

**Gender and Language Practices in Female Circumcision Ceremonies in  
Kuria Kenya**

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The University of Leeds

York St John University

Business School

### **Declaration**

I hereby confirm that this thesis is my own work. It has not previously been submitted for a degree elsewhere. Appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the works of others.

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**Dedication**

*To Ephraim and Evangeline!*

*For all you had to bear while I did this.*

## **Abstract**

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a global issue which has been declared a violation of human and girl child rights. This has been voiced from different perspectives. However, few studies have related FGM to gender and none of these have given the issue a critical linguistic approach. This study was set to fill this gap by detailing gendered discourses in the Kuria FGM ceremonies and uncovering ways in which FGM is normalised in discourse. This was a linguistic ethnographic study anchored in discourse analytic methods. FGM songs were audio recorded and participants in the ceremonies interviewed. Observation notes were also made. Data were transcribed and translated then analysed using Fairclough's (1992, 2003, 2015) Critical Discourse Analysis framework and Sunderland's (2004) Gendered Discourses approaches. Analysis focused on identifying, naming, describing and interpreting gendered discourses by critically analysing lexical items and metaphors. These were the traces/cues of the gendered discourses identified in the songs and interview responses. Particular interest was on those aspects of discourse that seemed normal and commonsensical but which, when analysed from a critical perspective, functioned to advance gender inequalities and position FGM as acceptable and expectable, even good. Findings show that Kuria female circumcision ceremonies are a site of many gendered discourses; male dominance and female subordination are legitimised through such discourses as: 'man as provider'; 'man as protector'; 'woman as domestic' and 'woman as object'. These function as building blocks of the three main discourses, 'proper woman discourse'; 'economic value discourse' and 'power and control discourse' in the songs and which are largely re-articulated and confirmed in the interviews. The conclusions drawn from the findings are that men are constructed as different from women, while women who have undergone FGM are portrayed to be better than those who have not and this forms the basis for perpetuation of FGM.

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**List of acronyms and abbreviations**

CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
F1	Female 1
FC	Female Cutting
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FPAK	Family Planning Association of Kenya
KWDA	Kenya Women Development Association
M1	Male 1
MD1	Male with daughter 1
MD2	Male with daughter 2
MOH	Ministry of Health
MWD1	Male without daughter 1
MWD2	Male without daughter 2
MYWO	Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

## **Chapter 1: Introduction and background to the study**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a global issue affecting women and girls in various parts of the world. Over 140 million girls and women have undergone FGM worldwide (Reid 2014), while 3 million are at risk every year; this means at least 8000 girls are at risk every day. In the UK, 130,000 girls and women live with the consequences of FGM while 60,000 are at risk of the most severe forms of FGM (Beckford & Manning 2016). In Africa, every five minutes a girl undergoes FGM while in the Kuria region of Kenya, 96% of women and girls have undergone FGM (Oloo et al 2010) despite its illegal status. FGM has been approached from religious, medical and human rights perspectives but the linguistic perspective has not been considered. Yet the practice, which is powered by culture, is enshrined in language. In Kuria, efforts made to end the practice include legislation and awareness campaigns but these have not borne fruit and the practice persists with the ceremonies taking place every two years. There is therefore a need to consider alternative approaches.

This study set out to examine gender and language practices in Kuria female circumcision ceremonies, to investigate the gendered discourses in the songs and interviews, and show how men and women are positioned, and whether this contributes to the perpetuation of female circumcision/female genital mutilation. I use the two terms interchangeably because, though the term Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is the one recognised by World Health Organisation (WHO), Kuria people use Female Circumcision (*esaro yabasagane*, see a detailed explanation of this in section 3.2). To achieve this, FGM songs performed during FGM ceremonies were audio recorded, transcribed, translated and analysed, participants in these ceremonies were interviewed and their responses recorded, transcribed and translated (see details of the type of respondents and the recruitment process in section 4.4). Songs and interviews constituted the main data for the study, field notes, which counted as additional data, were also kept. This research is based on the

poststructuralist<sup>1</sup> assumption that gender (in)equality, as part of social reality, is discursively constructed. Therefore, to realise an equal society, gendered discourses and discursively perpetuated retrogressive cultural practices need to be investigated and challenged. Gender, in this case is viewed as a social construct rather than a biological given. Discourse on the other hand is viewed from a critical rather than descriptive point. Gee (2011) distinguishes the two perspectives arguing that descriptive is associated with formal linguistics and views discourse as a stretch of language (spoken or written). It looks at the content of the language being used: the themes and issues being discussed in a text. Critical, on the other hand, is associated with critical discourse analysis approach to linguistics and views discourse as different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice (Fairclough 1992). This pays more attention to the structure of the language used to pass across the content and how this structure functions to make meaning in specific contexts. Apart from describing how language works, critical discourse analysis speaks to and also intervenes in social and political issues, problems and controversies in the world and is committed to social critique and change. It is therefore both descriptive and critical. This study is based within the discourse theories, specifically critical (interpretive) discourse analysis. The terms gender and discourse are discussed in detail in chapter 2. CDA is relevant and important for this study due to the fact that there are power struggles in the Kuria context which justify the use of CDA in the analysis. Using CDA in analysing FGM songs has methodological advantages because it shows that CDA should not only be applied in political and media discourses but in all forms of discourse which propagate inequality, oppression and injustice. FGM songs are also a form of media and therefore texts worthy of a critical analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> Poststructuralism is concerned with ‘critiquing ways in which competing forms of knowledge and the power interests that they serve aspire to fix meaning once and for all’ (Baxter 2003:23). It is heavily influenced by Foucault and Derrida who argue that social meaning is continuously negotiated and contested through language and discourse and keeps on shifting all the time. Poststructuralists view gender as not fixed but something that can be interpreted, talked and written about as well as enacted (Sunderland & Litosseliti 2008).



## 1.1 Background of the study

The topic of language and gender has received attention in the past two decades with researchers focusing on the relationship between the two (see Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013). Earlier language and gender researchers (first and second wave feminists) were associated with gender differences, political resistance against sex discrimination, promotion of gender equality and emancipation of women (Litosseliti 2006). Current researchers (third wave feminists) adopt more critical, constructivist and poststructuralist theoretical perspectives while focusing on diversity, performativity<sup>2</sup> and co-construction of gender identities and inequalities (and ways of changing these) in society (Litosseliti 2006). Talbot (2010) states that gender and language research is now predominantly interested in identifying, demystifying and resisting the ways language is used to reflect, create and sustain gender inequalities in specific contexts. The African context is to date still under-researched (Atanga 2013). Particularly the use of language in sociolinguistic and discourse senses; the application of linguistic research in solving social issues and problems is still underexplored. This study is embedded in the current trends and claims that language shapes and is shaped by social structures; language therefore contributes to reproducing and changing them.

Interest in gender and FGM<sup>3</sup> grew out of my own experience as a young girl while growing up in the heart of the Kuria region of Kenya. I realised there were gender issues I could question but which other people found normal and natural and talked positively about, for instance the issue of wife beating. I was also encouraged to believe that, without going through FGM, one could not become a woman or be married. FGM was a celebrated stage in Kuria with the ceremonies taking place every two years. I always wondered why people would celebrate so much after someone has just been cut in the genital area. To me, cutting conjured images of pain and

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<sup>2</sup> This is a term adopted from J.L. Austin's (1962) work where utterance of some words is, actually, performance of actions. For instance, to say 'I apologise' is in itself an act of apologising. Butler (1990) used the term in gender terms arguing that by engaging in some acts which are culturally considered gendered, one is performing their gender.

<sup>3</sup> Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is defined as partial or total removal of the female genitalia or other injury to the female genitals for cultural or other non-medical reasons (WHO 1997; WHO 2011).

watching the circumcised bleeding and walking with difficulty convinced me that indeed it was painful yet the escorts seemed to be happy and dancing by the girls' sides. I was convinced that there was something else that they did to the girls and was determined to find out what this was. Through schooling and reading literature I have come to realise that issues of gender and FGM in Kuria had not been spoken of or written about as much as it was in other communities. There was hardly any research on the Kuria people regarding language, gender and FGM.

The other issue that fuelled my interest is that whenever the girls were circumcised they were married off immediately. Only very few stayed in school and got married soon after completion of primary school. Working as an untrained teacher in my former secondary school (Ntimaru Secodary) further enhanced my interest in studying language and gender. I read a book on Kuria proverbs (Range 2000) and realised that they were all negative whenever reference was being made to women and positive when referring to men. The only time women were portrayed positively is when they were wives or mothers. This was interesting because I realised then that a Kuria woman was not recognised until she was a wife or a mother. I therefore set out to find out how gendered positions were constructed in discourse, and whether this perpetuated the practice of FGM. This study seeks to reveal how men and women are constructed in female circumcision songs and the way this is re-contextualised in the interviews in order to obtain views from key actors about gender. My ultimate goal is to suggest ways of promoting greater equality between Kuria men and women, subverting existing power imbalances and ending FGM, thereby enhancing women's position in the society, but also, importantly, helping to improve their health and quality of life. This will be achieved through informed collaboration with anti-FGM organisations working in Kuria and Kenya, awareness campaigns, role modelling and publishing anti-FGM literature drawn from this work.

## **1.2 Rationale**

Majstorovic & Lassen (2011) observe that there is a large amount of research in gender and language in the Anglo/American contexts. However, there are few such studies in Africa (Abudi et al 2011; Atanga 2013), fewer yet that examine language and gender inequality in Kenya, and none in the Kuria context. This study will fill this gap in the existing literature and methodology while suggesting alternative and

emancipatory ways of achieving gender equality. Women's participation in social, cultural and economic development is shaped by the way they are constructed within the society and the sociocultural structures around them. In most cases such constructions tend to relegate women to subordinate positions and confine them to domestic spheres. Research on gender issues in Kenya (Onyango 2008; Abudi et al 2011) has mostly focused on discrimination against women and the contribution of women to the economy and development in general. However, there is a dearth of literature that focuses on discourse and the construction of gender in circumcision ceremonies and particularly, on the Kuria female circumcision songs. This work will therefore be an addition to existing literature in gender and language scholarship worldwide, in Africa and in Kenya (a region that is still underexplored). Apart from this, this study identifies discourses in both binary (between man and women) and non-binary (among groups of women) groups. It examines how men and women are constructed through discourse but also at how some groups of women are represented as different from other groups. By this, it goes beyond focusing on the inter-gender (Kuria men versus Kuria women) relations and examines intra-gender (Kuria circumcised women versus Kuria uncircumcised women) relations as manifested in FGM songs. This aspect has not been explored in cases of majority-binary-sex-domains. By looking at the discursive construction of circumcised and uncircumcised women and the effect of this in the perpetuation of FGM the study reveals that not all women are subordinated or powerless as stated in gender and language literature (see Baker 2008). This research will therefore be my contribution to gender and language scholarship and is in line with current trends in gender and language research (and with the aims of feminism<sup>4</sup>).

This study presents me with an opportunity to investigate the relationship between gender, language and FGM in Africa using critical discourse analytical (CDA) (Lazar 2005; Fairclough 2010) methods. Gender and language research currently takes a

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<sup>4</sup> Feminism is a political movement that focuses on gender, on how men and women are constructed in different contexts and how they construct themselves. It investigates on gender equality by 'challenging discrimination encountered by women because of their sex', while calling 'for changes in social, economic, political or cultural order to reduce discrimination against women' (Freedman 2001:1). It also encompasses diverse and multifaced ideas, theories and actions with a common goal of liberating all women from oppression, injustice and discrimination (Botting and Hauser 2006).

critical stance in aiming to unveil the unequal gender relations prevalent but hidden in discourse and its assumptions relate to (and overlap with) the principles of critical discourse analysis (Wodak 2007). Sunderland (2004) states that CDA is theoretically well placed to identify gendered discourses, and many Western and non-Western researchers have used CDA successfully in their research (see Lazar 2005; Majstorovic & Lassen 2011) (see more of Sunderland's arguments in section 2.6.2). I use critical discourse analysis (CDA) as both a theoretical and methodological approach; particularly Fairclough's textually oriented approach because it does a close linguistic analysis while considering the context in which the texts are produced. I merge this with Lazar's (2005) feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA), because of its interest in gender, and Sunderland's (2004) gendered discourses approach, since it gives clear guidelines on identification and naming of discourses (see a detailed discussion of gender, discourse and critical discourse analysis in chapter 2). By doing this, this study has a theoretical and analytical significance in Kenya because this kind of methodological triangulation has not been carried out before in gender, language and FGM research.

CDA views discourse as a 'social practice' and as 'constitutive', implying 'a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it' (Fairclough & Wodak 1997:55). It has a 'starting point in social issues and problems' (Fairclough 2001:229). It does not begin with texts and interactions but with issues that preoccupy sociologists, political scientists and/or educationists (Fairclough *ibid*). The two issues at hand are gender<sup>5</sup> (inequalities and power imbalances) and FGM. CDA is therefore theoretically well placed to seek, identify and explain the workings of gendered discourses and the discursive legitimation of FGM. Using CDA presupposes a power discrepancy, that is, that one group is relatively marginalised within the asymmetrical power relations (in this context there is a tripartite gender and power hierarchy) and this makes it suitable for the present study. While Fairclough's CDA provides the tools to identify imbalances achieved through discourse it does not focus on gender. I therefore rely on Sunderland's (2004) approach to name and describe the gendered discourses that prevail and which function to maintain the status quo. This kind of

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<sup>5</sup> See section 2.1 for a definition of gender and gendered discourses.

combination has not been adopted in examining FGM ceremonies or analysing FGM songs.

Socially, this study aims to raise awareness of the role of language in perpetuating retrogressive sociocultural practices. It particularly contributes to discussions regarding female genital mutilation, which is a global social issue. It is therefore important in international debates about achieving gender equality, ending violence against women and enhancing female empowerment. Apart from revealing that language plays a role in perpetuating and legitimating female genital mutilation among the Kuria people of Kenya, it suggests alternative methods (such as adoption of non-discriminatory discourse) to world health bodies, human rights organisations and other anti-FGM campaigners in their struggle to end the practice. It therefore has both emancipatory and socially transformative goals. Although literature on FGM is extensive, this is the first study to approach FGM from a discourse perspective. Conducting a linguistic study on this topic is important in the development of an understanding of the underlying ideologies, power struggles and mitigating factors behind the practice of FGM at local, national and international levels. A focus on Kenya, and particularly Kuria, is appropriate because, despite anti-FGM campaigns and efforts made to end the practice, it persists and is publicly conducted. The study is therefore worthwhile in the sense that it investigates a sociocultural phenomenon and links it to linguistic practices on the assumption that linguistic change is an important factor and the initial step towards social change.

My aim is to disseminate this work through different avenues and it is expected that the recommendations of this study (see Chapter 9) will contribute to challenging gender inequalities and lowering FGM rates among practising communities. Potential users of the findings from this study include: gender and language researchers, critical discourse analysts, gender equality crusaders, anti-FGM campaigners, WHO, UNICEF, religious organisations fighting FGM and gender inequalities, educational institutions and other gender sensitisation bodies.

### **1.3 Why FGM Songs**

FGM songs are an integral part of the Kuria culture. They are performed during FGM ceremonies and, being cultural products like other folk songs, perform socialising

roles for community members. They express the experiences of the particular group that uses them and set social norms for the community (Baquedano-Lopez 2001). Circumcision songs carry ideological discourses that describe the communities that use them. Such discourses legitimate the gendered division of labour (for instance) while affirming the subservient position of women in relation to men.

Among the Kuria people, FGM songs are performed by women. It is argued (see Shuker 2013) that by performing songs that assert a female subservient position to men, women reconstruct a discourse that promotes a sexist<sup>6</sup> culture and consequently become accomplices to their own oppression through perpetuating hegemonic discourses. Circumcision songs as a genre of folk songs are therefore of interest because of their role as carriers of ideologies, embodiment of institutional values and performer of identity construction roles. As a social discourse, they construct and reproduce asymmetrical gendered relations among the Kuria people in both domestic and social spheres. They therefore provide a forum through which gendered ideals can be scrutinised. I analyse them for linguistic features and discourses (viewed as language reflecting and shaping sociocultural norms and practices). Another reason is that FGM songs would be easily available during the circumcision ceremonies, appropriate in answering my research questions and analysable using my research methodologies. They constitute FGM and gender related vocabulary, are rich in sociocultural aspects and are empirically original since they have not been researched before (a full definition of FGM, explanation on distribution and prevalence is discussed later in this thesis. See section 3.2 for more details).

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

This research sets out to investigate the gendered discourses in the FGM ceremonies of the Kuria people of Kenya and how these construct gender identities, legitimise and/or challenge gender inequality and power relations among members of the Kuria community and to find out whether this has a role to play in the perpetuation of FGM.

The main research question that this study addresses is:

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<sup>6</sup> A culture which promotes underlying discriminatory discourses against women, behind what is seen as female empowerment (Lazar 2005).

*What are the gender and language practices in female circumcision ceremonies in Kuria, Kenya and how do they construct gender identities and power relations?*

More closely defined empirical questions deriving from this main issue include:

1. Which lexical items and metaphors are employed in Kuria female circumcision songs?
2. What discourses are prevalent in the songs and how are they enacted, legitimised (and/or challenged) in the interviews?
3. In what ways does the language used in the songs construct gender identities and power relations among the Kuria people?
4. What is the effect of these discursive gender constructions on perpetuation of FGM among the Kuria people?

By answering these questions, I have positioned myself in the current research in gender and language which has shifted from focusing on the differences in language use between men and women to examining how language use constructs, represents and produces gender identities and relations (Sunderland 2014).

### **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

In Chapter 1, I present the sociocultural background to the study and highlight what fuelled my interest in conducting this research. I also identify the research questions being addressed and what makes this study significant. I describe the rationale for conducting a critical discourse analysis of FGM songs and ceremonies.

Chapter 2 provides a critical review of literature relating to this study. I review literature on gender and language and discourse analysis. The Chapter also presents theoretical frameworks that guide the study, particularly the theory of discourse and the principles of critical discourse analysis. In Chapter 3, the context of the study; the cultural beliefs, values and practices of the Kuria people is outlined. It is here that I discuss the practice of FGM both at global and local levels.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodology employed in the research. It provides a analytical overview of the methodology adopted as well as a description of the specific methods employed in data collection and analysis.

In Chapter 5, I provide a quantitative summary of the lexical items and metaphors found in the songs and interviews and their frequencies. I then explain the meanings of the metaphors and describe how, through the repeated use of these linguistic features, men, circumcised women and uncircumcised women have been constructed in asymmetrical ways. In Chapter 6, I present an analysis of the data and focus on how through lexical items and metaphors, men and women have been constructed. I focus mainly on how a Kuria woman (and man) is linguistically constructed through the 'proper woman discourse' which is a dominant discourse that emerges in the songs and interviews.

Chapter 7 focuses on the 'economic value discourse' as another of the key gendered discourses emerging from the data analysis. I examine how language is used to legitimate and perpetuate ideologies about who has economic right, and on how women and girls are reduced to objects of economic value, which have a price tag attached to them.

Chapter 8 discusses gendered discourses in relation to 'power and control' where again I examine how asymmetrical power relations are produced, legitimised and reinforced through language with ultimate power being vested on the men while women are denied this.

Chapter 9 summarises the main findings of the research and highlights points where discourses in the songs have been re-contextualised in the interviews. The chapter also summarises the contribution of the research to the study of language and gender in terms of theoretical and methodological underpinnings and to the wider society. It ends with a conclusion and recommendation for implementations, and identifies areas for future studies.

In this chapter, I have presented the sociocultural background to the study and highlighted what fuelled my interest in conducting this research. In the next chapter, I present a review of literature related to this study and present the theoretical and methodological underpinnings that guide this research.



## Chapter 2: **Literature review: Gender and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

### **2.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, I review previous literature that relates to the current study. I survey literature on gender and discourse analysis: the different approaches, methods and theories employed in studying the two. In the first section, I distinguish the terms ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ after which I critically discuss some works that have been conducted on language and gender worldwide, in Africa and specifically in Kenya. I identify the gaps in past works that my research addresses. In the second part of the chapter, I trace the development of gender and language research from structuralism to the ‘discursive turn’ while describing and evaluating the approaches that have been used to study gender and language. I then outline the theory of discourse and principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and relate these to gender and language, ideology and power (Fairclough 1995, 2001; van Dijk 1996, 1998; Wodak & Meyer 2001). I thereafter explore CDA as the theoretical and methodological framework that informs this study and give reasons why a critical approach to language study is suitable for social research in general, and for studying female circumcision songs in particular. The last section is a detailed description of the two critical discourse analysis approaches (Fairclough 1992, 2003, 2015 and Sunderland 2004) I have adapted for this study and the reasons why they are the most suitable for this kind of research. A critique of the two approaches has also been given.

### **2.1 Sex and gender**

Wodak (1997:2) differentiates between sex and gender by defining the former as a ‘biological aspect and as encompassing the anatomical differences between males and females’ whereas gender refers to the ‘psychological, social and cultural differences between men and women’ (masculine and feminine). This position is supported by Coates (2004) and Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013:10) who argue that, ‘sex is a biological categorisation based primarily on reproductive potential, whereas gender is the social elaboration of biological sex’. Gender refers to a social categorisation system which consists of a polarised set of social behaviours classed as masculine and feminine. Therefore, while the terms boys/male and girls/female refer to a person’s biological sex, the terms masculine and feminine refer to a person’s

gender (Sauntson 2000). Gender masculinity and femininity are temporary social constructs which are brought into being through social interaction. Masculine behaviours are expected of biological males and feminine behaviours of biological females (Sauntson 2012). Sex and gender are therefore linked only through ideology (which encompasses shared ideas and representations of social groups. It also includes norms, values and the perceived identity of a group). Butler (1990) has theorised gender as a performance arguing that gender is something we do rather than something we are, and is accomplished in discourse. It relates to the concept of performativity in the sense that the aspect of 'sex' works to materialise the body sex; By acting in a manner expected of a particular sex, an individual makes what is perceived to be sex real, according to a society's anticipations. Butler (1993) has further criticised the naturalness of sex arguing that in itself 'sex' is also socially constructed. Butler argues that 'sex' is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialised through time' (1993:1). Sex is therefore not what one is or has but 'that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility (1993:3), the actions which one performs and which qualify them to be accepted as a member of a specific community of practice. Going hand in hand with Butler's view, is Cameroon (2005:484) argument that 'biological facts are always filtered through social preconceptions about gender'. This implies that what is described as sex depends on the context of use and how the society views it. Most societies operate on two genders: masculine and feminine. However, as we shall find out later in this thesis, among the Kuria there are three gender expressions which are based on duties, responsibilities and expectations: men; circumcised women; and uncircumcised women. Gender in this case is not viewed as a biological given that relates to sex but as a social construct built on performing one's duties and fulfilling societal expectations. Being that gender is a complex and fluid category whose understanding is contextual, in a given group of men, for example, some may be more masculine than others, or one man may be more masculine in certain contexts than in others, and he could even be feminine (Kitetu 1998). Gender is therefore a social construct which is not based on essences; it is not fixed but dynamic and keeps changing depending on time and place.

The distinction between sex and gender is important because biological explanations of socially constructed differences between men and women are often used to justify male privileges or reassert traditional family and gender roles. Gender, thus, 'builds

on biological sex in that it exaggerates biological differences and carries them into domains in which they are completely irrelevant' (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013:2). For instance, men's superiority has been associated with physical strength, a relation strongly criticised and blamed for perpetuating gender myths, stereotypes, and imbalances that are ultimately damaging for both women and men and which perpetuate inequality. Women's child-bearing capacity, on the other hand, becomes the basis for developing an argument that women have a maternal instinct and thus are suited for raising children; this argument is ideologically used to legitimise women's 'natural' role as mothers and carers (Talbot 1998). On these bases also, men and women are treated differently, leading to gender differentiation, gender prejudice and uncritical beliefs and judgements about a person because of his/her gender. When these differentiations are accepted by a community, they become gender norms and common-sense practices that are hard to challenge and which this thesis sets out to demystify and challenge.

## **2.2 Gender and language**

According to Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013) gender is related to language in the sense that language is the means through which gender ideologies are constructed, perpetuated and contested. Language provides a field where gender is accomplished (West et al 1997). Assumptions and fallacies that drive gender ideologies in different cultures and societies are legitimised and maintained through language. Such fallacies include: men being strong and brave, aggressive, rational, competitive, practical and rough, while women are weak, timid, passive, irrational, cooperative and gentle. Among the Kuria people, there are terms used to refer to women as weak and as of less value than men and there are terms used to describe uncircumcised women as even weaker and socially inappropriate. Such labels are repeatedly used until they are considered both natural and common sense. All of these values and ideologies are propagated and passed on from one generation to the next by use of cultural linguistic practices such as songs.

Talbot et al (2003) posit that in patriarchal societies, power relations are maintained through language. Language is central in the routine maintenance of social inequality by mediating gender and power relations in everyday discourse. The current study investigates whether the language used in Kuria female circumcision songs plays a

role in the perpetuation of gender inequalities and female circumcision practices. The study proposes that both linguistic and non-linguistic forms and practices among the speakers of Kuria language, as used in circumcision songs and ceremonies, play a role in the construction and articulation of gender and female circumcision ideologies.

In any speech community (a group of people who share a language and collective behaviour; members are accepted and understand each other in a mutually intelligible way), each person has access to a wide range of discourses, they make choices on which to take up and use and which to resist and/or subvert. However, in the Kuria context people (in this case women and girls) don't always have the choice, they are forced to conform to the discourses set and made available to them by the society without a doubt or a question; key ideas of what it means to be female or male are very much defined to them. In other cases, however, the choices made are significant in the construction of oneself and others. As Coates states, 'our construction of ourselves as gendered masculine or feminine is profoundly affected by the discourses on gender current at any given time' (2004:216). Speakers, therefore, can choose to align themselves with the dominant or hegemonic<sup>7</sup> discourses of femininity or masculinity or they can choose to resist them. Note, however, that, because, as stated above, people don't always have a choice for or against the discourses, in some cases, members find it difficult to resist dominant discourses and choose to align themselves with these in order to fit in within their specific social groups. For instance, as will be realised in the analysis chapters, not all Kuria women and girls support the practice of FGM but they have no choice except to abide by what the society has set for them as the yardstick for attaining proper man/ womanhood. In this case they are forced to conform to key ideas of what it means to be a (proper) man or woman in the Kuria community.

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<sup>7</sup> The term hegemony was coined by Antonio Gramsci in 1926 who related it to the aspect of leadership based on the consent of the led (see Bates 1975). In linguistics and discourse the term has been used to mean domination of some sort. In this thesis, I use the term in reference to dominant discourses and groups, that are not questioned or which may be difficult to challenge.

Language in day-to-day use/discourse<sup>8</sup> appears in different forms; it can be oral or written. When oral, address forms, idiomatic and metaphoric expressions and proverbs usually show a leaning towards a certain gender in describing either positive or negative aspects. Hellinger & Bussmann (2002) argue that idiomatic expressions, metaphors and proverbs in different languages tend to be negative when describing women. In Kuria language, negative traits are named using feminine nouns while masculine nouns are used for positive traits. A prostitute, *omoraya*, for instance, is always feminine and there is no term in Kuria language for a man who practises prostitution. An analysis of these and other aspects of language is therefore useful for revealing what prevailing gender ideologies there are in a given society or context and how language is used to legitimate unequal gender and power positions.

It is worth re-stating here that masculinity, femininity and gender relations are constructed in and through language. Language therefore lies at the heart of understanding gender, and even though identity is constructed from cultural, social, and communal resources, the language people use carries the marks of their culture. What people say positions them relative to whom they are interacting with and to contexts of socio-culturally meaningful identities. Burr (1995:142) argues that ‘the person can only be a meaningful entity, both to himself or to herself and to others, by being ‘read’ in terms of the discourses available in the society’. The representation of women and men in oratory sites such as songs, myths, folklore and proverbs among the Kuria people is one site where language plays a greater role in advancing societal views about gender identities, norms expectations and practices such as FGM.

Research has been conducted on gender issues in different disciplines such as psychology, sociology and media studies (Coates 2004). Research that examines gender and language issues has focused on education, literature, the language of legislation and administration, creative writing and mass media and spoken communication, showing how men and women are represented (Atanga et al 2012) in different contexts. An analysis of the relationship between gender and language in sociocultural contexts is important because our identities and ways of looking at the world are formed through language use in specific contexts, thus, by analysing

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<sup>8</sup> I use the terms language in use and discourse interchangeably, in this case, language is conceptualised as a system of communication with various resources that users draw on, and discourse as the practice of using language to construct identities.

language we are well positioned to ‘describe and challenge conventional beliefs and representations’ (Mills & Mullany 2011:78) about gender and as a result achieve equality and social change.

