

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family: Abagusii, widely known as the Kisii or Gusii people [2]; Official language known as Ekegusii, also known as Gusii, formerly known as Kosava [3]; Language family is Niger-Congo [1]

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): ISO 639-3: guz

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): 0° 45' S, 34° 50' E [5]

1.4 Brief history: The Abagusii claim Mogusii as their founder, and have taken their name from him. Mogusii's great-great-great-grandfather Kintu (alias Muntu, Mundu or Wantu) was the leader of the migration of the Bantu. The ancestral Gusii population entered western Kenya from Uganda and later moved from the foothills of Mount Elgon towards their present lands, [7] 500 years ago. [5] The causes of this migration are said to have been either due to drought, or to conflict with the Nilotic-speaking Kipsigis, who are now part of the Kalenjin. On the way, two generations stayed at Goye Bay on Lake Victoria, after which they headed to the Kano Plains, the disablingly hot, humid flatlands that lie between Kisumu and the western highlands. Here they lived for over a century in scattered homesteads over the plains, and it is was in Kano that the clan structure of the present-day Gusii began to take shape, in the form of four large families headed by warriors who led the migration south, and which became the Bassi, Girango, Sweta and Wanjare clans. Then, presumably to flee the advance of the Nilotic-speaking Luo, they finally moved to their present location in the Gusii (Kisii) Hills. The other version suggests that the Gusii came from the south of Lake Victoria, settled for a while in the Kano Plains where they presumably merged with the Gusii that had come from Mount Elgon, and together they then moved into the Gusii Hills. Due to their history of almost constant migration, Gusii culture is inevitably a mixture of various influences, combining original Bantu elements with aspects borrowed from or imposed by contacts with Nilotic-speaking peoples, notably the Luo, & to a lesser extent the Maasai and Kipsigis. [5]

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: The establishment of the British colonial administration in 1907 was initially met by armed resistance, but it ceased after World War I. Unlike other highland peoples in Kenya, the Gusii were not subjected to land alienation. The seven subdivisions of Gusiiland were converted into administrative units under government-appointed chiefs. The first missions were established by the Catholics in 1911 the second were established by the Seventh Day Adventists in 1913. Mission activity was initially not very successful; several stations were looted. Since Kenyan independence in 1963, schools have been built throughout the area; roads have been improved, and electricity, piped water, and telephones have been extended into many areas. By the 1970s, a shortage of land had begun to make farming unprofitable, and the education of children for off-farm employment became more important. [2] Their lives have never been the same, and the pace of social change has increased with each successive decade up to the present. [4; pg49]

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): Gusiiland is located in western Kenya, about 30 miles (50 kilometers) east of Lake Victoria. Abundant rainfall and very fertile soils have made Gusiiland one of the most productive agricultural areas in Kenya. Between 70 and 80 percent of the land can be cultivated. Since 1989, the Gusii as a single ethnic group have occupied the Kisii and Nyamira districts of southwestern Kenya. The area is a rolling, hilly landscape on plains reaching altitudes of 3,900 feet (1,190 meters) in the far northwestern corner of the territory, and 6,990 feet (2,130 meters) in the central highlands. Average maximum temperatures range from 83° F (28.4° C) at the lowest altitudes to 73° F (22.8° C) at the highest elevations. The average minimum temperatures are 61.5° F (16.4° C) and 50° F (9.8° C) respectively. Rain falls throughout the year with an annual average of 60 to 80 inches (150 to 200 centimeters). In the nineteenth century, much of present-day Gusiiland was covered by moist upland forest. Today, all forest has been cleared, very little indigenous (native) plants remain, and no large mammals are found. [6]

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density: In 1989 the number of Gusii was 1.3 million, and population densities ranged from 200 to over 600 persons per square kilometer. This population, increasing by 3 to 4 percent per year, is among those exhibiting the most rapid growth in the world. [12] Their region is one of the most densely populated areas of Kenya, and the Gusii constitute the country's sixth largest ethnic group [10] comprising about seven percent of the national population. [7] Most recently, the population was 2,205,669 million in the Kenyan census of 2010 [9]

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Precolonial staple crop was finger millet, which was grown together with sorghum, beans, and sweet potatoes. By the 1920s, maize had overtaken finger millet as both a staple-food crop and a cash crop. [2]

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Milk, goats, and sheep for meat [4; pg60]

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Spears, clubs, shields, & bows and arrows [5]

