

Kipsigis Tribe

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

Kipsigis, Kipsigis (Kipsikiis, Kipsikis) ,Kalenjin Tribe

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

SGC

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

0.4252° S, 36.7517° E

1.4 Brief history:

“Kipsigis say that both they and the Nandi come from a place called "To," which some of them locate in the vicinity of Lake Baringo. In the course of their southward migration, sometime between the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Kipsigis and the Nandi separated. Today the Nandi are their immediate neighbors to the north. Pushing farther south, Kipsigis displaced the Luo, Kissi, and Maasai, the descendants of whom are currently their neighbors to the west and south. The Kipsigis once called these people puniik, meaning "enemies" or "strangers," although relations with these populations were never completely hostile. Relations with the Maasai were often characterized by fierce competition for grazing land. Despite reciprocal cattle raids, Kipsigis and Maasai intermarried and occasionally adopted one another's children.”

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

- Practice Christianity (varying degrees of Orthodoxy)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

- The Western Highlands (altitude of 1,500 to 2,000 meters)
- Cool weather
- Regular rainfall (good for farming)

1.7 Population size: 470,000

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

- Maize
- Wheat
- Pyrethrum
- Tea

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

- Cattle farmers

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

- Men hunt with bows and wood made arrows.

2.4 Food storage: None found.

2.5 Sexual division of production:

- “Women do all the cooking, which includes the ancillary tasks of collecting water and firewood. They tend the kitchen gardens and often grow small plots of finger millet and sorghum. Women are also the caretakers of children.” “Weeding is generally done by women.”
- “Men build houses, repair fences, and clear rough land. They provide veterinary care for livestock and, when the situation demands, perform autopsies.” “Plowing with oxen is men's work.”
- “Major agricultural tasks involve the entire family and, frequently, cooperative work groups composed of kokwet members.”
- “Planting maize is done by all available family members.” “Maize is harvested by work groups composed of both men and women, who move in a round from one farm to the next.”

2.6 Land tenure:

- Land is separated and controlled by Kokuets.
- The actual Kokuets are situated either in or around the agriculture fields.

2.7 Ceramics: None found.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

- People tend to be more generous within their kokuets but also trade with other kokuets.

2.9 Food taboos: None found.

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

- Farming communities in the highlands, little use for watercraft.

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): None found.

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): None found.

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

- approximately 14 years of age.

- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):
- Soon after marriage (varies)
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f):
- Varies based on wealth and social standing of the male head of the household.
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): None found.
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):
- Women's bride-payment is arranged soon after a ceremony welcoming them into the adult world.
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:
- "Divorce is exceptionally rare."
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:
- Polygamist culture
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:
- Payments include livestock and money
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns:
- "When a man is close to death, custom dictates that he call his sons together and instruct them about the disposition of his property, which, these days, may include certain off-farm assets. The livestock that a man has acquired by his own efforts—by purchase or by patient husbandry—are divided equally among all his sons. Bride-wealth cattle, however, are attached to the households from which his married daughters have departed, so that brothers from different houses may be more or less fortunate in the number of cattle they inherit. In cases where extended families occupy one farm, each household ideally receives an equal share of the land, which, over time, will be divided evenly between the sons of each house. If a man has more than one farm, each will be regarded as a separate estate to be shared exclusively by the members of the household who live on that farm."
 - Women inherit the status of their husbands when they marry.
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:
- Young children are nursed, fed, dressed, bathed, and watched over by women.
 - Fathers take a keen interest in their children, but physical contact and displays of affection are generally restrained.
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: None found.
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
- Kipsigis marry both within and outside of their communities.
- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?
- Men are to distance themselves from their children and not show affection towards their offspring.
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")
- It is the mother's job to raise and nurture her children without the help of her husband.
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)? None found.
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: None found.
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)
- It is preferential for females to be married to a man of the same or higher social standing than their own father.
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?
- Before young men and women become married, they are sometimes allowed to sleep in a "bachelors hut" where they may have sex with their boyfriend/girlfriend before they are married.
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring: None found.
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
- There are multiple instances of Kipsigi children being adopted into other Kipsigi and Maasai families.
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: None found.
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades: None found.
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)
- In the Kipsigis tribe there is generally only one potential father.
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
- At the age of 14, boys are separated from their mothers for a ceremony which brings them into manhood. When they return they are to remain aloof from their female relatives (sisters and mother) and in return the women are to treat him with the respect of an adult male.
- 4.24 Joking relationships?
- There do not appear to be specified joking relationships within the Kipsigis tribe.
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
- Descent is followed down through the husbands lineage.
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules: None found
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? None found.
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? None found.
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
- Marriage generally occurs within the community. However, there are instances in which members of the Kipsigis tribes marry members of other Kipsigis tribes or intermarry with the Maasai tribe.
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

- A man makes a bride-payment of either livestock or money to purchase his wife from her family.
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: None found.