### **2.2.1 History of gender and language research: From structuralism to the ‘discursive turn’**

Initial development of language and gender studies began in Western cultures in the mid-1970s (Mills & Mullany 2011). Gender and language studies in the late 1970s and early 1980s ranged from focusing on forms that were viewed to be sexist (Spender 1980) and language practices of both men and women which showed how men dominated women in conversations and how speech styles of both men and women serve different social and interactional goals (Tannen 1990). This began with the publication of Lakoff’s book, *Language and Woman's Place* (1975). Since then there have been many approaches to studying language and gender. The deficit approach that began with Lakoff viewed women’s language as being characterised by linguistic forms such as hedges, adjectives and words with exaggerated intonation contours that were weak and in-assertive, hence deficient.

In the late 1970s, attention shifted to the ways in which talk contributed to the construction of power asymmetries between men and women. This came to be known as the ‘(male) dominance approach’ (Coates 2016). This approach viewed women as an oppressed group (Talbot 2010; Coates 2016) and interpreted differences between male and female language in terms of men’s dominance and women’s subordination. This approach importantly emphasised that inequalities between men and women are reflected in and perpetuated through language. In this thesis, the term (male) dominance is associated with the dominance approach and viewed as discourse, a way of linguistically constructing men and some women (by both men and women) as socially more powerful, more intelligent, superior and therefore more important. The dominance approach was questioned by feminists because it positioned men above women. In most analyses that took this position, men were viewed as the norm and women as the other. Though they attempt to challenge the male dominance, men are still elevated in the process while women are ignored. To address this criticism, I focus on how men and women are constructed, but also on how women who are perceived to belong to different groups are positioned in the Kuria context.

Following the '(male) dominance approach' was the '(cultural) difference approach' (Cameron 2005; Coates 2016) which located gender differences in language in divergent paths of socialisation rather than in hierarchical power structures. Following this line, linguists (see Tannen 1990; Holmes 2006; Talbot 2010) argued that differences in linguistic behaviours resulted from the different sexes growing up in different subcultures. The major aim of the '(cultural) difference approach' was to investigate gender differences in language use in a way that does not devalue women but looks at both men and women's language in a more positive way. Difference approaches suggest that men and women constitute two cultures and are therefore subjected to different cultural socialisation processes resulting in the emergence of gender-based language differences. The difference approach was criticised because it failed to address the question of why gender-based differences in language arise at all (Talbot 2010).

Cameron (1996:43) argues that it is 'not mere coincidence that the interactional style associated with women is cooperative while that associated with men more aggressive and competitive'. There must be an underlying reason that explains such marked behavioural differences. Such an explanation lies in the power structures that construct gender relations. Although the approach had strength in showing linguistic strategies that characterise women and their language and to celebrate women's way of speaking, it was challenged by researchers who argued that it ignored the issue of power which is pertinent when analysing mixed talk. It has also been criticised for over-emphasising differences while ignoring similarities between men and women (see Cameron 2005). Both '(male) dominance' and '(cultural) differences' approaches are described as 'gender differences' approaches, since gender differences is what they sought and explored. These approaches have since been accused of perpetuating linguistic stereotypes of men and women and advancing gender asymmetries (Morrish & Sauntson 2007). They have also been challenged for viewing men and women as belonging to groups that were 'well defined and internally homogenous' (Cameron 2005: 486) and concentrated on mainstream white straight, middle class and monolingual groups. This study views gender groups as non-homogenous, as groups with an amalgam of sub-groups within them and examines a non-mainstream group. For instance, 'woman' as a category in Kuria is perceived to constitute both circumcised and uncircumcised women.

Much current research in the field of gender and language takes a social

constructionist<sup>9</sup> approach viewing gender identity as a social construct rather than a pre-given social category. A key principle of this approach is that speakers need to be viewed as doing gender rather than being a particular gender (Sunderland & Litosseliti 2008). Crawford (1995) argues that gender should be conceptualised as a verb and not a noun, and most linguists now agree with the argument that gender is not a static add-on characteristic of speakers but something accomplished in talk every time one speaks. Focus is now on how gender identities are performed in everyday talk and how gender is represented in texts. I take a social constructivist approach, which is also described as a 'postmodern feminist' approach (Cameroon 2005:484). These terms are not used interchangeably but they are related in the sense that they both question the 'naturalness of phenomena'. Post feminism takes a social constructionist approach arguing that gender (and sex in extension) is not a biological given but a social construct. This approach has five key principles: it disputes the naturalness of sex; argues that gender is something that one does or performs; advocates for diversity and a focus on different gender identities and positions; focuses on specific contexts and communities without making universal conclusions and pays attention to non-mainstream identities. (see Cameroon 2005). From these principles, I examine constructions of gender, gender identities and positions in FGM songs because what is believed to be 'womanly' or 'manly' behaviour is no longer related to biological sex differences but to social constructions that occur in discourse. My research does not investigate sex differences per se but how constructions of masculinities and femininities are attained through gendered discourses in texts, in this case, FGM songs. The constructivist approach allows for a diversified approach; from this I look at both the differences between groups of women (intra-group differences) and similarities between men and women (inter-group similarities) in the community. Although I do not study language and gender in fixed binary terms, I do not ignore the categories man versus woman and the differences between them. The approach also allows me to focus on a specific context

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<sup>9</sup> Social constructionism views language use/discourse as constructing and shaping gender and not just a reflection of gender (Sunderland 2015). This is a shift from the earlier focus on how language use systematically disadvantaged women (dominance approach), and from a celebration of all-women talk (difference approach). Social constructionism de-emphasises gendered speakers/writers as agents and focuses on what is communicated *by, to* and *about* men/women, boys/girls (Sunderland & Litosseliti 2008).



(Kuria community of practice) without assuming that similar patterns will be found elsewhere. I also examine a non-mainstream gender category (uncircumcised women) and how it is conceptualised by diverse groups of people in Kuria FGM ceremonies.

While earlier research (see Lakoff 1975) revolved mainly around how language is used by women and men differently, more recent approaches are concerned with how women and men create identity in and through discourse (Wodak 1997; Sunderland & Litosseliti 2002) and how gender identities are constructed in texts. Research questions have changed in recent years from how men and women speak to the kinds of linguistic resources men and women employ to present themselves and others as certain kinds of people, and the kinds of linguistic practices that support particular gender ideologies and norms (Cameron 1998; Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002; Sunderland 2004).

### **2.2.2 The discursive turn**

Recent studies on language and gender (see Ellece 2011; Kosetzi 2012; Atanga 2013) have shifted focus from differences between men's and women's use of language, that is, from *who* and *how*, to *what* is talked about (which includes gender) and *how*, rather than by *whom* thus de-emphasising gendered speakers and writers as agents and focusing on what is said/written to and especially about women, men, boys and girls (Sunderland & Litosseliti 2008). Weatherall (2002) explains that research has moved from language to discourse by considering how language in use reflects and perpetuates gender stereotypes. While earlier gender and language work documented how individual words could be considered sexist, 'later work examined how texts were constructed in sexist ways' (Weatherall 2002:76). In the discursive turn, focus is on the investigation of discourse as a power and knowledge system. Men and women are not viewed as homogeneous categories; differences among women and men, rather than between men and women, are scrutinised. The argument is that universalism marginalises what is dissimilar, thus bringing into play normalisation which declares dissimilarity abnormal, and negatively judges non-conformity (Ellece 2013). The aim is to expose gender binary as a discursive construction that exists to maintain the status quo through a systematic analysis of language as the key resource for upholding the fiction of gender.

The current research argues that there are differences among women as well as between men and women. It focuses predominantly on the social construction of gender through discourse that varies from written texts to everyday spoken talk and the dialectical<sup>10</sup> effects of gender ideologies and power on discourse.

Research (see for example Kosetzi 2012) that focuses on constructions of gender and which relate to this study include those that have questioned representations of men as logical, intelligent, responsible and brave while women are portrayed as inferior, stupid, unreliable, irresponsible, emotional, less rational and vulnerable. I use representation and construction in this thesis. Sunderland (2004) provides an explanation of the two concepts, which forms the basis for their use in gender and discourse studies. Representation is ‘of someone(s) and their attributes/behaviour, by someone(s), sometimes somewhere somehow; it is a result of a set of choices (e.g., of words) from a wider pool’ (Sunderland 2015:11). She adds that it involves creativity, agency and intention and it is not a mirror of reality. This means, how someone is represented may not be what they are in real sense. For instance, women may be represented in songs as weak by being portrayed performing chores considered weak, in this context, considering the amount of domestic work they do, the element of weakness may not be realistic. Representation is done from the lenses of the person representing and is ideologically influenced. The availability or desirability of the choices are filtered through ideology, socially shaped beliefs and awareness both of what is commercially advantageous and the consequences of transgression. Most gender representations are stereotypical, for instance representing women as privileging their appearance and men as domestically incompetent (Sunderland 2015). Gender representations ‘can occur in children’s books, magazines, newspapers, *songs* and other linguistic systems’ (Sunderland 2004:21 my emphasis).

Construction, on the other hand, entails direct or indirect talk about females or males as individuals or social groups; it is achieved ‘in the words’ (Sunderland 2004:24). Gender is discursively constructed in terms of identity, for the speakers, their addressees and any over-hearers present in a given language event. Research (see for

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<sup>10</sup> Both gender and power have a dialectical relationship with discourse, this means, the two influence discourse and are influenced by it (see details in Fairclough 2001, 2015; Sunderland & Litosseliti 2008).

example Atanga 2010) has found that men are often constructed as bread winners, with their place being in the public realm, as opposed to women who are portrayed as silenced, obedient to their husbands, and largely confined to private spheres. In Ellece's (2007) study, it is only through marriage and motherhood that women acquire full status in society and through these they become chaste, modest and respected. Their identity as successful women is strongly tied to giving birth and bringing up children (du Boulay 1986), therefore making both marriage and giving birth a necessity for women. The two terms, representation and construction, cannot be exhaustively discussed without mentioning Butler's (1990) gender performativity concept. Butler argues that gender is a performance and people normally perform their gender thus constructing their identities. Among the Kuria for instance, women perform duties (such as cooking, washing pots) which are perceived to be feminine, in this way they are performing their gender and with time these chores tend to be associated with femininity and any male performing them is labelled as weak. Individuals also perform their gender in speech, for instance, by singing the FGM songs which contain messages of gender roles and responsibilities, women are performing their gender. However, this study will not focus on gender performativity but on representation and construction, that is, how gender is represented and constructed in Kuria FGM songs. I view representation as showing the attributes without necessarily stating what one is or what they are perceived to be and construction as when direct description is given or a speaker presents what is perceived to be the norm, the expected, the anticipated. Cases of both representation and construction are evident in the data. Analysts (see Kosetzi 2007; Ellece 2013) also focus on diversity rather than gender differences only; different gender identities are analysed including similarities between men and women and differences between groups of women and men, non-mainstream groups are examined.

There are two main areas that currently preoccupy gender and language researchers: how individuals perform their gender identities in speech, and how gender is represented in texts. Although most researches using these approaches have been conducted in the western contexts (see for example Cameron, Sunderland, Lazar and Kosetzi's works, there are studies which have been conducted in the African contexts such as that of Kimenyi (1992), Kitetu (1998), Atanga (2007), Ellece (2011), Wambura (2012) among others, and similar findings have been realised. Other researchers now analyse texts where particular groups are not well represented or not

represented at all (see for example Jones 2016). I focus on non-representation too, by examining interviewee responses to questions concerning uncircumcised women and how they are constructed in female circumcision songs and ceremonies in Kuria (see chapter 5 for details). Overall, although it is a linguistic study and a critical discourse analysis, this study is anchored on feminist goals of examining how gender is constructing and suggesting ways of emancipating women.

### **2.2.3 Gendered discourses**

Gendered discourses are ‘discourses that say something about women and men, girls and boys and about their gendered actions, behaviours, positions, choices, relations and identities. More specifically, gendered discourses are discourses that represent and (re)constitute, maintain and contest gendered social practice’ (Litosseliti 2006:58). For instance, the gender difference discourse that represents men as aggressive and active and women as inactive in certain aspects is said to be gendered. A discourse is gendered if it suggests or states that men or women do things or behave in certain ways because they are men/women or because they are expected to behave so since they are men/women. Actual behaviour may or may not correspond to those representations and expectations (Wetherell et al 2002).

Gendered discourses are articulated by both men and women in different ways and different situations. They position men and women in certain ways and people take up (or challenge) such positions that constitute gender more widely. Discourses can therefore be gendered as well as gendering (Sunderland 2004). Common gendered discourses include: discourses of parenthood, femininity, heterosexuality, feminism, female emotionality and crises of masculinity.

Sunderland (2004) argues that discourses can be identified as either being descriptive or interpretative. Descriptive discourses take a descriptive name, for instance ‘legal discourse’ or ‘classroom discourse’. Interpretive discourses on the other hand are the ones whose interpretation depends on the analyst’s standpoint, for instance ‘sexist discourse’ or ‘racist discourse’. These may seem different from one person to another because what may be viewed as racist discourse by one person may not be viewed so by another. As such, gendered discourses are viewed as so only by an analyst who aligns themselves with a feminist perspective and they belong to the interpretive discourses group. I view discourses in the songs as gendered since they are

dichotomous, as such, I align myself with feminist positions and interpret them as discriminative discourses since they represent gender groups unequally.

There are as many interpretive discourses as there are analysts, for instance, gendered discourses (one example of interpretive discourses) can be found in classrooms, academic writing, songs, medical consultations, marriage practices, debates and so on. In order for an analyst to argue that a discourse is gendered, they must provide evidence from the language used by identifying the linguistic items used or linguistic cues/traces that are in a text. Linguistic realisations of discourses are called traces of discourse and are listed by Fairclough (2015) as lexical items, modality, agency, process types and how social agents are represented. I will identify and analyse some of these linguistic traces of gendered discourses in my data (see section 2.6.1 for a more detailed explanation of linguistic traces). Discourses exist in relation to other discourses (Litosseliti 2006), they co-exist in contradicting and conflicting relationships (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002) and some discourses are dominant while others are marginal in different texts and contexts (I will identify some of these relationships in the data).

Sunderland (2004) provides a list of some gendered discourses which have been identified and named. Coates (1997) identifies other gendered discourses while studying conversations between female friends. Her list includes competing discourses, conservative, patriarchal, feminist and oppressive discourses. She uses terms such as dominant, alternative and subversive to name her discourses and talks about some discourses being resistant to dominant discourses. I find a similar scenario in my analysis and name the discourses I identify that seem to challenge dominant discourses as ‘contradicting discourses’ (a term I adopt from Sunderland (2004)).

#### **2.2.4 Gender and language studies in Africa**

The African context, according to Sunderland (2009) and Atanga et al (2012), is one characterised by cultures of orality, multilingualism, multi-ethnicity, respect for the elderly, strong family networks and gender differentiation. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Kitetu & Kioko (2013) and Ellece (2011) have examined gender and language issues in marriage ceremonies. Ellece (2007, 2011, 2012) examines marriage discourses in Botswana. She argues that language is used to legitimate gender inequalities and

asymmetrical power relations between couples. Her research informs the current study in the sense that one of her key findings, compulsory motherhood discourse, is prevalent in the current study, suggesting that gender issues are shared in different African contexts. Out of these studies a clear image of heterosexuality is evident while other forms of marriage are not mentioned. This leads to a discussion of the element normative marriage, a term I have borrowed from Rich's (1980) concept of 'compulsory heterosexuality'. Rich argues that heterosexuality is a dominant discourse in society and as a compulsory, institutionalised system that supports gender inequality, it makes women dependent on men (1980). Heterosexuality plays a role in maintaining the gender hierarchy that subordinates women to men (Cameron & Kulick 2003) yet the role of heterosexuality in gender relations remains underexplored. Sunderland (2004) identifies and names compulsory heterosexuality as a gendered discourse. Related to heterosexuality is heteronormativity<sup>11</sup> (see Chambers 2003; Baker 2008) which is defined as encompassing cultural, legal and institutional practices that maintain normative assumptions that there are only two genders and that it is only sexual attraction between the opposite genders that is normal, natural and acceptable (Kitzinger 2005). Heteronormativity recognises those social practices which assume that everyone is automatically heterosexual and anyone who is not is punished, ignored or silenced.

African cultures are still largely opposed to all other forms of marriage except that between a man and a woman, with church leaders spearheading condemnation of any slight effort to recognise gay and lesbian relations. Heterosexuality is celebrated in all forms of communication and hailed through the media. This has hindered non-heterosexual couples' coming out for fear of discrimination or in the worst-case scenario, mob justice. In April 2015 when gay and lesbian groups presented a request to the Kenyan attorney general to register a gay people's association, both the church and political leaders opposed it vehemently, including the then deputy president William Ruto who was a staunch Christian (Karanja 2015). Rich (1980) points out that in heterosexual contexts, social, financial, sexual and psychological factors as well as the expected formation of a family constitutes women's dependence on men

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<sup>11</sup> Refers to 'organisation of all patterns of thought, awareness and belief around the presumption of universal heterosexual desire, behaviours and identity' (Baker 2008: 109). In heteronormativity, human relations fall into two groups, male and female.

*with whom they are, for instance, in a marriage relationship* (my emphasis). Caldas-Coulthard (1996) has pointed out the common belief that to be happy, a woman should be in a long-term heterosexual relationship (see also Kosetzi 2007).

In section 8. I examine how language is used in FGM songs to legitimate heterosexual marriages as the only natural and expectable forms of marriage in Kuria society where marriage is considered the norm and not getting married perceived to be a deviant behaviour. Heterosexual expectations such as marriage between people of the opposite gender are embedded in social institutions, guaranteeing that some people (men) will have more class, status, power and privilege than others (women). I will draw on the argument that behind the persistence of gender inequality lays the cultural schemas about the naturalness of a binary gender system in which there are two genders that derive from biology (West & Zimmerman 1987). The case in Kuria is such that the gender order is hierarchical with a higher value being put on masculinity than femininity. Heterosexuality like masculinity and femininity is taken for granted as a natural occurrence. Being a traditional patriarchal society, Kuria men and women are expected to be heterosexual. Any deviation from this is condemned and other sexualities are highly abhorred. Although current research has shown that those who are not heterosexual are less marginalised, this is mostly the case in Western cultures not in African states where such couples are declared outcasts and even killed<sup>12</sup>.

Kitetu (1998) and Letsholo (2013) have looked at gender and language in school environments. Others have examined language and gender issues in educational literature, the language of legislation and administration, the language of creative writing, the mass media and spoken communication (see Atanga 2012). Others still, have turned to the local African languages used in different contexts to examine the link between language and gender (Atanga 2007; Ellece 2012). This study belongs in the latter group. African based studies on language and gender are few, and only a small number of these make use of critical discourse analysis. However, the topic of language and gender has received attention in the past two decades with researchers, for instance, in South Africa, writing journal articles and papers on language and

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<sup>12</sup> In Kenya, homosexuality is illegal and one can be jailed, fined or killed for exhibiting behaviours ideologically perceived to be associated with homosexuals.

gender issues (see Thetela 2002).

African gender and language researchers whose work relates to the current study include Kimenyi (1992), who focuses on language and the institution of marriage in Rwanda. Kimenyi's findings show that in Kinyarwanda the verb 'marry' requires a male subject and a female object. Implications of this are that a man can marry a woman but not vice versa (see also Ellece 2007). This is a discursive strategy used to justify a man's expected position as higher than a woman's in their relationship. Thetela (2002) studies *hlonipha*, a language of respect which is a characteristic of a dialect in Sotho and in which women are forbidden from using certain lexical items associated with sex and sexual organs. This restriction is to their disadvantage when reporting sexual assault cases because they cannot explicitly mention certain words; thus, their evidence ends up being described by police as vague. Thetela argues that this state of affairs constructs and maintains dominant patriarchal hegemony in the socio-legal system (see explanation of hegemony in section 2.2).

Research in gender and African languages also show that there are gendered metaphors used to construct men and women in traditional conservative patriarchal ways. Examples of these are prevalent in African folk tale and dramas which have been of interest to gender and language investigations (see Kabaji 2005). Other topics of interest include gender representation in the language of modern and traditional songs, myths and folklore as orature sites and in novels/plays by African writers (Sunderland 2009).

A larger volume of literature on gender and language in Africa focuses on proverbs. Yusuf (1998), for instance, argues that African proverbs are characterised by entrenched gender biases, prejudices and stereotypical images of men and women. In some instances, representations show ambivalent attitudes about women as illustrated in the Kikuyu proverb '*a woman is like a blanket, when you cover yourself with it you feel hot and when you throw it away you feel cold*' which shows that either way women are not good. In most cases however, there is a greater tendency of attributing negative images and undesirable character traits to females than males. Yusuf (1998) argues that many proverbs across different African cultures dehumanise women and trivialise womanhood. Wambura (2012) examines proverbs in Kuria language and observes that they are more negative and morally restrictive when referring to women



but positive where reference is being made to men. This enhances the status quo and legitimates the dominant position of men in the society while women are subordinated. Songs however, particularly female circumcision songs, though mostly depicting the same image about men and women, have not been explored.

In Tanzania, gender stereotypes and gendered identities and relations are perpetuated through wise sayings and metaphors common in everyday life. Good examples are sayings identified by Sekwiha-Gwajima (2011) '*unalialia kama mwanamke*' (you are always crying like a woman) or *akili ya mwanamke sawasawa na ya mtoto*' (the intelligence of a woman is like that of a child) which are common among Swahili speakers. Such sayings reinforce the societal belief that a woman is always weak. Omari (2004) explores how spoken language, as well as oral literature, has been used to construct gender roles. To exemplify this, a case is given of a mother who when asked about the sex of her new-born baby would reply 'a soldier' if it is a son or '*mrembo*' (a beautiful one) if it is a baby girl. Such statements are common among the Kuria people with a girl child being referred to as someone who will bring cattle home or someone's wife and a boy as someone who will take care of the homestead. Children grow up hearing such utterances until they tend to associate them with truth. This aspect is similar to what Eckert (1994) found while studying pre-adolescent school children in the USA. In what she refers to as the 'heterosexual market', Eckert argues that at this stage, children displayed tendencies towards what was socially perceived to be signs of maturity since immaturity and a display of babyish behaviours meant they lost popularity in their peer groups. What they perceived to be aspects of maturity constituted those elements they have been exposed to through socialisation, such as being involved in quasi-heterosexual relationships as a way of negotiating their status among peers of the same gender. The children did this not because they desired the other gender but to gain approval from the peers of their own gender. This is similar to the Kuria case where most girls undergo FGM for acceptance among their peers and to be viewed as proper members of the community. Most research works, in the African context, that have focused on the construction of gender in oral literature analysed already translated materials. The current study will fill the gap that currently exists, particularly the dearth of literature on studies that make use of empirical data and which employ critical discourse analytical methods.

Early African feminism sought to maintain rather than challenge traditional gender roles. It was ‘distinctly heterosexual, pro-natal and concerned with many bread, butter, culture and power issues’ (Mikell 1997:4) while defending the importance of motherhood (see also Atanga 2013). However, contemporary African feminism (or Feminism in Africa as suggested by Atanga) seeks to challenge the status quo and subvert patriarchal practices. It describes ways in which contemporary patriarchies in Africa constrain women and prevent them from realising their potential beyond their traditional roles as hardworking, income-generating wives and mothers (Mama 2001). Linguistic feminists in African contexts now seek to ensure ‘women attain respect, dignity, equality and lives free from violence’ (Atanga 2013:308) including violence as a result of harmful practices such as FGM which is illegal in Kenya but which persists in Kuria despite the legislation.

### **2.2.5 Gender and language studies in Kenya**

Most gender and language studies conducted in Kenya have focused on gender bias in education, particularly how the language used in the education system reinforces gender differences and how this affects performance of boys and girls. Eshiwani (1985), for instance, in his seminal paper highlighting the predicament of girls, argues that the root of girls’ problems in education lies in sociocultural factors and the representation of these in the education materials. He suggests a change in sociocultural practices to realise girls’ success in education. Obura (1991) investigates how girls and women are represented in Kenyan text-books and concludes that women are invisible. He suggests a need for gender equality awareness in schools. Kitetu (1998) examines physics classroom discourse practices in a Kenyan school and observes that language is used to construct gendered identities and roles. She concludes that learning and knowledge construction events are gendered. These past studies inform the current research by showing that there are gender issues that can be solved through academic linguistic studies. They, however, explore educational contexts while the current study examines a sociocultural context with an aim of uncovering and challenging sociocultural-embedded ideologies of gender, power and female genital mutilation.

Ntarangwi (2001) examines gender identities in music and argues that although people make an effort to position themselves within the expected gender roles, the

ideal gender identities are challenged by the practised ones as society changes. For instance, the ideal primary role of women as child carers and home makers is now contested as women have more opportunity to make an economic contribution to the family and are therefore not the primary carers in some contexts. This, however, is only witnessed in urban settings (such as Mombasa where his study was based), and are yet to be experienced in rural areas such as Kuria. Ntarangwi's work is related to the current study since he focuses on music and depicts gender as a sociocultural phenomenon constructed and performed in different ways, suggesting that gender inequalities are commonly constructed in music in general.

Abudi et al (2011) examine honorific expressions and idioms in Luo language and how they express gender inequality among Dholuo speakers. Their findings reveal that discourse/language used in everyday life functions ideologically to maintain and support the interests of the dominant group while suppressing those of the subordinate groups. Their work relates to this study since both depict how dominant discourses are made to appear natural and commonsensical while contradicting ones are obscured. Satia (2014) examines language and the construction of identity in legal contexts. From his findings, women's main concerns revolve around the well-being of their families and performing their chores in conformity with societal expectations. This portrays them as both caring and responsible, hence enacting the 'good women' discourse. His work informs the current study in depicting what defines femininity in the Kenyan context and what a woman has to do to be considered a good (proper) woman.

Other gender and language studies in Kenya that are closely related to the current study have focused on literature and oral literature. As an example, Kabaji (2005) examines constructions of gender in Maragoli<sup>13</sup> folktales. His aim was to find out how women subvert and contest patriarchy. He argues that the narrators achieve this by presenting female characters who challenge patriarchal structures by contesting their social spheres of operation. He does not, however, focus on the discursively constructed gendered differences (and similarities) between men and women, a gap that this study addresses. Ndungo (2006) examines the image of women in Gikuyu

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<sup>13</sup> This is a name of an ethnic community in Kenya. Members live in the Western region of the country.

proverbs and songs in general. She finds out that women are constructed as evil, adulterous and unfaithful but also have positive attributes such as mothers and wives. However, some of the women in her study challenge patriarchal chains by resisting forced marriages. In the current study women have not in any instance challenged patriarchal ideologies that position them as subordinate to men. It is actually women who sing these gender biased songs, who prepare the girls for FGM and escort them to the circumcision ground, they then take care of them as they heal. Because it is women themselves who take an active part in perpetuating practices that legitimise gender inequalities and FGM, this indicates patriarchal hegemonic success where men need not coerce women because women have internalised patriarchal beliefs as common-sense and legitimate; they have accepted their status and take part in perpetuating practices that work to their disadvantage.

Closely related to Ndungo, is Kabira's (1994) study that deals with gender and the politics of control, and focuses on images of women in Gikuyu oral narratives. She states that in these narratives, wives are generally portrayed negatively, for instance, as unreliable, disobedient, irresponsible, disloyal, disagreeable, adulterous, cunning, senseless, gullible, forgetful, evil, full of trickery and lazy. As co-wives they are ogres, cruel and malicious. She argues that such images of wives strengthen the argument that women need to be protected from themselves, from other women and from men. They need to be disciplined as a reminder that they should stay in their place. To Kabira, therefore, folktales are used to perpetuate a negative image of women and are a means of social control.

The Kenya Oral Literature Association (KOLA) argues that Kenyan orature is characterised by social conformity and that its basic moral tone is shaped by the patriarchal mind-set of the Kenyan society (see Arndt 2000). This is mirrored in the images of women found in oral literature where women are presented either by their social relationship to men as daughters or wives or by their biological functions as mothers or non-mothers. Within these categories, women are contrasted as the good, if they act according to the expected norms, or the wicked if they deviate either willingly or not. As a result of oral practices conforming to social norms, the characterisation of a woman as good or wicked depends on whether she obeys or disobeys the patriarchal norms of her society. Two contrasting positions of women are presented. The first one constitutes those who speak up and act in their own

interests and these are viewed to have wicked intentions and warned that their behaviour always ends in disaster. They die or are divorced by their husbands. The other group constitutes those who do not articulate individual interests and therefore do not try to live them out. Either they are passive or they act in the interest of their husbands, children or social norms. They are mute or speak only when they are spoken to. In Kenyan oral literature, such patterns which symbolise women's readiness to subordinate themselves and their lack of independence are affirmed and rewarded in discourse. Women in subordinate positions are portrayed as finding happiness and fulfilment in the set roles as mothers or wives (see Arndt 2000; Kabaji 2005). Kenyan orature therefore, does not only mirror but also reproduces existing gender relations. This study examines such gender relations as enacted in the language of songs (a genre of orature) and is therefore an addition to existing literature.

