SYMBOLISM IN THE MANUFACTURE, USE, CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

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KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

SEPTEMBER, 2023
DECLARATION

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted by anybody for the award of a degree in any other university.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my loving family, as well as to all my lecturers for their support, patience, and encouragement in the course of study. This work is also dedicated to my parents, the late John Kitenyi Mulefu and Mrs. Ketsia Zindori Mulefu, for their prayers and for having been a great source of inspiration and encouragement.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I sincerely wish to appreciate the help of those without whom this work would have been a mere dream. First and foremost to my supervisors, Prof Henry Mwanzi and Dr. Lazarus K. Ngari for their guidance, suggestions, encouragement and frank criticisms that led to the writing of this thesis. Gratitude goes to my course lecturers, Dr. Susan Owino, Dr. J Ndalila of the Department of History, Archaeology and Political Studies; Dr. N. Nyamwaka and Dr. C. Tibbs, for taking me through the various units successfully. I wish to thank my informants and my research assistant for their understanding, hospitality and assistance which enabled me to collect the data. I appreciate the moral support of my workmates who developed interest in my research work. I am sincerely compelled to express my gratitude to Rex computers for typsetting the work, and my family for their support, patience, encouragement in the course of study. Also to my parents, the late John Mulefu and Mrs. Ketsia Mulefu for their prayers, and for having been a great source of inspiration and encouragement.

Above all, I am grateful to God for providing an opportunity for me to undertake this study.
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<th><strong>Meaning</strong></th>
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<td>Aratsa matsai</td>
<td>He bleeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bwoni-</td>
<td>Sin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ging’ (khale munonono) -</td>
<td>‘long long ago'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shuhu / shisanda -</td>
<td>Indigenous container (calabash) made from a Gourd used by initiates to serve food and water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idumi -</td>
<td>Whole series of circumcision ceremonies performed to mark transition of adolescent boys from childhood to adulthood status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingolole -</td>
<td>Head mask won by initiates to disguise their identity when in public.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikwalo -</td>
<td>Big headdress made using branches from a special tree and plant material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inanjirwa -</td>
<td>Instrument for administering an oath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inyungu, zinyungu –</td>
<td>Indigenous earthenware pot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indini -</td>
<td>Circumcised penis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injeso or Vivya vi kasi -</td>
<td>Indigenous circumcision knife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imuuma -</td>
<td>An oath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ihriru-</td>
<td>The main pillar tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isenende-</td>
<td>A special creeper used to make headdress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isukha -</td>
<td>Bed sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lidole -</td>
<td>Uncircumcised penis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iisumati / isumadi -</td>
<td>The Skin dress worn by initiates during seclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Javusevekeni – Adults who are not Tiriki by circumcision

Jivute – Those initiates who cry during circumcision

Kavukolosi - Sacred groves where circumcision rites are performed

Khukasisa - bless

Khukhunda mushere murwa- A ritual involving having “sex” with a Terik woman

Kukhuvwa shikong’o- ‘clobbering the back’

Khulomba bwali – Making a ritual fire on which a sacrifice is offered

Khun’gwa malwa - Beer drinking

Khungusa or khukhwesa – to pull

Khusekesa - Rubbing a stick into a log of wood to ignite fire

Khushebwa – To be circumcised

Khushela ingombe - ‘To milk the cow’, an act in which the initiate made the pot to roar

Khulya imuuma – An Oath administered not to disclose circumcision secrets

Khunga’awa – Ritual involving cleansing of the initiates to protect them from contracting illness after exposing their faces to the public

Khusuha - Curse which was uttered against those who divulged circumcision secrets

Khuvungitswa - To recruited/collection initiates
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khuvida –</td>
<td>Ritual involving spraying <em>idumi</em> material using the mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulanya -</td>
<td>Cattle raid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khulavitsa-</td>
<td>Cleansing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwambukha mujera-</td>
<td>Ritual crossing of a stream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwira -</td>
<td>“kill” (ritual involving “killing”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwisavitwsa-</td>
<td>Ritually purified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lihalo -</td>
<td>A knife like instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunyasi –</td>
<td>Special salve (medicine) for treating circumcision wound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusibwa -</td>
<td>Carved baton carried by <em>(mwiha)</em> ‘Bride’ as they left seclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutiriji -</td>
<td>A Tiriki dialect spoken by the Tiriki from the East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusyola -</td>
<td>Tree used for important occasions because of its indigenous attributes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luchina nende isio -</td>
<td>Indigenous grinding stone used to grind eleusine millet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likhula -</td>
<td>Age set in which those circumcised are to belong to with ascribe roles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liloko -</td>
<td>Sorcery /witchcraft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lusacheti -</td>
<td>Improvised wooden chopsticks used by initiates when feeding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Lusekhe** - Indigenous long drinking tubes used to drink beer from a common pot

**Luseso** - Special grass tied round a cultural beer pot.

**Lwimbo lwu vukhulu** – Special song sung to announce circumcision season

**Lwimbo lwisheslukhu** - The song of departure, sung to announce the end of seclusion period

**Magura** - Butter made from a cow’s milk which was used to smear the initiates for cleansing and protection on the occasion of ending seclusion

**Malande** – A first growing creeping plant

**Malwa ka masambu** - ‘The beer of the fires’ prepared to celebrate the initiates’ first public appearance after circumcision

**Malwa ki shikong’o** - ‘The beer of the back’ which is prepared to mark the symbolic ritual of ‘clobbering the back’ (*kukhuvwa shikong’o*)

**Masove** - A terrifying sound of a bull roaring

**Malwa ki shalukhu** - The beer prepared to mark the end of seclusion of the initiates

**Malwa ki tsinguvu** - The beer prepared to celebrate the giving of the new skin dress (*isumadi*) to the initiates

**Manani** – ‘Giant’ creature which the initiates were made to believe produced scaring sound

**Malwa ki idumi** - Indigenous circumcision beer made from eleusine millet
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mavere</td>
<td>Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miima kyi idumi</td>
<td>The circumcision rites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mijilo</td>
<td>Forbidden acts which the initiates were to confess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misambwa kye idumi</td>
<td>Spirits of idumi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirecheti</td>
<td>blankets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudiri</td>
<td>counsellor/caretaker who nurses the initiates in seclusion after circumcision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhaalia, lisambbu</td>
<td>headdress the initiates hold on the head to dance while necked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muloji</td>
<td>A witch – an individual who could use the power of witchcraft to cause misfortune.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulukha</td>
<td>A lustra ceremony performed to bless the ‘brides’ after ending seclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musakhulu wa kavunyonje</td>
<td>elder of the circumcision grove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musaza</td>
<td>Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mushebi mukhulundu / mukali</td>
<td>Circumcision chief who gives advice on the circumcision skill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muyayi, musoleli</td>
<td>uninitiated youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shivambo</td>
<td>Skin apron/skirt worn by the initiates when leaving the circumcision grove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shivanda, or Gavunyonje</td>
<td>Circumcision grove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shituvo /shirumbi</td>
<td>The ceremonial three-legged stool used for cultural purposes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shilivwa / shilihwa - Archway through which an initiate pass upon return from seclusion

Shisirani- Bad omen

Tsikhavi – Good luck

Tsirumbi /irumbi - Seclusion huts where initiates recuperate.

Tiriki original – Circumscision group still inteing some indigineuos material in idumi

Vakhulu – plu, mukhulu - Singular- denotes persons who have just been circumcised

Vamwayi - Terik sponsors who smeared the initiates with butter to cleanse

Vaana vi shing ‘ang ‘a - young wild animals

Vasaalisi - Terik ritual leaders

Vasomi – Partially indigenous/ Christian circumcision group

Vasaza - plu, musaza (sing) - Circumcised men

Vasoleli – Uncircumcised

Vayayi – Boys

Vasakhulu vi idumi - Circumcision elders

Vatirichi - Tiriki people

Vadiri vu khumatti or vajesi, mushevi (sing) - Circumcisers’

Vadiri vu murhumbi – Counsellors who nurse initiates in seclusion huts

Viiha, plu - Mwiha, singular – (“bride”) term used to refer to the initiates immediately after seclusion
**Vindu vi idumi** - “things” of the *Idumi* (materials culture used in *idumi*)

**Vuhindira** - Adulthood

**Vukhulu** - Circumcision songs and dance

**Vule** - millet

**Vusela** - Porridge served the initiates after circumcision.

**Vukhongo** - Sisal used by the initiates when performing *vukhulu*.

**Vusekhu** – Pollution caused by human blood

**Ukhavola idumi dawe** – Not to reveal circumcision secrets

**Vura**- Bows and *Arrows*

**Vwali** – Ritual fire

**Vwana** – Childhood

**Vunonera / vukungune** - Small biting insects

**Lirhimo** - Spear, **Ingavo** - Shield

**Shalukhu**- The day of ‘leaving’ seclusion

**Tsimoni tsindamanu** - “bad / evil eyes”

**Zimbamba** – Clans

**Other terms**

Male parents – Parents who are Tiriki by circumcision

Tirikinised - Make something sound Tiriki
# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Compact Disc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAYM</td>
<td>East African yearly meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAM</td>
<td>Friends African Mission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus group discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KIFCON</td>
<td>Kenya Forest Conservation Programme</td>
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ABSTRACT

Every society manufactures cultural material for both practical and ideological utility. In this study, I examined the symbolism in the manufacture, use, continuity and change in *Idumi* material culture among the Tiriki of Hamisi sub-county, Vihiga County. This thesis also investigated the origin of the circumcision (*Idumi*) material culture. *Idumi* designates the whole series of ceremonies performed to initiate adolescent boys into an age group (*likhula*) Sangree (1966:20). This research was guided by the premise that the Tiriki have unique symbols used in *idumi*. The study was based on functionalism theory. I used Bascom and Herskovits ‘change and continuity’ concept to stress that *Idumi* material culture is subject to change in the process of use as culture is dynamic. The study adopted descriptive design which involves interviews, question guidelines, participant observation, and focus group discussion. The research utilized qualitative methodology that involved description of what I went to find out in the field. Snow ball type of purposive sampling was used since renowned custodians of *idumi* material culture are few. Midrash approach was used to infer meaning in *idumi* symbols. The study found out that, *idumi* and its material culture owes its origin on the Terik. Some of the material culture in *idumi* still undergo the manufacturing process while some have been discarded. The cultural material integrated in *idumi* reinforce the desired traits the Tiriki ascribe to manhood. Though Change has caught up with material culture used in *idumi*, certain aspects persist. I recommend that circumcisers’ should use disposable gloves as well as sterilize their hands after every operation to protect initiates. Future scholars should examine how circumcision material symbols of other ethnic groups transform the initiates into the men society desires. Further, scholars should explore the evolution of *idumi* as an education institution in the transmutation of adolescent boys among the Tiriki. Lastly, since HIV/AIDS is still a pandemic, there is need to study on how circumcision or lack of it inhibits or contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview

This chapter provides background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, research premises, justification and significance of the study, in addition to the scope and limitations of the study. Apart from the research methodology, this chapter also deals with a review of related literature and the theoretical framework. In Literature review, an attempt was made to move from general to specific; that is material culture from a global perspective to the Kenyan scenario and even more specifically to the Tiriki community. In literature review, the notion of symbolism, social features of symbols, the origin and the meaning enshrined in the circumcision symbols, the manufacture, use, continuity and change in use of circumcision material culture among the Tiriki is discussed. Secondly, theories that were applied to guide the study and interpret findings are explained. The conceptual framework and facts based on other scholars findings and researches are presented.

In this study, I examine the origin, symbolic meaning, manufacture, use, change and cultural continuity/discontinuity in use of cultural material in Idumi. Cultural material in idumi is symbolic, and hence, they are activated into action at the right time to facilitate the transformation of the boys into manhood. I articulate how the integration of material culture in Idumi occurs.
Informed by Firth Raymond’s (1973:77) view that symbols are first and foremost implements of action, I stress that *Idumi* among the Tiriki does not only denote the symbolic ritual of “cutting” the foreskin from the penis, but also the rituals and material culture put into action to transit adolescent boys into manhood. In this context, making and using material symbols make *Idumi* ceremonies more actionable and memorable. I also utilize the concept of change and continuity in stressing that whereas some *Idumi* material symbols may be available for continued use, they are subject to change as culture is dynamic. No culture can run away from the dynamics of change in the course of time (Alan Merriam, 1964: 303). In this context; change is inescapable so long as cultural elements interact.

Therefore, relating to this study, I argue that even in *Idumi*, some aspects of material culture have changed while others continue to be used. I demonstrate that the Tiriki cultural ideology and *Idumi* material symbols have a reciprocal association. I stress that, symbolism in *Idumi* participates in constructing and concretizing cultural ideology, history, identity and social orientation among the Tiriki. I further illustrate that, material symbols made in *idumi* contribute to the shaping of the nature of action undertaken in *Idumi* ceremonies.

**1.1 Background of the Study**

Many societies both simple and complex possess cultural material that are manufactured and used for social purpose such as circumcision which has been practiced as a culture for a long time among many communities. Isaacson and Wigoder (1973) note that, the jews initiate male children on the 8th day after birth as a
religion rite (1973:66). The instrument used to perform the circumcision falls within the material culture scope. Initially, circumcision was to symbolically differentiate the Jews from their neighbours. The Good News Bible chapter 17:9-11 notes that; the Jews perform circumcision to symbolize the covenant between them and Jehovah. In this context, the blood which is shed during circumcision comprise the material that symbolically seals the covenant. However, circumcision is not exclusively a Jewish rite. Garry (1939) says that, circumcision is evident in Africa having been introduced and passed to the neighbouring people by the Egyptians (1939:142). In Senegal, West Africa initiates from the Jola tribe usually leave the forest wearing homed masks (Mark 1992:54). Mark’s illustration informs us that, the initiates returning to the community after initiation dress in ways that demonstrate transition to a new stage. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1965) mentions the Agikuyu in Kenya who perform circumcision accompanied with initiation songs and dance (1965:41-42). The initiation songs and dance comprise part of material culture. Consonantly, the Tiriki who perform circumcision (idumi) also incorporate material culture. To a large extent, material culture depicts the way of life of a community as Sangale (2005) rightly writes that, culture is the entire way of life, comprising material and non-material of a society, and, that it is importantly social and an outcome of the history of a society (2005:103). The manufacture of indigenous material culture has continued to date. Because of this, material culture has been studied to understand how cultural groups adapt and utilize them to manipulate the environment to meet their needs and their relationship with other people. This study focuses on the cultural material used in Idumi among the Tiriki with designs to explore their origin, symbolism, manufacture,
use, change and continuity/discontinuity. Some scholars allude to the fact that, the Tiriki comprise of Bantu family living in Hamisi – sub-county, Vihiga County. However, all the Tiriki may not necessarily be Bantu by ancestry. This observation was confirmed by interviewees who submitted that, Vatirichi as a community comprise people from various clans such as the Bakoba of Uganda, Kalenjin, Idakho, Maragoli, Isukha, Banyore, Kisiis’ and even Luo among others, who became Tiriki after undergoing Idumi customs. In this context, a Tiriki is one who subscribes to Idumi customs regardless of the clan or ethnic group one comes from, and hence the Tiriki are an amalgam of several clans brought together by idumi which adolescent boys of 12 to 20 years undergo to transform them into manhood. Idumi is typically performed after five years starting from late July in the declared year of Idumi and incorporates material culture such as songs and ritual admonitions at every stage to embolden the initiates.

The term Idumi does not only denote the ‘cutting’ of the foreskin of the penis, but a series of ceremonies performed to initiate boys into an age group (likhula) that enables them access adult status (Sangree, 1966:48). Idumi is interrelated with cultural material which undergo the manufacturing process and preparation which begin by ritual elders’ announcing the idumi season in the preparatory stage and goes on through the circumcision, seclusion and end of seclusion (shalukhu) stages. There exist other dances (Vukhulu), rituals and music carried out after the ritual of “cutting” the foreskin (khusheva) including purification (khulavitsa), “clobbering” the back (shikong’o) ritual, hatching (shalukhu) ritual. For one to be regarded a “real” man
among the Tiriki, all the *idumi* stages ought to be accomplished. Hence, successful
*idumi* ceremonies entirely depend on the success of the material culture used and the
rituals carried out at every stage. Due to the integrative nature of *Idumi* with material
culture and rituals, the Tiriki describe the whole process as ‘*Idumi*’, denoting
circumcision rituals and ceremonies.

*Idumi* is not only an initiation ceremony but a platform through which the
circumcised boy is introduced to adulthood responsibilities such as marriage and
secrets pertaining to adulthood especially sex which is revered as a tool of procreation.
Themes, on family and sex life are included in *vukhulu* and songs that aim at revealing
to the candidate’s information that was previously a preserve of the adults. Due to the
value and cohesive role the Tiriki attach on the *Idumi* process which incorporate
symbolic cultural material, the society sees this process as a platform for imparting
traits that define manhood as well as the roles of a circumcised man. For instance,
informants submitted that, the incorporation of cultural material such as *lusyola* tree
(markhamia platycalyx) in occasions of *idumi* where boys are involved symbolically
depict the masculinity strength which the circumcised they are to portray after the end
of the seclusion period. Women and men duties in *Idumi* rituals illustrate how the
Tiriki society perceives women and men. In essence, women are kept away from
secret matters concerning *Idumi* save for dancing *vukhulu*, allulating, preparing food
for the initiates and bringing water for the initiates use. The Tiriki society expects boys
to demonstrate traits of manhood such as resilience, courageousness, aggressiveness
and strength after being subjected to *Idumi* material culture and rituals. For instance,
boys are told not to make a mistake of crying like a woman during the circumcision operation.

Despite the fact that *idumi* material culture play a significant role in transforming the Tiriki boys from boyhood to manhood, the western education and Christianity influence have resulted to numerous changes in using these material culture. For instance, both the ‘Tiriki origin’ circumcision group and *Vasomi* have opted for the scalpel blade to perform the circumcision operation arguing that, the use of one indigenous circumcision knife (*injeso*) on a number of candidates as previously done is unhealthy with a lot of hygiene problems. These *Idumi* material culture and rituals is also equated to a cult by the church which depicts symbolic material culture as evil that aims at distracting person’s minds from the “true” God. However, in order to guard against sudden erosion of the Tiriki culture, progressive individuals have embraced changes in use of some of the material culture in *Idumi*. Even with the changes necessitated by emerging health concerns and modernity, some material culture utility in *Idumi* persist as will be demonstrated in this work.

**1.2 Statement of the problem**

Study on material culture symbolism in many communities other than the Tiriki has been carried out by many scholars. However, inadequate research has been done on cultural material in *idumi* and its symbolism among the Tiriki despite the role they play in transforming the boys from childhood to manhood as well as constructing cultural and social identities and relations among the Tiriki. The little attention to this subject focused on *idumi* ceremonies without emphasis on symbolism, hence creating
a scholarship gap. Furthermore, there has been inadequate examination on the manufacture, change and continuity of this material culture. The study on *idumi* material culture symbolism was necessary to enhance the understanding of why the Tiriki incorporate this material culture in the process of transforming Tiriki boys to manhood.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

i. To investigate the origin and meanings imbedded in symbols used during Tiriki circumcision.

ii. To examine the manufacturing process of Tiriki circumcision material culture.

iii. To discuss various functions of Tiriki circumcision material culture.

iv. To explain continuity and change of Tiriki circumcision material culture.

### 1.4 Research questions

The study addresses the following questions:

i. What is the origin and the meaning enshrined in symbols of Tiriki circumcision?

ii. What is the process of manufacturing the Tiriki circumcision material culture?

iii. What are the functions of the Tiriki circumcision material culture?

iv. What is continuity and change in the use of Tiriki circumcision material culture?
1.5 Research Premises

The study revolves around four fundamental premises.

i. The origin and symbols of Tiriki circumcision (Idumi) material culture have been forgotten.

ii. The manufacturing process of the Tiriki circumcision (Idumi) material culture is vibrant.

iii. The functions of circumcision (Idumi) material culture among the Tiriki are being modernized.

iv. The change in use of circumcision (Idumi) material culture among the Tiriki is enormous.

1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study

Material culture Studies have been carried out by scholars such as Hodder (1982:37-56) who researched on communities living around lake Baringo. However, inadequate research has been done on cultural material symbolism in dumi. Little attention by Sangree (1966) and Sangale (2005) to this subject focused on idumi ceremonies without emphasis on symbolism. The above authors’ omission justifies this study because it seeks to bridge this scholarship gap. It seeks to examine the symbolism in the manufacture, use, change and continuity of the cultural material in Idumi. The study commences from 1850 – 2014. The year 1850 provides a good starting point for the study because it marked the time when the symbolism in cultural material in Idumi was still intact with minimal external interference. The year 2014 provide a good
historical period to end the study since it allows for adequate time and space to explore
whether the material culture used in Tiriki initiation have changed or remain intact. This research is very important because it comes at a time when there is enormous pressure on the Tiriki to change from the utilization of symbolic cultural material in *idumi*, and hence, threatening their manufacture, preservation, and continued use. The Tiriki have unique way of manufacturing and using symbols of circumcision material culture, which make them culturally different from their linguistically related neighbours. However, the rate at which change in use of cultural material in *idumi* has permeated the community is alarming. Thus, the study is necessary not only to raise awareness but also the transformative value ascribed to the cultural material in order to preserve them for posterity. It is further hoped that the knowledge generated from the study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the forces underlying change and continuity in use of material culture, not only among the Tiriki but also other communities in Kenya like the Nandi, Maasai and Bukusu.

The study will also contribute knowledge to the increasing literature on material culture used in circumcision. The study is timely to document the symbolism in *idumi* material given that elders with knowledge about *idumi* are dying without leaving behind any record, a situation which is likely to create a gap in terms of connecting the past, the present and the future. It is further hoped that, the study will stimulate the interest of enviromentalists, politicians, and administrators among the Tiriki in order to re-ignite programmes to enhance *idumi* material culture preservation. Besides, the study is hoped to benefit scholars studying History, HIV/AIDS activists, culturalists,
church leaders and general readers with an interest of knowing the Tiriki culture in order to make an informed opinion.

Further, some Tiriki may not understand why material culture is integrated in idumi ceremony. By studying idumi material culture, the young generation and community members will be enabled to understanding what constitutes the social - cultural life of the Tiriki. Hence, abrupt changes and attempts to discard material culture used in idumi may not be possible but can only be modernized. Given the crucial transitional role material culture play in idumi, it is important for scholars to delve deeper into their symbolism. The few studies available look generally at material culture in idumi as ‘things’ used in idumi social ceremony, hence making this study not only crucial but significant.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study
In scope this study was defined in three main aspects. Geographically the study focused on Shaviringa and Shamakhoko Locations in Tiriki East, and Jepkoyai and Tambua Location in Tiriki West in Hamisi sub-county, Vihiga County. This region is mainly inhabited by the Tiriki, Terik, Maragoli, Isukha, Idakho, and some Luo clans. This study region is represented cartographically on page 93. The rationale for choosing this area being that the interest was in studying the symbolic cultural material in idumi, specifically on how they are manufactured, used, transforming, and continuity. The selected locations are places where idumi ceremonies are still strong, and where custodians of cultural material with the knowledge on the Tiriki cultural trends and history were accessed; and where the Tirikis’ who adhere to the use of
indigenous symbols of cultural material in *idumi* as well as those moderates who have adapted new ideas co-exist. The selected Locations in Tiriki East and west constitute spots where some of the cultural sites (*kavunyonje* and *kavukolosi*) are traceable and actively in used during the *idumi* season. These sites include *Ivulukhova, Ishaviringa, Ishiru*, and *Ivulukhombe* in Tiriki East and Jepsis, *Igavwanga, Jimudi*, and *Imuchinga* in Tiriki West. Sangale (2005) mentions the *kavunyonje*’s where *idumi* rituals are performed (2005:113-114). In content, this work was confined to the study of symbolism in the manufactured, use, change, and continuity of cultural material in *idumi* from 1850 to 2014, with specific reference to the tangible and non-tangible material. However, in the course of this study we encountered the following limitations. There was language barrier between the researcher and the respondents during interviews. This problem was very acute among informants with low literacy levels. We managed to surmount this problem by engaging research assistants conversant with local language. This study was affected by the problem of suspicion from respondents who were unwilling to share information on *idumi*. Nonetheless, the problem was overcome by informing the respondents that I am part of the Tiriki culture and the research was for academic purpose. This work did not delve deep into prohibitions observed during *Idumi*, but leaves this area for further research. In this work, I use the term material symbols interchangeably to refer to material culture.

1.8 Review of related literature

The body of literature on material culture is growing by the day. However, literature on *Idumi* material culture and the symbolism enshrined in them is scanty. Sangree
(1966) and Sangale (2005) briefly mention *Idumi* material culture in their works without paying attention to their symbolism thus prompting a gap in scholarship that requires to be addressed. All cultural material in *Idumi*; both tangible and non-tangible are symbolic. Material symbols emphasize the meanings derived from the interrelationship of objects within their cultural contexts. Miller (1994) notes that, ‘the instant function of the object is to symbolize the people who generated it as well as to reflect their beliefs’ (1994:13-18). Schlereth (1982) in his book Material Culture Studies in America sees tangible and non-tangible cultural material as the totality of artifacts which people make and leave behind (1982:11). In relation to this study, tangible or non-tangible cultural material in *idumi* do not only depict cultural beliefs but also the continuity of ancestral antiquities. For instance, Sangree (1966) mentions that, Tiriki boys returning home on the occasion of *shalukhu* pass through *shirivwa* which is constructed using *lusyola* branches (the same tree used for the construction of the sacred homestead ancestral shrine (*musambwa*) (1966:63). Bearing that in mind, the *shirivwa* which represents *musambwa* in *idumi* delineate belief in the ancestral presence as well as indigenous religious beliefs.

Globally, different communities both simple and complex possess material culture which perform specific functions. Rodney Harrison’s (2002) contends, that metal match tins as part of the cultural history and artifact point’s to cultural continuity from antiquity to the present among the Aboriginal people in Australia (2002:72). Leach, (1976) endorses Harrison’s view by observing that, when using certain material symbols, human beings project ‘inwardly generated ideas onto things and actions in
the outer world’ (1976:9). Harrison’s (2002) and Leach’s (1976) views inform this research in terms of how material culture function, change and continue among the Tiriki. In this regard, some of the concepts presented by the authors’ are in consonance with the myths used to construct ideas on material culture among the Tiriki.

Hall (1997) argues that, material objects as devices carrying units of social rules of conversation that facilitates interaction within the community through shared beliefs (1997:13-64). In this context, the Gelede masks among the Yorübä in Nigeria provide an appropriate example of material symbolism that transmitted coded information which could only be decoded by those from the Yoruba culture. With regard to this study, culture material in *Idumi* such as the *Ingolole* transmit coded information which can only be understood by the Tiriki themselves. However, when examining symbolism in cultural material, scholars should not just focus on the social codes of communication but consider the wider role they play, besides how they are manufactured.

Cultural material provide the source from which symbols are created. Hannerz (1969) writes that, culture encompass allegorical apparatus of interpretation, which include beliefs, ritual practices, and ceremonies as well as informal cultural practices such as language (1969:184). These allegorical forms are the means through which “social processes of sharing modes of behaviour and outlook within a community” take place. Further, Foster (1994) concurrs by stating that, culture becomes an elaborate system of classification whose units are symbols (1994: 366). Basing on this concept with regard to *idumi*, every artifact or material handled on the occasion of *idumi* ceremony is
ordinarily considered as a symbol, which consequently participates meaningfully in a network of shared significance called ‘idumi culture’. Therefore Hannerz (1969) and Foster (1994) present symbolic material culture as a “mirror” for reflecting the wider society’s cultural ideology. As concerns Idumi, cultural material interrelated with it does not merely reflect culture, but also perform specific function. This observation is confirmed by Hodder (1982) when he posits that, material symbols such as dress, pots, stool, and hearth position among communities living around Lake Baringo produced and utilized to anchor and enhance group identity (1982:37-56).

Material Culture is interwined with culture. Henry Pratt Fairchild (1966) sees culture as a noticeable attainment which embraces spheres such as language, beliefs, and making of utility tools as well as artifacts in which cultural actualization is enshrined (1966:80). Culture which is transmitted from one generation to the next is symbolism oriented. Having said this, material culture can be seen as “material things” against the background of the culture in which they are made and utilised. The material ‘things’ inform about the culture and the culture informs about the material. Indeed, Henry Pratt Fairchild observation informs this study on grounds that, Tiriki cultural orientation and beliefs are symbolically revealed in idumi material culture and ritual performance which can also be utililized to gain access to the history of the community. As concerns Idumi, the material culture associated with it does not merely reflect Tiriki culture, but it’s also made to perform specific function. The Tiriki transmit their culture from one generation to the next through idumi material culture and rituals that are symbolic, and which concretise cultural values that hold and
sustains the social fabric. Therefore, study on cultural material in *idumi* gives as the means to understand the Tiriki who produce and use them.

As mentioned earlier in this study, societies worldwide manufacture specific cultural material with symbolism that resonate with their cultural demand. However, it is worth noting that, in the context of their use, the cultural material goes through a complex and unconscious historical process of change as result of internal and external forces, and this has been a global phenomenon. Mehler (2009) writes that, imported global items altered European material documents (2009:261-281). Consonantly, Sondergaard (2014) says that, within Europe the material indication of globalization often consisted of increased dispensation and utilization of goods such as Chinese porcelain (2014:151-188). Killock & Medden (2005) concurs with Mahler by noting that, pottery and glass remains in the 17th century Limehouse in London originated from various countries and this had an effect on the alteration of British material culture (2005:1-91).

Miller&Tilley (1996) “Editorial” note that, alteration in cultural material may arise externally. Silliman (2009:211) buttressed this observation by assigning modification in utilization of symbols of material culture in North America and Australia to a deeply ingrained view of colonialism as a culture contact. With regard to *idumi*, the Tiriki and European missionaries interacted with a resultant effect of modifying, transforming, and discarding some of the symbols of *idumi* material culture. These attest to the fact that whenever two or more cultures interact, change is inevitable. Marvin Harris (1971) points out that, “No matter how much two cultures may
separate from each other, contact between them results in swapping some cultural traits” which in the long run will sway material culture in one way or the other (1971:153). Therefore, the so-called “European /Euro – American” objects were incorporated into indigenous American and Australian practices in ways that insured their survival as individuals, families, and communities and should not be interpreted in terms of loss or passive acquiescence. Rather, they represent additions and actions set within social remembering and forgetting. They represent what Joyce (2008:39) calls “patterned immaterialities” – “the probable remaining pieces of previous networks of knowledge and memory, intentionality and action, personhood and embodied dispositions”. As such, culture is dynamic hanging and sensitive. Echoing these ideas are the words of (Shorter, 1998:29) who contends that, human societies and cultures are not static, and so are the material culture, hence the Tiriki have not escaped this situation. The North Americans and Australians are not the only people whose symbols of material culture were affected due to colonial influence. Kieschnick (2003) notes that, Buddhism from India altered the material world of the Chinese by introducing new consecrated objects which continued to alter and evolve in response to new environments and demands of a dynamic society (2003:1-2).

In Africa, the colonial administration saw change as the only way of modernizing the continent and fitting it into the orbit of the West to the latter’s advantage. Boahen (1985:804) posits that, Europeans in Africa were generally imbued with the spirit of change which took acultural dimension in which Africans renounced indigenous practices to be admitted into a Church. Boahen’s view is supported by Niebuhr (1951)
who postulates that Christ as the author of Christianity is against cultural observances and those who practice such should not be considered as “those of the faith” (1951:30-40). However, Speaking on alteration of symbols, Hodder (1987) points out that, transmutation is not divorced from persistence with regard to symbolism in cultural material (1987a:8). That being the case, persistence and transmutation in cultural material that is made and utilized by various communities should be perceived as social-symbolic process. Based on this study, it is argued that even in Idumi among the Tiriki, some aspects of material culture still persist in use whereas others have altered.

The above views advanced by Hodder are supported by Mugambi (1989). He observes that in almost every discussion concerning African heritage, the question of continuity and change tends to prevail (1989:111). In consequence, change and continuity are processes integral to every culture and will continue to happen. As noted in the literature review, scholars argue that material symbols are not fixed but fluid. In this context, material culture is subject to change due to internal and external forces that breed new ideas that influence change. Collet (1987:105-116) and Ndoro (1991:60-66) are of the view that, changes in ideology and material culture are in some way related, and change in the latter reflects change in the former. This may explain why change in ceramic style is evident not only in northern Zimbabwe among people of the Musengezi culture, but throughout the region around the beginning of the second millennium AD when the community interacted with outsiders. The shift to the Christian ideology has not only interfered with material culture among the Tiriki but entire African communities that came into contact with Christian missionsries.
Regardless of the efforts made by any community to isolate culturally, mutation on its material culture is inevitable. For instance, the Maasai of Kenya regardless of guarding their culture has experienced alteration due to exposure to new western ideas and ideals through formal education. Coles (2008: ii, 99) contends that increased enrolment of the Maasai children in schools forced change in their community and culture. Although the aspects of cultural change cited by Coles are not covered in the scope of this study, this work outlines some of the forces of change which impacted on *idumi* material culture. Using Cole’s arguments as the basis, the current study explores the extent to which the Tiriki experience is similar or probably different from that of the Maasai.

As earlier noted, no material culture can escape change, and this applies to *idumi* material culture. Although *Idumi* and its material culture is deeply rooted in the history of the Tiriki, remarkable change has occurred in their use. Sangree (1966:125) and Sangale (2005:514) see missionary influence, adaption of modern ways of life and interaction with other communities causing damage to *idumi* material culture. Though change is inevitable with regard to *idumi* material culture, some aspects of this cultural material continue to be in use. The notion of symbolism which is derived from cultural material, and which is activated to facilitate the cultural process such as *idumi* among the Tiriki is discussed in the next section.

### 1.8.1 The notion of symbolism

It should be noted from the outset that, the notion of ‘symbolism’ as a concept which can organize human thinking and work as an analytical tool in areas such as those
addressed by this thesis, is fundamental to this study. Firth (1973:77) and Znaniecki (1934:181) opine that, symbols primarily are tools of action. Hall (1997) is of the view that, symbols are ‘social modes of thought’ (1997:2). In essence, symbols possess coded information and through their use people are able to materialize abstract concepts and to communicate with each other. The above authors’ description on symbols inform the present study. For instance, cultural material idumi is symbolically code named “harsh cows or calm cows” depending on the effect of the material on the body of the initiate. Consonantly, Hoselager (1997) writes that, human beings are, to use a technical expression, ‘cognitive agents’, with a representational system that allows them to think about the surrounding world (1997:29). Hoselager’s view resonates with Eliade (1961) who says that, researching on the basic meanings of symbols makes it possible to reach a ‘better understanding of man as he is, before he has come to terms with the conditions of History’ (1961:12).

The above authors’ observation concur with the present study as idumi symbolic material culture represent a hidden meaning which the initiates later understand as revealed to them in the idumi ritual process. On account of this, the hidden meanings in material symbols, the memories, the hopes, the fears, or even the whole structure of a culture can be interpreted, revealed and transmitted from one generation to the other. Undoubtedly, symbols are a kind of ‘meta-language’ of a communicative code, where human fantasy and knowledge are knowingly interlaced in order to explain the surrounding world. In view of this, symbolism is part of the symbolic heritage of a society, because, as the time elapses and the society evolve, they depict the primary
feelings of that society. In this context, material culture provides the source from which symbols are created, and hence this resonates with this study given that *idumi* symbolic material is sourced and made from the cultural surrounding. It is worth noting that different cultures contain diverse, often conflicting symbols, rituals, stories, and guides to action. For instance, the reader of the Bible can find a passage to justify almost any act, and traditional wisdom usually comes in paired adages counseling opposite behaviors.

Hannerz, (1969) observes that, culture is not a unified system that pushes action in a consistent direction (1969:186-88). Rather, it is more like a “tool kit” from which actors select differing pieces for constructing strategies and lines of action that paves the way for organizing action that might allow one to reach several different life goals. Informed by the views of the above authors, this thesis therefore considers and examines *Idumi* material symbols as tools which influence action through the shaping and organization of those stages in *Idumi* ceremonies among the Tiriki. After a general discussion on the notion of symbolism, the next section of this work offers an overview on social features of symbols.

### 1.8.2 The social features of symbols.

Inasmuch as we are talking about symbolism as part and parcel of Tiriki circumcision, it will be convenient to discuss and identify the social features of symbols and what symbols are. Turner (1970) views symbolism as anetwork that mysteriously connect the known with unknown which is postulated as existing (1970:26). Lewis (1977:1)
insists that, symbols must be considered as parts of a code which is only coherent once you have discovered the key (1977:1). The above author’s views concur with the present study on mysteries surrounding symbols. For instance, the *ingolore* in *idumi* is a mystic item believed to have the potential of connecting the initiate to the spiritual world, and that it’s only the Tiriki who subscribe to *idumi* culture who can comprehend the coded information in the *ingolore*.

Hall (1997) says that, people from the same cultural environment are able to interact with each other because they share the ‘same conceptual maps and interpret the world in roughly similar ways’ (1997: 3, 18). Indeed, the views above resonate with this study among the Tiriki whose symbols such as the *shilihwa* communicate coded information understood by the Tiriki themselves. Thus, in order to answer the question: ‘what is a symbol? Appropriately, it is more useful to identify the social features of a symbol. Indeed, symbolism mirrors perception of the surrounding world and its part of living cultures. By using symbols, people can find a way to give a special meaning to everything and, as Malcolm Hamilton (2001:69) points out, ‘nothing is arbitrary and accidental, because everything fits into a specific place’. It is also important to note that, not withstanding beliefs, customs and values between different societies, the process of symbolism remain a common feature. Eliade (1961) stresses that it is the presence of symbols that keep a culture open to growth and development, because symbolic images constitute part of a cultural heritage that can be shared and transmitted (1961:12). Hall (1997:2) argues that, it is precisely through
the use of symbols that people are able to materialize abstract concepts and to interact with each other, because symbols are, if nothing else, ‘social modes of thought’.

Hoselager (1997) argues that, that human beings are, ‘cognitive agents’, with a representational system depicted in symbols that allows him or her to think about the surrounding world (1997:29). For instance, the Cross in the context of Christianity symbolizes crucifixion of Jesus and the Christian faith , and hence, those who belong to the Christian culture give the same meaning to the cross while the non-Christian may look at the Cross as an item consisting of two wooden axis nailed together. This process of generating and projecting ideas, through some images that remain always active but unattainable, are what we call ‘symbolism’ and the projected ideas are the ‘symbols’. The process of symbolism can turn everything that participates in the network of shared and classified significances of a culture, into a symbol. In fact, every culture elaborates a system of classification whose units are symbols which work on the principle of what is not. This principle which Foucault (1970) calls ‘the logic of the binary opposition’ allow people to define, arrange and classify things into a social order, through their parallelism or disparities (1970: 52).

Lewis (1977:1) writes that, symbolism ought to be considered as parts of a code, which is only clear once you have discovered the key. Kassam and Megerssa (1996) mention the Boran- Oromo wooden stick collectively referred to as ulee which embodies astrong coded social value (1996:150). However, persons’ from non - Oromo culture, might define the ulee simply as a ‘wooden stick’ according to their cultural personification,yet among the Oromo it is a distinctive symbol of the self' in
the society. Consequently, the uniqueness of material symbolism becomes clear when we meet with people from a different culture, as in the case of the Oromo wooden stick.

Leach (1976) observes that, all customary behaviour convey information which cannot be understood until symbolic code is known (1976:9). Hall (1997) postulates that, every culture possess diversity of symbolic meanings about things that have ‘more than one way of interpretation’. This is because, as Eliade (1961:172) says, ‘likeliness, prototypes and allegories are variously lived and valued; and the product of these multiple realizations of them is largely inbred in varied cultural models’ (1961:172). In consequence, symbolism portray the social mode of thought which transmit coded messages which are only comprehensible to people belonging to the same culture.

Inevitably, the views discussed by the scholars’ above inform the present study since there are various *Idumi* material symbols such as the *isenende* among the Tiriki which have coded meaning that can only be understood by those who subscribe to *idumi* culture. After a general discussion on the social characteristics of symbols and their way of working within societies, the next section in this work considers the origin, symbolism, manufacture, and the socially designed functions of *Idumi* material symbols among the Tiriki.

1.8.3 The origin of Tiriki circumcision (*Idumi*) material culture

Before describing the origin of *Idumi* and the symbolic material culture associated with it among the Tiriki, a general explanation concerning the *Idumi* concept and the historical background of the origin of circumcision is neccessary. Informants submitted that, the Tiriki word *Idumi* does not only designate a series of male initiation
ceremonies, but denote circumcision which encompass the initiation of adolescent boys into likhula to enable them attain Vuhindira status. In this study, the concept “initiation” is used to describe a process involving adolescent boys going through the Idumi ritual cycle. Turner utilizes the term “circumcision” and “initiation” concepts to mean the same in his study on the Ndembu of Zambia circumcision rituals (Gluckman 1962:152). Among the Ndembu, the phrase “mwadi” comes from “kwadika”, “to initiate” which in mukandla, means “to circumcise”, a ritual practiced by the Ndembu in Zambia.

Bianchi (1984) notes that, initiation is a complex process (1984:81). Indeed, Van Gennep (1960) notes that, the process can only be understood if it is examined within the context of similar practices where the individual’s personality is modified as a consequence of mutilating part of his body (1960:71). La Fontaine (1985) concurs by observing that, as the adult status may be symbolized by the circumcised penis, the social changes are represented by the body (1985:26). It is worth noting that circumcision ritual acts are symbolic; and that significant social concepts are expressed through linking the physical with the social. The above authors’ views resonate with this study among the Tiriki whose Idumi encompasses both the cutting of the foreskin (khusheva) and the circumcision ceremonies that are transformative.

1.8.4 General historical background of the origin of circumcision

Circumcision is an old age custom that was practiced by many communities worldwide. The Bibical book of Genesis, chapter 17: 1-11 sees the origin of circumcision in Abrahamic covenant. However, it is not a Jewish rite exclusively.

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Neuman (1973) notes that, indigenous societies have practiced circumcision due to psycho social need that has a biological foundation (1973:186). Mwamwenda (1995) says that, circumcision has been part of many cultures in Africa before the advent of missionaries’ (1995:415). The above authors views resonates with this study, since apart from having a religious background, Idumi has been practiced as an integral part of the Tiriki culture for a long time even before the advent of missionaries in Kenya.

As for the origin of Idumi and the cultural material associated with it remains a mystery. However, Sangree (1965:66) is of the view that the Tiriki custom (mwima) of idumi was borrowed from the Terik without alteration from ‘ging’ (Idumi ya rula ging) (1965:66-70). The term ging, is a Terik word which may be interpreted as meaning, ‘long long ago’ (khale munonono) probably by 1850.

In tandem with Sangree, Sangale (2005) presents two supplementary theories to explain how the Tiriki acquired idumi; One on a Tiriki young man by the name Lukhova who was uncircumcised (Musoleli) and lived among the Valukeywo (Terik) as a herdsman and another theory on Lukhova’s son Ambalavu who was circumcised by the Terik (2005:107-108). Sangree’s (1966) and Sangale’s (2005) view on the origin of Idumi among the Tiriki is corroborated by Boyd & Richerson (2005) in their book, The Origin and Evolution of Cultures. They articulate that, the Tiriki adapted Age sets and male circumcision ceremonies from the Terik (varwa) (2005:328), and this happened when the Tiriki were offered asylum as refugees on condition that their men become incorporated into the Terik warrior groups. However, the authors seem to dwell on asylum as the reason for the Tiriki adapting Terik circumcision customs, yet
there could be other reasons other than the ones mentioned in the available literature concerning the adaption of the Terik circumcision by the Tiriki which this study examines. The circumcision material culture is actually the symbols which the Tiriki use to transmit the norms, values, identity, ideology, and history of society. For the purpose of this work, the term material symbols of *Idumi* and Tiriki circumcision material culture are used interchangeably.

1.8.5 The meanings enshrined in symbols of Tiriki circumcision (*idumi*) material culture

The symbols of *Idumi* among the Tiriki, which are the same as the circumcision material culture are numerous and are discussed in the literature review. These symbols which are both tangible and non-tangible include, but not limited to the *ingolole*, *isumadi*, *vukhulu*, *malwaki idumi*, *tsi-kavunyonje*, *tsi-kavukolosi*, *irhumbi*, *isenende*, *malande*, *vusela vu bule*, *lwimbo lwu vukhulu*, *Bwali* or *vwali*, the *masove* or *shingang’a*, *imuuma*, the *lusyola* tree (*markhamia platycalyx*), initiates dancing *shihekenye*, a bundle of *limuli*, *tsincheso*, *sing-injeso*, or *vivya vi kasi*, *ikwalo*, *inyungu*, *tsisekhe*- singular *Lusekhe*, ritual of *kukhuvwa shigong’o*, *shalukhu*, *shilivwa*, rituals (*mulukha*), age grade (*likhula*) among others. Symbols influence specific action in *Idumi* ceremonies by providing resources from which the Tiriki construct diverse lines of action. However, symbols do not define ends of action, but provided symbolic components used to construct strategies of action when effecting the *idumi* ritual process.
Hannerz (1969) writes that, symbols are the means through which “social processes of sharing modes of behaviour and outlook within a community” take place (1969:184). Similarly, in a journal article, Victor Turner (1969) in his studies on the Ndembu (Zambia) and Bagisu (Uganda) in 1964 and 1966 respectively explored symbolism in items such as, the trees, animal chyme and yeast which comprise fundamental aspect of the circumcision ritual (1969:229-244). By emphasizing these items to incorporate meaning in rituals, the authors’ describe meaning as something a society performs and constructs. The views of the above scholars informs this study which explores the meaning enshrined in Idumí material culture such as the ingolole, isumadi, and the kavunyonje among others as sighted in the introductory part of this section. However, among the Tiriki there are inadequate scholarly writings on the meaning enshrined in Idumí symbolic cultural material.

Most writings are general surveys about Idumí material culture, discussing Idumí “phases” in relation to initiation ceremonies and maintenance of Tiriki cultural heritage as noted in (sangree, 1966: 48) and (Sangale, 2005: 106). Broadly speaking, Idumí as a process that transforms the young men into manhood consists of phases that take place in public, and phases that are secretive and witnessed by circumcised Tiriki men. Van Gennep (1960) contends that, initiation rites of which circumcision is part and parcel, fall into three phases namely: the rites of, separation, threshold or marginal and rites of reincorporation (1960:82). Van Gennep’s views resonates with the present study on Idumí whose rites also fall into similar phases.
Idumi among the Tiriki ordinarily starts with preparation rituals to invoke the presence of ancestral spirits. Sangree (1966:38, 51) and Sangale (2005:128, 136) mention vasakhulu vi idumi preparing for idumi by making a ritual fire (vwali, vw-ali) in the circumcision grove where they sacrificing a white goat, and inspect its entrails to divine the status of idumi season which they announce by singing lwimbo lyu vukhulu which consent to idumi to take place. This announcement is immediately followed by prospective candidates for Idumi dancing with acreeping plant malande on their heads imitating how they will dance with muhalia in preparation to acquire manhood. The views articulated by the above scholars inform the current research by highlighting Idumi activities in the preparatory stages. However, the authors did not focus on the symbolism enshrined in this cultural material such as kavunyonje, kavukolosi, khulomba bwali, sacrificing a white goat, lwimbo lwu vukhulu, irhumbi and prospective Idumi candidates dancing with malande, which this study prioritizes to bridge the gaps left by the authors.

The preliminary preparatory stages in idumi encompasses vasakhulu vi idumi recruiting the initiates (khuvungitsa vasooleli) and arranging them from jivuledi to itaweti in the order in which they will be circumcised before handing them to mudiri, mu-va-diri -plu , whose first duty is to ensure the construction of irhumbi , irh-tsi-rhumbi-plu) (Sangale, 2005:141).Certainly, interviewees submitted that idumi recruits as a rule guided to the forest to go through circumcision instructions (Kwaya) and the ritual of the Eye (Imoni).Indeed, before the recruits proceed to the forest to go through the stage of pulling down (khung’usa) and the ritual of Imoni test, they are stripped
naked and their hair shaved off by vadiri whose character is beyond reproach. The ritual of shaving the initiate’s hair is performed in the homestead of an elder responsible for accommodating the initiates at night during Idumi rituals. The boys recruited as initiates usually become prospective candidate for Idumi.

Swannel (1980) writes that, a candidate is an individual taking a test (1980:77). That being so, Idumi is not only a test to manhood but also a test of bravery which starts by removing the boy from familiar home environment to the forest for the purpose of curving out the “manhood” identity. Brandt (1977) contends that, “removing the boy from the mothers’ environment”, and the impact of loneliness facilitates the creation of a sense of identity, and in this context manhood” (1977:517-518). Bernstein (1993) endorses the above observation by stressing that; the initial identity formation aspect is the process of separation-individuation (1993:21). As a matter of fact, individual identity exposure cannot be satisfactory if there is no development of awareness by the child as being emotionally and physically separate from his mother. Furthermore, Van Gennep (1960) notes that, the separation phase is a momentous change in the individual identity of the life of the boy (1960:72). The above authors’ discussion resonates with the present study.

Among the Tiriki, candidates for idumi are typically recruited and taken away from home to a new environment to facilitate the creation of anew identity. However, Sangree and Sangale who write on Idumi did not focus on the symbolism embedded in separating the initiates from their families, arranging the initiates in order from jivuleti to Itaweti, having the initiates’ heads shaven and going through the stage of
circumcision instructions (Kwaya) and “pulling” (khunng’usa) as cited in their work, which this study examines to fill the gaps left. As mentioned earlier, *idumi* candidates are customarily stripped naked (shihekenye) when subjected to circumcision rites. Turner (1967) emphasizes that, to drop the previous structural ties, an initiate from a tribal culture has go through nakedness and and completely submit to the liminal passage terms to achieve the next stage (1967:95). Turner’s views inform the current study on what occurs on *idumi* candidates before undergoing the cut. On the day before circumcision *vadiri vu murhumbi* usually confiscate clothing from the initiates and in return give them the headdresses made from a special creeper called *isenende* (*i-tsile-senende*, Terik, *senendet*).

As noted during fieldwork, nude except for these headdresses, the initiates usually dance before their watching relatives and neighbours on the afternoon preceding circumcision, and this confirms Sangale (2005:145) observation that, the initiates led by *Mudiri* dressed in *shivambo* and carrying *Limuli* tied on an Elgon tree stick (*Lusuyi*) emerge from the forest *shihekenye* dancing with *isenende* which is held firmly by the left hand on the head. Further, a crowd of men escorting the initiates sing the initiation song – *Hoyohe* as they dance. Though the work of the above authors resonate with the present study by highlighting the cultural material and activities involved in the preparation of *Idumi* candidates, they did not focus on symbolism enshrined in them, especially in the initiates dancing *shihekenye* with *isenende* on the head, *mudiri* carrying *Limuli*, as well as in the initiation song *Hoyohe*, which the present study examines in order to bridge the gaps left by the authors.
Idumi is a ritual guided by customs in its performance. After dancing naked on the afternoon preceding circumcision, Idumi candidates retreat to the homestead of an elder responsible for accommodating them at night during Idumi rituals, where they are subjected to various initiation ordeals such as keeping them awake in the cold at night with no clothing in preparation for circumcision. Hambly (1937:460) and Wilson (1952:210) document the initiatory ordeal that denies initiates sleep. Eliade (1958) notes that, the initiates in certain tribes are typically shaken constantly to stop them from sleeping (1958:15). Sangale (2005) mentions that, Tiriki initiates are not only stripped naked regardless of the cold to stop them from sleeping but are subjected to the ordeals of masove or shingang’a and an idumi oath in preparation for transition to manhood (2005:147 -148). Having this in mind, its culturally believed that in avoiding sleep, candidates for idumi physically conquer fatigue and this shows proof of will and spiritual strength to undergo circumcision; and that remaining awake is being conscious and responsible.

As observed during fieldwork in one of the homes of an elder where the initiates retreat for rituals on night prior to circumcision, candidates for Idumi among the Tiriki are actually stripped naked and subjected to idumi ordeals such as the threatening sound of masove, ji-ma-sove or “roaring of giants” (manani) as well as the administration of an oath in which they are made to jump over a ritual stick called inanjirwa placed between a native axe (ihaywa yi shitirichi) and native hoe (shisiri). The oath is believed to bring disease to a perjurer. The idumi ordeals are designed to terrify initiates into confessing all forbidden acts (mijilo, mu -mi-jilo) they might have
committed to make them ritually clean before circumcision. The above scholars’ views inform the present study on the ordeals the initiates are usually subjected to, especially by mentioning masove or shingang’a, an idumi oath and denying initiates sleep as some of the ordeals they go through in preparation for transition to manhood. However, they did not delve into the symbolism enshrined in this ordeals, which this study examines in order to fill the gaps left by them.

As earlier discussed, Idumi among the Tiriki constitutes phases performed in public and phases that are secretive take place in the sacred and the circumcision groves considered sacred cultural forests. On the day of circumcision, vadiri lead the initiates for circumcision into the circumcision grove where women and uncircumcised persons are not allowed. Informants confirmed that, whether idumi ceremonies are there or not, women are not allowed entry into the kavunyonje because the spirits of idumi can harm them. Victor Turner (19969) in his research on the circumcision rituals among the Ndembu (Zambia) and Bagisu (Uganda) illustrates that, the circumcision rituals performance and the environment where they are carried out correlate. He stresses that, unlike the Ndembu, the Bagisu have been forced to clear bushes due to high population densities forcing them to perform seclusion rituals in their homes (1969:232).

Though, the above authors views relates with the present study, they downplay the symbolism enshrined in the the circumcision grove and the sacred grove as sacred cultural forests among the Tiriki but instead dwell on their social cultural role as sites for conducting male circumcision ceremonies. With regard to the current study, I
discuss the symbolism enshrined in these sacred cultural forests in order to bridge the gaps left by the authors. Fourie (1921) writes that, initiates among the Ndebele are obliged to walk across the river in a process referred to as *wela*, which implies “going through the river”, while its emblematic meaning is to enter the world of adults (1921:128-9). Courtney-Clarke (1986) similarly mentions that, after circumcision Ndebele boys cross the river and an old man pulls them out on the other side (1986:21. The views presented above are in consonance with this study. During fieldwork, I noted the initiates being dipped in water before crossing the stream to the other side where circumcision took place. Informants revealed that, in the morning of the circumcision day, the initiates escorted by people carrying sticks of *Lusuyi* that have numerous small branches whose bark has been peeled off, and on which *muhalia – isenende* has been tied proceed to the *kavunyonje* where they “cross” a river (*khwambuhka mujera*) to the high table where the eye test ceremony takes place. The views advanced above concur with the present study. However, they fall short of discussing the symbolism embedded in the initiates “crossing” a river (*khwambuhka mujera*) and the sticks of Elgon teak (*Lusuyi*) that have numerous small branches and whose bark has been peeled off, which this study explores to fills his gap.