2.4 Food storage: Harvest was stored in round granaries, made of intertwined long thin sticks (well-aerated) placed about a foot from the ground and supported by stones. The granary was amply suited for keeping grain even up to ten years. Later harvests could be stored together with the earlier year's harvest taking the lowest layer without fear of the grain being spoilt. This long storage changed the wimbi colour to dark but its taste was preferred to the other grains, especially for the preparation of porridge and ugali. For immediate consumption however, some grain was threshed and stored in pots, baskets and emenyoncho- a big round-basket-like for storage with a narrow mouth/opening, smeared with cow-dung, and kept on the ceiling of houses – a warm area free of any insects or pests. [10]

2.5 Sexual division of production: Men responsible for defense, governance, and animal husbandry, and women for food-processing and the rearing of children. [4;pg60] Women were also responsible for cultivation, food preparation, and housecleaning. Men were also concerned with house-and fence-building, clearing new fields, and herding. [6]

2.6 Land tenure: Until the 1940's, land was held corporately by lineages and s. Grazing was communal, and arable land was divided into plots with strict use rights that pertained to each household of the polygynous family. Local populations also included families belonging to other clans—"dwellers" (abamenyi), who had limited tenure. Land was not inherited or alienated through transactions. Today all land is registered in individual men's names, but the land market is still limited, and sales are uncommon. Through inheritance, men have ultimate rights to the management and use of land. Women still have no birthright to their parents' land. The vast majority of women can obtain access to land only through marriage; however, a few employed women are able to buy land in other districts. Since the initial registration, land has not been surveyed, and much of it is still registered in the name of a dead father or grandfather. A man

usually transfers land to his wife and sons when the eldest son marries. Ideally, land is divided equally between wives, under the supervision of and witnessed by local male elders. After division, the husband often retains a small plot (emonga) for personal use. [2]

2.7 Ceramics: Most ceramic pottery and basketry was obtained through trade with Luoland. [2] However, the Gusii are known for their soapstone carvings, basketry and pottery. The soapstone or kisii is found in the Tabaka Hills of Western Kenya near the town of Kisii. A soft and easily worked stone, it comes in a variety of colors ranging from cream and lavender to black. It is then carved into various works of art, such as vases, trays, food bowls and African animals [7]

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: A father may not set foot in his son's house; a son-in-law has to avoid his mother-in-law; a daughter-in-law must not come too close to her father-in-law (she cannot even cook a meal for him). [6] However, within a clan, everyone shares his or her resources with each other. There are just certain social limitations that prevent certain members from entering certain places. [2]

2.9 Food taboos: There does not seem to be any evidence of any food taboos.

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? No information could be found.

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

- Female: 159.8 cm [4; pg122]
- Male: unfound

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

- Female: 62.92 [4; pg122]
- Male: unfound

Finding anthropometry of Abagusii males is difficult because there is so much variation. This is because periods of peace with neighbouring communities must have led to intermarriages and consequent consanguinity. [19]

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f): 12.5 [10]

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): 20 (f), 23 (m) [4; pg122]

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): Each woman has an average of 9 children. [12] Families can grow to be substantially larger due to the Gusii practice of polygamy.

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): 2 years [10]

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Girls tended to marry at the age 16, while boys averaged between 18 and 20 years old at their first marriage. [10]

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Used to be rare and required the return of the bride wealth [6] Today it is fairly common. [10]

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Both exist; Gusii society was traditionally polygamous [10] but there has been a decline in polygynous marriages among the Kisii, especially due to the European influence in the 20th century [6]

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: Dowry in the form of livestock and money, paid by the husband to the wife's family. [6] Employed women—such as nurses and lawyers—fetch higher bride-wealth payments, around the value of fifteen to forty-five zebu cows (although their bride-wealth is frequently paid in cash and European cows). [2]

4.9 Inheritance patterns: According to customary law, which is still the effective rule for the majority, only men can inherit. Sons inherit only the cattle, land, and other assets that belong to their own house (enyomba). All the resources that are owned by the father, such as personal cattle or business establishments, should be divided equally between houses, irrespective of the number of sons in each. Although national law recognizes the equal inheritance rights of daughters, customary law has seldom been challenged [2]

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: A Gusii person distinguishes her or his own father and mother by specific terms: tata (own father) and baba (own mother). Likewise, parents distinguish their children as momura one (own son) and mosubati one (own daughter). Mothers are ultimately responsible for the care and raising of children. However, they delegate many childrearing tasks to other children in the family. Fathers take very little part in child rearing. Grandparents play a supportive role and are supposed to teach grandchildren about proper behavior and about sexual matters. Mothers seldom show physical or verbal affection to children. Children stop sleeping in their mother's house when they are still very young. [6]