To challenge unequal gender positions, Kenyan feminists initiated a gender sensitisation project called the *Literary Road to Empowerment* with the aim of sensitizing creative writers and readers on gender prejudices and encouraging them to create new stories (Muthoni 1994). These stories had an African feminist significance. They explored and criticised the prevailing gendered relations and conceptions of manhood and womanhood (Arndt 2000). However, they have barely succeeded, the underlying narrative of 'man as superior and woman as inferior' still pervades different social-cultural aspects even in the modern African context hence calling for more research on alternative ways. It is worth noting that most of those scholarly works have used content analysis. Only Abudi (2011) and Satia (2014) have used Fairclough's critical discourse analytical methods but have not considered gendered discourses.

Folklorists have been criticised for being superficial and not subjecting their work to rigorous scrutiny. Thosago (1999) argues that folklorists focusing on Africa have been averse to modern theories and unable to subject to rigorous criticism the large corpus of oral forms through methods and principles of textual analysis. Their works are deficient in meaningful literary interpretation within specific theoretical paradigms (Kabaji 2005). This study is an attempt to correct this state of affairs. It is based on linguistic ethnographic approaches and makes use of discourse analytical frameworks. Primary data was collected through linguistic ethnographic methods and

analysed using critical discourse analysis. It will, therefore, make a theoretical and methodological contribution to research in gender and language in Kenya and Africa in general. Note here that, contrary to the dearth of (linguistic) research on gender issues in Kenya, there has been a considerable amount of literature in Kenya in the area of FGM/female circumcision (Toubia 1993, 1994; Mokaya 2012 Kenyatta 2015). In section 3.2.10, I discuss studies that have been conducted on FGM in Kenya.

### **2.2.6 Gender identity and power in songs**

Songs do not only play the role of entertainment and socialisation but also function as discourse strategies (Reisigl & Wodak 2001) in gender construction. Songs are learned and stay in people's minds for a long time since they are repeatedly performed until they are memorised. They become second to nature and common sense. Song, as a forceful communication and sociological tool, functions to persuade (Cooper 1985) and influence. The uniqueness of song lyrics and tonal music and the relationship between the two suggests that song and music have a more powerful impact on the audience than other forms of verbal communication (Anderson et al 2003). Nhlekisana (2013) argues that songs are also used to report and comment on current affairs, propaganda and to reflect and mould public opinion. Songs articulate issues related to human life experience such as love, marriage, death and work while expressing different societal beliefs, values, norms and expectations. Born & Hesmondhalgh (2000) view songs as a type of oral poetry which provides a means of conveying emotions, dreams, wishes, feelings, beliefs and world views. They are also ideological in nature since they express a view of reality that is, in most cases, biased portraying subjects and issues in skewed ways. They offer a unique opportunity to study how various facets of identity are constructed within and across cultures.

The role of songs in the construction of identity is well acknowledged and investigated by Griffith (2003) and Shuker (2013). The connection between identity formation, socialisation and circumcision songs can be investigated by examining different groups of people involved: singers (in most cases older circumcised women) and listeners (in most cases young girls for whom the messages are meant). Through repetition of the songs from season to season an image is created in the young listeners' minds concerning who they are and what they are expected to be or do as

female members of the community. The effects of song lyrics on people's identity, social behaviour and manners have been recognised by scholars (Griffith 2003; Zalipour 2011; Shuker, 2013). Some studies confirm this matter by investigating the negative effects of popular song lyrics on identity construction, such as in Chari's study (2008). Chari found that listening to aggressive song lyrics increases aggressive thoughts and hostile feelings. Words in the songs are particularly valuable when they reveal rich patterns of attitude, values and beliefs (Griffith 2003; Shuker 2013).

Studies of gender in popular songs are common worldwide (see Cooper 1985; Zalipour 2011) with women and men being represented as having certain character traits. However, ceremonial/cultural songs are underexplored in academic research. Although this study does not focus on popular songs, I will highlight few studies that have used different methods to examine gender representations in this genre. Cooper (1985) conducts an analysis of feminine images in popular music in the US. Cooper's study is a quantitative analysis from 1946 to 1976. The sample constitutes songs that appeared in 12 monthly issues of *Song Hits Magazine*. In the songs women are depicted as evil beings who possess a particular physical characteristic and whose need for a man makes them want to possess him. Women are also depicted as mothers, sex objects and delicate objects. Other depictions include women as being equal to children, attractive and supernatural. The findings indicate that images of women did not change during the 30-year period. Cooper concludes that popular songs play a role in communicating stereotyped images of women and this has implications in the attitudes of males and females toward women. Zalipour (2011) studies Asian popular songs to find out how female identities are portrayed. Through content analysis it is revealed that women are portrayed as dubious, treacherous, desirable, seductive and sex objects. However, Zalipour notes that in some limited instances women are constructed as independent, showing that the Asian society is in a transformation process.

In Africa, songs are common in initiation ceremonies and are used as a means of socialising and educating community members on certain aspects. Most academic studies have focused on popular songs in the African context. Nhlekisana (2013), for instance, examines selected popular songs in Botswana to find out how gender is represented linguistically. Through a critical discourse analysis of lexical items and metaphors the findings reveal that women are constructed as promiscuous, liars and

gossips, mothers, wives and active in domestic spheres. On the other hand, men are portrayed as owners of their wives (his watermelon farm - his woman). The conclusion is that the songs frame women within traditional discourses as homemakers and submissive partners of men and their sexuality is firmly under masculine control. This representation echoes culturally familiar gender stereotypes and expectations (in Botswana) while reinforcing ideological structures of patriarchy.

Ellece (2013) explores constructions of masculinities in Tswana songs through a critical discourse analysis. Her findings reveal that masculinities are multiply positioned in the songs. Some men are cast negatively; being involved in anti-social and criminal activities while others are represented as non-violent and caring (these character traits are however portrayed to be unappealing). Ellece concludes that in the songs male dominance is challenged hence reflecting a society that is undergoing social changes. One thing that these studies reveal is that song, like any other genre of language use, constitutes language that has powerful and constitutive effects and therefore a possible site for gender construction and fertile ground for discourse analysis.

## **2.3 Theoretical framework: theoretical background to gender and language research**

### **2.3.1 Foucault's theory of discourse and power**

Foucault's philosophy on the relationship between language and power provided a theoretical base for the poststructuralist approach to examining relationships between language, gender and social life. Poststructuralism is concerned with 'critiquing ways in which competing forms of knowledge and the power interests that they serve aspire to fix meaning once and for all' (Baxter 2003:23). It is heavily influenced by Foucault and Derrida who argue that social meaning is continuously negotiated and contested through language and discourse and keeps on shifting all the time. Poststructuralists view gender as not fixed but something that can be interpreted, talked and written about as well as enacted (Sunderland & Litosseliti 2008).

Foucault argues that language is the central means through which power relationships are enacted and maintained. He describes discourse as language in action and claims



that discourse can be understood as a series of events or statements that set up a relationship with other statements. He adds that it always involves a struggle and, therefore, power relations. It is this struggle for power that creates what is perceived as reality. He states (1975:194):

Power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.

For Foucault, different discourses do not simply reflect different realities but play an active role in creating realities, identities and relationships by constructing and maintaining ideologies. Foucault, further, argues that although there are an infinite potential number of discourses available, certain discourses have evolved throughout history into dominant discourses whilst others have become marginalised. The knowledges, behaviours and meanings embodied in dominant discourses are those which emerge as permissible or desirable in a particular society. In this way, they develop into culturally dominant discourses about what kinds of knowledges are valid and what behaviours and meanings are permissible (see also Sauntson 2012). Dominant discourses accrue power which means they are difficult to challenge. The less they are challenged the more they become *normalised*. They take on the appearance of being naturally occurring, stable and inevitable. Beneath these discourses is a form of power which is not explicit to everyone but which plays a role in the *normalisation* process through the overt discourses.

Foucault further argues: ‘the power that punishes is hidden [...] the law must appear to be a necessity of things and power must act while concealing itself beneath the gentle face of nature’ (Foucault 1975: 105-6). From this, Foucault argues that truth is something that is always variable, context-dependent and temporarily constructed within discourses that embody power relations. Dominant discourses promote the idea that there is one absolute truth. This is relevant in this thesis because dominant discourses about gender in the Kuria society have been normalised through the naturalisation process so that it appears natural and true that men should exhibit behaviour and knowledge that is perceived as masculine and women should exhibit behaviour that is perceived as feminine. These dominant discourses put ideological

constraints upon what is socially and culturally acceptable as masculine and feminine behaviour.

The effect of this normalisation process is that if men behave in the way that is not considered masculine or if women behave in ways not considered feminine within dominant discourses about gender, they are perceived as behaving unnaturally and constructed as socially deviant in terms of their gender identity. In the case of Kuria, they are labelled, criticised and/or punished. Within the field of critical discourse analysis (see section 2.6) the concept of normalisation through dominant discursive practices has been discussed with more specific reference to the ideological role that language plays in the normalisation processes being given (see Caldas-Coulthard 1996; Fairclough 1992, 2001, 2003, 2015; Wodak 1997). Ideology imposes a prior and systematically organised set of values on nature and on other objects of a culture as though they too were nature. While describing Foucault's concept of naturalisation and its shaping of perceptions of reality, Morrish (1997:344) states that 'the real is socially constructed by those with cultural power and their discourse establishes itself as the only legitimate account' - this is known as naturalisation<sup>14</sup>.

Although marginalised discourses are suppressed and subjugated, they still offer potential sites where dominant discourses and practices can be challenged, contested and resisted. Foucauldian philosophy and poststructuralist approaches are therefore much more empowering when examining gender issues including when studying language and gender (Sauntson 2000). It is worth noting that social and gender-based inequalities can be effectively addressed and reduced if the concepts of gender and gender relations are critically re-evaluated and inequalities challenged. Sauntson (2000:94) argues that in the context of education 'the notion of gender as a binary, fixed and hierarchical system must be challenged and newer, more diverse ways of construing gender be made available to pupils if gender-based inequalities are to be eradicated with no lasting harm caused to either sex'. Although this thesis does not focus on education, I agree with Sauntson's ideas that for any social change to be effected - and gender equality realised - there is a need for newer ways of

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<sup>14</sup> Naturalisation is perceived to be the process by which discourse starts to be seen as 'legitimised by nature, rather than open to contest and debate' (Morrish 1997:344).

understanding, construing and representing gender in the society. Meanings about gender develop out of contexts of social interaction with language being the primary medium. All meanings, knowledges and behaviours and subjectivities are discursively constructed through and constituted in language. In order to change meanings about gender and challenge existing dominant discourses about gender, and ultimately realise social change, it is paramount to focus on language.

### **2.3.2 Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (SFL)**

CDA as a method builds on systemic functional linguistics (SFL), a grammar model devised by Halliday (1985, 1994, 2004). According to SFL, any use of language is motivated by a purpose and language users make choices about meaning which are expressed through choices of formal linguistic features and are influenced by the contextual situation. Halliday (2004) states that language performs three meta-functions: ideational/experiential (language represents and constructs sociocultural reality, it gives structure to experience), interpersonal (entails relationships between participants) and textual (which constitutes co-textual and contextual cohesion and coherence in texts). In texts, the experiential meta-function is realised in process types, participants and circumstances. The interpersonal function is realised through roles allocation of participants. The textual meta-function is realised in the ability of linguistic elements to relate to each other within one, or across several, linguistic events and the experiential world. The link between SFL and CDA lies in the focus on studying power and ideology and on a detailed analysis of texts in real contexts of language use. They both agree that people use language to construct reality and language is formed by social identities, relations and systems of knowledge and beliefs. In classifying the value that formal features of texts have, Fairclough (2015) identifies experiential, relational and expressive values which are equivalent to Halliday's meta-functions. Formal features with experiential values are traces and cues to the ways in which the text producers' experience of natural or social world is represented. They are to do with knowledge and beliefs of text producers. Features with relational values are traces of and cues to social relations which are enacted via the text. Formal features with expressive value are traces of and cues to the producers' evaluation of reality. They have to do with subjects and social identities. I use elements of Halliday's principles in the analysis of songs and interviews.

#### **2.4. Discourse theory and CDA principles**

Discourse theory posits that some taken for granted dominant features in our lives are subjectively constructed by humans (Ellece 2007) – this is an anti-essentialist, constructivist perspective. The way we talk and act does not only reflect our world, identities and social relations, but actively plays a role in creating and changing them (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002). Discourse theorists, therefore, argue that our knowledge of the world is not to be treated as objective truth but rather as a product of discourse (Burr 1995). Fairclough (1992) views discourse as a form of social practice as well as linguistic practice and not a purely individual activity. He argues that discourse and social structures are mutually constitutive – meaning that discourse is a product of social structures and social structures are shaped by discourse. Discourse is also a mode of social representation in which social actors are offered different subject positions (Fairclough 2001). Fairclough argues that what makes discursive practices discursive, is language because discursive practices are manifested in linguistic forms, that is, in texts (spoken as well as written language). Discourse as discursive practice, therefore, does not contrast with discourse as social practice because social practices constitute discursive practices. Through discourse we construct our social identities, subject positions and different types of self, and systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough 1992, 2001). Subjects are positioned in different ways and placed in different social identities and discursive contexts – individuals can accept these subject positions or resist them. Discourse constructs relationships between people in the sense that language use in different discursive practices describes and influences how we relate with each other in terms of gender, power, age, race, status, ethnic and other relations that we hold with other social subjects.

In discourse theory, gender is viewed from a social constructionist approach. It is conceived as a social construct rather than a given social category to which people are assigned. It is a product of gendered expectations and conventions in different contexts. Both social constructionist approach and CDA view discourse as performing different ‘gendering’ roles: it sustains, reproduces or challenges the status quo; it constitutes social relations between people and represents the world and people’s social and personal identities (Fairclough & Wodak 1997) including gender identities. I take an anti-essentialist discursive approach in this study while

acknowledging that there are explicit socially constructed gender differences in the data which I discuss in section 6.2.

CDA has shifted linguistic studies from descriptive analyses to critical perspectives on language. Van Dijk (2001:352) identifies CDA as ‘a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.’ It is therefore an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that investigates the discursive practices in discourse. Fairclough theorises CDA as not just an analysis of texts but a form of systematic transdisciplinary analysis of relations between discourse and other elements of the social process; ‘...it addresses social wrongs in their discursive aspects and possible ways of righting or mitigating them’ (1995:10). CDA looks at the relationship between language and social practices, and in particular, between language and power (Fairclough 1995; Wodak & Meyer 2001). It is concerned with how ideologies and power are achieved, reinforced and contested through language and has a socially transformative goal.

CDA aims to ‘make more visible opaque aspects of discourse as a social practice’ (Gee 2011:358). Cameron (2001) argues that CDA examines the hidden agenda of discourse and investigates ways in which certain realities are talked or written about because speakers/writers’ choices are not random or neutral but ideologically patterned. The choices ‘do much work of naturalising particular social arrangements which serve particular social interests, so that in time they may come to seem like the only possible or rational arrangement’ (Cameron 2001: 124). I will now describe CDA’s key principles.

The first principle, according to Fairclough (2003), is that CDA primarily deals with power relations, dominance, ideology, politics, ethnicity, discrimination, gender and their interplay in discourse and challenging all forms of social inequalities. Van Dijk (2001:353) states that CDA ‘focuses on the way discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance in society’. It requires a diverse and multidisciplinary point of view to understand the ideological agenda in discourse which mostly lie behind what is written or told on the text level despite analysing the text itself from a linguistic perspective.

Secondly, Fairclough (2001) states that CDA is problem oriented – a researcher's starting point should be a social problem such as gender inequalities and *FGM* and not on the text (my addition). The emphasis here is that discourse needs to be analysed within its social contexts (Fairclough 2001) because discourse is conditioned by social structures and can therefore be understood only within its context and in relation to other related discourses. Analysis should therefore not focus on texts only but also on its production and interpretation processes, as well as its social conditions and relationship to other texts. Multiple genres, intertextuality (the relation between a text and other texts which are external to it but which are brought into it in some way (Fairclough 2003)), interdiscursivity (intersection between discourses) and recontextualisation are placed at the centre of investigating a social problem (Fairclough 1992).

Thirdly, critical discourse analysis does not assume that there is an objective social and politically neutral stance (Wodak et al 1997; Wodak 1999, 2001a). Its practitioners do not adopt an uninterested approach to the material effects of discourse, because indifference may perpetuate social and political injustice. Instead, they explicitly declare their political commitments to social problems. They reveal their commitment to social emancipatory objectives and take the side of those who are disadvantaged. CDA declares its socio-political stance, defines it and makes it known beforehand (van Dijk 2001). By taking a political stance, the aim is to uncover the discursive practices that maintain unequal power relations, work towards a radical social change and for fairness and equality. This principle makes CDA relevant to gender and language research because it stresses the importance of awareness raising and emancipation. This does not make CDA a biased interpretation because, though having an opinion, researchers argue rationally and with evidence (Fairclough 2001). The fourth principle is that discourse functions ideologically. At the heart of CDA is the claim that ideology<sup>15</sup> is mediated, disseminated and circulated through discourse (Fairclough 1995, 2001). Discourse reflects the interests of certain groups while

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<sup>15</sup> Ideology is understood as a set of propositions which are taken as defining what life is like and how one should act within it, they define what is to be valued and taken for granted and how we should feel and act. Ideologies appear to support the interests of one group while in real sense they work in the interests of another group - a more powerful group. Ideologies establish and maintain asymmetrical power relations (Fairclough 2001, 2003).

back-grounding those of others through the choices people make in communication; it signals identities and has active consequences. CDA therefore provides a method for examining how language acts as a discursive strategy for maintaining social and societal norms, values and practices by rendering them as natural and preventing genuine critical reflection among language users. The ideologies that disadvantage certain groups are uncovered to raise people's awareness as the first step towards emancipation. The work of a critical discourse analyst, as Fairclough (2003) observes, is to consider how language, including what is left out in any utterance, for instance, indexes genres (ways of interacting), discourses (ways of representing), and styles (ways of being) and how it invokes power relationships and impacts. A critical discourse study of female circumcision songs is justified in this sense because it will shed light on how the workings of discourse perpetuate gender ideologies and shape gender identities and power relations between men and women and between different groups of women as well as how FGM is constructed through discourse.

The last principle is that theories and methodologies in CDA are eclectic (Fairclough 2001, 2003); it requires a combination of theory and empirical data plus an incorporation of fieldwork and ethnography.

#### **2.4.1 Discourse, ideology and power**

The three terms discourse, ideology and power are key concepts in the theory of discourse and in CDA. The most important of these is power, which is legitimised through ideology and mediated in discourse. Fairclough (2003) posits that the main goal of CDA is to make visible asymmetrical relations of power (see also Reisigl & Wodak 2001; Lazar 2005) which exist between people in various levels based on gender, race, ethnicity and age. The concept of power is important as it unites and separates different people into groups depending on how much power they are perceived to control. The discourses of the more powerful people also tend to be naturalised into ideologies that people take as given and over time they become part of life. I will now define the term 'ideology' and explain how it relates to power and discourse.

Ideology is used to denote beliefs or belief systems that come to be accepted as common sense but which in most cases are misguided or at least partisan. It is therefore explicitly or implicitly opposed to truth (Cameron 2006). Ideology is related

to discourse and power in the sense that ideologies function through discourse and serve as a means of establishing and maintaining asymmetrical power relationships and dominance (Thompson 1990; van Dijk 1998; Fairclough 2001, 2003; Lazar 2005). It does this subtly but sometimes overtly (van Dijk 2001; Fairclough 2001, 2003; Blommaert 2005). The relation between ideology and discourse is intricate since ideas do not drift through the social world like clouds, rather, ideas ‘circulate in the social world as utterances, as expressions, as words which are spoken or inscribed’ (Thompson 1984:4). I particularly adopt Eagleton’s (1991) views that ideology has to do with ideas used to legitimate the power of a dominant social group or class. Eagleton further states that ‘a dominant power may legitimate itself by promoting beliefs and values congenial to it; naturalising such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable, denigrating ideas that might challenge them and excluding rival forms of thought’ (1991:5). This argument is similar to Foucault’s naturalisation concept discussed earlier (see section 2.3.1) and is applicable in this thesis.

The term power is defined as ‘asymmetries between participants in discourse events’ (Fairclough 1995:16). It is indexed in discourse. Fairclough’s model of power is based on Foucault’s definition of power in terms of institutional structures and how these structures work in the reproduction of social power and maintenance of the social order (see 2.3.1 for details on Foucault’s arguments). Social order relies, in varying degrees but ultimately, on the ability of one person or group to dominate others. The more the dominated fail to realise the domination, the more the dominating group enjoys the power. Power depends on certain conditions, for instance, personal capacities such as strength, knowledge, skills, freedom from control and possession of material resources. Control of material resources becomes a source of social power when others are systematically excluded from access to these resources. Among the Kuria, for example, men have the means to social power because they possess all valuable material resources such as land and are the sole decision makers (while women are not (see section 3.1.7)). This makes them the dominant group, while all other groups are dominated in diverse ways. It is noteworthy here that power is rarely absolute; in some situations, those who are perceived to be powerless, control an amount of power. Baxter (2003:5) argues that,



‘powerlessness is no longer experienced by all women all the time; instead it may pertain to many women some of the time or to a minority of women most of the time’.

According to van Dijk (1997) there are various kinds of power that are achieved through discourse. ‘Persuasive power’ is achieved through a kind of subtle control of the mind. It is based on compliance and argument where persuasion is used to get consent. It is the type that comes from people with symbolic capital such as parents, teachers, bosses and other superiors. Mumby & Clair (1997) argue that the most effective use of power is when those who have power are able to convince those they dominate to see the world from their perspective; power succeeds when the dominant groups manage to acquire the consent of the dominated (see also van Dijk 1997). This state of affairs is called hegemony (Gramsci 1971). Hegemonic power is a kind of social power that makes people act as if it were natural, normal or simply a consensus. There is no need for commands, requests, or even suggestions (van Dijk 1997). Text and talk are used to manipulate people such that they do what the powerful prefer. In hegemonic situations, domination is gained and sustained through discourse whereby dominant ideologies gain popularity through the use of linguistic means. The more powerful members of the group manage to convince others that it is not a matter of ideology at all, but simply natural or the way things are, the more they dominate and control. In this way, an ideology is naturalised and people need no explanation with regard to it. This is the type of power that this thesis focuses on, with an aim of increasing consciousness of how language contributes to domination of women by men and uncircumcised women by those who are circumcised with the assumption that consciousness is the first step towards emancipation (see Fairclough 2001).

Thompson (1990) argues that dominated individuals are not passive bodies to which power is applied. They participate in their own domination because they misrecognise power and therefore recognise those who wield it as legitimate so that power does not have to take the form of coercion. This view of power is relevant in this study particularly because of the power hierarchy in the Kuria social structure (see section 3.1). In the wider Kuria community, gender ideologies essentially construct men as all-powerful and women as subordinate, thus reinforcing and propagating male dominance. However, in Kuria not all men are powerful and not all women are powerless all the time. The council of elders have and control ‘absolute’ power over all the other members of the community (including other men) by virtue

of being decision makers; nobody challenges the members' decisions. At the household level, the male members of the household command power over the females because of the roles assigned to males and the material value of the properties they own compared to what is owned by women. Among women, those who are circumcised have power over the uncircumcised, which they have attained by undergoing FGM (the only time uncircumcised women can have power is when they will refuse to undergo the cut and stand by their decision despite coercion and pressure from within the family and the community at large. In this way, they would be said to have attained power over other pro-FGM community members and against FGM itself; this state of affairs is yet to be achieved). These power conventions have been accepted as the way of life of the Kuria people. They have penetrated the fabric of the society and resulted in a naturalised state that seems to sustain harmony and enhance 'good' intra-social relations of the members and are perceived to be common sense and therefore, not questioned or challenged. On the contrary, they are encouraged and celebrated. Children are trained to fear men, respect circumcised women and look forward to the day they will undergo FGM.

Discourse reproduces, maintains, and challenges existing power relations. It also constantly re-enacts and circulates ideological assumptions once they are '*commonsensicalised*' and naturalised. Ideology, on the other hand, acts as a mediating factor by 'providing the framework through which discursive practices acquire meaning' (Mumby & Clair 1997:184). Discourse is therefore not just a site of power struggle, but also a stake in power struggle. An analysis of discourse thus involves interpretation, which moves beyond discursive structures and focuses on showing how discourse serves to sustain relations of domination. According to Blommaert (2005), a critical discourse analyst should not focus on reacting against power alone but on analysing the effects of power; what power does to people, groups and societies and how this comes about. My role as an analyst is to demystify discursively naturalised gender inequalities and power asymmetries in the songs, to challenge commonly held perceptions and to chart the difference between ideological knowledge (what is perceived to be the truth) against what people actually do in the Kuria context (the reality). For example, it is believed that by undergoing FGM women are made strong enough to overcome life challenges, while in real sense it is a way of making them marriageable and of benefit to their fathers and husbands. This

is how ideologies work; overtly FGM is posed as good practice for women, but when looked at critically, the real beneficiaries are, in most cases, men.

#### **2.4.2 CDA theory and practice**

CDA has been described as both theory and method (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999; Fairclough 2001). It is theory in the sense that, it brings ‘a variety of theories into dialogue, especially social theories on the one hand and linguistic theories on the other [...] and what it itself theorises in particular, is the mediation between the social and the linguistic’ (Chouliaraki & Fairclough 1999:16). On the other hand, it is a method, because it presents an analytical framework for data analysis and interpretation (Atanga 2010). I now define the terms critical and discourse(s) then discuss its three strands: the socio-cognitive approach (van Dijk), discourse historical approach (Wodak) and textually oriented approach (Fairclough). I thereafter give a detailed discussion of the CDA approaches I adopt for this study.

#### **The meaning of ‘critical’**

CDA<sup>16</sup> has been *critical* in the sense that it assumes that there are connections between ideology and language which are hidden and that discursive practices use linguistic forms repeatedly to the point that they become naturalised. In being critical, CDA unveils or denaturalises ideologies in discourse while revealing how power asymmetries are legitimised in and through discourse (Fairclough 2015). It shows connections between language, power and ideology through the process of demystification/uncovering ‘something which may have become ‘naturalised,’ i.e. seen as something which has always been, was ‘meant to be,’ or cannot be altered’ (Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002:19). CDA has also been perceived as *critical* in the following ways:

In the sense that it seeks to discern connections between language and other elements in the social life which are often opaque. These include how

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<sup>16</sup> Critical discourse analysis, commonly abbreviated as CDA is defined as a ‘type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power, abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context’ (van Dijk 2001:352).

language figures within social relations of power and domination and how it works ideologically (Fairclough 2001:230)

In being critical, CDA does not focus on overt domination only or take things for granted. Fairclough (2003:9) observes that ‘we choose to ask certain questions about social events and texts’. These questions relate to issues of unequal power relations in terms of gender, for example. Secondly, *critical* is about being self-reflexive while doing research (Wodak 1999). The researcher consciously self-doubts and questions the existence of ‘truth’. Instead of making the object of analysis appear obvious, the focus is on its problematic and complex nature. CDA analysts state that it is only through reflexivity that an examination of the connections between ideology and language, with the aim of unraveling or denaturalising ideologies expressed in discourse and revealing how power structures are constructed in and through discourse, can be achieved. Further, *critical* means having a stand-point (van Dijk 1993; 2001; Wodak 2001a) or explicitly taking a political stance (van Dijk 2001; Wodak 2007; Atanga 2010). Van Dijk argues that ‘there cannot be an aloof, let alone a neutral position of critical scholars’ (1993:253). I agree with this position because for social issues such as FGM and gender, one needs to take an explicit position. Kosetzi (2007) states that all researchers carry their own backgrounds, academic and social perspectives, therefore, no theoretical or methodological approach is neutral. Choices are always involved in selecting data, formulating research questions and analysis, thus making objectivity hard to attain. Because of this ideological/political stance, CDA has been accused of partiality, prejudice and bias (Widdowson 1995; Hammersley 1997). However, to overcome this, CDA linguists have adopted a methodological triangulation<sup>17</sup> approach. I make use of this approach in this study (see section 4.6).

### **Meaning of discourse and discourses**

Fairclough (1995) observes that the use of the term ‘discourse’ underpins language in social relations and processes – language being a material form of ideology and also being invested in ideology. Mills (1997:2) defines ‘*discourse*’ as a ‘verbal

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<sup>17</sup> Triangulation entails a multi-methodical approach, using different approaches and methods in the same research as well as a variety of data in research. It enhances validity and reduces subjectivity (see Wodak et al 1999; Reisigl & Wodak 2001).

communication; talk, conversation; a formal treatment of a subject' whereas Halliday (1985) uses *discourse* interchangeably with *text*. Most researchers use it to refer to both written and spoken interaction. Fairclough (1995:14) distinguishes discourse from language arguing that whereas language is basically 'an instrument of communication, discourse is a way of signifying a particular social action from a particular perspective'.

