

**SAMBURU NOTIONS OF HEALTH AND DISEASE  
AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO INNER CLEANLINESS (1959)**

P, Spencer.

Paper submitted to a symposium on 'African Conceptions of Health and Disease', held in 1959 at the East African Institute of Social Research, Makerere College, Kampala

In this paper, I shall outline the Samburu attitudes towards health and disease, and then I shall try to explain how this is related to a more general attitude towards inner cleanliness.

By normal African standards the Samburu are said to be exceptionally fit and well nourished, and from a medical point of view they appear to have attained a fairly successful adaptation to their environment. But it would be wrong to imply that because they are a healthy tribe, they are not concerned with the problem of their own health. On the contrary, this is a subject which constantly disturbs them, especially where it concerns their children.

There is, needless to say, a high incidence of mortality among children;<sup>1</sup> and in order to give them the best chances of survival, adults take particular care to see that their children are well fed and do not suffer unnecessary hardship. This parental care in early life is perhaps the most important factor in the high standard of fitness in the tribe. A second factor is, of course, that only those who are physically strong at birth stand any reasonable chance of reaching maturity.

One feature of this general concern with health is the impressive number and variety of prescriptions which the Samburu have for their different ailments and diseases. Of some two hundred plants, shrubs, and trees whose names I have been given as having some use in the society, about eighty are specifically medicinal and twenty others have stimulant properties. The diseases and ailments which these are claimed to treat are gonorrhoea, malaria, fever, cough (throat and chest), tape-worm, jaundice, liver complaints, dysentery and various other named but unidentified stomach complaints, eye-sores, headaches, earaches, toothaches, sinus, snake bites, burns, rashes, external cuts and festering wounds, rheumatism, colds, barrenness, birth complications, and constipation. There are also various medicines which are used to treat diseases in stock.

A recurrent feature in these medicines is their purgative qualities as emetics and as cathartics. Purgatives are not only considered suitable for such rather obvious complaints as tape-worm, snake bites, constipation, and a variety of stomach complaints, but they are also taken for gonorrhoea, headaches, malaria, fevers, bad coughs and colds. This accounts for the number of general purpose medicines which as purgatives are claimed to cure almost any complaint.

A plausible explanation of this notion follows from the unusual diet of the Samburu. They are a pastoral tribe, and milk forms the bulk of their diet. It is frequently maintained by Europeans that milk is a constipating food; and this, assuming it is true, could explain the need for purgatives. The Samburu, however, maintain that it is not constipating and I personally have never found it so.

The explanation given by the Samburu is that disease is often a sort of poison which can be expelled from the system by taking a purgative. They even maintain that physical unfitness can be overcome in this way; after a harsh dry season when milk is again plentiful and men realize the ordeal that they have been through, they say that they cannot recover their fitness without first clearing their bowels. They take a purgative, have diarrhoea for several days, and then feel much better for it. The treatment need not be repeated until the next illness at the end of the next dry season. There is no acute constipation, so far as I could make out, but just a desire to rid themselves of all trace of excrement in their systems: excrement is a detestable unclean thing.

A Samburu custom shared by a number of neighbouring tribes, may have some relevance here. There is a practice among boys of any age between about six and ten years old in which they make a sub-incision in their urethras.<sup>2</sup> Informants maintain that unless this is done, there is a constriction which makes urination difficult at times. Here, again, interest is shown in taking a practical step in helping to keep their bodies clear of waste matter, although there is no physiological reason to suppose that they have any real difficulty in discharging this matter.

This conception of health and the desire to keep their bodily systems clear in order to remain in good health leads to a more general consideration of the Samburu attitudes towards uncleanness. Certain foods, for instance, are considered to be unclean and they would never be eaten except when circumstances make it absolutely necessary. These unclean foods include fish, eggs, donkey, dog, elephant, bush pig, monkey and most types of wild animal. The reasons given for avoiding these possible foods as unclean are worth noting. Monkeys are similar to human beings, and so are elephants for they have 'an arm' (nkaina = arm, trunk of an elephant) and two breasts like a woman – and they have even been heard to talk! To eat either species would be similar to eating a man, which is repugnant. Bush pigs, dogs and hens browse (and peck) among their own excrement. The egg of a hen is virtually the same as its excrement, and some maintain that it is its excrement. The association between unclean foods and excrement and cannibalism is suggested in these beliefs, and all three evoke similar feelings of revulsion. Carnivorous animals do not distinguish between clean and unclean foods, and for this reason they too are not eaten. Eating these foods might lead to illness and even death: no-one is quite certain, but they are repugnant and this is the main reason given for their avoidance.

