relatives. You come to the house of your joking partner and get what you want. But you can't intermarry because you were once from the same womb (tumbo moja in Kiswahili). The joking relation (utani) is a remembrance of a past relationship between descent groups.⁶⁷

20
Other South Lake people told me a similar story and all agreed that descent groups with joking relations used to be one but split because of sibling disagreement. One version of this story is used to show how the South Lake Ruri and Kwaya split into two groups.

Of course women were not the only ones to bridge the divides of diversity in the region. Men were also involved in the formation of institutions that facilitated regional interaction and cooperation including common understandings and coordination of, for example, territorial claims, age and generation-set rituals, shared expertise of leaders, eldership titles, and ancestral spirits. These connections are chronicled in the oral traditions discussed elsewhere. However these connections and common understandings were not as durable as intermarriage because they did not involve the transfer of a person from one group to the other. It is also true that these common assumptions did not mean that there was any lack of animosity and conflict between ethnic groups. An account of the conflict between Mara people and Luo as they settled in the region is set out in popular historian Zedekia Olool Siso’s book, *Grasp the Shield Firmly*. However, as much as men’s accounts make of warfare, it is nevertheless true that out of the extreme diversity in the region enough similarity developed to allow the long term and continual transfer of women, expertise and resources across these boundaries in a peaceful manner.

The development of underlying continuity in key social institutions facilitated the exchange of people, particularly women, across cultural boundaries. However, critical differences between the Interior and the Lake, matrilineal and patrilineal areas, came to play a role in the historical development of the region. These female connections, in turn, established kin relations that provided stable relationships of trust across cultural boundaries and ongoing
interaction. Marriage was exogamous and men often preferred to make interdependent connections by marrying a wife from another cultural group. Women who married across these boundaries were thus largely responsible for maintaining relationships with their natal communities, and those of their mothers and grandmothers, on whom the well-being of each community depended. Women’s memory kept alive these networks that connected their natal kin to an array of other kinds of relationships.

The Mnemonic Devices of Women’s Historical Knowledge

These common regional understandings allowed women the structure to become expert at remembering all kind of relationships and connections. Women’s stories, whether ancestral stories or folktales, are stories about relational webs, what Heidi Gengenbach calls a “relational epistemology.” These relationships create the core spatial images of women’s narratives consisting of expanding and contracting networks over shifting geographical areas. Women’s stories revolve around relationships in different places that indicate who one can rely on for help, who one has obligations to, or how to behave in order to maintain those networks. Knowing these paternal, maternal and affinal relationships allowed a woman to function in the diverse families that she was connected to throughout her life. Women’s knowledge is situationally specific rather than constituting a metanarrative of a people's history. Each one in effect has their own historical grid of relations.

The point is not that women’s and men’s historical knowledge is entirely separate and different but rather that their gendered roles gave them both opportunity and responsibility for a particular sphere of knowledge. Some extraordinary women knew men’s ethnic history because
they were privileged to attend elders’ gatherings around beer as independent women who inherited their father’s position. Others learned it because their husbands brought them along to carry the stool or they developed an interest in the stories. One of the few characteristics shared by many of the women I interviewed who were experts in masculine or ethnic historical memory was that they were first wives but either had no children or their children died young. Yet many women told me that they were not normally allowed to sit at men’s gatherings where history was told, but only come to fill the beer pot or bring food. It was here that men told stories about the past as they sought resolution to current community problems. Their stories concerned legitimizing authority over land and people, even if some of their stories were about female chiefs or rainmakers. Women were more concerned about social networks, even if some of their links were through the male line. These gendered sites of historical knowledge transmission applied across linguistic and cultural boundaries in the region. Women knew the ethnic stories and some of their work songs evoked those characters but they did not usually perform the stories as narratives and saw that as the domain of men. One South Interior Tatoga woman told me in response to my question about migration, “I cannot say anything about that because it is the concern of men, not women.” It is not so much that they didn’t know the stories as that they were not been given responsibility or motivation for remembering these stories or passing them on.

While men very easily started to tell the ethnic stories when prompted women most often denied any historical knowledge. Women’s social memory was not easily accessible without a culturally recognized metanarrative. How did women access all of the names and relationships
that they had to remember for maintaining far flung social networks? Gengenbach’s work explores some of the unconventional ways of remembering those connections. She found this in pots and tattoos and land rights and names. In order to access the historical memory that created or strengthened, enacted, enforced and enabled regional connections with diverse people, women used a number of mnemonic devices. Names, material objects, expertise and genealogies are some of the ones I found, although I am sure there were others. Because women did not recognize this as a formalized set of knowledge one can only uncover it by being present and hearing what women talk about.

I stumbled on some of this knowledge accidently. While I was doing dissertation work in South Interior Nata I decided that it would be useful to know how everyone was related to everyone else in the small village of Mbiso, along the main route from Musoma to the Serengeti National Park. So I began asking the men in the Magotto family who had been my main advisors and informants for the study. They gave me some of this information but fairly quickly deferred to their wives, even though their wives had come from other villages or ethnic groups. I also talked to two sisters in the family who had stayed in the village because they married men who were friends of their father and arranged for close marriages. Some men tried to explain why stranger wives knew more about village and family history than those men who were born and raised here by saying that “men were always walking around.” After she married, a woman spent more time in the village with her mother-in-law than she did with her husband. She depended on her neighbors for help in farming, borrowing implements and advice or aid in times of crisis.
Women’s framework for remembering this vast network of relationships started with their own ancestors. Like men, most women could easily recall the names in their line of descent at least through their parents, grandparents and great grandparents’ names, often to seven generations on both sides. If an ancestor came from a faraway place a new line of descent began. Yet women seemed much more focused than men on the names of particular ancestors to make connections with others, rather than the legitimizing function of outside ethnic origins. When asked about ethnic origins, many women simply said that their ethnic group was a mixture of “many groups from other places.”82 One woman, frustrated with the question about origins, called her husband to come out and give the proper answer.83