Currently, there are many overlapping definitions of the term discourse (see discussions by Fairclough 1992; Mills 1997; Cameron 2001; Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002; Baxter 2003; Weiss & Wodak 2007). Some of these include, 'a stretch of written or spoken language and accompanying paralinguistic interaction between people in a specific context' and 'language above the sentence' Cameron (2001:10). This definition echoes formalism in the *descriptive* sense of discourse. Considerations of written and spoken language in real life knowledge and context lead to the definition of discourse as 'language in use' i.e. language used to do something and mean something; language produced and interpreted in real world contexts (Cameron 2001). This echoes functionalism because of its focus on what language is used to do. This is the *interpretive* sense of discourse which is associated with critical linguistics and critical discourse analysis and which is applied in gender and language studies. The functionalist role of discourse can be interpreted in two ways: *as a facet of social life* (Fairclough 2003) and *as ways of seeing the world* (Sunderland 2004). Fairclough (1992) also views discourse as a form of social practice. This draws from Foucault's (1975) definition of discourse as, 'practices which systematically form the object of which they speak'. In this thesis, I will be using the term discourse in this interpretative sense.

Other interpretations of discourse include: Talbot's (1995) different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice and Gee's (2015) broad system of meaning, knowledge and practices associated with a particular institution or group of institutions.

Fairclough (1992) conceptualises discourse as a three-dimensional framework: text, discursive practice (production, distribution, consumption), and social practice. It therefore means that the analyst focuses not only on the text but also its production and interpretation within a larger social context. In this sense, discourse and social

structures are mutually constitutive, meaning that social structures are shaped by discourse and discourse is itself a product of social structures (Fairclough 1992, 2001). In terms of what it does, discourse ‘sustains and reproduces the status quo’ (van Leeuwen & Wodak 1999:93), is constitutive of ‘social relations between people’ (Wodak 2001a:66), and ‘representations of the world’ (Fairclough 2003:124) and people’s identities; it constructs subject positions and systems of knowledge and belief, constrains, enables, limits and empowers (Fairclough 1992). For instance, the feminist discourse which names, identifies and condemns sexual harassment of women, by men, can be seen as empowering to women, while demystifying the traditional discourse in which men’s harassment of women was viewed as something natural which women had to bear. Fairclough adds that discourse can bind people to an extent that they do not see connections or construct meaning outside the set of definitions given to them.

Drawing on Fairclough (2003), ‘discourses’, is perceived as a ‘count noun’ as opposed to ‘discourse’ a ‘domain of statements’. *Discourses* is perceived to be a group of statements, ‘ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the ‘mental world’ of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth and the social world’ (Fairclough 2003:124). Sunderland’s (2004:28) view of *discourses* as ‘ways of seeing the world’ extends beyond the receptive to actively ‘thinking about it’. I use Fairclough and Sunderland’s definition of ‘discourses’ as ‘ways of seeing and representing the world’ and as ‘socially constitutive’, in this thesis.

### **2.4.3 Origin and major CDA approaches**

The origin of CDA is traced to Althusser’s theory of ideology, Bakhtin’s genre theory and the philosophical tradition of Gramsci. It was developed as a reaction to mainstream linguistics such as Chomsky’s generative grammar and Labovian quantitative sociolinguistics (Wodak 2001a) and was influenced greatly by Foucault’s discourse theory. The birth of CDA, as we know it today, lies in Critical Linguistics (CL). Scholars such as Fowler (1991, 1996) started what they called Critical Linguistics (CL) in which they were concerned to develop a social approach to linguistics which recognised power relationships as a central theoretical issue and text as its main unit of analysis. These scholars had particular interest in how

language use served certain ideological interests. This was critical and it made the relationship between language and power explicit. Critical linguistics drew upon the functionalist linguistic theory (systemic functional linguistics) associated with Halliday (1985, 1994, 2004) to argue that language is as it is because of its functions in social structure and that 'a grammar of a language is a system of options amongst which speakers make selections according to social circumstances' (Fairclough 1992:26). Halliday's theory views language as performing three metafunctions (see section 2.3.2).

Wodak (2001) describes the commonality between CDA and CL arguing that they both sought to bring together social theory and textual analysis. CL explains the relationship between language/discourse and power/ideology as inextricable. Although both view text as the most important unit of analysis, CL is limited because of its focus on the text as a product and pays little attention to the processes of production of the text and the social context. This means that in CL, social meanings and ideologies of discourse were not considered in text analysis. CDA, on the other hand, pays attention to the production, distribution, consumption and interpretation of the text (Fairclough 1992). It also considers the social position of the interpreter since this has an influence on the meanings arrived at.

CDA encompasses four schools that appeared after the 1970s: British (represented by Fairclough, van Leeuwen, Fowler and Kress), Dutch (van Dijk), German (Link, Jager and Mass), and the Austrian school (Wodak). The British school benefitted hugely from Foucault's concept of discourse/power and Halliday's (1985) systemic functional grammar (SFG). Halliday's approach emphasised the way language choices are influenced by social functions. Following his ideas, numerous studies focusing on language ideology and power have been conducted. Halliday's notions of transitivity and nominalisation were of importance to this school, particularly to van Leeuwen (1996) who developed his theory of CDA from the stand-point of the positioning of social actors in discourse. In his social actors' approach, van Leeuwen investigates agency in discourses through grammatical active or passive roles that social actors are assigned. The ideas of Fairclough, Wodak and van Dijk have given major contributions to CDA.

Wodak et al (1999) identify the three most commonly used approaches in CDA: First, Wodak's discourse historical approach (Wodak 2001b) which takes the historical context and co-text of a text into account. Context in this case includes the social,

political, historical and psychological aspects, while co-text entails the semantic environment of the individual utterance which includes the extra-linguistic situations of an utterance. Wodak's approach traces the construction of sociopolitical issues such as racism through a historical evaluation. Her focus is on textual, intertextual and interdiscursive relation of discourses. To Wodak, the main concern of CDA is analysis of unequal power relationships.

Secondly, van Dijk's (1995, 2001, 2008) socio-cognitive approach focuses on the study of mental representations and the processes of language users when they produce and comprehend discourse and participate in verbal interaction. van Dijk's approach also focuses on 'knowledge, ideologies and other beliefs shared by social groups' (van Dijk 2001:64). van Dijk (1995:19) states that discourse is understood through models, that is, 'mental representations of events actions or situations people are engaged in, or which they read about'. He views ideology as a set of factual and evaluative beliefs, knowledge and opinion of a group, and attempts to explore the relationship between ideology, politics and language.

The third approach is Fairclough's textually oriented discourse analysis which makes use of linguistic categories in analysis. Fairclough (1989, 1992, 2001, 2003, 2015) argues that language is a form of social practice and needs to be investigated at both text level and beyond text level. He emphasises linguistic as well as intertextual analysis. According to Fairclough (1992), the analysis focuses on text as part of discourse analysis then maps these on to a systematic analysis of the social context. This is the approach I adopt in the current study.

I have selected this approach for five main reasons; first it highlights the relation between discursive processes and social processes and is the most developed theory and method of research in culture and society within the critical discourse analytical movement (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002). Secondly, it adopts a linguistic approach, Halliday's (1985,1994) systemic functional grammar (SFG) as the main resource for textual analysis, and therefore looks at language as a system from which speakers draw particular words and items for specific use according to the context and goals. thirdly, it views text as evidence of underlying structures, relations and processes (Fairclough 1992) in the context in which it is produced, and pays attention to its intertextuality. Additionally, it focuses on challenging underlying ideologies and making suggestions for social change. Furthermore, it focuses on the socio-semantic



representation of social actors (van Leeuwen 1996; Fairclough 2003), and goes beyond 'mere description and explanation, and pays more explicit attention to the sociocultural presuppositions and implications (effects) of discourse' (van Dijk 1993:131). Fairclough's approach is based on a three-tier model, which conceives discourse as text, discursive practice and social practice. Discourse as text deals with four aspects: vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure, my focus is on vocabulary and grammar. Discourse as discursive practice examines the production and consumption of the text. Consumption can be individual or collective (such as the Kuria case). Discourse as social practice focuses on the social context from which a text draws and into which the text feeds.

Within textually oriented critical discourse analysis, examination of vocabulary focuses on lexical items/choices, and their experiential, relational and expressive values. 'Experiential values relate to content, knowledge and beliefs; relational values relate to relations and social relationships while expressive values relate to subjects and social identities' (Fairclough 2001:93). At the discursive level, focus is on intertextuality and interdiscursivity. Discursive analysis shows how texts selectively draw on others and the orders of discourses such as genres, which are available to text producers and interpreters in particular social circumstances (Fairclough 1989, 1992). In this case I view songs and interviews as genres of spoken discourse.

Fairclough (1992) argues that a discourse analyst must start by analysing micro<sup>18</sup> structures found in the text, that is, vocabulary, metaphors and grammar and proceed to the contextual and social aspects that the text draws from. The value of this approach is that the researcher chooses linguistic elements to focus on according to the nature of the research questions, the problem they wish to investigate or the motivation for doing research (Fairclough 2003). Analysis starts with linguistic forms followed by analysis of context, since there is a relationship between the text and the external social world and focusing on form alone is not enough. Texts draw from the world and those who produce them, and the overall focus of CDA is on the interplay between the text and the context (Walsh 2001).

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<sup>18</sup> Language use, discourse, verbal interaction and communication belong to the micro level of the social order while power, dominance and inequality between social groups belong to a macro level of analysis (van Dijk 2008).

Fairclough's approach is also concerned with how ideologies are reproduced in a natural, commonsensical and taken-for-granted way in texts. This is what I focus on with regards to female circumcision in Kuria particularly to show how discourses embedded in the songs (texts) are used as a tool in the naturalisation process. The only way into the meanings of texts is through their language, because texts, after all, are linguistic objects. Circumcision songs as texts function through language and are therefore viewed as linguistic texts for which a linguistic analysis (a textually oriented critical discourse analysis) is appropriate. Fairclough's framework advocates for a social analysis and emancipation and thus has more advantages over other approaches (for instance Wodak and van Dijk's). Although CDA has not been used to analyse circumcision songs before, it has been used in the analysis of other gender related texts (see section 2.7). In the next section, I detail how CDA is practically applied as a method in linguistic analysis.

## **2.5 Critical discourse analysis as a method**

CDA is not methodologically homogeneous. It is not one approach (Wodak & Meyer 2001) but several applied in different contexts. Meyer (2001) posits that there is no one method of collecting data in CDA. Researchers combine different approaches and methodologies with a common theoretical base and related research questions. Combining different approaches minimises bias and improves validity (Wodak et al 1999). It also offers a more fruitful analysis than adopting a single approach. In CDA, most researchers make use of a multi-method approach to data collection, which is based on the principle of triangulation. In qualitative ethnographic studies, for instance, most CDA researchers combine observation with interviews and recording of occurrences and events. Analysis takes diverse approaches too. Despite the diversity, CDA mostly embodies a three-layered method of analysis: analysis of the text (at micro level), analysis of discursive practices (at meso level) and analysis of social practices (at macro level (Fairclough 2015)). This is summarised in Fairclough's illustration as shown in Figure 1.

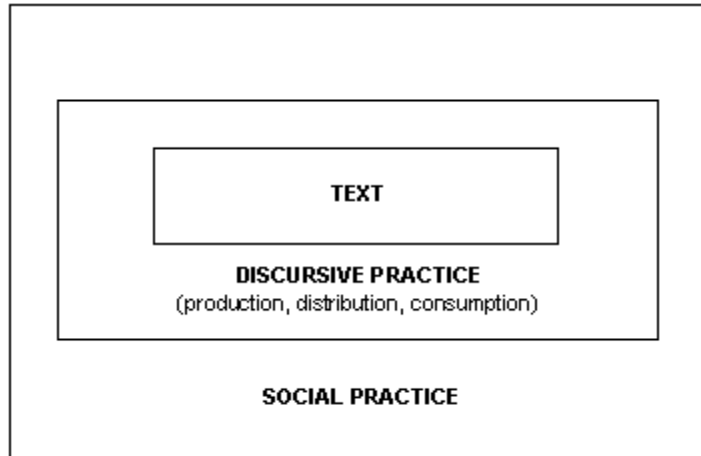


Figure 1: Three-layered conception of discourse

Source: Fairclough (2015:58)

### **2.5.1 Analysis of textual practices (micro analysis)**

Micro analysis entails exploring the linguistic and close textual representations within discourse at the text level. It is descriptive in nature (Fairclough 1992; Wodak 2001). This level of analysis is important since it depicts ideologies and/or discriminatory practices. According to Fairclough (1992) and Baker (2008), analysis at a textual level focuses on vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structures. The researcher, however, does not have to investigate all of these but can ‘make choices and select structures for closer analysis that are relevant for the study of a social issue’ (van Dijk 2001: 99). Selection requires the knowledge of the text-context relationship.

Within textual analysis, a focus on lexical items is important. Lexical items may vary from and be implemented in diverse ways. Fairclough (1992) suggests a focus on words under intext analysis, alternative wordings, re-wordings, and meanings together with their political and ideological purposes. He also suggests a focus on metaphors together with their political imports. Van Dijk (2001) investigates the ideological implications of lexical selections under the heading of ‘local meanings’. To him, meanings of words and implications are involved in respect to the contextual preferences of the researcher. According to Fairclough (2001), a lexical analysis would mostly focus on the socially constructed meanings and wordings or ideologically significant words and the ways in which linguistic positioning polarises the representation of in-groups and out-groups. The analyst identifies how persons

are named and/or referred to linguistically, traits, characteristics and features attributed to them and the perspectives from which these attributions are made. My focus will be on lexical items and metaphors in FGM songs and interviews. I select these two because lexical items have been predominantly used to polarise social subjects throughout the songs and interviews while metaphors are valuable due to their ideological underpinnings and role in legitimising and normalising unequal gender and power positions. Fairclough (2010) stresses that words are not neutral, choices can be used to normalise the power of a particular group over another and to advance certain ideologies.

Apart from lexical analysis, transitivity of the clauses is scrutinised based on the systemic functional linguistics (SFL). Transitivity is conceptualised in the grammatical aspects of a clause or sentence and the relation to its ideational meaning, that is, the way it represents reality (Fairclough 1992). It is concerned with the semantic structure of clauses and refers to who does what to whom, that is, 'the types of process which are coded in clauses and the type of participants involved' (Fairclough 1992:178). The main process types are material (action, event), mental, behavioural, verbal, and relational processes (Halliday 1985, 1994, 2004). These processes are encoded in verbs.

According to Halliday (1994) and Fairclough (2001) material processes are those of doing, creating and happening. They entail physical activity. The process involves a human or human-like entity and entails three participant roles: agent or actor, goal or medium and circumstances. The agent or *actor* is the *doer* of the action denoted by the verb while the medium or goal is the one affected by the doer's action. Circumstances are the other elements such as time and place. Actions in material processes are perceived to be intentions or superventions depending on the participants causing the action. Intention refers to actions caused by a human or human-like entity while supervention refers to actions that occur on their own. Mental processes have to do with thinking and perceiving; participant roles in this case include *senser* (one who senses) and phenomenon (what is sensed or perceived). Verbal processes involve saying. The participants in this case are three: the *sayer*, *what is said* and the *target* (who the message is directed to). Behavioural processes entail behaving activities such as smiling or laughing. The main participant is the

*behave*r. Relational processes refer to being and having an attribute or identity (Halliday 1994).

Participants are divided into two categories in relation to the processes depending on whether they are actively performing them or undergoing or being affected by them. Van Leeuwen's (2008) theory of representation of social actors applies here as an important device in the understanding of why some participants are signified and activated in the processes while others are passivised or excluded from the processes. To van Leeuwen, the role allocations, based on agency, shape and reshape the social practices of the actors through their assigned grammatical roles. Participants may be represented as active or passive to (de)-emphasise their power and ideological positioning. When activation of participants is aimed at in discourse, they are represented as *actors* in the material processes, *sensors* in the mental processes, *behave*rs in the behavioural processes, *sayers* in the verbal processes and *assigners* in the relational processes. On the other hand, when participants are passivised, they are presented as *patient*, *goal* or *affected* (van Leeuwen 2008). Passivisation also occurs when the participant is presented as the *receiver* (beneficiary) of the material process. An analyst looks at the social representations in discourse to understand which process types or participants are foregrounded and which are backgrounded. In this way, the analyst is able to uncover the suppressed dominant structures or power dynamics on subordinated groups by making visible the choices of transitivity structures in discourse.

Textual analysis is important in the current study, since I examine role allocations, and which social actors are presented as agents (or beneficiaries) in different process types. I focus on the role of the analysed songs in upholding traditional gender ideologies and FGM in Kuria through word choices, naming and reference allocation, while viewing the discourses in them as an integral element of the material social processes. The analytical focus at this level is on choices and patterns in vocabulary, the words used for men and women and their meanings; metaphors and their meanings; process types and participants' and representations at transitivity level. This is the *description* stage.

### 2.5.2 Analysis of discursive practices (meso analysis)

The meso analysis stage views discourse as something that is produced, circulated, distributed and consumed in society (Fairclough 1992). The focus is on the processes of text production and consumption; this is the discourse analysis stage rather than textual analysis. An analyst examines how the text producers draw on existing discourses and discourse genres to create texts and how listeners or readers rely on the available discourses and genres in the text consumption and interpretation. This means the producers encode meaning into a text by, for instance, choosing to highlight one view rather than another, or using one word rather than another and the receiver decodes the message and is influenced by it in a certain way. They depend both on existing background assumptions and language knowledge to encode and decode the message. Fairclough (2001) observes that receivers have their own perspectives and background knowledge which influence how the message is received and interpreted. They may conform to the message or resist, based on their judgment of who produced the message and if they can be trusted (Fairclough 2001). Approaching discourse as discursive practice means that attention is switched to speech acts, coherence and intertextuality<sup>19</sup> (linking of texts to other texts) and interdiscursivity<sup>20</sup>. Fairclough (1992) argues that order of discourses has primacy over particular types of discourse. Therefore, re-contextualisation of discourses is applied in legitimation and justification of discriminatory practices. This is the *interpretation* stage, which is concerned with, for instance, the ways in which participants arrive at some kind of understanding of discourse on the basis of their cognitive, social, and ideological resources, what Fairclough (2015) describes as ‘member resources’ (MR)). Interpretation cues are in the text but interpreters have to draw on their MR to interpret these cues. The interpretive phase already requires a

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<sup>19</sup> Refers to how texts draw from other texts. In intertextuality, the relation between text and context is examined because a textual analysis on its own is inadequate. The analyst therefore focuses on other texts and discourses and how they relate to the specific text under analysis. This is because discourses spread to different fields and to other discourses – they cross between fields and refer to each other since they are sociofunctionally linked (Reisigl & Wodak 2001; Ellece 2007).

<sup>20</sup> Refers to the link between discourses through other topics or subtopics (Reisigl & Wodak 2001). Sunderland (2004:45) defines interdiscursivity as ways in which discourses exist in ‘constellations, networks or ‘orders’ with other related discourses. In a certain order of discourse for instance, some may be more pervasive, widely recognisable and thus dominant while others will be less pervasive and marginal. Discourses can also be mutually supportive or oppositional (Litosseliti 2006) intratextually related or intertextually related.

degree of distancing between the researcher and the participant, but the interpretation is still conducted by means of categories and criteria provided by participants. Often, Fairclough argues, interpretations display ideological framings. In this case I will focus on intertextuality and interdiscursivity. In intertextual analysis, the term genre (as suggested by Fairclough 1992) is used to refer to a socially ratified type of linguistic activity, such as an interview or *song*.

### **2.5.3 Analysis of social practices (macro analysis)**

Macro analysis focuses on the wider sociocultural practices where discourse is produced and consumed. In this case focus is on how the text reflects and affects the society; this is where discourse analysis becomes critical discourse analysis. The analyst identifies the ‘social and cultural goings-on which the communicative event is part of’ (Fairclough 1995:57), asking questions such as what does this text say about the society in which it was produced? What impact does the text have on social relations? Is it replicating existing unequal power and social relations or is it challenging them? The social effects of discourse are mediated by members resources (MR) in the sense that social structures shape MR, which in turn shape discourses; and discourses sustain or change MR, which in turn sustain or change social structures (Fairclough 2015).

An analysis of the Kuria FGM songs (discourse) examines how representations of gender inequalities (as enacted in Kuria perceptions, beliefs and values/MR) shape, affect or influence existing gender relations and the practice of FGM (social practices). The wider social context is also examined - the Kuria people and their beliefs and norms as an example of Kenyan/African culture in general (see section 3.1). Fairclough states that in CDA it is impossible to isolate text analysis from the wider societal, cultural, political and ideological perspectives and practices. Focus is on ideology, power and hegemony which frame the investigation of discourse as a social practice (Fairclough 1992). The manifestation of power, ideology and hegemony within discourse practices are investigated through different perspectives with the focus being on critical and social issues handled by discourse analysts. This is the *explanation* stage. Here, the key aspect is to understand the broad, societal currents that are influencing the text being studied and how the text feeds back into the wider social context in which it is received and with what effects. I argue that

there are unequal gender and power positions between different groups of social actors in the Kuria context and that these are reflected (and constructed) in the songs which in turn legitimise the unequal gender and power positions in the society while maintaining the status quo. By subjecting the songs to CDA, I aim to expose and critique underlying ideologies that perpetuate these inequalities with an aim of initiating resistance towards them.

In summary, in the descriptive, interpretation and explanation phases of analysis (also described as the micro, meso and macro-levels of interpretations (Fairclough 2001)), a text is viewed as an account of something that is taking place in a larger social context embedded with a complex set of power relations. It is interpreted by readers or listeners depending on the rules, norms, and mental models of the society they live in. The analysis does not have to be clear-cut between the steps. They are done concurrently, for instance, when identifying the linguistic features in the text, and seeking their underlying meanings, one is already interpreting the text. In most analyses, however, once description is done, interpretation and explanation are carried out together. My focus is on linguistic features of the text (intratextuality), on intertextuality, whereby I look at how texts refer to other texts, and on interdiscursivity, that is, how discourses draw from and shore up other discourses. I rely on Fairclough's approach to conduct intratextual and intertextual analyses and on Sunderland's approach for interdiscourse analysis. I link the two approaches so that Fairclough's vocabulary items act as cues/traces of gendered discourses in the texts as stated in Sunderland's approach.

#### **2.5.4 CDA and metaphor**

A metaphor is a linguistic strategy through which one thing (often unfamiliar) is understood in terms of another (often familiar). Metaphors have been described as linguistic ways in which one entity is conceptualised in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). Charteris-Black (2004:19) defines a metaphor as a figure of speech in which, in some sense, 'meanings are transferred'. In metaphor, one thing is given a name that belongs to something else in a particular context. Context is important and helpful in metaphor identification and interpretation. Use of metaphorical language is perceived to be a strategy for coping with the expectations embodied by



life. Metaphors help frame social situations in various ways, usually by allowing one distinct domain of experience to be conceptualised in terms of another (Lakoff & Johnson 1999). Conceptualisation can be highly specific or more general. A special character of metaphor is the transference of a name, and by extension behaviour, of one object to another and by doing so, transfer of meaning from the original concept (the source domain or vehicle) to the target domain or topic (Charteris-Black 2004). Through this process, the structure and meaning associated with the source domain shapes the target domain. This means that the choice of the source domain affects how the target domain is interpreted (either positively or negatively depending on the shared beliefs and assumptions of the members of a social group). For instance, in the Kuria saying, 'a man is a lion' meaning is transferred from a lion (source domain) to a man (target domain) and this creates images of fear, strength, respect and destruction (in this context). The reverse is true in the Kuria saying that an 'uncircumcised woman is a dog'.

Metaphors are rarely neutral because they highlight some aspects of the target domain and conceal others. However, metaphors help speakers understand abstract concepts by talking about them in terms of concrete, easily identifiable and understandable concepts/objects (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). They function to highlight and make coherent certain aspects of human experience and create social realities. Structurally, metaphors are lexical items with metaphorical meaning (Halliday 1994), which extends beyond everyday universal meaning. All metaphors, therefore, have lexical meanings and relations but only a lexeme that has a meaning that is distinct from the literal meaning can be regarded as metaphorical. For instance, the word 'dog' that refers to a four-legged domesticated animal (lexical meaning) carries other meanings like non-human, non-identified, useless person who wanders haphazardly, in the Kuria context.

Kittay (1987) argues that metaphors are linguistic means by which ideological perceptions of the world are formed. This argument is supported by Fairclough (1992:194) who states that when 'we signify things through one metaphor rather than another; we are constructing our reality in one way rather than another'. Fairclough emphasises that the choice of the metaphor is important to critical analysts because 'different metaphors have different ideological attachments' (2001:100). Metaphor is central to critical discourse analysis due to its role in forming what is taken to be a

coherent view of reality but which may constitute hidden subtleties. Metaphors perform ideological work by privileging one understanding of reality over others. They also contribute to or constitute an ideologically vested discourse (Koller 2004) and produce distinct representations of the world (Fairclough 2003).

Deignan (2005) states that a discourse approach to metaphor research entails showing how metaphors have been used to present particular messages or ideologies, and this is in line with CDA's main goals. Metaphors, therefore, form a potent way of ideologically presenting the in-group (the circumcised) as good and the out-group (the uncircumcised) as bad by naming, describing and defining. Positive metaphors are used for the in-group and negative ones for the out-group.

Some of the topics dealt with in metaphor research include gender, race and political issues in different contexts. For instance, Patthey-Chavez et al's (1996) work compares metaphors used about men and women in erotic romances written for women. They conclude that metaphors in these texts tend to construct women as passive and men as active; women tend to 'melt or dissolve in response to men, while men on the other hand possess and consume women' (1996:82). This in return helps index and reinforce unequal relations of power and gender. They discuss their findings in relation to the roles and expectations of men and women. Their work is important to the current study, as it shows that CDA can be applied in the study of metaphors (see also Charteris-Black 2004). In this study, I analyse metaphors as linguistic features that act as cues/traces of gendered discourses in the songs. I do this by tracing their patterns in the text (songs) and linking these to the wider Kuria society in which the songs are produced and consumed.

CDA views metaphors as linguistic items embedded in sociocultural practice. The argument is that metaphors construct the context in which they are used from a particular point of view, and they are, in turn, constructed by it. Just like all other forms of discourse, then, they are constitutive of sociocultural relations and are clear manifestations of power because of their ability to highlight some features of reality and hide others (Lakoff & Johnson 1980; Koller 2004); they form and influence human beliefs, attitudes and action (Charteris-Black 2004). CDA is concerned with making explicit ideological motivations that would, otherwise, be implicit and concealed. Analysis of metaphors is one way through which this could be achieved.

Fairclough (1989; 1995) observes that metaphors need to be analysed as part of textual (linguistic) analyses. Works that have focused on the ideological and sociocultural functions of metaphor include Wilson (1992) and Akioye (1994) who argue that metaphors perform social functions including legitimization of social positions and relations. This is the reason why a critical discourse analysis of metaphors in Kuria female circumcision songs is necessary.

Charteris-Black (2004) states that metaphor analysis involves three steps (identification, interpretation and explanation) which are similar to Fairclough's (1995) three stages of CDA methodology (see section 2.5). While studying metaphors, Deignan (2005) argues, an analyst identifies linguistic items that function as metaphors and describes them, then examines their literal meaning and social use. One has to bear in mind that metaphors do not directly reflect reality; they filter it such that 'metaphorical choices made by speakers present a biased viewpoint' (Deignan 2005:124). She adds that public perceptions of social issues are strongly shaped by dominant metaphors because such metaphors encode ideological positions through the relationships they suggest between entities, and through their entailments. A CDA approach to metaphor analysis makes explicit the ideological bias of metaphors and reveals their relation to discourse and power. Fairclough (1992) states that in analysing metaphor the objective is to characterise the metaphor used in the discourse and determine what factors (cultural, ideological) determine the choice of metaphor, then consider the effect of metaphors upon the thinking and practice of the discourse producers. I make use of both Deignan's and Fairclough's approaches when analysing metaphor in this study to enable conceptualisation of difficult concepts and reveal different ways in which women (both circumcised and uncircumcised) and men are perceived in Kuria society.

## **2.6 Critical discourse analysis approaches used in this study**

### **2.6.1 Fairclough's textually oriented discourse analysis**

Textually-oriented discourse analysis is a linguistically based approach that focuses on any sort of discourse, both written and spoken – conversation, classroom discourse, media discourse and so on (Fairclough 1992). Fairclough (2003) proposes a critical discourse analysis that focuses on a problem, identifies the obstacles in the

efforts to solve the problem; considers whether the social order needs the problem; identifies ways past the obstacle and reflects critically in the analysis.