Other neighbouring tribes which, like wild animals, do not avoid certain foods as unclean are regarded with disgust by the Samburu. These include the Dorobo who hunted and ate wild animals until quite recently, the fish-eating Elmolo tribe of Lake Rudolph, and the omnivorous Turkana. Samburu generally avoid marrying women of these tribes: those persons who do marry them tend to have Dorobo or Turkana ancestry which makes it harder for them to marry into true Samburu families: to some extent they are tainted by the previous association. In the 1880's, when a terrible cattle plague killed off nearly all their cattle, some Samburu were forced to eat these unclean foods for their very survival. But this is a period which informants are anxious to forget; they point out that only a few had to resort to this way of living and that as soon as they could build up their herds again they abandoned it.

Death is another topic, about which there is revulsion, and there is, in addition, a certain awe and dread; it is avoided where possible in conversation. Ceremonies performed after death are simple and are executed with great care: to flout a single detail would be to lay oneself open to malignant supernatural force which could lead to illness and possibly death itself. In that diseases frequently lead to death, the association between the two is a logical one. But in Samburu ideology, they also

have an element of contagion in common: on the one hand contagion from disease (especially among cattle) is an observable phenomenon, on the other hand contagion from death is only observable in so far as their metaphysical beliefs readily lead to mental associations between unconnected events.

In this paper I have suggested that the Samburu attitudes towards disease, excrement, unclean foods, and death are related to each other in a consistent fashion. The beliefs which express these attitudes have an element of logical inference (such as the relationship between disease and death, and the use of purgatives which must succeed in curing a number of ailments), an element of free association (such as the relationship between unclean meat, and excrement, and cannibalism) and an element of metaphysical belief with no rational explanation (such as the belief that death is contagious through the action of supernatural forces). Excrement is decomposing dead matter, and it should be expelled from the system, just as a corpse should be taken from the settlement. Unclean foods should not be allowed to pollute the individual, just as marriages with tainted families (and Dorobo and Turkana) should be avoided so as not to taint the lineage. In the realm of ceremony and metaphysical belief, death is followed by a cleansing of the living who may then return to a normal state. In the realm of social action and preference, marriage is predominantly with families that are not tainted by an association with such tribes as the Dorobo or Turkana, and in a sense the lineage is kept clean. And in the realm of native medical belief and practice, disease is expelled from the system by taking a purgative and leaving the body clear and in good health.

#### NOTES

1. It was not possible to collect reliable figures for infant mortality to substantiate this point. But I think it is quite likely that less than 66% of those born reach the age of six months; other Europeans have estimated the proportion of survivors at a much lower figure.

2. Among small boys, this is unlikely to be due to gonorrhoea; and the custom was, in any case, practised before the appearance of gonorrhoea in the society. This custom has, incidentally, also been noted by Edward L. Margetts in an article entitled "Sub-incision of the Urethra in the Samburu of Kenya". (East African Medical Journal, Vol. 37, No 2, Feb 1960, pp. 105-8).

[For a comparison with Maasai concepts of health, disease, and pollution, see Spencer, P. Time, Space, and the Unknown, 2003: p. 66 n.6.]

#### **Appendix. Samburu Herbal Medicines (1960).**

A record was compiled of 203 varieties of tree, shrub and plant that were used by the Samburu. The uses were classified as medical (M), ritual (R), utilitarian (U), or as foods (F).

Of these, 167 truly awful specimens were collected, of which 150 were identified at the Herbarium of the Coryndon Museum in Nairobi. I am very grateful to Mr D. Napper for undertaking this thankless task.