Those who did tell the ethnic stories did so with a gendered twist. A South Lake woman, who told the story of how two sisters left the West Lake travelling on a reed mat and founded two ethnic groups, said that one of the sisters was her great grandmother. She ended the explanation of where all the descendants of those sisters went with the assertion that, “we go to these places to greet our relatives and they come to see us.”84 Significantly, male accounts of the same story were placed in the fifteenth century with royal origins in the kingdoms of Burundi or Buganda.85 Rather than mass ethnic migrations in long ago times as a founding story women’s accounts emphasize diverse ongoing relations, even with people depicted in men’s accounts as enemies.86 For example, one North Lake woman said, like the men, that the migrations stopped at a certain place along the way before settling, but added that they went back and forth between the two places and intermarried.87
In this region, names themselves carry critical historical information and serve as a mnemonic. I first became aware of this when I began interviews with the simple question of a woman’s name. Surprisingly enough their response was often, ‘do you want all my names?’ They would then launch into a long explanation of how they got various names and who they were named after. Men also have many names but in all my hundreds of interviews with men very few ever told me about the significance of, or stories behind, their names. Unlike my own culture where a person gets a fixed name at birth that does not change or multiply, here people had many different names that were used in different contexts for different people. They might also acquire names later in life as nicknames or praise names after particular events. After a woman gives birth she is known as the mother of that child. In the South Lake women in their home areas are known as “the mother of X” by using the Bantu prefix “Nya,” characteristic of matrilineal societies. These multiple names suggest not a fixed individual identity but a variety of identities depending on the social context and who gave you the name. The name itself evoked a particular social network. Names are both generically communal and personal, for example, North Interior Kuria used four set names for girls and four for boys depending on their birth order. However, they also had more personal names. One woman said she had one name as a first daughter and two more names after her grandmothers. Similarly one greets others by their generational identity as mother, grandmother, daughter or sister regardless of kinship.

A woman’s various personal names, however, had particular meaning beyond genealogical descent, making connections to places, events and various social networks. The first name that a woman was given was her personal “home” or “womb” name, often in reference
to an event at the time or circumstances of her birth. For example, a number of women were named after the locust invasion in the year of their birth.\textsuperscript{92} Others were named after a day of the week, harvest time, the time of day or a type of fish their mother ate when the child was born.\textsuperscript{93} Children born in the year the ginnery came to Mugango (1936) were named “Masine” (Machine) and more recently those born in 2008 were named “Obama.”\textsuperscript{94} A South Lake Kiroba Kuria woman was named “Nyawangwe” because when her mother was pregnant she saw a leopard and the diviner said she should call the baby after the leopard, \textit{engwe}, the Kiroba totem.\textsuperscript{95} Women’s names also solidified connections to people outside of their family. One Bumangi woman said that she had a difficult birth and so the traditional midwife named the baby after her own mother.\textsuperscript{96} A South Lake Kiroba woman was named after the healer who helped her mother get pregnant after six years of infertility.\textsuperscript{97} A man was named after the singer performing for someone who killed a lion on the evening that he was born.\textsuperscript{98}

Naming a child was so significant for the child’s future life that it often involved consulting a diviner and other family members as well as performing ritual action.\textsuperscript{99} Through a diviner or a dream a deceased grandmother might demand to be recognized with a name or announce that she has returned through the baby.\textsuperscript{100} When a parent or grandparent gave the child their “womb” name they would also confer a blessing. An example from a South Lake Kwaya ethnography goes, “I have called you Nyamutondo (morning-girl), you the daughter of Magesa (of the harvest). Let your blood be good! May you grow in good speed!”\textsuperscript{101} A South Lake pastor said that about a week after a baby was born the father’s father came to the house and held up the baby to give her a name. He considered the names in the family that had not been used for a
while and thus were vulnerable to being forgotten. The father's side named at least the first two children and then the mother's side the rest. The grandfather and grandmother discussed the name choice together. As one man said, naming was a way “to bring the ancestor to their home again and thus to please them.” According to a Kwaya ethnography, after the name was chosen the father took the child into the homestead courtyard early in the morning and, facing the rising sun, called on the ancestor, “Now my grandmother/ father I am calling on you. I have taken you out from the grass and brought you home. Be well!”

Being named after a grandparent gave the child close contact, if not identification with, an ancestor. In South Interior Zanaki after a name was given a goat was sacrificed near to the grave of that ancestor. Ancestors are honored by naming, giving them a way to maintain a regular connection, if not an actual presence.

The names that women chose to use on a daily basis indicated something about their identity and relationships, which they adapted to new identities like Christianity or Islam. Nearly every woman I talked to had at least one personal name given to her by her parents, a Christian or Muslim name, her father’s name and her husband’s name. In all of the Bantu speaking areas women most often gave me their personal name and their father’s name, often with the religious name added at the first or second place. Strongly Christian or Muslim women often used their religious name exclusive of their personal name. The religious name was important for many women, marking them as modern women. One woman said that her father objected to her going to the mission school because he wanted her to look after the cows, saying, “you got your Christian name, isn’t that enough?” Oddly North Lake Luo women, with few exceptions, consistently gave me their Christian name followed by their husband’s name. This
practice totally erased their natal connections and personal identity. Some said that this has been a recent change, or perhaps it is the result of my presence in the interview. 106 This practice was also the case with other women whose primary identity was in the church and those networks. 107 The use of a husband’s name might indicate a modern identity from European practice or an acknowledgement of the need for women to adapt to their husband’s family. One of the progressive educated women I interviewed from South Interior took it a step further by using her husband’s father’s name as her second or family name. 108 Another educated woman politician, known locally as Mama Rukuba, used her husband’s, rather than her son’s name after “Mama.” 109 One Luo woman used her Christian name plus the name of her mother’s father, Kagose, because he had been a famous prophet in Buturi. 110 Each of these naming practices indicates the shifting situational networks and identity of the woman.

Naming girls after their grandmothers or great grandmothers preserved the memory of individual ancestral stories and personalities. One woman said that her grandmother declared before she died that anyone who got her name could not have any other name, so that she would be remembered exclusively. 111 A South Lake woman told the story of her namesake, a paternal aunt who came from Butiama in South Interior Zanaki. 112 Some women said that a grandmother’s name was usually the one to “stick” more than the others. 113 If ancestors were forgotten their spirits went into a dangerous and liminal space of the forgotten ghosts and they were no longer helpful spirits and part of the living dead in the family. In the past children would not be given the name of a grandmother until after she died. One woman said, “children are named after grandparents so that you continue to remember that individual and so that the
children would remember her." Women who carried a grandmother’s name might also be charged with remembering her story, origin place, and genealogy. One South Lake woman told the story of her namesake who ran away from Ukara Island to preserve her baby’s life because she got pregnant before marriage. Another South Lake woman said that her great grandmother came from the Mara River and was carried here on a floating island after a problem at home. Many of the stories of grandmothers coming during times of hunger in the next chapter are from these naming stories.