Circumcision as a ritual involves the ‘cutting’ of the foreskin and Toubia (1995) mentions that it is executed in the forest (1995:9). Funani (1950) indicates that, “this ritual is performed in winter for the good scientific reason that it is cold and the wounds are unlikely to over bleed” (1950:30). Schroeder (1992) notes that, when the penis bleed during circumcision it is an act of purification that get rid of both female
influences, character, and ‘old cold blood’(1992:208). Old blood is cold when it remains in the child too long, and does not have heat any more. It must be got rid of to allow ‘New blood’ with heat which is necessary for strength and fertility.

Among the Bapedi ba Masemola, it is believed that when the surgeon cuts off the prepuce, he has implicitly permanently removed all that is childish. Eiselen (1932) says that, acquaintance with the “little knife” makes one a man (1932:72). The above authors’ views are in tandem with what happens in Idumi which does not only denote a series of ceremonies, but also the ritual of ‘cutting’ the foreskin (mutsuní) from the penis to transform the initiates into anew status. As noted earlier during field work, idumi candidates as a rule are guided to the kavunyonje early in the morning, where supplications and benedictions are performed by ritual elders before jivuleti is circumcised, and that the operation is very ‘painful’, yet the initiates are admonished to prove their manliness by bearing it without flinching or uttering asound. Interviewees stressed that, circumcision (Khushevwa) which is done early in the morning and involves the molding of the penis to look like an “Ak 47” gun must take place in the kavunyonje for it to be authentic in line with Tiriki customs of idumi.

Furthermore, before mass circumcision, jivuleti is not only circumcised first in advance, but his foreskin (mutsuní) now referred to as lidole is taken by the initiation elder and fixed on sharp piece of metal (luhwa) until it dries and sticks on the metal. Infact, informants disclosed that, the practice of lidole being taken by the initiation elder and fixing on sharp piece of metal until it dries for future use has been discontinued due uncertainties surrounding witchcraft in society. However, there is
symbolism in the ‘cutting’ of the foreskin, shading blood (*khuratsa matsai*) and circumcising *jivuleti* first which Sangale has neither mentioned nor discussed in his work and which this study examines to bridge the gaps left.

As mentioned in this work, circumcision is not a preserve of the Tiriki. Garry (1938) says that, circumcision is practiced among Jews, and it’s done on the eighth day after birth (1938:140-1). This differs from the Tiriki who circumcise boys in adolescence.

Further, Garry adds that, the Mohammedans and the Jews circumcision are considerably different. The Mohammedans, pursue the simple method of cutting off the integumental portion of the foreskin, almost the entire inner layer remains, and the glans remain covered whereas the Jews not only remove the prepuce, but also the slitting of its inner lining to facilitate the total uncovering of the glans.This departs from *Idumi* which involves not just the ‘cutting’ of the foreskin from the penis but a comprehensive process of defining men’s roles and identities among the Tiriki. This variance in circumcision style is evident between the Tiriki who practice *Idumi* and their neighbours who also circumcise. Informants told me that, the Tiriki circumcision, apart from the Terik and Nandi is unique and different from other communities which practice circumcision in western Kenya. This concurs with Sangale (2005) who refers to Tiriki type of circumcision as *Khureka*, that is “to project” into what looks like an “AK.47” ammunition, and that initially the same knife (*shivyia* or *incheso*) was used to circumcise all the initiates (ibid, 158). Though Sangale mentions the age group, the use of the same circumcision knife on all the initiates, and modeling the penis to look like an “AK.47” gun, he falls short of discussing their symbolism which this study examines to link the gaps left by the author.
In many African societies, the initiates after circumcision are served with specially prepared dish to help them recover their strength. Powell (1995) says that, initiates (abakethwa) among the Ndzundza of southern Ndebele, are served with soft porridge made from a mixture of mealie-meal and pumpkin (1995:59). The above view informs this study among the Tiriki whose initiates are also served with special porridge made from millet grain (vule) and delivered by the initiate’s mother in an indigenous pot (inyungu) on the edge of the kavunyonje on the circumcision day.

Interviewees noted that Tiriki initiates are customarily served with vusela vu vule to help them recover their strength after circumcision and that, the initiate’s mother is under obligation to prepare and carry the porridge to the outskirt of the kavunyonje. Interviewees disclosed that, prior to guiding initiates dressed in shivambo out of the kavunyonje, the counsellors returning the porridge pots (tsinyunngu tsiu vusela) from the kavunyonje customarily throw grass (vulimu) on the mother whose initiate demonstrated bravery, and cut off a bit of the isenende before handing it over to the mother whose son demonstrated cowardice. The views discussed by the above scholars inform this study. However, no attention is drawn to the symbolism enshrined in vusela vu bule, throwing vulimu on the mother and cutting off abit of the headdress vine before handing it over to the mother, and the initiates dressing in shivambo, which this work explores to fill the gaps left.

Among indigenous communities in Africa, the boys after circumcision are secluded and also acquire new status and name. Eiselen (1932) mentions that, among the Bapedi ba Masemola circumcised boys are referred to as badikane (1932:70). Powell
(1995) posits that the Ndzundza initiates are referred to as abakethwa (1995:59). Kuper (1978) says that, the badikane among Ndzundza and Manala people usually live in seclusion lodge (umphadu) permanently constructed using stones and protected by magical powers (1978:118). Towles (1993) notes that, Nkumbi initiates are secluded upto three months (1993:32). Turner (1982) says that, because the initiates are considered ritually contaminated, they are secluded from the realm of culturally defined state (1982:98). Consonantly, Jung (1953) observes that, transition to manhood seriously require prolonged isolation in an area accessible to men only and away from the mother (1953:129). The views advanced by the above scholars resonate with this study. Infact informants explained that, after the ritual of “cutting” the foreskin from the penis, the boys “enter” another status called vakhulu (initiates), who are then secluded in Irhumbi, tsirumbi- plural, where they are confined away from women till they performs the hatching ritual (shalukhu) to pave way for reintegration in society.

Upon arrival in the irhumbi, the initiates do not enter the irhumbi directly but go round it three times and come to the front where Mudiri wu Lusuyi hands over the initiates to Mudiri wi irhumbi, i.e... Mudiri the nurse. During fieldwork in one of the seclusion hut, I observed the initiates going round the irhumbi three times before entering it to comply with Idumi customs. Though the views presented by the above authors resonate with this study, the symbolism embedded in the irhumbi, the terms mudiri, vakhulu, and the initiates going round the irhumbi three times before entering it, is not addressed and which this work investigate in order to fill their gaps.
Apart from being subjected to numerous prohibitions while in seclusion, the initiates in many African communities also have their names and status changed. Eiselen (1932) writes that, initiates in seclusion among the Bapedi ba Masemola, receive food given by guardian custodians in the palms of their hands which they eat without touching with their fingers (1932:9). Eiselen adds that, among the Sotho secluded initiates discard childhood names and acquire new ones from previous Sotho kings’ like Singalela, Mosweswe, Silaki and Thulari for future identity (ibid, 72). However, this differs slightly with the Tiriki who, according to informants, the initiates adapt temporary names like Leopard and Lion whose usage ends after seclusion.

Eliade (1958) writes that, where touching food with the fingers is prohibited, it is concluded that the initiate is considered a new born infant and is unable to feed himself without aid. Further, Eliade observes that, during the period of seclusion, the initiates use secret language as an instruction and communication medium for the whole seclusion time (1958:15,37). Wilson (1952) concurs with the views of the above authors by saying that, in the ritual of cleansing (ukojiswa), Xhosa and Mfengu are obliged to eat roasted meat from the slaughtered white goat put on a thorny branch using the mouth and not fingers (1952:211). To underscore the importance of this stage where a prohibition exists, Van Gennep observes that: So great is the incompatibility between the profane and the sacred worlds that, a man cannot pass from one to the other without going through an intermediate stage (Gennep,1977:1).

Infact, informants noted that it’s obligatory for Tiriki initiates to observe ritual prohibitions when in seclusion. This demonstrate that, Idumi is a process pervaded
with rituals and restrictions that facilitate transition of initiates. This stage could also be understood as the time of purification before being admitted into the sacred world and to remain there.

The views advanced by the above scholars inform the present study on rituals and prohibitions undertaken in *idumi*. Informants observed that, Tirik initiates are prohibited from speech and usually communicate by knocking two specially made sticks (*virangasha*) and acknowledge greetings from the strangers by clapping on their skins (*isumadi*). In addition, apart from the initiates name changing to *vakhulu* after arriving in *irhumbi* the initiates are not referred to by their family home names but are given fictitious names (*Miira Khaandi*) such as a tree, lion, leopard which are to be used until the end of seclusion. Further, while in seclusion the initiates are usually prohibited from eating food using their fingers but have to use *tsisacheti* since they are ritually impure due to contamination caused by circumcision blood.

Informants further noted that, about five days after circumcision the initiates are not only taken to the river by *vadiri* to wash and thereafter smear them with some kind of soil (*lidohi-inyenyi*), but also to perform aritual referred to as (*khukhunda Mushere Murwa*) having ‘sex’ with aTerik woman just a few days to the end of the seclusion period. The views presented above inform this study on the rituals and prohibitions that are obligatory for the secluded initiates who have undergone *idumi*. However, the symbolism embedded in the temporary names given to the initiates, prohibition from speech and eating food with their fingers, *vakhulu* washing in a river, being smeared
with *lidohi* and performing the ritual of *khukhunda Mushere Murwa*, have not been addressed which this work explores to bridge the gaps left.

In many African societies, beer is brewed to usher in the ceremony associated with circumcision rites. Makwa (2010) says that beer brewing among the Bagisu of eastern Uganda is done three days prior to pen-surgery to usher in rituals performed on circumcision (*imbalu*) candidates (2010:101). Sangree (1966) also mentions brewing circumcision beer among the Tiriki (1966:56-61). The views above informs the present study especially on brewing *idumi* beer (*malwa*). Informants noted that, *vule, mamela*, and water drawn from a flowing stream form components of brewing *idumi* beer which takes three days to mature. Furthermore, informants enumerated seven stages of beer brewing in *idumi* ; namely, *Malwa ki shawenya* to celebrate the departure of the young man who had left to be initiated into adulthood, *Malwa ku muhalia* to mark the removal of *isenende* from the initiates home, *malwa ki tsinguu, malwa ka masambu, malwa ki shigong’o, Malwa ki shalukhu*, and *Malwa ka va Mwayi* to mark the time when Terik women came with animal butter to smear the *Viiha*. The discussion presented above on brewing circumcision beer informs this study. However, brewing of *idumi* beer is presented as an activity performed at every crucial stage to mark and celebrate *Idumi* process, and therefore did not address the symbolism enshrined in the duration taken to brew, the *vule* flour, the *mamela*, and the source of water for brewing *malwa ki Idumi*, which this work investigates to close the gaps left.

Music and dance cannot be divorced from Circumcision rituals among communities that practice Circumcision in Africa. Kaemmer (1993) notes that, rituals are highly
entwined with dance and music rendering it difficult to confirm with conviction which one sways the other in the ritual procedure” (1993: 69). Heald (1982) indicates extreme excitement and emotions among the Bagisu during circumcision (1982:21). However, sees music as entertainment with less emphasis on initiation. Kwabena Nketia (1957) underscores the vital role played by music and dance in ritual which include performing gender ideologies (1957:4-9). Rose Brandel (1954) writes that, music constitutes *gandja*, the Bapere and Babira people circumcision ritual of the Northern Ituri forest in Belgian Congo (1954:52-62). Although she opines that circumcision raises the status of men who go through it, the approach used comprises general surveys that lack data on symbolism in circumcision music and dance. Further, Brandel emphasis on music ignores dance as a fundamental aspect of the rituals. Interviewees noted that, *Vukhulu* is the highlight of *Idumi* and it provides an opportunity to communicate coded message.

The views discussed above on music and dance in circumcision are in tandem with this study on *idumi*. Informants elucidated that, the initiates dressed in indigenous attire comprising of *ingolore* and the skin cloth assembled in an open field to perform *vukhulu*, in which together with the crowd dance to the rhythm of two dry sticks (*virangasha*) knocked against each other, and *Mulinga* (half a beehive) drum made and covered with *lisero li imburu* which is hit with another wood in rhythmic manner. Additionally, few days to the end of seclusion period *vakhulu* dressed in *isumadi* and *ingolole* which at the top is inserted young palm reed leaves tied around a stick, and fibre tied on sticks made like buffalo horns (*ikwalo*) performed the final dance where the farewell (*suvule*) song dominated. Though the views articulated above resonate
with this study, *Idumi* music and dance is presented as a “tool” through which crowds are entertained, and therefore fall short of discussing the symbolism enshrined in *vukhulu*, musical instruments, costumes which include the *ingolole, isumadi, Ikwalo*, song texts and dances, which this work examine to bridge their gaps. In fact, *Idumi* music and dance as an integral part in the *Idumi* ritual process go beyond entertaining crowds.

While in seclusion, the initiates in many indigenous societies are subjected to initiatory ordeals. Eliade (1958) allude to the fact that “Circumcision and death are interchangeable” (1958:22). The suffering resulting from initiatory death, followed by new birth or resurrection is reminiscent to an initiate dying and being reborn as a different person. This demonstrates that, subjecting initiates to ordeals play the role of transforming them to a new status. Van Gennep (1960) posits that, the initiates among Melanesian tribes are typically brought to a consecrated place and battered with sticks (1960:72). Van Gennep illustration points to the transformative nature of initiation among malenesian tribes whose initiates are expect to acquire new traits. Schroeder (1992) notes that, physical sufferings to test maturity form part of the initiation dynamics in the Wosera intiation rites (1992:144). Mark (1992) says that, the initiates among the Jola tribe in Senegal are subjected to physical deprivation of many needs as an initiation ordeal (1992:49). Mark sees the physical hardship endured by the boys as a type of trial by fire. He demonstrates that, circumcision as a rite of passage among indigenous communities is integrated with initiation ordeals that are transformative. Sangree (1966) mentions that, the day preceding the *shikokong’o* ritual which is an
initiation ordeal in *idumi*, the initiates wearing *ikwalo, tsi-kwalo* –plu, danced enthusiastically in an attempt to break them (1966:57). As a matter of fact, the dancing is to psychologically divert the initiates’ fear of the *shikong’o* ordeal and render them physically exhausted before descending to the *kavunyonje* to undergo the ritual.

The views presented by the above scholars inform this study on the initiatory ordeals the initiates go through during *idumi*. Interviewees submitted that Tiriki initiates are subjected to the final initiatory ordeal which involve exposing their naked bodies to stinging leaves of anettle plant and biting insects in the ritual of *khukhuvwa shikong’o* in which the initiates presumably “die” and “resurrect on” the third day after maintaining silence. Literally, the idea of “death” and “resurrection” in the *shikong’o* ritual appear to be pointing to the ritual ‘killing’ of the old habits and character to allow the emergency of the new habits and character when the initiate recovers his consciousnes. The *shikong’o* ritual is transformative but not punitive. Interviewees further opined that, on the day preceding the *shikokongo* ritual, the initiates dressed in *ikwalo, ts-kwalo* and gathered in the dancing ground to perform *vukhulu* in which they danced vigorously to the farewell (*sevule*) song. To portray masculinity and prove to the public that, *idumi* had transformed them into ‘men’ the society desires, the initiates tried to break several *tsikwalо* in the process of dancing. I noted during field work that the initiates undergoing the *shikong’o* ritual are subjected to hostile *idumi* material culture such as small biting insects *vukungune/vunonera* and a nettle plant (*isambakhalwa ya manenje*) whose leaves sting painfully and which an elder lower to touch the bare back of an initiate who crawls under a table like arch structure covered with *Idumi* material culture
which are an integral part of transforming the initiates into Tirikihood. Further, on the site of the *shikong’o* ritual, *idumi* material culture such as the shield (*ingavo*), a spear (*rhirimo*), *lihalo*, indigenous axe (*ihaywa*) and indigenous hoe (*shisiri shi imbako yi shitirichi*), drinking tubes and beer pot.

The views articulated above on the *shikong’o* ritual and the activities involved in its preparation concur with this study. However, articulation of the symbolism enshrined in the ritual, the initiates trying to break *ikwalo* by shaking their heads violently as they dance, *Idumi* song *sevule*, and the material culture incorporated in the administration of the *shikong’o* ritual such as *ingavo*, *rhirimo*, *lihalo*, *ihaywa* and indigenous hoe (*shisiri shi imbako yi shitirichi*), temporary hut like structure (*lidiri*), and elders sipping beer from a common pot using drinking straws (*tsisekhe*), all of which carry symbol in *idumi* is missing and which this the research investigates to bridge the gaps left.

In many indigenous cultures, those initiated in a certain cultural institution such as circumcision are subjected to an oath to guard against revealing information on the rites performed. Geoffrey Parrinder (1969) writes that, members of a cultural institution such as the *Zan-Gbeto* in Ogu land in the Republic of Benin are under oath not to divulge anything about their initiating ceremony to non-members. He goes on to state that, failure to adhere to this rule always attracts severe fines or punishment called *Ozan*, and that the non-initiated are not allowed to know anything about the esoteric activities of *Zan-gbeto* and cannot accompany or address *Zan-gbeto* (1969:57). Parrinders view informs this study on what occurs during *shikong’o* ceremony in *idumi*. Informants pointed out that, on the occasion of the administration
of shikong’o ritual, the initiates usually take an oath (khulya inuuma) not to disclose initiation rites to persons not initiated in the Terik -Tiriki custom, and that those who reveal idumi secrets may develop a terrible itching of the skin and thereafter succumb to death. Certainly, during field work in one of the circumcision grove, I observed naked initiates taking the shikong’o oath administered on an Inanjirwa and heard the initiates being forewarned by the administrator of the oath that, “those who will divulge idumi rituals” will develop a terrible itching of the skin and will eventually die.

Furthermore, while out side the circumcision grove on the occasion of the shikong’o ritual, I noted women delivering water from a nearby stream which they placed some distance away from the grove. Informants submitted that, the water delivered has to be sprinkling on the initiates to resuscitate them back to “life” after being “clobbered to death”. Actually, from the circumcision grove after undergoing the ritual, the initiates supported by circumcised men ordinarily stagger back to seclusion huts to portray the adverse effects of the ritual on them, which is further consummated by maintain silence for three days. This demonstrate that, the shikong’o ritual has a ‘devastating’ effect on the initiates (shikong’o sha mala vakhulu) and alters their behavior. Moreover, informants elucidated that, three days to the end of seclusion period the initiate made a carved baton (lusibwa) or a carved stick (lusala lwa ya saara) which mudiri delivered to the family of the initiate. Initially, the carved baton made by the initiate was delivered by mudiri to the girl who was approaching marriageable age and chosen by the initiate. During field work the researcher established that, though the carved lusibwa or lusala lwa ya saara are still made by the initiates, they are no longer
delivered to the girl of choice as previously done, but to the family members who carry them as a souvenir on the occasion of shalukhu. The initial function of the lusibwa as a symbol of engagement to the girl of choice has not only been discontinued but overtaken by events given that the boys undergoing circumcision in the current social dispensation are very young and of school going age. The discussion above resonates with the present research in terms of the activities that happen on the occasion of administering the shikong’o ritual in idumi and thereafter. However, the symbolism enshrined in the shikong’o oath, water from a running stream, the women, the initiates keeping silent for three days after the shikong’o, and lusibwa has not been articulated, and which this work inveigates to close the gaps left.

Many Scholars have underscored the significant role played by flowing rivers or streams in indigenous cultural rites by attaching mystical powers to water in ritual performance. S.U. Erivwo writes that “All sources of water such as rivers and streams are places of power” (1983:17). According to Erivwo, places with water do not exist in the void but have mystic influential powers to those who interact with it. Bolaji Ido-wu (1971) observes that, the idea of associating some powers with rivers or seas is common to many cultures. He points out that, among the people of Songhai in Ghana the spirit of the river Tano is one of the chief spirits celebrated popular drumming and dances where people get possessed by the river-spirit called Zin or Jinn (1971:174). This being the case, its perceivable that indigenous communities interrelate rivers and streams with the presence of spiritual beings and this may explain why they provide sacred sites for performing rituals. Parrinder (1969) observes that, great rivers of East
and South Africa are also associated with mysteries and spiritual beings (1969:56). Towless (1993) says that, after burn everything to ashes in their circumcision lodges in preparation for reintegration in society, the initiates among the Mbo of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) who often sing Tini ko yo deikogiaba (we go to the water to wash) are guided by a young man into the forest where they undress and “bathe thoroughly” in a flowing stream (1993:152).

The above scholars’ views inform the present study about the importance of a river or a stream in the performance of rituals associated with idumi. Interviewees revealed that the Tiriki initiates usually perform the ritual of bathing in a flowing river in preparation for reintegration into society. Therefore, the initiates bathing in a flowing stream is not an ordinary act but a ritual that places the initiates into contact with the spirits that cleanses them before joining other members of the society. Though Towless presents important circumcision rituals involving the burning of seclusion items and washing in a stream before the initiates’ reintegration into society, his presentation underplays the symbolism in burning and washing in a stream. Burning and washing in circumcision rituals participate in removing the initiate from the previous unclean status of seclusion. Even though the present study resonates with Towless’s view on the rituals involving the burning of seclusion items and washing in a stream, there is a slight difference in how they are executed, in that among the Tiriki tsirumbi are not burnt, but are left to rot unlike the Mbo of Zaire who burnt their circumcision lodges.
The views articulated by the above authors inform this study on the rituals and activities performed in *idumi* such as the initiates’ washing in a flowing stream and burning of the items used during seclusion before reintegration in society. Sangree (1966) has mentioned that, some items used in seclusion such as beddings and the fence built around the seclusion hut are usually burnt before the initiates leave seclusion. The *ihrumbi* and *ingolore* are not burnt (1966:61-63). Informants emphasized that, in *idumi* all disposable items like *tsisacheti, vyuha, malala, shivambo* used while in seclusion are burnt except *irhumbi, ingolole, and lisumati*. By stressing that items used during seclusion are set a blaze before the initiates leave the seclusion huts, the informants suggests that the newly circumcised upon leaving seclusion are to refrain from coming into contact with items previously used lest they become contaminated. Though the discussion above inform the present study especially on the rituals of burning the items used in seclusion and the initiates washing in a flowing stream, the symbolism enshrined in these rituals have not been addressed and this study investigates the rituals to fill the gaps left.

As mentioned earlier, some activities and rituals are usually executed in *idumi* before reintegration of the newly circumcised in society. Interviewees noted that, before reintegration of the newly circumcised - ‘brides’ in society on the occasion of *shalukhu* an *idumi* elder whose character is beyond reproach performed the ritual of spraying the initiates’ with milk using the mouth starting with *jivuleti to itaweti* to prepare them to leave the seclusion hut and go unmasked. After the ritual of *khuvida*, the initiates proceed to the outskirt of the *kavunyonje* to perform a ritual in which they
imitated ‘killing’ an imaginary Maragoli enemy (*khwira mulokoli*) by throwing the sticks carried into darkness away from bonfire as if they were spears; and thereafter proceed to the river to shave, bathe and dress in new short skin aprons.

As a matter of fact, the ritual ‘killing’ renders the initiates ritually contaminated and must therefore shave the hair and bath in a running stream to remove the unclean status before interaction with the public. Interviewees clarified that, the ritual of the ritual of *khuida* to end seclusion was initially performed by a Terik woman (*vamwayi*) assisted by her daughter, and who reached under the *ingolore* to smear the initiates head with *magura* to indicate the end of seclusion. It can be noted that, though there is change in the personel and material used in the performance of the end of seclusion ritual in *idumi*, the significance of the ritual persists.

As this study reveals, the end of seclusion rituals is meaningful in preparing the newly circumcised to rejoin society with a new status and responsibilities. Informants stressed that after the ritual bathing, the newly circumcised (*viiha*) as arule come out of the river singing the songs of dismissal (*lwimbo lwi shalukhu* - *Hikoyohe-hikoyo Ingoyi yivule. Uunyenyanga alandola; ha haa ha alandola* (the leopard has given birth; the one who wants to see me will see me, and that each bride carries a decorated *lusibwa* or a stick whose bark is peeled off. In emphasizing that the newly circumcised ascending from the river usually sings *lwimbo lwi shalukhu*, the informants demonstrate that the newly circumcised are obliged not only to announce their new status but also the end of the seclusion period in preparation for reintegration into society. As such, *lwimbo lwi shalukhu* - *Hikoyohe - hiko* is utilized as an instrument
for communicating the end of the seclusion period. Sangale (2005) mentions the initiates singing *lwimbo lwi shalukhu* as they are taken home on the occasion of *shalukhu* but falls short of addressing the symbolism in the song (2005:219).

The views discussed above about the rituals and activities which take place before reintegration of the newly circumcised in society inform the present research. However, the symbolism enshrined in the ritual of bathing in a flowing river, the ‘brides’ being sprayed (*khuvida*) with milk or smearing them with butter (*Magura*), on the occasion of ending the seclusion period, the initiates hurling their sticks before them in darkness as if they were spears, carrying a stick (*lusibwa*) whose bark has been peeled off, hair being shaved (*Khuve kalisu*), bathing in a running stream (*Khwisinga mmujera*) and the dismissal song (*lwimbo lwi shalukhu*) has not been discussed, and which this work examine to fill the gaps left.

As earlier discussed, reintegration of the newly circumcised in society among communities that perform indigenous circumcision is accentuated by ritual ceremonies. Mark (1992) after performing ritual ceremonies to clear the way, the initiates among the Jola tribe usually leave the forest wearing homed masks (1992:54). Mark’s illustration informs us that, the initiates returning to the community after initiation dress in ways that demonstrate transition to a new stage. Chroeder (1992) writes that, reincorporation stage among the Wosera tribe centers around the *karim kangal* ceremony characterized by the removal of the “black paint” from the initiates’ faces, relaxing the taboos, sharing a meal, and then the Physical re-entry into the community (1992:202). Mark’s and Schroeder’s attention is drawn to what happens in
the final stage of reincorporation in *idumi* on the occasion of *shalukhu* among the Tiriki.

As a matter of fact, informants clarified that, on the occasion of *shalukhu* the newly circumcised ‘brides’ among the Tiriki customarily pass through the *shilivwa* constructed at the entrance to the homestead to honor their return from seclusion. However, there is one difference between the *shilivwa* made to honor a girl brought to the home of the bridegroom for the first time and the one built for the boy returning home from seclusion. Whereas the girl’s *shilivwa* is made of banana plants and banana leaves, the boy’s *shilivwa* is made from *lusyola* branches (the same tree that is used for the sacred branch at the homestead ancestral shrine, and on other occasions where men are presiding over important functions or being honored. However, *shilivwa* is not constructed for nephews or those sponsored for circumcision in a home they are not related paternally. By projecting the difference between the girl’s *shilivwa* and the boy’s *shilivwa* the gendering culture among the Tiriki is demonstrated. Interviewees recounted that apart from the newly circumcised passing through *shilivwa*, their reintegration in society involve the ritual of burning of *muhalia - isenende*, a ritual elder spraying (*khuida*) the “brides” with milk from the ritual gourd and the “brides” dipping their fingers in a bowl of water mixed with herbs. The account describing the last stage of the *idumi* ritual process demonstrates that, the end of the seclusion period is a process that incorporates reintegration rituals that signals the end of seclusion (see the video clip).
The above views on the activities and reincorporation rituals in the final stage of *idumi* resonate with the present study. However, the symbolism enshrined in the construction of the *shilivwa*, the term ‘bride’, burning of *tsisenende*, the brides’ dipping fingers in a bowl of water mixed with herbs, and the “brides” not returning to their home immediately after *shalukhu* remain unattended to, and which this study explores to bridge the gaps left. The *idumi* stages end with the last phase consisting of reintegration rituals that facilitate reincorporation of the newly circumcised into the community. In the next section that follows, I review the literature on the manufacturing process of *idumi* material culture.

1.8.6 The manufacturing process of Tiriki circumcision (*Idumi*) material culture

Sangree (1966), in his book *Age, Prayer and Politics in Tiriki* and Sangale (2005) in his book “Tiriki Community Customs and Traditions” presents a discussion on both tangible and non-tangible *idumi* material culture that form part and parcel of Tiriki circumcision material symbols. Hall (1970) notes that, it is precisely through the use of material symbols made that people can “materialize abstract concepts and communicate” with each other because symbols provide a ‘social mode of thought’ (19970:2). The present study resonates with Hall’s view of material symbols being prepared for use. Among the Tiriki; there are numerous symbolic material culture utilized in *idumi* such as the sacred forests; *kavunyonje* and *kavukolosi*, which must be prepared by circumcision elders (*vasakhulu vi idumi*) as per the *idumi* customs demand before use. Informants opined that, initiation rites or any matters concerning
Idumi are conducted in a sacred grove (kavukolosi) or circumcision grove (shivanda or kavunyonje) which are ritually constituted and destined for idumi functions.

Informants submitted that, after vasakhulu vi idumi consulting and agreeing to carry on with idumi, they retire to the circumcision grove to commence the initiation rites which involve sacrificing a spotless male sheep and inspecting its entrails to divine whether or not it is auspicious to hold circumcision in that grove, and thereafter emerge out of the grove singing an idumi song that gave a hint that idumi season is on. The informants’ emphasis on the ritual sacrifice being performed in specific places set aside for idumi suggests that, the ritual is sanctified and can not take place in circumcision groves which have not been ritually prepared. The aspect of sacredness in the circumcision groves indicate the presence of a higher authority for which the sacrifice is made. Sangree (1966:49-51) and Sangale (2005:128-132) mention a white goat as the animal sacrificed in a sacred or circumcision groves to prepare for idumi.

The difference in the animal used for sacrifice not withstanding, the fact remains that a ritual sacrifice has to be performed to prepare the circumcision groves for use. Informants alluded to the fact that, once the decision to hold idumi is made, prospective candidates for idumi begin dancing with malande held on their heads imitating how they will dance with muhalia.

By highlighting the material culture and rituals incorporated in idumi, the above discussion demonstrates that cultural material in Idumi play a significant role in the process of transforming the Tiriki boys to adulthood is in existence and use. However,
the manufacturing and preparation process of these materials culture has not been given attention. The sacred forests (the *kavukolosi* and *kavunyonje*) are made and prepared for use during *idumi* through a process that incorporates *idumi* rituals, which this study explores to fill their gaps.

Many indigenous communities that perform circumcision rites usually seclude the initiates to keep them away from public interaction. Victor Turner (1969) writes that the Ndembu of Zambia whose forest cover is still reasonable seclude their boys in the bush while the Bagisu perform seclusion rituals in their homes due to the absence of forests which have been clear to create land for the settlement of the high population (1969:232). Turner’s observation demonstrates that the environment determines how communities that perform circumcision rites seclude their initiates. Kuper (1978) mentions that the Ndzundza and Manala of southern Ndebele in Zimbabwe seclude their initiates in a permanent circumcision lodge known as the *umphadu* (1978:118). However, this slightly differs with the Tiriki whose initiates are secluded in temporary structures that end with the seclusion period. In their discussion on the aftermath of the initiates after undergoing the circumcision rite, Turner and Kuper demonstrate that, the initiates are not only ritually unclean but culturally secluded from the public domain as they transit to a new stage in the initiation cycle. The above views inform the present study among the Tiriki who also seclude their initiates after circumcision. Interviewees noted that, after circumcision the initiates retire to the *Irhumbi* which is built-in a secluded private hidden bush and thatched with a reed-grass (*Lise*).
However, during field work I noted that some *irhumbi*’ were thatched using black polythene paper and this could be due to depletion of the *lise* which is disappearing as the marshy area where it grew has been reclaimed for use. The use of *polythene* paper instead of *lise* to thatch *tsirhumbi* signals change. By insisting on secluding the initiates after circumcision, the interviewees demonstrate that the initiates’ interaction with the public is not tenable given that their condition after circumcision is precarious and ritually contaminated hence need to seclude them in *irhumbi*. The *irhumbi* is an important symbolic cultural material in *idumi* and its constructed before the initiates use. Interviewees noted that Tiriki initiates customarily reside in the *Irhumbi* which is constructed in an unfrequented forest area. However, as noted during fieldwork the forest cover continue to dwindled due to demand for land, making the construction of *tsirhumbi* to be done in open space where they camouflaged with a temporary fence. Even though the above authors’ information resonates with the present study on the construction of *irhumbi*, they only give information on where it’s constructed and not the process involved in the construction, and which this study explores to fill their gaps.

*Idumi* is manifested in various cultural materials that are made for specific use at every stage. Informants elucidated that, after completion of the ritual of the eye test, each initiate is usually supplied with the headdresses made from a special creeper called *isenende* -*lisambu* (*i-zi--senende*, Terik, *senendet*), which they hold on the head when dancing nude before their watching relatives and neighbors on the afternoon preceding. In addition, they described *idumi* rituals which the initiates are subjected to
in the homestead of one of the initiation elders where they spent the night preceding circumcision. Informants noted that; the initiates are not only subjected to the threatening sound of masove which they are told is the roaring of leopard (ingo(y)i), but also undergo idumi rituals which include the administration of an oath by jumping over a stick called inanjirwa. The presentation of the informants on the experiences of idumi candidates on the afternoon preceding circumcision demonstrate that idumi is interwoven with rituals and material culture which define specific actions to be executed at every stage in the idumi ritual process. Sangree (1966) mentions Tiriki initiates being subjected to masove (1966:53). This suggestion by Sangree demonstrates that Tiriki initiates go through a horrifying experience and a structured ritual program that sets them apart from the neighboring communities that also perform the circumcision ritual.

The views discussed above resonate with this study in terms of the material symbols used to prepare idumi candidates for circumcision. However, little attention is given to the process involved in the preparation and the making of idumi candidates to become idumi “material” through the imoni (eye) test, making isenende, the ritual of inanjirwa, and (shingang’a / masove), which this work examines to bridge the gaps left. I argue that symbolic cultural material used in the idumi ritual process goes through a manufacturing process before utilization. In fact, through cultural material made for use in idumi, the Tiriki dramatize their past experiences and bring them to the fore. Idumi as a ritual process involves the “cutting” of the foreskin (khusheva). Khutsia idumi means “going” for the cut. It describes the initiation ritual of “cutting” the
foreskin from the penis (*khushevwa*). Initiation plays a significant role in transforming a boy from boyhood to manhood. La Fontaine (1985) writes that the culture in question gives meaning to the terms “man” and “boy”, where becoming man entails initiation that results in “making adults out of young boys” (1985: 103). La Fontaine insisting on the transformative aspect of initiation of ‘making adults out of young boys’ suggests that, the initiation process transforms the initiate to adulthood status with ascribed responsibilities.

Interviewees noted that, uninitiated youth Transits from *muyayi* to *musaza* after circumcision which makes him an “adult man”. Interviewees opined that the Tiriki type of circumcision crafted on the penis of the initiate depict the identity of the indigenously circumcised Tiriki. One of the interviewees in the senior age grade of the *chumo* hinted that the acronym “AK47” was adopted from the weapon used in the second world war to demonstrate how the moulded penis is not only resembling the “AK47” gun but how its strongly shaped to perform its procreation function. This suggests that it’s the manhood (penis) that is made through circumcision not only to transform the boy into adulthood but also to perform the adulthood function of procreation. Indeed, informants submitted that, the Tiriki have a special type of circumcision referred to as *Khureka*, that is to Project into what looks like an “AK.47” gun. This Projection of the penis which is achieved after the circumcision preformed by *vadiri vu khumatsi* is a manifestation of manhood attained through the use of one circumcision knife (*shivya or incheso*); and that the initiates are typically served with porridge made from millet flour (*Vusera vu Vule*) after the operation and before
leaving the kavunyoje to the irhumbi. However, during fieldwork, the researcher established that the practice of using one circumcision knife to operate on all the initiates as previously done has been discarded because of the fear of the HIV and Aids, and hence, disposable scalpel blades are now being used once per candidate. Additionally the porridge delivered to the initiates is not only made from millet but also maize flour and this may suggest the decline in the production of indigenous cereals.

The above views resonate with the present study in terms of the important role played by circumcision in changing the social status of the initiated boys since it’s through initiation (circumcision) that boys are transformed to manhood and introduced to adulthood. However, though the indigenous circumcision knives have been discarded in favour of the scalpel blades, the cultural preparation of the scalpel blades to serve as circumcision knives incheso – singular injeso is still upheld. However, the discussion above did not focus on the process of preparing the circumcision knives (vivya or tsincheso), and in this case the scalpel blades in readiness for use on the initiates in the kavunyonje, which the present study examines to fill the gap left.

As earlier cited, the initiates in many indigenous societies are usually served with a specially made dish to replenish their strength after the circumcision rite. Powell (1995) writes that, the Ndebele initiates (abakethwa) are usually served with a soft porridge dish made from the mixture of pumpkin and mealie-meal (1995:59). In fact, the initiates among the Tiriki are normally served with vusela vu vule to help them
recover their strength. Interviewees submitted that, the *idumi* porridge is customarily delivered to the edge of the *kavunyoje* by the initiate’s mother who must adhere to the right process when preparing it to guarantee the quality necessary to energise *vakhulu*. By projecting the initiates as being weak after the circumcision rite, the discussion above demonstrates that *idumi* is a very exhausting encounter that necessitates the initiates’ being served a meal to recover from its effects. The above views are in tandem with the present study in terms of the meal served to the initiates after circumcision, however the views did not focus on the process of preparing the porridge, and which this study investigates to fill the gaps left.

The initiates in seclusion among indigenous societies usually observe ritual prohibitions. Eiselen (1932) writes that, the initiates in seclusion among the Bapedi ba Masemola in South Africa normally eat out of their palms and do not touch the food with their fingers (1932: 9). As earlier noted, the Xhosa and Mfengu initiates in the cleansing (*ukojiswa*) ritual reach to eat the roasted meat from a white goat hung on a thorny shrub with the mouth and not fingers. The above views resonate with the present study especially in what I refer to as the ‘ritual prohibitions’ in *idumi*. Informants disclosed that, Tiriki initiates are forbidden to touch or eat food with their fingers in the customary Tiriki manner during the seclusion period; and that each boy is usually given a gourd (*shisanda*, or *vyhu*), wooden spoon, and pointed stick (*lusacheti*) made from indigenous material with which to receive and eat his food.

Though the seclusion restrictions could be emanating from cultural considerations, the state in which the initiates find themselves after circumcision requiring them to hold
the bleeding penis with the hand makes it unhygienic to touch food with their fingers. Informants’ emphasis on the ban to touch food with their fingers demonstrates that, the initiates are not only in a contaminated state resulting from the bleeding circumcision wound but also in a transition state that require them to refrain from coming into direct contact with usual items used in everyday life. Besides supplying the gadgets with which the initiates receive and eat food, the vadiri usually take the vakhulu to the river to wash and smear them with some kind of soil (lidohi) material collected from a special site and later introduced them to Masove which is developed from one big ritual pot with a wide mouth to represent mature wild animals and two small pots to represent Vaana vi shingang’a which are made to produce the roaring noise. In this context, the utility of pots reveal a deep rooted attachment to indigenous cultural material items which form an integral part of idumi, and this may explain why the porridge and beer brewed during idumi is prepared, preserved and carried in indigenous pots (zinyungu) on the occasion of idumi and other cultural functions.

The above discussion resonates with the present study especially on the material items used during idumi such as; a gourd (shisanda, or vyuhu), wooden spoon (lusacheti), and pots. However, the illustration only dwell on the use of material items but not the process of manufacturing them, which this work examines to bridge the gaps left.

Circumcision ceremonies among indigenous communities are usually celebrated by brewing and serving indigenous beer. Makwa (2010) mentions beer brewing that herald important stages in circumcision among the Bagisu of Eastern Uganda (2010: 101. The view advanced by Makwa concurs with the present study on beer brewing in
idumi. Interviewees stressed that, idumi ceremony would be incomplete without brewing circumcision beer (Khuyenga Malwa Ki idumi) and that failure to brew circumcision beer can attract a ‘curse’. The Interviewees were in cognisance of several stages in brewing idumi beer such as malwa ki shawenya to celebrate the transition of vakhulu from the previous status of boyhood to the new status of manhood in the idumi ritual cycle. On that account, it is obvious that circumcision beer is not only made but it’s a prerequisite in the idumi ritual cycle, and hence, it’s interwoven with idumi because of its utility at every stage. This may explain why the ‘Tiriki original’ continue embracing circumcision beer in idumi. Even though the discussion above informs the present study by light on the stages of beer consumption in idumi, the process of its manufacture is not addressed, and which this research explores to bridge unfilled gaps.

Music and dance form an integral part of circumcision rites. John E. Kaemmer (1993) notes the crucial role of music in circumcision since it often marks the division between the ritual stages (1993:69). Suzette Heald (1982) observes that among the Bagisu, circumcision (imbalu) candidates are often escorted by song and dance to the ritual venue (1982:21). The views articulated by Kaemmer and Heald above on music and dance relate to this study since the Tiriki also integrate music and dance in their idumi ceremonies and rituals. Informants revealed that, music and dance in idumi are inseparable. They opined that, when performing song and dance, vakhulu as a rule dress in traditional regalia such as the isumadi and ingolole, which at the top is inserted young palm reed leaves tied around a stick; and that vakhulu and the crowd
usually dance to the rhythm of two dry sticks (virangasha) knocked against each other and Mulinga (half a beehive) properly made and covered with the skin of a monitor lizard (lisero li imburu) which is usually hit with another wood rhythmically.

The views presented by the above authors do not only inform the present study on the indigenous attire used during vukhulu but also the place of music and dance in idumi among the Tiriki. The attention by the informants towards indigenous attire and musical instrument demonstrate that these material culture are not only an integral part of circumcision rites, vukhulu is a tool of communicating the Tiriki culture as well as the social intention of transforming the initiates to adulthood status given that some of the songs sung such as admiring to ‘sleep’ with a wonan from the partially indigenous circumcision group contain messages about sexuality. However, though the view above informs this study it does not reveal much about the manufacturing process of isumadi, ingolole, ikwalo, music instruments, the composition of vukhulu songs which the present study examines to bridge the gaps left.

As previously mentioned, initiatory ordeals are a prerequisite in indigenous circumcision. As earlier noted, boys among certain Melanasian tribes and in the Wosera male initiation rites are subjected to physical sufferings and trials. This being the case, it’s obvious that the initiatory ordeals the initiates are exposed to, form part of the initiation curriculum that transforms them to a new stage and status. The views articulated on the initiatory ordeals inform the present study on idumi. Interviewees disclosed that, for an initiate to be considered to have attained Tirikihood the ritual of
“khukhuvwa shikong’o which encompasses initiatory ordeals is obligatory. Moreover, the shikong’o ritual encompasses various cultural materials some of which lie isambakhalwa are hostile to the skin. Furthermore, in anticipation of imminent “death” the initiates perform the final vukhulu where the idumi song sevule (wishing everybody well) is performed before retreating for a night vigil. The interviewees’ elucidation on the preparation of shikong’o and the kind of cultural material integrated in it shows that the ritual is an integral part of initiation ordeals among the Tiriki who ascribe to idumi. Though the views above inform the present study about the Tiriki initiates undergoing the shikong’o ritual, the process of making the site in readiness for the administration of the shikong’o ritual is not addressed, and which this study examines to fill their gaps.

Circumcision rites among indigenous communities typically enlist the newly circumcised into an age group. As discussed earlier, Van Warmelo (1930) mentions that, the Ndzundza have 15 age sets while the Manala have 13 regiments (age sets), and that the average period between the age group shifted from four years to 3 years from 1979 (1930:21). Interviewees noted the existence of nine cyclical age groups (makhula) among the Tiriki. Typically, each age group last for about fifteen years with circumcision being executed after every five years. However, this period differs slightly from the Ndzundza and Manala who have more age sets and perform theirs after three years. The views articulated above inform this study on the presence of age sets among the Tiriki. Informants submitted that, idumi is intended to formally incorporate the initiate into likhula and schools him in the status and role expectations
ascribed to his age group. This being the case, *idumi* provides the means through which the social cultural structure designed in age sets is maintained. However, the process involved in the formation of the age sets is not addressed, and which this work examines to bridge the gaps left.

As earlier illustrated by Schroeder (1992), the initiates’ reincorporation into society among the Wosera tribe is centered on the *karimkangal* ceremony which involve the removal of the “black paint” and community sharing a meal. The above views articulated by Schroeder informs the present study on the Tiriki whose newly circumcised reintegration into society is centered on *shalukhu* ceremony preceded by the removal of the *ingolore* from initiate’s head which is smeared with *Magura* to transit from *mukhulu* to the newly circumcised 'bride' (*mwiha, mw-vi-ih*). The newly circumcised “brides” returning home from seclusion carrying *lusibwa* pass through the *shiliwva* where the ritual of *khuida* with milk and dipping their fingers in a bowl of concoction of herbs mixed with honey and milk is performed before reintegrating in society.

As a matter of fact, interviewees drew attention to the fact that cultural material and rituals are embraced in *shalukhu* not only to reintegrate the newly circumcised in society but also to sanitize them from seclusion contaminants. Indeed, during field work on the occasion of celebrating *shalukhu*, I observe the incorporation of material culture and rituals in the ceremony that was performed to reintegrate the newly circumcised boys into society. However, the process involved in making these rituals and material culture such as *Magura*, *lusibwa*, and *shiliwva* has not been addressed,
and which this work investigates to fill their gaps. It is important to note that cultural material used to facilitate the reintegration of the newly circumcised into society during *shalukhu* ceremony is made before utilization.

### 1.8.7 Functions of Tiriki material culture associated with circumcision (*idumi*)

Both tangible and non-tangible cultural material in *idumi* is normally incorporated at every stage to accomplish a specific task. As earlier discussed, Victor Turner (1969) notes that the Ndembu of Zambia perform circumcision in the bush while Toubia (1995) mentions that, circumcision occurs in the sacred forest. The views expressed above are inconsonant with this study especially on performing the circumcision rite in the forest, however the scholars appear to narrow the function of the forest to the “cutting” of the foreskin. Nevertheless, the use of the forest for circumcision is not a preserve of the Ndembu. Informants revealed that, all the functions related to *idumi* are performed in the *Kavunyonje* which is located in a valley and the *kavukolosi* which in an ideal situation should be located in a raised place or a hilltop. However, during field work, I noted that due to the failure of the elders to acquire title deeds to protect the *kavukolosis*’ for *idumi* use, most of them have been cleared by the new generation which dispute ownership and need land for farming even in the hilltop. Sangree (1966) has mentioned the *Kavunyonje* and *kavukolosi* as places where *idumi* rites are performed such as the slaughtering of a white goat to use its entrails to divine the fate of divine (1966:49–51). Indeed, it is from the *Kavunyonje* where *vasakhulu vi idumi* announce the circumcision season by singing *lwimbo lyu vukhulu* after successfully sacrificing *limikho likhole* to cleanse the *idumi* season as noted during fieldwork but
not a white goat as mentioned by Sangree. In addition, prospective candidates for *idumi* ordinarily dance with *malande* held on their heads imitating how they will dance with *muhalia* immediately the *idumi* season is announced.

Though some differences arise in the animal used for sacrifice, the information given by the above author informs this study especially on the cultural material incorporated in the preparation of the *idumi* season. However, the author did not adequately address the function of *lwimbo lyu vukhulu*, the *Kavunyonje, kavukolosi*, the slaughtering of a white goat, and prospective candidates for *idumi* dancing with *malande* which this work investigates to bridge the gaps left by the author.

*Idumi* process among the Tiriki also involves the preparation of prospective candidates by separating them from the family ties to undergo circumcision rites in a secluded environment. Informants observed that, in the preparatory stages the initiates are arranged from *jivuleti, wakhavili*, and *itaweti* before subjecting them to the process of circumcision instructions (*Kwaya*), the stage of pulling down (*khunng’usa*) and the ritual of the Eye (*Imoni*) test. The above author’s views inform the present study on how candidates for *idumi* are prepared for the circumcision rite from the time of recruitment up to the time they are subjected to the ritual of *Imoni* test. However, the above author’s attention focuses on the stages involved in the preparation of the candidates for *idumi* but not on the function of the activities the candidates are subjected to, such as *Kwaya, khung’usa*, the *Imoni* test, and shaving the hair of *idumi* candidates, which this study examines to fill the gaps left.
Circumcision is a solemn ritual among indigenous communities and requires the initiates to be nude at certain stages. Eiselen (1932) mentions that the initiates Bapedi ba Masemola are not allowed to wear any clothes except a small skin enveloping their loins when hunting by day and often rely on fire to keep them warm against the extreme cold at night (1932: 70). Turner (1967) notes that, for the initiate to achieve the next stage, previous structural ties are vacated by subjecting the initiates to nakedness (1967:95). The above authors’ views inform the current study especially on the initiates undergoing the circumcision ritual while naked at some stages in the idumi ritual cycle. As previously mentioned, Mudiri dressed in shivambo and carrying Limuli tied on lusuyi lead the naked initiates who emerge from the forest with isenende held firmly on their heads by the left hand as they dance to the idumi song Hoyo hee. Persons’ carrying sticks of an Elgon tree that has many branches whose bark has been peeled off often escort the initiates to the dancing field from where they retreat to the homestead of an elder for accommodation at night prior to circumcision.

However, this contradicts Sangale (2005) who mentions that the initiates return home to go round a specially made shirivwa near their god of misambwa and to be sprayed (Khuviiida) with raw dough (Vwanga) on the chest and smeared with coloured soil, before descending to the kavunyonje where jivuleti is circumcised first in advance to officially open the session (2005:134,146-150).

However, during fieldwork, I established that after being recruited for circumcision, idumi candidates among the Tiriki do not return home to pass through the shirivwa nor undergo the ritual of Khuviiida. The rituals of passing through the shirivwa and
Khuvitida are performed on the occasion of shalukhu using some milk and beer. The above views resonate with the present study on how the candidate for idumi are handled in preparation for circumcision and the cultural material and rituals activated for use on the day before the circumcision rite, however, the function of this material culture such as, initiation song Hoyo-hee, isenende, Limuli carried by mudiri, sticks of an Elgon tree that has many branches and whose bark has been peeled off as well as the initiates dancing nude (shihekenye) have not been discussed, and which this work explores to bridge the gaps left by the scholars.

As noted earlier, the initiates among indigenous communities are subjected to various activities and rituals that keep them awake in readiness for circumcision. Hambly (1937:460) and Wilson (1952:210) write that the candidates for circumcision are denied sleep. Indeed, the views presented by the above scholars resonate with this study especially on denying the initiates sleep on the night preceding the circumcision rite. For instance, informants mentioned that the initiates among the Tiriki are usually kept awake the whole night by involving them in all kinds of rituals, such as subjecting them to ritual oath involving jumping over a stick called inanjirwa placed between a native axe (ihaywa) and a native hoe (shisiri). In addition, the initiates who are usually stripped naked are often frightened into confessing all their misdeeds by subjecting them to a threatening sound which they are told is emanating from a wild animal (shinganga / masove). This confirms Sangree (1966) who mentions subjecting the initiates to an oath and masove that terrifies them into confessing all the traditionally forbidden acts (mijilo) before descending to the kavunyonje where jivuleti
is circumcised after opening supplications (1966:53 -54). However, his suggestion of the initiates returning home to feast and be blessed by the homestead head before descending to the kavunyonje is disapproved, since the Tirki initiates’ only return home on the occasion of shalikhu.

The views discussed by the above scholars inform the present study on the initiates being stripped naked and keeping them awake on the night preceding circumcision. However, the function of the oath and masove in idumi are not addressed, and which the present study examines to fill the gaps left.

As earlier mentioned, the initiates in indigenous communities have to come into contact with flowing water in a stream in the process of circumcision. Fourie (1921) mentions that, the Ndebele circumcision rite is known as to wela meaning to “go through the river”, implying entering the world of adults (1921:128- 129) Fourie, Courtney-Clarke (1986) notes that Ndebele initiates normally “cross the river” on the other side where an old man pulls them out of the water an act that separates children from men (1986:21). The views discussed above inform the present study especially on the initiates crossing the river on the occasion of performing the circumcision rite. For instance, informants disclosed that, while in the kavunyonje the initiates must “cross a river” (khwambukha mujera) to the high table (mulinga) where the eye (imoni) test ritual takes place before the actual circumcision performed by vajesi or vadiri vu khumatsi who use indigenous circumcision knife referred to as (vivyia vi kasi or tsincheso–plu,-singular-injeso) Sangale(2005:150) mentions that, vadiri vu khumatsi customarily use one injeso to transform the initiates to manhood (2005:150). This view
suggests that one indigenous circumcision knife is used to circumcise all the initiates. However, during fieldwork, I established that indigenous circumcision knife (*injeso*) is no longer used; instead, a disposable scalpel blade which is used only once on one initiate is now being used to perform the circumcision operation, hence the idea of the initiates sharing the circumcision knife is no longer tenable due to health reasons. Though the above authors’ views on the initiates crossing a river during the circumcision rite resonate with the present study, Sangale did not focus on the function of the initiates “crossing a river” (*khwambukha mujera*) as well as the function of the circumcision knives (*tsincheso*) in *idumi* among the Tiriki, which the present study examines to fill the gaps.

Further, scholars have written on music and dance in the circumcision ritual process. Rose Brandel (1954) postulates that, music constitutes *gandja*, which is the circumcision ritual of the Bapere and Babira people found in the Belgian Congo (1954: 52-62). Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (1965) discusses music and dance in the Agikuyu circumcision ritual process and notes hidden messages in them (1965: 41-42). Furthermore, Thomas Johnson (1974) says that, songs enhance the performance of rituals in the *murhundzu* circumcision ritual of the Shangana- Tsonga people who live on the boundary of Mozambique and South Africa (1974: 328-339). The works of the above scholars inform the present study on music and dance which is integrated in *idumi* from the preparatory to re-integration stage in *idumi*. Interviewees mentions that, the *idumi* song *hoyo hee* on the afternoon preceding circumcision as well as the *idumi* song *ASIYO* sung at the circumcision stage in the *kavunyonje* are very
prominent and only sung at a specific stage to communicate specific message. However, a part from the song of ASIYO, there are other specific songs sung at the circumcision stage which the author seems to have ignored yet they play a significant role at this stage. Further, Sangale discusses the performance of Vukhulu in the seclusion stage as a form of entertainment (ibid, 190-191. The views above inform the present study on the place of songs in circumcision ritual ceremonies. However, the author did not illustrate the function of idumi music and dance at all the stages of idumi as portrayed in the song texts and dances as well as the function of isumadi and Ingolole in the seclusion stage, which this work investigates to bridge the gaps left.

As mentioned earlier, the initiates are served with specially made dish after circumcision to replenish their energy. Powell (1995) mentions that Ndebele initiates are served with a soft porridge made from a mixture of mealie-meal and pumpkin (1995:59). Sangree (1966:55) notes that, Tiriki initiates are served with porridge made from millet flour (Vusera vu Vule) before vadiri who cut off a bit of the vine headdresses (isenende/ muhaalia) before surrendering it to the waiting mothers’ to show that the initiate was a coward (jivute), while at the same time threw vulimu on the mother whose son demonstrated bravery. Furthermore, the initiates leave the circumcision grove dressed in shivambo to the seclusion huts. Having said that, its observable that the circumcision process is a very grueling exercise that requires a refreshing meal to enable the newly circumcised to recover from exhaustion and replenish their energy, and hence, in the case of idumi a mechanism is devided to
inform the mothers on the responds of their sons to circumcision since the boy child is the pride of the mother.