93 of these 203 varieties were held by the Samburu to have medical uses, and a further 12 were also used by moran in their soups, often to make them shiver or even shake (but see footnote). These are listed below.

##### **(i). trees, shrubs and plants with medical uses.**

Laamai. *Ximenia americana* L. : Olacaceae (hills & plains)  
M. for stomach ache, boil bark in water for 30 minutes, add milk and drink.  
F. similarly, moran may use the bark as an additive to their soups.

Labaii. *Psiadia arabica* Taub: Compositae (hills) .  
M. used in a lotion to disinfest calves, other small stock, and dogs of ticks. Boil leaves in water and bathe infested area.

Laibalishi. *Calotropis procera* R.Br.: Asclepiadaceae (plains)  
M. as a general cure for illness, smear on forehead  
R. inner part of root has ritual value  
(a) used as snuff to produce a propitious sneeze  
(b) for protection against animals and enemies, blow the snuff extract in their direction

Lambaalegi. *Ricinis communis* L.: Euphorbiaceae (plains)  
M. may be given to calving cattle that retain the placenta. To implement its release, the fruit is ground and placed in the cow's mouth.

Lampurpirei. *Commiphora* sp. : Burseraceae (plains)  
M. for general stomach ache or nausea: soak bark in cold water for about six hours, and then drink concoction.

Lamuriei. *Carissa edulis* Vahl: Apocynaceae (hills)  
M. medicine for gonorrhoea; boil root in water, add milk and drink.  
F. fruit is edible.

Larame. *Cistanche tubulosa* (Schenk) Hook.f. : Orobanchaceae (plains).  
M. used by pregnant women for the benefit of their unborn child: boil root in water, add milk and drink in quantity: she passes a lot of urine .

Laramlrami. *Senecio petitiana* A. Rich. Compositae (hills).  
M. used as a tonic for a newly born infant that is felt to be weak:  
mother chews the root until well mixed with her spittle, and then feeds the child mouth to mouth.

Laseremoi. No specimen (hills)  
M. general medicine for colds, fever, malaria, and gonorrhoea: root is boiled in a soup.

Lasesie. *Osyris compressa* (Berg.) A. DC. :Olacaceae (plains, along river beds)  
M. when a cow's udder or a woman's breast swells, it is covered with fat and an ember of this wood is held close so that its smoke can permeate the affected part.  
F. moran boil the bark in their soup and it is said to make them shake.

Laturdei. *Capparis* sp. Capparidaceae (hills and plains)  
M. form of disinfectant for open cuts: pound and grind the outer root into a powder, and place on open cut after washing it well.

Lauragi. *Sanevieria* sp. : Liliaceae. (plains)

M. medicine for gonorrhoea when men have difficulty in passing urine. Also used by pregnant wives who feel sick. Boil root in water, add milk and drink.

Lbolan. *Coleus* sp. : Labiatae (mostly on hills)

M. Good for a woman who has just given birth. (a) She mixes the leaf and stem with blood before drinking it; or (b), she mixes the leaves and stem with a cow's chyme and drinks as an emetic

Lchening'iro. *Commiphora africana* (A. Rich.) Engl. Burseraceae (plains)

M. taken for stomach ache: stew bark in water for some time, add milk and stir. Then drink.

Lching'ei. *Euclea schimperi* (A. DC.) Dandy: Ebenaceae (hills).

M. Taken by a man who has ng'ony (described by Samburu as an 'artery' disease of the stomach): boil root in soup and drink.

U. General use in hut construction for poles and secondary supports (laum, bokeshi, watanda)

Ldalampoi. *Entada leptostachya* Harms: Mimosaceae (hills and plains)

M. taken for rheumatism: stew root in water or soup

Ldaua lenkop (lit. medicine of the ground). *Melhanianthus ovata* (Cav.) Spreng; : Sterculiaceae. (hills and plains)

M. may be applied to a bad burn. Either (a) grind leaf into a paste with water and apply; or (b) simply chew leaf and apply.