Some of the richest stories about specific grandmothers were about those who transferred specific powers of healing or prophecy along with a name. They had to be remembered in order for the namesake to practice as a healer. One woman said that she inherited healing practices from her paternal grandmother, who was one of the most famous healers in Majita. Although healing is a power that cannot be taught but is rather a gift, she helped her grandmother to gather herbs for making medicines in the forest. Another South Lake woman was named after her paternal grandmother, who was a prophet for healing the land and had medicines for drought, locust or disease. This power was inherited through her father’s line and is embedded in the memory of his mother. One woman who had a strong Christian identity still knew some of the herbal medicines to treat children that she inherited from her namesake maternal grandmother. A North Lake Luo woman said she inherited her namesake grandmother’s medicines for treating children and still uses them to help others. A South Interior woman said that she has bracelets from her mother that, along with God, gave her dreams about how to treat illnesses and infertility with medicines. Other women went through initiation as a diviner, only to have it revealed that
a grandmother wanted to make contact and pass on her medicines. Although men, too, learn healing and prophesy from ancestors, women seem particularly charged, although not exclusively, with the memory of names and the networks that they represent.

Another source of memory that came out in interviews with women was the association of material objects with particular namesake grandmothers, often their bracelets (see photo?). The church objected to these bracelets as ancestor worship and asked their converts to get rid of them. As a result few women wear them today for fear of being seen as backwards, or if they do are embarrassed when a foreign woman calls attention to them. Some denied that the bracelets had any significance when asked, and said they were just for pretty. One South Lake woman, who was named after her paternal great grandmother, said she had no bracelet from her because she threw it away when she joined the church, another one said that she “left those things behind after baptism.” A North Lake woman said, “there are no things from the past left because the church did not allow it.” A South Lake woman who still wore two bracelets from her grandmothers said that one was a copper bracelet from her paternal great grandmother who came from Ruri and the other a white bracelet from her maternal grandmother from Ukerewe Island, whose family she remembered visiting as a child. Another South Lake woman said that a woman would get her grandmother’s bracelet or something that she liked to wear if she called out her name while in childbirth. South Lake Kwaya women were given a goat or chicken, as their personal property, along with their ancestral name as an *emisambwa* (protective spirit) to remember that person and follow her ways. Other women talked about baskets or pottery that
they inherited from their mothers or that conveyed a traditional style from their home area (see photo).

I also looked for historical memory in women’s accounts of their own life experience. This was not a comfortable genre for most of these women and I had to constantly ask more questions to keep them going with the narrative. With the exception of Christian women who had told personal testimonies in church, most of these women would not have had the occasion to tell their own story. But as I drew them out, the context of their stories was about who they married, their children, trouble in the marriage and often widowhood. Marriage was certainly the most important change in a woman’s life and often determined the rest of the story. Her husband’s family’s status gave her access to the land she farmed, available resources and support. Women did not often supply a lot of emotional commentary on their lives but told the basic facts about their marriage history. Comparing life stories from the Lake and Interior allowed me to identify significant differences that reconfigured the typical colonial history in terms of domestic violence and the loss of social networks. In returning to the introductory story about the funeral it is thus clear that in this setting women are drawing on their knowledge of people embedded in memory of descent, names, material objects and expertise as well as stories from grandmother.

When I asked women about their own weddings, eldership titles of farming activities they very quickly defaulted to giving me idealized “customary” knowledge rather than their particular story. This may be because they were not used to telling their own story and did not see value in it. But it is more likely that they were comfortable as experts in customary knowledge, particularly around marriage and family. Chapter 3 works with this knowledge and what it meant
in the context of constricted networks during the colonial era. Even as women’s social network knowledge was devalued in the colonial area they continued to assert the value of their customary knowledge for the community. However women’s insistence on talking about custom rather than their own story is problematic for the historian who seeks to historicize tradition and see how individual stories show change over time. Customary knowledge all too easily falls into the trap of the “ethnographic” present which posits tradition as idealized, timeless and unchanging. Therefore throughout I use other oral interviews and the archives to put custom in its historical context.

The final category of forms that women’s social network memory took is in informal talk that women share as counter-knowledge. In the opening funeral story of this chapter, women sat together sharing information about other people that men often derided as unproductive or even destructive “gossip.” While popular culture refers to this kind of talk derogatively as “gossip,” I began to see how critical this setting is for women’s social memory. Scholars have analyzed it as a “backstage performance” that reaffirms group norms and boundaries or critiques those in power.\textsuperscript{130} Tuulikki Pietilä’s study of Kilimanjaro demonstrates how gossip “enables a dialogue about moral reputations and value.”\textsuperscript{131} In thinking about social memory, the semi-public performance of “gossip” serves to reactivate and invigorate social networks that cross kinship, ethnic, and social boundaries as a valuable resource that women deployed to help them in their daily tasks.

In many societies around the world the ongoing background of sustained conversations among women is also feared as subversive and derided as destructive. Steve Stern, writing about
late colonial Mexico, talks about the weapons women used to resist abusive treatment, including “networks of female-female relations” that created webs of knowledge and female solidarity networks. Through their deployment of gossip women could start rumors about a man who did something wrong and bring down his reputation. Gossip is thus often denigrated and dismissed by men because they feared its ability to create scandal.132 In their crossing of diverse boundaries and maintaining links back to their homes women built an underlying set of common assumptions through their lives and stories.

Women’s knowledge of the past is thus preserved through a number of stories as well as material and immaterial devices like names, bracelets, medicines, greetings and genealogies. These are some of the unlikely places that a historian would look for sources and yet women can only talk about the stories of these grandmothers or healers when the mention their names or touch a bracelet. These mnemonic devices trigger stories about the past crucial for women’s role in forging and maintaining regional connections. The following chapters will reconstruct a different understanding of regional history using the information gathered in these unconventional sources.

**Grandmother’s Lessons for Maintaining Networks**

The most common place that a woman learned the stories attached to ancestral names and bracelets, that allowed her to create, strengthen, enact, enforce and enable regional connections, was in her grandmother’s house within her parents’ homestead, where she slept as a child. Grandmothers passed on to their granddaughters the social skills for crossing boundaries and maintaining a wide net of relationships. The stories that grandmothers told were critical because
they taught girls how to survive and prosper in their husbands’ home by maintaining those 
relationship grids. Yet the women themselves often declared that the stories were only for 
entertainment and nothing else.\textsuperscript{133} One said that when you went to your friend’s house overnight 
you would sleep with her grandmother and be delighted by new stories.\textsuperscript{134} Although 
grandmothers’ stories are often portrayed as silly folktales without any meaning other than to 
entertain, they contained instructions for proper behavior that constituted both a reinforcement of 
gender roles and a strategy for asserting women’s well-being.