However, during fieldwork, I established that the practice of informing the mothers whether their sons were brave or cowards during the process of ‘cutting’ the foreskin are less emphasized given that those under-age boys taken for circumcision are injected with pain killing drugs. The above views inform the present study on the material culture incorporated in idumi at the circumcision stage. However, the function of serving Vusera vu Vule to the initiates as well as the function of shivambo has not been addressed, and which this study investigates to fill the gaps left.

Communities that circumscise indigenously seclude their initiates in designated places where they are socialized in matters of manhood reserved for men who have undergone the circumcision rite. Johnson (1998) writes that socialization is learning learning to carry out social roles (1968:110). Gunter (1977) notes that, educational relation is always a social relation. In this context, the educational situation is always a social situation (1977:27). The views articulated by the above scholars resonate with this study especially on confining the initiates in irhumbi where instruction on social issues is imparted. For instance, interviewees disclosed that, the initiates life among the Tiriki is usually focused on group activities to the exclusion of all private or individual undertakings, for example, the initiates of seclusion hut eat, sleep, sing, dance, and bath at the same time and when commanded to do so by their counselor, who also instructs them in various social issues. Interviewees noted that, casual visitors to the irhumbi go there either to teach idumi, or listen to the teachings to gain more
knowledge about *idumi*. That being so, it is obvious that the *irhumbi* is not just a place for confining the initiates to undergo the healing process but also as a place for disseminating cultural knowledge that transforms the initiates into socially responsible men through the cultural instruction received. The views discussed above inform the current research on the activities the initiates are involved in while in seclusion. However, the authors did not focus on the detailed functions of the seclusion hut in *idumi*, which the present study examines to fill their gaps.

As earlier noted, the ritual contamination prohibits the initiates in seclusion from touching food with their fingers. Wilson (1952) posits that each initiate among the Xhosa and Mfengu must reach to eat roasted goat’s meat put on a thorny branch with his mouth and not fingers (1952:211). Eliade (1958) notes that, the initiates in seclusion are considered as ‘newborn’ infants unable to feed themselves without aid and therefore not allowed to eat using their fingers, and also use use a strange language learned (1958:15,37). The discussions of the above authors reveal that seclusion prohibitions are not only confined to touching food with fingers but also how the initiates interact during the seclusion period. Furthermore, Eiselen (1932) has mentioned the initiates among the Bapedi ba Masemola receiving food in their palms without touching it with their fingers, while among the Sotho, childhood names are replaced with those of the previous Sotho kings. The above views resonate with the present study given that, initiates among the Tiriki observe ritual prohibitions against touching food with their fingers instead use chopstick (*lusachetti*) to eat food as well as adopting nicknames (*Miira Khaandi*) such as a tree, lion, leopard while in seclusion.
However, the Sotho names differ slightly with the Tiriki. Whereas the Sotho adapt new names in seclusion for use in the future, the Tiriki initiates adopt temporary names whose usage ends after seclusion. However, the function of prohibiting the initiates from touching the food as well as the nicknames (Miira Khaandi) while in seclusion has not been addressed, which this work examines to fill the gaps left.

Furthermore, indigenous communities in their initiation rites occasionally smear circumcision candidates with clay soil. Makwa (2010) mentions that, the Bagisu initiates are typically smeared with clay (litosi) excavated from a sanctified swamp (2010:58). Wasambo were (2014 also mentions imbalu candidates among the Bukusu of western Kenya being mudded with – clay soil (silongo) on the whole body before circumcision (2014:22). The views of the above scholars resonate with this study on the initiate being smeared with clay soil. For instance, informants mentioned that, several days after circumcision the initiates are guided to the river not only to wash and thereafter smeared with some kind of soil (lidohi-inenyi) but also perform the ritual of khukhunda mushere murwa. However, the timing of smearing the soil slightly differs in that the initiates among the Bagisu and Bukusu are smeared with clay soil before circumcision, while among the Tiriki the smearing occurs after circumcision. Though the above views inform this study, scholars did not focus on the function enshrined in vakhulu washing in a river, being smeared with lidohi-inenyi, and the ritual of khukhunda mushere murwa, which this work explores to bridge the gap left.

As earlier mentioned, initiates in indigenous cultures are usually subjected to circumcision ordeals before and after the circumcision rite. Van Gennep (1960) has
mentioned the initiates among certain Melanasi tribes being beaten with sticks. The above author’s view on beating the initiates with sticks resonates with this study. For instance, interviewees disclosed that Tiriki initiates are subjected to the ritual of *khukhuvwa shikong’o* in which the material incorporated such as the nettle plant (*isambakhalwa*) painfully sting the body; and that an oath (*imuuma*) is also administered in which they swear never to divulge the initiation rites!' (*Ukhavula idumi dawe*!). On the occasion of *khukhuvwa shikong’o* the initiates dressed in a special big headdress: (*ikwalo, tsi-kwalo*) made of branches in addition to their regular masks and clothing perform the last *vukhulu* in which each initiate tries to break his headdress by violently bobbing and shaking his head as they dance. Sangale (2005) acknowledges *shikong’o* ritual as an agraduation ceremony in *idumi*, and that the farewell song (*sevule*) usually dominates on the afternoon before the initiates descend to the *kavunyonje* for the *shikong’o* ritual, which encompass material such as a temporary hut like structure (*lidiri*) constructed by ritual elders where a pot of beer and three straws (*tsisekhe*) are kept for sipping beer. However, Sangale contradicts himself on the credibility of the *Shikong’o* ritual by insinuating that, the occasion of *Shikong’o* is just a monument of folly and a merry making with a lot of booze to drink the whole night (2005:192-196,350). With this mentality, the scholar appears to depict *shikong’o* ritual as insignificant in *idumi* without considering the intention enshrined in the rituals and the acts interrelated with it such as *kwiha vuoya nu khusamba* and *kwiha mushi*.

With regard to this study, however, I emphasize that *shikong’o* ritual and the material culture associated with it play an important function in *idumi* among the Tiriki, and
hence goes beyond the notion of merry making as propagated by Sangale. Though the above authors downplay the usefulness of the ritual of *shikong’o* and its place in *idumi*, the *shikong’o* ritual is an initiatory “death” which the initiates undergo in their final transition to manhood. Therefore, to fill the gaps left by the author, I investigate the function of *shikong’o* ritual and the accompanying material culture such as the *shikong’o* oath administered on an *Inanjirwa*, a hut like structure (*lidiri*), *ikwalo*, the fare well song (*sevule*), the urine of a Terik woman (*Minyari ku mushere murwa*), anettle plant whose leaves sting (*isambakhalwa ya maneje*), and anest (*lihambo*) of small biting insects (*vunonera*), to which naked initiates are exposed during the ritual. The views above inform the present study on the activities that precede the *shikong’o* ritual and some of the *idumi* material incorporated in the ritual.

Initiation rites typically provide an opportunity for the newly circumcised to be “put” into an age grade with an age set name. As earlier noted, Van Warmelo (1930) has mentioned the Ndzundza and Manala people ascribing age sets based on military regiments. The above view informs the present study on initiating the newly circumcised into an Age grade among communities that practice circumcision. For instance, interviewees explained that, the newly circumcised among the Tiriki are initiated into an age group (*lihula*) before distributing them to their homes on the occasion of *shalukhu*. However, the previous functions ascribed to the formation of age sets may differ from the function of age sets today, which this work investigates to bridge the gaps.
As previously noted, reintegration ceremonies and rituals are normally performed to facilitate the reintegration of the newly circumcised into society. Anote earlier, Mark (1992) has mentioned initiates among the jola tribe in Senegal returning home wearing homed masks after a ritual ceremony. The above view resonates with this study on the initiates returning home after the circumcision rites. However, it differs slightly with the Tiriki whose initiates usually leave seclusion and return home unmasked. Towless (1993) also mentions the initiates among the Mbo of Zaire burning their circumcision lodges to ashes on the eve of leaving seclusion and thereafter abandon the site to a stream in the forest while singing *Tini ko yodei kogiaba* (we go to the water to wash). Though the views above agree with this study, there is a slight difference in the burning ritual before the initiates leave seclusion. Whereas the Mbo of Zaire burn the seclusion lodges, the Tiriki don’t burn the *irhumbi*, *ingolole*, and *lisumati* to ashes. The *irhumbi* is usually demolished or left to rot, and that it is only the disposable items like *tsisacheti*, *vyuhu*, *malala*, *shivambo* that are burnt on the night preceding *shalukhu*. Though the above views inform this study on activities executed before the newly circumcised abandon the seclusion huts, the function of the ritual of burning the items used in seclusion has not been addressed, and which this study investigates to fill the gap.

Schroeder (1992) mentioned relaxation of seclusion prohibitions and the *karimkangal* ceremony among the Wosera tribe in preparation to reintegrate the newly circumcised into society. The above view concurs with this study among the Tiriki. For instance, informants explained that, apart from the *shalukhu* ceremony that paved the way for
reintegrating the newly circumcised into society, a Terik woman sponsor (vamwayi) initially performed rituals to relax seclusion prohibitions by smearing the initiate’s head with butter (Magura) and slipping the string of beads (tsitambakwa) around the initiates neck in preparation for their return from seclusion to the homestead where they pass through the shilivwa before interacting with the family members.

However, during fieldwork, I established that the end of seclusion ritual is no longer performed by vamwayi but an idumi elder who performs the ritual of spraying (khuida) the forehead of the initiates with milk before leaving seclusion, and that tsitambakwa are not there. In addition, though the end of seclusion ritual is performed, the original Magura that was made from the milk of a specific cow and used for the end of seclusion ritual has been replaced with milk (mavere) which is even purchased from the market and this signals change. Though the above views inform this study on what transpires before the newly circumcised return into the society, the function of the ritual of smearing the initiate’s head with Magura and the role of tsitambakwa has not been addressed, and which this study investigates to fill the gap.

Furthermore, informants disclosed that, after the act of ‘kwira mulogoli’ at the kavunyonje on the eve of shalukhu, the newly circumcised carrying lusibwa whose bark has been peeled off proceed to the river where they perform the ritual of Khuveka lisu and Khwisinga mmujera from where they emerge singing lwimbo lwi shalukhu - Hi koyohe-hikoyo. Ingoyi yivule. Uunyenya nga alandola; haha alandola (the leopard has given birth; the one who wants to see me will see me). In addition, the ritual of burning muhalia- isenende the initiates used to dance on the first day of circumcision
is usually performed as all the newly circumcised dipp their fingers in a bowl of water mixed with herbs as they pass through the *shiliivwa* constructed at the homestead of the elder where they spent the night prior to circumcision. The views discussed above inform the present study on the activities that precede the return of the newly circumcised into the community. However, the function of these ritual activities and material incorporated in *Shalukhu* such as, *khuida* the newly circumcised with milk, burning *tsisenende*, *Khuveka lisu* and *Khwisinga* in a running stream, dipping fingers in a bowl of water mixed with herbs on the occasion of *shalukhu*, *lwimbo lwu shalukhu* and the *shiliivwa*, has not been addressed, and which this study explores to bridge the gaps left by the authors.

As indicated earlier, the circumcision rite is typically celebrated by indigenous beer-drinking ceremony. Makwa (2010 mentions the importance of beer in ushering in *imbalu* rituals among the Bagisu in Uganda. However, brewing circumcision beer is not confined to the Bagisu circumcision ceremonies. Interviewees noted that, among the Tiriki beer brewing activity punctuates transitional stages in *idumi*. The above views resonate with the present study on the use of indigenous beer in *idumi* ceremonies among the Tiriki. However, the discussion focuses more on brewing circumcision beer to celebrate the different stages in the circumcision process and ignores other functions of circumcision beer which this work investigates to fill their gaps.
1.8.8 Continuity and Change in the symbols of Tiriki circumcision (Idumi) material culture.

Mugambi (1989) writes that the question of continuity and change in every discussion concerning African heritage tends to predominate. As explained by Mugambi, change and continuity is an integral process to every culture and will continue to occur (1989:111). It is important to recognize that every culture that has made a significant impact in world history has done so only after rediscovering and affirming its roots and tracing them to antiquity. Consequently, a cultural renaissance is neither a blind return to the past, nor a blind leap into the future since the past is reincarnated into the present, and owing to that reincarnation, visions of the future are facilitated. In this context, African identity is grounded in the indigenous customs which may not be permanent but fluid. In essence, continuity and discontinuity of the people’s material culture may be occasioned by diverse factors that are not only internal but also external to the people. Continuity or stability of material culture can be used interchangeably to mean persistence in use and meanings attached to material culture in the social-cultural setting of a community. Material items such as pottery, dress among others is prone to change.

Arthur (1997) notes that, continuity of cultural material such as dress may be shaped by among other factors, customs that require a stricter adherence, isolation, fear, values, the decline in the power of royalty and the media (1997:129-139). Joshi (1997) postulates that, in the Indian society, women have a strong preference for traditional dress, the sari and deviation from this is held up to ridicule and criticism, thus leading
to fear or dislike of innovations (1997:214-231). In essence, women play a vital role in preserving the social values and customs attached to indigenous items and essentially perpetuate their continuity, however culture is dynamic. Ademuleya (2011) notes that, among the Ondo people in Yoruba land, individuals attach great value and prestige to indigenous cloth *aso-oke* which is collected at great expense in anticipation of special events in their lives and that, the old *aso-oke* type of cloth has become an emblem of identity for the Ondo people in the diaspora (2011:129-140. Dei (2000) observes that, personalization of indigenous dress emanates from cultural heritage, histories, and daily experiences of a group of people, and has no claims of universality (2000: 111-132). Ademulaya’s views informs this research, since the Tiriki who are the subject of this study value the *isumati* as an emblem of the community’s culture, hence continued use.

Though the views articulated by the above scholars are generally based on the indigenous dress as part and parcel of material culture and the factors that facilitate its continuity, they resonate with the current research in many ways: First, Continuity or stability of *idumi* material culture that is also symbolic can be used interchangeably to mean persistence in use and meanings attached to *idumi* material symbols in the social-cultural setting of the Tiriki community. Secondly, like in other African and Asian societies that have persistently adhered to the use of their material culture, continuity of *idumi* material symbols among the Tiriki may be shaped by similar factors such as customs that require stricter adherence, isolation, fear, and values attached to *idumi*. For instance, Sangree (1966) describes the garment the initiates among the Tiriki use
comprising *isumati* in addition to *ingolole* when appearing in public to perform *vukhulu* (1966:56-57).

Indeed, the views discussed by the above scholars resonate well with this study in terms of continuity in the use of material culture that is socially valued. However, they did not focus on specific areas of continuity and factors enhancing continuity in use and the meanings attached to *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki, which this study examines to fill their gaps.

As earlier mentioned, Alan Merriam (1964) has mentioned that, cultural material cannot escape change. Shorter (1998) observes that mortal societies and cultures are rarely passive (1998:29). This implies that human societies and cultures are not permanent hence perishable. However, change may be radical but it’s seldom total, and hence, continuities and discontinuities prevail. Ajayi (2005) also mentions that culture is not stagnant and consistently undergoes alteration and transmutation either for good or for bad (2005:1-11). This being so, its discernible that cultural transformation is an active phenomenon; hence the elements defining it such as the cultural material change as well.

Adejumo (2002:165-186) and Arthur (1971:29-139) for instance mention that, discontinuity of dress may be occasioned by among other factors, culture contacts, technological advances, invasion and conquest, government decrees, cumulative nature of culture, education, raw materials, urbanization, attitudes, values, and the media. Kurgat (2004) attributes change in society to several factors which is facilitated
firstly by contact with other cultures (2004:75). Shoko Betty (2013) notes that, intermingling of cultures in Mutare Zimbabwe among the Shona, Ndebele, Tonga, Korekore, and the Ndau tribes has caused people to adopt adornment symbols from cultures other than their own resulting in the alteration of meanings attached to the symbols such as tattoos, scarifications, and dress (2013:451-459). In view of the above, the erosion of cultural meanings is obviously attributed to contact between cultures and globalization which have become great agents of cultural transmutation.

The views discussed by the above scholars inform the present study about the influence of intermingling of cultures on *idumi* material culture change. Indeed, the Tiriki have not avoided the question of change concerning the use of the circumcision *idumi* material culture, and as such the factors cited by the above authors as effecting change on material culture could similarly apply to the Tiriki. As concerns this study, I stress that culture contacts, technological advances, invasion and conquest, government decrees, cumulative nature of culture, education, raw materials, urbanization, attitudes, values, and the media comprise some of the forces contributing to change concerning the use of *idumi* circumcision material culture. In this regard, I discuss how these forces have contributed to change in the use of *Idumi* circumcision material culture to bridge the gaps left by Sangree (1966) and Sangale (2005) who have written on *idumi* among the Tiriki but failed to pay attention to the forces contributing to change in use of *Idumi* circumcision material culture.

Scholars in various fields including anthropology, linguistics, and history have argued that western civilization, through education, religion, and technology have influenced
people’s change of attitudes towards African culture, thus casting doubt on whether or not the future of indigenous material culture and rituals is assured. Henry Murton Namanda (1999) mentions, *imbalu* circumcision rituals among the Bagisu being affected by the above elements of change. Sheffield (1973) says that, the missionaries whose intention was to convert the ‘savages’ to Christianity failed to differentiate Christian ethics from the European way of life, hence converting to christian typically meant “negation of traditional African way of life” (1973:11). Painter (1966) mentions the Friends African Mission (FAM) missionaries establishing a mission station at Kaimosi in 1902 to implement the Friends ideas about salvation and civilization (1966:21). Consonantly, Amatsimbi (2009:68) notes that, Christianity exposed the Tiriki to European culture and western education and by 1918 Vihiga, Lirhanda, Lugulu and Malava were established as centres to transform Luhyia culture. The Friends African Industrial Report (1904) says that, converts to Christianity were to abandon traditional way of life and pattern their new life in Christianity according to the norms learnt from the mission station of (EAYM) (1904:2). Undoubtedly, religion especially Christianity apparently constitutes an important force that ignites change in the use of indigenous material culture. Griswold (1994) sees religion as the system of ideas by which people represent their society (1994:50). In this context, Christianity represents new cultural ideas that the missionaries sought to impose on Africans with the hope of transforming and replacing indigenous culture with western culture.
Apart from Christianity, Catedra (1990: 56-58) and Caragata (1998: 215) note that education greatly influence cultural material transformation. Several committees on education in Kenyan including (Kamunge Report 1988; the Koech Report (1999:25) and scholars such as Kassilly & Mugatsia, (2009:138-141) cite westernized education as a cause of African cultural breakdown. Irrefutably, access to different types of knowledge resulting from education changes people's lives by creating a new psychological space which impact on socio-cultural change. The above scholars’ views inform the present study on western education, culture contact, and Christianity as forces impacting change on culture. However, their approach is general and not focused on areas of change in the use of cultural material in *idumi* which this study investigates to bridge the gap.

Urbanization has a great impact on culture change. Boahen (1985:485) and Koskey (1997:280) mention urbanization as force that continues to influence change on African culture and that the generation gap is worsening the situation. Sangree (1966) says that urban centers such as Nairobi, white highland farms and participation in the world wars’ as recruits availed apaltform where communities’ including some of the Tiriki interacted causing culture contact which impacted on their culture (1966:123). In essence, interaction of persons in various places such as the urban centers create structural changes, and hence changes in culture is bound to occur as people intermingle with other town dwellers at different levels. The views presented by the above authors resonate with this study especially on how internal and external interaction at different levels influence change in people’s culture. However, the
scholars did not focus on how urbanization and generation gap impact change in use of cultural material in *idumi*, which this study explores to fill their gaps. Furthermore, emerging health concerns encountered during indigenous circumcision have ushered in change. Egesah (2008) mentions the Eastern Cape province of South Africa enacting legislation against traditional circumcision after deaths and genital amputations were recorded in 1995 and 2004 circumcision (2008:30). Egesah’s view informs this research in terms of how the emerging health concerns have necessitated change in the use of some of the cultural material to safeguard the lives of the initiates. Concerning the present study, I established that emerging health concern especially HIV is among other forces influencing change in use of the cultural material in *idumi*.

As noted in this study, the erosion of the value and meanings interrelated with material culture is attributed to contact between cultures and globalization. Salimono (1999), O’Neil (2007:263-267), and Mazrui (1999:4) note the impact of globalization on indigenous institutions. They observe that, globalization causes the emergence of a “world culture”, often identified with “western culture”. As amatter of fact, European way of life and culture is not only emerging influential in the world but also being globalized through information and communication technology. The views articulated by the above scholars inform this study on the effect of globalization on cultural institutions. About the present study, I examine how globalization has contributed to change in the use of *idumi* circumcision material culture to bridge the unfilled gaps.

Moreover, Language is a vital component in the transmission and sustenance of cultural elements. In the Journal of Material culture, Miller &Tilley (1996) says that,
language, like material culture is a ubiquitous feature of human life and to be human is to speak, make and use tools (1996:5-14). Simani (2005) says that language is not only a means of communication and a carrier of culture but also forms the central organ of culture (200:515). With certainty, changes in language due to interaction with other communities inhibit the communication of the original meaning of the symbolism in cultural material. The views above inform this study, the scholars did not address how language has enhanced or inhibited continuity/discontinuity or change in the use of cultural material in *idumi*. Concerning the present study, I examine how language has contributed to discontinuity or change in use of *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki to fill the gaps left by the above authors.

Furthermore, availability of natural resource determines the continuity or discontinuity in the production of certain cultural items. Cleveland and Stein (1997) note that, natural resource scarcity results in the reduction of the number of products produced (1997:16). Kgathi and Motsholapheko (2002) say that, that commercialization of basket making resulted in the scarcity of raw materials used for producing baskets in some parts of the Okavango Delta as a result of over exploitation of raw material (2002: 471, 483). However, Scudder et al (1993) citing Campbell (1976: 163-173, slightly holds a different view by indicating that, though there was much less river reed in the mid-1970s than in the past, this trend was not caused by over-exploitation, but by clearance for agriculture and external or undesirable interventions in the water system where reed grows. Consequently, availability of resource material in the environment determines persistence or reduction in production of utility items. The
above authors’ discussions inform the present study on how resource material scarcity can influence change in the production of cultural material items used in the community. Concerning the present study, I investigate how natural resource scarcity has influenced change in the use of cultural material in *idumi* among the Tiriki to bridge the gaps left by the scholars who did not focus on this area. Therefore, it’s observable that continuity and discontinuity of cultural material in *Idumi* among the Tiriki may be occasioned by diverse factors that are not only internal but also external to the Tiriki as discussed in chapter four. The methodologies employed in this research are discussed in the next chapter.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

The researcher adopted the concept of “Change and Continuity” and functionalism theory to guide the study. To supplement the aforementioned concept and theory, Midrash approach was used to extract and elucidate the meaning immersed in the symbolic cultural material used in *idumi*. Since this study focused on symbolism, manufacture, use, change and continuity of *Idumi* material culture, Bascom and Herskovits’s (1959:26) concept of “Change and Continuity”, functionalist as well as Midrash approach not only helped in identifying aspects of chang and continuity, but also the uses to which material culture is put besides the meaning enshrined in the symbolic material culture. The concept of “Change and Continuity” which was propagated by Bascom and Herskovits (1959) and shared by Githige (1980) and Shisanya (1993) seeks to provide an understanding of the interaction between two or more cultures. It states that whenever new influences impinge on any society, some of
the pre-existing body of Customs and beliefs are discarded, modified or retained. The concept of “Change and Continuity” resonates with this study on *idumi* material culture. Basing on this concept, it is evident that, the interaction of alien culture with the Tiriki indigenous culture has resulted in some of the Tiriki material symbols being modified, discarded, changed, or retained.

Functionalism as a theory operates under the ethnological tradition. Its main proponents were Malinowski (1989), Garbarino (1977), and Radcliffe (1952), who write that material culture made by every community fulfills some vital function; provide the means through which social, cultural, and spiritual needs of a community are satisfied. According to functionalists, material culture made within a social structure and cultural activity associated with it must of necessity have a utilitarian value for its people. Malinowski defines “function” as the part which plays within the integrated system of culture” and “how they are related to each other within the culture”. His contemporary, Radcliffe-Brown (1935- 397) defines functions as “the function of any recurrent activity - the part it plays in the social life as a whole and therefore the contribution it makes to the maintenance of structural continuity”. What this means is that everything a society does (e.g., circumcision) has a practical use for its citizens and a specific place within the fabric of social norms. Such a fabric – the total of needs individually and collectively is known as the functional unity of that society.

The above theory on material culture fulfilling some vital function aligns with this study. Among the Tiriki, symbolic material culture is manufactured at every stage in
the *idumi* ritual process to perform a specific function. Further, Malinowski’s conceptual perspective in functionalism notes that theory is built around the dogmatic assertion that cultural items exist to fulfill basic human and cultural needs (Malinowski, 1989). The functionalist view of culture insists upon the principle that every type of civilization, every custom, material object, idea, and belief fulfill some vital function, has a task to accomplish, and represents an indispensable part within a working whole.

Malinowski’s perspective on functionalism is supported by Garbarino (1977) who gives two implications associated with the functionalist approach. One is the purposive aspect of functionalism: that everything has some purpose; for example, the purpose of a knife is to cut; an aspect that is very easy to see in material culture. Another implication of functionalism is integrative: that the elements are interacting within an integrated whole, which is affected as parts change or disappear.

Accordingly, functionalism views society as a system: that is as a set of interconnected patterns which together form a whole. The basic unit of analysis is society and its various parts are understood primarily in terms of their relationship as a whole (Radcliffe, 1952), and hence change in one part affects the whole. The functionalists were therefore interested in understanding the functions of material culture which are prone to change as people from different cultural backgrounds interact and which this study fulfilled by exploring the manufacture, use, change, and continuity of circumcision (*Idumi*) material symbols among the Tiriki.
Given that, the study also deliberated on the meaning rooted in *idumi* material culture which is symbolic, Midrash approach was used to illustrate and derive hidden meaning in this material culture used in *idumi* at every stage. Midrash is an approach used by Jewish scholars to elucidate and interpret scriptures for easier understanding. Alexander (1984) notes that, Midrash involves both discerning the symbolism implied in Scripture as well as revealing the connotation in the Scripture within the Jewish contextual background (1984:7). Fraade (1991) sees Midrash as a general scriptural interpretation, whether directly or speculatively to ascribe meaning to what is interpreted (1991:102). For instance, the meaning of the symbolism in the imagery of the serpent in Genesis (3:1-6) is not only pointing to evil but rebellion against divine authority. The views advanced by the above scholars on Midrash approach resonated with this work especially on the need to understand and interpret the meaning concealed in *idumi* symbols with regard to the contextual background, norms and values with designs to uphold the *idumi* tradition in the face of the social - cultural changes and challenges.

1.9.1 Location of the Study

This study was carried out in Hamisi Sub- County, Vihiga County. Through site survey and inquiry from community leaders such as area chiefs, the researcher focused on Shaviringa and Shamakhoko Locations in Tiriki East and Jepkoyai and Tambua Location in Tiriki West as suitable for the study.
Table 1: Administrative units in Hamisi Sub-County (locations and sub-location).

Table 1.1: Study Locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-County Hamisi</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>No. of locations</th>
<th>No. of Sub-locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shamakhokho</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaviringa</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tambua</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jepkoyai</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** District annual monitoring and evaluation report (2009 – 2011)

These Locations constitute spots where some cultural material in *idumi* the *kavunyonje* and *kavukolosi* are traceable and actively in use during the *idumi* season. Sangale (2005) mentions the cultural sites (*Zikavunyonje*) where elders lead candidates in performing *idumi* rituals which are symbolic (2005:113, 475). These sites include *Ivulukhova, Ishaviringa, Ishiru,* and *Ivulukhombe* in Tiriki East and Jepsis, *Igavwanga, Jimudi,* and *Imuchinga* in Tiriki West.

Among the symbolic material culture made in the cultural sites include making *vwali,* citing the *irhiru,* and the candidates “crossing” the river before circumcision. These locations are also areas where the Tirikis’ who adhere to the use of indigenous symbols of cultural material in *idumi* as well as those moderates who have adapted new ideas co-exist. These locations are also places where *idumi* ceremonies are still strong, and where custodians of cultural material with knowledge on the Tiriki cultural
trends and history were accessed. This background explains why the study was carried out among the Abatriki focusing on cultural material in *Idumi* within the four divisions in the sub-county namely: Shaviringa, Shamakhoko, Tambua, and Jepkoai Division.

1.1 A map showing: Hamisi Sub-County Administrative Boundaries

![Hamisi Sub-County Administrative Boundaries](image)

**Source:** District Development Annual monitoring Trasditional Report(2010-2011)

1.9.2 Research Design

The study was guided by qualitative research methodology that involved description of what I went to find out in the field, and which require that scholars work towards acquiring descriptive facts through discovery and exploration. Utilizing qualitative research methodology necessitated me to analyse, describe and interpret data with solid field examples. This is a method of collecting information by interviewing or
administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals (Orodho, 2003; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The design allowed me to use a variety of research methods including observation, interviews, question guidelines, participant observation, focus group discussion, and use of check list. It enabled me to collecting information from interviewees and respondents on the symbolic meaning, manufacture, use, change and continuity of Tiriki circumcision (idumi) material culture. In the next section, I discuss the various sampling techniques I used while conducting fieldwork.

1.9.3 Target population, Sampling and Sample Size

The target population were Tiriki males and women from the four locations of Hamisi Sub-County. Based on 2009 population census which it was 76,901. In selecting the informants, purposive sampling was utilized; it involves selecting Participants who can give the required information. 220 respondents were selected from the above target population. When idumi rituals are performed, not all individuals are involved directly in carrying out rituals like the eye test, circumcising, or spraying (khuvida) the initiates with ritually prepared idumi material. In the study, 50 elder custodianships of idumi material culture as well as 40 male parents, 40 vajesi or vadiri vu khumatsi, 40 vadiri or vadiri vu murhumbi were selected to share their views and experiences about idumi material culture. FGD4 comprised five women whose husbands are in the senior age group of chumo and five girls who actively participated in vukhulu. The participants were selected since they hold societal secrets about the origin, manufacture, use, change, and continuity of idumi material culture that ordinary Tiriki cannot have. Sangree describes the Tiriki elders with secretive information such as announcing the decision to hold idumi as ‘the initiation elders’ (vasakhulu vi idumi)
(1966:51). Further, 40 male professionals who are Tiriki by circumcision, 10 from each location filled the questionnaire. In addition, a questionnaire was administered to 40 youths (male students) who are Tiriki by circumcision, 10 each from five selected day schools in the four locations, and who have undergone *idumi*.

Finally, through focused group discussion (FGDS) key informants clarified change and continuity concerning *idumi* material culture and the role of women in *idumi*. All the interviewees were male who Tiriki are by circumcision and women who are Tiriki by birth and reside in the study area, and hence knowledgeable in Tiriki circumcision ceremonies. Snowball sampling techniques were employed in data collection. Here, the researcher utilizes a known contact for an introduction to informants he doesn't know. The researcher was introduced to respondents he had neither planned on meeting nor known before. The technique helped in tracing elders who were charged with the responsibility of *idumi* material culture like the custodians of circumcision groves (*kavunyonje*), sacred groves (*kavukolosi*), accommodating the initiates at night during *idumi* rituals, and *tsirhumbi* for interviews. I realized that with this method, the participants I had contact with led me either to their friends or relatives. Stratified random sampling was used to select interviewees.

1.9.4 Research Instruments and Equipment

The following research instruments were used in obtaining descriptive facts: 1) interview; 2) photography, audio and visual recording of *idumi* ritual scenes, material culture, and performance of songs and dance (*vukhulu*) by the initiates; 3) library research; 4) personal experience and observation and 5), questionnaires and focused
group discussions. The listed instruments are important for this kind of study and helped me collect descriptive data. As such, primary data for this study was gathered using the qualitative technique while secondary data was gathered through document analysis.

1.9.4.1 Data Collection

1.9.4.1 (i) Primary and Secondary Sources

This study relied on two complementary sources, viz: primary and secondary sources of data. To harness secondary information, written sources such as books, journals, thesis, magazine articles, dissertations and periodicals relevant to the study were consulted. These were obtained from several libraries including the Kenyatta University’, Masinde Muliro library, Maseno University library, and Baraton University. Primary sources included archival data and oral interviews. Archival research was conducted at the Kenya National Archives from where some material on Tiriki by Sangree (1966) was traced for information on Idumi. To check on the reliability and validity of the archival information, it became necessary to corroborate it with data obtained through oral sources to minimize any subjectivity.

1.9.4.1 (ii) Interview

Another source of primary data collection was the oral interview. Various informants including elders responsible for material culture, vadiri vu khumatsi, male parents, vadiri or vadiri vu murhumbi, and the initiates were interviewed to obtain the required information (appendix B). Formal and informal interviews with open-ended questions which probed on general information on the origin, manufacture, use, change, and continuity of the Tiriki circumcision material culture. Appointments were scheduled
with the participants for formal interviews, questions and themes on the research topic
were written down for guidance during interviews (appendix A).

The interaction with the participants was free since open-ended questions were used
since they allowed me to ask a follow-up question for further interrogation of new
opinions the participant brought up. Informal interviews were also employed with
members of the audience during and after *idumi* rituals and *vukhulu* performances to
gather information on their functions and symbolism. These informal interviews are
referred to as “conversational” interviews by Nannyonga-Tamusuza; they are
convenient when formal meetings are impossible for busy participants who are
unavailable for formal interviews (2005:48). By using interviews, researchers are
required to build a rapport with participants since they are exposed to detailed
interactions with them. I, therefore, cultivated a good connection with the participants
by being patient with them and not coercing them to provide responses they were not
willing to reveal due to the sensitivity attached to *idumi* and its associated material
culture. Additionally, interest and value were attached to each opinion presented by
my informants. Audio, Photography and Visual-Recording.

1.9.4.1 (iii) Photography, Audio and Visual-Recording

Still and video pictures of the candidates, dancers and the ritual scenes during *idumi*
ceremonies were captured and utilized in data analysis. The choice of this instrument
was informed by Jackson Bruce (1987) who mentions that relying on recollection can
be counterproductive due to inability to recall hence need to document information,
indicating when, who, and where the information captured occurred (1987:83). Meyer
(1992) insists on note taking since “mechanical aids” can fail (1992: 39). Hence,
during my fieldwork, I took notes as my recordings’ backup. I further recorded interviews on my mobile not only to water down suspicion from my informants but also to save time and as backup enhancement during data transcriptions and analysis.

1.9.4.1 (iv) Participant Observation

This was among the instruments utilized in data collection. The tool requires some level of participation to get fast hand information and experience. For instance, Meyers (1992) writes that those studying a specific cultural field should be involved to get first hand information (1992:22). Among the Tiriki, crucial circumcision stages are accompanied by idumi songs and dance. As such, I participated in vukhulu including singing for idumi candidates (khwimbira vasoleli) on the afternoon before circumcision. My specific interest was to hear the nature of the words spoken in the idumi songs and the way the words related to the function and symbolism hidden in the idumi circumcision songs. Because three weeks before the end of shalulukhu the initiates undergo the ritual of “khuhuvwa shikong’o”, I participated in the sourcing of some of the idumi material culture used in the ritual of khuhuvwa shikong’o to understand the function and the symbolism attached to them. I also got involved in idumi circumcision rituals by preparing a male sheep for sacrifice in the kavunyonje. Meyer (1992) writes that Participant observation during fieldwork enhance validity of the data interpretation and formulation of meaningful questions (1992: 29). Observation of respondents helped me in correlating views about what happens during the performance of vukhulu. For example, I confirmed informants opinion that during vukhulu the initiates dance while moving symbolically from East to west direction.
However, Meyer cautions against warns over participation to guard against compromising the research, hence, I moderated my involvement *idumi* activities.

**1.9.4.1 (v) Personal Experience**

I am part of the *mutirichi* culture, and my experience also informed this study's research tool. I have gone through circumcision and taken part in *idumi* rituals and ceremonies from the time I was circumcised, and thus, I have a lot of data on *idumi* circumcision material culture. Besides, interacting with some of the elder custodians of material culture for quite some time, and having the responsibility of organizing *idumi* activities enabled me to access vital data. This experience certainly informed this study. Tamusuza (2005) opines that inclusion of indigenous scholar’s knowledge is worth since they are part of that culture (2005:33).

**1.9.4.1 (vi) Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were issued by the researcher to the youth who are in school (male students) and professionals in the community as they have a grasp of the knowledge and are literate. The questionnaires comprised open-ended questions on the manufacture, use, change, and continuity of the Tiriki circumcision material culture, and issues influencing change and continuity in the use of the circumcision material culture among the Tiriki. The researcher gave the respondents three weeks to fill the questionnaires after which he did the averaging. Three weeks were necessary because of the sensitivity of *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki. On the other hand, questionnaires were administered to professionals and those who are literate.
1.9.4.1 (Vii) Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

Members of the (FGD1) comprised 8 youths who are attending school (students) and who had undergone idumi circumcision. The other (FGD2) consisted of 12 teachers and educational officers who are professionals from the Tiriki and subscribe to idumi culture. Male parents, and elders responsible for the kavukolosi custodianship. The third (FGD) comprised of 8 elders charged with the custodianship of kavunyonje, vajesi, or Vadiri vu khumatsi, and elders who accommodate the initiates at night during idumi rituals (Vasakhulu va khonyanga vana vashiri khushevwa). All members in the (FGD 1, 2, 3) were male and circumcised according to Tiriki customs of idumi. FGD4 comprised five women whose husbands are in the senior age group of chumo and four Tiriki girls who have participated in vuhkulu. A structured (FGD) questionnaire guided the discussions. Apart from note-taking, the data was audio recorded and transcribed later for analysis. This was done with permission from the respondents. This phase was mainly to generate qualitative data that relates to experience, awareness, and perceptions of diverse respondents on the origin, manufacture, use, continuity, and change concerning the circumcision material culture among the Tiriki.

1.9.5 Data Analysis

In analyzing and interpreting the data, the historical method which entails analysis and explanation of harnessed data both historically and logically was used. It is the application of this method that leads us to uniquely historical knowledge (Wafula
As such, a historical method of data analysis involves a critical investigation of events, developments, and experiences of the past; the careful weighing of evidence and the validity of sources of information, and the interpretation of the weighed evidence. The historical method is necessitated by the fact that the historical inquiry into social phenomenon needs more than mere knowledge of facts and events. Facts must be applied to establish the historical specificity of social phenomenon in terms of its constituent elements and of the relations between these elements which determines the structure of the phenomenon and give it coherence (Aseka, 1989:66). Historical data collected during fieldwork may contain exaggerations and biases given that the information gathered from informants may not be free from the element of subjectivity.

However, to minimize prejudice and exaggeration during the process of analyzing data concerning this study, I engaged procedures of historical investigation and data analysis to bring about corroboration of the diverse information gathered. The data collected was edited; coded, and classified in themes as per the questionnaire and analyzed manually. The data was presented in a qualitative form, which is descriptive. Overall, all the data were analyzed within the conceptual framework of “Change and Continuity” and functionalism theory.

1.9.6 Data Management and Ethical Considerations

All the necessary formalities were adhered to before the commencement of the study to conform to the requisite research practices. Letter of approval to conduct the research was obtained from Kenyatta University School of graduate studies and the
National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NASCOTI). Names of the respondents were not written on the questionnaire to enhance confidentiality. This was very important since it attracted positive responses from the respondents bearing in mind that *idumi* is a very sensitive and emotive issue, especially when looking for information considered culturally classified. Interviewees were fully informed of the nature and purpose of the study before their voluntary participation. Written consent forms were availed to respondents for signing before data collection. Besides, the researcher, as well as the research assistants had the responsibility of assuring the respondents that the main objective of the study was purely for academic purposes only. None of the respondents was coerced to participate in the research. The participants were assured that the outcome of the research was to be accessed by those who are interested in *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki. This was to help the researcher in obtaining valid information on the origin, manufacture, use, continuity, and change in use of symbols of circumcision material culture among the Tiriki.

### 1.10 Summary

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to problematise the origin, manufacture, use, change and continuity of circumcision (*idumi*) material culture among the Tiriki. From the literature reviewed, it has been noted that apart from failing to research on the symbolism enshrined in the circumcision (*idumi*) material culture among the Tiriki, the origin, manufacture, use, change and continuity of this material culture has not been given attention at a local level by scholars, which therefore makes this study not only important but also urgent.
The study was guided by qualitative research methodology which is descriptive in nature. This chapter demonstrates that the symbolic material culture manufactured for use during circumcision (*idumi*) ceremonies among the Tiriki has undergone the process of change vis aviz continuity and as such the conceptual framework of "Change and Continuity" and functionalism theory has been adopted to interrogate the origin, manufacture, use, change and continuity of this material culture. The challenge of change vis a viz continuity in use of indigenous material culture goes beyond the Tiriki. This chapter has also embraced primary and secondary methods of data collection in order to gather, analyze and present data. In Chapter Two, we discuss the origin *Idumi* material symbols among the Tiriki.
CHAPTER TWO

THE ORIGIN AND THE SYMBOLIC MEANING EMBEDDED IN CIRCUMCISION (IDUMI) MATERIAL CULTURE AMONG THE TIRIKI FROM 1850

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One, we problematized the origin, manufacture, use, change and continuity of idumi material culture among the Tiriki and demonstrated that there was intellectual need for using the tools outlined to delve deeper into these circumcision material culture. In this chapter, an attempt is thus made to trace the historical origin of Idumi material culture, particularly among the Tiriki by looking at their origin and the symbolism enshrined in them. Specifically, an explanation on where the Tiriki acquired idumi and its interrelated cultural material to which they attach symbolism, and how idumi became the foundation of their cultural life is rather shrouded in mystery that necessitate dyistification. In symbolic material culture is the basis of idumi, containing its rules, values, ideals, morals, and history, and hence, Midrash approach was used to illustrate and derive hidden meaning in this symbolic cultural material. Julio Trebolle Barrera (1998) is of the opinion that every illustration is an application utilized to infer into a given phenomenon for better understanding (1998: 497).
2.2 Explaining the Origin of Idumi and Its Associated Material Culture In Pre – Colonial Period 1850 – 1895.

Inasmuch as we are talking about the origin of idumi material symbols among the Tiriki, it might be convenient to start this chapter by trying to answer the following questions: who is a tiriki?, and what idumi is? . The Tiriki (Abatirichi) and other groups that comprise the Abaluyia such as the Maragoli, Banyole, Bakisa, Bawanga and Bamarama are affiliates of the contemporary western Bantu. The descendants of these linguistically related Bantu set foot in western Kenya in the beginning of the first millennium C.E, from Uganda. Their exodus which first took them to winam gulf and Lake Victoria Islands commenced in the 14th century and gradually ended in the 18th century (Were 1974:187, Oliver 1972:25ff). Conjectural causes such as over population, desire for a conducive land for settlement, the need to escape from livestock and human epidemics are assigned to their migration; and hence, most Abaluhya clans mention yimbo, Alego, Asembo, Kisumu, Sakwa and seme as some of the places they crisscrossed in their migratory pattern (were 1967: 188).

The evolution of the Abatirichi is hinged and shrouded in mythology. Nonetheless, the history of the preliminary - Tiriki commenced in the 14th century era in Misiri from where they moved along the Nile in canoes as far as jinja before settling at Asembo (Were 1967 b: 3, 1974a:56). The actual identity of Misiri is contentious with unending historical trajectory, however, the author notes that it may be referring to the biblical stories disseminated by Christian missionaries. Nonetheless, Misiri is thought to be possibly around Lake Turkana (Were 1974:188). From this perspective, elders liable
for the custodianship of idumi material culture opined that, Tiriki ancestors came from Ekhepeti and entered Kenya from Uganda long time ago (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). Ekhepeti dialectically sounds Egypt in the Vatirichi language. Even though the Misiri myth seem to be evasive and engulfed in the domain of mythology and very challenging to uncover, this alone does not disqualify the historian from trying to rebuild the history of the Tiriki. Indeed, such myths are typical occurrences’ in the midst of the East African people and some of them precede the epoch of European encroachment in the region (Kipkorir 2008:416). Ogot submits that, myths underlie the beginnings of the world which form the basis of actual reminiscence by the people (2009:486).

Consequently, the Misiri theory should not be pushed under the carpet since the historical tradition indicate that the embryonic -Tiriki under the leadership of Lokhoba moved down the river Nile towards Lake Victoria region and pitched camp at Asembo where they interacted with ancestors of the Terik who had come to the Lake region from mount Elgon (Were 1974a:56, 1967b:3). However, at the turn of the 17th century the Lou entry into the region disintegrated the power equilibrium consequently triggering the displacement and exodus of the embryonic -Tiriki, other Bantu groups, and the Kalenjin who moved to the north and east of the Kano plains. In their migratory oral traditions, the Tiriki point at a short stint in Alego, Gem, Kisumu and Wekhomo, and in the midst of their movement Alulitsi who had sired three sons’ Chisienya, Ameyo and Wanga had taken over the leadership of the Tiriki from his father Lukhoba who had formed Valukhova people (Were 1967b:3). Nonetheless, the
demise of Alulitsi caused Valukhova to disintegrate into three groups’, and one of them under the leadership of Wanga moved north to imanga where Abashitsetse and Abamuima clans united to form the Abawanga kingdom (Osogo 1966:57). Ameyo and his group which formed an offshoot of an emerging blend of the Kipsigis social fabric moved to the kipsigisland and this may be the Bantu group that mwanzi (1972:64) says entered kipsigisland through Buret from the region of Kaimosi in the west. The third cohort of the descendants of Chisienya revived bwali and journeyed into southern Maragoli and present day Tiriki areas which were appropriated by the last half of the sixteenth (Were 1967b:4).

Gideon S. Were and Derek A. Wilson (1972) mention that, the Tiriki had settled in their present area by 1650 after migrating from Uganda (1972:73). Meanwhile, the offsprings of Chisienya comprising Valukhova, Vammbo, valukhombe, vikhava, and Vashitsutsa clans referred to in the local phraseology as the original Tiriki (Tiriki vakwe) provided the fusing point into which immigrant communities dissolved to craft the Tiriki nation (Were 1967b:2). Consequently, it is apparent that the rest of the people who constitute the Tiriki are assimilables who allowed their sons to be circumcised according to idumi customs to attain Tirikihood as epitomized in the age group formation. In light of this, being a Tiriki does not lie in residing within the geographical boundaries of Hamisi constituency, Bantu ancestry or speakinglutirichi dialect, but a Tiriki (Mutirichi) is any male person subscribing to idumi culture regardless of tribe or clan affiliation (FGD3, May 28th, 2016). In consequence, the Tiriki consists of different ethnic groups such as the Bakoba from Uganda, Kalenjis.
Maragoli, Banyore, Isukha and idakho, as well as the Luo brought together by *idumi* as a cultural ideology. Women become Tiriki by virtual of their families subscribing to *idumi* customs and not the actual circumcision. Before the advent of the British, the Tiriki and Terik were decentralised politically and were only brought together by the mystical institution of *idumi*, and that the Tiriki performed their first circumcision ceremony in 1890 after the Terik bestowed *idumi* to Ambalavu, a Tiriki ancestor (Simani 2005:2, 25,114).

The origin of *idumi* with its interrelated cultural material remains a mystery not only to scholars but also to the Tiriki themselves. Informants insinuated that *idumi* originated from their ancestors who came with it from Egypt (*misiri*) while others opined that *idumi* was passed to the Tiriki by the Terik (*varwa*). The informants discourse not withstanding, the origin of *idumi* is undoubtedly anchored in the embryonic socio-cultural interaction between the Tiriki and Terik – Nandi neighbours who are kalenjiin by ancestry. The Tiriki interaction with the Terik – Nandi occurred in the 17th century, however, this interaction appear to have been less adhesive until the 18th and 19th centuries which witnessed elaborate socio-cultural interaction that had far reaching consequences on the Tiriki. The Tiriki and the Terik – Nandi were in close vicinity of settlement and widely interacted culturally and economically (Gimode 2003:168). Abatirichi were culturally swayed by the Terik - Nandi people with whom they interacted and shared a common border in the region of Aldai (Were 1967a:24). Undoubtedly, the Terik - Nandi predisposed the cultural as well as the social organization of the Abatirichi and the apex of this sway was the adaption of
male circumcision (*Idumi*) culture and its interrelated cultural material from the Terik (FGD3, May 28\(^{th}\), 2016). This confirms the earlier view articulated by elder custodians of *idumi* material culture that, the source of *idumi* and the material culture associated with it is closely linked to *varwa* among whom the Tiriki lived (interview, December 6\(^{th}\), 12\(^{th}\), 2015). Indisputably, the Terik- Nandi interaction, inspired Abatirichi to acquire the Kalenjin age-group circumcision system, sacred plants, *kapkorosi, kavunyonje, bwali* and the ritual of cursing (*muuma*) all of which comprise significant material culture in *idumi*. Sangree (1966) says that *idumi*, was annexed from the Terik and came unchanged from 'ging' (*idumi yarula ging*) (1966:39). However, this may not be so, since the term *idumi* was Tirikinised from the Terik word *tum* and that Sangree has not mentioned what remained intact.

To buttress Abatirichi traditions that unanimously point to *varwa* as the genesis of *idumi*. Simani (2005) has presented what, I term as the “Lukhova and Ambalavu” allegory which has become one of the cornerstone for explaining the genesis of *idumi* and its interrelated cultural material. In one of the mythology about the origin of *idumi*, Simani recounts that a circumcised Terik girl (Dengu) objected the marriage to an uncircumcised Tiriki young man Lukhova forcing him to succumb to Terik circumcision, which was carried out by a Terik woman. This myth indicate that Tiriki got circumcision from a woman, however this could be reffering to the Biblical analogy of a woman (Sarah) circumcising a man (Abraham) Gen, 17:24.

In accordance with Ambulavu’s myth, Simani (2005) notes that *Idumi* was derived from *Varwa* and handed down to the Preliminary -Tiriki by a Terik elder named
Diligin who allowed a young Tiriki man by the name of Ambulavu, son of Lukhova to be circumcised among his people (2005:107-109). This was probably during the 18th century. Ambulavu was the son of Lukhoba, who was the son of Nanduda, son of jisienye, son of Lulitsi and his wife Aliova, who was the son of Lukhova who led the preliminary -Tiriki exodus from the mythical Missiri to the Nyanza region (Were 1967b:4). Consonantly with the myth, Dengu, a Terik woman was Lukhova’s second wife who gave birth to Ambulavu who was born when the Preliminary -Terik and embryonic -Tiriki resided in close vicinity, and that when he was of age for circumcision, his mother influenced it to be executed by a Terik elder named Diligin in accordance with the Terik culture. Despite Sangale not articulating whether Lukhova underwent circumcision before or after lukhova’s sons including Ambalavu, it is undisputable that the source of idumi and its material culture point to the Terik. In deed, this was confirmed during the interview by one of the circumciser’s who said “Idumi yeru yi shirwa yarula ging khu valukeywo”, meaning that idumi came from the valukheywo who are linked to the Terik long time ago (interview, April 25th, 2015).

Further inquiry from male parents as to why they hold that their ancestors got idumi from the Terik, one of them said “when you look at the age set names such as Kaplelach, Koimet, Ngolongo, and also idumi songs such as Hoyo he, all of them sound Terik. In addition, all the Tiriki who subscribe to idumi have the spirit of circumcision (musambwa kwi idumi) and must therefore undergo it to appease this spirit (interview, April 29th, 2016). This may partly explain why idumi is not only mandatory but a matter of life and death for all Tiriki males, lest the misambwa of
idumi would haunt them, and hence in life or death someone who is of the circumcision age must undergo the rite including the dead before burial (vadiri vu khumatsi , interview, April 25th, 2016). However, to circumcise a dead body is ritually contaminating and calls for an immediate retirement on the part of the circumciser.

Moreover, when Ambulavu graduated to the senior age he was instructed in the techniques of idumi and given its symbolic accouterments which are central in idumi such a rod of authority called Inanjirwa and shisero-ismadi which authenticated his independence to perform circumcision among the Abatirichi, and this may explain why this accouterments persists. Consequently, idumi came to Abatirichi through the house of the second wife of Lukhova who comprise Avalukhova clan. Furthermore, Valukhova-Badengu clan which is referring to Lukhova and his second wife Dengu provide the ancestry from which Abatirichi trace the genealogy and the original house of idumi (intnsu yi shishevo). This position of Valukhova clan as the ‘house’ handling idumi matters is recognized by vatirichi (Abatirichi) and that is why when initiation chief (mushevi mukulundu) Sakwa Mmaitsi who is from Valukhoba clan launched the vasomi circumcision group in the 1940s, the move met less resistance (elders liable for the custodianship of idumi material culture interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015).

Indeed, Mmaitsi’s blood consanguinity that made him to share ancestral ties as a member of the valukhova who are credited for the origin of idumi validated his move to withdraw vasomi group from the main stream ‘Tiriki original’ circumcision group. Throughout my life as a Tiriki who also got circumcised, I have witnessed and participated in idumi rituals and can stress that, instructors repeatedly inform initiates
that they can not abscond *miima kya vakukha* of *idumi* as given to Ambulavu by the Terik. As the above stories imply, the origin of *idumi* is invariably the origin of its interrelated cultural material; that point to one source: the Terik. From the foregoing discussion, it can be deduced that *Idumi* and its interrelated cultural material originated from the Terik. In the next section that follows, I discuss the symbolism enshrined in *idumi* material culture integrated from the preparatory to the reincorporation stage.

### 2.3 The meaning enshrined in symbols of Tiriki circumcision (*idumi*) material culture in the Preparatory Stage.

Although *dumi* is deeply rooted in the lives of the Tiriki; it is only during rituals and ceremonies that the meaning enshrined in the circumcision cultural material is brought to the fore. Interviewees disclosed that the Tiriki assign meaning to the cultural material in *idumi* at every stage, namely; the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and reincorporation stage. However, they cautioned that some of the cultural material and symbolism perspectively are confidential.

The first phase in the *idumi* ritual cycle is the preparatory stage in which a ritual sacrifice is performed by initiation elders to dedicate the *idumi* season to the ancestral spirits of *idumi*. Interviewees submitted that, before any *idumi* activities take place, *vasakhu lu vi idumi* descend to the *kavunyonje* or *kavukolosi* to perform a ritual of suffocating *limiko* that has no defect and which is later skinned and its carcasses roasted on a ritual fire (*vwali*) which is prepared near the main ritual tree (*irhiru*) in the *kavunyoje*. In plate 1, I present a photograph showing *vadiri* skinning a male sheep sacrificed to purify the *kavunyonje* during the *idumi* inauguration ceremonies of 2015.
Interviewees disclosed that circumcision is performed in the kavunyonje after along duration of five years, and hence a cleansing ritual sacrifice has to be performed before use. For instance, elders liable for the custodianship of idumi material culture in concensus with interviewees stressed that, apart from the sacrificial ritual symbolizing khulavitsa the kavunyonje, it also symbolizes cleansing idumi from bad spirits which exists within and beyond to pave way for the idumi spirit to “come” and witness as well aid vasakhulu vi idumi in divining and determining the destiny of idumi season (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015).