Fairclough's three-tier analysis model states that the first step involves close examination of linguistic features (vocabulary, grammar and textual features). He lists a comprehensive list of textual features to focus on and suggests that analysts do not have to examine all of them but can analyse a limited number relevant to their text, context and purpose of the research. The following is a list of guiding questions during textually oriented discourse analysis.

#### A. Vocabulary

1. What experiential values do words have?
  - What classification schemes are drawn on?
  - Are there words that are ideologically contested?
  - Is there *rewording* and *overwording*?
  - What ideologically significant meaning relations are there between words?
2. What relational values do words have?
  - Are there euphemistic expressions?
  - Are there markedly formal or informal words?
3. What expressive values do words have?
4. What metaphors are used?

#### B. Grammar

5. What experiential values do grammatical features have?
  - What types of process and participant predominate?
  - Is agency unclear?
  - Are processes what they seem?
  - Are nominalisations used?
  - Are sentences active or passive?
  - Are sentences positive or negative?
6. What relational values do grammatical features have?
  - What modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) are used?
  - Are there important features of relational modality?
  - Are the pronouns *we* and *you* used, and if so, how?

7. What expressive values do grammatical features have?
  - Are there important features of expressive modality?
8. How are simple sentences linked together?
  - What logical connectors are used?
  - Are there complex sentences characterised by coordination and subordination?
  - What means are used for referring inside and outside the text

C. Textual structures

9. What interactional conventions are used?
  - Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?
10. What large scale structures does a text have?

(Fairclough 2015:129-130)

From Fairclough's framework and list of guiding questions, I developed my analysis guideline, summarised in the table below.

<b>Linguistic features</b>	<b>Experiential values</b>	<b>Relational values</b>	<b>Expressive values</b>
<i>Textual analysis</i>  Lexical items	How is reference allocated?  What is the classification scheme of word categories? Are there rewordings? Are there absent lexical items?  Are there meaning relations between words?  What knowledges and beliefs are re(produced)/confirmed?	What relational values do words have?  What social relations are produced/affirmed/challenged?	What expressive values do words have?  What social identities are constructed
Metaphors	Which metaphors are used?  How are they allocated to the social actors?	What social relations are reinforced/legitimised?	What social identities are constructed?

Grammar	What types of process and participant predominate? How is agency allocated? What transitivity structures are dominant (who does what to whom)?	What experiential values do words have? Which social subjects are allocated certain process types? How are gender relations represented?	Which social positions do social subjects take? What identities are men, women and uncircumcised women assigned?
<i>Discourse analysis</i>	What intertextuality and interdiscursivity features exist? How do the texts borrow from other texts? What is the 'order of discourse'? Which discourses are dominant? Which minor discourses shore up dominant discourses?		
<i>Social analysis</i>	What gender relations common in Kuria are rearticulated in the texts? What power relations are evident in the text? What is the effect of the textual features on the Kuria power and gender relations? What is the effect on the perpetuation of FGM? How is discourse determined by social structures (and practices) and what effects does it have on those structures (does it contribute to their sustenance or change/challenge them?)		

Table 1: Framework for textually oriented analysis

I employ these guideline questions in the analysis of both songs and interviews and, as stated earlier, my focus is at three levels of analysis: description, interpretation and explanation. In the description stage, I identify lexical items and metaphors and grammatical features in the songs and interviews. In the interpretation stage, I explore intertextuality (how songs draw from interview responses and vice versa, and how they both draw from outside texts in Kuria society), and interdiscursivity (looking at the order of discourses and how some discourses shore up others). In the explanation stage, I examine the effect of the linguistic representations on social and power relations in Kuria and on the perpetuation of FGM. In the next section I discuss Sunderland's (2004) gendered discourses approach.

### **2.6.2 Sunderland's gendered discourses: Identifying and naming discourses**

The process of discourse identification is always interpretive because there is no finite set of discourses. Sunderland (2004:28) argues that discourses are not always

recognised easily; they 'are not simply out there waiting to be spotted' but are 'in flux' (see also Litosseliti 2006). There is, therefore, no discourse that self-evidences itself as a discrete chunk of a given text in its entirety. Instead, as (Baker 2008:95) argues, 'what is there are linguistic features: 'marks on the page', words spoken or even people's memories of previous conversations [...] which - if sufficient and coherent may suggest that they are 'traces' of a particular discourse'.

There are no specific traces for certain discourses; the same linguistic features can be identified and interpreted as cues and traces of different discourses by different analysts. There are also no definite criteria for deciding that a linguistic feature is a trace of a certain discourse either. We can however, 'detect a discursive structure because of the systematicity of ideas, opinions, concepts, ways of thinking and behaving which are formed within a particular context and because of the effects of those ways of behaving' (Mills 2004:15). This systematicity of ideas can be manifested through repetition of words or phrases (Atanga 2010) which show that meanings are not 'merely personal and idiosyncratic but widely shared in a discourse community' (Stubbs 2001:215). Repeated patterns tend to acquire a common sense taken-for-granted status and with time they are no longer questioned but become part of a people's vocabulary and hegemonic discourse. To be powerful, therefore, discourses must have the characteristic of repetition (Baker 2008) although single instances (and absences) are also considered. An analyst does not only consider repetition but also the articulation of a discourse by a powerful speaker and how accessible the discourse is to a large number of people.

Identification requires co-construction by the language user of the text and elements of its production. Sunderland (2004) posits that some discourses can be pervasive, widely recognisable and therefore dominant while others will be marginal, supporting or shoring up the dominant discourses. To verify the presence of a particular gendered discourse in a text, the analyst should provide evidence that suggests the presence and workings of that particular discourse. Linguistic traces can be identified by applying the categories given by Fairclough (2015) such as vocabulary, agency and modality, as well as intertextual features.

Other linguistic features that act as traces of discourses include nominalisation, passivisation and sequencing (Halliday 1985; Fairclough 2003) and representation of

social actors (van Leeuwen 1996). Fairclough and Sunderland's approaches are therefore interdependent in the sense that while Sunderland's is used to identify discourses, Fairclough's provides the categories of the linguistic traces of the discourses. Text analysis is the main way of justifying an interpretation. To be sure that discourses have been correctly identified, an analyst should check that the identified discourses are recognised by others within and outside the same field, as suggested by both Fairclough (1992) and Sunderland (2004), because discourses can only exist if they are socially acceptable to some people, and provisionally recognisable (Jaworski & Coupland 1999).

Linked to discourse identification is the naming of discourses. The analyst may often name discourses according to the standpoint they come from. Although Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999) argue that the label used is not that important as long as a discourse is recognisable, Fairclough (2003) warns that the lack of a 'closed-list of discourses' does not mean that every single representation of the world should be named as a separate discourse. The analyst can use existing names that are familiar and instantly recognisable to others, or can come up with their own, however they must then give evidence to justify why a discourse has been identified and named as discourse of X or X discourse. Naming can be based on the discourses' functions (e.g. damaging, liberating, resistant, subversive, conservative discourses) or their relation to other discourses (e.g. competing, dominant, alternative et cetera (Baker 2008)). Both identification and naming of discourses are interpretive acts.

Although there are many discourses, this work focuses on discourses that are gendered because any human experience can be gendered (meaning that there is something in them that has to do with gender). Gender discourses exist in relation to other discourses (Litosseliti 2006), for instance to patriarchal discourses, conservative discourses and egalitarian discourses, in different ways. The term 'gender discourse' is different from (yet related to) 'gendered discourse' used in this thesis. The former referring to general discourses about gender while the latter being used to specifically mean those discourses about gender which are destructive and discriminative against women (and men sometimes). Discourses can be part of a network of discourses or order of discourse (Litosseliti 2006). Sunderland (2000, 2004) identifies an order of discourse she names 'fatherhood discourse' where the dominant discourse 'part-time father' consists of networked discourses such as



‘father as baby entertainer’ and ‘father as line manager’ (see also Litosseliti 2006). Because different discourses ascribe different subject positions to social subjects, social subjects can be constructed and named as mothers, fathers, carers and providers by different discourses and through different linguistic traces.

Once a discourse has been identified and named, it is important to look at its social significance, to find out how it positions social actors, for instance, women and men, boys and girls. This is because any discourse is not just a concept but also a social and constitutive process. From a gender perspective, particular discourses construct women, men, girls, and boys in gendered ways, and such gendered subject positions are taken up as the norm or challenged. Gendered discourses have been found to put both women and men in unfavourable subject positions, though Sunderland (2004) argues that it is women who tend to be constructed in more conservative ways; such discourses are referred to as damaging discourses. Examples of damaging discourses are traditional discourses which have been circulating in more or less the same form and have become naturalised in a particular community, for instance, those that present women’s subordinate position to men as natural and normal. The ‘woman as object discourse’ and ‘gender difference discourse’ are other damaging discourses, because, through them, the society legitimates gender-based hierarchies by normalising unequal gender relations and positions. These two are some of the discourses I identify and examine in this study (see Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

Sunderland’s approach has been used by Ellece (2011) to investigate gendered discourses in marriage practices in Botswana, where it was found that gendered discourses are used in marriage ceremonies to construct and legitimate stereotyped beliefs about relations between men and women. Examining gendered discourses in this thesis gives me room to explore various positions and subjectivities of men and women in Kuria, and the relation of these to FGM.

### **2.6.3 Criticism of Sunderland’s gendered discourse approach**

Sunderland’s approach has been criticised by linguists including Sunderland (2004) herself. Sunderland states that recognising a discourse is not an easy task - it is not done in a straightforward way, and this is mainly because ‘a discourse is not out there waiting to be spotted’ (Sunderland 2004:28), discourses are not evident or visible as a discrete chunk of a given text. There is no discourse that exists in a text in its

entirety. What is there are 'certain linguistic features, marks on a page, words spoken or even people's memories of previous conversations' (Talbot 1995: 24). Therefore, it is not easy for two or more people to see/view a discourse in the same way in a text. However, to counter this shortcoming, Sunderland opines that two people from the same field with a similar background will be able to view the existing discourse in a similar way. For instance, analysts with a background in gender are likely to view a gendered discourse in a similar way, this is why the identification and naming of discourses must be checked by analysts from the same field, and this is what I have done in my analysis (see section 4.8 for a detailed discussion of this).

The other criticism which closely relates to this is that the linguistic traces must be sufficient enough to suggest the presence of a discourse. The problem with this is that sufficiency is not measured nor is an analyst given a procedure on what is sufficient; one analyst may view two traces as sufficient enough to suggest the presence of a discourse while another may not. To achieve sufficiency, Fairclough (2003) suggests that traces of a discourse must be 'remotely or explicitly repeated, they must be common and stable' (Fairclough 2003:124). An analyst should also check on the understandings of the language users, listeners and readers about the particular linguistic feature and discourse (this I have done through interviews with the song performers). A discourse that is recognisable and socially acceptable to some people is valid for analysis (Jaworski & Coupland 1999).

The third criticism, which is the most important, is whether the identification of discourses is an appropriate approach for feminists and gender studies of language to take. Gill (1995) advocates for a reflexivity on the part of the analyst. An analyst should make 'explicit their position and reflect critically upon their own role' (Gill 1995:179). The practice of reflexivity and self critique is advanced in CDA and it is the position I take in this thesis (see details in section 4.9).

## **2.7 CDA, Gender and language**

Harrington et al (2008) list myriad methods and approaches used to study gender and language. These include: critical discourse analysis (CDA), classroom discourse analysis, critical classroom discourse analysis, feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA), feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis (FPDA), discursive

psychology, and conversation analysis (CA) (see also Sunderland 2004). These are employed by gender and language researchers in different contexts. The method adapted for this research is (F)CDA which is grounded in Foucault's discourse theories and draws on linguistic analytical frameworks from Halliday's systemic functional grammar (1994).

Discourse analysis has been described as a flexible, incisive and a valuable tool for the study of gender (Bucholtz 2003; Litosseliti 2006). CDA principles apply to gender and language research in the sense that while gender and language studies aim to show non-obvious ways in which language is involved in social relations of power and domination, language and gender research seeks to uncover the unequal gender relations prevalent but hidden in discourse. To address gender issues, it is necessary to analyse gendered discourses and unearth hidden agendas and ideologies (Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002; Litosseliti 2006) which constitute unquestioned background assumptions that people of a particular culture share. Sunderland (2004:18) argues that gender can be seen 'as an idea, or set of ideas, articulated in and as discourse'. Articulating gender as an ideology leads me away from associating gender with sex and instead examining the asymmetries and hierarchies between the sexes as depicted in texts; this is consistent with the discursive turn. A discourse analyst looks at a text to identify messages conveyed which are different from the explicit or literal information being communicated. For instance, circumcision songs are explicitly used for entertainment during circumcision ceremonies but implicitly carry underlying ideological messages which construct and reinforce unequal gender identities and power relations (for instance, that women are domestic and men are providers and protectors). The traditional Kuria society makes songs producers echo its expectations of men and women through these songs. Through critical discourse analysis this study will 'problematise taken-for-granted socially sanctioned notions of gender' (Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002:11). It will examine the asymmetrical gender and power relations and will address issues related to imbalanced gender relations and FGM among the Kuria people. It is therefore a critical discourse analysis study of gender in Kuria FGM songs. The following section highlights some gender and language studies that have fruitfully used CDA.

Critical discourse analysis has been particularly important in studying gender because of its concern with social issues and problems (van Dijk 2001; Fairclough 2001b).

CDA, especially Fairclough's approach, has been applied to issues of gender to unearth hidden agendas (Talbot 1998; Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002; Litosseliti 2006) and in identifying 'what is not said that from a certain point (feminist point) should have been said' (Litosseliti & Sunderland 2002:19). It has also been used to reveal 'how those with power and control over the production and distribution of texts push particular ideological discourses' (Jones 2016:21) on those who consume the texts. Some of the gender studies that have made use of CDA as an analytical tool include Sunderland's (2004) critical discourse analysis of gender in US children's fiction works. She discusses hegemonic and patriarchal discourses in fairy tales and suggests that because of the gendered discourses these draw on, 'they are not just imaginative books which provide pleasure for children' (2004:145). Instead, they are sites for gender struggles. In the same sense in my research I do not see female circumcision songs as just providing entertainment during female circumcision ceremonies but rather as re-production of discourses circulating in the context where these songs are produced and consumed.

Wodak (2003) studies the identities of successful women in the EU parliament. In her study, she acknowledges changes regarding women's position in terms of equal rights legislation but sees gender in relation to patriarchy as a monolithic system of oppression in which all men dominate all women (see also Butler 1990; Mills 1997; Walsh 2001). Lazar (2000, 2002) analyses advertisements of governmental fertility campaigns using CDA and observes that women are constructed as other-centred. They pay more attention to caring for others and find happiness and self-fulfillment through others' happiness and self-fulfillment. Mills (1998) examines British advertisements and observes that there are indirect sexist statements in many of the adverts and women are still treated as sex objects. She adds that although the forms that these sexist expressions take seem to be non-sexist on the surface, from a critical eye, gendered assumptions reassert themselves. Talbot (1995; 1997) critically analyses a horror and romance novel and examines how the hero's actions are represented. She observes that the hero is constructed as an agent, active and in control (he is attributed material process verbs) while the heroine is not (she is attributed mental process verbs). This, in turn, positions the two subjects as unequal. The two approaches to CDA that have mainly been used to study gender are Fairclough's and Wodak's (see section 2.4.3). This study, however, makes use of

Fairclough's approach combined with Sunderland's (2004) gendered discourses approach.

While past approaches had assumed that people use language in certain ways because of who they are, CDA suggests that people are who they are (partly), because of the way they use language (Cameron 1998) and partly because of the discourses they are exposed to. At the same time, people activate power whenever they produce meaning. Here, CDA is particularly useful, in that it aims to understand social issues by exposing the subtle role of discourse in maintaining them.

## **2.8 FCDA, Gender and language**

Developing out of CDA is feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA), which provides a feminist study of language and reveals how power and ideology in discourse sustain a gendered social order. According to Grainger (2009) a feminist approach to discourse analysis views language as a form of social action. Feminist critical discourse analysis is associated primarily with Lazar (2005,2014) who argues that the goal of FCDA is to provide a critical perspective on unequal social arrangements that are sustained through language use with the aim of transforming and for social emancipation. Feminist CDA adopts a critical feminist view of gender relations and aims at changing the existing conditions of these relations. It focuses on gender and isolates it as a variable in investigating social phenomena while 'demystifying the interrelationships of gender, power and ideology in discourse' (Lazar 2005:5). It is applicable to the study of talk and texts, and in 'critiquing discourses which sustain a patriarchal social order: that is, relations of power that systematically privilege men as a social group and disadvantage, exclude and disempower women' (Lazar 2005:5). FCDA attributes gender discriminatory discourses to patriarchy and subtle sexism<sup>21</sup> (Kosetzi 2007) and emphasises the need for gender equality. FCDA developed out of the need to decrease the dominance and grip of white heterosexual men as the pioneers of discourse related studies and provide diversity among feminist scholars in CDA research (Walsh 2001; Lazar

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<sup>21</sup> Lazar conceptualises this term as the underlying discriminatory discourses behind what is seen as female empowerment. She says 'beneath the appearance of emancipation, sexist discrimination thrives in covert forms [...] through deep seated, naturalised, androcentric assumptions' (2005: 20).

2005). The theoretical principles of FCDA remain almost identical to CDA's with a poststructuralist view, social emancipatory goals and a political praxis.

Feminist CDA shows that social practices are far from neutral and are gendered, hence the need to effect a social transformation. In it, social status quo is contested in favour of a humane, just society in which one's gender does not predetermine their relationships with others nor does it determine what one might become (Grant 1993). This approach undertakes the role of examining and analysing the oppression of women and the way this is reflected, maintained and resisted in discourse. Such oppression includes blatant exclusion, gate keeping social practices, physical violence and verbal harassment and denigration which remain a reality for many women in different cultures (Lazar 2005). The major task of feminist CDA is to 'examine how power and dominance are discursively produced and/or resisted in a variety of ways through textual representations of gendered social practices' (Lazar 2005:10). This also involves looking at ways in which women can be empowered to participate in public domains. With a goal of achieving these goals, I take a feminist CDA approach and describe myself as a feminist critical discourse analyst who focuses on the African context.

Lazar argues that 'sexist discrimination thrives in covert forms' (2005:20). Such discrimination is hard to detect with ordinary eyes, it requires critical lenses and a strategic perspective to uncover the subtle and hidden agenda perpetuated through discourse. In Kuria, there is overt inequality between men and women with regard to women's rights and freedoms. My focus in this research is mostly on the indirect and implicit forms of sexism (although I point out the overt gendered depictions from time to time). In songs, women are constructed using conservative discourses in a subtle way, creating need to critically analyse the ideologies behind these representations.

## **2.9 Criticism of CDA**

CDA has been criticised for a number of reasons. First, Jorgensen & Philips (2002) criticise CDA's claim that language and discourse exist in a dialectical relationship, that language affects discourse and discourse affects language. They argue that it is impossible to demonstrate this dialectical relationship in an empirical way. They further state that CDA's claims that discourse shapes the world are hard to prove

since analysts focus on a single text and this is inadequate to represent the world. Their criticisms have, however, been addressed in current analyses where researchers (see Atanga 2007 and Ellece 2007) combine CDA with other methods through triangulation approaches.

Secondly, Blommaert (2005) criticises CDA's methodological and analytical approaches, arguing that CDA's biased interpretations of discourses under the guise of critical analysis projects subjectivities and prejudices in relation to data (see also Widdowson 2004). This had earlier been voiced by Hammersley (1997) who argued that taking sides with certain groups of people is politics rather than scientific research. However, CDA analysts have countered this by declaring outrightly their political stance and confessing their biased nature as an intentional approach to overturning injustice and achieving social change. For instance, Wodak (2001a:96) argues that CDA's biased position is in solidarity with the oppressed and a strategy of opposing 'those who abuse text and talk in order to establish, confirm or legitimate their abuse of power. CDA explicitly declares and defends its socio-political position, 'it is biased and proud of it.' Blommaert further criticises CDA's application of findings arguing that CDA research is limited to the developed world, particularly the UK and US, yet it makes assumptions that findings can be applied to all contexts. While this claim was valid in the 80s and 90s it no longer counts, especially as researchers from Sub-Saharan Africa (and Kenya, in this study) and other developing countries are now making use of CDA approaches in their studies (see for example Atanga 2010; Kosetzi 2012; Ellece 2013).

Other criticisms include CDA's non-systematic application of systemic functional grammar (Halliday 1985). Widdowson (2004:97) and Jorgensen & Philips (2002:71) have described this as the 'expedient picking and choosing of whatever aspects that seem useful for its purposes'. The argument is that CDA analysts make interpretation of texts without reference to adequate linguistic patterns. However, Fairclough's (1992, 2001, 2015) framework gives a detailed approach to linguistic, discursive and social analysis, which analysts adopt in different contexts. Even so, Widdowson (1995) criticises Fairclough's framework for failing to specify how actual analysis is carried out. Widdowson states that Fairclough's is a checklist of various factors that one *might* consider and which even Fairclough himself does not follow, instead, choosing some aspects and ignoring the rest. Widdowson also states that CDA

analysts are motivated by their political stance and this comes into play in analysis and interpretation where analysts only pay attention to textual features in the text, making some (generally those that confirm the analyst's hypotheses) prominent and others (those that do not) marginal. To counter this criticism, CDA proponents argue that in textual analysis one can select certain features of a text and exclude others depending on the aim of the research. For instance, Fairclough (2003:14) states that 'textual analysis is inevitably selective: we choose to ask certain questions about social events and texts, and not other possible questions'.

### **2.10 Rationale for a critical discourse analysis approach**

CDA does not have one homogeneous method of researching social phenomena. Meyer (2001:23) and van Dijk (2001:96) explicitly state that CDA does not have a single empirical method of data collection and analysis because it is a 'cluster of approaches with a common theoretical base and similar research questions [...] there is no typical way of collecting data, CDA integrates the best work of many people from different cultures, countries'. It allows the researcher to combine strengths from different methodologies to improve validity. Different types of data are collected and analysed and this helps the researcher to minimise subjectivity during interpretation of data because if different data from different sources collected through different methods produce similar results then it validates the findings (Fairclough & Wodak 1997; Wodak et al 1999; Ellece 2007). I therefore make use of triangulation: combining participant observation with audio-recording, interviews and note taking (see details of triangulation and other methods in chapter 4) and this gives strength to the approach I take.

### **2.11 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed the theoretical background that informs the thesis. I have examined the relation between gender and discourse analysis and the different approaches, methods and theories employed in studying the two. In the first section, I distinguished the terms gender and sex after which I critically discussed work that has been carried out on language and gender, which relates to my work worldwide,



in Africa and in Kenya. I then presented approaches that have been used to study language and gender: the (male) dominance, (cultural) difference and dynamic approaches and highlighted studies that have examined gender from critical and feminist critical discourse perspectives. In the second section I traced the development of gender and language research from structuralism to the 'discursive turn'. I also conducted an overview of the discourse theory and discussed the relationship between discourse, ideology and power. I then explored the concept of CDA as a theoretical and analytical framework for this study. I concluded the chapter by listing some of the criticisms of CDA and showing how CDA practitioners have countered them and showing why, even with the criticism, CDA is best placed to analyse FGM songs and interviews. In the next chapter, I will provide the context of the study, outline the cultural beliefs, values and practices of the Kuria people and discuss the practice of FGM both at global and local levels.

## **Chapter 3: Setting the Context: Kuria people and Female Genital Mutilation practices.**

### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter contains two sections. The first section sets the context of the study by describing the Kuria people's socio-geographical and cultural aspects, norms, values and beliefs. It also presents a detailed description of how Kuria men and women are viewed in the society in terms of gender roles, behaviours and social expectations while highlighting how these are reflected in and constructed through language. The second section discusses the FGM phenomenon: the different definitions and conceptualisations of FGM, types, effects and distribution of FGM cases globally, in Africa and Kenya. It also describes the Kuria FGM practices and gives an outline of the circumcision process in Kuria. It concludes by outlining efforts to end the practices and justifies the need for newer (language-oriented) approaches.

### **3.1 The Kuria people**

#### **3.1.1 Geographical location**

The Kuria people, also called Abakuria, are a Bantu language group who live in both Kenyan and Tanzanian territories (Abuso 1980). In Kenya, they live in Kuria East and West districts in Migori County (the former Nyanza province) and in Tanzania they live in Serengeti, Tarime, Musoma, Bunda and some parts of Mwanza district. The homeland of the Kuria is between River Migori to the east and the estuary of River Mara to the west. On the western side, the area stretches from Migori county in South Nyanza to Musoma district of Tanzania. To the south, the land borders the Transmara district on the Kenyan side and the Ngurueme region in Tanzania. To the North West is Lake Victoria with a small corridor occupied by the Luo. The immediate neighbours of the Kuria people are the Abagusii, Maasai, Ngurueme, Zanaki, Ikoma, Luo, Suba and Kalenjin. According to the 2009 Kenyan national census, the Kuria people number slightly over 300,000 (KNBS 2009) on the Kenyan side, with three times this number living in Tanzania. They speak Kuria language or *Igikuria* which has mutually understandable dialects.

The Kuria who live in Kenya are divided into four clans; the Abagumbe, Abairegi, Abanyabasi and Abakira, while those who live in Tanzania are the Abapemba, Ababurati, Abakira, Abamera, Simbete, Abanyabasi, Watobori, Abakunta, Abakenye and Abagumbe. Because of the accessibility and good road networks of the region, this study focused on the Kuria who live in Kenya. However, the results may also apply to the Tanzanian group, since they share their beliefs, language and sociocultural aspects.

### **3.1.2 Kuria household arrangements and administrative units**

Historically, the Kuria are a polygamous patriarchal society (Abuso 1980). Polygamy catered for the demands for labour to farm the land and is still common in many households with men marrying up to ten wives. A high value is placed on marriage and family life among the Kuria people. Most girls are married off after circumcision (at the age of 9-13 years) to either young men or old men as second, third or fourth wives. It is within the marriage institution that gender roles are determined particularly in household activities. Being a patriarchal society, men inherit land from their fathers, while women do not. Women do all domestic chores while men do none. In the local community, there are administrative units organised hierarchically. Several households that share a stream or source of water and live opposite each other (these might be relatives or people from different neighbouring clans) form an administrative unit called a village. Villages are organised into sub-locations which form locations. Locations form divisions which form districts and districts then form counties. The leaders of households are the men. A village is presided over by a village elder (usually male). The sub location is headed by a sub chief, a location by a chief, a division by a district officer and the district by a district commissioner. The officers and commissioners are appointed by the central government. The chiefs and sub chiefs are expected to maintain law and order in their administrative regions. They inform and implement new directions from the central government. They get a very minimal salary and depend on handouts from fines on law breakers, those arrested in drinking dens and trouble makers. It is worth noting that the administrative leaders are normally men. Women are not permitted to rule or lead in this community.

### 3.1.3 Gender roles and duties in Kuria

In Kuria society, the duties and roles of men and women are clearly defined. Men are seen as superior and there is a gendered division of labour. Men are referred to as *abagaaka* or *abasaacha* (those who try) while women are *abakari* or *abakungu* (those who keep safely). Women and girls are expected to do all house work. They are expected to rear and bring up children, collect firewood, carry water from the rivers and streams and be loyal to their husbands and community. These values and expectations are imparted to women during the seclusion period after circumcision (the period within which the initiates are set aside from the community for healing; see details of this in section 3.1.6 and more details in section 3.2). Grandmothers and aunts also do the teaching after girls graduate (come out after the FGM healing sessions) before they are married. On the other hand, men and boys are expected to defend the community in case of war or raids from neighbouring communities, especially the Maasai and Kalenjin communities, with whom they engage in constant wars over cattle. They also do manual work like clearing land for farming, building houses, making policies and rules for the community and deciding on cases and disagreements. Table 2 summarises the duties of men and women in Kuria society.

Duties of men	Duties of either gender	Duties of women
Taking cows to graze	Farming	Taking care of children and the home
Building homes and constructing houses		Cooking and serving
Protecting people and cattle		Weeding
Fighting enemies		Domestic chores
Clearing forests for farming		Caring for relatives
Offering sacrifices on behalf of family		Collecting firewood
Negotiating dowry		Socialising children
Ruling homes, villages and communities		Entertaining guests

Slaughtering an animal in a ceremony		Fetching water
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Table 2: Summary of the duties of men and women in Kuria

The gendered division of labour is reinforced by a set of taboos that govern the family unit. Such taboos include men being prohibited from sweeping the house. A woman is also not allowed to sit on her husband's chair. It is taboo to harvest without seeking permission from one's father and for a woman to dig a grave.