Warfare/homicide

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

- Because of past conflict, the Kipsigis are generally more diplomatic in their conflicts.

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: None found.

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

- Clansmen are expected to make homicide payments when one of their own is held responsible for a death.

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

- The Kipsigis and Maasai raided each other's tribes historically.

4.18 Cannibalism?

- There were no instances of cannibalism within the Kipsigis culture.

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: None found.

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

- The Kipsigis are a farming society with permanent homes around the land that they cultivate.
- They do not change location or move around once they marry and move into their permanent home.

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

- Kokuets: "run by three chiefs, military, administrative and ritual."

5.4 Post marital residence:

- Each wife has her own residence separate from her husband's other wives.

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

- Each Kokuet has a land which they legally own through the Kenyan government.
- Land is bought or traded.

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

- There is an age set division.

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: None found.

5.8 Village and house organization:

- Kokuets: "The homestead usually consists of a couple of houses and an adequate number of granaries."

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

- Each wife has her own house which consists of her and her children; the husband has his own separate house but supports all of his wives houses.

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? None found.

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

- "The Kipsigis family is focused around the homestead. Several of these homesteads form a "kokuet"; and again several of the kokuets a central unity run by three chiefs, military, administrative and ritual. The homestead usually consists of a couple of houses and an adequate number of granaries."

5.12 Trade:

- There is the trading of food and other resources within and between kokuets.

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

- Men have the ability to gain wealth and therefore improve their standing within their social hierarchies.
- Women's social standing is determined entirely by their husband and social standing.

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

- RCR does not take a majority of the Kipsigis time because they are a community which much constantly devote their time to farming.

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- In rare and extreme cases, individuals will use witchcraft to curse a specific person or animal.

6.2 Stimulants: None found.

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

- Ceremonies greeting a new born child.
- Puberty rituals include separate ceremonies for males and females at the age of 14.
- There are multiple ceremonies involving death which depend on which individual has died.

6.4 Other rituals:

- Ceremony celebrating the completion of a family (when the first child is born)

6.5 Myths (Creation):

- Follow Christianity.

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

- Generally choral singing at celebrations.

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

- There is a ceremony in which males are circumcised at the age of 14.
- There is a ceremony in which parts of the females clitoris and labia are removed at the age of 14.

6.8 Missionary effect:

- Celebrate Christian holidays.
- Many ceremonies have been altered into a more Christian version of the original ceremony.

6.9 RCR revival:

- The Kipsigis follow old ceremonies and traditions which they have altered with their acceptance of Christianity.

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

- “The Kipsigis bury their dead quickly. The eldest son will bury his father, and the youngest son will bury his mother. After a death, the immediate family will retreat from public life to mourn. The spirit of a recently deceased patrilineal relative is believed to be reincarnated in a newborn child.”

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? None found.

6.12 Is there teknonymy? None found.

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

- Kipsigis have almost entirely abandoned their native religion and adopted Christianity as their main religion.

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: None found.

7.2 Piercings: None found.

7.3 Haircut: None found.

7.4 Scarification:

- There are occasional sacrifices of cattle and other livestock.

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): None found.

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: None found.

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: None found.

7.8 Missionary effect:

- Christianity took the Kipsigis away from their original traditions.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: None found.

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

- Siblings based on father.
- Siblings from the same mother all live together in the same home until they become adults and are married off.

8.2 Sororate, levirate: None found.

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): None found.

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Numbered references

1. http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=sgc
2. http://www.kalenjin.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=78&Itemid=253
3. <http://www.africanlatitude.com/en/info/the-ancestral-peoples/the-kipsigis.html>
4. <http://www.everyculture.com/Africa-Middle-East/Kipsigis.html>
5. http://www.kericho-county.org/index.php?view=article&id=47%3Aabout-the-kipsigis-&format=pdf&option=com_content&Itemid=37