Vadiri vu khumatsi in concurrence with informants stressed that, in the process of perusing the intestines of the sacrificed sheep during divination, the appearance of the
“black” symbolizes ritually unclean situation which is unfavourable for \textit{idumi}, while the “white” colour symbolizes ritual sanctity which is good for \textit{idumi} (interview, April 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2016). In that respect, by using divination mechanism the elders are probably able to gain insight into the future about \textit{idumi}. However, events cannot be predicted with total certainty. During fieldwork, I established that a spotless male sheep that has no defect preferably of one colour - “red” (\textit{limuchi}) or “black” (\textit{limwamu}) is used to perform \textit{idumi} rituals in the \textit{kavunyonje}, but not “white” goat (\textit{imburi indavu ikhole}) as mentioned by Sangree (1966:51) and Sangale (2005: 123-124). However, regardless of the differences arising from the animal used for the ritual sacrifice, the fact remains that the Tiriki perform a divination ritual not only to determine the fate of \textit{idumi} but also to symbolically cleanse and commission the \textit{idumi} season.

As a matter of fact, during fieldwork I noted that, the Ram selected for ritual sacrifice is delivered to the \textit{kavunyonje} by a specially ordained senior circumcision ritual elder who utters cultural prayers before tying it to the central ritual tree (\textit{irhiru}) which symbolically represents the ancestral spirit (\textit{Lusambwa}) of \textit{idumi} in the \textit{kavunyonje} from where it is collected for sacrifice by an elder who is ritually ordained to perform \textit{idumi} rituals. The elder incharge of performing the ritual sacrifice suffocates the Ram by holding its nostrils until it urinates and dies before handing it over to \textit{vadiri} for skinning. \textit{Idumi} is a matter of life and death since the initiates can lose life through bleeding after circumcision, and hence to preserve their lives, the higher being who is the source of life (breath) has to be appeased by offering a whole sacrifice which is not bruised and this is symbolized by suffocating the Ram which
dies without making unnecessary noise to disturb the spirits (elders given the custodianship of tsirhumbi, interview, May 8th, 2016).

The idumi preparatory stage also involves khulomba vwali in the circumcision grove. Informants opined that; symbolism abound in vwali which is made in the kavunyonje near Msala kwi miima. For instance, elders charged with the custodianship of idumi material culture stressed that, vwali does not only symbolize an occasion for “warming” the spirit of idumi, but also symbolizes an ‘alter’ where vasakhulu vi idumi offer sacrifices to evoke Musambwa kwi Idumi to “come” and “activate” idumi (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). The elders added that, consumers of the sacrificial meat roasted on vwali symbolically “bond” with the spirit of idumi, implying that reunion with musambwa kwi idumi is obligatory to ensure the success of idumi process. Consequently, its perceptible that the idea of vwali warming idumi is a mechanism designed to symbolically enact the activation of life which the initiates are obliged to perpetuate after undergoing the idumi process.

Ordinarily after a successful ritual performance in the Kavunyonje, vasakhulu vi idumi announce the idumi season by singing lwimbo lyu vukhulu - hoyo-he. For instance, vadiri vu khumatsi in solidarity with interviewees explained that lwimbo lyu vukhulu whose tone is similar to that of a war song symbolizes that, the time for transition to manhood is imminent as well as the fact that idumi is like “war” which the initiates, like warriors going for battle must prepare to face courageously without retreating (interview, April 25th, 2016). Informants submitted that, after vasakhulu vi idumi announcing the idumi season by singing lwimbo lyu vukhulu, candidates for idumi
begin preparing by singing and dancing on roads holding *malande* with the left hand firmly on their heads’. Plate 2 is an illustration of *idumi* candidates dancing with *malande* to symbolize their readiness to undergo the “cut”.

**Plate 2**: *Idumi* candidates dancing with *malande* to symbolize their readiness to undergo the “cut”

![Plate 2: Idumi candidates dancing with malande to symbolize their readiness to undergo the “cut”](image)

**Source**: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 7th July 2015.

Interviewees noted that, dancing with *malande* carries symbolism. For instance, male parents in consensus with interviewees disclosed that, the act of prospective initiates singing and dancing, overtly holding *malande* on their heads’, covertly symbolizes their resolve of “entering” *idumi* to be transformed into adulthood as well as upholding and perpetuating the indigenous *idumi* culture handed to the Tiriki by *varwa* through their ancestor Ambalavu. Undoubtedly, dancing with *malande* on the head in public
does not only symbolize the initiates’ open “demand” and readiness to become “men” through *idumi* but also the need to uphold and spread *idumi* culture far and beyond, just the way the *malande* plant spreads. Furthermore, elders given the custodianship of *tsirhumbi* in congruence with informants stressed that, a boy who has danced with *malande* held on the head can not be withdrawn from *idumi* since *malande* comprise *idumi* material culture that symbolically demonstrate resolve to be transformed into the status of manhood (interview, May 8th, 2016). Intrinsically, candidates for *idumi* symbolically declare the need to change their status by openly dancing with *malande* on the head, and hence its obligatory for a candidate who has touched and danced with *malande* to undergo *idumi*. Further, male parents stressed that, among other songs sung by *idumi* candidates who dance with *malande* in preparation for *idumi*, the song *hoyo-hee* also features prominently to symbolize that, the time to fight the “enemy” fearlessly, and in this case the “enemy” of boyhood has come (Interview, April 29th, 2016). That being the case, it is indisputable that *lwimbo lyu vukhulu* symbolizes that transition to manhood is not for the cowards (*jevute*) but those who are ready to undergo the ‘cut’ regardless of the challenges anticipated. As such, the *idumi* song - *hoyo-ee* symbolically sets and captures the mood that activates the preparation for *idumi*.

*Idumi* is a systematic process that enables a boy to “enter” an independent status of manhood. Informants revealed that, initiation process starts by *vasakhulu vi idumi* removing the *idumi* candidates from the homestead to a secret location to
psychologically prepare them for *idumi*. Plate 3 illustrate *idumi* candidates being led away from the homestead by *vasakhulu vi idumi* and *vadiri* after recruitment.

**Plate 3** is an illustration of *idumi* candidates being led away from the homestead by *vasakhulu vi idumi* and *vadiri* after recruitment.

*Vadiri vu muhrumbi* in agreement with informants disclosed that, the first stages of “crafting” the traits of manhood is symbolically executed by removing *idumi* candidates from their parents homestead and assembling them in the homestead of an elder who accommodates them at night to commence the process of deleting old childhood traits and the influence caused by familiar environment especially from the mother (interview, December 28th, 2015). This implies that, among the Tiriki male

**Source:** Photo taken by the researcher during fieldwork on 1st August 2015.
children need to stay away from the mother in order to “explore” the world so as to develop into “appropriate” men. This may explain why the candidates for idumi are taken away from the homestead to facilitate the process of symbolically expunging feminine influence and character from them. Further, interviewees noted that as a rule idumi candidates who are assembled in the homestead of an elder for accommodation at night undergo the ritual of shaving off the hair prior to the ritual of the Imoni test which starts with giving instructions (kwaya). For instance, vadiri vu khumatsi in consonance with interviewees disclosed that, the activities of kwaya and Imoni test symbolically deconstruct idumi candidates from the previous boyhood character to usher them into a new beginning that embrace manly traits (interview, April 25th, 2016). However, boyhood character is generally inherent in boys and changes with age, and hence the young candidates in idumi may not be in a position to immediately display the intended manly traits.

Moreover, elders liable for the custodianship of tsi-rhumbi in unison with informants stressed that, the boys are more often closer to the mother and this renders them emotionally maladjusted with feminine character and hence isolating and subjecting them to the ritual of the imoni test symbolically removes female oriented character and the mothers’ babyhood syndrome to develop independent male oriented attributes (Interview, May 8th, 2016). Undoubtedly, extracting the boy from the homestead to a private place is an attempt to make him aware of ‘who he is’ by isolating and subjecting him to initiation ordeals that inculcates new manly traits. However, some
manly attributes such as masculinity are inherent and don’t require isolation for them to emerge.

*Idumi* as a ritual process follows an ordered structure which is maintained in all the stages. Informants revealed that before the execution of any ritual, the initiates whose hair is shaved off are arranged in the order in which they are to be circumcised from *jivuleti* to *itaweti* with regard to the age grade seniority of their fathers’. In plate 4, I illustrate *idumi* candidates whose hair has been shaved off to symbolize anew beginning.

**Plate 4: Idumi Candidates** whose hair has been shaved off, and who have been arranged in order from *jivuleti itaweti*

![Plate 4: Idumi Candidates](image)

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 2nd August 2015.
As noted, *idumi* process maintains an ordered social system. This order is what elders charged with custodianship of *idumi* material culture called “khulonda makhula” (maintaining the age grades structure) which does not only symbolize social stratification, status, normative roles, and responsibilities the initiate’s father performs but also symbolizes an ordered social structure based on the age grade system reinforced through *idumi* (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). That being the case, it’s observable that activities in *idumi* are based on age grade seniority that governs interaction in the social structure for an orderly existence and survival of the community’s culture of *idumi*, and hence men in the senior age grade are not only custodians of *idumi* culture but also a symbol of respect and honour and that is why age grade is outstanding in ritual involvement.

Informants explained that, customarily the initiates are arranged in descending order from the *jivuletii* to *itaweti* before their hair is shaved off by *vadiri* who have undergone the ritual of *kwisavitswa*. For instance, *vadiri vu murhumbi* in unison with informants revealed that, before subjecting the initiates to *idumi* rituals, their boyhood hair is shaved off just the way the hair of a newborn baby, widows and widowers (*Vakhunzakali*) is cut; and that the symbolism is the same, that of a removal from the previous status and entry into a new one (Interview, December 28th, 2015). This view suggests that *idumi* rituals are supposed to be performed only in *idumi* context and according to *miima* in *idumi*. Male parents stressed that, *idumi* is likened to “second birth”, as such shaving the initiate’s hair not only prepares him to symbolically be born into a new status of adulthood, but also symbolizes anew transition era from the
ritually unclean status of boyhood in preparation for entry into a new adulthood status with ascribed responsibilities (Interview, April 29th, 2016). My counterparts and I during my initiation into manhood were shaved to symbolize a new beginning and departure from the previous unclean status of *vusoleli* before descending to the forest where we were subjected to strenuous activities involving the *imoni* test. Consequently, shaving the initiate’s hair symbolically terminates the boyhood stage in preparation for transition to anew status reserved for circumcised men, and hence, this symbolically disconnects the initiate from undesired previous status to usher in anew beginning as symbolically in the shaving act being performed by specially selected men of good morals.

*Idumi* is not an event but a process. Informants disclosed to me that, after the shaving ritual, the initiates are led to the forest where they are stripped naked to undergo the ritual of pulling (*khungusa* or *khukhwesa*) which encompasses the ritual of the eye test, and instructions on *idumi* tenets (*kwaya*). As such, the stages of *kwaya*, *khungusa* or *khukhwesa* and *imoni* test are symbolically crucial in preparing *idumi* candidates to acquire the status of manhood. Elders entrusted with the custodianship of *idumi* material culture emphasized that, the ritual of *khungusa* or *khukhwesa* is not just “pulling” the creeping (*muhalia*) plant to make *tsi-senende* but symbolizes detaching *idumi* candidates from their previous old childhood habits, mannerisms, status, experiences, and positioning them on the new path of attaining new norms and values that befit adulthood (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). This partly explains why the boys among the Tiriki acquire new behaviour not only after performing the ritual
of khungusa or khukhwesa, but also after undergoing the cut (vadiri vu khumatsi, interview, April, 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2016).

Further, informants explained that the initiates escorted by a multitude of men emerge from the forest dancing nude (shihekhenye) with isenende held on their head by the left hand after performing the ritual of imoni test. In plate 5, I illustrate nud initiates dancing with isenende held on their head.

**Plate 5.** Nude initiates dancing with isenende held on their head.

![Plate 5](image)

**Source:** Photo of initiates taken by researcher during fieldwork on 2\textsuperscript{nd} august 2015.

Furthermore, elders liable for the custodianship of idumi material culture told me that idumi among the Tiriki is the ‘Eye ‘(idumi yu mutirichi ni imoni) and that is why the candidates for idumi must undergo the Eye test which involves staring at nothing “that must be seen” and mysteriously “drop dead” in preparation for circumcision. Vajesi or
vadiri vu khumatsi explained that, the ritual of *imoni* test symbolically “bewitches” and removes the initiate from the physical to the spiritual world of *idumi* where he “interacts” with the spirit of *idumi* which is to aid him in navigating successfully through the *idumi* process (interview, April, 25th, 2016). Fundamentally, the ritual of the *imoni* test does not only capture and psychologically shape the initiates’ mind to respond positively to pain during circumcision but symbolically prepares them to remain focused and firm from any distraction regardless of any stimuli when undergoing the process of crafting them from boyhood to manhood. However, the practice of injecting the initiates with anaesthetic drugs before circumcision negates the intention of the *imoni* test.

Informants revealed that *idumi* is a solemn ritual that does not allow unauthorized material on the body; hence, the initiates are obliged to dance naked with *isenende* that symbolizes charm in the ritual world. *vadiri vu khumatsi* in uninaminty with informants disclosed that *idumi* is a ritual equivalent to “second birth” and dancing *shihekhenye* symbolize the insignificant social status of childhood from which they are about to be ‘born’ into the most valuable status of manhood, while dancing with *isenende* held on their head symbolizes protective charm as well as the initiates wish for good luck (*tsikhavi*) and prosperity as they transform into men (Interview, April 25th, 2016). Having this in mind, it’s irrefutable that the initiates dancing *shihekhenye* symbolically reveals their insignificant social status. The nature of the *insignificant* status is referred to as nakedness which is symbolized in “*shihekhenye*” and the basic moment to reveal their “inferior status” is when they dance nude holding *isenende* on
their head. Though dancing *shihekenye* is a customary requirement for the initiates transiting to manhood among the ‘Tiriki original’, it is rather dehumanizing and should not be seen as the only method to remind the boys that uncircumcised status is detestable, and hence, reversal of this practice is inevitable.

*Idumi* is not only a delicate, but a “tough” and a “painful” experience which necessitates both physical and ritual cleanliness. Informants revealed that, *idumi* is a matter of “life” and “death” and that is why the initiates ought to be ritually cleansed from *mijilo* before circumcision. This ritual cleanliness is achieved by absolving the initiates from childhood ills after subjecting them to the scaring sound of the bull roarers (*masove*) that frightens them into confession and an oath administered by crossing over a ritual stick (*Inanjirwa*) placed between an indigenous axe (*ihaywa yi shi tirichi*) and indigenous hoe (*shisiri*). Informants opined that, symbolism in the *idumi* oath and *masove* are meaningfully identifiable in the final preparatory stages of the *idumi* ritual. For instance, male parents in accord with informants revealed that, *masove* or *shingang’a*, which is ‘pursued’, as well as challenged, tied (*khuliza*) and drugged from the “forest” by courageous strong men symbolizes the danger inherent in the prohibited ritual sins as well as uncertainty a waiting the initiates who are not ready to confess all the *mijilo* they have committed to facilitate their ritual cleanliness to secure their safety as they transform into manhood (interview, April 29th, 2016).

Plate 6, Illustrate some of the *masove* instruments which include one large pot covered with skin from a male sheep and a ritual stick (*shidundu*) which has a hole inserted in the pot and two small pots used to produce threatening sound.
Plate 6: *masove* instruments which are used to produce the threatening sounds which symbolize the danger inherent in the prohibited ritual sins which require cleansing.

**Source:** Photo of initiates taken by researcher during fieldwork 2\(^{nd}\) August 2015 evening.

Though it’s undisputable that ritual purity is a prerequisite in *idumi* to guarantee uninterrupted transition from boyhood to manhood, the inclusion of *Masove* in the ritual is designed as a mechanism to symbolize the dangers in life which the initiates can evade by upholding moral values in the society. *Masove* does not only represent an idea muted to symbolize imperilment acquired in the boyhood stage as a consequence of unknowingly contravening the social order and the indigenous moral
code but also the outcome likely to befall those who breach what the society has set as the dos and donts that facilitates adherence to societal moral values. Accordingly, once candidates for idumi have been cleansed by subjecting them to Masove, the new status acquired is to be maintained even after circumcision to enhance the social cohesiveness of the society. This may explain why the Tiriki are averse to untypical social behaviour that necessitates drawing the attention of the initiates to mijilo through masove before circumcision (Elders liable for the custodianship of idumi material culture, interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015).

Further, interviewees revealed that to enhance the confidentiality of idumi, an oath which involve the initiates jumping over a ritual stick referred to as inanjirwa is administered. Vadiri vu khumatsi in congruence with interviewees explained that inanjirwa does not only symbolize the central instrument from which idumi power and authority emanates but a noticeable symbol which binds the initiates in a pledge not to divulge idumi customs to non Tirikis’(interview, April 25th, 2016). Undeniably, an idumi oath is a ritual act in which the initiates’ commit themselves to uphold the culture and secrets of idumi with prescription of consequences to those divulging the information. However, an oath is averbal promise which may end up not being followed, and hence, with increased interaction and religious influence the oath may not be foolproof on revelation of idumi secrecy. Therefore, in the next sub section, I discuss the symbolism embedded in idumi material culture among the Tiriki in the circumcision stage, which is a crucial phase in transforming the boy into manhood.
2.4 The meaning of the symbolism embedded in *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki in the circumcision stage

The next vital stage in the *idumi* process is circumcision whose climax is the removal of *mutsuni* performed in the *kavunyonje* where the initiates are guided by two *vadiris’,* one from behind and another in front carrying *limuli* tied on a stick of *Lusuyi* as demanded by *idumi* customs. Plate 7, is an illustration of *vadiri* carrying *limuli* tied on a stick of *Lusuyi* which symbolize the power of witchcraft (*lilokho*) that guards the initiates against dangerous forces both natural and human.

**Plate 7:** *vadiri* carrying a bundle of various grasses (*limuli*) tied on a stick of an Elgon tree which symbolize the power of witchcraft (*lilokho*) for protection of the initiates

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 3rd August 2015 morning.
As a rule, the initiates and elders who are guided by vadiri carrying limuli enter the kavunyonje from the right-hand side to symbolically wish them goodluck and a successful operation. Indeed, the informants noted the symbolism enshrined in limuli and Lusuyi. For instance, elders entrusted with the custodianship of idumi material culture in consonance with interviewees revealed that limuli tied on a stick of Lusuyi symbolically potent the tenents of black magic designed to ward off both natural and human threats which may hamper the transition of the initiates to manhood (Interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015. In consequence, it’s observable that the performance of idumi appears to be based on tapping the powers of witchcraft which is believed to possess the ability to fortify and shield the initiates from natural and human threats that are likely to impede their transformation to adulthood status. Shielding the initiates from threats not withstanding, witchcraft in idumi is porous and its workability remains debatable and mysterious. Furthermore, interviewees explained that, conventionally women are prohibited from entering the kavunyoje; however, in the company of other kinsmen they carry sticks of Lusuyi with numerous branches whose bark has been peeled off to escort the initiates.

Women in (FGD4, May 29th, 2016) in consilience with interviewees explained that, the ritual of circumcision that “removes” the initiates’ foreskins transforms their sons to resemble the “father” and this is symbolized by carrying sticks of Lusuyi whose bark has been peeled off. Essentially, the removal of the bark from Lusuyi branches symbolize transformation to manhood. Plate 8, is an illustration of relatives and other women carrying sticks of Lusuyi whose bark has been peeled off.
Plate 8: Relatives and other women carrying sticks of *Lusuyi* with numerous branches whose bark has been peeled off to symbolize peace

As earlier noted, kinsmen including women escorting the initiates on the circumcision day, normally carry sticks of *Lusuyi* which have numerous small branches and whose bark has been peeled off; and on which *muhalia-isenende* is tied. *Vadiri vu murhumbi*, explained that, the sticks of *Lusuyi* whose bark has been extracted and on which
muhalia is tied do not only symbolize peace, good luck, serenity, success, and calmness, but symbolically shields the initiates from witches and people with “evil eyes” who may position themselves strategically to undermine their transition to manhood (Interview, December 28th, 2015). Indeed, from the exposition of the symbolism encrypted in Lusuyi and limuli one can infer that in the context of idumi, the idea of “witchcraft” does not necessary exists for malicious intentions but symbolise ‘mysterious power’ that consolidates the institution of idumi as a means through which the Tiriki shelter the initiates from perilous spirits as well as transmitting their heritage in order to sustain the idumi culture as dictated by their forefathers.

As already mentioned, idumi rituals usually take place in shivanda - kavunyonje as well as the kavukolosi. Informants explained to me that, the kavunyonje is not only the epicenter of Tiriki circumcision activities but also holds a special place and symbolism in Tiriki circumcision. Responding to the symbolism enshrined in the kavunyonje, vadiri vu khumasti said ‘those sacred forests’ (kavukolosi and kavunyonje) symbolize holy places for all those circumcision (idumi) ‘things’ and that, not only are all trees found in these forests considered unusual but are absolutely secured by customs (miima) because from our ancestors it was proclaimed “if you cut a tree from my shrine you will die (ulakhutsa)” . Consequently, the kavunyonje symbolizes a “high” place where members of the community including ancestral idumi spirits (misambwa kye idumi) converge on the occasion of transforming the boys to manhood (interview,
April 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2016. Plate 9 is an illustration of the \textit{kavunyonje} which symbolizes a shrine with regard to \textit{idumi} among the Tiriki.

\textbf{Plate 9:} The \textit{kavunyonje} which symbolizes a shrine with regard to \textit{idumi} among the Tiriki.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{kavunyonje.png}
\end{center}

\textbf{Source:} Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 3rd August.

In essence, the symbolism engraved in the \textit{kavunyonje} is not anchored in the forests being secluded but in the sacredness and sanctity of the rituals performed in that site. Further, male parents disclosed that, the \textit{Kavunyonjes’} do not only symbolize the infinite \textit{idumi} spirit (\textit{musambwa kwi idumi}) which binds the departed, the living and the coming generations in long-lasting relationship but also symbolize a sanctified place where \textit{idumi} rituals solemnly take place (interview, April 29\textsuperscript{th}, 2016). Having said that, the sanctitude of \textit{idumi} rituals is symbolized in the existence of the
Kavunyonje as a sacred cultural site for the perpetuation of idumi customs among the Tiriki.

As earlier mentioned the idumi rite among the Tiriki occurs in the kavunyonje. Informants revealed that, the initiates typically enter the kavunyonje and perform a ritual act of kwambukha mujera to the mulinga where imoni test ceremony is executed before circumcision. Plate 10 is an illustration of the running stream in the kavunyonje which the initiates “cross” before undergoing the circumcision.

Plate 10: The stream or river (mujera) in the kavunyonje which the initiates are obliged to “cross” before undergoing the circumcision rite.

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 3rd August, 2015.
Informants noted that, “crossing the running stream” is symbolic in idumi. For instance, Vadiri vu murhumbi in oneness with informants divulged that, the act of the initiates “crossing the running stream” does not only symbolize dividing children from men; but contact with the running river water symbolically ‘washes’ away the dirt interrelated with boyhood to pave way for entry into a new stage of mahood, and hence signals the beginning of the end of the condition of boyhood (interview, December 28th, 2015). Bearing in mind that idumi is a cultural process muted to symbolize new status formation by separating the boys from men through circumcision which transit them to manhood, its undoubtedly clear that the new status formation is implicitly symbolized in crossing the running river, which continually flow to symbolize idumi as avenue of preparing the initiates to perpetuate life.

As already noted, the initiates’ entering the kavunyonje ordinarily “cross the river” to mulinga where rituals to “open” idumi are officially performed. Interviewees divulged that, mulinga is not only a ritually dedicated site but symbolizes the “Heart” of idumi in the kavunyonje where rituals are performed (Mulinga ku mu kavunyonje nu Bwali vwi Mirukha ji kholekheranga. For instance, male parents disclosed that, mulinga and the area surrounding it symbolizes a ritually “sacred place” where idumi elders, the initiates, and the ancestors who are considered to be “living” (valamu) converge as partakers in the the process of transmuting the initiates from boyhood to manhood. Mulinga symbolizes an Altar (Interview, April 29th, 2016). Fundamentally, it is conspicuous that the symbolism in Mulinga is lodged in its pivotal role as a focal point where idumi candidates, the living, and the ancestors ritually converge as participants
in the journey of modifying the initiates to manhood. Undoubtedly, the significance of the symbolism of Mulinga as an Alter in idumi is stressed by the fact that it is only the ritually cleansed (visavitswa) who are allowed access to it.

As earlier discussed, the Tiriki refer to the practice of transmuting boys to manhood as idumi which depict male circumcision. Informants explained that, circumcision is performed by hereditary or those initiated into the art of circumcision. Considering this, its obvious that though the skill of circumcision is inherent, one can acquire it through training. However, whether hereditary or by training all vadiri vukhumatsi are initiated into the art of circumcision through the ritual of khulia vudiri which entail inculcating the spirit of circumcision, authority and courage to those cleansed and ordained as circumcisers (interview, April, 25th, 2016). Essentially, vadiri vu khumatsi undergo the ritual of khulia vudiri before being empowered to perform the circumcision rite. While interviewing vadiri vu khumatsi, I spotted a number of them wearing a copper bracelet (mkasa) on their left hand. I was curious and asked one of them why they are wearing a copper bracelet. He told me that all are ritually ‘ordained’ vadiri vu khumatsi wear mkasa which symbolizes empowerment to perform the circumcision rite on the initiates (Interview, April 25th, 2016). Mkasa is not only a symbol that differentiates those authorized and commissioned as vadiri vu khumatsi from other custodians of idumi material culture, but its also a symbol of the ‘power to cut and heal’ since it is believed to own mysterious ability not only of regulating bleeding but also facilitating the healing of the circumcision wound (Vadiri vu murhumbi, interview, December 28th, 2015). Plate 11 is an illustration of the left hand
of one of the circumcisers’ *mujesi* or *mudiri wu khumatsi* wearing the copper bracelet (*mkasa*) which symbolizes authority to circumcise (*kusheva*).

**Plate 11:** The circumciser (*mujesi* or *mudiri wu khumatsi*) wearing the copper bracelet (*mkasa*) on the left hand as a symbol of authority to circumcise (*kusheva*)

![Image of hand with copper bracelet](image)

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 3rd August 2015.

As previously noted, *kusheva* which is the “removal” of the foreskin from the penis is performed by *vadiri vu khumatsi*. Informants noted that, the process in *kusheva* adheres to the age grade seniority of the father, and as a rule the boy from the senior age grade is chosen as the first (*jivuleti*) to be circumcised to provide the key with which to "open" the *idumi* session. For instance, *vadiri vu khumatsi* in consonance with informants explained that, after the circumcision elders’ supplications and
benedictions at the Mulinga the initiate from the most senior age-grade is circumcised first to “open” idumi to symbolically cleanse it by the first blood which constitute the power that “washes” the kavunyonje, and hence, the weeping of jivuletì when undergoing circumcision symbolizes bad luck while the courage displayed by him symbolizes that all initiates will be firm and finally be the men desired by society (interview, April 25th, 2016). In this regard, it possible to infer that, the premonition of the out come of idumi is adduced at a higher level and that is why jivuletì is selected from the senior most age set to set the pace and mood in idumi process.

Furthermore, interviewees noted that after officially launching idumi the initiates in all the kavunyonjes are arranged and circumcised in the order of age grade seniority from jivuletì to itaweti. For instance, elder custodians of tsirhumbi revealed that arranging the initiates in an ordered structure inline with the age grade of the father symbolically differentiates and socially stratify the society along social status, normative roles, and responsibilities shouldered not only in idumi but the society in general (interview, May 8th, 2016). Consequently it is perceptible that organizing the initiates in accordance with the age grade of their fathers symbolizes an ordered social structure which is perpetuated and upheld in idumi among the Tiriki to enhance respect and harmony. My observation while in the field during my research relates well with the above viewpoint. In all the kavunyonjes I entered during the circumcision session, the initiates were organised based on the age grade of their fathers’, and not their height. The elders in the kavunyonjes emphasized that the age
grade as well as the moral conduct of the initiate’s father ought to be scrutinized in the process of queueing up the initiates before circumcision.

Furthermore, interviewees revealed that, Tiriki circumcision involves projecting (khureka) the penis into indini that resembles an “AK47” ammunition, as rightly cited by Simani (2005:156). For instance, vadiri vu khumatsi explained that, the initiate among the Tiriki becomes muhindira after mudiri wu khumatsi makes a cut in the foreskin and this is symbolize by khureka the penis into indini yi irhiru that resembles an ‘AK.47’ gun; and that the indigenous circumcision knife (injeso, singular, tsincheso plur) was initially used before replacing it with the scalpel blades. Plate 12 is an illustration of the injeso which was initially used for circumscision.

**Plate 12: Indigenous circumcision knife injeso–singular, tsincheso plur) which has been replaced by a disposable scalpel blade**

*Source: Photo taken by the research during fieldwork in 3rd august, 2015.*
While carrying out a further interview with *vaddirī vu khumatsī*, I asked why they mold the penis to look like an “AK 47” Gun. One of the circumcisers disclosed that, apart from the Terik and Nandi who circumscise in the same way, the “AK47” style of circumcision is permanent mark that symbolically differentiates the indigenously circumcised Tiriki from the non-Tiriki who are referred to as *jevusevekeni* (interview, April 25th, 2016. However, it’s feasible to perceive that the acronym “AK47” might have been drawn from ex - World War 2 compantants who compared their type of circumcision with the guns used in war. This demonstrate the effect of interaction that resulted into the adoption of anew name since initially the circumcised penis was referred to as *isheve yi irhiru*.

As cited earlier, *idumi* provides a platform on which boys transmute to manhood. Informants explained that, to transform the initiates into manhood *vaddirī vu khumatsī* initially used designated indigenous circumcision knife referred to as *shivya or injeso*. However, though *ijeso* is carried to the *kavunyonje*, its function has been replaced by disposable scalpel blades which are now referred to as *tsincheso* plu - singular-*injeso*, and which are used only once per candidate. For instance, elders entrusted with the custodianship of *idumi* material culture in concurrence with informants disclosed that, the shift from indigenous circumcision knife to the disposable scalpel blade has been necessitated by the need to safeguard the initiates from contagious diseases such as Hiv and Aids, however, the symbolism ascribed to the scalpel blade as a circumcision instrument is in tandem with indigenous *injeso*
used previously since it facilitates the ‘delivery’ of the initiate from ritually unclean childhood status into ritually clean adulthood status December 6th, 12th, 2015.

Moreover, informants explained that before the disposable scalp blade are used for circumcision they are ritually constituted through cleansing to attain the tag *injeso* with ascribed symbolism. Plate 13 is an illustration of scalpel blades that have replaced indigenous circumcision knives (*injeso*, singular, *tsincheso* plu).

**Plate. 13** is an illustration of scalpel blades which have replaced indigenous circumcision knife (*injeso*, singular, *tsincheso* plu).

![Source: Photo taken by the research during fieldwork on 3rd August 2015.](image)

For instance, male parents elders entrusted with the custodianship of *idumi* material culture in concurrence with informants disclosed that *injeso* symbolizes a ritually
prepared instrument used by the ‘man maker’ or mudiri wu khumatsi to give “birth” to the boy a ‘second’ time to enable him take on the identity of the “father” (interview, April 29th, 2016). Consequently, the anology fronting idumi as the ‘second birth’ is symbolized in the act performed by injeso in transforming the initiate from boyhood to the status of manhood, and hence, injeso symbolizes a tool used by mudiri wu khumatsi to ‘make men’ by transforming boys from the statusless boyhood stage to the much valued manhood stage by “cutting” the foreskin. As noted, the issue of HIV and AIDS transmission occasioned by sharing tools has assuaged both the ‘Tiriki original’ and Vasomi to adopt disposable scalpel blades as tsincheso to safeguard the health of the initiates.

Idumi is a religious performance since it involves convenanting and “inviting” misambwa through sacrifices to come and “witness” as well as bless the initiates. Informants explained that, idumi is obligatory to fulfill the covenant between the initiates and the ancestors through blood. While stressing the symbolism enshrined in shading blood during circumcision, Vadiri vu khumasti said, “blood (khuratsa matsai) by the initiate during circumcision symbolizes the sealing of a covenant bond (indakhano) between the initiates and the ancestors who have become soil (lilova) where the circumcision blood drops (interview, April, 25th 2016). With this in mind, its observable that idumi is a ritual bond with the ancestors which is symbolically consummated in the blood shed by the initiate, and this may explain why uncircumcised males among the Tiriki are not tolerated since they are regarded as social outcasts not recognized by the ancestors for having betrayed the values and
norms of their society. However, this remains debatable for communities’ that have subscribed to *idumi* culture yet their ancestors did not circumcise.

Further discussion with interviewees on what transpires after the completion of circumcision in the *kavunyoje* revealed that, the initiates are served with porridge made from *vule* delivered by their mothers’ in indigenous pot (*inyungu*). For instance, *Vadiri vu murhumbi* in unanimity with interviewees explained that, the *inyungu* containing porridge is protected from any “fracture ” by carefully carrying it to the edge of the grove by the initiate’s mother to symbolize the fragile ritual juncture the son is undergoing on the occasion of transition to manhood; and hence fragmenting the pot and spilling its contents does not only symbolize ritual uncleanliness on the person handling the pot but also symbolizes “doom”, “bad omen”, and an uncertain future for the initiate transforming to manhood (interview, December 28th, 2015). The women in (FGD4, May 29th, 2016) in consonance with interviewees, explained that the initiate’s mother prepares and delivers the initiation porridge (*vusela vu vule*) to the *kavunyonje* to symbolize the way she carried the son she painfully delivered and who is about to be ‘delivered’ to manhood through a painful experience. *Vusela vu vule* was ordinarily the first meal a woman who has delivered is culturally served with to symbolize continued fertility of her womb, and hence, serving the initiates with *vusela vu vule* symbolically wished them reproductive ability

In that respect, its apparent that the position of women in the cultural transition of the boy to manhood is central in *idumi* and this is symbolized in their motherly instincts of preparation and delivering the indigenous porridge to the *kavunyonje* in an indigenous
pot. Plate 14 is an illustration of the initiates’ mothers delivering pots of porridge to the edge of the circumcision grove.

**Plate 14:** The initiates’ mothers delivering pots of porridge to the edge of the circumcision grove.

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 3rd August 2015.

Customarily, the mothers are obliged to deliver the porridge securely to forestall the possibility of still ‘delivery’ and the danger of the initiate not being able to procreate which is symbolically manifested in the pot breaking. Additionally, elders charged with the custodianship of *tsi-rhumbi* explained that, preparation of the porridge from *vule* and carrying it in *inyungu* is more of a ritual that symbolizes the ushering of the initiates into active reproductive adulthood life that prohibits the pot from being handled by barren persons (interview, May 8th, 2016). This may explain why people
who are barren or impotent are prohibited from handling the pot containing porridge or any other material culture related to *idumi* since they symbolize infertility, yet *idumi* is meant to prepare the initiates to have offsprings for the continuation of the society (Elders charged with the custodianship of *tsi-rhumbi* interview, May 8\(^{th}\), 2016). Therefore, the pot containing porridge must be handled carefully by a person who understands the cultural implication of maintaining its intactness, hence carry them caustiously to guard against any fracture.

Furthermore, male parents disclosed that, the Tiriki insistence on the initiate’s mother carrying the porridge pot symbolizes marital fidelity that confirms patrilineality of the boy and that is why just as breaking the porridge pot symbolizes marital unfaithfulness and ritual uncleanness on the part of the mother rendering her ritually contaminated to prepare food for the initiate, food from the bereaved home of an initiate is prohibited to guard against ritual contamination (interview, April 29\(^{th}\), 2016). Though it may be beyond the scope of this study, it is noticeable that *idumi* is encircled with precautionary taboos inscribed in the porridge pot and which are premeditated to shield the initiates from possible ritual violation to ensure their safe transition to manhood.

As noted in the foregoing discussion, the initiates are served with porridge made from *vule*. In concurrence with interviewees, *Vadiri vu murhumbi* explained the preference of millet-made porridge for the initiates by noting that, productivity is symbolized by millet, and hence, the Tiriki expect the initiates to be fruitful and multiply as the millet does after undergoing the circumcision rite (interview, December 28\(^{th}\), 2016). In consequence, it’s conceivable that millet-made porridge has a cultural value that
symbolizes fertility and that is why it’s customarily delivered in *inyungu* to the initiates to wish them the billity to have many children after the circumcision rite. As such, *idumi* symbolizes as a stage for modelling the male sexual organ primarily for reproduction to foster new life, and hence the initiates after seclusion are expected to marry and produce many offspring’s which is symbolized in the millet porridge. Although women carry the pots of porridge to the adge of the circumcision grove, they are not allowed to set foot in the *kavunyonje*. Plate 15 is an illustration of the initiate’s mothers’ outside the *kavunyonje* guarding their pots containing porridge.

**Plate 15:** The initiate’s mothers’ outside the circumcision grove (*kavunyonje*) guarding their pots containing porridge.

*Source:* Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 3rd August 2015.
Women delivering the indigenous porridge to the *kavunyonje* in an indigenous pot symbolically depict them as a channel through which culture is transmitted from generation to generation (Male parents, interview, April 29th, 2016). Customarily, Women are not allowed entry into the *kavunyonje*, hence the porridge is taken to the *kavunyonje* by men. Plate 16 is an illustration of men carrying the porridge into the *kavunyonje*.

**Plate 16:** men carrying the porridge into the *kavunyonje*

![Plate 16: men carrying the porridge into the kavunyonje](image)

*Source:* Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 3rd August 2015.

After accomplishing activities in the *kavunyonje* the initiates are destined to the seclusion huts. Informants disclosed that, the initiates dress in *shivambo* before leaving the *kavunyonje*. For instance, elders charged with the custodianship of *idumi* material culture explained that, *shivambo* symbolizes the new status of *vuhindira* acquired after
undergoing the circumcision ritual (interview, December 6\textsuperscript{th}, 12\textsuperscript{th}, 2015). Plate 16 is an illustration of an initiate \textit{mukhulu} dressed in short skin apron (\textit{shivambo}) before being led out of the \textit{kavunyonje}.

Plate 17: An initiate (\textit{mukhulu}) dressed in short skin apron (\textit{shivambo}).

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 3\textsuperscript{rd} August 2015.

As previously mentioned \textit{shivambo} is worn after circumcision. Interviewees disclosed that, \textit{shivambo} exemplifies transition form boyhood to manhood. For instance elders charged with the custodianship of \textit{tsi-rhumbi} in congruence with interviewees disclosed that \textit{shivambo} is a symbol of status change (interview, May 8\textsuperscript{th}, 2016). With this in mind, it’s discernible that any man among the ‘Tiriki original’ who failed to dress in \textit{shivambo} is not considered to have transited to manhood. However, \textit{shivambo}
should not be the only viable personification for transition to maturity, since the removal of the foreskin is more critical than just dressing in shivambo.

*Idumi* is a site for testing the traits of manhood such as bravery. Informants revealed that, when returning the pots used to deliver porridge in the *kavunyonje vadiri vu muhrumbi* symbolically return *isenende / muhalia* to the initiate’s mother by cutting some part and also throwing grass to some mothers. For instance, *Vadiri vu murhumbi* in concordance with informants explained that cutting a bit of *isenende or muhalia* symbolizes timidity, while throwing grass symbolize bravery implying that, the boy did not cry during circumcision (interview, December 28th, 2016). Sangree (1966) mentions *mudiri* throwing grass and cutting part of *isenende* before giving it to the initiate’s mother (1966:55). However, during fieldwork in one of the *kavunyonje’s*, I observed *Vadiri vu murhumbi* returning the pots used to deliver porridge. However, there were less activities involving throwing grass on the initiate’s mother and cutting off a bit of *muhalia* to account for courageousness and cowardice.

Consequently, elders liable for custodianship of *idumi* material culture explained that the boys undergoing initiation in the current social dispensation are not only very young, but are typically anaesthetized before circumcision making it difficult to determine courageous of coward initiates (Interview, December, 6th,12th,2015). Undoubtedly, the use of anaesthesia makes it difficult to established with certainty the initiate who withstood pain during the ‘cutting’ of the foreskin; hence the symbolism coded in throwing grass and cutting off a bit of *muhalia* is dwindling.
Customarily, the pots used to deliver porridge to the *kavunyonje* are securely returned to the mother to symbolize safe transition of the initiates. Plate 18 is an illustration of some of the *vadiri vu mrhumbi* returning the pots used to deliver porridge to the initiates in the *kavunyonje*.

**Plate 18: vadiri vu mrhumbi returning the pots used to deliver porridge to the initiates in the *kavunyonje*.**

![Plate 18: vadiri vu mrhumbi returning the pots used to deliver porridge to the initiates in the *kavunyonje*.](image)

*Source:* Photo taken by the researcher during field work on 3rd August 2015.

After returning *tsisenende* and the pots used to deliver porridge to the initiates in the *kavunyonje*, a large crowd of previously initiated men carrying branches of *lusyola* tree customarily escort the initiates out of the *kavunyonje* to the seclusion huts. Interviewees disclosed that, the *idumi* song of “picking the coins” is very prominent as
the newly circumscised initiates are escorted to the *irhumbi* by amultitude of previously initiated men. For instance, elders liable for custodianship of *idumi* material culture in consonance with interviewees explained that, the song of “picking the coins” symbolically informs the escortees to delete any blood drops to safeguard the initiates from witches. Plate 19: A crowd of men who are Tiriki by circumcision preparing to lead the initiates out of the *kavunyonje*.

**Plate 19**: A crowd of men who are Tiriki by circumcision preparing to lead the initiates out of the *kavunyonje*.

Source: photo taken by the researcher during fieldwork on 3rd August 2015.

Interviewees noted that, the initiates are routinely escorted to the seclusion huts by a large crowd of men carrying branches of *lusyola. Vadiri vu khumatsi* in concurrence.
with interviewees disclosed that *lushyola* represents ancestral tree, and hence, covering the initiates with *lushyola* branches when escorting them to *tsirhumbi* symbolically provide ancestral protection from malicious people who can harm them (interview, April 25th, 2016). Interviewees noted that, the *tsisenende* which the initiates dance with are typically handed to the young virgin girls, who, at this stage are believed to be ritually uncontaminated. Apart from the young girls being unpolluted they gallant the initiates. For instance, elders liable for the custodianship of *idumi* material culture in consonance with interviewees explained that, the young virgin girls contact with the *tsisenende* used by the initiates symbolically indicated the wish not only for a clean and safe circumcision but also good luck for the initiate; and that the close relationship established between the initiate and the young girl symbolized the promise that part of her dowry after her marriage will be offered to the boy when he will be marrying to pay for his wife’s dowry (Interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). However, this kind of a scenario has changed in the contemporary society where brothers’ nolonger anticipate dowry from their sisters’ marriage to facilitate their own marriges. Futhermore, women in (FGD4, May 29th,2016) in concurrence with interviewees disclosed that after the *vakhulu* have been safely guided to *Irhumbi*, girls’ who are yet to menstruate and whose virginity is intact typically dance holding the *isenende* returned from the initiates after circumcision to symbolize the wish for fertility after marriage.

Informants intimated that, *idumi* is incomplete without brewing *Malwa Ki idumi* which is prepared by using yeast (*mamera*). Plate 20 is an illustration of *mamera* made
from millet and which is ground into flour that is added on the beer being brewed to facilitate maturation process.

**Plate 20: Yeast** (*mamera*) made from millet and which is ground into flour that is added on the beer being brewed to facilitate maturation process.

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 29th July 2015.

Informants explained that, *Malwa Ki idumi* is ritual beer and those involved in the process of brewing must be ritually clean to safeguard the beer from being tasteless, and that; the symbolism in brewing *Malwa Ki idumi* is not only enshrined in the source of water used in the brewing process but also in the millet from which the flour is made, and hence, the duration taken by the beer to mature on the occasion
earmarked for celebration symbolically depict the transition process of the initiates from the previous status to a better status in the *idumi* ritual cycle.

Informants explained that, apart from the demand that water for brewing ought to be fetched directly from a stream and the beer brewed with the ingredient of *mamela* ought to be ready in three days to coincide with the actual stage being celebrated. For instance, male parents in consilience with informants explained that, the potential in *mamera* which facilitates the beer’s maturation from tasteless “water” on the first day to bitter concentrated beer on the third day does not only symbolize *idumi* as an irresistible and irreversible force that transit boys into manhood but also symbolize an agent of change that “turn” boys into “tough”, “fierce” “men” which are the traits the Tiriki ascribe to manhood (interview, April 29th, 2016). In that context, *idumi* is observably an influential agent that possess invisible potential which transforms the initiates into manhood and this is symbolically depicted in the unseen force in *mamela* that turns mere water into alcohol, and hence, *idumi* covertly inculcates in the initiates the traits of manhood. However, it should be noted that the emphasis is directed on *mamela* and not the alcohol which is prominently conspicuous in *idumi*, and hence, there is need to moderate its consumption to scale down its devastating effects amongst the youth.

As hinted earlier, water for brewing circumcision beer is acquired directly from a running stream. Informants revealed that, when brewing circumcision beer Tiriki custom demands that water from a running stream be used, unlike the “static” water kept in the family house. For instance, male parents explained that, water from a
running stream symbolizes that life is a constant “flow” which *idumi* candidates are obliged to perpetuate after being transformed into manhood (interview, April 29th, 2016). That being the case, sourcing water from a “flowing” stream for use in brewing *idumi* beer as well as performing other *idumi* functions symbolizes that *idumi* is dynamic with the potential to ensure continuous “flow” of life among the initiates after their transformation to manhood. After exiting from the *kavunyonje* the initiates are led to *tsihrumbi* where they are confined until *shalukhu*. In the sub sections that follow, I examine the symbolism in *idumi* material culture in the seclusion stage.

2.5 **The meaning of the symbolism embedded in *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki in the seclusion stage**

Seclusion refers to the stage when the newly circumcised boys among the Tiriki are confined to the *irhumbi* away from the public. Typically, the *irhumbi* is constructed in an isolated place where members of the public are not allowed free access until the ritual to free the initiates from contamination resulting from circumcision blood is performed; and that the initiate who snicks out of the *ihrumbi* before the end of the seclusion period must undergo a cleansing ritual. Plate 21 is an illustration of the *irhumbi* sing, *tsihrumbi* –plural).

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 29th July 2015.

As previously mentioned, Tiriki initiates are confined in *irhumbi* until rituals of *khulavitsa* are performed to “hatch” them into “full” men before reintegration into society. Informants revealed that, the symbolism in *irhumbi* captures the status and condition of those confined. For instance, elders liable for the custodianship of *idumi* material culture in concordance with informants explained that the initiates are considered ritually unclean due to the bleeding circumcision wound, and hence, the *Irhumbi* in which they are secluded symbolizes a place where the ritually “dead” or unclean persons’ such as the newly initiated boys are confined to limit interaction with the “living” people as they anticipate purification from the “shadow of death” and the contamination caused by fresh blood before reintegration into the society (Interview,
December 6th, 12th, 2015). In this context, confinement of the initiates in *irhumbi* symbolize setting them apart to guard against external contamination which can slow their recovery from the circumcision wound.

Furthermore, elder custodians of *tsirhumbi* stressed that, *irhumbi* symbolizes a secluded place set aside to confine those who have survived from the scene of “death” as well as those contaminated by coming into contact with blood of the survivors such *vadiri* who take care of the initiates in *irhumbi*; and that any person stepping at the scene where a dead person is, equally becomes contaminated and therefore not allowed access to *irhumbi* (interview, May, 8th, 2016). For that reason, it’s distinct that spilling someone’s blood and coming into contact with it, like in the act of the circumcision of the initiates’ is a cultural dilemma that contaminates those involved necessitating separation pending ritual cleansing for reintegration in society; and hence, the condition of the initiates contamination is symbolized by excluding them from defined realms to *irhumbi*.

Further, as earlier mentioned *idumi* is performed in accordance with Tiriki customs (*miima*). Informants explained that, upon arrival at the *irhumbi* the initiates rotate it three times before entering from the East direction where the sun rises with *jivuletiti* entering first. For instance, male parents in unison with informants revealed that, rounding the *irhumbi* symbolically enact the three rites of passage in *idumi* involving separation, threshold or marginal, and reincorporation which transmute the initiates from boyhood to manhood; and that their confinement in seclusion is brief just the way the sun rises from the east and sets in the west (interview, April 29th, 2016).
Consequently, it’s perceivable that rounding the *irhumbi* three times and getting in from the East is mystic. However, the actions symbolize *idumi* as a process of altering the status of the initiates from *vasoleli* to *vahindira* through the rites of passage which must follow the natural order of doing things and this is symbolized by the initiates’ rounding the *irhumbi* three times before entering from the east direction.

Moreover, interviewees revealed that, once the initiates enter the *irhumbi Mudiri wu Lusuyi* hands over Vakhulu to *Mudiri wi irhumbi* who is meticulously selected from persons of high integrity and moral standards since he plays the role of the main “teacher” in molding the character of the initiates. Plate 22 is an illustration of the of *Mudiri wi irhumbi* standing with one of the initiate he is taking care.
Plate 22: *Mudiri wi irhumbi* standing with one of the initiates he is taking care.

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 20th August 2015.

Male parents in consilience with interviewees emphasized that, *idumi* is intended to transform the character of the initiates above reproach, and hence, this is symbolized by selecting *Mudiri wi irhumbi* whose character is supposedly “straight” and “upright” to be in charge of the initiates in the *irhumbi* (interview, April 29th, 2016). Taking this into account, it's perceptible that *Mudiri wi irhumbi* symbolically represents a mentor and “a role model” for emulation, and hence, the person chosen to serve as *Mudiri wi irhumbi* must be of good character.

*Idumi* is a transitional process through which the status of the initiates continuously changes. Informants explained disclosed that after circumcision the status of the newly
circumcised changes to vahindira. However, upon arrival in irhumbi their status changes to Mukhulu- singular, vakhulu – plural, which implies a person who has just been initiated, and hence the vakhulu are confined in irhumbi until they perform the hatching ritual (khwalukha). For example vadiri vu khumatsi in consonance with informants revealed that, the tag Mukhulu does not only symbolize a state without a defined social status but an ambiguous condition which the boys find themselves in after circumcision since they are neither what they were before idumi nor the person they wanted to be (interview, April 25th, 2016).

Further inquiry as to why mukhulu has no defined status immediately he enters the irhumbi from the kavunyonje, one of the vadiri vu murhumbi said “mukhulu is neither man nor woman since he exhibits the same features of women”. For instance, he wears shivambo - an attire the Tiriki designate for women and he bleeds (aratsa matsai) like a menstruating woman. And yet, he also has the attributes of men - has the male reproductive organ as well as maintaining the ancestral male name he was given during the ritual of naming to incorporate him into society (interview, December 28th, 2015). Certainly, the status of the candidates for idumi changes immediately after circumcision as symbolized in bleeding and wearing shivambo. However, though the condition of the initiates at this stage symbolizes socially undesignated status, the reference to them as displaying women attributes amounts to gender bias, yet women play avital role in idumi such as giving birth to the boys. Furthermore, interviewees stressed that, while in the irhumbi, initiates are considered to be in a ritually
contaminated status which prohibits them from normal speech, and hence, they interact and communicate by knocking two sticks (Virangasha) against each other.

Plate 23 is an illustration of specially made sticks -Virangasha which the initiates usually knock one against the other to pass information.

Plate 23: Virangasha which the initiates usually knock one against the other to pass information.

Source: Photo taken by researcher on 20/8/2015.

The initiate change of status in the transition process is noted in the acts of performing some activities in an extraordinary way as symbolised in using Virangasha to pass coded information as per the instructions given by mudiri. Interviewees submitted that once in the irhumbi vakhulu are prohibited from using their ordinary names but instead are tagged with nicknames (Miira Khaandi) such as Lion or Leopard whose
usage as a rule ceases at the end of the seclusion period. For instance, *vadiri vu khumatsi* in unison with interviewees disclosed that tagging the initiates in the transition status with *Miira Khaandi* symbolically disguises their identity from bad spirits, while speech restriction symbolizes a return to the other “world of infancy” from which they are to grow gradually and speak the language of *vahindira*, but also symbolizes a return to the infancy stage from which the initiates are to be guided into adulthood and instructed on how to interact among themselves and members of society (interview, April 25th, 2016). In the light of this, it is within the perception of *idumi* that the initiates’ using family names and ordinary speech is a taboo while in seclusion and this is symbolized in the adoption of pet names and passing information by knocking two sticks. However, the curtailment of speech and adoption of temporary names while in the *ihrumbi* is designed to transit the initiates to the new status of manhood in terms of speech and identity as seen in change of names.

There are ritual prohibitions in *idumi* during seclusion. Informants submitted that, the *mukhulu* in *Irumbi* is ritually unclean and therefore prohibited from touching food with fingers, and instead use *lusacheti* in order to avoid ritual impurity (*vusekhu*) caused by circumcision blood. The initiate’s bleeding circumcision wound renders them ritually unfit to touch food with their fingers. For instance, *vadiri vu murhumbi* in accord with interviewees explained that *vakhulu* are in a ritually contaminated state and this is symbolized by prohibiting them from handling food with their fingers and instead use *tsisacheti* and *vyuhu* or *visanda* to serve food (interview, December 28th,
Plate 24 is an illustration of chopsticks (*tsisacheti*) which then initiates use to avoid touching food with their fingers to symbolize their unclean status.

**Plate 24:** Chopsticks (*tsisacheti*) which the initiates use to avoid touching food with their fingers

*Source:* Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 20th August 2015.

As noted, initiates in seclusion are ritually contaminated. Taking this into account, it’s against the Tiriki customs for them to handle food with their fingers. However, the customs notwithstanding, the restriction not to touch food symbolically depict the necessity to safeguard the hygiene of the initiates’ who usually contaminate their fingers by handling and keeping the bleeding circumcised penis in the right healing
position, and hence, they use tisacheti and vyhu or visanda to serve food. Plate 25 is an illustration of shuhu.

Plate 25: A serving utensil made from vyhu plu or visanda) aguord (shuhu, singular, vyhu-plu)

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 20th August, 2015.

Moreover, informants revealed that, a few days after circumcision Mudiri usually guide vakhulu to the river to bath, and thereafter smudge them with white clay on the legs and hands. For instance, Vadiri vu murhumbi in conformity with informants disclosed that, the initiates are ritually unclean and undergoing the ritual of kwivalikha and this is symbolized by staining them with white clay to warn members of the public to keep a distance when they notice them from far to guard against ritual contamination (interview, December 28th, 2015). Considering this, the initiates interaction with members of the public while in seclusion is restricted to conform to
the requirements in *idumi* and that is why they are muddied with conspicuous clay to be avoided from far. However, the white clay used to stain the initiates body is not for decoration, but symbolically designed to camouflage the initiates from the public gaze. Plate 26 is an illustration of the initiates smeared with white clay soil on the legs and hands.

**Plate 26:** The initiates smeared with white clay soil on the legs and hands to symbolize that they are undergoing the seclusion rituals.

![Plate 26: Initiates smeared with white clay soil on legs and hands.](image)

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 25th August, 2015.