-4-

Ldepe. *Acacia* sp. Mimosaceae (plains)

M. (a) for fever with gonorrhoea, headaches, and jaundice: put bark into water and milk and leave to stand before drinking.

(b) may also be given to cattle with jaundice or saar: soak bark in water and then forcibly feed.

Ldule (lit. 'flute'). No specimen. (hills)

M. taken for stomach ache: stew bark in water.

U. boys' flute (improvised from bark tube)

Lechuchin (larabirabi). *Boerhaavia* or *Commicarpus* sp. Nyctaginaceae (hills and plains)

M. used by women with swollen breasts, and those with bodily swellings caused by (e.g.) gonorrhoea: stew fruit in water and drink.

Leekuru. *Withania somnifera* Dunal: Solanaceae. (lower hills).

M. used as a disinfectant in a wound: dry root in the sun and grind in into a fine powder; clean wound with warm water or cow's urine, enlarge the wound if necessary, and apply the powder

Lemichiria. *Combretum aculeatum* Vent.: Combretaceae. (hills & plains).

M. used for gonorrhoea: stew roots in water and add milk; Drink.

Lenja. Specimen indeterminable (plains)

M. used for sore eyes: wood is stewed in water, and then eyes are bathed when water is warm.

Letualan. *Crotalaria* sp. Papilionaceae (plains) BAT: /lt-\ 1

M. for colds: scrape root and chew; spit out the wood, but swallow the spittle.

Leturot. Specimen indeterminable (at watering points in hills and plains)

M. taken for malaria and by a woman whose stomach still aches after a birth: boil plant in water with a little milk added

Lgelaiorok. *Vepris eugenifolia* (Engl.) Verdoorn Rutaceae (hills)

M. identical use to lororoi, which is only found in the plains; whence the two trees are complementary for medicinal purposes. depending on convenience.

U. hut supports, herding staffs.

Lgirei. *Lawsonia inermis* L. :Lythraceae (plains).

M. for a bad stomach: boil root in a soup; induces diarrhoea.

Ljipilikwa. *Strychnos* sp. :Loganiaceae (hills)

M. bark has the same preparation and application as the root of leekuru, but ljipilikwa is preferable.

Lkarasha. *Sterculia* sp. *S. africana* Fiori or a species near this: Sterculiaceae (lower hills)

M. a weak emetic, highly suitable for very small children, and used when they have burned themselves or are generally ill: boil root in water.

U. brush can be made by pounding the end of a stick: useful for cleaning inside small milk containers

Lkelelit. *Euphorbia* sp. Euphorbiaceae (plains)

M. used in a meat soup especially by moran: the white gum is highly dangerous to the eyes - it is first put into a fire to burn off this gum, and then boiled in the soup for perhaps 30 minutes.

This preparation may also be used by moran for gonorrhoea and chest complaints, induce ing diarrhoea

Lkerdedi. *Acacia Senegal* (L.) Willd. : Mimosaceae (plains).

M. given to a wife who has just given birth - good for her stomach (womb?) and helps to loosen the placenta: boil bark in water (which turns red) and drink.

Lkiloriti. *Acacia* sp. : Mimosaceae (hills)

M. (a) for stomach ache (womb?) especially after childbirth: soak the bark in water in a cow's nkoloki or just boil in water, and drink. (b) the above boiled mixture may be applied to a festering sore (as after circumcision or a bite from a wild animal. To save time, the leaves may be chewed and applied to the sore spot.

F. the moran boil the bark in their soups.

Lkimanshoi. *Hibiscus* sp. Malvaceae. (plains)

M. the bark may be chewed to cure a cold

Lkinoi. *Lannea alata* Engl. : Anacardiaceae (hills)

M. the red fluff around the roots may be put onto an open wound, and is said to be a very effective cure

F. fruit may be eaten raw or cooked. (Apart from the fact that this tree does have fruit and no resin, it is very similar to silalei).

