

The 'Evil Eye' (Ebibiriri) in the Gusii Community: Origins, Manifestations and Effects

Fredrick Kayusi Ondabu¹ & Orucho Justine Amadi²

1. *M.Sc., Environmental Geosciences, Pwani University,*

P.O Box 195-80108 Kilifi, Kenya

Tel: +254736045035

mg22pu3605021@pu.ac.ke

2. *Lecturer, Social Work, Maasai Mara University,*

P.O Box 861-20500, Narok, Kenya

Tel: +254702532633

orucho@mmarau.ac.ke

Abstract

Social Workers, Sociologists and Social anthropologists have given little attention to the evil-eye in communities where depravity is predominant. The evil eye has continued to affect the health and social well-being of children and people with light brown skin because of the susceptibility and delicacy of their skin to 'ebibiriri'. The Gusii community strongly believes in the existence and power of the evil eye, locally known as "ebibiriri." The evil eye is believed to be a form of negative energy that can cause harm, illness, or misfortune to individuals or their belongings. The community believes that anyone can possess the power to cast the evil eye, intentionally or unintentionally, and that certain individuals are more susceptible to its effects. The purpose of this study was to investigate the antiquity and etiology of the evil eye in the Gusii community in Kenya. The study used snowballing and purposive sampling to select participants of this study. The participants consisted of 50 parents whose children had suffered from the evil-eye, 30 evil-eyed people and 20 religious leaders. The findings of the study reveal that children are particularly susceptible to the "evil eye" (okobiriria), not because they are young but because their skin is still light brown and consequently subtle. To protect themselves from the evil eye, the Gusii community employs various traditional practices such as wearing protective charms and amulets, performing rituals, and avoiding envy and jealousy. The community also has a system of beliefs around the causes and effects of the evil eye, which vary depending on the context and the individuals involved. Overall, the belief in the evil eye is deeply ingrained in the Gusii culture and plays a significant role in shaping their daily lives and interactions with others. Women are the main conveyor of the evil eye though men can also be conveyors. The evil-eye is unconscious and not controllable by the person who has it thus, when a woman with this delinquent gives birth, she is forced to focus her eyes on millet grains held in front of her to absorb the evil effect and prevent it from reaching her infant. The study recommends a dialogue among the evil-eyed people, religious leaders and the victims on the treatment of both the victims and the evil-eyed people to bring this degeneracy to a culmination.

Key Words: Evil eye, Evil eyed people, Depravity, Gusii Community, Social workers, Social Anthropologist and Sociologists