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: Certain types of same-sex activity were tolerated in tribal tradition, but only as childish behaviors unworthy of an initiate. [8]

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): During the precolonial period, the exogamous, patrilineal clan (eamaate) was the largest cooperative unit. Clans were part of clan clusters, which had birds or animals as totems but lacked any common organization. At the lineage (riiga) level, patrilineal descent and marriage defined commonly recognized access to land and provided the rationale for corporate action. During the colonial period, indigenous political and social organization became conceptualized as a segmentary lineage system in which units from the clan cluster, clans, and clan segments became defined according to a genealogical grid with an eponymous ancestor at the top. [2]

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized? For a man is a ‘natural’ role to provide his wife with children. No other fathers are recognized [14]

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”): Childbearing role is an inherent role for women [14]

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? Yes, it is believed to be a very natural process of the body [10] However, if a woman miscarries multiple times she will assume it is the workings of supernatural powers, specifically a witch. [4]

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: Academics describe marriage by abduction as the practice whereby a man takes a woman by force, rapes her and then attempts to use the stigma of rape and, should she become pregnant, the shame of pregnancy to secure their marriage. [18] Even after traditional, properly set-up wedding ceremonies, a bride would come home to her new house and refuse to go inside, forcing her new husband to use physical force. This was a symbol of total submission. A group of friends would stand outside to make sure the marriage was consummated [10] According to the North American anthropologist Robert LeVine, was two famous mass outbreaks of rape in Gusii-land, in 1937 and 1950. According to his research, the brideprice in both those years had soared beyond the reach of young Gusii men. [10]

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin): Prefer someone in the community who is not in the clan of the eligible man or woman [10] Prettier women have better chances of marrying at a younger age. [10]

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?: Currently, yes; Gusii culture had always permitted considerable independence to females within their own sphere; as a result, parents had few reservations about allowing their daughters, like their sons, to take advantage of new educational opportunities. Less than a generation ago, chastity had been highly valued, but owing to the decline of the bridewealth system and the predominance of love as opposed to arranged marriages, by the 1970s girls had almost complete sexual freedom. [13; pg 38] Traditionally, men gained social value by being in control of female sexuality. It also gave social value to women to submit to sexual control. [14; pg 169]

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: No evidence of this. [4; pg 105]

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?: The father and the other wives if applicable. [17]

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: There are about 90 males per 100 females. [16]

4.22 Evidence for couvades: There does not seem to be any evidence of couvades in Gusii culture.

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): No distinctions were found.

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?: In everyday interaction, the expected behavior is one of respect and deference by young people toward older people as well as by women toward men. [6] The Kisii idea of moral order consists of restraint and modesty imposed by conformity to a code of prohibitions. Overt conflict is usually avoided at any cost. Avoidance is used as a general strategy for managing interpersonal conflict in Gusii families and communities, not merely in following the rules of kin-avoidance. [4; pg68]

4.24 Joking relationships? Jokes are permissible if they are told between two people within the same generation. [6]

4.25 Patterns of descent for certain rights, names or associations: Organized by patrilineal descent [4; pg59]

4.26 Incest avoidance rules: A marriage between two people in the same clan is forbidden [10]

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?: The traditional Kisii wedding is no longer performed. Among wealthier people, it has been replaced by a wedding in church or before an administrative official. [12] The traditional ceremony was an extremely elaborate ritual that lasted several days. The rituals emphasized the incorporation of the bride into the groom's lineage and the primacy of male fertility. [12] Once dowry had been paid, a special day called ekerorano was set-aside for the bride and groom to meet. The introduction was followed by a physical inspection where the groom and bride bared their upper bodies. Each checked the other to ensure there were incisions or marks on the body. This was a way of checking for beauty and strength. Satisfied, the bride and groom would shake hands and swear not to renege on the agreement to marry each other. Food would be served after this event. The bride was allowed to visit the groom before the wedding and could sleep over but in the company of a young boy and girl who slept between them to avoid any sexual encounter. A wedding date was then set when the bride would be escorted by a group of girls from her village to her matrimonial home. The groom's party arrived a day earlier and a party was organized where young men danced throughout the night. Gifts including a large pot and blankets for the mother-in-law and a goat for the father-in-law were exchanged for bearing a beautiful daughter. Her parents gave the bride a table and chairs and other utensils. Dowry was paid in form of cattle usually 10-15 but sometimes higher. The bride carried a special gourd enkondo in her arms. The groom walked ahead followed by the bride and bridesmaids (abariakari) and then the rest of the party. The bride wore red ochre and soot and trudged to her new home taking occasional rests depending on the distance. Villagers cheered and ululated as the wedding party passed by. [10]