### 3.1.4 Religion, values and beliefs of the Kuria

The main religions in Kuria are Christianity (60%), Islam (5%) and indigenous beliefs (35%) (Ondiek 2010). Generally, there is a balanced and harmonious relationship between Muslims and Christians in Kuria. Among the Kuria people, despite their religious nature, communal life is controlled by the (secular) council of elders (*inchama*<sup>22</sup>). This council constitutes a group of old men, the youngest being in their mid-sixties, who rule over households indirectly. They preside upon communal activities and dictate when circumcision ceremonies are to be held. They also control sexual behaviour and conduct in the community. They dictate what other members of the society have to do (and when), and mete out punishment on those who go against their decrees. Celebrations accompany every stage of life as children are born and grow to maturity. Each of these stages is characterised by a lot of singing, chanting and performing of rituals. In these celebrations are oral literature performances including songs which convey cultural values, beliefs, traditions and gender expectations of every member of the Kuria community. Other oral literature traditions, such as proverbs and narratives, also reinforce norms and expected behaviours which are passed on from one generation to another without being questioned.

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<sup>22</sup> Members of this council are commonly referred to as *abagaaka bi kimiira* (literally men of the culture).

### **3.1.5 Livelihood and socioeconomic activities**

The main economic activities among the Kuria people are small scale farming, indigenous cattle rearing, small-scale trading and small business engagements. The Kuria grow maize, coffee and tobacco for commercial purposes, while food crops include cassava, finger millet, millet and sweet potatoes. Coffee, maize and tobacco are believed to be men's crops, because of their economic value, while the rest are grown by women. Farming is carried out by using oxen to pull the plough; and weeding (which is mostly done by women) by using homemade hand hoes. Note that this traditional gendered division of labour and perceptions about gender roles has been altered to some extent along the Bwirege Nyabasi border. This could be because the number of single parent families has risen in this area following perennial interclan clashes. For instance, most households have lost their men in ethnic clashes, forcing some women to take over family head positions as leaders where they are allowed to grow 'men's crops' and engage in other activities usually performed by men. Farm products sold at the local Ntimaru, Kegonga and Kehancha markets include tomatoes, green vegetables, rice, beans, cassava, ripe bananas, small fish (*omena/ichimeno*) and boiled maize. Other market activities include selling plastic containers, cooked food and second-hand clothes and shoes, commonly known as *mitumba*, on market days. Equipment repair and entertainment rooms (for instance those showing the English premier league football and action films) are mostly run by middle aged men. There are also small mobile phone charging kiosks and motorcycle repair shops spread in different places along the Ntimaru Kehancha main road. It is at these market centres where some men pass their time. Due to limited means of transport, only a few people have travelled outside their home area, thus the only way of life they know is the one they have been socialised into. A few men who have travelled to the capital city of Nairobi are employed as watchmen while some live in Kericho town working in tea farms as tea pickers. There are only a handful of professionals, most of whom are teachers.

In this region, the main source of domestic fuel is firewood. Charcoal, kerosene and gas can be found in a few affluent households. Electricity is mainly found in Ntimaru, Kegonga and Kehancha centres but it is quite unreliable with constant blackouts. Secondary schools in the district make use of solar panels that charge batteries used for lighting at night. Some use diesel-fueled electricity generators. These are also

used in the market centres, shops and clubs when there is a prolonged black out. A number of businesses in Ntimaru, Kegonga and Kehancha are owned by people from other ethnic communities, mostly the Kisii, Luo and Kikuyu. These mini-supermarkets and mini-malls are mostly stocked with foodstuffs, clothes and shoes.

The main social problems in this district include illiteracy, poverty and economic inequality. The very rich (mostly politicians) are a tiny minority, and they trade in cattle and maize. There is a small percentage of the middle class, most of whom are teachers. The majority of district dwellers are lower class, living on less than one US dollar per day. However, even with these disparities, people socialise freely across class and ethnic boundaries. Having discussed the economic activities, I highlight the general social context in Kuria society in the next section.

### **3.1.6 Kuria celebrated life stages**

#### **Birth ceremony**

Among the Kuria people, the ability to give birth is considered to be vital for women. A woman who has had children earns respect in her family and among her peers. Giving birth is perceived to be an assurance of the continuation of the family line. Any woman who does not have the ability to give birth is seen as cursed and derogatory names such as a 'dry tree' are used to describe her. She is called the barren one (*omogomba*). There is no equivalent term for her husband or a male who does not sire children. Upon staying childless for up to two or three years after marriage, a husband is pressured to marry another wife with little or no consideration for medical interventions. A similar case is when a woman does not bear sons. Her husband is expected to marry another wife. This shows how male children are highly valued in the Kuria community. A man who has many children, both sons and daughters, is considered rich. Sons are associated with protection while daughters are viewed in terms of economic gain, which comes through dowry when they are married off.

Confirmation of a pregnancy is treated with joy in both families, with the man and his wife taking a token to his father-in-law to announce the expectation of a future generation. Women give birth at home with the assistance of local midwives. Once a woman gives birth, rituals are performed to protect the mother and baby from misfortunes and 'bad-eyed witches'. The new mother is taken good care of, fed well,

provided for and not allowed to do physical work up to three months. When a child is born there is ululation (*ukuririata*) which is used by women to announce a successful birth and celebration from the house where the child is born. If it is a boy, the ululation is prolonged and the women announce that it is a shield and spear (*inguba ni ritimo*). If it is a girl, the celebration is short and the women would announce that it is a firewood load (*omosaire gonkwe*). This gendered announcement of births reveals the values associated with each gender. A male is seen as important in the protection of the family line. He is the one who will inherit family property once his father dies. Being compared to firewood signals that the girl's importance is constructed as short lived. She is perceived to be of value to her home, but only for a short time before she gets married.

### **Naming ceremony**

The naming ceremony is conducted after four days for a girl and five days for a boy. For first-born children, males are given one of these three names, Marwa, Chacha or Mwita, while females are named Robi, Boke or Gati. For other children naming depends on different aspects ranging from: being named after deceased relatives, the weather and climatic conditions, farming season, time of the day and what the mother is doing just before the child is born. For instance, a child born during the farming season is called *Weirema* (of the farm) (boy) or *Nyakorema* (one who farms) (girl). As the child develops, he/she is socialised according to their gender. Boys are taught by male members of the family how to hunt for wild animals, to farm, to herd cattle, and protect the community, all of which require courage and strength, while girls are taught domestic chores, such as cooking, washing and caring for the younger siblings by female members of the family. Other teachings range from cultural norms, historical developments, expected behaviours, community values and oral literature aspects.

### **Circumcision ceremony**

At the age of 13 (for girls) and 15 (for boys) the teachings change to how to be men and women. It is at this time that they<sup>23</sup> are being prepared for circumcision. The boys

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<sup>23</sup> Boys as well as girls are circumcised in this community. Boys' circumcision takes place concurrently to that of girls, to prepare them for marriage and performance of duties such as leadership, offering sacrifices and sitting among the elders. Uncircumcised boys do not occupy



are expected to build their huts (*ichisiiga*) and move out of their mother's hut. The girls stay in their mother's hut till marriage. Preparations for girls' circumcision start many weeks and months before the exact day (see a discussion of the Kuria female circumcision process in section 3.2.11). Invitations to the ceremony are made by their parents, older siblings, aunts and other relatives. On the circumcision day girls are escorted by aunts, relatives and friends to the circumcision ground during which there is continuous singing. Once circumcised, those who are considered to be brave are escorted home amidst celebrations and singing and are received by friends and relatives, given gifts and praised for their courage. Those who show fear or cry are left to walk home alone and are not rewarded, neither is there any singing.

Once home, they are secluded for two weeks or one month, depending on the individual, for them to heal. During this period, they are fed well and not expected to do any physical work. They are taught how to be women in the community, how to respect their husbands once married and take care of children. At the end of the healing period there is a graduation/coming out ceremony (*omooroko*). This is a one-day ceremony where it is declared that they are ready to come out of seclusion, interact with the other sex and be ready for marriage and bringing up a family. This celebration is important since it sets the girls free to be involved in sexual relations with men and they are ready to receive marriage proposals.

### **Marriage ceremony**

After the circumcision and healing ceremonies, the next stage is marriage. This is expected to take place as quickly as possible. In some cases, marriage proposals are made on the coming out day and arrangements that culminate in a consummation of marriage concluded soon after. Marriage is compulsory in Kuria community; no one has a choice not to get married. Girls who stay for a long time without being proposed to are eventually married off to old men as second wives just to give the dowry to their families. Every man is expected to marry (*atete*) and every woman be married<sup>24</sup> (*atetwe*). It is the men who propose marriage and pay dowry, while women are not

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any leadership positions in the community. Boys' circumcision is beyond the scope of this research.

<sup>24</sup> The verb 'to marry' is used with men and 'to be married' with women, in this community. A similar case has been reported in Rwanda (see Kimenyi 1992).

expected to do this. Women are not allowed to choose suitors - this is done by their fathers and/or male relatives if the father has died. Marriage proposals and agreement on dowry are conducted by men only, with no involvement of women whatsoever. Dowry is paid in terms of cattle and the number (normally between 15 to 30 heads) is agreed on after long negotiations. Upon agreement, men from the woman's side visit the man's side to collect the dowry on an agreed date. It is on this day that the wedding date is set.

On the wedding day, the bridegroom is accompanied by family members and friends to the bride's home. They are received well and served special porridge (*entobeke*) which is followed by meat (*inyama*) and *ugali*, a thick paste of water and cassava flour (*ubukima*). The celebration then continues till evening when they leave with 'their wife' and take her back to the man's home. Once there, celebrations continue through to the next day when the husband introduces his wife to the other members of his immediate family. The new wife is also introduced to other relatives and informed that she is now part of this family. All this time the position of the man and woman are emphasised with the role of the man as head of the family and provider and woman as his helper and supporter being underscored. Soon after marriage, the father of the married man apportions him a piece of land. Sometimes they are also given a cow and bull. The mother-in-law gives her daughter-in-law cooking utensils: a grinding stone (*orogena*), a serving dish (*ekehe*), a serving bowl (*orohongo*), a basket (*ekegabo*), a cooking pot (*inyongo*), a water pot (*inyongo ya amanche*) and cooking flour (*obose*). These are to be used by the new wife to start a new kitchen and form a new home. The mother-in-law also erects a cooking place for the new wife with the help of aunts and cousins and other female relatives (this is done for all the wives being married to the family. However, it is more elaborate for the first wife since she occupies the most respected position among the co-wives). After this, a new home is expected to grow as a different entity. Divorce is not expected since the two families are closely involved in counselling couples from time to time. The marriage is sealed once the couple has children, especially male children. If the woman does not bear male children after three years, the man is pressured to marry another wife. Kuria men are said to be polygamous in nature and are allowed to marry as many wives as they can afford to pay dowry for. However, the first wife is considered the most important.

### **Death ceremony**

Death is believed to be the last stage and the customs surrounding it vary based on the gender of the dead person. All 'normal' people are buried within the compound, while people who are considered mad, the disabled, uncircumcised and unmarried women are buried outside the compound<sup>25</sup>. On the day of the burial, the grave is dug before sunrise. It is only married men who are allowed to dig the grave. Males are buried on the right-hand side of the compound and females on the left hand side. The Kuria bury their dead wrapped in cow hides or banana leaves (Rioba 2014), although this is slowly changing to wooden coffins. For seven days after burial, family members are not allowed to travel out of their homes and men are not allowed to go to war. This is to allow the spirit of the dead to settle well in the other world. After seven days, there is a cleansing ceremony to keep away death and its evil spirits. Kuria people do not believe in natural death. Death is always believed to be caused by witchcraft or evil spirits. After the cleansing ceremony, everyone is free to resume their chores and normal life activities. It is also believed that the spirit of the dead is always among their relatives and he/she is acknowledged through naming. Giving their children names of deceased relatives is therefore believed to be a way of inviting the dead back to the living world for companionship and protection.

#### **3.1.7 Kuria power structures**

In Kuria, power, status, hierarchy and social order are manifest in the cultural ideas about gender relations. The utmost power lies with a group of men called the council of elders (*inchama*) who decree on every event in the community. These men have been accorded the highest social status in the community and walk with a fly-whisk (*ekewasi*) as a symbol of identification. They decide when farming is to take place and when ceremonies and festivities are to be held. Other community members do not challenge directives passed by these men, because of fear based on the belief that they possess magical powers obtained from ancestors, which they can use both benevolently and malevolently. Second to them are the other men who wield power and control in their homesteads. These men make decisions at a household level and gain more power as they advance in age. The third most powerful group is that of

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<sup>25</sup> These are not buried where people live since it is believed that they do not become ancestors in their other lives; they turn into demons and evil spirits (*ibihwe na amasambo*).

circumcised old women, who are respected for their wisdom and called upon to give advice to the young women being prepared for marriage or those who are newly married. The next group is that of other circumcised women who are said to have earned status, cultural identity and respect by undergoing FGM. At the lowest level are uncircumcised women and children who are grouped together.

In general, men are more powerful and are regarded as superior to women. At a family level, women are expected to show respect to men, including those who are younger than them (as long as the men are circumcised). Before being married, a woman is given instructions on how to submit to the rule of her husband. She is informed of the consequences of not living up to the expected behaviour. It is women who teach their daughters traditional rules of conduct, thereby perpetuating the norms of servility and subservience from one generation to the next. The ideal rules for proper female behaviour are inscribed in language and passed on from one generation to another through linguistic practices such as proverbs, narratives, songs and wise sayings which form a body of the oral literature of the Kuria.

### **3.1.8 Kuria songs and dances**

Songs among the Kuria, to a great extent, deal with gender roles and expected behaviours of men and women. One major characteristic of Kuria songs is repetition, which intensifies the aesthetics of the song. The most common song and dance among the Kuria people is the lyre (*iritungu*). This is both a genre of song and dance and a musical instrument that is used as part of singing and dancing during ceremonies. Given the level of skill required to play the *iritungu*, its performance is generally given by professional musicians who are often attached to the chief, or another much respected member of the community. The musicians sing praises of these elders, lauding their wisdom, magnanimity, or military prowess. The words rely heavily on comparisons of people's prowess and success, drawing on historical events, people and legends from the heritage of both their clans and Kuria as a whole. *Iritungu* has been used as a genealogical and historical record of the Kuria culture for a long time (Senoga-zake 1995).

As a musical genre, *iritungu* dance is accompanied by the gourds (*ibirandi*) that are half filled with seeds and pebbles. This is a common form of song and dance used in

the circumcision ceremonies. Each member of the community has a role and a part to play. The other dance is called *isururu*. Men cut pieces of wood of about 15cm from which they carve shoes called *imitiamburi*. They wear these shoes as a means of enhancing their height and image as dancers. They also attach ostrich feathers to their elbows. Girls wear beads around their necks and heads and use a lot of oil on their bodies. Male dancers wear monkey skins and cheetah hides across their chests. *Ukuhurania* (persuasion), which is a boys' circumcision activity, involves circumcision songs and dances. When the time comes for boys to be initiated, they meet during the day to seek permission from their parents and clan elders. They dance to the songs of persuasion for elders' permission. After permission has been granted they continue dancing along the road to the circumcision site while singing songs of praise, bravery and chanting.

*Iribina rye ntono* (the dance of the *ntono*) is a circumcision dance which is accompanied by elaborated and prolonged singing (Senoga-Zake 1995). After boys and girls are circumcised and healed they celebrate with the *iribina rye ntono* (Senoga-Zake 1995). During the dance, which takes place during the day, girls pick their partners but during wedding ceremonies, boys pick their partners and the dance is performed at night. When composers have a new tune they never know if it will have a great influence on the rest of the community. For instance, Makorre Mwita from Kegego in Kuria sings love songs to the accompaniment of *iritungu* and *ibirandi*. His famous song derives from a story of a wife who deserted her husband and stayed away from home. She lived with several men but realised that her first husband was the best of them all. Returning to him she found that he was not ready to receive her back. She is given shelter and comfort by her children for the rest of her days (Senoga-Zake 1995). The moral of the song is that a woman who goes away 'to practise prostitution' is not welcomed back to her matrimonial home (there are no such restrictions for men). The song also emphasises the value of caring for one's parents when they are old. This shows that the composition and themes are normally drawn from the local context and historical happenings of the time. Messages in the Kuria songs are largely gendered. The repeated images of women as domestic and objects of beauty and men as brave, protectors and providers construct and maintain particular patriarchal gender ideologies, which become norms over time. The songs' producers prove that they are operating within a tradition that imposes an ideological

position through oratory devices. The songs and dances are therefore one of the means through which Kuria gender and cultural beliefs are conveyed.

FGM songs, also called *obhosamba bwa abhasagane* (literally, circumcision songs for girls), are performed months before the ceremonies, during the actual ceremonies and after (during healing). They are the focus of this thesis (see details of circumcision songs in section 3.3).

### **3.2 Female genital mutilation**

The World Health Organisation (hereafter WHO) has defined Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as partial or total removal of the female genitalia or other injury to the female genitals for cultural or other non-medical reasons (WHO 1997, 2011). The council on scientific affairs of the American Medical Association (1995) defines FGM as unnecessary modification of female genitals. WHO further describes female genital mutilation as a violation of the rights of girls and women (WHO 2008, 2011) and calls upon communities and cultures that practise FGM to end it. Despite the efforts of WHO and others anti-FGM organisations to end the practice, communities practising FGM still firmly resist change with each giving myriad reasons for its continued practise. Most of the communities that practise FGM view WHO's approach as a top-down or influenced by Western views.

#### **3.2.1 Distribution of FGM cases**

##### **FGM in the world**

An estimated 100-140 million girls and women worldwide have undergone female genital mutilation (Reid 2014). Most of these cases have been reported in Africa. However, in the recent past FGM is practised in some countries in the Middle East and Asia (UNICEF 2005; WHO 2006, 2011). There have also been cases of FGM among immigrant communities in western countries such as Australia, Canada, France, UK, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States (WHO 2006). However, many of the girls who live in Western countries and who are subjected to FGM do not undergo FGM in these countries, they are instead sent to their countries of origin to undergo the procedure on the pretext of visiting relatives (Munoz-Ortiz 2009). In a study of FGM among North Africans who live in Scandinavia, 73 out of

the 220 women interviewed reported being cut when they travelled home for a visit, while only 15 women admitted that their daughters were genitally mutilated in Scandinavia (Elgali et al 2005). Recently there have been instances where FGM has been conducted in the UK. For instance, by October 2015, up to four girls had been found to have been mutilated in the UK in a span of one year (Beckford & Manning 2016).

### **FGM in Africa**

Female circumcision has been reported in 28 countries in Africa. Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan account for three quarters of all cases of FGM in the world (WHO 2011). In some countries, more than ninety percent of women have gone through one form of the genital surgeries (Gollaher 2000). Recent studies show that nine out of ten women in Djibouti, Egypt, Guinea, Mali, Northern Sudan, Sierra Leone and Somalia undergo FGM (Yoder & Khan 2008). In these countries, the prevalence among women aged 15-49 years is very high (over 80%). These include percentages from Djibouti (93%), Egypt (91%), Eritrea (89%), Guinea (96%), Mali (85%), Sierra Leone (91%), Somalia (98%) and Southern Sudan (89%). Ninety percent of all female genital procedures in Africa are type I or type II (Reis et al 2012). The remaining 10 percent are type III procedures mostly carried out in Northeast Africa.

Table 3 shows the distribution of FGM cases in 20 African countries among women aged 10-49 years (these are the percentages of women who have been mutilated in these countries), while Figures 2 and 3 show prevalence of FGM cases by geographical distribution.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>FGM/C Prevalence of women aged 10-14</b>	<b>FGM/C Prevalence of women aged 15-</b>
1	Egypt	96.4	95.8
2	Eritrea	78.3	88.7
3	Northern Sudan	86.8	89.2
4	Ethiopia	62.1	74.3
5	Guinea	89.3	95.6
6	Mali	91.2	91.6
7	Burkina Faso	65.0	76.3
8	Mauritania	65.9	71.3
9	Senegal	24.8	28.2

10	Cote d'Ivoire	39.6	41.7
11	Chad	43.4	44.9
12	Central Africa Republic	27.2	35.6
13	Nigeria	12.9	19.0
14	Benin	12.1	16.8
15	Ghana	3.3	5.4
16	Niger	1.9	2.2
17	Cameroon	0.4	1.4
18	Kenya	20.3	32.2
19	Tanzania	9.1	14.6
20	Uganda	0.5	0.6

Table 3: Distribution of FGM cases among women aged 15-49 in 20 African countries

Source: AFRUCA 2016

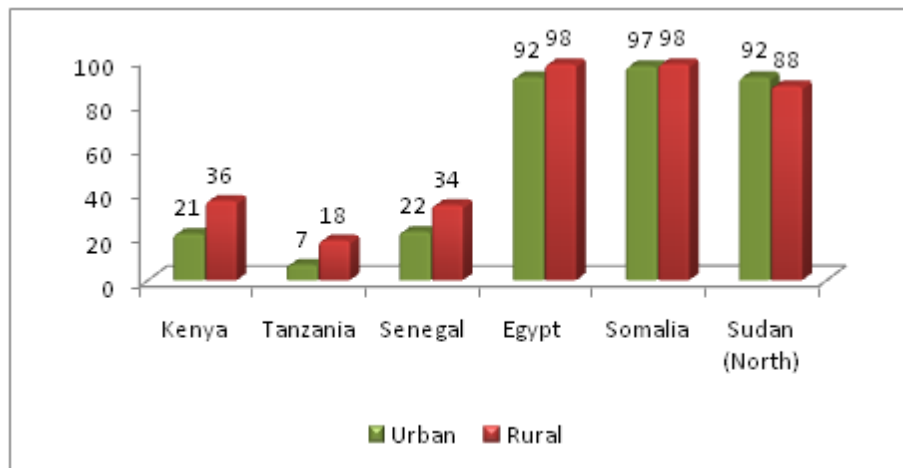


Figure 2: FGM prevalence in some African countries by geographical distribution

Source: Olenja & Godia 2016



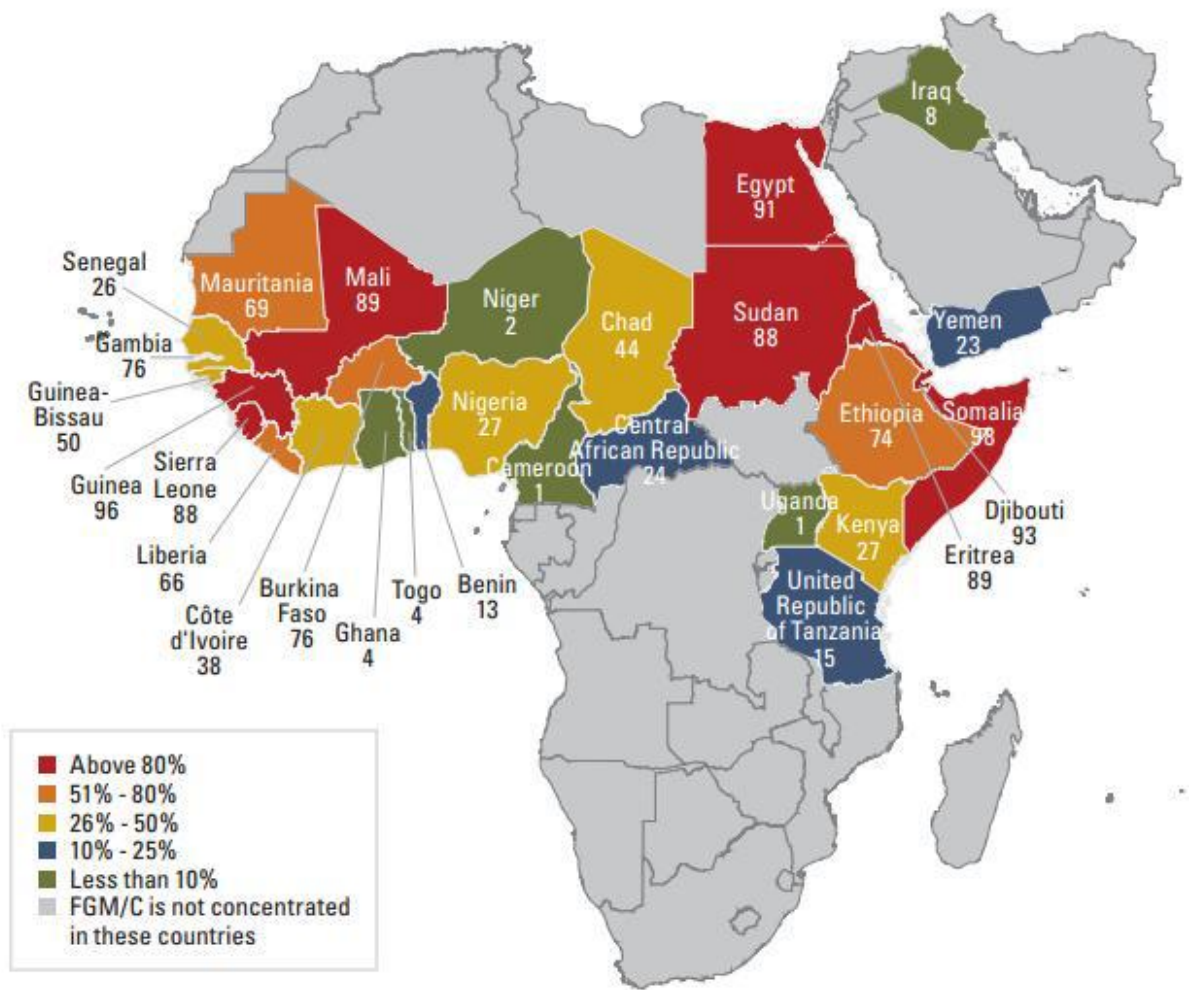


Figure 3: Map of Africa showing the distribution of FGM prevalence by percentages

Source: AFRUCA 2016

### FGM in Kenya

In Kenya, an estimated 27.1% of girls and women aged 15-49 have undergone FGM (DHS 2008-09). This is a decrease from 40% in 1998. FGM is prevalent in some communities, for instance the Kuria, but unheard of in others, such as the Luo. Ninety seven percent of female Somalis living in Kenya, 96% of the Kisii of Western Kenya and 73% of the Maasai of Rift Valley have gone through FGM. The lowest rates in the country are among the Luo and Luhya where only 0.7% of women have undergone FGM. Among the Kuria people, FGM is a deeply rooted cultural practice with 96% of women and girls having gone through it (DHS 2008-09; Oloo et al 2010).

Kenya is classified by UNICEF (2005) as a group II country which means FGM is prevalent in certain ethnic groups at varying rates.