Boys also slept in their grandmother’s house and listened to her stories when they were 
little. But they moved on as pre-adolescents to sleep at the boys’ house while girls stayed with 
their grandmother until they married.\textsuperscript{135} According to ethnography, South Lake Kwaya boys 
stayed with their grandmother during their convalescence after circumcision, giving her a natural 
setting for teaching them how to be responsible men.\textsuperscript{136} However boys learned the history they 
would be responsible for in their future role as fathers when they sat around the cattle corral fire 
at night with their father, brothers and grandfather.\textsuperscript{137} And of course small girls were also 
sometimes allowed to sit near the fire and hear the men’s talk.\textsuperscript{138} It is not that these spheres of 
knowledge were hermetically sealed off from each other but that one took gendered 
responsibility for a certain set of knowledge.

Both grandmothers and grandfathers shared with their grandchildren a particular kind of 
relationship known as \textit{utani} or a joking relationship – the same word that is used for \textit{utani} 
between clans – in which they could talk to each other as peers, in an intimate and joking way.\textsuperscript{139} 
This allowed grandparents to serve a critical role in transmitting knowledge to the next
Although grandparents were respected for their age and wisdom, one could laugh with them and tell them your secrets, even intimate details. Some of the deepest, most intimate relationships occurred between skipped generations. Women often laughed when I asked them to tell me grandmother’s stories and said, “Oh, you don’t really want to hear those stories, do you!”

Although a girl was more likely to stay with her paternal grandmother she often went to live with her maternal grandmother for weeks or even years in her mother’s natal home. Grandparents were the confidents of their grandchildren, comforting them when they were hurt or punished, even covering up for them when they got into trouble. One woman told a story that illustrated this kind of relationship:

Once there was a grandmother who was with her grandchildren. While they were together the children would get excited and pinch the old woman and she would cry out. Their mother would come and ask, “what is wrong, why are you bothering your grandmother?” Grandmother said that the children were pinching her but that they should not be punished. The woman said the lesson of this story is that children should not be disrespectful to their grandparents. But it also shows that grandmother is patient and puts up with a lot for love of her grandchildren.

Of course not everyone had a grandmother in her father’s homestead and those woman often said that they learned about these things from their mother or another descent group or neighborhood grandmother. A Luo woman said that it was disgraceful the way that everyone slept in the same house today instead of with their grandmother.

Grandmothers were specifically charged with teaching girls about sex and advising them about marriage. After the marriage a woman might come home for a visit and talk to her grandmother about sexual problems. Because of the formal relationship she would never think to talk to her mother about such intimate subjects but was completely confident in her
A North Lake Luo one man said that “The grandmother’s work in the village is to be the teacher of teenage girls. These girls sleep in grandmother’s house and … learn how a woman should act in our society.”

Although these stories reinforced gender roles they also served to protect young women. A South Interior Nata woman said that her grandmother stood up for her mother when she was abused by her father. This was in a marriage where both parents were of the same lineage and grandmother came to her aid. Some of the songs that grandmothers taught were about courtship and the secret meetings of lovers, while others exhorted women to stay and make the marriage work even if things are bad. One song urged girls to be sure that the boy who was courting them did not have a terrible disease while another supported the girl in forcing through a love marriage. According to the women I interviewed, grandmother had to make sure that the girls were in at night and not running around with boys. A girl should not get pregnant before she was circumcised (in the interior) or married (along the lake). A South Lake Ruri woman said that grandmother reminded them “who they were” and said that they should not be seen talking to boys on the road.

Grandmother’s stories were often folk tales to amuse, but also to teach, children as they fell asleep at night in her house. The women I interviewed enjoyed telling grandmother’s stories and felt comfortable remembering these pleasant memories. A South Interior Zanaki woman said that a story always began with the call for a story (muse-muse, or hadithi-hadithi) and the answer from the children to “bring it” (mzagi, or njoo). They would also tell riddles (kitendawili), in which case the call for a riddle would be answered by the demand to “catch it” (tega, kale-
In addition to telling folktales or stories with animal characters the women also sang songs that told a story. These songs brought smiles and laughter to the women and to all who were listening to the interview. An example of those songs learned from grandmother was one described as a song you would sing to welcome guests to the house. Another woman said that her grandmother played a stringed zeze while she sang these songs to the children. The songs are largely about the affairs of everyday life and the family rather than larger public events.

Both girls and young boys were repeatedly taught the stories about generational obedience and respect for elders. A South Lake woman told a story, along with a song, that was meant to teach children to do what their elders asked them. It went something like this:

One day some birds saw the elders sitting around their beer-pot drinking and they wanted a taste of it too. The elders drank the beer through reed straws and they had to add water now and then to keep it from getting too thick. So the elders called a girl and told her to go down to the spring to get some water for them. Seeing their opportunity, the birds went down to the spring and sang such an amazing song that when the girl heard them she stopped to listen and stayed there, forgetting what she had been sent to do. The elders waited for her and then sent another girl to go down and see what had happened to her. The next girl also heard the birds and stayed to listen to them. Finally one of the elders went down to the spring himself to see what was going on. He saw the girls and heard the birds and he too stayed to listen. One by one all of the elders came down there to listen and stayed. In doing so they left the pot of beer unguarded and the birds took that opportunity to fly over and finish off all the beer.

As another South Lake woman said, “in the past if an older person sent you for an errand they would spit on the ground and you had to jump up and be back before the spit dried.”