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? It is common to name a child after a deceased person from the father's clan for the first name, and one from the mother's clan for the second name. Children may also be named for a recent event, such as the weather at the time of the child's birth. Some common names refer to the time of migrations. (ie: a Kisii woman's name Kwamboka means "crossing a river") [6]

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Marriage is usually and preferred to be within a community. However if one must look outside for a spouse it is better to bring in a female to the clan rather than a male [2]

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?: No, the groom chooses; the prospective husband used a friend to assess the girl's character and her suitability. He found out whether she worked hard in the house and in the fields. He tried to discover whether any of her family had ever been accused of witchcraft. He also asked girls who knew her well whether she had any disfiguring marks on her body. When a suitable girl had been selected, the families negotiated the brideprice. Once the girl's family was satisfied that enough had been paid to them, they gave the boy permission to take their daughter away. [10]

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: No evidence was found.

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Low amount of deaths due to warfare due to the tribe's overall commitment to peace as well as strong allies in bordering regions [7]

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Precolonial, outgroup caused more violent death. Today, ingroup causes more violent death. [10]

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Wars referenced in 1.4 and 5.5 account for out-group killing. A lot of in-group killing that has been accounted for involves the burning of people identified as “witches.” Witches are publically burnt alive, even when they once belonged to the community. [10]

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): Gusii relationships with neighboring groups varied over time but were generally peaceful and cooperative with the Luo groups and perpetually hostile with the Kipsigis. After 1918, the British administration suppressed armed conflicts in the area. There was, however, a resurgence of armed conflict, over land, between the Gusii and the Maasai during the 1960s. [2]

4.18 Cannibalism? No evidence of cannibalism.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: Kisii County has 245,029 households with a population of 1,152,282 [10]

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): The Kisii used to be very mobile depending on the season, however, now due to a growing population, land constraints, and the fact that their community is already located on great land for farming, the Kisii do not have mobility patterns any longer. [6]

5.3 Political system (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Traditionally each clan has a clan leader, a male in charge of making decisions on behalf of the clan. The family head was still responsible for making the daily decisions in and around his homestead. [7] During the precolonial period, disputes over cattle and land, crimes, and other misdeeds were handled by local male elders' councils and by big-men. Only the Kitutu clan cluster developed a rudimentary political office of chief, Omogambi (lit., "giver of verdicts"). [12] Today local disputes are handled by a meeting of local male elders and the assistant chief (baraza). Crimes and disputes can also be taken to the court system. [2] Women usually alienated, and geographically separated, from their natal clans and were thus in a position of little influence and power during the first years of marriage; however, older women, who had gained power by dint of the number of their sons and daughters-in-law, were often in charge of negotiations between fighting parties. Men continue to dominate political life, and leadership in the latter part of the twentieth century is based on elected office in local government bodies and in administration as chiefs and assistant chiefs. [12]

5.4 Post marital residence: Husband's family's home. [6]

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): During their early settlement in their present location, they were often victims of inter-tribal clashes between them and their neighbors – the Maasai, Kipsigis and the Luos - who stole their animals, mostly cattle, sheep and goats. In protecting themselves against these skirmishes, they gathered together and settled on highlands in a small location for security and defense. [3] A call from a horn, or drum, was always signal for trouble. The reaction was immediate; young men would leave whatever they were doing and dash off to the places where the weapons were kept. [5] In the 1890's the Kipsigis raided the Gusii with such ferocity that the Gusii had to build walled settlements for protection; but the Gusii eventually forged a broad military alliance and inflicted a decisive defeat on the Kipsigis shortly after the turn of the century. [4]

5.6 Social interaction divisions? (age and sex): Daily interactions follow strict rules of politeness. There are rules for avoiding sexual shame (chinsoni) and rules governing respect (ogosika). They regulate proper behavior between women and men, between generations, and between different kinds of relatives. Bodily functions must not be mentioned or implied between different generations or between women and men. It is important to avoid being seen on the way to the lavatory. Body language is reserved and gesturing is kept to a minimum. Between people of unequal status, such as young and old or woman and man, the person of lower status is not supposed to look directly into the other's eyes. [6] Children cease sleeping in their mother's house when they are still very young. At the age of 6, a girl starts to sleep either in the house of one of her mother's co-wives or that of her grandmother. Initiated girls must sleep in the house of a postmenopausal woman, usually the paternal grandmother. [2]