The most prevalent type of FGM practised in Kenya is ‘flesh removal’ (WHO Type I and II). The Kisii and Kuria communities practise type I (clitoridectomy) while the Maasai and Meru practise type II (excision); and the Somali Borana and Rendile type III (infibulation) (Population Council 2007). There is an overall trend recently leaning towards removing less flesh and reducing the severity. Among the Somali it has been reported that there is a decline in the severity of the cut (Population Council 2007), whereas among the Kisii there is an increasing trend towards nicking (pricking with a needle), mostly carried out by medical professionals. However, among the Kuria people these trends have not been reported. Figure 4 shows the prevalence of FGM in Kenya by type while Figure 5 shows the prevalence of FGM in Kenya by region:

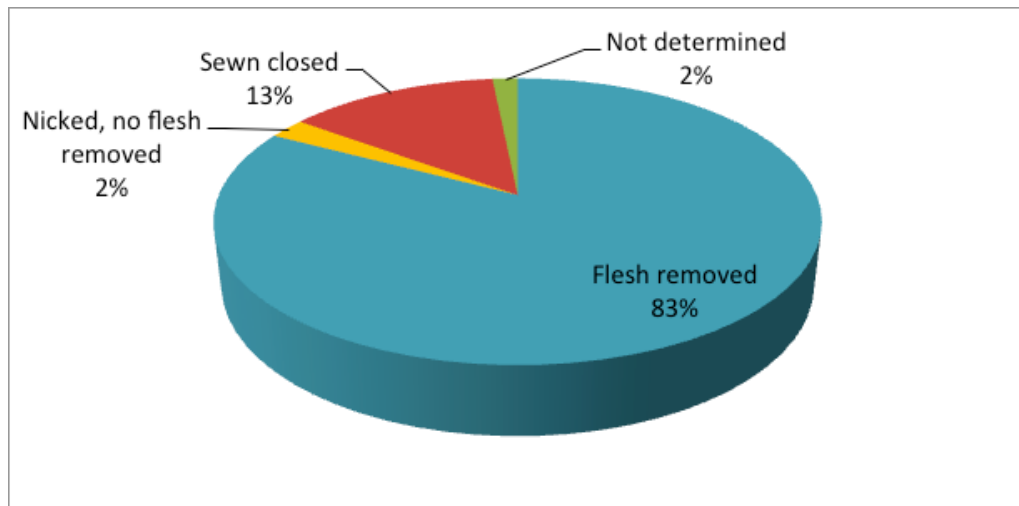


Figure 4: Prevalence of FGM cases in Kenya by type

Source: DHS 2008-09

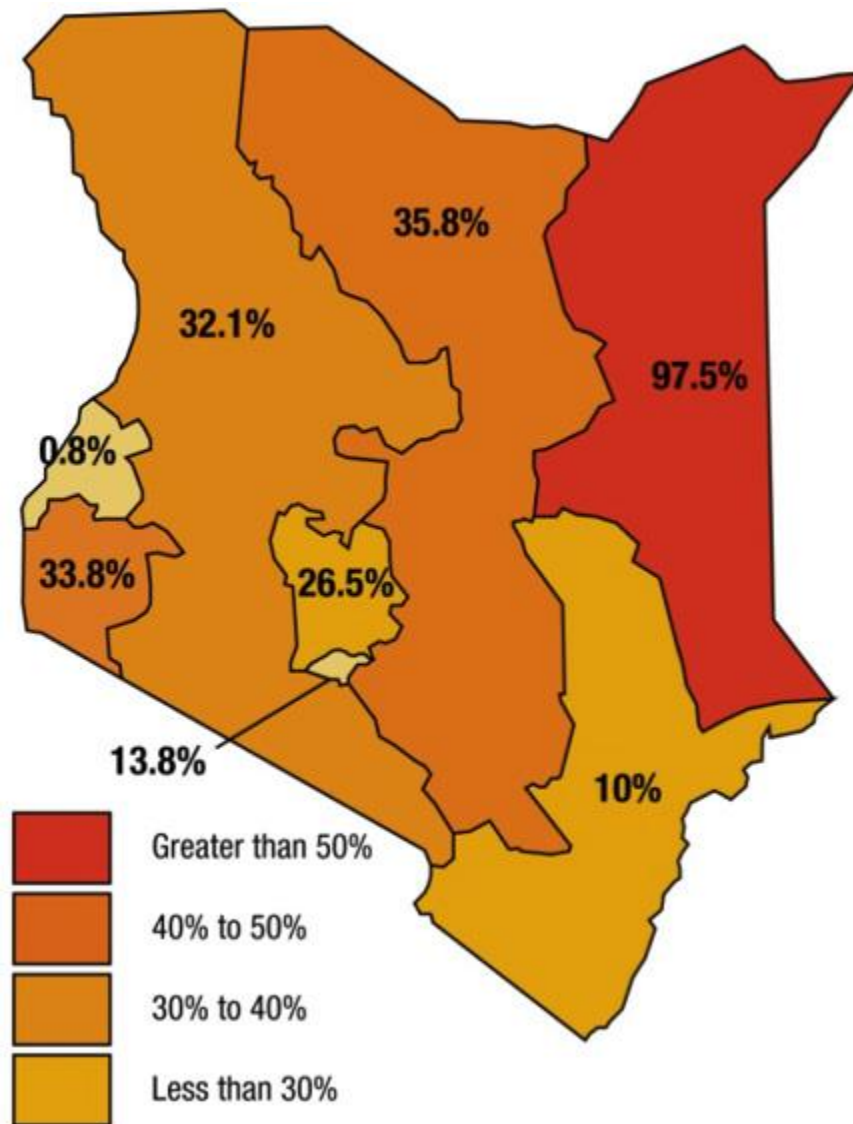


Figure 5: Distribution of Female Genital Mutilation cases in Kenya (by province)

Source: DHS 2008-09

Kenya is a patriarchal society (see Wangila 2007; Onyango 2008) with strict moral and cultural restrictions being put on women and their behaviour. One such restriction, which is associated with religio-cultural aspects, is the taboo against women achieving sexual pleasure. The other is unplanned pregnancies among other taboos and rituals associated with child rearing. Openly discussing sex and sexuality is also a common taboo in many ethnic communities in Kenya. Research has revealed that Kenyan mothers find it hard to teach their daughters about sexual maturation, abstinence, use of contraceptives and FGM because of these restrictions (Chrichton et al. 2012). In Kenya, women and girls in the rural areas are more likely to undergo FGM than those in the urban areas.

### 3.2.2 Definitions of related terms

The term female genital mutilation (FGM) was coined by WHO (1997; 2008) and is used by those who disagree with the practice and the cutting of any part of the female genital organ. FGM as a term is now recognised worldwide. However, among most communities where cutting some parts of female genital organs is considered to be a (normal and positive) cultural practice, the term used is female circumcision<sup>26</sup> (Onuforo et al. 2004). Female circumcision is considered a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood in most of these societies. The anti-FGM advocacy literature has variously defined the ritual using different expressions such as ‘Female Genital Castration’, ‘Female Genital Surgery’ and ‘Female Genital Cutting’. Those in support of the practice argue that these expressions are suggestive of an ideological dichotomy of Western versus non-Western or superior versus inferior. FGM, for example, presents the initiates as having been mutilated, which to those involved is seen as an insult. Expressions such as ‘female genital castrations’, conjure images of infertility, especially among communities such as Kuria in which it is argued that the practice prepares women for marriage and motherhood. Practitioners argue that it is their right to practise their culture and accuse the critics of neo-colonial attitudes. However, to date, the two terms ‘female genital mutilation’ and ‘female circumcision’ have been used interchangeably. I will therefore use both FGM and female circumcision in this thesis. Other terms that are important in this study include Kuria terms for girls going through circumcision, the ‘uncircumcised girls’ (*abasagane*), those who have just been circumcised, the ‘initiates’ (*abasamba*) and those who have graduated, the ‘women’ (*abaiseke*). The surgeon is ‘circumciser’ (*omokebi/omosari*) while the woman supporting the girl is ‘supporter’ (literally the holder of the head (*omogoti motwe*)), the point(s) where cutting takes place is ‘circumcision ground’ (*ekebaga/ekebega*) and the cutting ritual is ‘circumcision ceremony’ (*esaaro*). When being prepared for circumcision and undergoing healing women and girls are involved in ‘singing circumcision songs’ (*okorea obosamba*)

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<sup>26</sup> The use of the term female circumcision, especially among the Kuria, is analogous to male circumcision although the two practices are not the same (Monahan 2008). While the clitoris is cut for the females, the penis is not cut for males; only the prepuce/foreskin is removed and does not damage the penis as an organ for sexual pleasure. Clitoridectomy on the other hand destroys the clitoris, the organ for sexual pleasure in females (Gruenbaum 2001). To emphasise the gravity of the act, WHO adopted the term FGM to support advocacy towards its elimination (WHO 2008).

and on the last day of the healing process there is a large ‘coming out ceremony’ (*okooroka*). The actual act of circumcision is termed ‘to be cut’ (*ogokebwa/ogosarwa*).

### **3.2.3 Types of female genital surgeries**

The practice ranges from washing of the clitoris for the purpose of cleansing it, light pricking of the clitoris, cutting the small tip of the hood of the clitoris prepuse to cutting of the main parts of the female genitalia and sewing the opening, leaving a small opening for passing urine and menstruation. WHO (2008) has classified the surgeries into four main types. Type I: partial or total removal of the clitoris and the prepuce (clitoridectomy); Type II: partial or total removal of the clitoris and labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora (excision); Type III: narrowing of the vaginal orifice and creation of the covering seal by cutting and appositioning the labia minora and/or labia majora with or without excision of the clitoris (infibulation); Type IV: all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, such as, pricking, piercing, incising, scraping, and cauterisation. The Kuria people practise Type II (partial or total removal of the clitoris and labia minora, without excision of labia majora).

### **3.2.4 Effects of FGM**

The physical effects of female genital mutilation vary depending on the level of the operation. The effects can be short term or long term and have been classified under physical/health, mental, sexual and economic categories. Physical effects include pain and bleeding at the time of the operation, which pose a greater risk for hemorrhage and shock; these claim an unknown number of victims every year with most of those who succumb going unreported (Oloo et al. 2010). Oloo reports that most Kuria women suffer from these side effects (see more effects of FGM to Kuria women in section 3.2.12). Other effects include reproductive tract infection, infertility, HIV/AIDS virus transmission, delivery complications, obstetric fistula (Eke & Nkangimiene 1999; WHO 2008) and death. Those who survive often undergo acute or chronic disorders which include clitoral cysts, labial adhesions, recurrent urinary tract infections, renal scarring and kidney dysfunction (Gollaher 2000). FGM also causes sterility and, as intended, the long-lasting loss of sexual feeling. Women are left with scars, numbness and a loss of sensation in their sexual organs (Gollaher

2000) making FGM a cause of life-long psychological/mental issues. The World Bank Report (2005) identifies economic effects of FGM, listing a loss of productive labour as a direct or indirect consequence of FGM, and a reduction in household financial resources through the fees paid for the operation and medical treatment of FGM-related complications. An essential economic effect of FGM among the Kuria is the enormous cost of entertaining guests during the ceremonies and the lavish gifts given to the girls who have undergone the cut appropriately.

### **3.2.5 Reasons for practising FGM**

Many reasons have been given in support of FGM among practising communities. First, religion has been cited as the main reason for practising FGM. Among Muslim communities, the practice is guided by the belief that it is demanded by the Islamic faith. However, while studying FGM in Sierra Leone and Egypt, Moges (2003) found that there is no explicit connection between FGM and Islam. The argument that FGM seems to be very extensive among communities that practise Islam, hence relating FGM to Islam, has also been opposed because research has found that not all Muslims practise FGM. Momoah (2005) for instance, observes that FGM is not practised in the Muslim countries of Saudi Arabia, Libya, Jordan, Turkey and Syria. In Christianity, Toubia (1993) argues strongly that there is nothing specific in the Bible that promotes FGM. The debate on whether FGM has religious backing still goes on.

Secondly, there is a cultural aspect to the practice of FGM (Chege et al 2001; WHO 2011). The cut is a symbolic operation that represents a transition in life stages and it is an initiation rite (mostly a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood) in different cultures (MYWO 1991/1992). This is the reason given by communities that practise FGM especially where it is performed at puberty on girls aged 12-14 years old or just before the onset of menstruation, thus transforming girls from child to adult status. Thirdly, FGM is perceived to be a requirement for marriage. Findings from a baseline survey in Kuria show that most girls interviewed cited fear of being unmarriageable as the main reason why they chose to undergo FGM (see Oloo et al 2010). This was the case among the Kikuyu of Kenya, for instance, where before initiation, the girls were kept in seclusion for a period of time (at least two weeks) and given instructions on morality, tribal laws, social codes, being a good wife and mother before undergoing the mutilation (Kenyatta 2015).

Kenyatta (2015) gives a vivid picture of the role of circumcision in preparation for marriage among the Agikuyu in the mid-1970s. He shows how an uncircumcised tribe member could not marry and was ostracised by the community and no one was allowed to interact with them; they were an outcast. In the matrimonial relation, the rite of passage is the deciding factor. No proper Gikuyu would dream of marrying a girl who has not been circumcised, and vice versa. It is a 'taboo for a Gikuyu man or woman to have sexual relations with someone who has not undergone this operation' (Kenyatta 2015:75). This is the case in most African cultures and other third world countries where marriage is not an option, but rather a necessity for survival. In many African countries, for instance, an unmarried woman will have a difficult life without support from relatives or community. Marriage is therefore the basis for the practice of FGM, because without undergoing FGM, a woman is denied the right to marriage and, in extension, to what is perceived as a happy life.

Achieving a 'chaste' status, sexual purity and the promotion of virginity have also been associated with the continued practice of FGM. FGM is deemed to diminish the women's desire for sex. Medically, this has some element of truth because cutting away the sensitive part of the female genitalia kills the sensation associated with the organ. There is a generally held belief - in communities that practise FGM- that uncircumcised women and girls are difficult to satisfy sexually and thus difficult to control. They are overly sexual and can seek sexual satisfaction anywhere and with anyone, hence leading to sexual promiscuity (Mokaya 2012). Excision is therefore believed to protect a woman against her over-sexed nature, saving her from temptation, suspicion and disgrace while preserving her chastity (Moges 2003). Removing the clitoris to suppress sexual appetite, is seen as desirable and a boost to men's self-esteem, because as men grow older their sex drive diminishes. A circumcised wife would therefore be more suited for an aging man's needs than an uncircumcised woman whose demanding sexual needs would make a husband embarrassed trying to satisfy her and 'could risk using dangerous drugs to improve his potency' (Gollaher 2000:193). The assumed reduction of desire even during marriage is expected to ensure faithfulness of the woman to her husband, because it is believed that when uncircumcised, a girl has loose morals and runs wild, hence she can bring shame and disgrace to her family (GTZ 2005). Within communities that practise FGM, it is also believed that FGM serves as a means of discouraging

premarital sex and reducing sexual desire of a girl, thereby preserving her virginity. However, this is not the case among the Kuria people where FGM is seen as a prerequisite for a girl to have sexual relations with any man since she has attained womanhood. FGM has therefore been blamed for many cases of teenage pregnancies and dropping out of school in the months following the circumcision ceremonies (Ondiek 2010).

Another argument is that uncircumcised women risked clitoral swelling which could drive them to masturbation or lesbian activities and increased risks of vaginal cancer (Gollaher 2000). The dominant ideology, therefore, is that circumcision makes marriage secure, with the wife being drawn to her husband by love not lust, thus providing greater stability for families.

Gender identity is another reason for the upholding of FGM. In some societies, the clitoris is seen as a dangerous organ that requires removal. For instance, in African states such as Mali, Burkina Faso, and many other parts of West Africa where severe cases of FGM are practised, the clitoris represents maleness (Gollaher 2000; Wien 2003). FGM therefore is practised to clearly distinguish the sex of an individual based on the fact that the clitoris of the female makes her male. In FGM, the removal makes a male female and assures a woman of her femininity. In addition, there is a belief that the clitoris makes a girl ugly and must be removed. According to one Sudanese woman, 'in some countries they only cut out the clitoris, but here we do it properly, we scrape our girls clean. It is properly done nothing is left other than a scar; everything is cut away' (Wien 2003:11). Since the clitoris represents masculinity in young girls, the need to identify their sex clearly becomes of prime importance in distinguishing gender identity. This is clearly put by Egyptian women defending FGM, 'we are circumcised and insist on circumcising our daughters so that there is no mixing between male and female' (Wien *ibid*).

FGM is also believed to be practised for hygiene and aesthetic reasons. In most communities, the female external genitalia is perceived to be dirty and unsightly and their removal is considered to promote hygiene and aesthetic appeal (Althaus 1997). Those who uphold FGM argue that the removal of the female genitalia contributes to the cleanliness and purity of a woman. This is why in some communities the popular terms used for mutilation are synonymous with purification, for instance, *tahara* in



Egypt and *tahur* in Sudan (Althaus 1997). It is believed that the removal of the clitoris and the labia contribute to the beauty of a woman. In such communities, an uncut girl is considered dirty and polluted. This is the reason why uncut women are ostracised by their own families and communities. They are not considered to be part of social life and do not participate in communal feasts, since they would be seen as polluting them. These misconceptions are based on the belief that secretions produced by the glands in the clitoris, labia minora and majora are bad smelling and unhygienic and so they make the female body unclean. It is believed that the absence of the clitoris keeps the vagina clean and that its presence damages the baby at delivery and affects the husband's genitalia during intercourse (Leye et al. 1998).

In most African communities, including Kuria, where marriage is viewed as a means of economic gain, especially to girls' parents, FGM is seen to be a step towards material wealth. This is common in rural areas. FGM is the prerequisite for marriage and subsequent payment of the bride price to the parents of the girl. In communities where FGM is deeply rooted, an uncut girl is not eligible for marriage and may be a burden to her parents, as no member of the community will dare to marry her, meaning no monetary gain for her parents. Among the Rendille of Northern Kenya, for instance, when discussing the decision to cut their daughters, men stress the economic ramifications of cutting arguing that an uncut girl denies her family the right to receive wealth and failing to cut a daughter would have significant social and economic consequences for the girl and her entire family (Shell-Duncan et al. 2001). Among the Kuria, parents choose to have their daughters undergo cutting to make them marriageable for their own economic gain.

It is not only the parents who benefit economically from FGM. The cutters also play a significant role in the promotion of FGM because this is their trade (FPAK 1997) and through it they gain income and social status in the community, this is the case in Kuria. In Kenya, cutters are paid from the fees that parents are charged. More is charged if a girl is pregnant or has cried during cutting since getting pregnant while still uncut is considered a bad omen and crying is seen as an embarrassment to the family, so the cutter must work harder to cleanse her

(GTZ 2005). The circumcised girls also benefit materially and this is one of the reasons used by circumcised women to persuade any girl who might be hesitant to undergo the cut. The girls receive money, clothes, shoes and umbrellas among other gifts from their parents, relatives and friends, making it a lucrative encounter worth enduring to most of them. While some members from Kenyan communities practising FGM have acknowledged its dangers, many of them are not ready to abandon it. They prefer the less severe types of cutting rather than total eradication but the majority want the teachings and the ceremonies that accompany FGM to continue, citing preservation of their culture as a justification for this view. This has also been associated with the fact that the ceremonies give the parents and relatives the opportunity to display their wealth, generosity and social status to the rest of the community (GTZ 2005).

Other reasons for continuation of FGM include anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism ideologies. This is common among communities who perceive anti-FGM campaigns as Western strategies to erode African culture and replace it with Westernism (Kenyatta 2015). Gollahar (2000) in a study of FGM in Africa observes that most women view FGM as their right and are happy with it. A case is cited of a woman who had been circumcised as a girl and who professed to be quite happy arguing that circumcision has been part of the African woman for many thousands of years and efforts to end it were Western driven with anti-FGM campaigners attempting to blackmail African nations to ban their valued custom. She adds that:

But whenever moves are made to do this, streets are filled with happy circumcised women demonstrating their desire to protect their daughters' rights to enjoy the same benefits (Gollahar 2000:198).

She then goes on to list many things that a girl gains when circumcised. First and foremost, female circumcision is seen to be a rite of passage and proof of adulthood; 'one day she is a girl, the next she is a woman,' (Gollahar 2000:198). Secondly circumcision is said to raise her status in the community, both because of the added purity that circumcision brings and the bravery that initiates are called upon to show. Thirdly, it confers maturity and inculcates positive character traits including the ability to endure pain. The circumcision ritual is also an enjoyable season in which a girl is the centre of attention and receives presents and moral instruction from her

elders and those who have gone through it before. It creates a bond between the generations, as all women in that society must undergo it and thus have shared an important experience (see reasons for practising FGM among the Kuria in section 3.2.13).

### **3.2.6 FGM and the law**

Since Western governments became aware of FGM among immigrants, legislation has been used as the main intervention tool (Leye et al. 2007). In Europe, Sweden was the first country to introduce specific laws prohibiting FGM (The 1982 Act Prohibiting Female Genital Mutilation (Leye & Sabbe 2009)). Currently there are laws prohibiting FGM in most western countries. In Europe, about 45 criminal court cases on suspected FGM have been tried and many convictions obtained (Leye & Sabbe 2009). The UK witnessed a court prosecution of a case relating to FGM in May 2014-2015 where Doctor Dhanuson Dharmasena, a consultant, who had been called to help deliver the baby of a woman who had been infibulated was charged. He cut the woman to deliver the baby but reinfibulated her in order to stop the bleeding caused (she had undergone infibulation at age six). He was charged in court for allegedly perpetuating FGM, although the mother did not want him prosecuted. He has since been acquitted (Mae & Smith 2015).

Campaigns against FGM have intensified since 1994. At the fourth world conference on women in Beijing, FGM was declared a danger to women's reproductive wellbeing and a violation of their rights. In July 1996, human rights advocates and women's groups successfully pressured the Egyptian government to issue regulations that prohibited ritual surgery on female genitals. In the UK, in 1996, the government passed legislation that established criminal penalties for cutting girls under 18 years old. At the same time, the American Medical Association denounced all medically unnecessary procedures to alter female genitalia. In Africa, 24 countries out of the 28 in which FGM is practised, have passed legislation against it. For instance, in Senegal, a law was passed in 1999 which makes it a crime to carry out FGM or to encourage anybody else to do it (The Economist 1999). In 2015 an act outlawing FGM was officially passed into law in Nigeria (Muganzi 2015). In Tanzania and Mauritius, FGM is illegal when performed on minors (Shell-Duncan et al 2013). In Eritrea, Ethiopia and Togo fines are levied not only against practitioners but also anyone knowing about the practice and failing to report it (Shell-Duncan et al. 2013).

Even with these legislative measures, UNICEF has emphasized that there is little research on the process and type of legislative reform needed in different contexts. 'The role that legislation plays in promoting behaviour change in FGM/C is an area that is particularly complex, under-researched and not fully understood' (UNICEF 2010:3).

### **The Kenya Anti-FGM Act (2001, 2011)**

Kenya has signed several international human rights conventions which provide a strong basis for characterization of FGM as a violation of human rights. For instance: Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); International Convention on Economic, Social and cultural Rights (ICESR); Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (The Maputo Protocol) and African Charter on Human and People's Rights (The Banjul Charter). The African Union declared the years 2010-2020 to be the decade for African Women, and Kenya which is a member, is expected to continue its commitment to promote and protect the rights of women. Before The Kenya Child Act 2001 came into fulfillment, the second president of the republic of Kenya, Daniel Moi, had issued two presidential decrees banning FGM and prohibiting government controlled hospitals from performing FGM (MYWO 1992).

In 1999 The Ministry of Health launched a National Plan of Action for the elimination of FGM in Kenya. This detailed the government's commitment to ending the practice. This was then followed by the passing of the Children's Act (2001) which came into full force in 2002 and which made FGM illegal for girls under the age of 18 years. The penalties under the Act included 12 months imprisonment and/or a fine of up to fifty thousand Kenya shillings (approximately 350 GBP). There were cases of court charges after this act but the efforts were hindered by widespread criticism that the Act offered inadequate protection and did not apply to adult women who were also being subjected to the practice. The Act was said to have failed to curb FGM because it was poorly implemented (Oloo et al. 2010). In 2011, however, efforts to end FGM came into full force again when parliament passed a second Anti FGM Act (2011), which prohibited FGM (Wangari 2011). This Act was signed into law on the 6<sup>th</sup> October 2011 after being drafted by Kenya Women Parliamentary Association (KEWOPA) with support from parliament council and UNFPA/UNICEF (2007) joint programme. The Act criminalises all forms of FGM performed on anyone, regardless

of age and status and banned the stigmatization of women who had not undergone FGM. It also made it illegal to aid someone in performing FGM, taking them abroad to have the procedure completed and/or failing to report to the authorities if the individual was aware that FGM had taken place.

The punishment to those violating this Act was much more severe than the previous one. It included three to seven years' imprisonment or life imprisonment for causing death by performing FGM, in cases where the victim died; it also included a fine of up to one million Kenya shillings. To date, there have been several successful prosecutions under the 2011 Act (see Wangari 2011; Criminal Law Appeal 2014). Although FGM has been declared illegal in Kenya, there is a clash between subscription to international norms and local sociopolitical allegiance. The commitment to protect community interests and minority rights, protection and promotion of cultural aspects as is outlined in the Kenyan Constitution (2010) have been used by practitioners to fight the government's efforts to end the practice. For fear of being demonized by these minority communities, the government is ambivalent: it positions itself in the middle, both with and against the international community.

### **3.2.7 FGM and power**

The first group of people to comment on the issues of FGM and its relation to power were feminist activists and scholars (Daly 1978; Walker 1992; Hosken 1993; Walker & Parmar 1995; Levin 2003; Pollack 2011). They argued that FGM was an assertion of male dominance over women, and pronounced FGM to be a form of violence against women and a ritual that provided evidence of a cultural hatred towards women (Daly 1978). They called FGM genocide of girls and women. Levin (2003) described it as sexual torture. Hosken argued that the politics of FGM was predicated on African males' affirmation of power over female sexuality. 'FGM is a training ground for male violence; it is used to assert absolute male domination over women not only in Somalia but all over Africa' (Hosken 1993:5). In this case FGM is perceived to be a site where women are exposed to violence while men watch and do nothing. Hosken adds that 'for African men to subject their own small daughters to FGM in order to sell them for a good bride price shows total lack of human compassion and vicious greed that is hard to comprehend' (1993:16).

The tradition underlying the practice of FGM is firmly upheld by men even though the cutting itself is the work of women. The personal narratives of women who have been cut describes their powerlessness: being held down by women, one sitting on the chest, others gripping the arms, and legs as the circumciser commences business (Gollaher 2000). Among the Kuria, FGM goes beyond male power to female power; those who have been circumcised have more power which they exercise over those who have not, both explicitly and through hegemonic practices. Mothers encourage their daughters to undergo FGM so that they both can assert their position, status and respect among other females. Multiple forms of power therefore come into play in the Kuria FGM practice.

The actual practice of genital cutting is a power centre for older women. Noah (2009) argues that FGM mostly takes place in strictly patriarchal societies and in such societies, women's control of the physical cut is one of the few areas in life in which women feel they hold any power. The cut takes place in the open, usually in a public place and anyone is allowed to the grounds. This collective participation by women is part of what has been described as 'public gaze' (Maina et al. 2000). FGM is therefore understood in the context of social norms including the norms that shape and control behaviour. Hayes (1975:620) writes that 'it is women, curiously enough, who directly and positively perpetuate it despite the pain, risk and complications. Older women, in particular, are strong advocates of it'. This may seem to be the case of victims turned perpetrators but FGM is governed by social norms and played out within socially defined gender roles where women are instruments, playing a normalised role. Although men are in most cases portrayed as passive actors, they are active in Kenya, and Kuria, in female circumcision. The seeming passivity is just the way gender power relations and control are organized and manifested. In African systems, male power control is invisible but through a critical discourse analysis what may appear as a normal pattern of behaviour is exposed to be an arena for power play. Men's dominant role in the perpetuation of FGM in Kenya and Kuria is evident in cases where married and initially uncircumcised women are forced, mostly by their husbands, to be circumcised to reduce sexual lust and activity (Maina et al 2000). In the same area, a religious sect advocating for a return to African traditions has argued that female circumcision is necessary in making women well behaved, thus preventing female prostitution. From these findings men are not passive. Therefore, there is a need to understand the power relations and the specific ways they are

masked by the normalisation processes. Focusing only on the victims and perpetrators or on the medical complications associated with FGM is to miss the complex and socially constructed meanings, the power relations and the social norms that define a 'proper woman', which is a key theme of this thesis.

### **3.2.8 FGM and culture**

FGM is deeply engrained in the cultures of the practitioners, with most of them viewing it as a practice for transforming girls to women. One American reporter researching on the practice in Ivory Coast discovered that FGM was deeply interwoven into the texture of family and cultural life. 'It is part of a girl's dreams of womanhood, a father's desire to show off with a big party and a family's way of proving its conformity to social conventions' (Gollaher 2000:189). Pain is key and is integral to the ritual. The operation is carried out without any anesthetic. In some cases, there are measures to intensify the pain as a way of preparing the girls for the difficult life associated with womanhood. In central Kenya, for instance, it enacts a symbolic rebirth into adulthood after which a girl is expected to assume behaviours of adult women, including sexual behaviours. In rural Egypt, the woman who performs the ritual provides the girl with a certificate. The circumcised girl keeps this to the day of her marriage. She presents the certificate to her prospective husband (Gollaher 2000). Therefore, to remain uncut is to risk becoming ostracised or being labelled as 'uncultured'.

### **3.2.9 FGM and gender**

FGM has been viewed as one of the myriad ways in which gender relations are manifested in various contexts. It is viewed as a means of maintaining male dominance in an unequal gendered power relationship. Among the Kikuyu of Kenya, for instance, FGM is performed before puberty to transform a girl into, what is perceived to be, 'virgin' status (Kwaak 1992), prevent promiscuity and keep her faithful to her husband after marriage. All these have been perceived to be more beneficial to men than women (Shell-Duncan & Hernlund 2000). In this context, FGM has to do with how women's bodies are sexually viewed and controlled. FGM is also viewed as a way of making one a female adult and giving a woman her assertive power position in her community.

Foucault (1984) argues that societies control sexuality through the construction of dichotomized and gendered sexuality with female sexuality being subordinate.

Societies have designed rules and norms defining appropriate male and female sexual behaviour. These norms are learned and reinforced through everyday social interaction; at the same time shaping and influencing social interaction and behaviour. Through this everyday interaction, norms are confirmed; in turn, they normalise social behaviour and relationships including relations of power. In this way, control of female bodies and sexuality is normalised. Although rarely explicitly stated, sexual control, in essence, is the control of sexual desire and pleasure by removing the part of the body that gives sexual pleasure. Among the Kuria, the cutting is said to reduce female sexual desires (*ekemeni*) in the girls. Foucault's (1975) analysis of control in medicine and his conceptualization of normalisation as a modern way of control can also be applied to female genital mutilation. Over time it is taken for granted that the cutting of the clitoris is the normal way of transforming a girl into a socially constructed woman and making her marriageable.