However some of those obedience stories were aimed at reconciling girls to the man their parents chosen for her to marry and go to live in a strange household for the good of the larger community. A South Interior woman told this story of how the rabbit deceived a mother.
One day the rabbit went to get a hoe from his mother, telling her he was going to farm. But he didn't do that, instead he just sat. Then he went back to her and asked for peanuts to plant in the field he had just cultivated. He asked her to roast them for him before he planted and she did. He went away and came back saying he had done it, but he only went to eat the peanuts. So when it was time to harvest she saw that the field had not been farmed at all. He said, oh it was not this field but the next one or perhaps the next one. But there was no crop to harvest and they were hungry. The moral of the story is not to deceive your elders because it will catch up with you in the end.\textsuperscript{160}

Girls were taught to trust the wisdom of their elders to choose what was best for them rather than letting their own desires lead them to a destructive end. One of these stories was about a man who turned into a bird and lured a young girl out into the wilderness. The bird excreted bright beautiful beads as it flew further and further away and the girl ran to pick them up until she was lost. The girls were taught not to be deceived and chase after beautiful things.\textsuperscript{161} A similar story tells of a girl who refused the man that her parents chose for her to marry and instead found her own husband. But that man turned out to be a vulture in a man’s disguise and as soon as they married he flew away with her and took bites out of her body. The moral was not to refuse the man your parents want you to marry.\textsuperscript{162} Other stories tell of similar horrors that beset the girls who are not careful in choosing a husband and do not accept the boy chosen by their parents to marry.\textsuperscript{163}

However some stories also cautioned girls to protect their own interests even as they were taught their obligation to represent the family well and show solidarity.\textsuperscript{164} Women told stories that recognized the necessity to form other links because one cannot always rely on family. This lesson would be especially relevant to girls when they found themselves far away from kin. One song from a South Interior woman married away from home was about a man who had two sons.
The sons were supposed to go out and check the traps for wild animals. They found an animal trapped in one of them but the animal begged them to let him go. One of the brothers found this so amazing that he left the animal go. But his brother said he would tell their father unless he got the best pieces of meat at each meal. The boy agreed so that his brother would keep the secret. One day he forgot to give his brother the best meat. So the brother told his father what had happened. The father was upset and took the boy who had done wrong out to the traps. He put the boy in a trap and left him there. The animals came by and the boy sang a song that went, “I am a man and I am in a trap, help me.” None of the animals would help him until the animal that he had let go before came by and saw him and opened the trap. The boy went away with the animal and he got rich.165

The audience identified with the boy who disobeyed and was punished too harshly by his father. Yet in the end his misdeeds were rewarded. This is one of a number of stories in which kin betrayed their own but strangers, or in this case animals, return the kindness.

The stories that grandmothers told to girls prepared them to be aware and cautious as strangers in their husband’s home. This is a tale about a woman who was fooled because she was trying to avoid work and responsibility.

One day a rabbit (sungura) saw a woman farming in the field with her child on her back. The rabbit said, “let me take the child so that you can work, I will help you.” The woman went on farming but the rabbit persisted, “let me take the baby home and you can keep working.” So the rabbit went to the woman's home and killed the baby, butchered, cooked and ate it. He left the head and wrapped it in a blanket. When the mother came home the rabbit said, “all is well just go about your work.” He showed her the baby's head in the blanket as if it was sleeping. He gave the mother the meat to eat. When she was ready to sleep he gave her the baby to sleep with. The mother saw that the baby was dead but she had already eaten the meat. She ran after the Rabbit to get him. But he ran away. He called back that she was a fool. The lesson of the story is not to be a fool and take care of your responsibilities. You don’t know who to trust and you should not try to get out of work.166

Girls were exhorted to take care of their obligations themselves and not be seduced by easy times or bad things would happen.
The women who told these stories took pride in their roles that supported the family and the community. They said that the main lesson for girls in all these stories was how to behave and live in peace with others in your husband’s household as a grown woman.¹⁶⁷

Overwhelmingly the women said that you should first take care of and show respect (even fear) for your husband and your mother-in-law, after that came brothers-in-law and father-in-law. This meant feeding them, helping them and showing discipline (adhabu) in their homestead.¹⁶⁸ Many women also noted the importance of teaching girls how to be hospitable and to take care of a guest by greeting them and bringing them food and water for bathing after their long travel.¹⁶⁹ A North Interior woman married in the South Interior said that as a grandmother she teaches her own grandchildren, telling the boys to take care of women well and not to hit them. She added that she tells the girls if they are hit, “just to make ugali (porridge).”¹⁷⁰ Women were to work hard and farm so that the family did not go hungry, including grinding flour on a stone, hauling water, gathering firewood and above all not being lazy.¹⁷¹ Grandmothers also taught the girls how to do handwork like making baskets, reed mats, wooden or gourd utensils and in some cases pottery or even how to dance.¹⁷² When three South Lake women were interviewed together they said that the main characteristic of a good woman was one who greeted and respected others, especially her parents and other elders, and did what they asked. She kept her household and children in order and disciplined.¹⁷³ Another woman added that above all one must not be greedy (mchoyo in Kiswahili) but always generous to share with your family and neighbors.¹⁷⁴

Watching how adults interacted with children as we went around for interviews I observed how the value of respect and knowledge of relationships were constantly reinforced as
crucial for becoming an adult. Whenever we came into a homestead even the youngest children were told, or ordered, to greet the guests with respect. In the South Lake there were greetings that distinguished age and gender. If a child did not make these distinctions they were harangued and even mocked. In one place, after the pastor's children greeted us he asked them if they remembered what relationship my friend Perusi had to them and how they should address her as a result. When one didn't know he showed his disappointment and when the other answered correctly she was praised. They were quizzed again and told not to forget the next time. It had been years since Perusi had seen those children but this was crucial information, particularly for girls, to remember.  

Grandmothers also taught a number of taboos that seem silly and arbitrary but that also reinforced both gender roles in the family and a woman’s protection. For example, a number of women from different areas said that they were taught not take coals from their father-in-law’s fire, not to sit with him to talk or even say his given name. The explanation for this taboo was to show the utmost respect for him. Another taboo from a South Lake woman was not to stand in the doorway if she was pregnant because the baby would then have a hard time coming out. Girls were told to control their childish behavior of being noisy and running around (utundu) because this would not be proper for a wife. Some food taboos were specifically gendered. A woman should give the head of the fish to her father-in-law or to other men. Young girl should not talk while eating, and were prohibited from eating chicken, some kinds of fish and eggs. However the same South Lake woman also said that when a woman dishes out food for her husband she should hide some of it so he will think the food is finished and she can go eat it.
herself since men and women eat separately.\textsuperscript{179} Gerald Hartwig’s informants on the island of Ukerewe south of the Mara Region said that South Lake people share with them the use of proverbs to speak about confidential matters in front of others as a form of admonishment and to teach children good behavior.\textsuperscript{180}

Although many of these stories and taboos obviously socialize women into accepting gender roles of those who serve and obey, woman also told stories that explained their gender roles in society by telling of a time when men and women lived in separate worlds. A story that I heard in a couple of places in the South Lake was about a boy named Mariro.