U. The Elmolo use this wood as a punt pole.

\*Lkinyil. (Lock) *Rhamnus Prinoides* L'herit (hills)

M. root (?) may be stewed in (e.g.) tea for malaria and colds.

F. moran put root into soup to induce shaking.

\*Lkitalaswa. (Lock) *myrica kilimand scharica*.. eng var *macrophilla* (hills)

M. identical use and preparation to Lkinyil

F. ditto.

Lkokolai. *Rhamnus staddo* A. Rich. : *Rhamnaceae* (hills) R.. propitious for burning on ceremonial fires.

M. (a) when a mother's milk (or a cow's ) is 'bad', burn wood in a fire, plunge into a milk container and hold this close to the breast or udder so that the smoke can permeate the skin (cf. lasesie).

(b) for stomach ache or a cold: boil the root in water and add a little milk.

Lkwienoi. *Heteromorpha trifoliata* (Wendl.) Eckl. & Zeyh.: *Umbelliferae* (hills)

M. (with semi-magical implications), the charcoal may be rubbed into the forehead, temples or aching part for a. headache, or chest for a chest ache.

U. firestick

R. for protection at night (against sorcerers?) rub charcoal onto each big toe.

Lmaem. No specimen (plains)

M. for gonorrhoea, boil roots in water and add milk.

U. a stick may be used for cleaning teeth.

Lmang'wei (ripanti). *Sclerocarya birrea* Hochst. : *Anacardiaceae* (lower hills)

M. for stomach ache: stew bark in water, and add milk and sugar 'like tea')

F. fruit edible

Lmarak. *Blepharis linearifolia* Pers. *Acanthaceae* (plains)

M, for malaria and other fevers: stew whole plant in water, add milk and drink.

Lng'alayoi. *Cucurbitaceae*. Indeterminable (plains)

M. used as an emetic for gonorrhoea: boil root (only) in water, skim off the top part with a brush (of thorn twigs) and drink bottom part in quantity.

F. moran stew the root in their soups. Said to make them big and sexy, and to shake.

Lng'erioi (Itamioi). *Olea chrysophylla* Lam.: *Oleaceae* (esp. hills).

M. may be taken for tapeworm: put bark in cold water, heat and boil for (say) 30 minutes, leave

for 12 hours, and then drink cold.

F. the berries may be eaten from the hill variety.

U. (a) useful for herding staffs and clubs

(b) used by women for smoke-scouring milk containers after use.

R. propitious for an ilmugit fire

Loimugi (Imumondo). *Newtonia hildbrandtii* (Vatke) Torre: Mimosaceae (plains)

M. for a bad stomach: boil bark in water and drink.

U. tooth-stick.

Loimurukuti. No specimen (hills and. plains).

M. (a) may be taken for malaria or some other fever or for gonorrhoea: either taken as a soup or boil in water and add milk.

(b) when children's eyes are slightly infected, bathe them with water in which the root has been boiled

F, moran put the root into their soups: said to make them shake.

Loisuki. *Fagara chalybea* Engl. : Rutaceae (lower hills).

M. (a) for colds: fruit/roots are boiled in milk.

(b) may also be given to cattle who have caught mporoto from bush animals..

U. used by women for smoke-scouring milk containers after use.

Lokumaati. Specimen indeterminable (hills)

M. for sore eyes: rub the leaf in the palm of the hand to make it soft, add water, and pour the solution into the eye several times a day until the eye is better.

Lookidong'it. *Dracaena* sp. :Liliaceae (hills)

M. for gonorrhoea when a. man cannot urinate: peel off bark and boil remainder in water, add. milk.

U. (a) tubular jars (for tobacco, arrows), milk containers.

(b) bright red powder for facial or other decoration: obtained simply by grinding the wood to a fine powder.

Lookii. *Lycium europaeum* L: Solanaceae (plains)

M. rheumatism, bodily swelling, esp. of a woman's breasts: boil root in water and drink later.

Lookiting'i. *Ipomoea spathulata* Hall.f.: Convolvulaceae (plains).

M. sore eyes: boil leaves in water and expose the eyes to the vapour while it is hot, and then wash the eyes with the lotion when it is cool.