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Anyone within the same generation may joke with each other and talk about sexual matters, this is prohibited between different generations [6] Talking about personal feelings is prohibited. Hence, questions about a person's mental state are answered with statements about physical health or economic situation. [6]

5.8 Village and house organization: Before the colonial period, the extended polygynous family was spatially divided into two components: the homestead (omochie), where the married men and women and their unmarried daughters and uncircumcised sons lived, and the cattle camps (ebisarate), located in the grazing areas, where most of the cattle were protected by resident male warriors. The British abolished the cattle camps in 1913. In the late nineteenth century most Gusii were settled in dispersed farmsteads, although the North Mugirango built fortified villages for protection against Kipsigis raids. A homestead consisted of the wives' houses. [12] The traditional Gusii house (enyomba) was a round, windowless structure made of a framework of thin branches with dried mud walls and a conical thatched roof. Today, the Gusii continue to live in dispersed homesteads in the middle of farm holdings. Modern houses are rectangular, with thatched or corrugated iron roofs. Cooking is done in a separate building. [6] Several houses were built near each other to form a homestead. In a large homestead there were many houses, belonging to mothers, grandmothers and adult sons. They arranged according to custom. In the centre of the homestead was the cattle corral, called the boma. Directly facing the gate was the house of the senior wife. The houses of the junior wives were arranged to the right and left of the senior wife's house. Near the main gate were the houses of both the married and the unmarried sons. The owner of a homestead would most likely have his own small house in the middle, very close to the cattle shed, where he ate most of his meals. [10]

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses): After the age of 8, boys gradually start to sleep in a special house for unmarried sons. After initiation, at the age of 10 or 11, a son cannot sleep in his mother's house at all. [2]

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?: Soft skins or mats on the ground [10]

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: All Kisii clans are descendents of one large clan, claiming common ancestry from Mogusii. When they split into separate clans, helped one another fight against their enemies, and to acquire new territory by forest

clearance. There are no clan-specific geographical areas in Gusii-land due to the nature of the land the Gusii encountered when they first arrived in the hills. Heavily forested and cut by steep scarps, making settlements was no easy matter, and required tremendous effort to clear the forest. Members of the same family would cut down trees and then build their homes there, separating the clans further. As forest clearance had by necessity to start from the outskirts, the clans were distributed evenly across the whole of Gusii-land. Nowadays the clans are represented by chiefs in the local Kenyan administration. [10]

5.12 Trade: Pre-colonial Gusii exchange took place within the homesteads. Tools, weapons, crafts, livestock, and agricultural products were exchanged, and goats and cows were often used as the media of exchange. During the nineteenth century, regular barter between the Luo and the Gusii, conducted by women, took place at periodic border markets. In addition, there was a regular and voluminous trade of Gusii grain for Luo livestock that took place at Gusii farms. Luo traders still arrive in Gusiiland on donkeys loaded with salt and pots. The network of markets, shops, and cash-crop purchasing centers that connects Gusiiland with the rest of Kenya has continued to grow. In 1985 the major urban center was Kisii Town, which features numerous marketing facilities, shops, and wholesalers. [12]

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? There is no formal hierarchy. There is a marked trend toward intermarriage between persons of similar economic and social status. [2] Each clan has a clan leader. [7]

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: The amount of time the Kisii devote to rituals, ceremonies, and religion is situational. Religious ceremonies and things of that nature take place when someone comes of age, dies, gives birth, etc.

6.1 Specialization (shamans, medicine): If afflicted by misfortune, many Gusii visit a diviner (abaragori) who may point to displeased spirits of the dead and prescribe sacrifice. Abanyamoriogi (herbalists) use a variety of plant mixtures for medicines. Indigenous surgeons (ababari) set fractures and treat backaches and headaches through trepanation (needles). Professional sorcerers (abanyamosira) protect against witchcraft and retaliate against witches. Omoriori, the witch smeller, finds witchcraft articles hidden in a house. Witches (omorogi) can be men or women, but are usually women. They are believed to dig up recently buried corpses to eat the inner organs and use body parts for magic. Among the Gusii, witchcraft is believed to be a learned art handed down from parent to child. [6]

6.2 Stimulants:

- Nakabu (*Polycarpha eriantha*): An infusion of these pounded leaves is drunk three times a day as a cough remedy. [11;pg73]