One day Mariro was hunting with his friends and got lost. He traveled to a land inhabited only by women with lots of cattle. He worked for them as a herd boy along with his dog, which he treated like his child. The dog went to the women’s house and told him what went on there. Mariro found out that they wanted to kill him so he took all their cattle and ran away. The women chased him but the dog did miracles and kept them from getting him. He came back home with the cattle and his people were amazed because they thought he was dead and berated the other boys for leaving him out there. He was the hero for coming home with the cattle.\textsuperscript{181}

A similar South Interior story of men and women living separately tells how men tricked the women into giving them the cattle.\textsuperscript{182} While the stories acknowledge women’s superior position in the past as owners of cattle they also demonstrate how men came to gain cattle and superiority by tricking the careless women.

These stories might also be interpreted as a way to empower women to survive and prosper as strangers in a new household, where they need to pay careful attention to relationships. In fact some stories show them that relationships with other women, particularly their mother-in-law was more critical for survival than that with their husband. A new wife worked for her mother-in-law, using her kitchen, fields and granary until she formally got her
A mother-in-law taught her daughter-in-law the local customs and prohibitions and introduced her to the family. South Lake women said they were taught never to curse their mother-in-law. Even if she said bad things, you had to be quiet. When you married she taught you the ways of that household – how they cooked, what they liked to eat – and you needed to follow their rules. If your mother-in-law sent you on an errand came back quickly and worked hard for her to show respect. She introduced you to your new family and so you needed to “show a good heart.” A North Lake woman reiterated, “when you get married you must be respectful and welcome people into your home, we were to do as they did at that home.

A final story is another cautionary tale for girls about who to trust in their new marital home. The most obvious message is that elders, even parents, are sometimes not trustworthy and can betray you. Some ethnographers say that the taboo on close interaction with a father-in-law prevents the possibility of sexual contact. In the story this taboo is breached, leading to its terrible outcome. The mother-in-law in this story is the one who helps her daughter-in-law and son. Since a mother’s security in old age depends upon her sons and their sons she is likely to make sure that the mother of her grandchildren is protected.

One day two young men were on a journey and found a woman who was pregnant and getting ready to bathe at the lake. She asked them to please go away and let her bathe alone. When they refused she promised that if she gave birth to a boy he would be their best friend and if a girl she would marry one of them. So they left but that night she gave birth to a girl. The two boys heard this and came to claim the baby. The mother refused and hid the baby until she was grown up and ready to be married. One of those young men, named Jirengere, had waited in another land for her a long time and when he heard she was old enough came and married her and took her home. His family rejoiced when they saw that he had brought home a beautiful bride. But the father, who was jealous and wanted her for himself, told Jirengere they needed to build a new house for his wonderful
wife. So they went out into the forest to cut poles for building the house. Every tree that Jirengere suggested his father would say was not good enough for his beautiful wife. Then they found a really big tree that the father agreed was good enough. He got a ladder for Jirengere to go up and cut branches. But when he was at the top his father took away the ladder and left him with no way to get down. When the father returned home Jirengere’s wife asked where was her husband but got no answer. When she went one day to get vegetables in the fields she sang song about missing her husband and longing to find him. Jirengere, still in the tree, heard the song and sang his own song back to her, longing for his beautiful wife. In the song he said, “my father did this to me, I have no food, I can't move, and I had to eat my hair.” The wife told her mother-in-law what happened to Jirengere. The two of them went to look for him, following the song and bringing food for him. They found the tree but it was too tall to climb. His mother leaned over and said, “come down out of the tree onto my back.” Jirengere said, “No, I want to come down on my beloved wife's back,” and he came down out of the tree. They had a big party to welcome him home. They killed the father who did this bad thing to his son by digging a big hole and pouring boiling water onto him in the hole.

This story has multiple layers of meaning but for a girl listening to her grandmother it reinforced the taboo against interacting with her father-in-law and her need to rely on her mother-in-law.

Other stories, particularly in the South Lake, reminded women of their need for ongoing connections to their natal home and encouraged them to marry closer to home to maintain that support. As we will see in Chapter 3, the colonial administration of indirect rule encouraged people to think more “tribally” and to keep their daughters closer to home. A variation of one of the taboos noted above from the South Lake is that a young girl should not stand in the doorway or she would marry far away. Mothers may have worked to get their daughters married closer to home even if they did not have much choice in the partner. Most of the child brides that I talked to in the South Interior had married close to home. Even if mothers could not keep their husbands from marrying their daughter off as a child, they may have been able to assure that she was close at hand. One North Lake woman said that she was taught to make things work in her marriage no matter how bad it was and have patience because you cannot leave your children.
you lack something you can always ask you mother for help but you need to stay. Maintaining relations with their home area was a priority for many women, but certainly more in matrilineal areas where their children were still descent group members. A South Lake woman said, “I took my children often to my mother’s home and when I weaned them they spent four or five years living there until they were ready to come back for school.

Women in the Mara Region were charged with remembering stories that maintained a network of social relationships critical to their own survival as strangers in their husband’s homestead. However, these stories also served a critical public function in maintaining cross-ethnic networks throughout the region necessary to the community’s prosperity. Although we tend to think of marriage and family as private matters, in this context the history of those connections underlie the region’s history. Knowledge of these networks was passed on in the unlikely places of gossip, customary knowledge, life experiences, grandmother’s stories, names, genealogies and bracelets. The way women obtained their knowledge seems fairly consistent until recent times when grandmothers claim that their grandchildren are not interested. However the core spatial images that are invoked by the different kinds of stories that are told about different generations of women bring into focus a history of shifting sets of networks that expand and contract in the Mara Region and beyond over the past 150 years. It is to that chronology that we now turn, starting with the oldest stories about the grandmothers or great grandmothers of today’s elders.
Note issue about calling this “clan” rather than descent group as is not consistent in segmentation. Could also be that utani creates fictive connections between groups who now live near one another...

Scholars on utani, UDSM.

Bischofberger, 17.

#554, interview notes.

#554

Interview #240, female, Jita, 31 August 2010, Butata.

See Shetler, Imagining Serengeti.

Will continue to use the circumcision since this is how it is described by my informants. I understand that the form practiced here on women is clitorodectomy.


This from Hartwig? The Kerebe royal descent group could not be circumcised because the chief was prohibited from having any blemish on his body.

Interview #255, male, Sukuma, 8 September 2010, Mugango.

#? male, Zanaki, date, place; Bischofberger also heard oral traditions of Turi origins in Zinza, p. 12.


Interview #311, female, Zanaki-Turi, 28 September 2010, Bumangi.

Tobisson 1986, 85-6, 88; Huber 1973, 16, 79 (see note for origins of Kwaya)

Bischofberger 1972, 9, 12; Cory 1952, 27; Kollmann 1899, 175; and Bernatzik, 1947.

