

CONSTRUCTION OF A PATRIARCHAL IDEOLOGY IN GUSII ORAL POETRY

NYAMBANE FREDRICK MONANTI¹, KITCHE MAGAK² & Dr. JANE BWONYA³

¹Department of Literary Studies, Maseno University, Maseno, Kenya

²HOD, Department of Literary Studies, Maseno University, Maseno, Kenya

³Senior Lecturer, Department of Literary Studies, Maseno University, Maseno, Kenya

ABSTRACT

Abagusii people of Western Kenya, just like any other human community world over, are socialized to operate within prescribed ideologies, and one such ideology is patriarchy. These ideologies are constructed and inculcated Abagusii's mindsets through oral poetry, the oldest and most versatile of the genres of oral literature and one which has had an intimate relationship with people, hence, the choice of Gusii oral poetry as a vehicle for studying Gusii's patriarchal ideology and relationships. This paper thus examines the Gusii oral poems as a semiotic system and discourse of encoded signs which embodies the Gusii socio – cultural ideology. The objective of the paper is to establish how the patriarchal ideology of Abagusii has shaped social relationships between Abagusii themselves and their neighboring communities. In the analysis of the sampled oral poems, this paper uses a conceptual framework developed from the Chandler (1995) strands of semiotics in which he argues that culture produces signs and attributes meanings to them. The semiotic tenets are then linked to the sociological literary theory strands by Rosenblatt (1978) in which he argues that literature mirrors protocols of the society which produces it and serves specific social purposes. Finally, strands from the two literary theories of semiotics and sociological theories are further interlinked with the Althusserian (1989) and Eagleton (1976)'s tenets of Marxism in which they argue that art is a product of a specific historical epoch and its purpose is to be an Ideological State Apparatuses which interpellates people into becoming subjects of given ideologies. This paper has adopted an analytical study design. Secondary data was obtained from the review of published works and primary data was the textual analysis of Gusii oral poems collected from the Abagusii resource persons and libraries. The sampling of data and resource persons was both purposive and through snowballing. The study is significant in the sense that it contributes towards celebrating the role of oral poetry as a vehicle for enabling humans to perceive themselves, their environment and their world in ways unique to themselves and enhancing of intercultural relations as well as forms a basis for related studies.

KEYWORDS: Patriarchy, Ideology, Emissary, Initiation Oral Poetry, Perceptions, Stereotypes & Enhanced Relations.