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

- Birth: When a woman is about to give birth, two female neighbors or kin maintain a faire and minister to the woman in labor by rubbing her abdomen and flanks at the time of the membrane rupture, making a solution of ash and water for her to drink in order to enhance the contractions, and tying a medicine stick around her abdomen. When a younger woman goes into labor, however, the news spreading through the neighborhood may attract as many as 20 post-menopausal women to gather around her. Regardless of their usual feelings, they do not act overtly supportive on this occasion but mock her and chide her, shrieking with laughter among themselves. The young woman in labor tolerates the ordeal stoically, never crying out. [4; pg129]
- Death: Funerals take place at the dead person's homestead, and a large gathering is a sign of prestige. [6] Women are buried beyond the yard, on the left side of the house, whereas men are buried beyond the cattle pen, on the right side of the house. The preferred person to dig the grave is the deceased's son's son. [2] After burial, the widow/widower is in a liminal state and cannot move far from the homestead until after a period of a few weeks to two months, when ritual activities, including a sacrifice, are performed. [2] During the time of a funeral there is a practice of wailing, head-shaving, and animal sacrifices. Before burial, the corpse is dissected in order to determine whether death was caused by witchcraft. [6] One basic theme of the funeral is the fear of the dead person's spirit. The deceased, enraged at having died, may blame the survivors and must therefore be usually placated with sacrifices. [2]
- Puberty: Initiation; involves genital surgery for both sexes: clitoridectomy for girls and circumcision for boys. The ceremony is supposed to train children as social beings who know rules of shame (chinsoni) and respect (ogosika). Girls are initiated at the age of seven or eight, and boys a few years later. Initiations are gender-segregated, and the operations are performed by female and male specialists. Afterward, there is a period of seclusion for both genders. [6]
- Seasonal: There doesn't seem to be any evidence of seasonal rites of passage.

6.4 Other rituals: There is a Gusii rite of passage in which the older women of a lineage and locality verbally abuse a younger woman who is in transition to a higher status. Such hazing is customary on three occasions: when a girl undergoes clitoridectomy, when a woman already married with bridewealth undergoes the most formal Gusii marriage ceremony (enyangi), in which iron rings (ebitinge) are put on her ankles (rare nowadays); and when she gives birth for the first time. On all three occasions, the senior women of the locality once young, in-marrying strangers themselves- mock the novice, particularly with sexual insults. [4; pg129]

6.5 Myths (Creation): Before the advent of Christianity, which now claims over 80% of the population, the Gusii believed in a supreme God called Engoro. It was Engoro who created the Universe - the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars and all natural forces. Thus he was the source of all property and all life. He governed the destiny of man, sending him rain or drought, plenty or famine, health or disease, peace or war, depending on whether man lived a good or a bad life. Engoro was pure, just and generous. He was also all-knowing, and was thus held in the highest possible regard by the Gusii. Engoro lived in the sky. He was not visible, nor did he directly interfere in the daily affairs of man. But he occasionally revealed himself in storms, thunder, earthquakes and lightning. Other events on earth were carried out by his agents, the spirits of the ancestors. [10]

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

- The favorite instrument is the obokhano (lyre). [6] Horns, flutes, gourds and drums were also played. [10]
- One of the most popular pastimes for Gusii males was wrestling. The boys wrestled with other boys and the men wrestled with other men. Wrestling was done mainly when people were looking after cattle in the field. Sometimes organized wrestling was arranged between villages or clans. The best wrestlers became very famous, and lyrics and girls composed songs of praise about them. [10]

- The Gusii soapstone carvings have received international distribution and fame. The stone is mined and carved in Tabaka, South Mugirango, where several families specialize in this art. [2]
- Traditional Gusii dances were frequent and invigorating affairs, often performed in the evenings after meals, as well as during funerals, wedding ceremonies and at beer-parties for elders, after which the old men and women 'danced vigorously'. Young men of the warrior age group enjoyed war dances, whilst young women danced to local tunes which they composed and sang, either alone or accompanied by instruments. [10]