Linguistic analysis

See Shetler, Imagining Serengeti. The first hunter-gatherers probably spoke a Khoisan-related language, similar to the Hadzabe of central Tanzania. Pastoralists speaking Southern Cushitic or Rub Eastern Sahelian languages, who also practiced grain crop farming, moved into the region by 1000 BC

Older historical linguistic sources, Schoenbrun, Ehret. Check Karagwe reference.

Bischofberger 15, E. Rassler 1909, 331.


Interview #295, male, Luo-Kakseru, 17 September 2010.


Interview #298, male, Luo-Kakseru, 17 September 2010, Shirati.

Tobisson 1986, 85-6

Shetler, “Historical Memory,” 644.

Huber 1973, 217-8

Secondary Sources on this? Sukuma to Mara Region

Interview #302, female, Sizaki in Ikizu, 21 September 2010, Nyamuswa.
Interview #255, male, Sukuma, 8 September 2010, Mugango.
Interview #299, female, Ikizu, 19 September 2010, Nyabange.
Interview #235, female, Jita, 28 August 2010, Butata. A Jita woman said that a typical Jita wedding in her day was 3 goats, with two of them going to the maternal uncles and one to the family, leaving the father with some hoes.
Interview #237, female, Jita, 30 August 2010, Butata. … Interview #269, female, Ruri, 10 September 2010, Bwai; Interview #238, female, Jita, 30 August 2010, Butata; Interview #272, female, Ruri, 10 September 2010, Bwai; Interview #277, female, Ruri, 11 September 2010, Bwai.
Interview #311, female, Zanaki-Turi, 28 September 2010, Bumangi. Brideservice was not considered part of the bridewealth and its value would not be returned in the case of divorce. As one woman put it, you did it out of love, not obligation. Interview #315, female, Zanaki, 29 September 2010, Bumangi. However one Bumangi woman claimed that brideservice is a more recent phenomenon. Interview #314, female, Zanaki-Butiamia, 29 September 2010, Bumangi; Interview #314, female, Zanaki-Butiamia, 29 September 2010, Bumangi.
Peters, “Introduction: Revisiting the Puzzle of Matriliny,” 133; Wendy James, “Matrifocus on African Women,” in Defining Females: The Nature of Women in Society. Edited by Shirley Ardener (Berg, Oxford, Providence, 1993), 126, 137. If a boy did not have a full sister to provide his marriage cows his father could “borrow” them from another wife’s house, but the debt extended to the next generation. Cite on ‘house’ issues…. See chapter 3, page 30-31? Interview #315, female, Zanaki, 29 September 2010, Bumangi. A Luo man describes how his father called all his sons together on his deathbed to tell them “all of his cattle debtors,” for this is where they would go for help if they had no cattle to marry. Shenk, Kisare, 51-2. But the debt between houses has to be paid, even if in the distant future by his heirs, thus further binding together the homestead of a man after his death. One could also “borrow” cattle from a wealthy relative for a marriage, binding oneself to that debt until it was paid even by his children or grandchildren.
Interview #68 Ghamarhizisiji (Uyayehi) Nuaasi, female, Tatoga, 5 August 1005, Issenye.
Tobisson 149.
Shipton, 52.
Jean Davison, Gender, Lineage and Ethnicity in Southern Africa (Boulder: Westview, 1997).
Tobisson 148
Huber 1973, 78
Shipton, 56. Shipton’s study of Luo “entrustment “ in Western Kenya emphasizes the “protracted marriage dues” made for ongoing exchanges and obligations between in-laws.
Huber 1973, 90.
Interview #68 Ghamarhizisiji (Uyayehi) Nuaasi, female, Tatoga, 5 August 1005, Issenye.
Interview #267, female, Ruri, 10 September 2010, Bwai.
Huber 92.
Interview #312, female, Zanaki, Bumangi, 28 September 2010, Bumangi.

Interview #309, female, Nata in Ikoma, 24 September 2010, Morotonga; Interview #312, female, Zanaki, Bumangi, 28 September 2010, Bumangi; Interview #307, females, Nata, 22 September 2010, Mbo.;

Interview #68 Ghamarhizisiji (Uyayehi) Nuaasi, female, Tatoga, 5 August 1005, Issenye

Interview #326, female, Kuria-Kenye, 5 October 2010, Kiagata Kwisaro. Find the quote, female, Luo, date, place.

Shipton, 72.

Interview #246, female, Jita, 1 September 2010, Butata.

Interview #68 Ghamarhizisiji (Uyayehi) Nuaasi, female, Tatoga, 5 August 1005, Issenye.


Interview #234, female, Jita, 28 August 2010, Butata.

Interview #269, female, Ruri, 10 September 2010, Bwai.

Interview #269, female, Ruri, 10 September 2010, Bwai; Interview #270, female, Ruri, 10 September 2010, Bwai.

Interview #276, male, Ruri, 11 September 2010, Bwai.

Interview #303, females, Ikizu and Zanaki, 21 September 2010, Nyamuswa.

Interview #240, female, Jita, 31 August 2010, Butata.

Interview #262, female, Ruri, 9 September 2010, Mugango; Interview #268, female, Ruri, 10 September 2010, Bwai.

Shetler, *Imagining Serengeti*.  
Siso, *Grasp the Shield Firmly*  
Gengenbach


Examples of this in my early interviews were Interview #113, female, Ngoreme, 7 October 1995, Maburi; and Interview #55, female, Ikoma, 13 July 1995, Morotonga.


See Shetler, *Imagining Serengeti*.  
Muse, the first Zanaki rainmaker, Bischofberger 1972, 13.

While most of my informants are East Nyanza Bantu speakers, a Luo man too described learning history from the elders who sat together relaxing around a pot of beer or from his grandfather as they worked together. Interview #295, male, Luo-Kakseru, 17 September 2010, Shirati.

Interview #68 Ghamarhizisiji (Uyayehi) Nuaasi, female, Tatoga, 5 August 1005, Issenye.

In Mexican colonial history Steve Stern argues that men and women have a cultural argument over right and obligation.

Gengenbach

#558, interview notes. [MBISO DATABASE] incorporated

Interview #266, female, Ruri, 9 September 2010, Kuruwaki; Interview #274, females, Ruri, 11 September 2010, Bwai.
Interview #275, female, Ruri, 11 September 2010, Bwai.

Interview #239, female, Jita, 30 August 2010, Butata.

Interview #246, female, Jita, 1 September 2010, Butata.