*Idumi* is a prelude to marriage that accomplishes its bond in sexual intercourse which is deemed a secret matter in most African societies. However, an interactive discourse with interviewees revealed that before *vakhulu* leave seclusion, a ritual to demystify sex in which they are guided to the river where they undress, plunge in water, and make movements resembling a man having sex in what is referred to as having “sex” with a Terik woman (*khukhunda Mushere Murwa*) is performed. For
instance, elder custodians of *idumi* imaterial culture in congruence with interviewees stressed that, the ritual of *khukhunda Mushere Murwa* symbolizes a stage where the circumscised sexual organ is “commissioned” for the work it was intended, which borders on having sex to foster new life (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). Furthermore, male parents emphasized that, apart from the ritual symbolizing that the penis is molded for sex, the ritual of *khukhunda Mushere Murwa* also symbolizes that *vakhulu* are now *vasaza* and *vahindira* who can now share in mens’ guarded space of procreation which is actualized in sex (interview, April 29th, 2016). Undeniably, the ritual of *khukhunda Mushere Murwa* explicitly unveils the guarded “secret” of adult sexual life which is the only conduit through which procreation to perpetuate generation occurs. In this context, the ritual of *khukhunda Mushere Murwa* provide an occasion to symbolically inculcate in the *mukhulu* that, his circumcised organ is modeled primarily for reproduction that occurs through sex with a woman. During my own initiation into manhood, together with my counter parts, we were guided to a stream at night, ordered to remove *lisumadi* and forced into water where we made movements resembling a man having “sexual intercourse with a woman”. The ritual of *khukhunda Mushere Murwa* symbolically unveiled to the initiates the channel through which procreation and continuation of society is realized (*vadiri vu khumatsi*, interview, April 25th, 2016).

Informants disclosed that, after convalescence a ceremony refered to as “putting” *mukhulu* in the cloth of manhood (*inguvo ya vasaza*) that is *isumadi* to symbolize authority of manhood is perfomed. Plate 27 is an illustration of the *isumadi* which symbolizes the authority of manhood.
Plate 27: The indigenous skin cloth (isumadi) in which the indigenously circumcised initiates dress while in seclusion to authority of manhood.

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 13th August, 2015.

Idumi is not only a ritual but an occasion for “commissioning” the newly circumcised into manhood as symbolized in the delivery of inguvo ya vasaza to the initiate. Informants disclosed that, the occasion of “putting” mukhulu in inguvo ya vasaza is celebrated by malwa ki tsinguvu and involves delivering to the initiate anew isumadi to replace shivambo which he first wore when he was circumcised. For instance, Vadiri vu khumatsi in conjecture with informants explained that idumi enables the newly circumcised man to obtain full authority not only from his father and clansmen but also from society and this authority is symbolized by the isumadi given as the indigenous wear to the initiate; and preferably made from the skin of a young bull.
(interview, April 29th, 2016). One of the elders liable for the custodianship of tsirhumbi insisted that “putting” mukhulu in isumadi does not only symbolize reincarnation of idumi as handed over by ancestors but also giving the initiate ‘full’ authority to be at the same footing with his father in matters concerning manhood and Tiriki culture (interview, May, 8th, 2016). In consequence, the analogy of “putting” vakhulu in the “cloth of manhood” does not necessarily imply dressing in isumadi, however, it symbolizes the evolution of vakhulu into “men” who are ready to handle the obligations of manhood given that, they are now “full” men. In fact, when the Tiriki say “Khura vakhulu munguvo ngale” “putting initiates in the indigenous wear” it means “commissioning” vakhulu into matters of adulthood.

In his theoretical perspective on the interpretation ascribed to symbols, Malcolm Hamilton (2001) asserts that, by utilizing symbols, people discern a way of assigning special meaning to everything, and that ‘nothing is unpredictable and by chance (2001:69). In other words, to understand what symbolism imply, one need to probe what the symbols communicate.Among the questions I set to examine symbolism in idumi include: what does “putting the initiate in the indigenous cloth” symbolize? Does it mean that people who are circumcised, but not indigenously do not qualify to wear isumadi? These questions were a springboard to the understanding of idumi as a stage for putting vakhulu into the “cloth of manhood”.

Interviewees stressed that, those who are not circumcised in the indigenous Tiriki idumi (jevusevekeni) and Vasomi are not considered full vasaza and can not therefore interact freely in the ‘Tiriki original’ idumi ceremonies. In concurrence with
informants male parents stressed that “dressing” the initiates’ in - *isumadi* symbolically gives them the “key” to engage in matters pertaining to manhood and whoever “enters” manhood is officially dressed in *isumadi* which is adored and valued as an indigenous attire of adulthood (interview, April 29\(^{th}\), 2016). Plate 28 is an illustration of the initiates (*vakhulu*) dressed in skin cloth (*isumadi*) which symbolizes authority of manhood.

**Plate 28:** *Vakhulu* dressed in *isumadi* which symbolize authority of manhood.

![Plate 28: Vakhulu dressed in isumadi which symbolize authority of manhood.](image)

*Source:* Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 26th August 2015.

To symbolize their power, men wear skins at important meetings or functions including the performance of *idumi* rituals. This explains why initiates performing *vuhkulu* sing to warn “boys who are partially indigenous or *jevusekeni*” against admiring their skin cloth - “*inguvu*” since they declined to be circumcised
indigenously so as to qualify to wear isumadi (vadiri vu khumatsi, interview, April 25th, 2016). Informants stressed that, “putting” vakhulu in the “cloth” of manhood which comprise isumadi, symbolically “commissions” them as “adults”. The initiates in seclusion among the Tiriki do not appear in public without wearing the Ingolore.

Plate 29: is an illustration of the Ingolore.

source: photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 26th august 20115.
Interviewees noted that, *Ingolole* holds a significant place in *idumi* among the ‘Tiriki original’. For instance, elders given the custodianship of *idumi* material culture in accord with interviewees explained that *Ingolole* symbolizes *shimanyinyiro sha vakhuka* which overtly holds the spirit of *idumi* and covertly the spiritual sacredness of *idumi* which links the Tiriki to their *idumi* customs, and that *Ingolole* and *isumadi* are worn by the initiates who carry a stick whose bark has been removed to symbolize outright transition to adulthood (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). Plate 30 is an illustration of *vakhulu* wearing *Ingolole* and dressed in *isumadi* and carrying a stick to symbolize outright transition to adulthood.

**Plate 30: The vakhulu wearing Ingolole and dressed in isumadi carrying a stick.**

*Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 25th August, 2015.*
Undoubtedly, the symbolic attributes assigned to Ingolole, places it in a definite position that epitomizes religious and spiritual elements as illustrated in its utility, and this may explain why it is held in high esteem among the Tiriki. Consequently, the performance of special rituals, often in secret, appear to be essential in the preservation of the spirituality of the ingolole as a totem and this is witnessed in the rituals performed to allow its removal from the head after the end of seclusion; and hence, the initiates’ wear ingolole and dress in isumadi to symbolize the spiritual connection with idumi as well as the original culture handed to the Tiriki by the ancestors while carrying the stick symbolizes the initiates’ change of status into adulthood.

As a prelude to lessening restrictions on the interaction between vakhulu and the public, vakhulu dressed in isumadi and ingolole occasionally leave the irhumbi to perform vukhulu and this occurs after the ceremony of malwa ka masambu. An intense discussion with informants disclosed that, apart from being the climax of idumi, vukhulu also carries symbolism in the instruments, dance motifs, song texts, formations, as well as costumes worn by the initiates during performance of vukhulu. During fieldwork, I observed the initiates dressed in isumadi, ingolole with a palm reed attached at the top approaching the performance venue from one direction and danced as they moved from east to west direction imitating the sequence of the sun to symbolize the wish for good luck as the daybreaks and in the future. Plate 31 is an illustration of vukhulu entering the field from the east direction to perform vukhulu.
Plate 31: The initiates (*vukhulu*) entering the dancing field from the east direction to symbolize the wish for good luck

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 26th August, 2015.

In consonance with informants *vadiri vu khumatsi* revealed that, when *vahkulu* perform *vukhulu*, they move from east to west in clockwise direction to symbolize that *idumi* is part and parcel of the life of the Tiriki and whoever takes part in it must not forget to follow the normal direction as dictated by nature; and hence, to move in an anti-clockwise direction symbolizes bad luck (interview, April 25th, 2016). Moreover, male parents remarked “you cannot follow the left while doing things”, as the left-hand side also known as the “woman’s hand” (*mukhuno mukhali*) symbolizes “bad omen” (interview, April 29th, 2016). In consequence, its observable that, in the performance of *idumi*, the themes of prosperity, success and good luck are
reincarnated when *vakhulu* perform *vukhulu* and this is symbolized when they dance as they move from east which is the right-hand side (*mukhuno musaza*) to the west.

As noted in the exposition of the performance of *vakhulu* in which the initiates oscillate in a clockwise direction, its perceptible that *idumi* is tagged with mysteries in nature which routinely determine its perpetuation. Therefore, the east to west direction which is reminiscent with the left or right contains symbolism. In fact, when I was growing up, my parents used to rebuke me for receiving items by the left hand. They emphasized that anything to do with the left side, direction or hand is symbolically associated with bad omen (*visilaani*). Therefore, as the initiates approach the dancing venue to performing *vuhkulu*, they usually maintain the dancing pattern of moving from east to west to safeguard against “bad luck” including the inability to be productive. Furthermore, interviewees disclosed that musical instruments used in *idumi* such as specially made sticks *virangasha*, half beehive (*mulinga*), and the gourd possesses symbolism. For instance, during field work, I observed air being blown in a pipe inserted in a gourd which prompted high pitched sound rhythmically harmonized by striking *virangasha* on *mulinga* instrument made from *lusyola* wood and covered with *liserol imburu* which prompt a deep low sound. Additionally ,I noted that in some places a dry log of wood , wooden box and, ten liter plastic container are improvized to play the role of *mulinga* and the gourd .Male parents in conformity with interviewees disclosed that, the high pitch sound produced by the gourd symbolizes a woman’s voice while the dominating low key sound produced by tapping on *mulinga* symbolically represents real man who speaks in a deep voice; in addition the pipe
inserted in the gourd symbolizes the male organ while the gourd symbolizes the female organ all of which must work in harmony to bring forth new life for the next *idumi* season and this symbolically demystifies sex (interview, April 29th, 2016).

Certainly, the emergence of *mulinga* as the dominant drum in the performance of *vukhulu* illuminates the dominance of men not only in *idumi* matters but also in family affairs among the Tiriki, hence the aspect of gender is symbolically portrayed in the instruments that project women and men identities, however some of the attributes like voice projection in the intruments are natural and should not be used to demean and execute cultural chauvinism against women whose role is equally important in *idumi*.

Further, informants on the wrapping up of *idumi* revealed that there are two sessions of *vukhulu* in which the *idumi* farewell song *sevule* dominates. In concensus with interviewees, *Vadiri vu murhumbi* emphasized that song “Sevule” symbolizes the successful end of *idumi* season (interview, December, 28th, 2016). In view of this, the dominance of *sevule* song on this occasion leaves no doubt that conceptualization of distinct songs sang at every specific stage in *idumi* communicate special information. Informants disclosed that, before the conclusion of the *idumi* season the initiate normally participates in *vukhulu* in anticipation of breaking several *tsikwalo’s* - plural, *ikwalo* before descending to the *kavunyonje* for the ritual of *shikong’o*. *Vadiri vu khumatsi* in unanimity with informants stressed that *idumi* is perceived as a ritual that transforms *muyayi* into a strong and masculine *musaza* and these attributes are symbolized by *mukhulu* breaking several *tsi ikwalo* during the concluding phase of
vukhulu (interview, April 25th, 2015). In this concluding phase of idumi, vakhulu ordinarily dress in Ingolole and isumadi, besides wearing a big headdress (ikwalo, sing tsi-kwalo, plu) fixed at the top of ingolole. Plate 32 is an illustration vakhulu standing with the mudiri; the first initiate (mukhulu) wearing the headmask (Ingolole) on which a big headdress (ikwalo) looks like Buffalo horns are fixed at the top.

**Plate 32:** The first initiate (mukhulu) wearing ingolole on which a big headdress (ikwalo) which looks like Buffalo horns if fixed at the top.

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 26th August 2015.
As noted, the last day of vukhulu provide the initiates with an opportunity to prove their manhood by dancing enthusiastically shaking their heads in attempting to break tsikwalo. By taking this into account, it’s clearly that noted the last phase of vukhulu is to test the traits of manhood acquired by the initiates through idumi as symbolized in breaking several tsikwalo’s. However, breaking several tsikwalo is not the only way to determine manly traits, since others like courage and assertiveness prevail.

The initiates among the Tiriki typically undergo the ritual of shikong’o before graduating from seclusion. A comprehensive anatomisation of the ritual of shikong’o by the informants revealed that, vakhulu are presumably “clobbered to death” and come back to “life” after three days in the occasion celebrated by malwa ki shikong’o. Consequently, the ritual of shikong’o makes idumi among the Tiriki unique. In congruent with informants, male parents disclosed that the ritual of shikon’go does not only symbolize the “killing” of initiates (khwira vakhulu) who die to the profane world of childhood, but also symbolize “death and rebirth” of vakhulu into new men, with new identity, character, and roles (interview, April 29th, 2016). On that account, idumi is designated to curve out a new identity and character. However, the conception of “death and resurrection” in shikong’o though speculative symbolically points to the destruction of the previous childhood habits to pave way for the infusion of new traits of “real” manhood.

Interviewees submitted that; the initiates typically maintain silence for three days after the Shikongo ritual. Male parents in concurrence with interviewees explained that customarily the dead among the Tiriki were interred after three days and this was to a
certain their irrevocable transition to the higher ancestral world, and hence, since the initiates are presumed dead after Shikongo ritual they maintain silence to symbolize gradual transition to a higher status of manhood which is irreversible (interview, April, 29th, 2016). In essence, the figure three (in the three days) silence symbolizes the vital transitory ritual cycle in idumi which encompasses circumcision, seclusion, and reintegration (Vadiri vu khumatsi, interview, April 25th, 2016).

Furthermore, informants divulged that the ritual of shikong’o encompasses an idumi an oath, in which the initiates jump over a special ritual stick (inanjwira) placed between ihavywa, shisiri shi imbako yi shitirichi, and lihalo which comprise the paraphernalia of the shikong’o oath. Vadiri vu murhumbi in congruent with informants explained that the ritual stick (inanjwira) symbolizes the power bestowed to the Tiriki ancestors to perform idumi, and hence, jumbing over this ritual stick on the occasion of shikong’o symbolically fastens the initiates to the authority of idumi which has the potential to adversely affect those who contravined idumi tenets (interview, December, 28th, 2015). Furthermore, informants accentuated the importance of the tools incorporated in the shikong’o ritual. For instance, elder custodians of tsirhumbi explained that, these are basic tools of production which symbolize the tenet of hard work inculcated in vakhulu through idumi; and ihavywa symbolizes strength (interview, May 8th, 2016). With that in mind, the paraphernalia incorporated in the shikong’o ritual point to the fact that idumi is designed to craft men whose energy is to be invested in hard work to ensure sufficient food production to sustain their families and the community as symbolised in the indigenous tools of production is
demonstrate, and hence *idumi* is utilitarian. Plate 33, 34 and 35 are illustrations of tools used on the occasion of the *shikong’o* ritual and oath.

**Plate 33:** Indigenous axe (*ihavywa*)

*Source:* photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 26th August 2015.
Plate 34: The indigenous hoe (shisiri shi imbako yi shitirichi) which forms part of the tools used in administering shikongo ritual

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 27th August 2015.
Plate 35: The indigenous tool for harvesting sickle (*injeso*) which forms part of the tools used in administering *shikongo* ritual that symbolically emerge when that initiate “resurrects from death” after the ritual of *shikong’o*.

*Source*: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 27\(^{th}\) August, 2015.

Further dissection into the scene of *shikong’o* ritual by interviewees revealed that an improvised hut (*lidiri*) is constructed where cultural tools with ascribed symbolism such as the spear (*rhimo*), shield (*inguva*), an indigenous stool (*shirumbi*), straws (*tsisekhe*) and a pot of beer for the elders are kept. Plate 36, 37 and 38 are illustrations of the spear, shield, and *shirumbi* which are kept in *lidiri* constructed in the *kavunyonje* during the *shikong’o* ritual.
Plate 36: An indigenous spear (*rhimo*) which symbolizes the tool men use to provide security in society.

![Image of an indigenous spear](image)

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 27th August, 2015.

Interviewees disclosed that, there is symbolism in the house like structure constructed in the *kavunyonje*. For instance, *Vadiri vu khumatsi* in concensus with interviewees stressed that, *lidiri* symbolizes a homestead as well as a hut (*isimba*) which the circumcised boy who is now a “man” is to construct and dwell in after *shalukhu* (interview, April 25th, 2016). With this mentality, it emerges clearly that a Tiriki boy after circumcision is an ‘adult’ who cannot stay in the same house with his parents, however, given the young age of the initiates who are still dependent on their parents even after seclusion, the costs involved and the changes occurring in the society dictate against the idea of the initiate constructing a house immediately after *shalukhu*. Furthermore, male parents disclosed that tools such as *rhimo*, *inguva*, and
shirumbi do not only symbolize war instruments used by men to provide security and exercise power in society, but also the power to defend and protect the interest of Tiriki. Shirumbi symbolizes the authority wielded by men in the home. Male parents added that, the shield was made from a tough skin of a hipopotomus which was not easily penetrated by arrows and this symbolized the society’s impregnable defence system (interview, April, 29th, 2016). In this context, idumi is a platform through which the community customarily entrusts its future safety and leadership to the younger generation as symbolically illustrated in rhirimo, inguva, and shirumbi. These instruments which are reserved for cultural functions are ordinarily placed under the custodianship of a revered elder whose spoken word symbolizes authority that no person can dare to culturally challenge.

Further interviewees noted that, rhirimo, inguva, and shirumbi have undergone cultural authentication. For instance, Vadiri vu khumatsi in consilience with interviewees explained that, during the installation of community leaders among the Tiriki rhirimo, inguva, and shirumbi are some of the instruments handed over to a community leader to symbolize authority to lead and protect the community’s interests. In addition, Vadiri vu khumatsi noted that these instruments are conspicuously missing in occasions where women have been inaugurated as chiefs since they are not cultural leaders (interview, April 25th, 2016). However, the indigenous symbolism ascribed to these instruments has shifted to the contemporary ceremonial dispensation, and even acquired additional symbolism in the educational transformation of the community where the spear is now symbolizing a pen while the
shield symbolizes a book which are tools to fight ignorance. Plate 37 and 38 are illustrations of the shield of indigenous stool (inguva) and shirumbi which are kept in lidiri constructed in the kavunyonje during the shikong’o.

Plate 37: An indigenous shield (inguva) which symbolizes the tool men use to protect themselves in the process of defending the society.

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 27th August, 2015.
Plate 38: An indigenous indigenous stool (shirumbi) which symbolizes the authority to lead.

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 27th August, 2015.

A rigorous discussion with informants disclosed that, symbolism enshrined in the ritual of shikong’o is vested in the idumi material culture used. In solidarity with informants, vadiri vu murhumbi stressed that, during the shikong’o ritual naked vakhulu crawl through an arch like structure constructed using lusyola branches which incorporate a nettle plant (isambakhalwa ya maneje) which sting painfully and a nest (lihambo) of small biting insects (Vukungune / vunonera) which bite painfully to symbolize that, idumi is idumi muliro “hot - fire” that no one can play with since “it can finish you” (idumi ilakhumala) (interview, December, 28th, 2015). Indeed, vukungunel vunonera and isambakhalwa ya maneje in shikongo ritual inflict enormous pain which the
initiates are obliged to bear without rubbing the body. Plate 39 is illustrations of lihambo of vukungune / vunonera which bite painfully and plate 40 is illustration of isambakhalwa ya maneje which sting painfully to symbolize that idumi is “fire” (muliro).

Plate 39: A nest (lihambo) of small biting insect’s vukungune / vunonera which bite painfully to symbolize that idumi is tough.

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork 27th August, 2015.
Plate 40: A nettle plant (*isambakhalwa ya maneje*) which stink painfully to symbolize that *idumi* is like fire

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 27th August, 2015.

As noted earlier, women are tasked with delivering water on the occasion of the *shiking’o* ritual. In concurrence with interviewees, women in (FGD4, May 29th, 2016) disclosed that delivering water on the occasion of administering the *shikong’o* ritual underscores the important role they play in nurturing and perpetuating life and this is symbolized by supplying water from a flowing stream to sprinkle on the “clobbered” initiates to help them regain consciousness”.

In view of the material incorporated in the *shikong’o ritual, Idumi* is anticipated to equip the initiates with traits that enables them to face challenges encountered in life with courage and this is symbolized by integrating hostile material that sting in the
ritual process. Further, interviewees disclosed that, on the occasion of shikong’o ritual, the initiates gather berries of a wild plant—Sodom apples (tsi mbune tsinda landalwa) and carry them into the kavunyonje. In unison with interviewees’, Vadiri or vadiri vu murhumbi emasized that tsi ndala ndalwa symbolize “confiscated animals” (tsing’ombe tsiranyirwe) (interview, December 28th, 2015). However, the practice of kulanya is outdated in society today and the continued collection of tsi ndala ndalwa during shikong’o ritual does not only symbolize the continued value attached to cattle as a form of wealth but the need for a man to look for wealth for the benefit of himself, his household and the community.

Furthermore, interviewees divulged that the shikong’o ritual renders the initiates very “weak” and often keep “silent” for three days. In congruent with interviewees, Vadiri vu khumatsi stressed that, apart from symbolizing “unconscious” state resulting from a brush with “death”, keeping silent for three days by the initiates symbolizes the transition stages in the ritual “death”, “death” of their previous boyhood lives and behaviour to pave way for the “birth” of a new stage of awareness and a new responsibility (interview, April 25th, 2016). Consequently, idumi as a transformative process involves observances through which the initiates symbolically discard their previous status to evolve into newly circumcised ‘men’ and this is symbolized when they keep silent for three days after shikong’o ritual which is celebrated by malwa ki shikong’o. Plate 41 is an illustration of vasakhulu vi idumi in the home of one of the initiates drinking malwa ki shikong’o from accommon pot using tsisekhe to symbolize unity and the need to share resources.
Plate 41: Circumcision elders (vasakhulu vi idumi) drinking the beer of malwa ki shikong’o from a common pot to symbolize unity and the need to share resources.

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 27th August, 2015.

As mentioned earlier, utility of circumcision beer is executed at every transitional stage in idumi. Informants opined that, malwa ki shikong’o is not only delivered to the kavunyonje but the beer drinking ceremony normally extends to the home of the initiate where the elders who espouse unity drink from one pot using tsisekhe to celebrate the occasion.

Further, inreviewees noted the symbolism in malwa ki shikongo in the conclusive phase of idumi. For instance, male parents in congruence with interviewees revealed that, apart from symbolizing the conclusion of idumi season, sipping malwa ki shikongo by the elders from one pot using tsisekhe symbolically tell the newly
circumcised boys that it is important for men in society to embrace unity and harmony (interview, April 29th, 2016). One of the male parents stressed that, persons’ not of the same age grade nor Tiriki by circumcision, and those who have not attained a specific cultural status in idumi are not allowed to share the beer pot on which a special grass (Luseso) is usually tied to symbolize the cultural identity, and that an elder suspecting to have entangled in adulterous relationship with a woman belonging to one of the individuals’ near the beer pot is not allowed to consume beer from the common pot to symbolize the importance of marital fidelity (interview, April 25th, 2015). Intrinsically, the act of the elders sharing beer from a common pot underscores the significance of societal unity and harmony which are constructed on moral values and sharing resources, and respect for elders in the community. In deed, the breakdown in moral values and individualism are great terminators of social harmony in the contemporary society.

After “recovering” from the effects of the shikong’o ritual, mukhulu is groomed for reintegration in the society as a notable adult, through an elaborate ceremony referred to as shalukhu. In the section which follows, I examine the symbolism of idumi material culture in the reintegration stage.

2.6 The meaning of the symbolism embedded in idumi material culture among the Tiriki in the reintegration stage blazing

Reintegration stage is the period after the performance of a rite of passage. Informants explained that, the items used by the initiates in seclusion such as a section of the irhunbi fence, vyuhu, malala, virangasha, tsisacheti are set a blaze on the night
preceding shalukhu. Ingolare, isumadi, and the irhumbi are not burnt. Plate 42 is an illustration of blazing of the items used in seclusion.

**Plate 42:** Blazing of the items used during seclusion to pave way for shalukhu.

![Plate 42: Blazing of the items used during seclusion to pave way for shalukhu.](image)

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 2nd September, 2015.

In tandem with informants, male parents disclosed that burning of the items does not only symbolize “disposing off” of and ending all the filth associated with mukhulu status as well as “hatching” (khwalula) of the newly circumcised from seclusion into society as “men” with new identity and roles, but also symbolizes the end of “incubation period” for new attitudes, practices and behaviours which the newly circumcised, who are now referred to as “brides” (viiha) are expected to display after reintegration in society as “full” men (interview, April 29th, 2016).
Consequently, *shalukhu* portrays the beginning of an end to seclusion period as symbolized in the burning of the items used in *irhumbi* to pave way for the newly circumcised to abandon the seclusion environment for good as “full” ‘men’ with new identity and status. Consequently, *shalukhu* symbolizes the “shading off” of *mukhulu* status to pave way for reintegration in society. Further, informants explained that, before abandoning the *irhumbi* the ritual elder sprays (*khuvida*) the face of the newly circumcised with milk from a cow which has not calved for more than three times to indicate the beginning of the end of the seclusion and the initiates wearing masks. Informants clarified that, initially a Terik sponsor assisted by her daughter used butter (*magura, ma—gura*) to perform this ritual. Indeed during field work, I noted that this ritual to end the seclusion period is no longer performed by a Terik woman but an *idumi* ritual elder who uses milk instead of *magura* and this signals change.

As reported by informants, the ritual of *khuvida* the initiates who are now referred to as ‘brides’ is very symbolic on the occasion of *shalukhu*. Elder custodians of *idumi* material culture in consensus with informants disclosed that, rituals performed in *idumi* renders the newly circumcised unclean by making them to “fellowship” with spirits some of which are perilous, and hence, the ritual of *khuvida* symbolically cleanses them from contaminants associated with *idumi* before leaving seclusion to interact with members of the public (interview, December 6\textsuperscript{th}, 12\textsuperscript{th}, 2015). For that reason, the ritual of *khuvida* symbolically sanitizes the newly circumcised from the impure seclusion status caused by exposure to various rituals to pave way for safe exit from the ritual world of *idumi* and this is symbolized in the use of milk which is
“white” to symbolize purification. Further, interviewees submitted that, on the occasion of shalukhu the newly circumscised boy is referred to as the ‘biride’ (mwiha) a term denoting a woman who is getting married, however, the reference to a ‘biride’ is symbolically figurative. In this context, the newly circumscised boy from seclusion is treated as new member joining the society to perpetuate its continuity just the way the bride joins the family of the bridegroom as anew member to perpetuate life through procreation. For instance, Women in (FGD4, May 29th, 2016) in concurrence with interviewees explained that, idumi enables their sons to graduate to anew status from childhood to manhood and from mukhulu to ‘mwiha’ with new responsibilities just the way a girl getting married graduates from the bride to anew status of a married woman with ascribed new roles and responsibilities and this new status is symbolized in the term ‘bride’ ‘mwiha’.

Further,discussion with interviewees revealed that the newly circumcised are guided to the edge of the kavunyonje after the ritual of khuvida for a vigil where the ritual of “killing” an imaginary enemy referred to as “killing” a Maragoli (kwira mulogoli) is performed. This ritual involve throwing sticks into darkness as if they are spears at the orders of initiation elders. The sticks are hurled away into darkness from a huge bonfire lit at the edge of the kavumyoje and the newly circumcused are not to “look back” after the act. They also engage in fictitious warlike activities in which deadly weapons (tsimbango) are thrown into darkness.

In harmony with interviewees, male parents explained that, the bonfire ritually symbolizes the “warming” to activate the spirit of idumi to give “birth” to the newly
circumcised “men” through *shalukhu*. In addition, hurling sticks in darkness and not ‘looking back’ symbolized a momentous change in the life of the newly circumcised boys in which the past boyhood status and experiences are discarded and replaced with a new life status of manhood which is ritually inaugurated in *shalukhu* (interview, April 29th, 2016).

Moreover, *vadiri vu khumatsi* stressed that the act of “not looking back” after hurling their sticks into darkness does not only symbolize their evolution from the old childhood status to a new status of adulthood after *shalukhu*, but also the “abandonment of all the childhood past as they turn around into newer life of adulthood the next day” (interview, April 25th, 2015). Observably, the ritual of hurling sticks into darkness and not ‘looking back’ symbolically disconnects the initiates’ from the old boyhood past from which they can never return and hence their connection with the past as children is broken off, as they become attached to the new world of “men” with a new identity after *shalukhu*. The engagement in fictitious warlike activities and the ritual of “*kwira mulogoli*” pointed to the fact the newly circumcised were symbolically graduating into the warriorhood class with the obligation to defend their community from intruders. However, this ritual is on the wane given that communities continue to interact in many spheres such as marriage with the aspect of security being the role of the government.

Further discussion with interviewees revealed that, the ritual of *kwira mulogoli* renders the newly circumcised “brides” ritually unclean, and hence, the “brides” carrying *lusibwa* or *lusala lwa yasaara* are guided into a running stream to bathe and shave their hair after executing the ritual, and as a rule descend from the stream singing
lwimbo lwi shalukhu - Hi koyohe-hikoyo. Ingoyi yalule / yivule. Ununyanya alandola; ha haa ha aalandola (the“leopard has hatched /given birth”, the one who wants me will see.Interviewees noted that lwimbo lwi shalukhu in which a leopard is mentioned is symbolic. In accord with interviewees, vadiri vu khumatsi disclosed that the reference to a leopard has “hatched” symbolizes the end of the seclusion period; while the long sticks (lusibwa) symbolizes the new status and authority of manhood acquired through idumi (interview, April 25th, 2016). Plate 43 is an illustration of ‘viiha’ who are from the ritual bathing in a sstream carrying long sticks whose bark has been peeled off on the occasion of shalukhu.

**Plate 43:** viiha carrying long sticks

*Source:* Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 2nd September, 2015.
Indeed, interviewees emphasized the symbolic disengagement from the contaminated status of an initiate enacted in the ritual of shaving off the “brides” hair and bathing in a running stream; Plate 44 is an illustration of the viiha whose hair has been shaved off to symbolize anew era.

**Plate 44**: The newly circumcised “brides” (viiha) whose hair has been shaved off to symbolize anew era.

**Source**: photo taken by researcher during field work on 3rd September, 2015.

Interviewees submitted that, the new era in the life of the newly circumcised is symbolically indicated in shaving off the hair of seclusion. Elders liable for the custodianship of idumi material culture in concordance with interviewees explained that the “hair of seclusion” - that is, the hair of a newly circumcised - is cut just the way the hair of a newborn baby is shaved in the Tiriki culture to symbolize transition.
to a new status and era, while bathing in a stream symbolizes “cleansing” from ritual contaminants associated with *idumi* activities (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015).

In the context of *shalukhu* in *idumi*, the rituals of shaving hair and bathing in a stream are customary acts performed to symbolically acquit individuals from unpleasant ritual condition consequently transiting them into a worthwhile depolluted status before reintegration in society. Therefore, these rituals point to a new era in the new status formation in the life of the newly circumcised with a new identity of a “man” as symbolized in carrying *lusibwa* and the reference to the song “the leopard has “hatched” (*Ingoi yalule*). Indeed a “real” man as the product of *idumi* among the Tiriki in the traditional set up was expected to display the Leopard attributes because he was indebted to defend himself, his household, and society aggressively as a man (*musaza*) just the way the leopard fiercely defends its young ones without reservation, and hence, this symbolically points to commitment in discharging responsibilities which is no longer a preserve of men since women are liable for some families. Carrying *lusibwa* to symbolize adulthood responsibilities is not tenable immediately since the boys are young of school going age and still dependant on parents.

Further, informants disclosed that cultural material with symbolism is incorporated in the *shalukhu* ceremony. On the eve of *shalukhu viiha* as arule pass through a specially made *shilivwa* constructed using Lusyola branches, lukhanda, lishindu, muhalia, and luvlinu. Plate 45 is an illustration of the newly circumcised *viiha* passing through *shilivwa* as an elder sprays them with a mixture of honey and milk on the forehead to symbolize the end of the seclusion period and the ritual impurities associated with it.
Plate 45: The newly circumcised “viiha” passing through shilivwa to symbolize the end of the seclusion period and the ritual impurities associated with it.

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 3rd September, 2015.

This shilivwa is first constructed in the homestead of one of the elders who accommodated the initiates at night during idumi rituals and where they retreat after the ritual bathing in a running stream. The entire “brides” pass through shirivwa singing the dismissal song – hikoyo he hikoyo, as an elder standing by sprays their forehead in the ritual of khuvida with a mixture of honey and milk to symbolically depollute them as they pass through the shirivwa. The ritual is typically performed in the morning to coincide with the ‘sun rising’ to symbolically anticipate success and good lack.

As noted, there are two categories of cultural archways (vilivwa-plu, shilivwa – singular) which are constructed to herald shalukhu; the first is constructed in
homestead of an elder who accommodated the initiates at night and the second in the homestead of the “brides” parents. In congruent with informants, male parents for instance, stressed that apart from symbolizing the end of the seclusion period and its associated restrictions, *shilivwa* which is constructed by using *Lusyola* branches considered as the ancestral tree (*Musaala ku lusambwa*) also symbolizes an *idumi* shrine that represents ancestral spirit of *idumi* (interview, April 29th, 2016). As noted by informants, this view may explain why *idumi* is not only a religious performance but also a collective responsibility which involve the living family members, relatives as well as the departed ancestors, as John Mbiti (1969) notes “What affects the initiate affects corporately the parents, the relatives, the neighbours and the living dead” (1969:121). In that context, the *shilivwa* is not a usual gate but a sanctified structure that symbolize the “presence” of the ancestors whose role is to bless as well as “witness” the reintegration of the “brides” in society on the occasion of *shalukhu*. Thus, it is notable that *Idumi* performance is structured on rituals that embrace ancestral veneration and this makes it a socio-cultural religious performance that herald the “birth” of the new “men” with new status on the occasion of *shalukhu* before reintegration in society. On the eve of *shalukhu* all the *tsi-senende* used by the initiates prior to circumcision are delivered to homestead of and elder where they spent the night preceding circumcision for the ritual burning to symbolize the end of rituals. Plate 46 is an illustration of the burning of *tsi-senende* on the occasion of *shalukhu*. 

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Informants explained that, the ritual of burning tsi-senende which the ‘brides’ danced with before circumcision is concurrently performed as the viiha pass through shilivwa on the occasion of shalukhu. In agreement with informants male parents stressed that, burning of tsi-senende on the occasion of shalukhu symbolically terminates rituals interrelated with idumi (interview, December 29th, 2015). Consequently, the white smoke from the ritual of burning tsi-senende symbolically denote that idumi and its interrelated rituals are past now with the “brides” emerging from seclusion with a new status of adulthood.

Furthermore, interviewees noted that the initiate are rendered ritually unclean as a result of bleeding and handling of the circumcised penis, and hence, have to perform
the cleansing ritual before using their fingers to eat food. Plate 47 is an illustration of the “brides” (viiha) dipping their fingers in a bowl containing a mixture of herbs and honey to symbolically cleanse to “remove” all seclusion prohibitions of not touching food with fingers.

**Plate 47:** The newly circumcised “brides” (viiha) dipping their fingers in a bowl containing a mixture of herbs and honey to symbolize cleansing to “remove” all seclusion prohibitions of not touching food with fingers.

*Source:* Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 3rd September, 2015.

Indeed, the ritual contamination caused by circumcision blood makes the initiates observe the taboo of not touching food with fingers. Undeniably, the taboo of not touching food with fingers though customarily executed symbolically interrelates culture with hygiene. *vadiri vu khumatsi,* in unison with interviewees drew attention to
the fact that, reintegration of the newly circumcised in the society preceds the removal of all restrictions and this is symbolized by immersing their hands in a ritual bowl containing amixture of herbs and honey to purify them from the ritual contaminants before using their fingers to eat food on the occasion of shalukhu (Interview, April 25th, 2016).

During field work on the occasion of shalukhu, I witnessed an elder positioned next to the shirivwa holding a bowl made from a guord containing a concoction of indigenous herbs mixed with honey from bees that nestle underground, in which the ‘viiha’ dipped their fingers after passing through shirivwa. In concurrence with informants, elders charged with the custodianship of tsirhumbi, explained that “cleansing” the “brides” from vusekhu caused by circumcision blood to enable them eat food using their fingers on the occasion of shalukhu is symbolized by submerging their fingers in a concoction of indigenous herbs mixed with honey which symbolically “decontaminates” them from vusekhu to break the prohibition of not touching food with fingers (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015).

Consequently, its observable that, the transitional prohibitions in idumi are based on taboos that prescribes how the newly circumcised are to reintegrate in the society as individuals who are pollutant free, and hence, drenching their hands in a concoction of indigenous herbs mixed with honey is to symbolically purge themselves from ritual contaminats in order to restore the conventional way of doing things including eating food using their fingers in the customary manner to symbolize anew beginning.
After performing obligatory *shalukhu* rituals, each ‘bride’ is escorted to the family Homestead by elders’ carrying long sticks whose bark has been peeled off. For instance, *vadiri vu murhumbi* revealed that, the long sticks carried by elders symbolize the maturity and the new adulthood status of *viiha* that comes with new responsibilities (interview, December, 28th, 2015). Plate 48 is an illustration of the elders carrying long sticks leading *viiha* to their homestead.

**Plate 48:** Elders carrying long sticks whose bark has been peeled off leading the “*viiha*” to their homestead.

*Source:* Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 3rd September, 2015.

Moreover, informants disclosed that, the ‘bride’ returning from seclusion on the occasion of *shalukhu* typically goes through the *shilihwa* constructed strategically at the entrance in the homestead. Plate 49 is an illustration of *shilivwa* through which the
‘bride’ \( (mwiha) \) pass first on the occasion of \( shalukhu \) before interacting with members of the family.

**Plate 49:** A specially made \( shilivwa \) through which the ‘bride’ \( (mwiha) \) pass first on the occasion of \( shalukhu \) before interacting with members of the family.

**Source:** photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 3rd September, 2015.

In consonance with informants, \( vadiri vu khumatsi \) revealed that, Tiriki men usually acknowledge the fatherhood to their sons during \( idumi \), and this is symbolized by the construction of \( shilivwa \) in the homestead through which the ‘\( mwiha \)’ pass and thereafter followed by his seclusion-mates as he enters the home on the occasion of \( shaluhku \). In addition, passing through the \( shilivwa \) symbolizes “reunion” with the ancestors, the family members besides relatives, and that, the ‘bride’, is not only considered as the heir apparent, but also as the hope of the family with regard to
sustaining his father’s household, lineage interests and property (Vadiri vu khumatsi, interview, April 25th, 2016). Given what has been said, it is distinct that the explication on the attributes assigned to the construction of the homestead shilivwa reveals that it is an extraordinary cultural archway - (gate) which draws attention to the patrilneality of the newly circumcised since its contruction is based on strong customs that are symbolically designed to maintain the family geneology that bestows paternal rights to the boy leaving seclusion on the occasion of shalukhu.

As matter of fact, the boy from seclusion passing through the shilivwa symbolically authenticates that he is a bona fide son of that home, and therefore belongs to the father’s clan. This may explain why a Tiriki man cannot take for circumcision a boy he has not fathered or accept a boy whose circumcision was done elsewhere. In this regard, shilivwa is not constructed for viiha who have been sponsored and celebrate shalukhu in a relative’s homestead since they don’t belong to that lineage to warrant a cultural bond accomplished in rituals performed at the shilivwa. Additionally, male parents explained that, the boy returning from seclusion on the occasion of shalukhu is associated with good luck, strength and the hope of the family as symbolized in the use of lusyola which is fairly strong and associated with good luck as well as being considered the ancestral tree (Musaala khu lusambwa), while the girls shilivwa on the occasion of celebrating her achievements is constructed using Banana trunks which are weak to symbolize their temporary transitory status in the home (interview, April 29th, 2016). Based on this, its perceivable that gender categorization is symbolically articulated in the material used in the construction of shirivwa on the occasion of
shalukhu as noted in relating girls to weak objects of nature (Banana trunks) and the
boys to lusyola which is a strong wood.

Furthermore, informants disclosed that supplications and offerings to the ancestral
spirits on the occasion of shalukhu are performed at the homestead shilivwa. For
instance, vadiri vu murhumbi in congruence with informants explained that on the
occasion of shalukhu, an offering made to the ancestral spirits is symbolized in the Pot
of beer is placed on the right hand side of the shilivwa as one emerges from the main
house. The pot is positioned on the right-hand side of the shilivwa which is male-
oriented to symbolize that a son is graduating to manhood as well as wish him good
luck on the occassion of shalukhu (Interview, December 28th, 2015). That being so,
aspects of religiosity are detectable in idumi on the occasion of shalukhu as
symbolized in religious rituals and the beer offering made at the shirivwa which
symbolize the homestead shrine where the “bride” is dedicated to the ancestors for
his general well being as he transit to the new status of adulthood. Plate 50 is an
illustration of a Pot of beer placed on the right-hand side of the shilivwa to symbolize
an offering made to the ancestral spirits on the occasion of shalukhu. The beer in the
Pot is usually sipped by senior ritual elders who use tsisekhe, lu-tsi—sekhe.
Plate 50: A Pot of beer placed on the right-hand side of shilivwa to symbolize an offering made to the ancestral spirits on the occasion of shalukhu

Source: photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 3rd September, 2015.

2.7 Summary and Conclusion

It was the objective of this chapter to examine idumi material culture among the Tiriki by looking at their origin and symbolism in the idumi ritual process. It has been demonstrated that the origin of idumi and its interrelated cultural material point to the Terik among whom the Tiriki settled long time ago probably by 1850. The community of Abatirichi (Tiriki) is a product of migration, assimilation, interaction, and amalgamation of different clans brought together by subscribing to idumi culture. We have demonstrated that, every stage in idumi is accompanied by both tangible and non-tangile symbolic material culture which is part and parcel of the idumi
process. The non-tangible material culture include rituals and *idumi* songs. The chapter concluded by exploring the symbolism embedded in *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki in the reintegration stage.

From the above discussion, it is clear that *idumi* is not the mere cutting of the foreskin of the penis; it involves material culture which is embedded with symbolism at every stage of the *idumi* ritual cycle notably the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and the reintegration stages which play a significant role in altering a baby boy into a “man”. Therefore, in the following chapter, I examine the manufacturing process of *idumi* material culture and preparation of ritual sites for use so as to enhance an understanding of how they are made and prepared before use.
CHAPTER THREE

THE MANUFACTURING PROCESS OF TIRIKI CIRCUMCISION (IDUMI)

MATERIAL CULTURE

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter Two we discussed the origin and symbolism enshrined in *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki and noted that *idumi* and the material culture associated with it originated from the Terik, and originally came, fully developed unalterable, from 'ging' (*idumi yarula ging*). According to the Tiriki elders, ‘ging’ is a Terik word referring to 'long long ago' (*khale munonono*).

We concluded that *idumi* among the Tiriki is not the mere cutting of the foreskin of the penis; it involves material culture which is inscribed with symbolism at every stage of the *idumi* ritual cycle notably the, preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and the reintegration stages. On account of this, *idumi* and its interrelated material culture symbolism is inseparable. Thus, to study the analogies encrypted in *idumi* material culture without examining the assembling process is an insufficient study of this material. The current chapter, therefore, interrogates the manufacturing process of *Idumi* material culture at various stages in the *idumi* process in the period (1850-2014). These stages include the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and reintegration. To guide in its analysis, this study has adopted functionalism theory as put forth by Malinowski (1989), Garbarino (1977), and Radcliffe (1952) respectively who contend that within a social structure material culture are made to fulfill some vital function by
providing the means through which social, cultural, and spiritual needs of a community are satisfied. This chapter therefore explores the manufacturing process of Idumi material culture in the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and reintegration stage.

3.2. The manufacturing process of Tiriki Circumcision (dumi) material culture in the preparatory stage

The preparatory stage is the first phase in the idumi cycle, which begins in January till July after every five years, in the year of idumi. Interviewees disclosed that, though numerous material culture associated with idumi undergo the manufacturing process and preparation before use, some of them such as the kavunyonje and kavukolosi are strategically positioned and are used in their natural form, however, they are ritually constituted and prepared for the circumcision ceremony through a ritual sacrifice. In concurrence with interviewees’ elders liable for the custodianship of idumi material culture explained that the kavukolosi is sited on a hilltop while the kavunyonje is located in a valley by a river; and where indigenous tree species such as Lusyola (Markamia platycalyx), Lusuyi (Maba alyssinica), and Likhomo (Chaetacme microcarpa) naturally grow, and hence in the preliminary stages, the process of constituting the kavunyonje and kavukolosi involve vasakhulu vi idumi performing a ritual in which spotless male sheep is sacrificed in a specific site before they are utilized for idumi functions (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). In plate 51, I present a photograph of a male sheep that has been suffocated by holing its nostrils in a ritual of khulavitsa and khusaalisa to prepare and commission the kavunyonje for use.
Plate 51: A photograph of a male sheep suffocated in a ritual performed to prepare and commission one of the circumcision groves (kavunyonje’s) for use.

Source: photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 11th July, 2015.

However, Sangree (1966) mentions the sacrifice of a white goat in the kavunyonje before the elders announce the idumi season (1966:49). Though there is a difference in the animal used for sacrifice in which Sangree mentions a white goat while interviewees mentioned a spotless male sheep, the fact remains that a ritual sacrifice must be performed to kick start the idumi process and hence informants stressed that a sheep is preferred for sacrifice to assuage the spirits because it is a humble and a calm animal that befits the cleansing and blessing ritual on an occasion such as idumi. Informants noted that, A goat is a restless animal which was sparingly used in rituals that required cleansing from a bad spell but not necessarily blessing. The use of A goat
in sacrifice was to effect the purging of a bad omen (shisirani) resulting from an individual who had committed mjjilo such as murdering a person and since a goat is a troublesome animal, it was not preferred for ritual sacrifice in idumi which required tranquility (Male parents, interview, April 29th, 2016).

Interviewees noted that, the cultural sites in idumi are associated with higher hierarchy of beings and this may explain why rituals involving sacrificing a male sheep that has no defect are performed to constitute and commission them as shrines. Undeniably, it’s apparent that cultural beliefs donot only dictate the cleansing but the location of the kavukolosi on a hilltop and the kavunyonje in a valley with a flowing river where indigenous trees grow naturally. The performance of the ritual by holding the nostrils to suffocate the sheep is based on the belief that the Supreme being is the source of life - the (breath) which must be returned to Him in totality by suffocating the sacrificial animal.

Further interviewees revealed that, there are rules enacted to safeguard and make the kavunyonje and kavukolosi to develop and be preserved into cultural sites. For instance, male parents explained that, there are customary rules such as prohibiting cutting of trees and taking wood out of these sites in order to protect and allow them develop into cultural shrines. To enforce the perception of a shrine, the circumcision elders then identify the main pillar tree (irhiru) in the kavunyonje and kavukolosi which becomes the central ritual tree from where idumi rituals are performed. Male parents added that, before idumi functions take place in the previously constituted and the newly created kavunyonje’s and kavukolosi’s, selected idumi elders performed a
ritual sacrifice to “commission” these secluded forests for use, and hence the following procedure is adhered to when performing the ritual; first, a spotless *limiku* that has horns is delivered in the *kavunyonje* or *kavukolosi* by an elder in the senior circumcision age grade. *Vasalisi* inspects the male sheep to ascertain its fitness for a sacrifice and thereafter conduct indigenous prayers to evoke *misammbwa* to witness the commissioning of the groves for use.

After the supplication, the ritual leader hands over the male sheep to a selected elder in a senior age grade who suffocates it by holding the mouth and nostrils tightly until it loses its life. The sheep is then skinned and its entrails examined by a senior ritual expert to divine the status of the *kavunyonje* and *kavukolosi*. The meat from the sacrificial male sheep is then roasted on *vwali* and consumed by the elders and no part of the sacrificial meat is to be carried out of the groves. This is followed by *khusaalisa* ritual performed by a selected elder in the senior age grade, who sprays (*khuvida*) the area around the pillar tree (*irhiru*) with amixture of milk and honey from the bees that nestle underground. As he performs his task, he calls upon ancestral spirits to come and make the groves safe for use during *idumi* activities (Interview, April 29th, 2016).

Further, elders charged with the custodianship of *idumi* material culture revealed that, after performing the *khulavitsa* and *khusaalisa* rituals, the *kavunyonje* is placed under the custodianship of *musakhulu wi kavunyonje* while the *kavukolosi* is placed under the care of *musakhulu wi kavukolosi*. Particularly, one of the elders liable for the custodianship of *idumi* material culture in the *kavunyonje* insisted that; both old and
newly created sacred forest where circumcision activities are performed cannot be used until *khulavitsa* and *khusaalisa* rituals are performed.

As previously mentioned, the initiates habitually dress in *shivambo* when leaving the circumcision grove to the seclusion huts. Informants revealed that *shivambo* is an essential material in *idumi* manufactured by the family of a prospective candidate in the preparatory stage prior to circumcision. Informants explained that *shivambo* is an open skin of a goat or cow which is made from *lisero* of a young bull or a he goat, and goes through a manufacturing process before use by the initiate on the circumcision day. For instance, in accord with informants elders charged with the custodianship of *tsirhumbi* disclosed that, the original *shivambo* is manufactured by smearing *lisero* of a young bull or a he goat with animal fat and leaving it for three days to soften, and thereafter scrapped smooth; and later softened manually by rubbing it between the palms of the hand (*khu sakusa*) to convert it into soft leather. The softened leather is then cut to look like an open skirt according to the size of the prospective candidate for *idumi*. Some holes are then made at the strategic places on the *shivambo* where strings made from the skin are usually fixed for the purpose of tying it when it is worn by *mukhulu* before leaving the circumcision grove after circumcision (interview, May 8th, 2016). Essentially, *shivambo* is fundamentally indigenous attire manufactured to reflect the original garment worn by the ancestors to delineate indigenous culture which is brought forth during *idumi*. Plate 52 is an illustration of the dried *lisero* of a he goat being scrapped by family members to make
the short skin apron (shivambo) which the initiate is to wear as he leaves the kavunyonje after circumcision.

**Plate 52:** The dried hide (lisero) of a he-goat being srapped by family members to make the short skin apron (shivambo).

![Image of people working on a hide](image)

**Source:** photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 12\textsuperscript{th} july, 2015.

*Idumi* is highly interwined with songs and dance. In depth inquiry from informants on how songs are generated disclosed that some songs are formulated according to the prevailing situation while other songs such as hoyo hee sung to announce the *idumi* season is sung in its natural and original form as passed on by the Tiriki ancestors. In tandem with informants, *Vadiri vu murhumbi* explained that, the process of producing *idumi* songs is entrusted to men who, apart from being skilful in singing, dancing and other societal values, they are also men who are knowledgeable in the history of the
Tiriki circumcision, myths and genealogies of different circumcision age grades as well as knowing the various stages when specific idumi songs are to be sung (interview, December 28th, 2015). Accordingly, some of the idumi songs are evolved to reflect the prevailing situation while specific songs continue to be used the way they were handed down from generation to generation to preserve the cultural message in them.

Informants noted that, the idumi preparatory stage involve a wide range of members including prospective candidates for idumi who start dancing with malande on their heads. Plate 53 is an illustration of prospective candidates for idumi pulling (khungusa) maalnde to make the dancing gear which they hold on their head.

**Plate 53:** Prospective candidates for idumi pulling (khungusa) a fast-growing creeper called maalnde to make the dancing gear which they hold on their head.

*Source:* photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 12th July, 2015.
Informants disclosed that when the elders announce the *idumi* season by singing *lwumbi lyu vukhulu -hoye-hee*, prospective candidates for *idumi* start moving along roads singing *idumi* songs and dancing while holding *malande* on their heads imitating how they will dance with *muhalia / isenende*. (2005) mentions Vasoleli with *Malande* (2005:132).

In consonance with informants, male parents explained that, the process of making *malande* for *vasoleli* boys to use for dancing as they rehearse for the main *idumi* ceremony starts by identifying prospective candidates who are scheduled for the circumcision ritual. With the consent from parents, prospective candidates for *idumi* are accompanied into the bush by previously circumcised boys to pull down (*khungusa*) a fast growing creeper called *malande*. The creeper is then straightened, lined up, and coiled into a head ring (*ingara*) at one side while the other end is left loose. The thickness of the *ingara* is made according to the size, age, and weight of the prospective candidate for *idumi*; and that previously circumcised boys instruct prospective candidates for *idumi* on how to hold the *malande* on the head and dance (interview, April 29th, 2016).

Apart from the *kavukolosi, kavunyonje, and malande* as discussed above, *tsi-rhumbi* which must be constructed before the circumcision of the initiates also constitute an important material culture in *idumi* among the Tiriki. Informants explained to me that, before *irhumbi* is constructed, circumcision elders do not only identify and purify the site where it is to be built, but also commission its construction by performing an
*idumi* ritual that authorizes contraction in what is referred to as *khusena tsi-rhumbi*.

Plate 54 is an illustration of *idumi* elders commencing the process of constructing the *irhumbi* by using *idumi* material culture to identify the construction site.

**Plate 54:** *Idumi* elders commencing the process of constructing the seclusion hut (*irhumbi*) by using *idumi* material culture to mark the construction site

*Source:* photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 13th July, 2015.

Elders charged with custodianship of *tsi-rhumbi* in consensus with informants confirmed that, the process of constructing *irhumbi* starts with *vasakhulu vi idumi* in each socio-ritual unit (*lusomo*) identifying appropriate site which is isolated from the public. A brief ceremony, in which a senior circumcision ritual elder purifies the site is performed. The site is ritually purified through an *idumi* ritual of *khusena tsi-rhumbi* which involve spraying the site with some beer and erecting the center pole (*irhiru*)
using the *lusyola* tree (*Markhamia platycalyx*) before construction. Plate is an illustration of the seclusion hut under construction

**Plate 55:** The seclusion hut (*irhumbi*) under construction at one of the purified sites.

![Image of the seclusion hut under construction](image)

**Source:** photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 14th July, 2015.

After erecting the *irhiru*, the construction of *irhumbi* whose door must face the East direction where the sun rises begins in earnest. *Mudiri wu murhumbi* earnestly mobilizes *idumi* candidates to cut and gather grass called *Lise* from marshy areas, assembles construction poles from acceptable indigenous trees as well going to the bush to remove the bark (*Khu vwola mikoye*) from a plant called (*likhambi*) to make strings for tying the poles and the grass on the *irhumbi* roof. Once the *irhumbi* has been roofed, a fence (*lugaga*) which has only one *shilibwa* facing the direction from where the sun rises is constructed round the *irhumbi* (interview, May 8th, 2016).
Idumi as a process involves preparing the candidates before subjecting them to circumcision. Informants informed me that, candidates for idumi as the main material in the circumcision process are recruited (khuvungitswa) and taken to the homestead of an elder charged with the custodianship of accommodating the initiates during idumi rituals from where they are taken to the forest on the second day to undergo the ritual of the imoni test. As noted previously, the process of idumi among the Tiriki starts on the first day when the initiates are handed over to the elders to go through the idumi process of kwaya which involves khung’usa and the ritual of the imoni test. In agreement with informants, Vadiri vu murhumbi explained that as the candidates for idumi are subjected to the ritual of the imoni test, the relatives and men accompanying them involve in the activity of khungusa a fast growing creeper called (Muhalia) to make isenende or lisambu which the naked candidate for idumi holds by his left hand as he dances on the afternoon preceding circumcision.

