

# **GENDER IDEOLOGY IN *KUMUSE* RITUAL DISCOURSE AMONG THE BUKUSU OF KENYA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Ritual is a mode of discourse production. In ritual discourse, participants employ discursive strategies. Rituals are instruments for the formation of self and the social identity of the group. Masculine ideologies and power structure that enhance the domination of men over women prevail up to date. Kumuse is one example of ritual performed by the Bukusu people as an instrument to regulate human relationships. It is the most respected ritual through which the community poses its social questions and formulates its moralities. Ritual discourse is an important factor as it relates to gender and discourse. Discriminatory messages in ritual practices are often taken for granted. This study utilizes the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) as an extension of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). It adopts the context model which ties up with the notion of discursive strategy. It sets out to evaluate the role of ritual discourse in the construction of gender ideologies. The respondents of the study include the oral artists and members of the Bukusu community who are involved in the ritual Kumuse. The objective is to help debunk hidden assumptions about gender roles in Bukusu community. Video recording, structured interviews and observations were the main tools of data collection. Gramsci (1971) argues that language is intricately connected to how we think about and make sense of the world. Language then is central to gender ideologies. In language, there is contained a specific conception of the world and philosophy is contained in the language itself. The findings reveal that gender ideologies are discursively constructed in ritual discourse. The findings may be used in practical applications to combat all forms of social discrimination through language. The oral artists can use this knowledge to propound on guidelines which can help to avoid the discriminatory linguistic presentation of specific groups of persons in ritual, media, family and other social institutions.

**Key words:** Ritual, discourse, gender, ideology, discursive, construction, *kumuse*