Looliontoi. *Dekindtia africana* Gilg.: Oleaceae (hills)

M. for tapeworm: put (root?) in cold water and leave for 12 hours; drink concoction. Excessive diarrhoea,.

U. herding staff, moran's club, roasting grill-stick.

Loong'uaaroi. Specimen indeterminable (hills or plains).



M. malaria or other fever: boil wood in water and drink

.

Lororoi. *Boscia* sp.: Cappariaceae (plains)

M. malaria and other fevers: boil outer covering in water and drink.

Lowei. *Balanites* sp.: Balanitaceae (plains)

M. (a) for an open clean wound (e.g. spear): heat resin (tiara) in a fire and place hot on the wound, (b) for sore eyes: put some of the resin into the eye (man or cow) and wash later in the day. (c) for 'aching ribs': dissolve in water and drink.

Lparaa (laitorogi). *Euphorbia* sp.: Euphorbiaceae (hills and plains)

M. a festering wound (man or cow): cut off the festering part, and cover the open wound with sap. U. The sap dries to a very hard glue and is mixed with black stone chippings to make the knob of a knobkerrie.

R.. for blackening initiates: outer casing of wood is burnt in a fire and the charcoal mixed with fat.

Lpukur. *Momordica* sp. : Cucurbitaceae (plains)

M, for a bad persistent headache: peel off the bark (poisonous) and add remainder to a soup made from the brain of a sheep. Causes vomiting

Lteroi. Specimen indeterminable (hills and plains)

M. rheumatism 'in the bones': stew the leaves in water and add milk.

Ltikomi. *Cardiospermum corindum* L.: Sapindaceae (lower hills)

M. snake-bites: stew root in quantity; drink and vomit alternately; finish with aoup based on mutton.

Ltuleli. *Solanum* sp. : Solanaceae (plains)

M. (a) cough and bad throat: peel root, stew in water and drink or gargle, or simply chew peeled root.

(b) skin sores: rub seeds on sore parts.

Lturkan. Specimen not identified (hills)

M. malaria: stew root in water and drink when cool. Also an emetic.

Lumeei. (ntito-yieyo). *Asparagus* sp.: Liliaceae. (plains).

The root has a shorter and a longer part with different uses.

The shorter part loiporo:

M. ear ache: warm the loiporo over a fire, and put the sap into the ear.

F. eaten by children.

The longer part arkeek:

U. thread for sewing the cup-caps of milk containers.

Makutukuti. *Clerodendrum myricoides* R.Br. : Verbenaceae (hills)

M. malaria, fever, gonorrhoea: stew root and drink.  
or shove root up anus - 'similar effect'.

F. moran soup to make them shake: stew root.

Margueet. *Croton megalocarpus* Hutch.: Euphorbiaceae (hills)  
M. colds: boil bark, add. sugar and milk and drink cold.

Miskiyei. *Rhus natalensis* Bernh. ex Krausse.: Anacardiaceae (hills)  
M. mild medicine for pregnant women and women or children with stomach ache: stew root and/or leaves in water

Mokotan. *Albizia anthelmintica* Brongn.: Mimosaceae (plains)  
M. tapeworm and also rheumatism: boil bark, wood or root in water for a short time and add a little milk. Large quantities may be prepared in a cow's stomach. Gives diarrhoea.  
F. bark, wood or root used by moran in their soup to make them shake.

Murgusian. *Gardenia* sp.: Rubiaceae (plains).  
M. malaria: (no further details).  
U. really tough wood, with a useful profile for making three-eared soup-stirrers

Nemunyi. *Euphorbia* sp. :Euphorbiaceae (plains)  
M. For a bad chest. prickles are burnt off, and then remaining plant is added to a moran's soup.

Nkaiteteyei. *Commelina* sp. : Commelinaceae (hills and plains)  
M. (a) children's colds: pound stalk, boil in water and add a little milk.  
(b) may also be given to lame animals that cannot join the herd as a medicine or simply food.

Nkeju nkitojo ('hare's foot'). *Portulaca* sp. : Portulacaceae (hills & plains)  
M. burns: identical preparation to *Idaua lenkop* , but less effective.