The process of making isenende starts by relatives and men accompanying idumi candidates into the forest pulling down (khungusa) Muhalia. Plate 56 is an illustration of relatives of the initiate pulling down (khungusa) a fast growing creeper called Muhalia to make isenende or lisambu which the naked candidates for idumi hold on their heads as they dance on the afternoon before circumcision.
Plate 56: Relatives of the initiate pulling down (*khungusa*) a fast-growing creeper called (*Muhalia*) to make the headgear (*isenende* or *lisambu*) which the naked candidate for *idumi* holds by his left hand as he dances on the afternoon preceding circumcision.

After gathering the *Muhalia*, it is straightened, lined up, and coiled into a head ring (*ingara*) at one side while the other end is left loose. The thickness of the *ingara* is made according to the size, age, and weight of the *idumi* candidate. Once the process of twisting *Muhalia* at one end to make some kind of *ingara* is complete, it changes its name to *isenende*, and then to *Lisambu* when candidates for *idumi* come out of the forest dancing holding it tightly by the left hand on their heads (interview, December 28th, 2015). Male parents added that, *isenende* is a valuable *idumi* material made from *muhalia* and goes through a process of making before the naked initiates are given to...
hold it on the head as they dance in preparation for circumcision (interview, April 29th, 2016). Further inquiry from the interviewees on how candidates for idumi are usually refined prior to circumcision revealed that they are processed into “idumi material” and this is achieved through the ritual of the imoni test performed in the forest from where they emerge dancing naked. Plate 57 is an illustration of idumi candidates who are naked dancing with isenende held on their head as they come from the forest after performing the ritual of the imoni test.

**Plate 57:** Idumi candidates who are naked dancing with isenende held on their head as they come from the forest after performing the ritual of the eye (imoni) test.

![Plate 57: Idumi candidates who are naked dancing with isenende held on their head as they come from the forest after performing the ritual of the eye (imoni) test.](image)

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 2nd August, 2015.

Informants submitted that, actions in idumi adheres to an established system. For instance, vadiri vu vukhumatsi explained that candidates for initiation are prepared by
arranging them in order from jivuleti to itaweti according to the age grade seniority of their fathers, and thereafter placed under the custody of the counselor who has been cleansed (kwisavitswa) to take them through the ritual of the imoni test. Mudiri wu khwaya vasoleli then prepares idumi candidate spiritually and psychologically into idumi “material” by taking each one of them through various steps that require focusing their eyes on non existent object in space without blinking. Once mudiri wu khwaya vasoleli had fully prepared the candidates through the ritual of the imoni test, prospective candidates for idumi emerged from the forest naked as they dance with isenende held on their head (Interview, April 25th, 2016).

Interviewees noted that, the initiates’ are customarily assembled on the first day, shaved in the morning of the second day before proceeding to the forest to pull and go through the eye test ritual and thereafter return in the afternoon to dance before retreating to the homestead of an elder entrusted with the custodianship of accommodating the initiates at night prior to circumcision where they are subjected to masove and idumi rituals before going for circumcision on the morning of the third day.

Idumi is an institution of rituals. Interviewees revealed that ritual cleansing is a prerequisite before the initiates undergo the actual circumcision. This is achieved by exposing them to the threatening sound of masove or Shingang’a that scares them into revealing mijilo they might have committed in order to be exonerated before circumcision. The masowe undergoes a process of making before it is released to come and “eat” the initiate unwilling to confess. In deed, during fieldwork on the night
preceding circumcision, I witnessed an event in which Masove which produces the threatening sound comprises pots of various sizes, some small ones representing Vaana vishingang’a, and a big pot with a wide mouth representing shingang’a to vary the resonance.

In concurrence with interviewees Vadiri vu khumatsi, for instance explained that, before making and bringing Shingang’a, circumcision elders prepare a room which is deemly lit and where a small fire is made. Across the entrance of the room is placed a stick called inanjirwa on which an indigenous axe, hoe are placed, and which idumi candidates jump over as they enter the room. At the exit of the room, an elder sitting on a chair and holding a fly wisk in each hand which he shakes to appear as if they are ears of the “Wild animal” is strategically placed and covered with a sheep’s hide (lisero). Closer to the chair of an elder holding the fly wisks is placed a stool covered with a sheep’s skin on which the idumi candidate sits to face the “Wild animal”. In the next stage, idumi elders prepare one big ritual pot with wide mouth to represent mature wild animal and two small pots to represent Vaana vi shingang’a. Vasakhulu vi idumi then dispatch vadiri vu murhumbi with the three ritual pots to the “forest” in the company of previously initiated men who are strong and aggressive to “wrestle”, tie and bring the shingang’a which presumably struggles and produces threatening noise. The threatening noise from the “wild animal” is produced by vadiri who blow air in the ritual pots (interview, April 25th, 2016). The actions in masove is enacted dramatically to capture the fears and the hopes of the initiates in their transition process to manhood. Plate 58 illustrates instruments used to make Masove.
Plate 58: Instruments used to make *Masove* which produces the threatening sound.

**Source:** photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 2\textsuperscript{nd} August, 2015.

As such, it is distinct that the revelation about *masove* point to a technique devised in *idumi* to inform and warn the initiates about the threats incubated in breaking the social moral code. Though it’s the role of *idumi* to inculcate values enshrined in the moral code, *masove* can not be the single source of reminding and enforcing them. As discussed above, *idumi* material culture made in the preparatory stage is intended to generate awareness that the year for *idumi* rituals has began. In the next section that follows, I discuss the manufacturing process of *idumi* material culture used in the circumcision stage.
3.3 The Manufacturing process of Tiriki circumcision (*idumi*) material culture used in the circumcision stage

After the preparatory stage, the next stage is the circumcision stage, whose climax is the removal of the foreskin from the penis. The circumcision stage is the most intense stage in the performance of *idumi* ceremony and includes manufacturing and preparing the indigenous circumcision knives (*tsincheso*, singular -*injeso*), brewing circumcision beer (*khuyenga malwa ki idumi*), preparing special porridge from millet (*vule*), and the cutting of the foreskin.

Interviewees revealed that material made for use such as *tsincheso* in the circumcision stage are intertwined with rituals which incorporate spraying them with some beer and remnants of undigested food (*vusee*) from a sacrificial Ram to “cool them down” before utilization. It is important to note that, the indigenous circumcision knife has been discarded and replaced with a scalpel blade as a circumcision tool, and hence, attention is drawn on how the indigenous circumcision knife was manufactured and prepared for use before being discarded, and how the scalpel blade which has replaced *injeso* is ritually prepared for use as a circumcision tool. Informants further explained to me that, the process of manufacturing and preparing *injeso-tsincheso*-plu, was ritually guarded and done by a specific blacksmith of Tiriki by circumcision. In congruent with informants, *vadiri vu khumatsi* explained that the production process of circumcision knives was highly ritualized and shrouded in mystery. The production of *tsi-ncheso* before discarding them went through the following process: First, after the acquisition of raw materials which comprise Iron bars which were cut into small
pieces the size of a six-inch nail, mwirhanyi constructed a furnace (Isholo) into which burning charcoal was put, and also made the mukuva which was connected to Isholo to blow air into it to enable cut pieces of iron metals or six-inch nail put in Isholo to burn red hot. Using a pair of iron or wood tongs, the blacksmith lifted the red hot Iron bar or the six-inch nail and placed it on the principal anvil molding stone where it was hammered, reheated, hammered to evacuate impurity and forge small circumcision knives. The circumcision knives were then sharpened to the required standard by the mwirhanyi.

Before tsi-ncheso were put to use, mwirhanyi handed them over to vasakhulu vi idumi to bless (khukasisa) and “cool” them before handing them over to vadiri vu khumatsi. Furthermore, in solidarity with informants, vadiri vu khumatsi disclosed that the scalpel blades which have replaced tsi-ncheso go through the following process to attain ritually accepted standards to make them operational. First, to acquire the scalpel blades for use during circumcision, a specific elder who has been cleansed (kwisavitwsa) is selected and authorized to source for them. Once the scalpel blades have been sourced, they are handed over to vasakhulu vi idumi who bless (khukasisa) the blades by performing a ritual involving spraying some milk and honey to “cool” them so that they are not slippery to cause damage on the initiates during circumcision. The scalpel blades for use during circumcision are then stored near the ritual tree in the kavunyonje from where they are retrieved and handed over to vadiri vu khumatsi for use (interview, April 25th, 2016). As such it is notable that, despite the change from the indigenous circumcision knife to modern scalpel blades as
circumcision instruments, the cultural quality assurance as noted in the sourcing, cleansing, storage, and commissioning persists to adhere to the customs of idumi.

The circumcision is a critical stage in idumi ritual circle. It is the most important operation that confers upon the initiate the status of Tirikihood when mudiri wu khumatsu makes a cut in the skin of the penis. Informants explained that since the penis is susceptible to injury, caution is indispensable when processing to mold and project (khureka) it to look like an “AK.47” gun which is the Tiriki circumcision style similar to the Terik and Nandi who circumscise indigenously; and that the circumcision stage provides a platform through which the boy’s male organ goes through a “manufacturing” process to alter it from lidole to indini which the man maker (circumciser) judiciously molds.

In consonance with interviewees on how the penis is processed to resemble an “AK.47”, elders liable for the custodianship of idumi material culture disclosed that; the first thing mudiri wu khumatsu does is to expose the head of the penis by retracting (kuuva) the foreskin onto the body of the penis and thereafter, mutsuni which the initiate hardly notices. In the next stage which is very painful and require the services of a brek man to hold the initiate tightly, mudiri removes the inner skin to expose the head glands of the penis, and thereafter diligently cuts the delicate skin under the head of the penis without interfering with the sensitive nerves. Thereafter, the penis is realigned with the rest of the body to ensure that during the projection of the penis, the head of the penis does not point in the wrong direction. Using the left-hand thumbnail in the final stage, mudiri wu khumatsu cuts the skin of the penis through which the
head of the penis is forced to project (*khueraka*) which leaves a fold of mutilated skin below the head of the penis which is exposed and pointing at an angle of forty-five degrees like an “AK.47” gun (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015).

Though the penises are not made for immediate use during *idumi*, it is through *idumi* that it is molded and made for use. Therefore, the art of making the penis in *idumi* among the Tiriki is not just “cutting” the foreskin. As ascertained from the expository on the uniqueness and distinctive nature of the circumcision style among the Tiriki with regard to their neighbouring communities who practice circumcision but not in a similar style, it does not imply that the difference in circumcision style among other communities renders the penis irrelevant to the dimension of not performing the intended function.

Just as noted in this work, as submitted by informants, before *vahindira* move to seclusion huts from the *kavunyonje*, they are usually served with *vusela vu vule* as a vital material culture prepared and delivered to the *kavunyonye* in an indigenous pot (*inyungu*) on the circumcision day preferably by the mother. Informants explained that, the millet-made porridge is prepared using flour from millet preferably harvested from the previous season, and the process of preparation begins three days before the circumcision day. For instance, *Vadiri vu murhumbi* in solidarity with informants, explained that, the process of preparing *vusela vu vule* begin by preparing flour from millet. The millet flour is then soaked and mixed in warm water to make dough which is preserved in a well-covered *inyungu*. The *inyungu* containing the soaked millet flour is then placed strategically near the fire place preferably where cooking takes place to
enhance the fermentation process. Early in the morning on the circumcision day, the fermented dough is removed from the pot and prepared into \textit{vusela} which is put into an indigenous \textit{inyungu} and carefully carried to the \textit{kavunyonje} by the initiate’s mother. Since \textit{vusela vu vule} on the circumcision day is ritually bound, all of it is carried to the \textit{kavunyonje} (Interview, December 28\textsuperscript{th}, 2015). As such, the indigenous approach to the process of production of \textit{vusela vu vule} in terms of preparation of the raw material, leavening and delivery to the \textit{kavunyonje} is just to epitomize the culture attached to \textit{idumi} as pronounced in the initiate’s mother carrying the porridge, the indigenous pot, the time taken to ferment, and the use of millet. However in some circumstances, porridge made from maize flour has been delivered in other containers other than the \textit{inyungu} but this has not changed the essence of \textit{idumi} at this stage.

\textit{Malwa ki idumi} is an integral part of \textit{idumi}. It is manufactured in all crucial stages in \textit{idumi} to celebrate the demarcation from one stage to another. Informants explained that \textit{malwa ki idumi} is manufactured from the mixture of \textit{tsimbale} made from maize flour and \textit{mamela} from \textit{vule}, and that, it takes some time to mature. In harmony with informants, male parents explained that the process of manufacturing \textit{malwa ki idumi} begin by preparing \textit{mamera} which is added to the brewed beer to facilitate maturity process. Plate 59 is an illustration of an initiate’s mother spreading \textit{mamela} on a canvass material to dry before grinding it into flour for use in the process of manufacturing circumcision beer.
Plate 59: Initiates’ mother spreading *mamela* on a canvass material to dry before grinding it into flour for use in the process of manufacturing circumcision beer.

Source: photo taken by researcher during field on 29th July, 2015.

Preparation of *mamela* involves soaking *vule* into the water for about three days that indicates the stages through which the initiate pass in the process of transforming into manhood. After three days, the *vule* is removed from water and kept in a conducive place to sprout into *mamera* which is dried and thereafter crushed into flour to be utilized in the preparation of *malwa ki idumi*; and that the person handling *mamera* ought to be ritually clean to safeguard against contamination which may spell doom to the candidate undergoing initiation. Believed families with an initiate or those who might have attended burial ceremonies are not allowed to handle brewing material to guard against the beer going “flat” and tasteless (interview, April 29th, 2016).
As noted, the dough made from maize flour is used in brewing *malwa ki idumi* is fermented first to make it ready for use. Plate 60 is an illustration of a male relative putting the fermented dough on the frying pan to prepare *tsimbare*.

**Plate 60:** One of the male relatives of the initiate putting the fermented dough on the frying pan to prepare *tsimbare* used for manufacturing circumcision beer

*Source:* photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 30th July, 2015.

Informants explained that, the dough for brewing *malwa ki idumi* is specially prepared. For instance, *vadiri vu murhumbi* in consensus with informants explained that, while *vule* is soaked to sprout before crushing it into *mamera* flour as an ingredient for beer making, a circular hole (*ingulu*) of about two feet in diameter and three feet deep is dug in the ground where the dough made from maize flour is “buried” and covered with leaves of a wild banana (*masitsi*) on top, of which compact soil (*visinde*) is added to make the hole air tight for four weeks to enhance
fermentation process. The fermented dough is retrieved after four weeks, dried, and then “fried” on a big frying pan (khu sihira) to produce tsimbare. Tsimbare is then put in a large pot, into which mamera flour and water fetched from a flowing stream and made warm is added and covered for the three days to activate the process of maturity (Interview, December 28th, 2015). Funeral attendees and those from berieved homestead are customarily baned from the frying site. Plate 61 illustrate the frying process of tsimbare.

Plate 61: The frying process to produce tsimbare for manufacturing circumcision beer

Source: photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 30th July, 2015.

As noted, the explication in the brewing process of malwa ki idumi communicates the beliefs, function and changes attributed to idumi as imprinted in the duration and the material used in brewing. For instance, mamera is believe to facilitate maturity of beer
the way it transmutes initiates to manhood while *vule* has the tag of productivity; and that to usher initiates into manhood is to ensure life is a continuous “move” as depicted in fetching brewing water from the river. The process of manufacturing *malwa ki idumi* is similar in all the *idumi* stages. As I have stressed, every stage of *idumi* must be accompanied by specific material culture. *Idumi* as a process maintains its tempo and cultural meaning at every stage, only if the material culture assigned to that stage are manufactured and used. In the following sub section, I discuss the manufacturing process of *idumi* material culture used in the seclusion stage.

### 3.4 The Manufacturing process of Tiriki circumcision (*idumi*) material culture used in the seclusion stage

The seclusion stage refers to the period when the initiates are confined in *irhumbi* and barred from the public domain. In the seclusion stage, material culture manufactured for use include, *isumadi*, *ingolole*, and the preparation of the site for *khukuvwa shikong’o* and the material culture for use during the ritual.

Informants revealed that, the initiates are typically brought utility material in the seclusion period such as *isumadi* to replace *shivambo* which they wore on the circumcision day as they left the *kavunyonje*. Interviewees explained that, *idumi* is anticipated to craft energetic and active men and in consequence the indigenous clothing material such as *isumadi* and *shivambo* are manufactured from the *lisero* of a young bull or a he goat which are very buoyant. In concensus with interviewees, male parents explained that the process of making *isumadi* which is the cloth of “manhood” involves identifying the *lisero* from the right animal whose skin is ritually accepted for use. The *lisero* is then smeared with animal fat and left for three days to
soften the fur, which is then scrapped; leaving it smooth and thereafter softened manually by rubbing it between the palms of the hand (*khu sakusa*) to convert it into soft leather. Plate 62 is an illustration of *lisero* being scrapped by one of the family members to make *ismaidi* to replace *shivambo* worn while the wound is still open.

**Plate 62: Lisero being scrapped by one of the family members to make isumadi)**

The softened *lisero* is then delivered to *irhumbi* where the *mudiri wu murhumbi* cuts it according to the size of *mukhulu*. After cutting the *lisero* according to *mukhulu* size, holes are made at the strategic places on the skin where strings made from the skin are usually fixed to tighten the skin when it is worn by *mukhulu* during the seclusion period. Once the skin dresses are ready, a ceremony to celebrate changing from
shivambo to isumadi which is referred to as “putting” the initiate in the cloth of manhood (khura mikhulu mu inguvu ya vasaza) which is celebrated by malwa ki zinguvu is performed (interview, April 29th 2016).

Ingolole is another important cultural material manufactured for use in the seclusion stage. Informants explained that the original ingolole is usually made using makhambi strings (mikoye) made from the bark of a plant referred to as Likhambi. However, during field work, I noted that some tsingolole are made from sisal fibre which may indicate the scarcity or depletion of makhambi as the original indigenous material for manufacturing tsingolole. In addition the sisal material is bought from the open market where the handlers may not be people who are Tiriki by circumcision which contravines the idumi cultural norm. However, the challenge of the original indigenous material for manufacturing tsingolole not withstanding, interviewees reported that the processes of making ingolare is very intricate.

In accord with informants, for instance, elders charged with the custodianship of tsirhumbi explained that, the process of making ingolare is very tedious and begins by the relatives and fathers of the initiates going to the bush to remove the bark (Khuvwola mikoye) from likhambi, plu- makhambi. The bark of Likhambi is then dried and later taken to the initiates to knit (khuvasa) into strings for making Ingolole. Before making the Ingolole, specification of each mask and the initiate’s head size is taken into account by inserting an empty small basket (shiruvi) which should fit properly on the head. The properly fitting shiruvi is then removed from the head and the Ingolare is woven around it until it is large enough to fit on the head of the
mukhulu. As the Ingolole is being made, a projecting nozzle with a hole about six inch deep and one and a half inch in diameter is made at the center of the mask. The base of this hole is tightly knit to protect the head of the initiate where the stick of a palm reed (lishindu) is inserted in the hole when performing vukhulu.

After completing the weaving of the mask, it is fitted on the head of the mukhulu to mark the position of the eyes, where two holes are made using a blunt object, and thereafter sewn round to provide a clear space for the eyes to view (interview, May 8th, 2016). Plate 63 is an illustration mukhulu knitting (khuvasa) into mikoye dried bark extracted from Likhambi to make Ingolole.

**Plate 63:** An initiate (mukhulu) knitting (khuvasa) into strings dried bark extracted from a plant referred to as Likhambi to make the Ingolole.

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 8th August, 2015.
As such, its appreciable that in making tsingole, idumi provided an opportunity to impart utility skill of weaving to enable the initiates fit well in the environment which required production of indigenous items. However, the present socio-economic environment require trainable skills for employment that goes beyond indigenous crafts.

In the final phase of the seclusion stage, the initiates undergo the ritual of khukuvwa shikong’o which involve preparation of the site and assembling the material to execute the ritual. Informants reported that the site for the shikong’o ritual is usually prepared and infested with insects that bite painfully and a nettle plant (isambakhalwa ya manenje) whose leaves sting. In fact, during fieldwork on occasion of the shikong’o ritual, I noted naked initiates moving to a prepaired structure where they crawled under a table like structure covered with idumi material which included vu kungune/vu nonera and isambakhalwa ya manenje whose leaves sting painfully.

In concensus with informants, elder custodians of tsirhumbi explained that, before making the structures for use during shikong’o ritual, idumi material culture code named “aggressive and non aggressive cows”(tsi’ngombe tisimbala ni tisimboma) are sourced and assembled at the site. These material is then arranged in two categories; aggressive such as isambakhalwa ya maneje and vukhungune which respectively sting and bite painfully, and palm reed (lishindu) whose thorns prick. The non aggressive material include Lusyola branches, muhalia, lukhanda and luvini among others. In the next stage, elders knowledgable in idumi construct a table like arch structure using Lusyola branches across a section of a stream in the kavunyonje.
whose width measures about six feet long, two feet high and three feet in diameter. On top of the constructed table like arch structure is placed leaves of the *Lusyola* branches with aggressive and non aggressive material culture being arranged with the most aggressive material such as *isma-bkalwa ya maneje* which sting painfully being lowered inside the table like structure so that it comes into contact with the body of the naked initiates who crawl in it (interview, May 8\textsuperscript{th}, 2016). Consequently, the harsh nature of the material used is designed to inculcate intended traits of manhood such as patience, perseverance, and persistence, however, some of the initiates are too young to comprehend this kind of experience perceive as torture.

Further, informants disclosed, that on the occasion of administering the *shikong’o* ritual, the initiates perform an *idumi* ritual reffered to as “milking the cow” (*khushela ingombe*) which goes through a process of making. For instance, *vadiri vu murhumbi*, in unison with informants explained that before commencing the process of preparing the ritual of ‘*khushela ingombe*’, the following *idumi* material culture are sourced: a large earthenware ritual pot (*inyungu*), cowrie shells (*tsi-simbi*), a scraped sheepskin, and a ritual stick (*shidundu*) that has a hole. *Idumi* material culture such as *tsi-simbi* are first put in the pot. This is followed by stretching and tying a scraped sheep skin over the top of the *inyungu*. With the pot sitting mouth up, one end of a vertically held *shidundu* is placed against the skin which is made to vibrate and produce a roaring sound by sliding one hand first and then the other down the stick in a milking-like motion. In a kneeling position each *mukhulu* is given a chance of *khushela ingombe* by sliding one hand first and then the other down the stick in a milking-like motion.
that make the pot to roar (Interview, December 28th, 2015). Undeniably, the actions of the ritual of *khushela ingombe* is not just to introduce the initiates to the cultural duties of aman which included milking the cows but it heralds the coming to an end of *idumi* season to pave the way for re-incorporation into society. Therefore, in the next section, I discuss the manufacturing process of *idumi* material culture used in the re-incorporation stage.

3.4 The Manufacturing process of Tiriki circumcision (*idumi*) material culture used in the reincorporation stage

The reincorporation stage is the last phase in *idumi* when the newly circumcised are reunited with their families and interact with the public on the occasion of *shalukhu*.

In depth dialogue with interviewees revealed that material culture used to facilitate reintegration of the newly circumcised in the community such as butter (*magura*), milk, as well as the *shirivwa* that provide the base for performing the final “hatching” (*shalukhu*) rituals that bring to an end the seclusion period follow an elaborate process of making which must adhere to the *idumi* customs and procedures. For instance, in congruent with interviewees male parents stressed that, the process of preparing *magura* and *mavere* for use on the occasion of *shalukhu* involve sourcing milk from a “red” cow (*ingomb’e imuchi*) or a spotless cow which should not be “black” in colour and which has calved not more than three times. The milk is usually boiled and left to cool over night and thereafter, the top cream is collected and put in a ritual guard where it is preserved to undergo a leavening process to be ready for use on the third day of *shalukhu* (interview, April 29th, 2016). During fieldwork, I established that due to environmental change that has resulted in the reduction of livestock and milk supply in
the community, packed milk purchased from the shop, in some instances has been used to perform the end of seclusion ritual. Even though this bespeak some change, it has not altered the function engraved in the milk on this occasion.

Further, informants, opined that on the occasion of shalukhu, idumi elders usually prepare a concoction of indigenous herbs in which the initiates dip their fingers as they pass through shirivwa singing hikoyo song composed by Tiriki ancestors a long time ago and continue to be used in its original form. For example, vadiri vu khumatsi in concensus with informants explained that, the process of preparing a concoction of indigenous herbs commences with an elder in the senior circumcision age grade who has undergone the idumi ritual of kwisavitwsa goes to the forest to search and collect assorted material comprising leaves and roots from plants considered of value to idumi. These assorted material collected from the forest is then crushed, put in a container made from shisanda, and mixed in water collected directly from a stream to form some kind of paste. In the next stage, some mavere and honey preferably from bees that nestle underground are added to the paste made from the herbs and mixed to form an indigenous concoction in which the initiates dip their fingers as they pass through shirivwa on the occasion of shalukhu (interview, April 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2016). Consequently, the magnitude of interrelationship between the natural environment, idumi, and its promoters is outstanding as demonstrated in the sourcing of plant and other material from the forest to manufacture herbs on the occasion of shalukhu. This begs for the need to enviously conserve the environment for sustainable source of plant plant material.
As mentioned earlier, *shirivwa* is strategically constructed in the homestead on the occasion of *shalukhu*. In consonance with informants, elders charged with the custodianship of *idumi* material culture referred to the *shirivwa* through which the newly circumcised pass on the occasion of *shalukhu* as “The Tiriki gate of ending seclusion of the indigenously circumcised” (*shirivwa shi idumi ya vatirichi yi shalukhu*). Like other *idumi* material culture made for use, the making of the *shirivwa* goes through the following processes: procurement of essential *idumi* materials, such as *Likhindu, isenende, Luvinu, lusiyola*, and a rope (*Mukoye*) like creeper referred to as *lukhanda* which is used to fasten the *shirivwa* firmly immediately after construction. The materials procured are arranged in order of priority. The site and the direction of the *shirivwa* is identified before a senior member in the family whose behaviour and character is beyond reproach initiate the construction of the *shirivwa*.

Once at the materials for the construction of *shirivwa* are assembled in order of priority, with *lusyola* being given prominence, an elder selected to construct the *shirivwa* makes two small holes about one and a half feet deep and one meter apart starting on the right side and finishing with the one on the left. In the process of construction, the elder inserts a prepared branch of *lusyola* in the hole on the right side first then followed by the one on the left. Other *idumi* material culture such as *Ilundu, Luvinu, and Likhindu* are then inserted in the small holes following the order from the right to the left, with *isenende* being hung at the top of the *shirivwa*. The process of constructing the *shirivwa* is completed by tying a rope (*Mukoye*) like creeper referred to as *lukhanda* at the base of the branch of *lusyola* which is inserted in the small hole,
and then extending to the left, then coiling it upwards in a clockwise direction via the upper part of the *shirivwa* to the right in order to fasten it (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). Plate 64 is an illustration of the homestead *shirivwa* which goes through several stages of construction before its ready for use on the occasion of *shalukhu*.

**Plate 64:** The homestead *shirivwa* which goes through several stages of construction before its ready for use on the occasion of *shalukhu*

*Source:* Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 3rd August, 2015.
In consequence, the illustration in the construction of *shirivwa* especially the material used and the process involved, depict *shirivwa* as an extra ordinary gate like ‘structure’ which comprise cultural material in *idumi* strategically designed to ‘communicate’ the interaction of the newly circumcised, the ancestors, and the family members whose re-union is crafted in *shirivwa* on the occasion of *shalukhu*. However, the material used not withstanding, *shirivwa* remains an acknowledgement tool of fatherhood to the son graduating from *idumi* on the occasion of *shalukhu*.

Essentially, the process of constructing the homestead *shiliivwa* on the occasion of *shalukhu* must always start from the right and end on the left just the way the sun rises from the east and sets in the west, and this process is followed to abide with *idumi* customs to safeguard the well being of the newly circumcised on the occasion of *shalukhu*. Fundamentally, the construction of the *shirivwa* in the final stage of the *idumi* ritual cycle compliments other material culture manufactured to facilitate the process of re-intergrating the newly circumcised into society. Considered separately, *idumi* is not only the “cutting” of the foreskin from the penis, but a process of manufacturing material culture that performs specific *idumi* function at every stage.

### 3.6 Summary and Conclusion

It was the objective of this chapter to examine the manufacturing process of *Idumi* material culture in the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and reintegration stages of *idumi* upto 2014. We have demonstrated that this material culture is diverse and include both tangible and non tangible. We have concluded that some of the material culture goes through a manufacturing process while others are used in their natural
form but after being ritually constituted. The study has also demonstrated that specific material culture is made and used at every stage in *idumi* to facilitate the process of distinction from one stage to another. In making the material culture and preparing the ritual sites for use, the focus is centered on the initiates who are being transmuted from boyhood to manhood.

We have concluded that elders in the senior circumcision age grade who are ritually purified (*kwisavitwsa*) to conduct *idumi* rituals are charged with the responsibility of making and preparing *idumi* material culture and ritual sites. In the next chapter, I examine the functions of *idumi* material culture in the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and re-incorporation stages of *idumi*
CHAPTER FOUR

THE FUNCTIONS OF TIRIKI CIRCUMCISION (IDUMI) MATERIAL CULTURE 1850-2014

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter three, we interrogated the manufacturing process of Idumi material culture in the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and reintegration stages of idumi and noted that these material culture and the rituals are diverse and go through a process of manufacture and preparation before use. These material culture and the rituals are part and parcel of idumi ritual cycle. We have concluded that elders in the senior circumcision age grade play a vital role in making the material culture and preparing the ritual sites for use during idumi; and that at every stage of the idumi ritual cycle, specific material culture is made or prepared to perform specific function that facilitates the transition process of becoming a man among the Tiriki initiates. The current chapter examines the functions of idumi material culture in the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and reintegration stages of idumi from 1850-2014. The year 1850 marked the period when functions of idumi material culture among the Tiriki was still intact with minimal external interference while 2014 give as the opportunity and adequate space to explore whether the cultural material interrelated with circumcision have changed or remain intact.

The colonial period upto 2014 has been characterized by enormous change visa avi contuinity in the use of idumi material culture as will be examined in the next chapter.
This chapter focuses on the functions of *idumi* material culture in the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and reincorporation stages. The functionalism theory is used in this chapter to guide the study. The chapter concludes that cultural material made at every stage in *idumi* perform specific function. This cultural material function as an avenue through which the traits the Tiriki associate with men like aggressiveness, strength and persistence are emphasized and imparted. Apart from this cultural material performing the task of transiting boys into “men”, it also functions as a channel through which the Tiriki culture is transmitted.

4.2 The functions of Tiriki circumcision (*idumi*) material culture in the Preparatory stage

The Preparatory stage is the preliminary phase in *idumi* when *vasakhulu vi idumi* perform initiation rituals involving the suffocation of a defectless male sheep in the *kavukolosi* or *kavunyonje*, from where they emerge singing *lwumbi lyu vukhulu – hoyo hee* after a successful ritual. However, as earlier noted Sangale (2005) mentions the strangling of a white a goat (2005:128). Though the animal used for the sacrifice differ, the fact remains that a ritual sacrifice is performed to usher in the *idumi* season as was previously done in the early years of 1850 when the Tiriki ancestors from whom *idumi* was received performed similar rituals to divine the *idumi* season. During fieldwork in one of the *kavukolosi*, I noted that a male sheep that has no defect instead of a goat is suffocated in the ritual performed to divine the status of the *idumi* season.
The informants exposition on the material culture in the preparatory stage revealed that *idumi* is associated with spirits (*misambwa*) which have to be appeased by sacrificing a defectless male sheep in the *kavukolosi* or *kavunyonje*. In conjunction with informants, male parents disclosed that the function of sacrificing a male sheep is intendend not only to “purify” the *kavunyonje*, but also to dedicate the *idumi* season to *misambwa ji idumi* in order to “calm” *idumi* so that it does not “swallow” the initiates during the process of transition to manhood (interview, April 29th, 2016). Undeniably, the performance of *idumi* is religiously biased as illustrated in the execution of a ritual sacrifice to appease *misambwa ji idumi* which are evoked to guarantee a favourable season for *idumi*; and that there exist dynamic spirits in the *kavunyonje* and this may explain why their purification is necessary.

During fieldwork, informants confirmed that *vasakhulu vi idumi* usually sing *lwumbi lyu vukhulu – Hoyo hee* after a successful ritual sacrifice in the *kavukolosi* or *kavunyonje*. For instance, *Vadiri vu muhrumbi* in agreement with informants stressed that, *lwumbi lyu vukhulu – Hoyo hee* sung by *idumi* elders after a successful ritual performance in the *kavunyonje* functions as a communication tool that reminds prospective *idumi* candidates, their parents, relatives, and circumcisers that the year is for *idumi*, and that the ceremonies associated with it have began; and that this song is also sung during last funeral rites involving elder custodians of *idumi* material culture in order to send them honourably to the ancestral world of the ‘living dead’ (interview, December, 28th, 2015). That being so, relating *idumi* circumcision material culture
such as songs to activities like funeral rites establishes that idumi defines the whole life cycle of a Mutiriki.

As previously discussed, candidates for idumi usually dance on the roads holding malande on the head immediately the elders announce the idumi season. In concensus with interviewees for instance, elders liable for the custodianship of tsirhumbi emphasized that, malande functions as a tool used by uninitiated boys to communicate their candidature for idumi. Additionally, malande is an idumi material whose function is to reinforce the resolve and the demand of prospective candidates for idumi to “enter” manhood and to emphasize to the public that, it is himself who is asking for transition to manhood and that no one is forcing him (interview, May 8th, 2016). Sangale (2005) mentions uninitiated boys dancing with Malande (2005:132). In consequence, its evident that though malande functions as an overt material utilized by prospective candidates for idumi to confirm their single-hearted resolve and readiness to transit from musoleli to musaza. In view of this, the candidates for idumi dancing with Malande exemplifies the function of the youth through whom the culture of idumi is to be upheld and carried to the next generation as evidenced in dancing with malande held on the head. In the Tiriki context of idumi, the function of malande is to portray prospective initiates “demand” for the status of manhood as manifested by dancing with it on the head.

As initially submitted by informants, prospective candidates for idumi ordinarily go through the process of khungitswa in the preparatory stage before assembling in the homestead of an elder who accommodate them at night during idumi rituals. Male
prents in concordance with informants stated that, “if prospective initiates are to abandon boyhood habits, severance of the old domestic ties with their mothers is necessary to enable them develop the traits such as masculinity, independence, and identity which the Tiriki ascribe to manhood”, and hence the process of *khuvungitswa* which delinks them from the familiar home territory performs this task (interview, April 29th, 2016). Consequently, the primary function of taking away the boy from their parents homestead in the process of *khuvungitswa* is to disconnect him from the mothers’ influence to enable him get waxed to the world of men that require manly qualities such as being masculine and resilient. However, this does not imply that women role in constructing their sons attributes is negligible, since the function of motherhood is incomparable.

Moreover, interviewees disclosed that prospective candidates’ hair is shaved (*kuveka lisu*) before guiding them to the forest to go through the *idumi* ritual of *imoni* test and the process of *kwaya* which involves *khukhwesa* or *khung’usa* where nudity is a prerequisite. *Vadiri vu murhumbi* in oneness with interviewees, explained that the basic function of *kuveka lisu* is not only to demonstrate a new beginning, but also to separate the boys from their previous ritually unclean childhood status (Interview, December 28th, 2015). Conspicuously, the function of *Khuveka lisu* is to demarcate the previous childhood status from that of manhood which the initiates anticipate to acquire. However, in what is referred to as the ritual of removing (shaving) childhood hair, the hair of male children born among the culturally oriented Tiriki is shaved to acknowledge ancestral paternal geneology as well as to usher the child in the family;
and hence in the same way the initiates hair is shaved to dedicate them to the ancestral spirit of *idumi* as they transit to the new status.

*Idumi* candidates also go through the ritual of *imoni* test in the preparatory stage. Informants disclosed that, candidates for *idumi* are normally arranged in order from *jivuleti* to *itaweti* when undergoing the ritual. Elder custodians of *idumi* material culture in concordance with informants disclosed that, *idumi* among the Tiriki is the “eye” (*idumi yu mutirichi ni imoni*) which is a prerequisite for attaining manhood. The task of the ritual of the *imoni* test is not only to prepare the boys emotionally as well as spiritually to imbue them with strength and courage to endure the circumcision ordeal, but also *kulokha vasoleli* in order to “capture” their mind for the purpose of drawing them into circumcision without fear; and that the ranking of the initiates from *jivuleti* to *itaweti* functions as an avenue through which social disposition and esteem for the age graded structure are reinforced in *dumi* (interview, April 6th, 12th, 2016). Certainly *imoni* test serves the function of concretizing bravery and firmness of the initiates on their “journey” to manhood, and that the initiate who flinches or tries to resist in the process of “cutting” the foreskin is said to have failed not only the ritual of *imoni* test, but also the test to manhood.

As such, basing on the intention of *idumi*, it is noticeable that the function of the *imoni* test ritual is to embolden the initiates to guard against crying, an attribute ascribed to women. However, crying is not “womanish” but a response to pain stimuli, and hence this may explain why the pain regulating drug is usually administered to the initiates’ in the current circumcision scenario to alleviate pain, and hence address the
concern of the young initiates who may respond negatively to circumcision (FGD2, May 21st, 2016).

As previously mentioned by informants, the ritual of imoni test heralds the initiates’ emerging from the forest shihekhenye dancing with isenende held firmly with the left hand on their head. Male parents, for instance, disclosed that malicious people in the crowds may influence candidates to fear idumi or even bleed profusely after the “cutting” of the foreskin, and hence the isenende given to each initiate functions as lilokho to guard against people with tsimoni tsindamanu as well as neutralize any destructive witchcraft which might be directed at them; and that the initiates dancing shihekhenye functions as a ‘revolt’ against the uninitiated statusless position from which they are destined to depart through idumi (interview, April 29th, 2016). Apparently, uninitiated youths among the Tiriki have no social status and hence dancing shihekhenye function as an overt demonstration of relinquishing the childhood status from which they will never return. However, the value and status of people should not be tagged to initiation or luck of it but to the humanity aspect. The initiates holding and dancing with isenende is to conceptually distract their minds from thinking about uncertainties regarding idumi to enable them remain focused on the qualities to be displayed in the course of attaining manhood.

As previously mentioned, all transitional stages in idumi are accompanied with specific songs. Interviewees revealed that, idumi songs perform the function of moderating the intention of the various stages in idumi ritual cycle as well as functioning as a mirror through which societal conventions are communicated.
consequence, specific songs are sung in the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and shalukhu stages. In the introductory stage, Vadiri vu murhumbi in accord with interviewees’ for instance, explained that the idumi song hoyo hee sung by elders after a successful ritual sacrifice in the kavunyonje performs the task of a theme tone proclaiming the idumi season; and that when candidates for idumi emerge from the forest dancing with isenende held on the head on the afternoon prior to circumcision, the same song which carries a war tone perform the role of informing idumi candidates that the time to face the enemy with courage, and in this case the enemy of boyhood has come and there is no retreat (interview, December 28th, 2015). Supposedly, the idumi song hoyo hee was sung by victorious warriors returning from war; and that warriorhood comprised the initiated, and hence the involvement of persons who are yet to be initiated in this song on the occasion of idumi sparks a contradiction. However, the song does not only perform the purpose of anticipating victory as well as emboldening the initiates to face circumcision with courage but also carries the messages admonishing cowardice (FGD3, May 28th, 2016). Irrefutably, apart from performing the role of inspiring and buttressing idumi candidates, the song cautions the candidates against trepidation.

Idumi is a well coordinated process. It ensures that anticipated candidates for idumi go through obligatory preliminary stages before metamorphosing to manhood. As earlier noted from the previous interaction with informants, the initiates on the afternoon preceding circumcision customarily retire to the homestead of a designated elder for accommodation at night where they are subjected to a variety of circumcision ordeals
including the scaring sound of masove or shingang’a, and the administration of an idumi oath. The initiates are cleansed in preparation for circumcision and also allowed to request masove to give them idumi. As earlier mentioned, the initiates are exposed to masove and an idumi oath as mechanisms to consolidate the process of transition to manhood.

For instance, vadiri vu khumatsi in congruent with informants, stressed that masowe functions as a platform for attaining ritual purity for the initiates before undergoing circumcision, and this is achieved by subjecting them to the threatening sound of bullroarers (masove, ji-ma-sove) to persuade and terrify them into revealing the forbidden activities they may have committed to being absolved (interview, April 25th, 2016). In addition, elders given the responsibility of the custodianship of tsirhumbi informed me that, whenever a boy goes for idumi, he may not come back a “live”. He may succumb to excessive bleeding and dehydration after circumcision or he may have his penis chopped off due to involvement in forbidden acts which renders him ritually unclean. As such, the initiates must be “purified” in preparation for the “cutting” of the foreskin, and hence masove functions as an avenue to achieve this purity by scaring the initiates into revealing mijilo they might have committed for them to be absolved by circumcision elders in order to attain ritual purity to be guaranteed safe circumcision in the kavunyonje.

Furthermore, interviewees explained that, the kavunyonje where the circumcision ritual takes place is not only a sacred site but also associated with misambwa which require those undergoing idumi to be clean and ritually upright. For instance, elders
entrusted with the custodianship of tsirhumbi in concurrence with informants, explained that idumi as a ritual is associated with misambwa which are averse to ritual contamination, as such masove functions as a means through which the initiates are made to confess the forbidden acts in order to be absolved in preparation for the ritual of “cutting” the foreskin which is averse to ritual uncleanness (interview, May 8th, 2016). With certainty, masove is a concept muted to instill fear that leaves the initiates emotionally apprehensive as concerns idumi. However, it’s worth appreciating that the masove encounter functions as a means of reminding idumi candidates about the dos and donts with their implication forthwith.

Informants further revealed that, on the same night of the masowe encounter, an idumi oath is administered on all the initiates. For instance, Vadiri vu murhumbi in concensus with informants stressed that an idumi oath does not only function as a ritual that bind idumi candidates to the Tiriki custom but as a warning against those disclosing idumi secrets to jevusevekeni and women, since if they do, they will “ripe like a banana” and die. In addition, an idumi oath functions as a “shield and a “weapon” that guards and protects the authenticity of idumi (Interview, April 25th, 2016). Thus, an idumi oath perform the task of providing checks and balances on how the initiates are to interact with the outside world concerning classified information on idumi (FGD3, May 28th, 2016). In essence the administration of an oath is often associated with a covert organization of which idumi is not. However, it is evident that an idumi oath is not designed to inculcate the art of cultural fundamentalism but to enforce and solidify the culture of idumi which require the initiates to internalize the
importance of guarding information revealed to them in the process of transition to manhood. As such, in the preparatory stage which precedes the circumcision stage, an *idumi* oath serves as a unifying factor for all indigenously circumcised Tiriki boys, who are obliged to guard the secrets of *idumi* that forms the foundation of their transmutation to manhood. From the foregone discussion, its observable that *idumi* is inseparable from the cultural material which are religiously harnessed at every stage to fulfill the customs of transforming the boys into adulthood among the Tiriki who subscribe to indigenous circumcision. Following is a discussion on the function of *idumi* material culture in the circumcision stage.

4.3 The function of Tiriki circumcision (*idumi*) material culture in the Circumcision stage

Circumcision is a stage involving the actual process of “cutting” the foreskin from the penis in the *kavunyonye* or *shivanda*. Interviewees revealed that, on the occasion preceding mass circumcision and circumcision of *jivuleti* to officially open the *idumi* season, a male sheep that has no defect usually of one colour ‘brown’ or ‘red’ is sacrificed in the *kavunyonye*. Indeed, during fieldwork as earlier mentioned, I established that a male sheep that has no defect is sacrificed when performing the ritual of inaugurating *idumi* season.

For instance, elders entrusted with the custodianship of *idumi* material culture in harmony with interviewees stressed that, *idumi* is interrelated with *misambwa* which are regarded as the living dead, and who are expected to come and witness the process of transmogrification of the initiates to manhood; and that, failure to honour the
misambwa with sacrifices, as it is believed may harm the initiates and the entire process of idumi. That being the case, the ritual sacrifice performed to officially ‘open’ the idumi season is enshrined in religious beliefs directly linked to misambwa, and hence the sacrifice executes a religious function that beckons the idumi spirits for a conducive idumi season. In addition, the preference for the sacrifice of a spotless male sheep that has one colour accomplishes the function of attracting calmness and problem free season anticipated in the whole process of the idumi ritual cycle (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015)

Further, elders entrusted with the custodianship of tsirhumbi in concurrence with informants explained that, the ritual sacrifice of unblemished male sheep perform the function not only of appeasing misambwa but evoking them to “come” and “consecrate” (khusalisa) the idumi season, as well as deter any other charm from malicious people who may harbor evil intention of harming the initiates (interview, May 8th, 2016). In view of the rituals executed, it is observable that Idumi is ancestrally designated as illustrated in misambwa being evoked through a ritual sacrifice of unblemished male sheep to “bless” and “protect” the initiates. However, it is important to mention that these ancestral spirits are not called upon in daily life, but are occasionally evoked on special circumstances such as during idumi, and hence this should not be construed as sanctioning ancestral worship but interaction with culture.

As mentioned earlier, jivuleti is circumcised first to officially “open” the idumi season in which a pattern which depicting circumcision age grade seniority is adhered to. Interviewees disclosed that among the Tiriki, elders in the senior age-grade lead junior
ones by providing the necessary material culture for use not only in the circumcision stage but also in the performance of all *idumi* circumcision rituals, and hence this functions to articulate and sustain the ordered social hierarchy and structure among the Tiriki.

Furthermore, interviewees stressed that before mass circumcision, a ritual is performed in which the son from the most senior circumcision age grade is usually chosen and offered as a “sacrifice” by making him the first to be circumcised to shed the first ritual blood which plays an important function in *idumi* ritual process. In concurrence with interviewees, *vadiri vu khumatsi* expressed that, there are two types of *jivuleti*; *jivuleti wu murhumbi* who is usually at the head of the line during the *imoni* test ritual and who is the first to be circumcised, and *jivuleti* who is circumcised in advance to ‘open’ the circumcision season and in this case the son of the elder in the oldest age group oldest age group. In concurrence with interviewees, *vadiri vu khumatsi* for instance expressed that *jivuleti* who is circumcised in advance to “open” the circumcision session functions as a “sacrifice”, and that the courage he displays during the process is significant for all *idumi* candidates throughout Tirikiland.

Moreover, its deemed bad luck for *jivuleti* (the one who faces the knife first) to cry or faint when undergoing circumcision, and hence circumcising *jivuleti* first does not only serve the function of inaugurating and blessing the *idumi* season by shedding the first blood but also functions as a trendsetter and the yardstick with which the response of all other initiates is to gauged during the process of “cutting” the foreskin (interview, April 25th, 2016). Indeed, members in the (FGD3, May 28th, 2016)
mentioned that the son of an elder in the senior age being circumcised first to open the circumcision session in the *kavunyonjes* (FGD3, May 28th, 2016). However, during fieldwork in one of the *kavunyonje*, interviewees disclosed that this practice is gradually diminishing as some elders in the senior age do not prefer giving their grand children to be circumcised first in advance as an offering due to the fear of witchcraft associated with it.

Additionally, *vadiri vu murhumbi* explained that, the circumcision of *jivuletî* functions as a determinant of the fate and reaction of all other initiates to the circumcision process, and hence depending on how *jivuletî* reacts and behaves during the process of “cutting” the foreskin, other initiates may follow *jivuletî* example. If *jivuletî* cries during the process of “cutting” the foreskin, it signals cowardice, and yet a “real” man must endure the pain and be firm from the start to the end of the process of “cutting” the foreskin. To show cowardice during the circumcision process demonstrates that the candidate will not handle the manhood challenges (Interview, December 28th, 201). As a matter of fact, the courage displayed by *jivuletî* during circumsciscion functions as a confidence building process that demonstrates that all *idumî* candidates will be firm and finally transform into men the society desire. That being the case, its observable that whichever way *jivuletî* who “open” the circumcision session responds to circumcision will influence the reaction of all other initiates to circumcision, and hence they are held hostage by *jivuletî*. The insinuation that *jivuletî* determines the reaction of the rest of the initiates to circumcision may not be foolproof since persons
react to different stimuli in different ways and this may not be possible for jivuleti alone to determine the whole process.

Circumcision and rituals interrelated with it take place in the kavunyonje. However, informants alluded to the fact that, the kavunyonje is not only a place for performing the function of circumcising the initiates but also religious functions related to idumi. For example, vadiri vu murhumbi in unison with informants stressed that specific sacred site within the kavunyonje, especially near the ihriru is not only used for the function of male circumcision ceremonies but functions as a site for performing religious rites that enhance the alteration of the initiates into manhood. Vadiri vu murhumbi noted that idumi is interrelated with misambwa believed to reside in the kavunyonje, and hence the kavunyonje serves the purpose of as a shrine where indigenous prayers and ritual sacrifices regarding idumi are performed (interview, April 25th, 2016).

Moreover, interviewees disclosed that the kavunyonje is often positioned in a place that has natural forest cover with different variety of indigenous trees and vegetation that contribute significantly to idumi. Male parents in agreement with interviewees, for instance, revealed that, the kavunyonje serves as a source of acquiring certain plant materials used in idumi to impart the traits of manhood into the initiates such as isambakhalwa that stings painfully; and that, apart from functioning as a place for sheltering and camouflage ritual elders and initiates’ when performing those idumi activities that are strictly secret, the kavunyonje also functions as a site that “preserves” and “guards” idumi secrets from jevusevekeni (interview, April 29th,
In consequence, the illustrative approach noted in the role of the *kavunyonje* in *idumi* leaves no doubt that the *kavunyonje* is the epicenter of *idumi* activities that goes beyond the magnified function of circumcising the initiates among the Tiriki. However, the position of the *kavunyonje* as a shrine is threatened by encroachment resulting from unquenchable appetite for more space to farm and lack of clear guidelines to preserve the groves.

Furthermore, informants disclosed that prior to circumcision the initiates entering the *kavunyonje* perform the ritual of “crossing” the river (*khwambukha mujera*) under the guidance of *mudiri* carrying *limuli* to the *mulinga* where the ritual of *imoni* test takes place before circumcision. Elder custodians of *idumi* material culture in concordance with informants revealed that *limuli* performs the function of witchcraft (*lilokho*) that is believed to delay rain as well as divert evil to allow the *idumi* process to proceed, while *khwambukha mujera* does not only function as an act of separating *idumi* candidates from childhood to adulthood, but also remind them that the time to transmute from *musolelli* to the new status of *musaza* is imminent (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). In consequence, the actions executed in *idumi* are premeditated in conjunction with the natural forces and the environment as reflected in *lilokho* to divert evil and *khwambukha mujera* to signal the new status in which the initiates are dramatically entangled.

As scrutinized earlier, interviewees alluded to the fact that circumcision operation is performed in the *kavunyonje* by skillful *vadiri wu khumatsi* who initially used indigenous circumcision knives (*injeso, plu - tsincheso*) which were ritually cleansed
to perform the task of transmuting *idumi* candidates from childhood to ‘adulthood’. As previously cited, Sangale (2005) mentions *vadiri vu khumatsi* using *vivyia vi kasi* or *tsincheso*-plu, -singular- *injeso* to circumcise the initiates. However, as spoken of earlier during fieldwork, disposable scalpel blades have replaced indigenous *tsincheso* which are, however, “cleansed” ritually before executing the circumcision function to metamorphose the initiates from boyhood to manhood, and in this case, the scalpel blades which are ritually groomed for the circumcision purpose. For instance, *vadiri wu khumatsi* in concurrence with informants disclosed that, *injeso* functions as an implement employed to transmute and grant manhood to the boy by “cutting” the foreskin to mold and project (*khureka*) his penis into what looks like an ‘AK 47’ ammunition (interview, December 25th, 2015).

Intrinsically, elders charged with the custodianship of *tsirhumbi* consonantly stressed that, *injeso* is a ritually “sanitized” circumcision knife used in the *kavunyonje* to transform *idumi* candidates from boyhood to manhood. When pressed further to shade more light on the function of *injeso* as a ritually “decontaminated” circumcision knife with regard to *idumi* among the Tiriki, one of the elders charged with the custodianship of *tsirhumbi* said, “an uncircumcised male is socially an ‘infant’ (*mwana*) who is ritually unclean; a circumcised male is socially a man (*musaza*) who is ritually clean”. In view of this, *mudiri wu khumatsi* uses *injeso* to implement the task of reconstructing an initiate from the ritually unclean reputation of boyhood to a ritually polished degree of manhood by “cutting” off *lidole* from the penis (interview, May 8th, 2016). Thus, *injeso* is a ritually fortified circumcision knife used by the “man
maker” - *mudiri* *wu* *khumatsi* to effectuate the purpose of giving “birth” to manhood by “cutting” the foreskin from the boys’ penis. Undoubtedly *injeso* is not a typical but a transformative ‘cutting’ implement which disconnects the initiate from the previous stage interrelated with boyhood to manhood. However, the manhood in this context in not construed to imply physical development but status alteration from uninitiated to initiate.

Like other *idumi* stages, songs are sung in the circumcision stage. Interaction with interviewees in a discourse on songs in the circumcision stage revealed that once the initiates conclude the final ritual of the eye test in the *kavunyonje*, *mukali* *wi* *idumi* customarily will howl: *Hoi hoo hoye hehoo*, and thereafter sing the song of *Asiyo* that draws the attention of the inititaes to the ‘change of the environment’ in the *kavunyonje*. This is followed later by several specific songs communicating to the candidates that the hour to transmogrify into manhood has come. For instance, *Vadiri vu khumatsi* in oneness with interviewees stressed that the songs sung at the circumcision stage in the *kavunyonje* do not only implement the task of “pulling” and bringing *idumi* candidates nearer and nearer to the knife but also inform them over and over again that transmogrification to manhood requires courage and bravery. The songs execute the role of “luring” the initiates into circumcision to become *Musaza*, a title meant only for circumcised men among the Tiriki (interview, April 25th, 2016). Additionally, male parents explained that the purpose of songs in the circumcision stage is to convey to the initiates that *idumi* is the only channel through which the ‘respected’ status of manhood is obtained (interview, April 29th, 2016). In essence, the songs executed at the circumcision stage are predetermined with designs to
psychologically entice candidates to respond positively to circumcision with a promise of status elevation. Though the songs function as a catalyst to induce courage in the initiates during the circumcision operation, they conspiratorially camouflage the initiates who scream during the operation on the penis.