Interview #253, female, Jita in Kuria-Kiroba, 7 September 2010, Nyabange.


Interview #302, female, Sizaki in Ikizu, 21 September 2010, Nyamuswa. She refers to the bracelets as her “shetani.” This is a current Kiswahili word for ancestral spirits which give a healer her power but was demonized as an evil spirit by the missions, a trend that is common throughout Africa.

Interview #238, female, Jita, 30 August 2010, Butata; Interview #270, female, Ruri, 10 September 2010, Bwai.


Interview #242, female, Jita, 1 September 2010, Murangi; Interview #245, female, Jita, 1 September 2010, Murangi.

Interview #281, female, Luo-Kamageta in Luo-Kakseru, 14 September 2010, Shirati Kabwana.

Interview #240, female, Jita, 31 August 2010, Butata.

Interview #242, female, Jita, 1 September 2010, Murangi.


Cite


Stern, 103-7.

Interview #290, female, Luo-Kenya, 16 September 2010, Shirati Michire.

Interview #284, female, Luo-Kowak in Luo-Kakseru, 15 September 2010, Shirati Nyakina.

They might also sleep with their grandmother for a while and hear her stories but would not consider them important as history. Interview #235, female, Jita, 28 August 2010, Butata.

Huber 1973, 220-221, 223.

Huber 1973, 68; Interview #245, female, Jita, 1 September 2010, Murangi.

Interview #236, female, Jita, 29 August 2010, Bwenda.


Huber 1973, 211; Tobisson 110.

Tobisson 110.

Interview #258, female, Ruri, 8 September 2010, Mugango.

Interview #281, female, Luo-Kamageta in Luo-Kakseru, 14 September 2010, Shirati Kabwana.

Tobisson 110-11.

Shenk, Kisare, 17-8.

Interview #309, female, Nata in Ikoma, 24 September 2010, Morotonga.
An odd diversion from this was a song that a South Lake women sang for me that could be translated as, “The Kuria came to kill and destroy, they should go home.” Interview #269, female, Ruri, 10 September 2010, Bwai

In some areas pottery was associated with blacksmithing and so taboo for others to do it. Interview #260, female, Ruri, 8 September 2010, Mugango. One woman said that certain women were experts in making specialized baskets like

Interview #312, female, Zanaki, 28 September 2010, Bumangi; Interview #240, female, Jita, 31 August 2010, Butata.

Interview #301, female, Kuria, 21 September 2010, Nyamuswa.

Interview #326, female, Kuria-Kenye, 5 October 2010, Kiagata Kwisaro.

Interview #286, female, Luo-Kowak in Luo-Kakseru, 15 September 2010, Shirati Nyakina.

Interview #311, female, Zanaki-Turi, 28 September 2010, Bumangi; Interview #301, female, Kuria, 21 September 2010, Nyamuswa; Interview #308, female, Nata, 23 September 2010, Mbiso; Interview #237, female, Jita, 30 August 2010, Butata; Interview #238, female, Jita, 30 August 2010, Butata; Interview #244, female, Jita, 1 September 2010, Murangi; Interview #281, female, Luo-Kamageta in Luo-Kakseru, 14 September 2010, Shirati Kabwana; Interview #283, female, Luo-Ugu in Luo-Kakseru, 14 September 2010, Shirati Oboke; Interview #287, female, Luo-Kenya, 15 September 2010, Shirati Nyakina.

Interview #312, female, Zanaki, Bumangi, 28 September 2010, Bumangi; Interview #240, female, Jita, 31 August 2010, Butata.

Interview #301, female, Kuria, 21 September 2010, Nyamuswa.

Interview #326, female, Kuria-Kenye, 5 October 2010, Kiagata Kwisaro.

Interview #286, female, Luo-Kowak in Luo-Kakseru, 15 September 2010, Shirati Nyakina.

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Interview #312, female, Zanaki, Bumangi, 28 September 2010, Bumangi; Interview #240, female, Jita, 31 August 2010, Butata.

Interview #301, female, Kuria, 21 September 2010, Nyamuswa.

Interview #326, female, Kuria-Kenye, 5 October 2010, Kiagata Kwisaro.

Interview #286, female, Luo-Kowak in Luo-Kakseru, 15 September 2010, Shirati Nyakina.

Interview #311, female, Zanaki-Turi, 28 September 2010, Bumangi; Interview #301, female, Kuria, 21 September 2010, Nyamuswa; Interview #308, female, Nata, 23 September 2010, Mbiso; Interview #237, female, Jita, 30 August 2010, Butata; Interview #238, female, Jita, 30 August 2010, Butata; Interview #244, female, Jita, 1 September 2010, Murangi; Interview #290, female, Luo-Kenya, 16 September 2010, Shirati Michire; Interview #294, female, Luo-Kamageta in Luo-Kakseru, 16 September 2010, Shirati Kabwana.

Interview #246, female, Jita, 1 September 2010, Butata; Interview #237, female, Jita, 30 August 2010, Butata. In some areas pottery was associated with blacksmithing and so taboo for others to do it. Interview #260, female, Ruri, 8 September 2010, Mugango. One woman said that certain women were experts in making specialized baskets like
the large ones for storing flour. Interview #237, female, Jita, 30 August 2010, Butata; Interview #250, female, Jita, 3 September 2010, Butata.

173 Interview #240, female, Jita, 31 August 2010, Butata.

174 Interview #245, female, Jita, 1 September 2010, Murangi.

175 #558 interview notes, Musendo.

176 Interview #235, female, Jita, 28 August 2010, Butata; Interview #237, female, Jita, 30 August 2010, Butata; Interview #240, female, Jita, 31 August 2010, Butata.

177 Interview #237, female, Jita, 30 August 2010, Butata.

178 Interview #240, female, Jita, 31 August 2010, Butata.

179 Interview #275, female, Ruri, 11 September 2010, Bwai.


181 Interview #236, female, Jita, 29 August 2010, Bwenda; Interview #267, female, Ruri, 10 September 2010, Bwai.

182 Shetler, Telling our Own Stories, Ngoreme.

183 Huber 1973, 69-70, 140.

184 Interview #240, female, Jita, 31 August 2010, Butata.


186 Interview #250, female, Jita, 3 September 2010, Butata.

187 Other layers in See so that we may see…

188 Interview #240, female, Jita, 31 August 2010, Butata.

189 Bumangi

190 Interview #281, female, Luo-Kamageta in Luo-Kakseru, 14 September 2010, Shirati Kabwana.

191 Interview #260, female, Ruri, 8 September 2010, Mugango.