Ntopai (kitok). *Sansevieria* sp. Liliaceae (plains)  
M. gonorrhoea, when a man cannot pass urine: fry the inner part of the plant in fat from a sheep's tail  
U. ropes and matting on mobile low country huts.

Ntuju. Curcubitaceae - Indeterminable (hills and plains) . M. malaria or other fever: shake fruit in a milk container with water, and drink juice. Patient then vomits.

Nyerman (loongoososi). Indeterminable (lower hills)  
M. generally good for stomach ache, especially for pregnant women who may take it without fear of abortion: stew root in soup. Causes diarrhoea and clears the stomach

Raraiti. *Kalanchoe* sp. Crassulaceae (hills and plains)  
M. for certain types of stomach ache: stew root and drink.

Sakurdumi. *Cissus* sp. Ampelidaceae (plains)  
M. constipation: put root in cold water, add previously heated stones to the water, and insert the root up the anus. Patient has diarrhoea.

Sarai. *Balanites* sp.: Balanitaceae (plains).

M. cattle with infected eyes: dry the leaves in the sun, grind them into a powder and put into the eye.

U. used by women for smoke-scouring milk containers after use.

Sarokiteng'. No specimen (hills)

M. general purpose medicine, especially for fevers - malaria, gonorrhoea, stomach or chest disorders: stew root in a beef soup

\*Seketeti. *Myrsine africana* L. Myrsinaceae (hills mostly).

M.. tapeworm: crush berries and drink with water or milk. May cause diarrhoea.

F. moran put root in soup to make them shake.

Senantei. No specimen (hills)

M. headache or chest complaints: stew root in boiling water and add milk and sugar (smell sweet).

R. (a) used by laibonok (for magical protection?): burn root in a fire, grind charcoal into a powder, and place on forehead, temples (optional), and in mouth.

(b) while the root may be used (above), it would be unpropitious to cut this species down.

Senatoi. Specimen indeterminable, (yellow flowers) (hills)

M. malaria: stew leaves and drink concoction.

Serai. Specimen indeterminable: *euphorbia* sp. (esp. hills)

M. barrenness or a chronic illness: tap this species for its sap, kill an ox to provide (a) meat, (b) a soup, (c) a container (from its bladder) for the concoction of the sap mixed with water in quantity. The patient drinks as much of the concoction as possible, vomits, and eats the meat or drinks the soups, and repeats this sequence 3-5 times a day until the meat is all eaten. Other people only have token quantities of the meat.

Serishoi. No specimen, (plains).

M. (a) charcoal mixed with fat may be smeared over an infant's head to strengthen the skull, and may also be placed in its food,

(b) any part of this plant may be stewed in water as an emetic for malaria or stomach aches.

Sesiai. No specimen, (plains along rivers)

M, prevents indigestion from a surfeit of meat (moran at loikar). Soak bark in a bowl (improvised from the visceral membrane). The water turns brown. The concoction may be drunk after eating some meat, and more water added to the bowl as it is drunk.

Silalei. *Boswellia hildebrandtil* Engl.:Burseraceae (plains)

M. (a) chest complaints: boil resin and bark in water, and add milk, (b) charcoal mixed with fat may be smeared over an infant's head to strengthen the skull, and may also be added to its food (cf. serishoi)

R. (a) resin used to tip the arrows of initiates who shoot birds after their circumcision.

(b) wood burnt on the soriu fire for cooking inside the hut (but not on the fire for cooking outside).

Silepani. Specimen indeterminable (plains).

M. bad chest and coughing blood: bark is eaten.

F. children eat the berries.

R. propitiously placed on huts and in fires during ceremonies.

Simalelei. No specimen. (plains)

M. barrenness: boil bulbous root in water, add milk and drink. Causes diarrhoea.

Sinoni. *Lippia ukambensis* Vatke: Verbenaceae (hills)

M. malaria, other fever, a bad cold: boil leaves and stem in water and add milk.

Siocotei. *Salvadora persica* L. Salvadoraceae. (plains - in river beds)

M. (a) women after giving birth, and especially if the afterbirth is retained: root is added to a soup,

(b) cattle who retain the afterbirth: mix root with water and forcibly feed.