With the aforementioned discussion on circumcision, the initiates are served with indigenous porridge made from vule after the operation. Informants underscored the significant role it plays in idum after circumcision. In concensus with informants, male parents explained that the purpose of serving the initiates with vusela vu vule is not only to replenish and boost their energy after undergoing a very grueling idumi ritual process, but also to confirm that the initiated boy belongs to the man who fathered and the woman who gave birth to the boy and carried the porridge to the kavunyonje (interview, April 29th, 2016). Indeed, vusela vu vule or brown Ugali (made from millet flour) is very significant in cultural functions such as idumi. Though the insistence on serving the initiates with vusela vu vule is based on the nutrutional value to help them recover their strength and on the customary base of affirming the tenet of the initiate as the bona fide son of the parents, porridge made from vule affirms the affinity to indigenous culture. However, porridge made from maize flour has also found its way to the initiates therefore undermining the cultural functionality initially ascribed to the indigenous porridge of authenticating the paternal linkage.

Further, informants revealed that, after serving the initiates with vusela vu vule, they dress in shivambo before leaving the kavunyonje for the tsirhumbi accompanied by a group of older initiated men who chase away all uninitiated onlookers. As noted
earlier informants stressed that, Tiriki initiates dressing in *shivambo* before leaving the *kavunyonje*. For example, elders entrusted with the custodianship of *idumi* material culture in tandem with informants explained that, the function of *shivambo* in which the initiates dress before leaving the *kavunyonje*, is not only to shield the circumcised penis from people with “bad” eyes, but also to demonstrate that their status has changed from that of the statusless uncircumcised boy to the most admired new status of manhood (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). This being the case, *shivambo* functions as attire that distinguishes the initiated from uninitiated since it’s only after circumcision that the initiates dress in *shivambo*.

Furthermore, with the preceding conversation on the value attributed to *malwa ki idumi Idumi*, informants noted that ceremonies interrelated with *idumi* would not be complete without brewing *malwa ki idumi* whose function is not only to inaugurate rituals effected on *idumi* candidates but also to expidite the transmutation of the initiates from boyhood to manhood the way the yeast used in beer brewing turns tasteless water to bitter alcohol; and hence *malwa ki idumi* such as *malwa ki shawenya*, *malwa khu muhalia*, *malwa ki tsinguvu*, *‘malwa ki shikong’o*, and *malwa ki shalukhu* is brewed for the purpose of heralding and celebrating these stages. The beer brewed is programmed to mature within three days to coincide with the actual occasion being commemorated. For instance, male parents in concordance with informants explained that, since *idumi* is likened to second ‘birth’, *malwa ki idumi* in the circumcision stage performs the function of “thanks giving” to the *idumi* spirit for having facilitated the transition of the initiate to mahood by guarding him against
evil forces which would have endangered his “journey” to manhood (interview, April 29th, 2016). In addition, elder custodians of tsirhumbi in concurrence with interviewees’, confirmed that, after the initiates undergoing a successful circumcision operation in the kavunyonje, a selected ritual elder uses the millet-brewed beer (malwa) that functions as an offering to appease as well as evoke blessings and protection from the ancestral spirits by spraying the beer using the mouth on the idumi shrine (gurusion) erected at a strategic place in the initiates home on the day of a successful transition to manhood but also on the occasion of shalukhu as they pass through shirivwa (interview, May 8th, 2016). That being so, it’s perceivable that the celebrations and actions enacted with the beer when commemorating the crucial stages in idumi appear to be stage - managed with an element of idumi spirits (misambwa kye idumi) in the mix. However, it is appreciable that apart from malwa ki idumi facilitating the celebration and inauguration of the changes in the status acquired by the initiates at every significant stage of transition, the beer drinking occasion performs the function of socialization and sharing resources which depict some of the aspects accentuated in idumi. In the next section that follows, I discuss idumi material culture in the seclusion stage in order to establish there functions.

4.4 The functions of Tiriki circumcision (idumi) material culture in the Seclusion stage

As aforementioned, the seclusion stage is the phase after the “cutting” of the foreskin when the initiates are considered ritually impure necessitating their isolation in a special hut called irhumbi. Informants disclosed that, apart from irhumbi functioning as a place set aside to enclose recuperating initiates from the public domain with a
view to guard against ritual contamination, it also executes the task of a “school" where the initiates receive socio-cultural instructions to prepare them for adult life as well as knowledge on *idumi*. For instance, *vadiri vu murhumbi* in solidarity with informants explained that, a part from functioning as a nursing home for the initiates, the *irhumbi* functions as a “school” where the initiates are not only given instructions in social cultural matters and various rules on social conduct, but its also a place where knowledge on *idumi* material culture with regard to *lilokho* is disseminated to the initiates. In addition, the initiates are not only taught to observe particular rules of behaviour such as not entering into their parents’ bedroom as well as the bedroom of huts of people not of their age, but also receive formal instruction about the conduct expected of them once they become full “men” after the end of seclusion period (interview, December 28\(^{th}\), 2015). Indeed, during fieldwork in one of the *ihrumbi*, I noted casual visitors occasionally coming to *ihrumbi* carrying assorted plant material (*idumi*) to teach the initiates as well as to listen to the teachings and thereby gaining more knowledge about culture and *idumi*. *Irhumbi* is a place where the initiates acquire socio-cultural knowledge which is transmitted through the material culture incorporated in *idumi* as well as the routine followed in this seclusion hut.

Further, male parents in concensus with informats stressed that *irhumbi* functions as a “learning centre” where the initiates receive instructions on the value of respecting elders, disassociating from ‘disobedient’ peers who might influence them negatively, adult life and rules on sexual conduct such as not seducing and sleeping with menstruating, married women and widows. Additionally, male parents emphasized
that irhumbi functions as awarning centre where the initiates are instructed to avoid entering the cooking section (isisi) (interview, April 29th, 2016).

Furthermore, Irhumbi as an initiation “school” does not only serve the educative function. Informants’ disclosed that; irhumbi performs the role of socializing the newly circumcised boys to manhood by focusing on group activities that are prosecuted in the irhumbi. For example, elder custodians of idumi material culture in consonance with interviewees’ stressed that, all the initiates in irhumbi undertake activities such as eating, sleeping, and singing at the same time as agroup, and after being commanded by mudiri and this sways them to think and act as a social group (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). Furthermore, Vadiri vu khumatsi added that, irhumbi functions as a place where the socialisation process is continued by providing an opportunity for the newly circumcised boy to begin identifying himself in a different way such as being a “man” (musaza) or someone who can lead others given that he has undergone idumi (interview, April 25th, 2015). In essence, life in irhumbi is deliberately made a little bit difficult in order to enhance the abandonment of individualism for group tasks that make the initiates to imbrace the need and value of the social presence of other members in society. Informants disclosed that, the irhumbi does not only function as a center for socializing the initiates into manhood, but also provide a stage for the initiates to learn new roles, re-enact and develop new identities. Therefore it’s worth noting that, Irhumbi as an initiation “school” that ushers in an educational situation is also a social situation.
From the above exposition, it is justifiable to liken the function of *irhumbi* in *idumi* to an “education” institution where enculturation of the initiate to facilitate adoption to his socio-cultural environment takes place. That being the case, it’s apparent that while in *irhumbi*, *mukhulu* is taught the overt behaviour patterns of his society, as well as covert thought patterns and value systems so that he will think, act, and behave in ways acceptable and desirable to the community. The researcher has consequently been persuaded to comply himself with the saying that, the total body of instructions at the *irhumbi* can be likened to schooling, and hence, apart from the educative role, it’s observable that the *irhumbi* - like any other social institution performs a socialisation role in the life of an initiate.

As earlier mentioned, the initiates in *irhumbi* are ritually adulterated. Informants alluded to the fact that, the initiates are ritually contaminated with the circumcision blood which makes it obligatory for them to observe the ritual proscription against accessing food with their fingers, and instead use *tsisacheti* and *vyuhu* not only for the task of serving food, but also prompting them about their ritually polluted status of *mukhulu*. Indeed, during fieldwork in one of the *irhumbi*, I noted the presence of indigenous utensils such as calabashes (*vyuhu*) made from gourds, wooden spoon and pointed sticks (*tsisacheti*), however, modern spoons, folk, plates and cups were also noticeable. This points to the cultural mix with appreciation that some utensils are available to hygienically serve food and guard against contamination and this is accomplished by proscribing initiates from accessing food with their fingers to guard against ritually filthy status caused by the bleeding circumcision wound. For instance,
*vadiri vu murhumbi* in concordance with informants explained that, the use of *tsisacheti* and *vyuhu* to serve food does not only perform the task of socially demarcating the transition between the blood stained stage of circumcision that renders the initiates ritually besmirched and the progressively ritually pristined healing stage of manhood, but also serves the function of cushioning the initiates from the impurity caused by circumcision blood (interview, December 28th, 2015). That being the case, it’s discernible that the use of *tsisacheti* and *vyuhu* to serve food to the initiates perform the task of demonstrating the changes that are occurring in the social status configuration from childhood to adulthood. However, the condition in which the initiate finds himself after circumcision which require holding the bleeding penis with fingers in the right healing position makes the fingers unhygienic to handle food, hence the need to use *tsisacheti* and *vyuhu* and other similar utensils. Moreover, proscriptions in *idumi* are taboo based.

In essence, the ban not to handle food with fingers as a taboo while in seclusion does not only function to ascertain the health of the initiates but also to sustain the changes in the initiate’s social status from childhood to adulthood, and this calls for increased internalization and acting upon societal values which include customs, manners, modes, patterns of behaviour, and conformity to norms set up by the community and culture.

Furthermore, interviewees revealed that, several days after circumcision, *vakhulu* are guided to the river by *vadiri vu murhumbi* to wash and thereafter smeared with “white” *lidohi-inyenyi* and this is often performed whenever they move out of the *irhumbi* into
the public. For instance, *vadiri vu khumatsi* in agreement with interviewees stressed that, the function of smearing the initiates with *lidohi-inyenyi* is not only meant to guard them against dangerous spirits, but also to prompt them about the fearful seclusion ritual of *kwivalikha* which calls for separation from members of the public in order to protect them from smudging on the strength that members of the public in their day to day activities might have interacted with situations that are incompatible with *idumi* such as attending burial ceremonies (interview, April 25th, 2016). Elders entrusted with the custodianship of *tsirhumbi* further explained that, since the season of *idumi* is said to be one of great vulnerability to evil spirits that may cause mayhem to the initiates, they are normally smeared with “white” *lidohi-inyenyi* for the purpose of invoking spiritual protection not only in the course of the difficult journey of transition from *muyayi* to *musaza* during the seclusion period but also when they venture outside the *tsirhumbi* to perform *vukhulu* (interview, May 8th, 2016). The spiritual protection notwithstanding, the “white” clay is very conspicuous and attracts public attention hence smearing the initiates with it performs the task of alerting members of the public to keep distance when they notice them from far in order to avoid interacting with them before the end of the seclusion period. With this in mind, its perceptible that the “white” *lidohi-inyenyi* which intimate the fearful ritual of *kwivalikha* is not only intended to camouflage and cushion the initiates from unnecessary public anxiety but to frighten members of the public because of the awareness of the danger portrayed in the white clay which functions as a warning against the dreaded ritual of *kwivalikha*
*Idumi* is performed to initiate the boys into adulthood. Informants disclosed that, while in seclusion and when their penises are almost healed and about to leave seclusion, *vakhulu* are guided to a river by *vadiri vu murhumbi* to perform a ritual act in water that resembles a man having sex with a woman in what is referred to as having “sex” with a Terik woman (*khukhunda Mushere Murwa*). Male parents in congruent with informants explained that, the purpose of this ritual of *khukhunda Mushere* is not only to introduce the initiates to adult life where sex is performed for procreation and continuation of society but also to demystify sex which hitherto was considered a secret and a matter that cannot be mentioned in public (interview, April 29th, 2016). Consequentially, *idumi* is an introduction to marriage where sexual intercourse is the underlying bond, hence through the ritual of *khukhunda Mushere Murwa* the initiate is informed that the function of his circumcised and modeled organ is primarily for reproduction through sex but not just for decoration. Though its obvious that the ritual of *khukhunda Mushere Murwa* performs the task of demystifying the notion about sex by “commissioning” the initiate’s sexual organ, its not a licence for immediate sexual entanglement after the end of the seclusion period but a confidence building ritual to create consciousness about the role of sex in human life which should rightly be executed between man and woman, and this may be the reason why reference is made to a Terik woman (*Mushere Murwa*). Substantially, the movements made in water during the ritual perform the task of regularizing the sensitivity of the penis from the harsh encounter with the circumcision knife.
As previously reported, the initiates in seclusion are obliged to wear *isumadi* and *ingolole* whenever they move out of the *irhumbi* into the public domain. Informants explained that, *isumadi* is the “indigenous” garment for Tiriki men and whoever “enters” manhood is officially dressed in it in a ceremony crowned by *malwa ki zinguvu*. During fieldwork, I established that the initiates among the Tiriki are brought *isumadi* to replace *shivambo* in an occasion celebrated by *malwa ki tsinguvu*. For instance, elders entrusted with the custodianship of *idumi* material culture in consonance with informants emphasized that *isumadi* does not only function as a dancing attire, but also serves as the basic “indigenous” cloth for Tiriki men which the initiates wear by day and sleep on at night and whoever “enters” manhood is obliged to dress in *isumadi* (Interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). Consequently, *isumadi* performs the task of epitomizing indigenous culture of *idumi* through which the Tiriki boys “enter” manhood. This may explain why initiates performing *vukhulu*, normally sing to warn boys who have not been circumcised according to the Tiriki custom (*jevusekeni*) against admiring their mighty cloth, “*inguvu*” since they declined to be circumcised indigenously so as to qualify to wear *isumadi* (*Vadiri vu khumaatsi*, interview, April 25th, 2016). However, due to environmental changes and the young age of the initiates, the perception of *isumadi* as a garment on which initiates sleep on at night has been compromised since at some level blankets and beddings made of reeds (*machambi*) have been introduced in *irhumbi* for the comfort of the initiates.

Further, informants explained that in addition to *isumadi* the initiates also dress in *Ingolole* when venturing out of the seclusion hut. Male parents in concurrence with
informants, for instance, explained that the purpose of the *ingolole* is not to scare away women and children from approaching the initiates, but its task is to hide their facial identity since they are undergoing the seclusion rituals which prohibits facial exposure to the public to safeguard them from contracting a disease called *khu venyehka* (interview, April 29th, 2016). Under those circumstances in which the *Ingolole* is utilized, its noticeable that its integration in *idumi* is attached to a taboo which ought to be observed by the initiates in seclusion. However, the *Ingolole* is used to camouflage the initiate’s outward identity allowing the inner self to emerge in a safe context.

As previously discussed, Tiriki initiates routinely perform *vukhulu*. Informants explained that, *vukhulu* is not only performed to mark the climax of *idumi*, but functions as an avenue through which societal values, virtues, and history are communicated, and hence, because of the integrative nature of *idumi* music and dance, and other cultural elements in *idumi*, the Tiriki refer to the whole *idumi* music and dance as “*khushina vukhulu*”, which denotes “dancing circumcision music”. *Vadiri vu murhumbi* in unison with informants, for instance, stressed that the purpose of *vukhulu* is not primarily to entertain the initiates and the public, but effects the task of educating, empowering and transmuting boys into men by telling them through the songs what society expects of them given that they have now transformed to “men” (interview, December 28th, 2015). Further *vadiri vu murhumbi* added that, through a veiled language, *vukhulu* functions as a tool for “conveying” messages which cannot be communicated in daily discourse such as themes on sex and family life. Since
society expects boys to get married after idumi rituals, information on family life has to be conveyed through vukhulu songs in order to mould the initiates into “full” or “complete” men, and hence vukhulu plays this function well. For instance, vukhulu song such as fungula muliango tsomee (open the door, I pierce) has sexual connotation and fulfils the function of revealing matters on sex to the newly circumcised.

Furthermore, elder custodians of tsirhumbi disclosed that, the use of vulgar language while performing vukhulu does not only function as an avenue of socialization by rupturing cultural impediments on what should be spoken publicly consequently bringing together people of different identities in terms of age, gender and economic background, but also functions as a stage that enables the participants to play out their identities. Elder custodians of tsirhumbi added that, the last stage of vukhulu is generally dominate by the song “Sevule” whose function is to inform the community that idumi season and vukhulu have come to an end (interview, May 8th, 2016). Apart from vukhulu serving the role of re-uniting the initiates with their families, it also functions as a stage for expressing togetherness. This being noted on the functionality of vukhulu in idumi, it is perceivable that vukhulu is not just designed for entertainment but it’s laden with potent messages that unveil the cultural orientation of the Tiriki, and hence the complexion in which vukhulu is executed in the seclusion stage of idumi “mediate” the purpose behind the performance of idumi, which is to “make” men in society.

As initially discussed, the shikong’o ritual in idumi preceds the end of seclusion. Informants submitted that, prior to shikong’o ritual, the initiates’ cutomarily dance in
a headdress (*ikwalo*) which is fixed at the top of the *ingolole*, and as arule dance enthusiastically to shatter the *ikwalo*. Indeed, during fieldwork I established that, before the initiates are guided to the *kavunyonje* to receive the *shikong’o* ritual they dance exuberantly in an attempt to break the *ikwalo* fixed on the top of the *Ingolole*. *Vadiri vu khumatsi* in solidarity with informants, for instance, explained that what defines a man among the Tiriki is having “tough” muscles, being strong and resilient, and hence shattering several *tsikwalo* during *vukhulu* perform the task of testing these traits ascribed to manhood; and that, an initiate who break several *tsikwalo* during the last session of *vakhulu* is referred to as *umusaza* (one who is a “real” man) (interview, April 25\(^{th}\), 2016). Consequently, its evident that the artistic depiction of *vakhulu* dancing fanatically to smash several *tsikwalo* is intended to publicize masculinity traits such as strength, endurance, assertiveness, and resilience acquired by the initiates’ in the course of transmogrification to manhood. However, to smash *tsikwalo* should not be seen as the only standard to gauge manliness since other attributes such as deep voice and the male organ appeal to manly traits.

Furthermore, interviewees revealed that, initiates go through the last ritual of *kuhkuvwa shikong’o* in which they are presumably “clobberred to death” and gradually come back to “life” after three days of silence. This ritual involve exposing naked initiates to *Isambakhalwa ya maneje* which sting painfully and *Vunonera* which bite painfully as a way of grooming them to graduade into warriorhood. During fieldwork in one of the *kavunyonje’s*, I observed the initiates being subjected to *Isambakhalwa ya maneje* and *Vunonera* on the occasion of the *shikong’o* ritual. For instance, elders liable for the
custodianship of *tsirhumbi* in harmony with interviewees emphasized that, the *shikong’o* ritual does not only function as a platform through which the initiates are introduced to the community’s culture, beliefs, and spiritual values, but also functions as an avenue through which the previous ritually tainted childhood status, habits, identity and roles are “killed” to pave way for re-emergence of new status, identity, and roles of “real” manhood.

Fundamentally, the inclusion in the *shikon’go* ritual of *Isambakhwa* and *Vuronera* which sting and bite painfully respectively perform the task of inculcating the traits the Tiriki ascribe to manhood such as couragiousness, perserverance, persistence, aggressiveness and assertiveness which were qualities to be exhibited by the initiates who were now graduating into warrior class on the occasion of *shikong’o* (interview, May 8th, 2016). Furthermore, *vadiri vu murhunbi* in concensus with informants expressed that, the three days silence by the initiates’ perform the task of overtly communicating to the public that they are experiencing metamorphosis from *mukhulu* to anewly circumscised man status after a close brush with ‘death’ in the *shikong’o* ritual from which recovery is gradual (interview, December 28th, 2015).

Admittedly, *Shikong’o* ritual insinuates “clobberring the initiates to death” and who gradually come “back to life”. However, it performs another task other than what it purpots; it designates transmutation from childhood past to allow new manly attributes to emerge as well as facilitating the initiates graduation into warriors who were to shoulder the communitie’s defence. That being the case, administering the ritual of *Shikong’o* to young boys recruited for *idumi* in the current social dispensation, and
who may not understand the concept of warrihood is counterproductive since the
government has arrogated responsilities with regard to security. When the phase of
*kuhkuvwa shikong’o* is complete, the initiates are prepared for re-entry into the
society through reintegration rites, but now as ‘new’ persons. In the next section, I
examine the functions of *idumi* material culture in the reintegration stage.

4.5 The function of Tiriki circumcision (*idumi*) material culture in the

Reincorporation stage

Re-incorporation stage is the period after the performance of a rite of passage such as
*khushewva* among the Tiriki. Informants disclosed that, since *vakhulu* are considered
ritually ‘dead’ as a result of contamination by circumcision blood, they are confined to
*irhumbi* to isolate them from the public. Since the initiates ritually impure condition
militate against free interaction with ritually untainted “living” people, they have to
perform a number of rituals in order to be “hatched” into sanitized “full” men before
reintegration into society through an elaborate ceremony referred to as *shalukhu*.

The end of seclusion rituals is a precursor for the initiates’ re-integration in society.
For instance, elders liable for the custodianship of *idumi* material culture in
concurrence with informants disclosed that, rituals such as burning some of the items
used during seclusion, shaving off the initiate’s hair, bathing in a running stream,
passing through *shiribwa*, and *khulavitsa* are routinely performed to groom and
“hatch” the initiates’ into “full” men before rejoining society through an elaborate
ceremony referred to as *shalukhu* (leaving seclusion) (interview, December 6th, 12th,
2015). For instance, elders liable for the custodianship of *tsirhumbi* in concensus with
informants explained that, before the initiates leave the *irhumbi* for good on the eve of *shaluhku*, all disposable items like *tsisacheti, vyuhu, malala, shivambo* used in seclusion except *irhumbi, ingolole* and *lisumati* are burnt; and that the function of burning is not only to “dispose off” all the filth associated with *mukhulu* status, but also to safeguard them from witches who may use the remnant material from the circumcision rites to demage their manhood (interview, May 8th, 2016). That being so, the purpose of burning seclusion items is to purge the departure scene of contaminants to allow a friendly interactive environment.

Typically, before reintegration into society, the ritual of *khuuida* is performed on the initiates. Informants explained that, the *idumi* ritual processes ordinarily put the initiates into fellowship with ancestral spirits some of which may be detrimental to their life after the end of the *idumi* ritual cycle, and hence the ritual of *Khuuida* in which the initiates’ remove the *ingolore* to allow the ritual elder to spray their forehead and chest with *mavere* starting with *jivuleti* to the last *itaweti* has to be performed before *shalukhu* to allow them go unmasked in public. Male parents in consonance with informants, for instance, stressed that the function of the ritual of *Khuuida* on the eve of *shalukhu* is not only to perform the task of *khulavitsa* the newly circumcised from impurities and prohibitions associated with the seclusion stage, but also to remove the initiates who are now referred to as *viiha* from the status of *Vakhulu* plu, *mukhulu* -singular, to pave way for reintegration in society.

Additionally, the use of *mavere* in the ritual performs the purpose of *khukasisa* and conjure to the newly circumcisced *tsikhavi* (interview, April 29th, 2016). In view of
the ritual of *khuvida*, it’s observable that the task of this ritual is to decontaminate the impure status of *mukhulu* into authentic status of the *viiha* who are transmuting into adulthood. However, the adulthood status is not an immediate realization since the initiates are very young and still in the developmental stage.

As discussed before, interviewees revealed that, the initiates are guided to the outskirt of the *kavunyonje* after the ritual of *khuvida* where they assemble around a bonfire made by *idumi* elders to keep vigil prior to *shalukhu*, and while at the scene, they throw some sticks into darkness as if they were spears in the ritual “killing” of an imaginary enemy, dubbed “killing” *mulokoli* and thereafter retreats without looking back. *Vadiri vu murhumbi* in tandem with interviewees, for instance, explained that the bonfire lit by elders does not only perform the purpose of keeping the spirit of *idumi* “warm” but also “active” to facilitate the success of *shalukhu* (Interview, December 28th, 2015). From this perspective, *shalukhu* does not only function as an exit ceremony from seclusion, but also as a stage for the newly circumcised to return in the fold having attained new values that sustain societal fabric. However, *shalukhu* ceremony should not be seen as the only occasion to celebrate achievement made in life since its boy centered and encrypted in circumcision. Female children also have their successes which ought to be celebrated in a gorgeous way.

As mentioned previously, initiates customarily perform the ritual “killing” of an imaginary enemy by throwing sticks that look like spears into darkness. *Vadiri vu khumatsi* in unison with interviewees, for instance, explained that the act of ‘killing’ an imaginary enemy performed the task of prompting the newly circumcised to
understand their role as warriors whose responsibility lay in defending the interests of the community; and that throwing sticks into darkness and “not looking back” perform the duty of making the newly circumcised aware about their transmorgification to manhood as well as the shattering of the childhood past from which they will never return (interview, April 25th, 2015). In light of this, the typical role of throwing sticks like spears in the ritual “killing” of an imaginary enemy intended to fine-tune the concept of warriorhood as the initiates metamorphosed from ordinary boys. However, the indigenous function of warriorhood has been overtaken by events as the government has taken over the provision of security. Consequently, the newly circumcised should be sharpened into modern warriors who should “fight” the real enemy of ignorance and be predisposed to defend the communities’ position and interest in terms of modern ideas such as leadership, education, and employment opportunities at all levels of government.

Furthermore, informants revealed that, the newly circumcised participation in the ritual “killing” of an imaginary enemy prior to shalukhu renders them ritually blurred and have to perform the ritual of Khuveka lisu and Khwisinga in a running stream from where they emerge carrying lusibwa singing lwimbo lwi shalukhu that refers to a leopard in the morning of the day of shalukhu. For instance, male parents in solidarity with informants disclosed that, ritual of Khuveka lisu which is referred to as the ‘removal of seclusion hair’ performs the duty of disengaging the newly circumcised from the ritually insanitary mukhulu status to a new status of a “bride” mwiha to pave way for anew beginning and reintegration in society, while Khwisinga performs the
task of unfastening all the “filthy” affiliated with the previous mukhulu status as well as the contamination caused by the ritual “killing” of an imaginary enemy to facilitate the “hatching” (khwalula / khwalukha) to pave the way for reintegration in society; and that bathing in a running stream is supposedly designed to perform the role of ensuring a continuous flow of life after shalukhu (interview, April 29th, 2016).

Ordinarily, the rituals of Khuveka lisu and Khwisinga among the Tiriki are the last rites performed to extricate family members from the reserved status of death and mourning to bring them back into active life. However, in the case of idumi where the ritual object is the initiate who is suposedly exposed to all kinds of spirits and contaminants which can be catastrophic even after shalukhu, its observable that the rituals of Khuveka lisu and Khwisinga provide a mechanism to getting rid of unwanted seclusion status to facilitate social connection and interaction of the newly circumcised with members of the public as individuals with sanitized status. That being said, the rituals remain mystic.

Furthermore, interviewees explained that, after bathing in a flowing stream the newly circumcised as rule return to the homestead of an elder where they spent the first night prior to circumcision to pass through shirivwa as a senior elder performs the ritual of khuvida using maveere, as well as burning tsisenende used to dance the first day the initiates were taken for circumcision. Vadiri vu murhumbi in unanimity with interviewees, for instance, stressed that the task of the ritual of khuvida as they pass through the shilivwa constructed in the homestead of a senior elder is to effect the ritual of khukasisa and bestow tsikhavi to the entire newly circumcised corhot that
spent the night in the elder’s homestead prior to circumcision; and that, the burning of *tsisenende* on this occasion performed the role of communicating the end of the circumcision season and rituals to allow the newly circumcised assume manhood responsibilities as they to rejoin society (interview, December 28th, 2015). Plate 65

Illustrate the burning of *tsisenende* to demonstrate the end of *idumi* rituals rituals.

**Plate 65:** Burning *tsisenende* to demonstrate the end of *idumi* rituals.

![Plate 65: Burning tsisenende to demonstrate the end of idumi rituals.](image)

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 2nd September, 2015.

While standing at the *shirivwa* on the occasion of *shalukhu* during field work, I heard the elder performing the ritual of *khuvida* saying to the ‘brides’ “*mkase, muhindire, nmwivule vana*” meaning be blessed, live long, and give birth to children. Taking this into account, it’s discernible that the task of the ritual of *khuvida* at this stage is destined towards entrenching the intention of *idumi* whose purpose is to inculcate the
tenets of procreation in the initiates for continuity of the community, as confirmed in the statement “give birth to children”. Further, vadiri vu khumatsi explained that, burning tsisenende perform the purpose of indicating the completion of transmogrification rituals into manhood (interview 25th April, 2016).

As indicated earlier, idumi music and dance transcends the preparatory to the reintegration stage. Informants disclosed that, after the ritual bathing the newly circumcised carrying lusibwa emerge from the stream singing lwimbo lwi shalukhu - Hi koyohe-hikoyo. Ingoyi yivule. Uu nyenyanga alandola; ha ha alandola (the leopard has given birth; the one who wants me will see me. vadiri vu murhumbi in concensus with informants, for instance stressed that lwimbo lwi shalukhu performs the task of communicating to the public that viiha have “hatched” from seclusion as “men” with a new identity and attributes; and that lusibwa performs the role of overtly telling the public that their status has metamorphosed to that of the circumcised adults (interview, December 28th, 2015). In fact, through lwimbo lwi shalukhu the viiha tell the public that, “you see, we are now men out of seclusion. We are now here and those who want to see us can see us”. From this perspective, its apparent that lwimbo lwi shalukhu does not only function as a tool through which the newly circumcised project themselves as men who are ready to arrogate societal obligations, but also to inform the public that they have chased away boyhood and all its filthy as depicted in carrying lusibwa. However, the manhood mantle is not an immediate occurrence but alater development when the young boys have matured.
Among the Tiriki, society decrees that the father organizes not only for the circumcision of his son but also receiving him upon return on the occasion of *shalukhu*. Informants noted that, after the rituals performed in the homestead of the elder where the newly circumcised spend the night prior to circumcision, they are escorted to their parents homestead where they pass through another homestead *shirivwa / shilihwa* constructed from *lusyola* branches before interacting with the family and members of the public. *Vadiri vu khumatsi* in conformity with interviewees, for example, revealed that the homestead *shirivwa* which is constructed strategically in the homestead by the father of the boy returning from seclusion and through which he must pass first followed by his seclusion-mates on the occasion of *shalukhu*, perform the role of confirming patrilineal rights as well as dedicating the boy to the ancestors, beliefs, and values of society as well as wishing him good luck and protection (Interview, April 25th, 2015). Necessarily on ground of this, the construction of *shiriwa* is undoubtedly linked to the ancestral genealogy. With this mentality, *shiriwa* is only constructed for boys with paternal rights and this may explain why the *shirivwa* is not constructed for nephews sponsored for *idumi* in the homestead of the maternal uncle - “mama’s brother” since they don’t belong there.

Moreover, interviewees underscored the customary significance of *lusyola* in the construction of *shirivwa*. For instance, male parents in conformity with interviewees explained that, the use of *lusyola* in the construction of *shilihwa* perform the role of a religious shrine where ancestors come to witness the return of the newly circumcised as well as crown him as the pillar of the homestead and heir apparent (interview, April
29th, 2016). Inevitably on account of this, the lusyola appears to be a prerequisite in the construction of shirivwa due to the cultural attributes assigned to it such as being fairly strong, hard, and associated with tsikhavi, and hence its use in the construction of shilihwa is designed to portray this traits which are anticipated from the newly circumcised. Taking that into consideration, its worth noting that the function of the cultural material in idumi is not only to inculcate and reinforce the traits the newly circumcised boys are anticipated to acquire in their new status of manhood, but also to “transmute” them into men who are cognizant of their culture, social values and history of their society, and to enable them recount such events to future generations.

4.6 Summary and Conclusion

It was the objective of this chapter to examine the functions of idumi material culture upto 2014. We have demonstrated that these material culture are diverse and effectuate specific function at various stages in the idumi. These stages encompass the, preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and reintegration phases all of which are integrated with material culture that execute a specific function. We have concluded that the function of these cultural material is not only to reinforce the traits the newly circumcised boys are anticipated to portray in their new status of manhood, but also to transormagryf them into men who are conscious of their culture, social values and history of their society, and to enable them recount such events to future generations.

From the above discussion, it is obvious that idumi is not the mere cutting of the foreskin of the penis; it involves the integration of material culture that implements specific function at every stage. Despite the fact that idumi integrates material culture
that performs specific function at every stage, the influence of western education and Christianity has led to many changes in the functions accomplished by the material culture interrelated with idumi. For example, apart from some Tiriki opting for hospital circumcision where non Tiriki effect the operation using modern disposable scalpel blades, they have also changed from incorporating indigenous material such as isumadi and indigenous circumcision knife on the basis that cultural circumcision is primitive and also unhealthy with many hygiene problems. The church also equates idumi material culture and rituals to a cult whose aim is to distract peoples’ minds from the true God.

Further, due to certain influences, both internal and external such as those resulting from interaction between two or more cultures; some aspects in cultural material with regard to idumi have transformed while others continue to be used. In view of this, the survival of a culture depends on how it interacts and responds to the prevailing environment. In the next chapter that follow, I examine change and continuity in use of idumi material culture in order to create an understanding of the factors influencing change visa avis continuity in idumi material culture among the Tiriki.
CHAPTER FIVE

CHANGE AND CONTINUITY OF TIRIKI CIRCUMCISION (*IDUMI*)
MATERIAL CULTURE IN THE PERIOD 1902-2014

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter Four we examined the functions of *idumi* material culture up to 2014 and argued that this material culture accomplishes specific function at various stages in the *idumi* ritual process. We concluded that despite the continued use of material culture to discharge distinct task in the *idumi* ritual process, transmutation has occurred in their use due to internal and external influences. The current chapter, therefore, examines change and continuity of *idumi* material culture from 1902-2014. In the year 1850 – 1901, *idumi* material culture was intact and religioysly upheld. However, the establishment of the Friends African Mission (FAM) station at Kaimosi among the Tiriki in 1902 signalled the beginning of a new era for both the Tiriki as a people and their culture of *idumi*.

Painter (1966) says that the Friends African Mission (FAM) missionaries found Kaimosi in 1902 a suitable place for missionary work with the hope of converting the Tiriki as well as other Luhyia’s for Christ (1966:21). For instance, male parents in concurrence with interviewees explained that the missionary message of purity as a prerequisite for entry into the kingdom of God swayed some Tiriki to became converts and consequently changed from *idumi* which they now related with impurity (interview, April 29th, 2016). During the late 1920s and early 1930s the mission
converts refused to let their sons be circumcised and initiated in the traditional Tiriki manner Sangree (1966). The Christian missionary activities such as education and evangelisation shaped change in use of *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki in a remarkable way. Due to external and external influences, the old indigenous structure on which *idumi* was based could no longer sustain the cultural dynamics as transmutation was inevitable. The years 1926-1940s saw an influx of Maragoli immigrants into Tirikiland. First, from about 1926 onwards, an increasing number of Maragoli immigrant’s majority of whom were Christian converts, refused to have anything to do with Terik-Tiriki initiation ceremonies on religious grounds (1966:107).

Centrally, cultural material remains a significant component in *idumi* rituals despite inevitable changes. Thus, interrupting the indigenous Tiriki circumcision group from material culture integration in *idumi* rituals and ceremonies equates to terminating the whole transition process in their society. Indeed, among the Tiriki, those who are circumcised in hospitals and the non-Tiriki way are derogatorily referred to as *jevusevekeni* since they missed significant transformation agents in the form of material culture. This chapter explores the change and continuity of *idumi* material culture. It also examines the factors which have shaped this change visa avis continuity in use of this material culture.

Due to the value and cohesive hold of the Tiriki on *idumi*, this chapter adopted focused group discussion (FGD’S) to clarify change and continuity with regard to *idumi* material culture. Therefore, to enhance an understanding on the perception of
diverse respondents on change and continuity concerning cultural material in *idumi*, four focused group discussion (FGDs) were utilized. The discussion schedule with (FGD’S) to clarify issues on change visa avis continuity in *idumi* material culture was as follows, (FGD1, May 14\textsuperscript{th}, 2016). (FGD2, May 21\textsuperscript{st}, 2016), and (FGD3, May 28\textsuperscript{th}, 2016). Members in the (FGD 1 -3) were male circumcised according to Tiriki customs while (FGD4, May 29\textsuperscript{th}, 2016) comprised women whose husbands are in the senior age grade of *chumo* and girls who actively participated in *idumi* song and dance.

5.2 Changes in circumcision (*idumi*) material culture among Tiriki in the Period 1901-2014

*Idumi* material culture among Tiriki has undergone drastic change. The material culture is not what it used to be a couple of years ago. Their vigour and vitality are waning. Not every Tiriki is circumcised indigenously and that both the ‘Tiriki original’ and *vasomi* have adapted the use of modern devices like disposable scalpel blade instead of the indigenous knife (*injeso*) as a tool used to perform the circumcision. What has happened over the years to warrant these changes? The focused group discussion (FGD’S) reported that, transmutation in *idumi* material culture has been occasioned by forces internal and / or external to the culture, such as Christianity and culture contact, western education, technological advancement, globalization, rural – urban migration, interaction with the neighbours in the form of trade and intermarriage, health concerns, Government Policy, and the changing attitude of the young generation as discussed below. The (FGDs) revealed that, alteration in *idumi* and the cultural material interrelated with it is inevitable in the current social-cultural dispensation in which language is significant in interaction. The FGD3 disclosed that diverse
languages spoken among the inhabitants in Tirikiland inhibit the communication of the original meaning of material culture used in *idumi*, and hence influencing some change in use of this cultural material.

### 5.2.1 External Forces

#### 5.2.1.1 Christianity and culture contact

This has widely spread in Hamisi Sub-county and other parts of Kenya. The Christian message against Tiriki culture which evolved around *idumi* appeared to be authentic with far reaching consequences. The FGDs disclosed that, when the Friends African Mission (FAM) missionaries came to Tirikiland, they did not only preach against *idumi* culture but also discouraged the Tiriki Christian converts from involving their sons in *idumi* whose cultural material was perceived to be bordering on witchcraft (*lilokho*). Indeed, elders liable for the custodianship of *idumi* cultural material in consonance with interviewees explained that, Friends missionaries’ at Kaimosi condemned Tiriki culture as *bwoni* which was to be washed away before acceptance into Christianity (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015. Necessarily on grounds of perceiving *idumi* as *lilokho* and *bwoni*, the Friends missionaries and Tiriki Christian converts were indispensable defoliants of *idumi* and its interrelated cultural material. Axiomatically, Christianity has been and still is a major force of material culture modification in *idumi*.

The FGD1 and members in the FGD3 who comprise some of the key-consultants reported that, from the preliminary period when Christianity was introduced in Tirikiland to date, it has swayed Tiriki converts consequently causing irreversible
change in *idumi* and its interrelated cultural material as well as a divisive cultural conflict between the ‘Tiriki original’, *vasomi*, the hospital circumcision group though rendering them adults left the person a non-Tiriki, and the Maragoli immigrants who replaced indigenous ritual routine with Christian prayers, hymns and sermons which were incompatible with the Tikiri culture of *idumi*.

The FGD3 articulated that severe assault on *idumi* cultural material with designs to discourage its use occurred in 1927 when Chief Amiani who was a Christian convert authorized the cutting of the *gavunyonjes* to cause *idumi* to be executed in the open devoid of cultural material and rituals, and further supported missionary defamation of *idumi* by agreeing with missionaries who pared circumcised youth to denounce *idumi* by revealing its secrets before women and non-Tiriki in Afriends church congregation. In that case, it’s visible that immediately after conversion and thereafter, Tiriki converts were the main players in the execution of the missionary’s plans to disrupt *idumi*. In view of this, disengaging from the indigenous way of life, and in this respect *idumi* culture, Tiriki converts opened themselves to the process of Christianization which catalyzed change in *idumi* cultural material.

Moreover, FGD2 noted that, the institution of *idumi* continually faced prejudice not only from the early Christian missionaries, but also from overzealous Tiriki converts and Maragoli immigrants, who regard *idumi* and its material culture and rituals as a primitive culture. To some extent the prejudice did not only influence the emergence of splinter circumcision groups such as the *vasomi* who discarded the *ingolole* and the *isumadi*, but also renouncing by the ‘Tiriki original’ circumcision group of some of
the rituals such as the ritual of administering an *idumi* oath on a stick on which the foreskin of *jivuletī* was fixed and dried thus adulterating the originality of *idumi*. Senior elders in the age grade of *chumo* and who are also liable for the custodianship of *idumi* cultural material explained that, cultural schism arising from antagonistic attitude towards *idumi* which was perceived as offensive to christian ideals occurred in 1928 until 1939 (interview, December 6th, 12th, 2015). Taking that into account, it’s noticeable that the onslaught on *idumi* which provoked further drift from it by various groups including immigrants was based on preconceived impression of *idumi* as a rudimentary practice. However, no culture can be termed primitive since it is intentionaly conceptualized to serve a specific function, in a pecfic environment and specific time though its dynamic.

The (FGD3) comprising senior *idumi* elders submitted that protracted attack on *idumi* by missionaries and Tiriki Christian converts who wanted to preserved some of the distinctive features of *idumi* to safeguard their cultural identity developed the *Vasomi* circumcision group in 1940 under the leadership of Sagwa wa Mmaitsi who was the hereditary initiation chief (*mushevi mukhulundu*). In essence, this was abold step to cushion moderate Tiriki Christians from cultural estrangement. However, instead of preserving the crucial material culture, the *Vasomi* facilitated change by mixing indigenous, Christian and modern cultural elements in *idumi* which resulted to what can be refered to as syncretism. In cognizance of this development, its appreciable that *Vasomi* were receptive to Christian and modern conceptualization of cultural material which they incorporated and at the same continue to integrate some of the indigenous
material culture in *idumi* to minimize further cultural conflict and alienation in society, and this resonates well with Peter van der Veer (1994) who posits that syncretic agenda is a pragmatic design to trounce friction and tend tolerance (1994:197).

Robert J. Scheirter (1986) notes that, syncretism encompasses mixing components in the existing culture with new ideas that appear distant from vibrant institution such as Christianity (1986:151-155). Consonantly with Scheirter, syncretism appears to imply a process of merging two binary powers, cultural optimism, formations or conceptions which mingle to model a new thing. In view of these sentiments, the mixing of cultural components had a profound impact on *idumi*. For instance, FGD2 disclosed that, this process of merging varied cultural components, say in *idumi* among the Tiriki, brought “confusion in the vital ceremonies, material culture, and rituals integrated in *idumi*; thus, creating irreparable split between Tiriki converts to Christianity and those who remained loyal to the indigenous culture of *idumi*, which further accelerated the gap in consolidating material culture used in *idumi*. Nevertheless, syncretism which has resulted in the adoption of alien material culture in *idumi* by both the partially indigenous and the ‘Tiriki original’ has caused uncertainty on whether *idumi* culture still maintains its indigenous sway or it’s drifting towards modernity and Christianity.

The FGD2 further noted that, during the 19th century, syncretism implied any number of incompatible things, especially where inclusion of indigenous and alien material culture in *idumi* became indispensable. For overzealous Tiriki converts to Christianity, it conjured a means of promoting cultism and witchcraft which deviated from the Christian faith; for the moderates it brought to mind not only the utilization but also
integration of various material culture, even if incongruent with *idumi* culture, while among the ‘Tiriki original’, embracing alien material culture in *idumi* was an affront to their culture. The importation of Christian cultural ideas into Tiriki culture dissuaded alarge proportion of the Tiriki from indigenous material culture integration in *idumi*. For istance, members of the FDG1, FGD2, FGD3 and FGD4 confirmed that, the *Vasomi* circumcision group has discontinued the inclusion of brewing *malwa ki idumi*, the *ingolole, isumadi* and performing *vukhulu* therefore contributing to change in *idumi* material culture.

In the contemporary cultural dispenation, there exists incorporation of some alien cultural material in *idumi* to ‘fill the gaps’. The FGD2 and FGD3 reported that, incorporation of alien material culture in *idumi*, by both *vasomi* and ‘Tiriki original’ circumcision groups are a reality intended to address some of the emerging challenges that have no answers within the existing culture. For example, before Christianity came to Tirikiland, the circumcisers’ used a single knife on all the initiates since the threat of diseases that had no cure was unknown. However, the emergency of contagious diseases’ such as HIV and Aids, has accentuated the need to embrace modern material items such as disposable scalpel blades to supplement some of the indigenous material culture used in *idumi*.

However, a senior elder in (FGD3) clarified that some cultural material in *idumi* is still valuable for both *vasomi* and the ‘Tiriki original’. During *idumi*, they are incorporated in the relevant circumcision stages; and where they cannot risk the lives of the initiates, it is when they turn to modern material items such as the use of
disposable scalpel blade for circumcision. In that case, it’s obvious that for some Tiriki, the existing indigenous material culture used in *idumi* cannot fully perform the intended process of transforming boys to the intended status of manhood, and hence, modern material culture is filling in the gap where indigenous material culture is obsolete. Plate 66 is an illustration of the initiates putting on blankets and sheets which are replacing the *isumadi* to demonstrate the influence of modernity on change in *idumi* material culture.

**Plate 66:** The initiates putting on blankets and sheets which are replacing the *isumadi* to illustrate the influence of modernity on change in *idumi* material culture

![Plate 66: The initiates putting on blankets and sheets which are replacing the *isumadi* to illustrate the influence of modernity on change in *idumi* material culture](image)

**Source:** Photo taken by researcher during field work on 9th August, 2015.

Further, FGD2 and members in FGD4 disclosed that acculturation of the Tiriki by Christianity that saw the introduction of alien material articles to the community
influenced change of lifestyle of which idumi circumcision is part and parcel. In consequence, the acceptance of these material items in idumi has resulted in very little manufacture of the indigenous idumi material utensils used while in seclusion, hence causing idumi material culture deficiency and loss of skills.

Taking that into consideration, the likelihood of relying on modern material culture in idumi is indispensable. For instance, FGD1 noted that in the contemporary setting when the vakhulu are secluded in irhumbi during their convalescence, they are issued with a sheet (shuka) and a blanket provided by their families which are referred to as isumadi by vasomi and interestingly some of the ‘Tiriki original’who appreciate modernity privately provide blankets to their initiates in addition to isumadi to cover themselves from cold. The blanket as such has been added to their indigenous material culture.

During fieldwork, I established that, there is no mudding done for Vasomi candidates, and that the ritual of khuida on the occasion of shalukhu has been stopped. Consequently, this discontinuity has impacted change on idumi material culture. Further, the FGD4 reported that, the Pro - Christian Vasomi has caused a lot of changes in idumi material culture. For instance; Vasomi have replaced indigenous circumcision songs with Christian songs making idumi lose its indigenous impact. With regard to shalukhu, which refers to the end of seclusion and when the newly circumcised are re- integrated in society, the pastors are invited to do it the Christian way using the Bible.
Indeed, the continued association of indigenous idumi with thuggery, looseness of girls after consumption of malwa ki idumi which is seen as primitivity, and increased inclination to Christianity has tended to reduce the impact of indigenous idumi which is integrated with material culture as a recent projection showed many Tiriki abandoning the ‘Tiriki original’ to the Vasomi group (FGD3). Christians have not only christened some of the indigenous circumcision songs but have composed their own songs therefore altering the whole scenario and the intention of the indigenous circumcision songs in idumi. With that knowledge in mind, its obervable that, negative activities associated with malwa ki idumi idumi as one of the material culture, further drifting to christianity and Vasomi group is lessening attachment to idumi culture has hastened change. However, the entire material culture should not be vilified because of a few bindividuals behaviour after beer consumption.

5.2.2.2. Western education

Idumi among the Tiriki is still appreciated in the contemporary social dispensation as a process of conferring manhood unto the boy. However, the influence of western education has caused many changes in idumi as the avenue of transforming boys into manhood. For instance, FGD1 and FGD2 submitted that, western education is not only a serious threat to the continued existence of idumi material culture, but also an effective agent of change. Because of this, some of the educated Tiriki have withdrawn their boys’ from idumi which is interrelated with cultural material considered as ancient that falls short of civilization. Necessarily on ground of this, no culture is primordial, and hence, undergoing idumi with or without material culture accompaniment is not aparameter to gauge the level of education attained and civility.
Furthermore, FGD2, FGD3, and FGD4 revealed that education is an important tool for economic as well as political empowerment, and because of this, the ‘Tiriki original’ group that was very rigid lowered the period for seclusion and the circumcision age to the pre-adolescent, pre-school or primary school age to allow the youth to continue with schooling after circumcision so that they can be in a position to compete favourably in employment and leadership opportunities. Taking that into account, it’s commendable that elders have changed and are now visionary about the education and the future of the boys after circumcision. However, lowering the age and confining to the school calendar which dictate the time at which idumi takes place has adversely affected the execution of idumi to the required expectation since the time to effectively integrate material culture is limited; and the fact that the initiates are too young to endure the rites and rigours of idumi warrants the exclusion of some of the “hostile” cultural material thus rendering them superficially exposed to idumi.

Further, FGD3 added that, in the past, an aspiring candidate who underwent idumi the Vasomi way was normally booed and considered a coward who failed to undergo all the stages in idumi interrelated with cultural material. The irony; however, is that most of those educated and members of Parliament aspiring for leadership in Hamisi Sub - County are Vasomi who had deserted material culture. This may explain why the rigid ‘Tiriki original’ circumcision group embraced some changes in idumi material culture which opened the door for new ideas that definitely impacted change on material culture. With this in view, western education has been, and still remains a prominent agent of change in idumi material culture (FGD2).
5.2.2.3 Technological Advances

Technological advancement has impacted change on *idumi*. Regarding the effect of technology on *idumi*, the FGD2 explained that it has facilitated faster flow of information and ideas hence enabling interaction with the outside world which has changed the way the Tiriki view and perceive *idumi* as less functional and perhaps inferior to the culture of other people in the world. Though faster flow of ideas is informative, people are gullible to communication technology falsehoods which have influenced some Tiriki to opt for hospital circumcision devoid of cultural material perceived to be unsafe for their boys, hence undermining the essence of *idumi* material culture.

Further, FGD2 and FGD3 disclosed that technological advances, has resulted in the production of quality items such as blankets which are replacing *isumadi*, modern spoons and forks which are replacing *tsisacheti*, and modern plates which are relpacing *vyuhu* for serving food to the initiates in seclusion to avoid ritual contamination. That being said, its obvious that some parents swayed by the benefits of technology and who are well off are not ready to subject their boys to difficult life during *idumi*, and hence supply modern utensils, mattresses and mats made from reeds to replace the use of *isumadi* and dry banana leaves as bedding material in *irhumbi*.

The newly circumcised also dress in new cloth instead of the skin during *shalukhu*. In that respect, the inclusion of alien material culture such as CD discs resulting from technology is not only undermining the authenticity of *idumi* but has influenced change in the cultural material interrelated with it. Plate 67 is an illustration of *vakhulu*
who have added CD discs on their isumadi which demonstrates the influence of Technological advances on change in idumi.

Plate 67: Vakhulu who have added CD discs on their isumadi which demonstrates the influence of Technological advances on change in idumi material culture

Source: Photo taken by researcher during fieldwork on 26th August, 2015.

As noted, technological advancement has produced attractive items which families collect and give to the initiates who add to their indigenous attire. For instance, the FGD1, FGD2 and FGD3 FGD4 reported that, apart from CD discs Vakhulu usually add, bicycle light bulbs, shiny garlands and small plastic lids of different sizes to isumadi when going to perform Vukhulu. In that case, it’s evident that intrusion of external items is impacting change on idumi. Furthermore, advancement in technology has turned the world into a global village. For instance, FGD1 and
FGD2 reported that, due to globalization made possible by communication technology, the Tiriki can no longer live in isolation to guard against change on the cultural material in *idumi*. In that context, it is appreciable that communication technology has enhanced interaction with the outside world due to the faster flow of information. Undeniably, interaction with the external world cultures has significantly altered the Tiriki world view consequently swaying some of them to perceive their *idumi* culture as inferior, and this may explain why some of them have changed from *idumi* that integrates material culture and opted for hospital circumcision.

The the mass media is part of technological advancement and its impact on cultural material alteration is significant. The FGD3 reported that, the young generation is no longer enthusiastic about *idumi* as it used to be a couple of years ago due the mass media which has exposed them to modern ideas and other cultures perceived to be modern. Unequivocally, mass media plays a vital role in society, however, the inferiority complex brought about by the negative mass media exposure of *idumi* and the cultural material interrelated with it, and the prejudice from modernists continues to influence change.

### 5.2.2.4 Internal Forces

Interaction in trade and intermarriage with the neighbours continues to influence change in *idumi* material culture. FGD2 and FGD3 disclosed that, trade has enabled the Tiriki to obtain modern material items such as spoon, fork cups and plates made from melamine and plastic material which are replacing indigenous material; but also new material goods such as Sisal fibre from far off places such as Kiboswa market to
manufacture *tsingolole* which was originally made from the bark of a plant called *Likhambi* which has become extinct due to environmental change. Indisputably, Sisal fibre appear to be the only alternative remaining for making *tsi-ngolole*. However, the use of sisal has not only changed the originality and quality of *ingolore* as well as incurring production costs which never existed previously, but buying it from handlers who are non - Tiriki contrary to *idumi* customs signals change. Further, the FGD4 disclosed that modern cloth - (trousers and shirts) in which *viiha* dress on the occasion of *shalukhu* has replaced *isiiro* which was used on the same occasion. Plate 68 is an illustration of *viiha* dressed in trousers and shirts on the occasion of *shalukhu*.

**Plate 68:** *Viiha* dressed trousers and shirts on the occasion of *shalukhu* which demonstrates how new materials have influenced change in *idumi* material culture.

Source: Photo taken by researcher during field work on 3rd September, 2015.
Indeed, the youth in FGD1 reported that they are comfortably dressed in trousers and shirts instead of the skin (isiiro) during shalukhu. Having said this, isiiro and the modern clothing can be said to have undergone cultural authentication. However, it’s observable that change has occurred within the prescribed idumi dress.

5.2.2.4 Intermarriage

As mentioned earlier, intermarriage has influenced change in idumi material culture. FGD1, FGD2, FGD3 and FGD4 submitted that, women from other communities married to Tiriki men have influenced some of the men to abandon idumi in its totality by taking their sons to Vasomi, while others take them to the hospital or the Maragoli type of circumcision that has nothing to do with idumi material culture. That being case, society may not have control over individual’s choice of amarriage parttner and from which community one should marry. Though intermarriage enhances harmonious social coexistance, it has brought about cultural interaction with a resultant effect of modifying, transforming, and discarding some of the material culture interrelated with idumi. This resonates with (Marvin Harris 1971) who says that, “regardless of the gap two cultures may be apart, exposure to each other results in the swapping of cultural attributes” which ultimately impact on material culture (1971:153).

Indeed, the Tiriki interaction with other communitite through marriage has influenced change in idumi material culture and rituals. For instance, FGD2 and FGD3 disclosed that, the Tiriki and Maragoli interact and intermarry; as such the idumi ritual of “kwira” mulogoli is not emphasized as previously done. In essence, the ritual of
“kwira” intendend to conceive warriors for raiding, however, interaction in marriage leading to harmonious co-existence and the government arrogation of security have rendered the ritual outdated hence desertion from this cultural ritual practice. Consequently, intermarriage has brought about material culture dilution with some persons subscribing to intermarriage being averse to *idumi* culture. Furthermore, it is evident that Hamisi Sub - County has become quite cosmopolitan due to a number of factors such as religion, trade and modern ways of life through Christianity, Islam and formal education, which are creating anew cultural environment with an impact of alienating the Tiriki from *idumi* culture.