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

- Females; Clitoridectomy: Among the Abagusii, the 19th century scheduling of the operation at age 10-11 has been revised, presumably in regard to the (rare) practice of pubescent marriage; it is now practised at age 6-8. [8] Kisii was one of the few Kenyan tribes that practiced mandatory female circumcision. Although this ritual has since been outlawed, it still persists but is not as frequent as it was in the past. [7] The Gusii have by far the highest proportion of circumcised women in any Kenyan society, with an estimated 97% of adult, Kisii women having undergone the operation. [10] Each girl going to be initiated would wake up her mother at dawn and ask for a hen or two shillings, as payment for the operator. The mother typically pinched the girl and told her she was still too young. The idea was to test her seriousness and courage. If the girls insisted on going with her age-mates, she left the house naked except for a cloth on her shoulders and accompanied by her mother. At the place of the ceremony a crowd of women surrounded a stone on which the girl to be operated on was seated. For every operation a woman came behind the girl to support her, firmly holding the girl's hands over her eyes so that she did not see what was going on. The operator applied some white flour to the girl's private part and expertly and swiftly cut off the head of the clitoris. As soon as this was done the crowd of the gathered women gave a trilling noise, gaily singing and dancing. The girl was then led over to a shed to squat and bleed. After all the girls had been circumcised and the operator paid, they were led to their respective homes. On the way obscene songs were sung, indicating that the girl was now too big to be inhibited or embarrassed. At home she was again asked to squat behind a granary or bush until the mother had cooked for her and the crowd that had gathered in the homestead. Then in the afternoon groups of initiated girls gathered in a house of one of the mothers of the novices for a month-long seclusion. After the seclusion and cleansing, the life and behaviour of each girl was expected to be that of an adult and was conditioned by the prospects of her marriage. The crudely performed operation with unsterilised blades can kill. There is also the risk of infection and excessive bleeding, complications during labour and delivery, reduction of sexual desire and sometimes an accompanying fear of sexual intercourse. [10]
- Males; Circumcision: The day before initiation the candidate shaved his head and slept in the hut of the sponsor who escorted him to the operator the following dawn. The older boys usually treated the candidate roughly; telling him how painful circumcision was, just to test his bravery. If the boy was still determined to go through with it he was led to bathe in a chilly river and was then taken to the home of the circumciser. These ceremonies were not usually attended by parents, but brothers and unrelated women could come to witness. When the time came the boy was led to a special tree. He put his hands above his head, leaning his head on the tree for support. Unlike girls, boys were not supported by anybody during the operation and were not expected to show any signs of pain. In the process of operation the older boys stood with clubs and spears threatening that if the boy moved or showed any signs of pain he would be killed. After the operation the boys were led away holding their bleeding penises with one hand and carrying a bush, ekerundu, a fertility symbol, in the other hand. In the afternoon the novices were led into seclusion by sponsors and 'classificatory brothers', who sang obscene male circumcision songs. The mothers of the novices prepared food daily and sent it to them. A lot of food was needed to 'heal their wounds'. Nobody was permitted to eat leftovers. The boy's life in seclusion was usually a comfortable and enjoyable one. No quarrelling or fighting was allowed among themselves. After seclusion there were several cycles of cleansing, anointing and feasting. These launched the novices into adulthood. [10]

6.8 **Missionary effect:** After the arrival of Missionaries and later the British colonialists, many were converted into Christianity and encouraged to abandon many of their cultural practices and values in favor of a Christian and British Western upbringing. [3] Today, most Gusii claim to be followers of some form of Christianity. A Roman Catholic mission was first established in 1911 and a Seventh Day Adventist mission in 1913. There are four major denominations in Gusiiland: Roman Catholic, Seventh-Day Adventist, Swedish Lutheran, and the Pentecostal Assemblies of God. [6] When Christian missionaries first arrived in Kenya in the early 19th century, they attempted to do away with the initiation ritual of clitoridectomy, but were defeated by the power of its cultural significance. [10]

6.9 **RCR revival:** There have not been any recent revivals in the Kisii community.

6.10 **Death and afterlife beliefs:** Death was considered an "unnatural" event brought on by witchcraft. Kisii believed in medicine men and the spirits of their ancestors. Today, witchcraft is still feared in Kisii communities. [7] Gusii believed in the survival of the spirits of their ancestors. Unlike other people, however, they made no distinction between 'good' and 'bad' ancestors. [10]

6.11 **Taboo of naming dead people?** No taboo *naming* dead people, however, the Abagusii do believe in angry spirits. The Kisii make sacrifices to appease these spirits. [6]

6.12 **Is there teknonymy?** There does not seem to be any evidence of teknonymy in Kisii culture