U. toothstick - makes mouth and nose especially clear and fresh.

Siteti. *Grewia bicolor* Juss: Tiliaceae (plains)

M. women after giving birth, especially if still sore: boil the red berries in water for about 5 hours, add milk and stir thoroughly.

U. spears (best wood), grid sticks for roasting, whips, hut construction, donkey packs, herding staffs

R. bows and arrows of initiates made of this wood.

Sokoltiei. *Phytolacca dodecandra* L'Herit.: Phytolaccaceae (hills)

M. acute stomach ache: stew roots, both an emetic (especially if milk is added) and a purgative.

Sukurtuti leashau. *Cissus* sp. Ampelidaceae (hills and plains)

M. when a human or a calf has a deep seated cough ('rising from the liver'):

(a) for humans, stew the root in water - may also be used for general complaints.

(b) for a calf, pound the wood until it is soft and can be given (forcibly?) to the animal.

Sukurtuti lenglron. 125 DN: *Cissus cactiformis* Gilg: Ampelidaceae (plains)

M. (a) bad stomach or chest: boil root in a meaty soup.

(b) when stock have been bitten by (e.g.) a hyena, grind the green upper part into a powder and rub into the sore place, which will dry and heal.

Sumurwoi. *Coleus* sp. : Labiatae (hills and plains).

M. used for jaundice among the stock:

(a) calves - boil leaves or wood and administer to those calves with jaundice.

(b) sheep and goats - spread the leaves inside their enclosures - this both cures those with jaundice and prevents its spread to other small stock.

**(ii). Other plants etc added by moran to their soups,  
of which a considerable number were held to induce shaking.**

\*Lboloriu (loiraur). *Cussonia* sp. Araliaceae (hills).

F. boiled in soup by moran, makes them quarrelsome and shiver, but not shake.

U. milk-containers

Lemunyi. *Acacia* sp. Mimosaceae (hills).

F. root and bark are boiled in soup by moran - said to make them become very brave and shake.

U. very white wood, and may be used by moran for earrings instead of ivory.

Lkerenyi. No specimen (hills)

F. moran boil the root in their soups.

Lkesik. No specimen, (hills) - not widely known and could be a local name for some other tree or plant

F. moran boil the root in their soup, and it is said to make them shake.

Lkilanyai. *Rhoicissus* sp.: Ampelidaceae (hills)

F. moran and others boil the root in a meat soup. Not very important, but it is said to make a person 'swell'

Lkitakesi. *Indigofera basiflora* Gillett: Papilionaceae (plains)

F. moran put root into their soups.

Lkroong'uei. Specimen not identified. (hills)

F. moran put root into their soups - said to make them shake and become brave.

Lkujuk. No specimen (hills)

F. moran may put root into their soups.

Naisiwankeek. *Myrothamnus flabellifolius* Welw. : Myrothamnaceae (hills).

F. moran put the root in their soups.

R. Dorobo (and possibly laibonok) use it for magical protection against dangerous animals: spit out pieces of the wood along the path, or place on forehead

Nkilel. No specimen. (hills)

F. root is used in moran's soup to make them shake.

Ntepes. *Acacia* sp. Mimosaceae (plains)

F. (a) the fruit (sakaram) can be stewed

(b) moran use the bark in their soups - only if no other suitable trees are available.

U. (a) thorn fence around settlements and stock enclosures.

(b) grid sticks for roasting

R. ceremonially propitious for placing on top of huts.

Sanankuri. *Scutia myrtina* (Burm.f.) Kurz: Rhambaceae (hills and plains)

F. root drunk in soup, especially by immature moran who wish to grow big and strong.

\* These are four of the plants that are particularly favoured by moran in their soups to make them shiver or shake. Dr John Lock (a pharmacologist at Makerere) tested these on mice and found that they each had a purgative action, but no apparent stimulation on the central nervous system, implying that they were not responsible for moran shivering or shaking. I am grateful to Dr Lock for identifying two of these plants.