### 5.2.2.5 Health concerns

The panoramic view on emerging health concerns has caused changes in *idumi*. The FGD1, FGD2 and FGD3 reported that, the fear of infection and bleeding that cause health complications and even death after indigenous circumcision where material culture is integrated in circumcision has compelled some Tirikis’ to snick their boys to the hospital to undergo what they refer to as safe circumcision, hence changing the landscape of *idumi* and the relevance of the material culture attached to it. Undoubtedly, the safety of the boy’s undergoing circumcision is mandatory, however, its unjustifiable to condemn the entire spectrum of *idumi* and its interrelated cultural material as an undertaking engulfed in fatal complications, and hence many have gone through it in the indigenous ‘garb’ and are of age.

Moreover, FGDs stressed that HIV and Aids scourge has completely transformed the outlook towards material instruments used for circumcision necessitating both *Vasomi*
and ‘Tiriki original’ circumsciscion groups to replace indigenous circumcision knife with disposable scapel blades for the safety of the initiates. From this perspective, it’s distinct that the fear of infection from HIV and Aids has forced change in the instruments used for circumcision where the circumcisers’ now use disposable scalpel blade per initiate as opposed to candidates sharing one knife as previously done as away of enhancing unity. With this in mind, circumcision instruments should not be compromised to guarantee the safety of the initiate. Vadiri vu khumatsi in FGD3 confirmed the replacement of indigenous circumcision knives with disposable scapel blades which are used only once per candidate. Intrinsically, the impression of the initiates sharing one circumcision knife to symbolize unity and brotherhood is no longer tenable as the material instrument used for that purpose is obsolete, however, this does not imply that the indigenous circumcision knife is the only object of unity in idumi, though its abandonment signals change in idumi material culture. That having been said, it’s undeniable that HIV and AIDS and other infections have compelled the Tiriki to opt for modern tools and medicine considered to be more hygienic instead of the traditional knives and medicine and by so doing rendering change in idumi material culture inevitable.

As earlier indicated, the boys taken for initiation are very young necessitating change in some of the cultural material in idumi especially the indigenous medicinal material. For instance, FGD2 and FGD3 reported that, the indigenous medicinal material used during idumi such as Isambakhalwa ya maneje to anaesthetize the penis before circumcision has been abandoned and replaced with modern an aesthetic drug which is
injected around the penis to minimize pain during circumcision. In essence, the initiates are injected with anti Tetanus drug after circumcision to protect them from contracting ailments caused by a cut on the part of the body. Given the circumstances in which circumcision is performed on very young boys who can not withstand the act and in a forest environment which may not be hygienically safe, it is understandable that injecting them with pain moderation and anti Tetanus drug is aprecautionary step to safeguard them from uncertainties that may surround idumi. However, this has caused change in the perception of material culture concept with regard to indigenous medicine (herbs) leading to their abandonment.

The FGD1, reported that while in irhumbi, Vakhulu are injected with anti-biotic medicines such as PPF and Triple pen to facilitate the healing of the wounds, which are also kept clean by use of iodine and other antiseptic material. The youth who had undergone idumi in FGD1 confirmed being injected with medicine before and after circumcision when they were in ihrumbi and this demonstrates drifting to modern medicine to the detriment of cultural material. However, the administration of modern medical requirement is done by a trained medical person who is a Tiriki by circumcision and therefore has access to the kavunyonje and the irhumbi. Having that said, it’s obvious that the health of the initiates, most of them being of school going age has been prioritized to forestall the possibility of contracting diseases to enable them recover in good time before resuming school.
5.2.2.6 Rural - Urban Migration

Many families among the Tiriki have settled in urban areas. The FGD2 and FGD3 stressed that, some Tiriki’s have settled in towns and find it expensive to return their children to the rural home for *idumi* which incorporate cultural material perceived as witchcraft in a ‘primitive culture’. With this mentality, its noticeable that urban life has changed the perception of some Tiriki about *idumi* culture consequently resulting to cultural estrangement that has influenced change in the utilization of cultural material in *idumi*.

Tiriki men continue seeking employment in towns because of dire economic necessity and the need to raise money to support the education of the children. For instance, the FGD1 and FGD2 reported that, the Tiriki’s working in towns have been able to support their sons who have advanced academically as well as economically yet they did not undergo *idumi* indigenously. If that is the case, *idumi* appeared to be pro-culture rather than pro-education, and hence to reverse this mentality the ‘Tiriki origin’ circumcision group which initially stuck on the strict process of *idumi* introduced some changes, such as discouraging the newly circumcised boys from drinking *malwa ki idumi* which is incompatible with schooling as well as reducing seclusion days to allow the newly circumcised to attend school. Necessarily on ground of this, it’s obvious that as much as the ‘Tiriki orginal’group would prefer to continue with *idumi* that encompasses indigenous material culture in totality, they also recognized schooling as a rite of passage as more important than *idumi* with its cultural material entanglement and this has impacted change on cultural material.
5.2.2.7 Government Policy and the changing attitude of the young generation

The government policy on wildlife conservation and the school calendar influences change on idumi material culture. The FGD2 and FGD3 reported that, the government ban on hunting wild animals since 1977 still exists to date. The Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) game warders often arrest anyone caught with wild animal skin and this has caused lack of raw materials specifically the skin of the imburu for making idumi drum, and hence forcing change on the material culture used for assembling idumi musical instrument. In essence the idumi drum was originally made from the skin of imburu to project a dormant deep voice of manhood when played. However, its replacement with improvised musical instrument made from timber and plastic jerican has negated the original intention since the instruments do not produce the intended sound.

Further, FGD1, FGD2, and FGD3 reported that the government policy requires ceremonies performed within the stipulated period. Essentially, idumi is influenced by the school calendar and takes place in August and December when schools are closed. Considering this, it’s obvious that idumi ceremony heavily dependent on the school calendar consequently constrains the time required to expose the initiates to the material culture as well as their effective manufacture and application which definately impact change on them. Subsequently, its perceptible that lack of exposure to cultural material as required renders the initiated youth leaving seclusion ‘raw’ with little knowledge on matters pertaining to idumi material culture, and in that way, they continue to change because of the information gap created as a result of time constrains.
Furthermore, the attitude of the youth towards *idumi* is influencing change on material culture. For instance, FGD1 reported that, though *idumi* is their culture, it’s the wish of the youth to have knowledge that empowers them economically rather than knowledge on *idumi* material culture that cannot place them in the job market. One youth in FGD1 said, “Given an opportunity, I would unreservedly opt for economic power not cultural things which are controlled by old people. We are a new generation with new ideas and we must do things in a new way to improve our lives economically”. With this mentality, it is obvious that the young generation is exhibiting a degenerating attitude towards *idumi* material culture and lack of interest in them signals imminent change not only among the current youth but the future of the material culture among the Tiriki.

The youth also likened *idumi* with torture and pain they suffered when they were exposed to *isambakwala* that stings painfully. Thus, one of the youths in FGD1 said, “even if my father compels me to go for *idumi* a second time, I will not accept it. It was a harrowing experience. It was like torture, how can I accept that? We the young generation cannot be coerced to remain loyal to material culture that inflict pain on our bodies and make us uncomfortable, and which is becoming outdated. Can you imagine me allowing my own child, when I will have one, going through such a horrifying experience? No way”. In view of this, it’s undeniable that, the young generation is developing a negative attitude which is influencing change on *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki.
It is therefore the researchers’ view that, *Idumi* with its interrelated cultural material cannot be ‘caged’ in indigenous “cloth” which depreciates with time, and hence this material culture and its associated symbolism, so to speak, are not cast in metal. Change is inevitable and sometimes occurs unnoticed. Given that, the young generation provides the channel through which culture is transmitted for the future progression, the reluctance displayed by the youth towards perpetuating *idumi* culture will eclipse the very culture they ought to uphold.

5.3 Continuity of circumcision (*Idumi*) material culture among the Tiriki

Although *idumi* material culture has undergone drastic change, certain aspects persist. The FGDs reported that, some aspects of *idumi* material culture continues to perform a significant role, the changes witnessed not withstanding. The FGDs observed that, continuity of *Idumi* material culture is determined by numerous tenets that include, *Miima* in *idumi*, administering an oath and restriction on *idumi* matters, values, cultural identity, the functions they play, and the raw materials for manufacturing the material used during *idumi* ceremonies as discussed below.

5.3.1 Factors influencing continuity of *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki

Circumcision (*Idumi*) Customs (*Miima*)

The FGD2 and FGD3 submitted that some aspects of cultural material are utilized to ensure continuity and conformity to *miima* in *idumi*. For instance, in the preliminary stages candidates for *idumi* typically go through the ritual of *khuveka lisu*, *Imoni* test, *khun’ngusa*, dancing naked while holding *isenende*, *inanjirwa* which culminates in subjecting them to the sound of *masove* all of which constitute *Miima* designed to consolidated and conceive the initiates’ for transformation from childhood to
adulthood. In that context, it’s observable that the cited customs are hereditary and often performed to understand the paradigms of unity, connectivity, continuity and devotion to the mystery surrounding *idumi*. In this vein, the concept of adhering to ‘the way of doing things’ exists to set the rhythm of *idumi* to avert uncertainties which may occur if things are done contrary to the established traditions. Customarily, the initiates among the Tiriki as a rule are obliged to wear *isumadi* and the *ingolole* when performing *vukhulu* to comply with *idumi* customs. Plate 69 is an illustration of *vakhulu* dressed in *isumadi* and the *ingolole* to comply with *idumi* customs.

**Plate 69:** *Vakhulu* dressed in *isumadi* and the *ingolole* with *lishindu* fixed at the top in accordance with *idumi* customs when performing *vukhulu*.

Source: Photo taken by the research during fieldwork on 25th August 2015.
The FGDs disclosed that, in accordance with miima, vakhulu must don isumadi and the ingolole with lishindu fixed at the top when in public. In view of this, wearing this attire is to abide by the custom banning exposure of the body while in seclusion for fear of contracting disease. However, the attire camouflages the initiates from anxious kinsmen eager to explore the condition of an absentee family member.

Further, the FGD2 and FGD3 reported that, to comply with Miima in Idumi, initiates from both Vasomi and ‘Tiriki original’ undergo the ritual of ‘kukhuvwa shikong’o’ to acquire the status of Tirikihood. However, a circumcised man wishing to cross over from Vasomi to the ‘Tiriki original’ group must dress in shivambo and actively participate in Vukhulu before accompanying other initiates to the Kavunyonje for the ritual of ‘kukhuvwa shikong’o’. This implies that, the age of the man not withstanding, he must dress in shivambo to be connected with the transition ritual as dictated by miima to determine entry into the new status of manhood after circumcision. However, shivambo is only a customary requirement which does not supersede the AK47 style of circumcision shared by Vasomi and ‘Tiriki original’ which marks a vital aspect of transition to manhood.

5.2, 3.1 Administering an oath and restriction on idumi matters

The youth who had undergone idumi circumcision in FGD1 reported that, during the exposure to masove and ‘kukhuvwa shikong’o’ ritual, they took an oath promising not to reveal any matters concerning idumi, and if they did, they will ‘fall sick by rippening like a banana and die’. The FGD2 and FGD3 reported that an oath is typically administered to the Tiriki initiates to maintain confidentiality of idumi.
Keeping this in mind, it’s appreciable that the oath initially attempted to ensure minimal exposure of material culture and rituals to non Tiriki’s, however, with increased interaction, Christian influence, and cultural dynamics the oath is not foolproof to the secrets of idumi. To some extent information on idumi has become an open secret due to social intercourse at various levels.

5.2.3.2 Values attached to idumi material culture

FGD2 and FGD3 reported that, the valued ascribed to cultural material in idumi surpasses that of other neighbouring communities’ and it’s their cultural right to integrate them in idumi to effect transition of the boys to manhood. Apparent, the Tiriki insistence on upholding some of the cultural material in idumi is based on deep rooted socio -cultural transformative values ascribed to these material culture, such as isenende, Ingolole, isumadi, Vukhulu, the rituals of ‘kukhuvwa shikong’o’, and kukhunda Mushere Murwa whose functions are customarily indispensable in transiting the initiates’ from the status of vusoleli/Vwana/Ludoro to the most admirable status of Vuhindira. However, insinuating that the value of cultural material in idumi overshadows that of their neighbours’ amounts to cultural chauvinism and ethnocentricism, and hence using one’s own material culture to judge other peoples’ culture is inappropriate. Furthermore, the FGDs noted that, the older generation jealously guard cultural material idumi to which value is assigned. For instance, one of the elders’ in FGD3 showed off his ingolole, lisumati and cowrie shells (tsisimbi), indigenous axe and hoe, and mkasa (brass ring) which are code named ‘cows’ ‘tsingombe’ that have been in his possession for very many years, and stressed that, he
cannot part with them because of the transformative ritual value they posses in *idumi*. Further, he said “I cannot abandon our *idumi* material culture and rituals. Though we are using some western material items such as the scalpel blade for circumcision due to unavoidable circumstances, our indigenous material culture which make us different from other communities will continue to be in use, since without them there can be no *idumi* and vice versa”. Taking this into account, its observable that some of the valuable cultural material on which *idumi* relies have been preserved from time immemorial due to their value in *idumi* and their absence might cause *idumi* to vanish from the scene. However, circumstantial change in utility in some of the cultural material is inevitable.

FGD1, FGD2 and FGD3 further explained that, the value engrained in the *kavunyonje* and *kavukolosi* cultural material in *idumi* is demonstrated by entrusting their custody to *Vasakhulu Vi idumi* to guard them against degradation. However, a spot check in some of the *kavunyonje*’s during the circumcision session revealed the presence of human activities that indicated felling trees which implies that the value attached to the sacred forests is waning. Moreover, some cultural material in *idumi* are ordinarily preserved by individual families such as *isumadi* and *ingolole* which potent spiritual value connectivity. For instance one of the male parents’ in FGD2 said “Even though iam aging, I will retain my *ingolole* and *isumadi* for future use of my grand children and if they are worn out and iam too old, I will pay an expert to make them if I am unable to manufacture them, especially the *Ingolole*”. On being probed why *Ingolole*
should continue to be used by his grand child, he said ‘I, made and wore it as I consider it ethnic and emblematic’ (shimanyintiro).

Further inquiry as to why his grand child should wear ingolole during idumi despite the fact that the environment and times have changed, he responded ‘I, wore it, and it made me what Iam and therefore my grand son should wear it to become a really Tiriki, and musaza . With this kind of perception, its obvious that, the value ascribed to idumi and some of its interrelated cultural material has necessitated continued preservation of what is believed to be indispensable cultural material such as the isumadi, ingolole and the kavunyonje . However, material culture is fluid and bound to change as culture is dynamic.

5.2.3.3 Raw Materials Availability

The continued supply of some of the material culture for use in idumi is posing a challenge due to the scarcity of raw materials for making them. However, the FGD1, FGD2, and FGD3 reported that, availability of some of the raw materials such as the skin for making Shivambo and isumadi, maize and Vule for brewing Malwa ki Idumi and making porridge, and isenende for making dancing material continues to ensure their reintegration in idumi. From this perspective, its undoubtedly clear that performance of idumi is dependent on the continued availability of these resoucres from which cultural material is made. This implies that, depletion of these material resources will adversely impact on idumi.
5.2.3.4 Cultural identity

The FGD2 and FGD3 disclosed that *idumi* incorporates material culture which exemplifies cultural identity. Hence, when *vakhulu* appear publicly during the occasion of performing *vukhulu* donning *ingolole, ikwalo, isumadi* they portray cultural distinctiveness of the Tiriki. That being said, it is indisputable that these distinctive material culture exists in *idumi*, however, their epitomization of the cultural identity is not ubiquitous, and hence, its only confined to the ‘Tiriki original’ circumcision group which subscribe to *idumi* culture since other circumcision groups that exists in Tiriki do not subscribe to these material culture. Except for the AK47 unique circumcision shared by the ‘Tiriki original’, *Vasomi* have deserted other cultural material in *idumi*. Consequently, like any other social institution crafted for social utility, *idumi* is dynamic with cultural material interrelated with it being prone to change. However, some some of the cultural material aspects in *idumi* persist and continue to be utilized in transforming the initiates to manhood. In this context, there is change visa avis continuity with regard to *idumi* material culture.

5.4 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter intended to look at the change and continuity of *idumi* material culture. As observed, we have discussed a situation in which the missionary onslaught on indigenous culture caused the emergence of three alternative types of circumcision which determined alteration on material culture. The first was the Maragoli type of circumcision which substituted Christian prayers, hymns and sermons for indigenous ritual. The second was the hospital type of circumcision for those who claimed to be modernists. The third was the *Vasomi* who discontinued some of the distinctive
features of the indigenous Tiriki circumcision material culture. Further, we see how idumi has gone through formidable changes brought about by forces internal and/or external to the culture, such as Christianity and culture contact, western education, technological advancement, rural - urban migration, interaction with the neighbours in the form of trade and intermarriage, health concerns especially the issue of HIV and AIDS, Government Policy, and the changing attitude of the young generation.

However, despite these changes, material culture continues to be significant in idumi. Continuity has been enhanced by Miima in idumi, oathing, values attached to idumi, cultural identity, the functions they play, and the availability of raw materials for manufacturing some of the material cultural. Though change is inevitable, some aspects of material culture interrelated with idumi persists and continue to execute the task of transforming the initiates from childhood to manhood, and hence, there is change visa avis continuity.
CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research. The purpose of this chapter is to give a summary of the main findings of both the literature study and the research work undertaken in this work.

6.2 Summary

This study which is on symbolism investigates the origin, meaning, manufacture, use, change and continuity of cultural material in idumi among the Tiriki. The objectives of the study were to investigate the origin and meanings imbedded in symbols used during Tiriki circumcision, to examine the manufacturing process of Tiriki circumcision material culture, to discuss various functions of Tiriki circumcision material culture, to explain continuity and change of Tiriki circumcision material culture. The study was conducted in the four locations of Hamisi sub-county, Vihiga County including Shamakhokho, Shaviringa, Tambua and Jepkoyai. Field research was carried out to gather information from informants in the above named four locations. The choice of Hamisi as the area of study was because the Tiriki have unique cultural material interrelated with idumi to which symbolism is ascribed and distinguishes them culturally from their linguistically related neighbours. The study also examined change and continuity besides investigating the forces which have influence change visa avis continuity of cultural material in idumi. The study addressed
the following questions: What is the origin and the meanings enshrined in symbols of Idumi material culture? What is the manufacturing process of Idumi material culture? What are the functions of Idumi material culture? What forces have influenced change in Idumi material culture? The literature reviewed in this work established that some studies had been undertaken on idumi among the Tiriki. However, several gaps including the one on the meanings and symbolism imbedded in idumi material culture were identified as possible avenues for scholarly research. This study is important because it comes at a time when there is enormous change in Tiriki symbols of idumi which threatens the cultural identity of those who subscribe to idumi culture. It also contributes to the scarce literature on circumcision material culture which has so far, not received serious scholarly attention.

In this study, the Tiriki are treated as people who are under pressure grappling with the challenge of change visa avis continuity with regard to cultural material in idumi. The subject of change visa avis continuity with regard to cultural material in idumi assumes even greater significance in the contemporary society in which the population is divided on whether to continue with them or embrace modern material. This study is grounded in the functionalism theory which posits that communities’ typically make material culture to fulfill some vital function, and the concept of "Change and Continuity” which illustrates that, material culture is susceptible to change as culture is dynamic, however, some aspects persist. Midrash approach was used to illustrate and derive hidden meaning in the symbolic cultural material. Before undertaking the research, I read several books to understand other scholars’ views on material culture
dynamics and to identify the gap to fill in relation to content, context and the trend of scholarship on material culture and its symbolism as depicted in Chapter Two. More specifically, I have reviewed literature in relation to the following themes: the notion of symbolism, social features of symbols, the origin and the symbolism enshrined in the cultural material in *idumi*, the manufacture, use, change and continuity of Tiriki symbols of circumcision material culture. Since the available writings from a few scholars are general surveys about *idumi* and some of its related material culture; discussing *idumi* “institution” in relation to social cultural life of the Tiriki, this study is one of the ethnoculturelogical contributions on cultural material in *idumi* and the symbolism ascribed to it among the Tiriki.

The study adopted descriptive design. It aims at accurately and systematically describing a population or phenomenon. It answers important research questions such as what, when where and how. This design allowed me to use a variety of research methods which encompassed both primary and secondary data. Primary data was gathered through observations, interviews, question guidelines, questionnaire, photography, participant observation and focus group discussions (FGDs). Secondary data was obtained from journals, newspapers as well as books in libraries. Research tools were validated through expert consultation-in this case by my two supervisors and enabled me to gather information on manufacture, use change and continuity of *Idumi* material culture. Data analysis involved transcription of interviews, data coding and thematization. The study used a qualitative research methodology that involved descriptions of what I went to find out in the field.
The target population were Tiriki men and women from the four locations of Hamisi Sub-County based on 2009 population census which was 76,901. The sample for the study targeted Tiriki men and women married to Tiriki men in senior age grade and girls who had participated in idumi activities such as vukhulu. I employed purposive, snowballing, and stratified random sampling techniques to derive the respondents. A total of 220 respondents were randomly selected and interviewed out of the possible 455 who had been identified as competent informers. Interview based question guidelines were preferred for old custodians due to their low literacy levels while open ended questionnaires were sent to the literate cohort. Among the informants, I interacted with include vadiri vu khumasti, vadiri or vadiri vu murhumbi, male parents, vakhulu, custodians of idumi material culture in charge of, kavunyonje, kavukolosi, accommodating the initiates at night during idumi rituals, and those in charge of tsirhumbi.

The study used a qualitative research methodology that involved descriptions of what I went to find out in the field. To achieve the objectives of the study during and after fieldwork, qualitative method of data analysis was used. To cross-check whether I had gathered data covering all the themes of my topic, I carried out in-field data analysis. Furthermore, the out-of-field analysis involved transcriptions of interviews, data coding and thematisation. Among the most salient ethical codes I observed were: concealing the identity of interviewees and respondents, seeking interviewees permission before any recordings or photos being taken, recognizing the contribution of the interviewees and respondents to this study by acknowledging them. In
investigating the process of manufacture and use, the functional approach was used. The data collected provided a better understanding of the manufacture, use, change and continuity of *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki. The results from this study showed that though cultural material interrelated *idumi* is still culturally entrenched, change visa avis continuity has occurred in their use.

In Chapter Two, the study examines the origin and the symbolism embedded *Idumi* material culture. The study has demonstrated that, the Tiriki adopted *idumi* and its interrelated material culture from the Terik. This is confirmed by the fact that, age set names, the culture material and *idumi* songs have Terik intonations. Historical references such as (Sangree, 1966) and (Sangale, 2005) attest to the fact that, the Tiriki interacted with the Terik from whom they adopted *idumi* culture. The study has noted that the first Tiriki ancestors to be circumcised by the Terik was Ambalavu whose father Lukhova had married a Terik woman, and hence, after circumcision the Terik gave Ambalavu a rod of authority called *Inanjirwa* to preserve the secrets and rules of *idumi* and the skin cloth (*shisero*), which is also referred to as *isumadi* all of which comprise important *idum* imaterial culture among the Tiriki. The chapter concluded that *idumi* among the Tiriki is not the mere cutting of the foreskin of the penis; it involves material culture which is embedded with symbolism at every stage of the *idumi* ritual cycle notably, the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion and the reintegration stages which play a significant role in transforming a baby boy into a “man”.

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Chapter Three explores the manufacturing process and preparation of cultural material in *idumi* before use in the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and reintegration stages. It has been noted that, though cultural material in *idumi* undergo a manufacturing process before utilization either in public or secret, some of the material culture is extracted, assembled and used in its natural form depending on the specific *idumi* stage. The cultural material in *Idumi* that require privacy and secrecy are ordinarily prepared either at night or in the *kavunyonje* or *kavukolosi* where those authorized are allowed access. The chapter concludes that, specificic material culture is made at every stage to perform specific task of transiting the initiate to the next stage of the *idumi* ritual cycle.

In Chapter Four, the study focuses on the the functions of cultural material in the preparatory, circumcision, seclusion, and reintegration stages of *idumi* from 1850-2014. Fundamentally, the chapter argues that the task of cultural material in *idumi* is not only to reinforce the expected traits to be portrayed by the newly circumcised boys, but also to “transform” them into men who are aware of their culture, social values and history of their society as well as to enable them recount such events to future generations. The chapter concludes that, despite the factuality that *idumi* encompasses material culture integration that accomplishes a definite role at every stage, both internal and external sway such as intermarriage, health concerns, western education and christianity have impacted change on some of the cultural material used in *idumi*. However, though alteration in utilization of this cultural material interrelated with
*idumi* can not be barricaded, aspects of this cultural material typically persists for continued use.

In Chapter Five, the study explored change and continuity in cultural material in *idumi* from 1902-2014. In the year 1850 - 1901, cultural material in *idumi* was intact and religiously upheld. However, the establishment of the Friends African Mission (FAM) station at Kaimosi among the Tiriki in 1902 signalled the beginning of a new era for both the Tiriki as a people and their culture of *idumi*. It has been argued in this chapter that the heightened missionary activities such as evangelization, introduction of western education, and sustained onslaught on Tiriki culture of *idumi* determined change in the cultural material used in *idumi*. But more importantly, Tiriki Christian converts pressurized change in cultural material in *idumi* by either taking their boys for Hospital circumcision which had nothing to do with *idumi* culture or embracing Vasomi circumcision which had discontinued some of the cultural material in *idumi*, for instance replaced *isumadi* with *mirechendi* and *tsisukha* which are modern material.

Furthermore, apart from changing from *malwa ki idumi* to non alcoholic drinks, Tiriki Christian converts discontinued the use of *ingolole* which constituted an important cultural material in *idumi* among the Tiriki. Further, I have urged in this chapter that, cultural material in *idumi* will keep on transposing due to the existence and activities of various circumcision groups such as the, Vasomi, Maragoli type of circumcision, and pure modernists who rely on clinical circumcision in hospitals which emerged among overzealous Tiriki Christian converts. In addition, the chapter has pointed out
that technological advancement, globalization, rural-urban migration, interaction with the neighbours in the form of trade and intermarriage, health concerns, Government Policy, and the changing attitude of the young generation have remarkably predisposed change on cultural material in *idumi*. The chapter concludes that, though cultural material in *idumi* has not escaped the question of transformation, some aspects of this material culture continue to play a significant role in transforming the initiates from childhood to manhood, and hence there is change visa avis continuity with regard to this material culture among the Tiriki.

6.3 Conclusions

The study had set out to address the following premises: That the origin and symbols of *idumi* material culture have been forgotten, that the manufacturing process of cultural material in *idumi* is vibrant, that the functions of *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki are being modernized and lastly, that the change in use of cultural material in *idumi* among the Tiriki is enormous.

This study has achieved its objective by establishing that the community of Abatiriki still remembers the origin and symbolism cultural material in *idumi*. As this study reveals, the Tiriki still recall that the origin of *idumi* and its interrelated cultural material is Terik. This disapproves the premise that the origin and symbolism of this cultural material has been forgotten. The study has noted the manufacturing process of culture material in *idumi* which partly confirms one of the research premises of this study. Based on the findings of the study, it is apparent that some cultural material in *idumi* are manufactured at every specific transition stage before utilization. However,
in the course of the fieldwork, the researcher noted that, though some of the cultural material in *idumi* is made, the initiates passively participate in the process. In addition, some of the cultural material used during *vukhulu*, especially the *ingolole* and *isumadi* appeared dilapidated indicating long duration of utility. This study therefore revealed that though persistence in use of some of the cultural material is evident, the manufacturing process is no longer vibrant as previously done and this may be attributed to both internal and external forces. This disapproves the premise that the manufacturing process of cultural material in *idumi* is vibrant.

However, as this study reveals, some attachment to cultural material in *idumi* is profound. This attachment oscillates in the functions the material culture play, such as inculcating and reinforcing the desired traits the Tiriki ascribe to manhood besides providing the channel through which the peoples’ customs, culture, history, beliefs, societal values and responsibilities of “men” are still passed from one generation to another. *Idumi* is inseparable from some of the cultural material such as the *ingolole*, *isumadi*, the *kavunyonje*, the *irhumbi*, and the *shikong’o* ritual which bestows Tirikihood to the initiate. The Tiriki refer to the *idumi* circumcision materials as “*vindu vye idumi*”, “things of *idumi*”. Because of the concrete social function assigned to some of the cultural material that necessitate continued hold on them, it may be evasive to modernize some of the functions they perform in due course.

The study found out that, though *idumi* and some of its interrelated cultural material still espouse some value, change visa avis continuity is inevitable due to cultural dynamism. Fundamentaly, what is of high value in 2016 may not be of value in 2030.
Indeed, this study established that change has occurred in some of the cultural material used in *idumi* and this can be attributed to cultural defoliants such as Christianity, western education, technological advances, rural urban - migration, and globalization, and health concerns especially the issue of HIV and Aids which has accelerated irreversible alteration in some of the cultural material in *idumi*. In essence, these forces have changed peoples’ perception about *idumi* and its associated material cultural. For instance, apart from using modern medicine insteadey of traditional herbs in treating circumcision wounds, both *Vasomi* and the ‘Tiriki original’ circumcision groups have embraced the use of scalpel blade per candidate instead of the indigenous knife that was used previously on several candidates during circumcision. Besides, a part from administering anti tetanus injection, the newly circumcised boys dress in modern cloth on the occasion of *shalukhu* instead of the skin. Some of the Tiriki families, especially those urbanized are opting to take their children to the hospital for circumcision. In addition, apart from modern medicine being used to treat circumcision wounds instead of indigenous herbs, modern material items such as spoon, folk, cups and plates made from melamine and plastic material are replacing *tsisacheti* and *vyhu/ishisanda* that comprised indigenous material utensils used by the initiates to serve food while in seclusion. The information discussed above partly confirms the premise that the functions of cultural material in *idumi* are being modernized. This implies that, the Tiriki are embracing change as times, conditions and meaning under which *idumi* is performed are also shifting. This confirms the research premise of the study which stated that change in use of *idumi* material culture among the Tiriki is enormous.
6.4 Recommendations

In the light of the above findings, I make the following recommendations:

6.4.1 Recommendations regarding the authenticity of the origin and the meanings enshrined in symbols of Tiriki circumcision (*Idumi*) material culture

The study established that the Tiriki acquired *idumi* from the Terik (*varwa*) who first circumcised a Tirik young man by the name Lukhova to facilitate marriage to a Terik (*Murwa*) girl. As the legends discussed in this work suggest, apart from Lukhova’s circumcision being carried out by a Terik woman, the Terik girl he intended to marry was also circumcised. In essence, there is need for a study to ascertain this conception. Future scholars should carry out research to examine not only how circumcision rituals among these two communities are performed, but also areas of convergence and divergence in cultural material utility in *idumi* and the symbolism ascribed to them. Moreover, since the Terik girl was circumcised and yet the Tiriki do not perform female circumcision, such a study may be usefull in elucidating why the Tiriki do not circumcise women. The question that calls for attention is whether the Tiriki and Terik linguistically share names used to refer to *idumi* artefacts is important in understanding not only the origin but also the symbolism engraved in the circumcision material culture of the two communities.
6.4.2 Recommendation regarding the manufacturing process of Tiriki circumcision (idumi) material culture.

As noted during fieldwork, some of the cultural material in dumi are manufactured while others such as the sacred forests; kavunyonje and kavukolosi are used in their natural form. However, the study observed existence of gap between the young and the old generation in the transmission of skills necessary in the preparation and manufacturing of cultural material idumi. The elders urged that the boys undergoing circumcision are too young to be exposed to the needy critis of cultural material interrelated with idumi. The researcher therefore recommends that despite their age, and if the community wishes to sustain the knowledge on the use of some of the cultural material with regard to idumi, the elders should devise away of informing the initiates on how this cultural material is constituted in order to encouraged as well as to sustain not only the art and the skill of preparing but also manufacturing this material culture such as the ingolole and isumadi.

6.4.3 Recommendation regarding functions of Tiriki circumcision (idumi) material culture.

As indicated in this study, cultural material in dumi such as the sacred forests – kavunyonje and kavukolosi execute predetermined tasks. However, encroachment on these forests is evident and devastating. The researcher as a consequence recommends the need for concerted efforts to conserve and secure the cultural forests for the present and the future generations. There is also need to establish a conservancy center
to preserve portable cultural material in *idumi* to guard against decimation. The use of some of the cultural material in *idumi* has been riddled with dissension. Among the controversial issues has been the use of one circumcision knife to circumcise several initiates. However, due to emerging health concerns, functions performed by certain material culture with regard to *idumi* need to be modernized. The researcher univocally recommends that, apart from *vadiri vu khumatsi* using dispossole scalpel blade per candidate when performing the circumcision operation to secure the initiates from contracting diseases such as HIV/AIDS, they should also use and change their gloves as well as clean their hands by using a sterilising liquid such Hibiscol after every operation. This will guarantee a low risk of infection. In addition, all stakeholders handling the initiates such as *vadiri vu khumatsi* who perform the circumcision operation and *vadiri vu murhumbi* who take care of the initiates while in seclusion should be given basic health care education to safeguard the health of the initiates. Additionally, proper disposal of material used in the *kavunyoje* should be effectuated to guard against environmental contamination.

*Idumi* material culture such as *vukhulu* is originally meant to be performed on specific *idumi* occasions, however, it has transcended its original context and is now performed in inter-schools’ music, dance and drama competitions, cultural functions, and radio stations. Yet, *vukhulu* in *idumi* is considered sacred and can only be performed when the initiation period is on, a view which brings to the fore the question as to why *vukhulu* is secularized. As such, future researchers need to investigate the
secularisation of vukhulu. Among the question’s scholars should investigate include how gender is re-performed or redefined in vukhulu.

6.4.4 Recommendation regarding change visa avis continuity of Tiriki circumcision (Idumi) material culture

This study has acknowledged change visa avis continuity with regard to Cultural material in idumi. External and internal causes are some of the fundamental forces impacting change on cultural material in idumi. Consequently, as the Tiriki continue to radically rethink and reformulate ways of dealing with the cultural shock resulting from inevitable change in cultural material utility in idumi as persuaded by Christianity and other emerging issues, the study recommends that the Tiriki should also rethink and re-examine some of the retrogressive cultural material in idumi with a view to embrace change particularly within the context of the changing modern world. Given that culture is dynamic, the research recommends that, the Tiriki who subscribe to idumi culture should be flexible to adopt useful cultural material from another culture while adhering to other aspects of idumi cultural material considered to be central in the ritual process. Since the world is currently undergoing a major transformation from a modern industrial society to a post-modern, and post-industrial society which is imbracing social - cultural changes, idumi and its interrelated cultural material cannot afford to remain static since the Tiriki are part of the larger society caught up in the web of global cultural transformation. From the research interviews contacted, it emerges clearly that the Tiriki still attach some value on cultural material which are indispensable in executing in idumi; hence, both the vasomi and ‘Tiriki
original’ circumcision groups should institute tangible measures to guard this material culture from extinction. Therefore, as people who still have preference for some of the cultural material in idumi, but who live in the modern society, the study recommends that both the ‘Tiriki original’ and Vasomi should be involved in a joint programme to preserve valuable cultural material in idumi that depict the community’s identity.

6.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Further research needs to be carried out on cultural material in Vihiga County and in other parts of the country in order to compare and see how such cultural material originated, was manufactured, used, and establish whether there is change visa avis continuity. Further research should also be done on cultural material in idumi with a view to examine how change in this material culture is affecting the transition of the youth into adulthood among the Tiriki. The evolution of idumi as an education institution in the transmutation of adolescent boys among the Tiriki is worth exploring. Research should also be done on Taboos observed by the Tiriki during idumi. Bearing in mind that the study was carried out in four Locations of Hamisi Sub-County; the results may not be generalized to the larger Hamisi Sub-County or any other part of the country. Researchers are therefore encouraged to do research on similar fields in different Locations of Hamisi Sub-County to avoid generalizations.
CITED REFERENCES

(a) Published Sources


Garbarino, M. S. (1977). *Social Cultural Theory in archaeology; Asho*


Silberschmidt, Margrethe. 1999. ‘Women Forget that Men are the Masters’: Gender Antagonism and Socio-Economic Change in Kisii District, Kenya. p24, Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitute.


(b) Unpublished Sources


APPENDICES

APPENDIX : QUESTIONNAIRE

A: Introduction
Dear respondent,
I am carrying out research on the manufacture, use, change and continuity of symbols associated with circumcision (idumí) among the Tiriki of Kenya from 1850 to 2014. Attached is a questionnaire: please fill in to help gather the correct information to facilitate better understanding about the manufacture, use, change and continuity of symbols associated with circumcision (idumí) material culture among the Tiriki. The information collected will be treated with confidentiality and purely used for research purposes only and will be used as such. There is no right or wrong answers. Please spare a few minutes to answer this questionnaire by filling information in the spaces provided. Do not write your name.

B: Background Information.
   Gender…
   Age………………..  Age group (Likhula) ………………………
   Marital status
   Education level
   Occupation
   Residence

b (ii) Section of the Tiriki
(i)  Traditional
(ii) Partially Traditional (Middle reformed)
(iii) Modernized
b (iii) How long have you lived in the community?
   10 ears  20 years  30 years  40 years and above
(iv) What can you say about the ethnic composition of the community you live in?

C: Tentative questions

(a) Objective one: To investigate the origin and meanings imbedded in symbols used during Tiriki Circumcision (*idumi*).

1. Who is a Tiriki?
2. What is *Idumi*?
3. Why is *idumi* circumcision a life and death matter for the Tirikis?
4. What could be the origin of Tiriki *idumi* circumcision?
5. What does *idumi* constitute?
6. What has made the Tiriki to continue with their old age customs (**miima**) of *idumi* Circumcision?
7. Who is involved in the process of *idumi* circumcision?
   (a) Parents only. (b) Relatives and clansmen (mother’s side and fathers’ side)
   (b) The entire community.
8. What stages did your *idumi* circumcision take from beginning to the end, i.e. what is the process of *idumi*?
9. Were the stages in your *idumi* circumcision accompanied by symbolic material and rituals?
   Yes (b) no
10. Can you mention some of the symbolic material and rituals accompanying the stages in *idumi* circumcision?
11. What could be the origin of these *idumi* circumcision material symbols and rituals?
12. Do the Tiriki assign meanings to their *idumi* circumcision symbols?
   (a) Yes (b) no
13. What meaning do you think the Tiriki assign to their *idumi* circumcision material culture?
14. Is the meaning assigned to *idumi* circumcision material culture different from the symbolic material used and rituals performed in *idumi* functions? Briefly explain.

15. In what language and dialect is *idumi* circumcision material culture and meaning communicated?

16. When did you learn about the meaning assigned to *idumi* circumcision material culture?
   Before ☐ After circumcision ☐

17. Who taught you their origin and meaning?

18. How were you taught their meaning?
   Once ☐ several times ☐

19. Can you list some meaning of the symbols you can remember?
   i. Where are the symbols kept, and who keeps them?
   ii. When are symbols availed for use, and what happens to them before use?
   iii. What symbols are shown to the initiates during the night before circumcision?

20. What is the meaning of these *idumi* symbols to the initiates?
   (a) What happens to those initiates who reveal their meanings?
   (b) Who were the original users of these symbols?
   (c) Where do symbols used during seclusion come from?

21. What meaning is linked to symbols used when initiates are in seclusion?

22. What meaning is attached to symbols used when initiates are dancing during *vukhulu*?

23. What could be the origin of symbols used during ‘clubbing’ (shigong’o)?

24. Does the ritual of ‘clubbing’ (shigong’o) have any meaning in the Tiriki *idumi* circumcision?

25. What meaning is attached to circumcision symbols used during *shalukhu*?
(a) Objective Two: To examine the manufacturing process of Tiriki Circumcision (Idumi) material culture

1. Do the idumi material culture undergo the manufacturing process before use?
2. Why is idumi circumcision material culture part and parcel of idumi ceremonies?
3. Are there idumi Circumcision material culture which are a prerequisite for iduni ceremonies to take place (a) yes (b) no
4. If yes, in no.2 above can you list down some of the idumi Circumcision material culture which must be manufactured as a prerequisite for idumi ceremonies to take place? Can you describe the process involved in making idumi circumcision material culture listed in no.4 above and which are a prerequisite for idumi ceremonies to take place?
5. What stages and materials are used to construct the seclusion huts (tsirumbi)?
6. Who constructs the seclusion huts (tsirumbi) and for what purpose?
7. What material related to idumi are made and kept in the seclusion hut (Irumbi)? And by whom? How are the sacred forests (kavunyonje and kavukolosi) prepared for use?
8. What material symbols are used during the dancing day before circumcision (Kwimbirwa), and who makes them and how?
9. Which circumcision materials are used by initiates in the morning, when they are being taken to the forest? How are they made and from what?
10. What process is involved in making the earthen pots used during idumi?
11. How are the idumi circumcision material used during the actual circumcision manufactured e.g., Knives (vivya/tsincheso), medicine (Lunyasi)?
12. Which materials do the initiates use when leaving the forest (kavunyonje) after circumcision?
13. How are these idumi circumcision materials in 13 above made and by whom?
14. Where do the initiates feed from while in seclusion (irumbi) after circumcision?
15. Who manufactures these material symbol from where the initiates feed from while in seclusion (irumbi) and from what?
16. What materials do the initiates sleep on in irumbi, and how are they made?
17. What do initiates use in Irumbi to feed from, and who makes them and from what?
   18. Mention the process involved in making the headdress (ingolole), and for what purpose is ingolole made, and by whom?
19. What other symbols are used on the occasion of performing song and dance (vukhulu), apart from those made by the initiates in the irumbi?
20. From what materials in no.21 are these symbols made and how?
21. Tiriki circumcision is incomplete without beer (malwa). How is it made and from what?
22. There are symbols used during ritual of “Clubbing” (Shikong’o) – How are they made and by who?
23. Which symbols are used during pass-out-day (shalukhu)? Who makes them and how?
24. Who prepares idumi material symbols used to make the archway (Shilivwa), and from what materials is shilivwa made?
25. Apart from Shilivwa, what other circumcision material symbols are used on shalukhu day, and who makes them?

Objective Three: To discuss various functions of Tiriki Idumi circumcision material culture

1. Do you think material culture used during idumi among the Tiriki serve any function?
2. Can you write down some of the material culture used during idumi circumcision among the Tiriki?
3. Why does the Tiriki community value idumi and its accompanying material culture?
4. Why is idumi circumcision material culture part and parcel of all idumi functions?
5. Do you think the material culture the Tiriki initiates are exposed to and use during idumi serve any function?
6. If yes, in 5 above, can you mention how *idumi* circumcision and its associated material serve the function of effecting the transition from childhood (*Vwana* or *Vusoleli*) to adulthood (*Vuhindira*)?

7. How does *idumi* circumcision material culture perform the education function among the Tiriki initiates?

8. Can you identify ways in which *idumi* circumcision material culture serves the function of socialization among the Tiriki?

9. In what way does *idumi* circumcision material culture perform the function of identity creation among the Tiriki?

10. Give ways in which *idumi* circumcision material culture preform the religious function among the Tiriki?

11. How does an idumi circumcision material culture play the function of inculcating the moral code and values amongst the Tiriki initiates?

12. What role do *idumi* circumcision and the material linked to it play in the gendering process among the Tiriki?

13. In what way does *idumi* circumcision material culture contribute to character building amongst the Tiriki initiates?

14. Comment on how *idumi* circumcision material culture helps in the transmission, preservation and conservation of cultural heritage among the Tiriki?

15. In what ways do you think *idumi* circumcision material culture assists in enhancing the utilitarian function among the Tiriki initiates?

16. Mention ways in which *idumi* circumcision material culture perform the role of fostering unity among the Tiriki?

17. How does *idumi* circumcision material culture perform the function of crafting behavioural rules, rites and reciprocal privileges amongst circumcision age sets in the Tiriki community?

18. State how *idumi* circumcision and its associated material culture serve the function of instilling the virtual of resilience in the Tiriki initiates?
19. Can you list ways in which *idumi* circumcision material culture socially prepares Tiriki?

20. Initiates for communal life?

21. How do *idumi* circumcision and its associated material symbols facilitate the function of the initiate’s adaptation to their environment?

22. How does *idumi* circumcision material culture perform the function of integrating Tiriki initiates into the community?

23. In what way do you think an *idumi* circumcision material culture performs the role of preparing the Tiriki initiates for leadership responsibilities?

24. How does *idumi* circumcision material culture function as an agent of change in the initiate’s life? (The essence of *idumi* circumcision material culture)

**Objective Four: To explain change and continuity of Tiriki *idumi* circumcision material culture**

1. Is there change or continuity in use of circumcision material culture among the Tiriki?
   - Yes [ ]
   - No [ ]

2. If yes, which circumcision material culture has changed - tangible, intangible or both? Explain briefly.

3. Is there any change in the manufacture, accessing, and use of *idumi* circumcision material culture during your initiation and the present one (2015)? Briefly explain.

4. What change do you think has occurred in *idumi* circumcision material culture with regard to tangible - intangible material culture?

5. What has caused these changes?

6. Are the forces that have influenced change in *idumi* circumcision material culture internal or external?

7. In what way do you think the above forces have influenced change in *idumi* circumcision material culture?
8. Can you identify the force that has prominently influenced change in *idumi* and its associated material culture?

9. Which month do the initiates go for *idumi* circumcision?

10. Can you state what happens to the initiates before and after circumcision?

11. Is what you have stated in no. 11 above happen to you when you were a candidate for *idumi*?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forces influencing change in <em>idumi</em></th>
<th>Tick where applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Influence of Christianity and culture contact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Influx of immigrants into the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Western education - The increased levels of literacy in the community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The influence of urbanization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Depletion of natural resource material</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Technological Advances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 The generation gap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Cultural authentication - adopting other items to be part of <em>idumi</em> material</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Globalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Emerging health concerns - HIV and Aids</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Abandonment of rituals and beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Government policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Creativity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Interactions with other communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. Which instrument is used for circumcision?

13. What material do the initiates use as beddings while in seclusion (*irumbi*)?

14. Can you identify the type of utensils used by the initiates while in seclusion (*irumbi*)?

15. In what material do the initiates dress on the occasion of ending seclusion (*shalukhu*).

16. Which of the following forces do you think have influenced change in *idumi* material culture? Tick where applicable.

17. Can you identify some of the *idumi* symbols that have undergone replacement in the table below?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original symbol (indigenous)</th>
<th>Replacement / Current</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Spear</td>
<td>pen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Shield</td>
<td>book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Skin cloth (<em>isumadi</em>)</td>
<td>Some use blankets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Circumcision knife(<em>shivya/injeso</em>)</td>
<td>Scalpel blade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Chopsticks (<em>tsisacheti</em>)</td>
<td>Spoons, forks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Gourds (<em>vyuhul시스anda</em>)</td>
<td>Modern plates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Short skin apron (<em>isiiro</em>)</td>
<td>Dress in modern cloth when ending seclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Nettle plant used as anaesthesia (<em>Isambakhalwa</em>)</td>
<td>Injecting pain killing drug</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 9 Indigenous brew (*malwa ki idumi*)
  Indigenous medicine(*lunyasi*) | |

18. Which category of the Tiriki has replaced some of the original *idumi* symbols with modern material? (a) Partially indigenous Tiriki.

19. Mainstream indigenous Tiriki (c) All of them. Briefly state why?
20. Is there any *idumi* circumcision material culture that has been discarded?

21. Do the meanings the Tiriki assign to *idumi* circumcision material culture still portray their *idumi* cultural beliefs in view of the changes above?

22. What is your opinion on *idumi* and its material culture?

23. Given an opportunity, do you think the indigenously circumcised youth can accept to be subjected to *idumi* material culture a second time?

24. What role has language played in bringing change in the use of *idumi* material culture?

25. Tell how intermarriages have led to dilution of *Idumi* material culture?

26. How do the current constitution of Kenya influence change in use of *idumi* circumcision material culture?

27. How are the upcoming revival churches causing current changes in *Idumi* material culture?

28. What’s the future of Tiriki circumcision material culture given that the old generation that preserves them is dying?

29. Do you think economic hardships may erode Tiriki circumcision material culture? Comment.

30. Are there stages where the Tiriki continue using *Idumi* circumcision material culture?

   (a) YES  (b) NO

31. If yes, can you mention the stages, and the *idumi* material culture used? ....

32. What do you think is making some *idumi* material culture to remain unchanged for continued use? Tick where possible and Give reasons why?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CULTURAL CONSTRUCT</th>
<th>LEAST</th>
<th>LITTLE</th>
<th>A LITTLE</th>
<th>MORE</th>
<th>MOST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Circumcision customs(<em>miima</em>),</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative oath (<em>imuuma</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Restrictions on discussing <em>idumi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Values attached to <em>idumi</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural identity</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Raw material availability</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX B, LIST OF INFORMANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position/Status of Informant</th>
<th>Date of research</th>
<th>Place of Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elder custodian of <em>idumi</em> material culture; in charge of the <em>kavunyonje, Kavulosi</em>, and accommodating the initiates at night fo <em>idumi</em> rituals</td>
<td>December 6th, 2015</td>
<td>Shaviringa and Shamakhoko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elder custodian of <em>idumi</em> material culture; in charge of the <em>kavunyonje, Kavulosi</em>, and accommodating the initiates at night fo <em>idumi</em> rituals</td>
<td>December 12th, 2015</td>
<td>Jepkoyai and Tambua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellors (<em>Vadiri vu murhumbi</em>)</td>
<td>December 28th, 2015</td>
<td>Shaviringa and Shamakhoko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December 29th, 2015</td>
<td>Jepkoyai and Tambua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumcisers (<em>vajesi or vadiri vu khumatsi</em>)</td>
<td>April 25th, 2016</td>
<td>Shaviringa and Shamakhoko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 26th, 2016</td>
<td>Jepkoyai and Tambua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Parents</td>
<td>April 29th, 2016</td>
<td>Shaviringa and Shamakhoko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 30th, 2016</td>
<td>Jepkoyai and Tambua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elders charged with custodianship of seclusion huts (<em>tsirhumbi</em>)</td>
<td>May 8th, 2016</td>
<td>Jepkoyai and Tambua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 9th, 2016</td>
<td>Shaviringa and Shamakhoko</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group discussion (FGD1)</td>
<td>May 14th, 2016</td>
<td>Jepkoyai and Tambua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group discussion (FGD2)</td>
<td>May 21st, 2016</td>
<td>Jepkoyai and Tambua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus group discussion (FGD3)</td>
<td>May 28th, 2016</td>
<td>Jepkoyai and Tambua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women (FGD4)</td>
<td>May 29th, 2016</td>
<td>Tambua and Jepkoyai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C, RESEARCH INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is *idumi* and where did it originate?
2. why do the Tiriki perform *idumi*?
3. can you describe the process (stages) involved in *idumi*?
4. what cultural material are incorporated in *idumi*?
5. what is the origin of the cultural material incorporated in *idumi*?
6. what meaning and symbolism is ascribed to this cultural material?
7. How is the cultural material used in *idumi* made at every stage?
8. what function do this cultural material perform?
9. what rituals are incorporated in *idumi* at every stage?
10. what function and symbolism are ascribed to rituals incorporated in *idumi*?
11. what changes do you think have occurred in cultural material used in *idumi*?
12. what has caused the changes in the cultural material used in *idumi*?
13. Has some cultural material used in *idumi* remained unchanged?
14. what factors influence persistence of some cultural material in *idumi*?
APPENDIX D, RESEARCH INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FGDs

1. when and where did Tiriki idumi begin
2. why have the Tirik continued to practice idumi
3. Is material culture essential to idumi
4. what type of cultural material used at every stage of idumi?
5. Why have the Tiriki continued to incorporate cultural material in idumi.
6. why do the Tiriki lay a lot of emphasis on cultural material in dumi
7. Is there a difference in the earlier material used in idumi and the present?
8. what changes have occurred in the cultural material used in idumi
9. what has caused the changes
APPENDIX E: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FROM KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND POLITICAL STUDIES
P.O BOX 43844
Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: 8710961, 871622
Ext: 4164/4165
Chairman.history@kua.ac.ke
Date: 18 January 2016

Our Ref: C50/KER/CE/26464/2013

RE: SANDULA BENJAMIN REG. NO. C50/KER/CE/26464/2013

This is to confirm that the above named is an M.A student at Kenyatta University in the Department of History, Archaeology and Political studies specializing in History. He successfully completed his course work and defended his research proposal entitled: Symbols in Action: Manufacture, Use, Change, and Continuity of the Tiriki Circumcision Material Culture, 1850-2014.

He is currently collecting his research data for analysis.

Any assistance accorded to him will be highly appreciated. Thanking in advance.

Yours faithfully,

DR. WASHINGTON NDIRI
CHAIR, HISTORY ARCHAEOLOGY AND POLITICAL STUDIES
/cbr
APPENDIX D: LETTER FROM NACOSTI AUTHORIZING RESEARCH

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Ref No: NACOSTI/P/16/01367/9964

Date: 17th June, 2016

Benjamin M. Sandula
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “Symbols in action: Manufacture, use, change and continuity of the Tiriki Circumcision Material Culture, 1850-2014,” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Vihiga County for the period ending 13th June, 2017.

You are advised to report to the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Vihiga County before embarking on the research project.

On completion of the research, you are expected to submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of the research report/thesis to our office.

DR. STEPHEN K. KIBIRU, PHD.
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Vihiga County.

The County Director of Education
Vihiga County.
APPENDIX E: NACOSTI LICENCE

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:

MR. BENJAMIN M SANDULA
of KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, 0-50322
muthanga, has been permitted to
conduct research in Vihiga County
on the topic: SYMBOLS IN ACTION:
MANUFACTURE, USE, CHANGE AND
CONTINUITY OF THE TIRIKI
CIRCUMCISION MATERIAL
CULTURE, 1850-2014
for the period ending: 13th June, 2017

For NACOSTI

Director General
National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation

CON peeledE:
1. You must report to the County Commissioner and
the County Education Officer of the area before
undertaking any research; Failure to do that
may lead to the cancellation of your permit.
2. Government Officers will not be interviewed
without prior appointment.
3. No questionnaire will be used unless it has been
approved.
4. Excavation, felling and collection of biological
specimens are subject to further permission from
the relevant Government Ministries.
5. You are required to submit at least two (2) hard
copies and (one 1) soft copy of your Final report.
6. The Government of Kenya reserves the right to
modify the conditions of this permit including
its cancellation without notice.
APPENDIX E: LETTER OF AUTHORITY FROM TIRIKI COUNCIL OF ELDERS

THE SUPREME TIRIKI CULTURAL COUNCIL OF ELDERS

25-01-2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

DEAR SIR/MADAM,

Re: Sandula Benjamin ID No 6017429

The above-named person hails from the Tradition Culture of the Watiriki of Kamisi Constituency.

He has visited our Cultural Centre office for data research collection for analysis in his studies on material culture.

I have discussed and helped him as per his needs.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. Dr. Mbarya Omamo Joseph-07/01/202
Secretary General of the Watiriki.