6.13 **Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)** Gusii believed in a supreme god called Engoro, whom they believed created the universe and was the source of all life. [7] However, God did not directly interfere in human affairs. It was the concept of an ancestor cult that, together with their ideas about witchcraft, sorcery, and impersonal forces, that provided a complex of beliefs in superhuman agencies. [2] The Gusii believed that displeased ancestor spirits were responsible for disease, the death of people and livestock, and the destruction of crops. [6] Afflicted by misfortune, many Gusii visit a diviner (omorgori; pl. abaragori), who may point to displeased spirits of the dead and prescribe sacrifice to placate them. [2] Today, most Kisii people identify themselves as Christians. [6]

7. Adornment

7.1 **Body paint:** Yes, used for special occasions, especially among warriors [15; pg67]

7.2 **Piercings:** Men & women have ear piercings [15; pg68]

7.3 **Haircut:** Men and women shave their heads. Young people shave decorative patterns into their hair on special occasions. [15; pg68]

7.4 **Scarification:** No evidence of scarification used for adornment among the Kisii.

7.5 **Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):** Plaited fiber, beads, wire, and carved bone are used in specific situations [15; pg68] Waist beads, bead necklaces, and coils of iron wire are normally worn by Kisii women. Coils of iron wire are also worn by wealthy/influential men [15; pg68] Specifically, who have gone through the enyangi wedding ceremony wear iron ankle-rings, publically and religiously certifying her monogamy and lifelong bond to her husband. This is seen as a distinction from surrounding people for their superior morality and lack of sexual promiscuity. [4; pg68]

7.6 **Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:** Warriors were distinguished by stunning headdresses of ostrich feathers or carved tusks, red and white paint on their faces, lengths of iron wire wrapped around their arms and legs, and the spears and shields they carried. [15; pg68]

7.7 **Sex differences in adornment:**

- Women:
 - Young women: short, simple apron of sisal fiber (or elaborately beaded for special occasions)
 - Married women: soft fiber tassel suspended from a cord around their waist and hanging low in back. The tassel served as the equivalent of today's wedding ring. They also often had raised cicatrices on the front and sides of their torso below the breasts and sometimes on their back and upper arms [15; pg68]
- Men:
 - Married men: small goatskin around their loins and sometimes a larger skin tied over one shoulder.
 - Wealthy/influential men: beaded cloaks of goat or leopard skin, numerous earrings, and coils of wire around their arms and legs. [15; pg68]

7.8 **Missionary effect:** Western dress is standard among the Kisii now [12]

7.9 **Cultural revival in adornment:** No evidence of any cultural revivals of Kisii adornment in recent history.

8. Kinship systems

8.1 **Sibling classification system:** All women and men of the same generation are considered "brothers" and "sisters." [6] "Real" brothers, are called mamura ominto. [2]

8.2 **Sororate, levirate:** At the death of a husband, the widow chooses a leviratic husband among the deceased's brothers. [2] In the mother's family, the reciprocal term mame is applied to mother's brothers, their wives, and to sister's children.

8.3 **Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):** Gusii kinship terminology is classificatory, merging lineals with collaterals. Specific lineal terms are used to denote the immediate family. [2] All women and men in one's parents' generation are called tatamoke (small father) and makomoke (small mother). All members of the next generation are omwana one (my child), grandchildren's generation is omochokoro (my grandchild), and grandparents' generation is sokoro (grandfather) and magokoro (grandmother). [6] Gusii terminology also distinguishes links that have been established by a transfer of marriage cattle. [2]

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

- Hospitality:
 - Respect & hospitality toward strangers is common. At the same time, the Gusii are very reserved, polite, and in many ways suspicious about others' intentions. Although interpersonal conflicts are common, people are not supposed to show outwards signs of anger. [6]
 - One always greets strangers as well as acquaintances of one's own generation with a simple phrase similar to our "Hi, how are you?" (Naki ogenderete). However, when visiting a homestead or meeting a relative, a more complete greeting ritual is necessary. This includes asking about each other's homes, children, and spouses. Unannounced visiting is not considered polite; a message should be delivered before a visit. [6]
- Alcohol:
 - Traditionally, only older people were allowed to drink large amounts of locally brewed beer (amarua). Today, social control over drinking has broken down, and traditional beer and home-distilled spirits are served in huts all over the district. Probably close to 50 percent of young and middle-aged Gusii are regular drinkers, with a larger proportion of men than women. This heavy drinking leads to violence, neglect of children, and poverty. [6]
 - Alcoholism and violence toward women are the most severe social problems. The Gusii also have high murder rates compared to the rest of Kenya. Although violence toward women (such as rape and beatings) has been part of Gusii culture since earlier in this century, alcohol is probably a factor in its increase. [6]

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