Devaluation of women and over-valuation of men is normalised through a long process that starts at the family level and continues through society in general (Maina et al 2000). During the socialisation process, women internalise and act according to the picture created of them. To illustrate this, part of the knowledge imparted by older women to the circumcised young women is how to be well behaved and submissive to their husbands. I view this, therefore, as a form of organising control, where the controlled also execute control, with the oppressor, in this case the men, being invisible and therefore hard to identify. This invisibility may differ depending on how it is organised. For example, in some African societies with matriarchal systems of governance, women and children constitute one economic unit, this provides space for women to exercise some control over household affairs (Amadiume 1997) and husbands have to negotiate, for instance, to get part of the surplus food produced by women (Clark 1980). However, this does not mean that women are not subordinated; it is only that the control by men is more invisible. When any changes are introduced, the invisible actors start redefining their position, in this way, their active role becomes visible. A case in point, is when Catholic priests living in Egypt banned female circumcision. This led Egyptian male converts to decline to marry uncircumcised women forcing the College of Cardinals in Rome to rescind its decision (Lane & Rubinstein 1996). In Uganda, when the government considered outlawing the practice among the Sabinu people, male elders passed a law requiring all women to undergo circumcision (Eliah 1999). Female circumcision in Kuria



illuminates this aspect whereby, when anti-FGM campaigns are introduced, men refuse to marry uncircumcised girls (Wambura 2016). With this refusal, men form the strongest opposition to the eradication efforts (Maina et al 2000); at this point their active role becomes visible in this socially normalised practice therefore making FGM a gender issue.

### **3.2.10 Studies of FGM in Kenya**

There is a wealth of literature on FGM in Kenya though none of these focuses on songs or on language use in FGM ceremonies. In his book *Facing Mt Kenya: The Tribal life of the Gikuyu*, Jomo Kenyatta (2015), the Kenyan first president and a freedom fighter, defended FGM as a form of nationalist resistance to European colonial domination. In his view, those who attacked FGM including missionaries, sentimental pro-African bodies, the colonial government and the educational and medical authorities, had focused on the surgical operation only. They missed the understanding of the fact that the operation was regarded as the very essence of an institution with enormous educational, social, religious and moral implications quite apart from the operation itself. Kenyatta approached the subject from an anthropological perspective.

FGM has also been researched from a health perspective whereby attempts have been made to discourage surgeries on female genitalia because they have adverse health effects. Health concerns associated with FGM include haemorrhage, clitoral cysts and inflammation among others (see section 3.2.4), which affect women in different measures globally. The third has been a psychological approach with psychologists arguing that FGM causes trauma and shock to the victims, which last a lifetime. The fourth approach has sociological underpinnings. Maina et al (2000) argue that FGM is carried out in Central Kenya as a social normalisation process. The researchers looked at what FGM implies for both men and women as actors within unequal power relations. They argued that despite being seen as passive, men were actually central actors in the FGM process. Their findings are similar to interviewees' responses in this study where it is unanimously agreed that it is men who decide on whether and when the girls are to be circumcised and their decision cannot be contested. Maina's study, however, focused on the sociological aspects and impacts of FGM and was anchored in social theories; the current study is a linguistic analysis. The other

approach has been the religious perspective with anti-FGM proponents arguing that female genital surgeries have no religious background as compared to male circumcision which, in Christianity, was ordained by God when he instructed Abraham to circumcise his male descendants (the Bible book of Genesis Chapter 17). Related to the religious approach is what Njoroge (2000), Kanyoro (2001) and Wangila (2007) call a feminist theological perspective in studying FGM. Speaking as Kenyan nationalists as well as African women, they vigorously condemn the rite. In their view, it is not only fuelled by the predominant patriarchy in Kenya but also by religion. They conclude by unanimously agreeing that any effort to liberate women from this rite must take into serious consideration religion and sociocultural aspects. They observe that the rite has continued to thrive despite the numerous legal, confrontational and humanitarian based approaches to end it. They, however, do not consider the linguistic perspective from which I approach FGM.

Other studies and reports have been published by the United Nations, WHO, UNICEF and other organisations on the subject of FGM in Kenya. These have taken a human rights perspective and are non-academic. There is, however, hardly any academic literature with a gender or linguistic perspective on FGM, yet language plays a great role in the socialisation process and indoctrination of ideologies in society. There is need for answers to such questions as whether FGM is a gender issue, whether language is used to perpetuate this gender issue and whether linguistic differentiations of men and women pave the way for female circumcision to take place. This study seeks to address these questions through a critical discourse analysis of FGM songs.

### **3.2.11 FGM in Kuria**

The origin of Kuria female circumcision (*esaaro yabasagane*) is still a mystery as is the origin of the practice internationally. From the interviews and historical writings about the Kuria people, one thing persists, nobody knows when it started. They ‘were born and found it ongoing, it was practised by our great grandparents and passed on

to us by our fathers we will pass it to our children and them to their children' (Rioba<sup>27</sup> 2014). Circumcision was, therefore, done as required by the Kuria tradition without any questioning. However, recently researchers have argued that the Kuria people and other Bantu language speakers might have learned the practice from Egypt (*Misiri*) from where they all originated, which would explain why the Bantu circumcise their girls while Nilotes do not (Mokaya 2012).

The importance of the ritual to the Kuria people is that it is a key element of their culture. Ruel (1997) notes that it marks Kuria girls' progression through life and the pain is meant to prepare them for the difficult adulthood responsibilities ahead such as: bearing children and giving birth, establishing a family and becoming a parent. This is why, in Kuria, a girl who is not circumcised is not allowed to get pregnant. '*Esaro* gives a person adult status and the right to bear children which come with marriage ceremonies' (Ruel 1997:26). Because the emphasis among the Kuria people is on establishing a family, marriage becomes a sequel rite to initiation irrespective of the age of the girl and because marriage and continuation of family is important (everyone is expected to have a family), FGM becomes inevitable since no one will be allowed to marry if she has not gone through circumcision. 'FGM among the Kuria people marks the marriageability of women, as well as the right to bear a name and a home and being socialised properly into acceptable womanhood' (Ruel 1997:27). The ceremony is accompanied by feasting and elaborate celebration and the event filled with processions of symbolic songs and dance intended to teach the young girl her duties and desirable characteristics as a wife and mother and to do all that is considered acceptable according to her gender.

When a girl is circumcised she is placed in an age set (*esaiga*). She remains in this age set until she is married, upon which her age set changes to that of her husband if the age sets are different (in most cases they are, because no one is expected to marry a person of the same age set). Traditionally circumcision is carried out on girls aged between 12 and 17 although this has reduced to between 9 and 15 because older girls and young women are more likely to understand that what they are being subjected

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<sup>27</sup> Rioba was an oral interviewee who was very knowledgeable in Kuria customs, history and beliefs. He was 80 years old at the time of the interview and had lived in both the Kenyan and Tanzanian sides of Kuria.

to is power and domination and are therefore more likely to resist. This may threaten the practice and the power that individuals accrue through engaging in it. There is a lot of awareness and anti-FGM campaigns at schools, in churches and other forums. Some young children now hear of the side effects of FGM more often than before, they also have examples of those who haven't undergone the cut as role models and mentors. This is why they are likely to resist, hence the reason for the decrease in age.

### **3.2.12 The Kuria female circumcision process**

The female circumcision ceremonies are a public event celebrated with public dancing, drinking and feasting. The circumcision ceremonies take place in December during school holidays. The council of elders (*inchama*) declares a circumcision season months or even years before it is conducted. This council is charged with the responsibility of being custodians of the cultural knowledge and practices (Kidegesho 2008). These elders perform rituals to appease ancestors so that none of the initiates suffers or dies. They pour animal blood on the circumcision grounds to ward off evil spirits. Girls are then prepared for the ceremonies by undergoing several prescribed rituals which culminate in genital cutting. The rituals begin many weeks and months before the exact day of the cut. The cutting ceremony is held in an open field with the elders, family members, relatives and friends present; this is a form of public declaration that the girl has undergone it and a way of showing conformity to the community beliefs.

Among the *Abairege* and *Abanyabasi* clans where my research was based, circumcision takes place in a specially-clan-designed-location/ground called *ekebega* which is usually far from the residential areas (normally an inhabited forest or hill). The girls are circumcised between the ages of 9-14. Initially (early 1990s), girls were cut at the age of 12-17, but currently parents are concerned that their girls might become sexually active when still young, so they are now cut earlier to avoid the taboo of getting pregnant before circumcision (Oloo et al 2010).

Preparation for the ceremonies begins at a family level months before the day of the cut. They start with collecting firewood (*ichinkwe*) from the indigenous forests in the neighbouring Maasai land and smearing family houses and floors with cow dung (*okohoma*). This is fulfilled by the candidates in the company of their aunts and elder

sisters. Mothers prepare cassava flour (*obose bo amarebo*) which is used to cook *ugali* (*ubukima*). They also prepare finger millet yeast flour (*ememera*) which is used to make a fermented sour drink (*obosara*). The father's role is to find a cow or goat that will be slaughtered to provide meat (*inyama*) on the circumcision day. These three food items are eaten on the circumcision day. As the day draws nearer invitations are made to inform kin, and friends about the day a girl is to be circumcised. This is done by the girls, their parents, relatives and friends who tell one another.

One week before, the girl receives a colourful piece of cloth (*leso*), an umbrella and a dress (*egemu*) from her parents (the father provides the money and the mother buys these items) which she will wear on the circumcision day. The family also approaches an aunt (paternal or maternal) to be the personal escort (*omogoti motwe*) for their girl. This is the one who holds her as she is being cut. This marks her readiness for the cut and there is no turning back. The girls from neighbouring villages meet at each other's home every evening to receive teachings from older women and encouragement from those who have gone through the cut before. Singing of songs that carry different messages continues. On the eve of a girl's circumcision day, her mother and female relatives gather near the hearth in her mother's kitchen to sing songs (*okorea obosamba*) and encourage the candidate to be brave, not to shame the family by showing fear or crying, and instruct her on how to bear the pain. They spend the entire night singing. A flag is flown from the apex of one of the huts to signify that someone, from the household, is being circumcised, and at dawn they set off for the circumcision site set by the council of elders. Each girl walks beside her supporter holding an umbrella, as singing continues.

The noise of circumcision parties can be heard as they walk their candidate to the site. The girl is normally wearing her dress (*egemu*) and *leso* and is escorted by relatives and neighbours who taunt her against embarrassing them and warn her against crying. Once there, the girls line up and sit on dry banana leaves. Behind each girl there is the personal supporter who holds the girl tight and ensures she does not run away if she gets scared. The circumciser (*omosari/omokebi*) then approaches with her tools (normally a razor blade or a specially made knife (Kalu 2015)) and cuts off the labia minora (and all that is within it) of each girl moving along the line and giving

each girl time to wait for up to five minutes before standing up. No anaesthesia is applied and the girls are not to blink or touch the hand that cuts them. During these five minutes, there is bleeding and once the girls leave, a pool of blood can be seen where each of them sat. For each girl, the cutting takes between five and six minutes depending on how cooperative one is. The girls stand up in unison and have their *leso* tied around their necks by the women escorting them. They line up in the order in which they were cut and are allowed to walk home. Along the way trails of blood can be seen marking the routes from the circumcision ground to the girls' homes. The five minutes' break also gives time for messengers to deliver the message home about each girl's 'bravery'. Once the message is delivered, the circumcised girls are led back to their homes by fellow villagers amidst singing and dancing and money notes being pinned onto their *shukas/lesos*. A *Leso* is tied around the neck of each girl and it flows down to the ankle to let blood run freely to the ground as the girl walks home. At this point she is viewed by the community as a 'proper' Kuria woman. The celebrations still continue even when there are complications and haemorrhage, and some girls lose their lives due to excessive bleeding.

Once cut, there is a group of noisy relatives and friends waiting to escort the girl home. They are heavily dressed in banana leaves, herbs and shrubs and when they move they can be mistaken for small bushes walking. The men hit shields and shout praises for the girls, while the women ululate and blow whistles as they dance all the way home. The women sprinkle powder on the faces of the newly circumcised women (*abasamba*). The powder's whiteness serves to mask their facial expressions because at this point some girls shed tears due to the pain caused by walking and blood clotting at the wound. The men smear their faces with red ochre and adorn wild animal skins and birds' feathers. Some wear Maasai headgear. Musicians play musical instruments such as *ekegogo*, *iritingo* and *ibirandi* to which the group dances. As they walk home, the group keeps growing as more people join in with the aim of eating and drinking once they get home. The group repeatedly stops for newcomers to pin money on the girl's hat, praise her and the crowd increases as does the jubilation and exuberance of the escorts.

Once at the gate to the girl's home, a cow/goat's blood is sprinkled to ward off evil spirits and the girl is asked to walk over it and get in the house. She goes to a specially

prepared room and lies on an animal hide (*iriiho*) or mattress placed on the floor. She is served with a drink (*obosara*) and later a meal of *ugali* and meat (*ubukima na inyama*). Then the celebration continues into the night. The girl is now considered to be a proper woman ready for marriage once she heals. Healing takes between two weeks and one month and the girl is occasionally bathed by an older woman (usually her grandmother or a relative in case her grandmother is no longer alive). Bathing consists typically rubbing the genitals with a maize cob (*egetogoyo*) which is believed to ensure all the blood scabs are removed. It is a procedure which sometimes causes another bout of bleeding and excruciating pain to the girl, but which she is expected to bear. Once healed, the girls 'graduate' (they come out). Graduation takes place at a common field where all are gathered to receive gifts from relatives, neighbours and friends. After this, they can be married as soon as they get suitors and bear children. It is worth noting here that, even though they are considered ready for marriage, they are not allowed to identify a marriage partner but have to wait until a man comes their way. In most cases, their marriage partner is decided upon by their parents, especially the father, who is approached by the groom's male relatives. The marriage ceremony is organised and the girl is not expected to turn down her father's position. The mother has to accept, and encourage her daughter to accept, her father's decision.

### **3.2.13 Reasons for FGM in Kuria**

While conducting interviews in Kuria, Oloo et. Al. (2010:15) found that FGM was conducted for women to 'stay for longer periods without sex while their husbands went out to graze the animals or raid from the neighbouring communities'. Women's sexual desires are curtailed to make them faithful wives, and sexual desires are reduced to maintain good morals. However, this has been contested after research findings (Ondieki 2010), indicated that circumcised girls are more promiscuous since they get permission to engage in sexual affairs with young and old men once circumcised because they have attained marriage status and are now proper women (see also Oloo et al 2011; Wambura 2016). Even with such findings it is still believed to preserve a girl from promiscuity and immoral behaviour since cutting the clitoris reduces the urge for sex.

Oloo et al (2010) has revealed that ridicule and insults from their peers can be impossible to bear, making most of the girls succumb to pressure and opt for the cut.

An uncircumcised girl is often stigmatised, labelled and discriminated against. She is sanctioned from performing some chores. For instance, she cannot pick vegetables from her neighbour's garden because if she did, it is believed that the vegetables will wilt and dry up; she cannot draw water from the communal water source because the water will be contaminated and the well will dry up; she cannot open or close the cowshed gate of the homestead she is married to, because the cattle will die if they passed there. She is not allowed to cook or serve elders or her husband's peers when they come visiting. If she urinates somewhere and children step in it they will die. During birth, it is believed that if the baby's head (mostly a baby boy) touches the clitoris, the baby would die. Some of these myths and superstitious beliefs put pressure on the girls until they succumb to the cut. FGM is also conducted for economic gain (see details in section 3.2.5).

### **3.2.14 Efforts to end FGM in Kenya and Kuria**

Early attempts to end the practice were made by Christian missionaries and colonial authorities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. These two groups denounced the practice as barbaric and it was banned. The missionaries took an uncompromising stand (Natsoulas 1998) and collaborated with the colonial administration to outlaw female circumcision. However, the missionary ban on FGM was resisted, at times violently, and used by nationalist movements in Central Kenya to break away from the mainstream church and form the independent church which allowed female circumcision. The missionaries, however, succeeded in eradicating the public celebrations among the Kikuyu, the dances, the songs and the feasting which provided so much meaning to the ritual (Githiga 1996; Maina et al 2000). To the missionaries, the public celebrations were extremely obscene and local chiefs were instructed to fine those participating. Even without the feasting, the physical operation persisted secretly although it reduced to a certain level (Thomas 1995). Nationalist and cultural support for FGM dampened early anti-FGM initiatives and FGM became a symbol of African tradition, with the first president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, being a strong proponent of the practice (Kenyatta 2015). However, boundaries were expanded to include health professionals in the operation (Oloo et al 2011).



At this time, the focus was on women as victims and as perpetrators, inflicting pain on other women and thus efforts were made to educate women about the harmful nature of the practice. These efforts, however, failed to understand the complex power relationships that underlie the practice. Efforts were renewed in the mid-1980s with local partners, government officials and international NGOs being involved (UNICEF 2010). Since then, there have been intervention measures and strategies put in place to end FGM. Such approaches include: health risk/harmful traditional practice approach, addressing the health complications of FGM, educating traditional circumcisers and offering alternative income, alternative rites of passage, supporting girls escaping from FGM and child marriages, religious oriented approach, legal approach, human rights approaches, intergenerational dialogue, promotion of girls' education to oppose FGM and media influence. However, these interventions have been isolated and uncoordinated making their impact limited (Population Council 2007).

In Kuria, religious groups have made efforts to ending FGM in Kuria through anti-FGM campaigns. These have borne fruit with some families opposing FGM out of religious conviction and, instead, taking their girls to school. The Seventh Day Adventist movement has spear-headed these efforts to end FGM and has been vocal in the campaign against the practice. Education practitioners have also added their voice to campaigns against the practice and argued that it hinders girls' education. The efforts made in the education department include encouraging the formation of anti-FGM clubs in schools, which have significantly contributed towards giving support to girls who have not undergone the cut (Oloo et al 2010). Among the Kuria, most of the girls who have not been circumcised perform better in schools to compensate for them not being cut and because they spend more time in school compared to those who are circumcised, who usually get married immediately after they graduate from the ceremonies (Oloo et al 2010). The law has also been used in the fight against FGM with circumcisers, parents and relatives who coerced girls to go through the cut being charged in court. In 2014 a female circumciser from Kuria East was charged in court and sentenced to seven years for performing FGM on a minor (Criminal Law Appeal 2014).

Alternative rites of passage have also been encouraged with girls being housed in rescue camps which are run by a committee drawn from the local anti-FGM network. In the period preceding circumcision, girls running away to evade the cut are mobilised and given accommodation away from the community for the entire period of the circumcision. While in the camps they receive training on life skills, sex, sexuality, FGM, hygiene, career choices and the value of education. Most girls have escaped FGM through these programmes. However, they have not always been as effective as intended, since some girls coming back from the rescue camps succumb to pressure and get circumcised after the training (Oloo et al 2010). There is therefore a need for alternative approaches to ending FGM. This need is the primary motivation for conducting this research.

### **3.3 Circumcision songs in Kenya**

In Kenya, songs play an important role in people's lives. They are salient features in different cultural ceremonies. Children begin to sing as soon as they can understand words and continue to sing throughout their lives. Popular traditional songs (folk songs) include courtship songs, marriage songs, war, death, funeral, lullabies, birth songs, circumcision, manhood songs, fieldwork songs, songs sang while canoeing, praise songs, songs of scorn, grazing songs, songs for children, songs for rains to fall and for floods to end, drinking songs, and songs for particular seasons and occasions (Senoga-Zake 1995).

All communities in Kenya that practise female circumcision have the ceremonies accompanied by songs. Among the Kikuyu people (Agikuyu), several days before circumcision ceremonies begin, initiatory songs are sung. Candidates have their own songs which they present to their older family members (*wazee*) to signify that they are ready and prepared for transition (Senoga-Zake 1995). About four months before the initiation period, they sing and dance. Two weeks before circumcision there are songs and dances for boys and girls. The girls who are ready to be circumcised pay visit to their friends' homes to sing and make invitations. A day before circumcision they sing from sunrise to sunset, and then retire to their homes for parental blessings. On the eve of the circumcision, they begin singing very late in the night accompanied by whistles blown by women until dawn when they proceed to the circumcision

grounds. After the physical operation is completed, the girls leave the river and return to their respective homes. Dancing and singing continues coupled with leg rattles<sup>28</sup> until late afternoon. The singing continues for up to three months until the girls heal completely. On the graduation day, they gather at a common field where singing fills the air. They sing praises to those who showed no signs of fear or pain and songs of scorn to those who exhibited signs of weakness. After this day, they are viewed as grown-ups and their years of childhood come to an end.

Among the Kisii (Abagusii) circumcision ceremonies are held after the harvesting season. Girls sing circumcision songs to help them gather courage. They sing while grinding sorghum, gathering firewood, fetching water and picking vegetables. This is to prove to their parents that they are ready for circumcision. If a girl is not ready to do a woman's job then she is not ready to be circumcised (Senoga-Zake 1995). As they escort them to the circumcision grounds, the women sing songs such as '*eyae oiye kwabeire mokabamura* (you have become men's wife)' (1995:117). After the circumcision, *esimbore* (a circumcision song) is performed by a group of women. This song reminds the girls that they are no longer children but women who are ready to get married. The circumcised girl is praised with set names such as *goko* (grandmother), she is now free to start farming activities and will no longer have sexual relations except with circumcised men (in marriage).

Among the Kipsigis, singing and preparation begins in the month of December and January and circumcision takes place in February. In the songs they sing, girls ask their boy lovers to 'behave and not go after other girls while their sweethearts are going through the healing period' (Senoga-Zake 1995:119). Singing and dancing is done every evening until the initiation day. The songs are repeated over and over, and over the years they are memorised, at times the tunes and some words may change and new words may be added in. But the messages and ideologies behind them remain the same.

Kuria FGM songs are not only used for entertainment during the celebration season but are a custodial of Kuria beliefs, values and customs. Such a presentation of the

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<sup>28</sup> Sound producing jingles worn on the legs just below the knee and which make some noise when one makes a step, normally worn by Kuria men during ceremonies.

gender roles creates unforgettable pictures in the minds of the audience including young children and plays a major role in their socialisation. They grow up associating with the roles ascribed to their gender as outlined in the songs. The songs also contain messages that encourage the initiates to be brave when undergoing circumcision (Oloo et al 2011). Apart from this, as stated before, the songs encourage the initiates to engage in sex claiming that by doing so the recovery process after circumcision will be faster (Oloo et al 2011) and since they are proper women who are free to do what the uncircumcised are not allowed to. It is the interest of this thesis to analyse these unequal positions.

The focus of this study will be the close connection of FGM songs, gender identity and power. This is because FGM songs are communicators of identity, and words in them are expressions of general social attitudes and sociocultural aspects of the Kuria community. In the analysis, linguistic features are explored with reference to gender and female circumcision. The question asked is whether messages carried in the songs perpetuate gender inequalities and the practice of female circumcision by portraying them as natural, positive and necessary among the Kuria people.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have contextualised two main areas: the Kuria people and the FGM practice. In the first section, I have described the Kuria people and their socio-cultural aspects. I have also detailed how Kuria men and women are viewed in the society and what social and gender roles, beliefs, values and customs are enshrined in Kuria society and reproduced in Kuria language through songs. In section two, I presented existing literature on FGM practices in the world, in Africa, in Kenya and finally in Kuria. This included giving statistics and outlining measures that have been put in place to end the practice. In the next chapter, I present the research methodology I employ in examining FGM songs and interviews.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview and justification of the research design and methods employed in the study. The first section presents the location of the study and describes the preparation for data collection, the actual data and collection procedures, detailing both audio recording of songs and semi-structured interviews. It then describes the preparation for analysis including transcription, translation and coding (categorisation). It is here that I detail how I apply the analytical framework, particularly, Fairclough's linguistic features and Sunderland's gendered discourses. The last section deals with reflexivity, ethical considerations and challenges faced during data collection and analysis. This is primarily a qualitative study whose aim is to produce descriptive data rather than statistical figures. I set out to investigate the constructions of gender in female circumcision songs, to examine how language enacts and legitimates gendered positions while promoting FGM among the Kuria people of Kenya. My objective was to find answers to the following questions:

1. Which lexical items and metaphors are employed in Kuria female circumcision songs and in the interviews?
2. What gendered discourses are prevalent in the songs, and how are they enacted, legitimised (and/or challenged) in the interviews?
3. In what ways do they construct gender identities and power relations among the Kuria people?
4. What is the effect of this construction on perpetuation of FGM among the Kuria people?

### **4.2 Overview of Kenya**

Kenya is a sovereign state in East Africa, whose capital city is Nairobi. Other major cities include Mombasa, Kisumu and Nakuru. It borders the Indian Ocean to the South East, Tanzania to the South, Uganda to the West, South Sudan to the North West, Ethiopia to the North and Somalia to the North East. Kenya covers approximately 224,445 square metres and had a population of approximately 45 million people in July 2014 (CIA 2016). Currently, the head of the republic is the

president who has a deputy; the two form the executive, which is one arm of leadership; the other two arms are the legislature and the judiciary. Kenya gained independence from Britain in 1963 and now has 47 counties which are part of 8 provinces governed by elected governors. Agriculture is the largest income earner for Kenya followed by tourism. The principal cash crops are tea, coffee and horticultural products which are exported (CIA 2016).

There are an estimated 42 different communities. Each of these communities has their own language. The two official languages, English and Swahili, are used in varying degrees for communication with other populations (Asongu & Marr 2007). Swahili is a lingua franca while English is used for education and official and national functions. The country has a young population with 73% of the residents being aged below 30 years (KNBS 2009). 12% of girls aged 15-19 have been married, divorced, separated or widowed while 15% of women and girls share their husbands with at least one or more other women (DHS 2008-09). A vast majority of Kenyans, 83%, are Christians, 11% Muslim, 2% traditionalists, and 4% others (KNBS 2009). Kenya has no single prominent culture. It instead consists of various cultures practised by the country's different communities. Demographically, more than three quarters of the Kenyan population live in the rural areas. Most of these are women who engage in small scale agriculture and are poor. According to national statistics, there has been a decline in FGM rates from 40% in 1998 to 27% in 2008-09. However, there is a huge regional variation ranging from 97% in the north east to 1% in western parts of the country (Wilson 2013) (see a detailed discussion of FGM in Kenya and Kuria in sections 3.2.1; 3.2.11).

Culturally, Kenya is predominantly patriarchal (see Onyango 2008). There is gender imbalance in all the communities with regard to access to and control of directly productive assets such as land. To date, women are not allowed<sup>29</sup> to inherit land despite this being their constitutional right. Women are also not actively involved in decision making, community and public participation and other key leadership aspects. And since they are poorly educated they tend to remain in poverty. Girls are caught up in domestic and agricultural chores in their early stages of life, with most

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<sup>29</sup> Although it is stated in the Kenyan constitution that both male and female children have a right to parental inheritance, only male children inherit valuable properties.

communities preferring to educate the boy child and not the girl child. Girls do not have an equal right to education, due to the ideology that educating girls is of no importance, since they will be married off to other clans or families and their future husbands will reap the rewards of their education. Although there have been efforts to realise equality in enrolment at primary school level, most girls drop out of school soon after circumcision and get married to older men, while boys stay in school. Once they have undergone FGM, it is believed that girls have become women and they tend to disrespect female teachers whom they view as equals (Ondiek 2010). Rising school costs also increase inequalities, where parents tend to prefer marrying off their daughters and using the dowry to educate boys. This is reflected later on when it comes to employment with only a few girls to take up professional positions, since the majority dropped out of the education system for one reason or another. It is for this and other reasons that a study on sociocultural activities is important to challenge retrogressive practices such as FGM and realise equality development. With this background, I present the research site, population and sample of this study in the next sections.

#### **4.3 Research site**

I collected data from Kuria East District in Migori County Nyanza province, in Western Kenya. I chose Kuria because this is where I was born and brought up, therefore it was easier for me to gain access to the community. Having grown up here had given me in-depth knowledge and understanding of the socio-cultural norms and gender expectations. I understood what I was expected to do and how I was to behave as a woman so as not to cause any inhibitions or make participants uncomfortable about my research intentions. Kuria East is a newly created district which is divided into two divisions, Ntimaru and Kegonga, I chose East for two reasons: one, research has shown that it has a larger percentage of FGM cases and gender inequalities compared to Kuria West. This is despite East having witnessed more campaigns on ending FGM (Oloo et al 2010) and achieving gender equity. Secondly, both divisions in Kuria East are accessible with good road networks, I was therefore able to access the respondents and data collection points with ease. A division in this context is an administrative unit which is a sub-unit of a district (see section 3.1.2). The head of the division is the District Officer (DO) who is directly under the head of the district

(the District Commissioner/DC) (see Figure 6, the map of the study area).

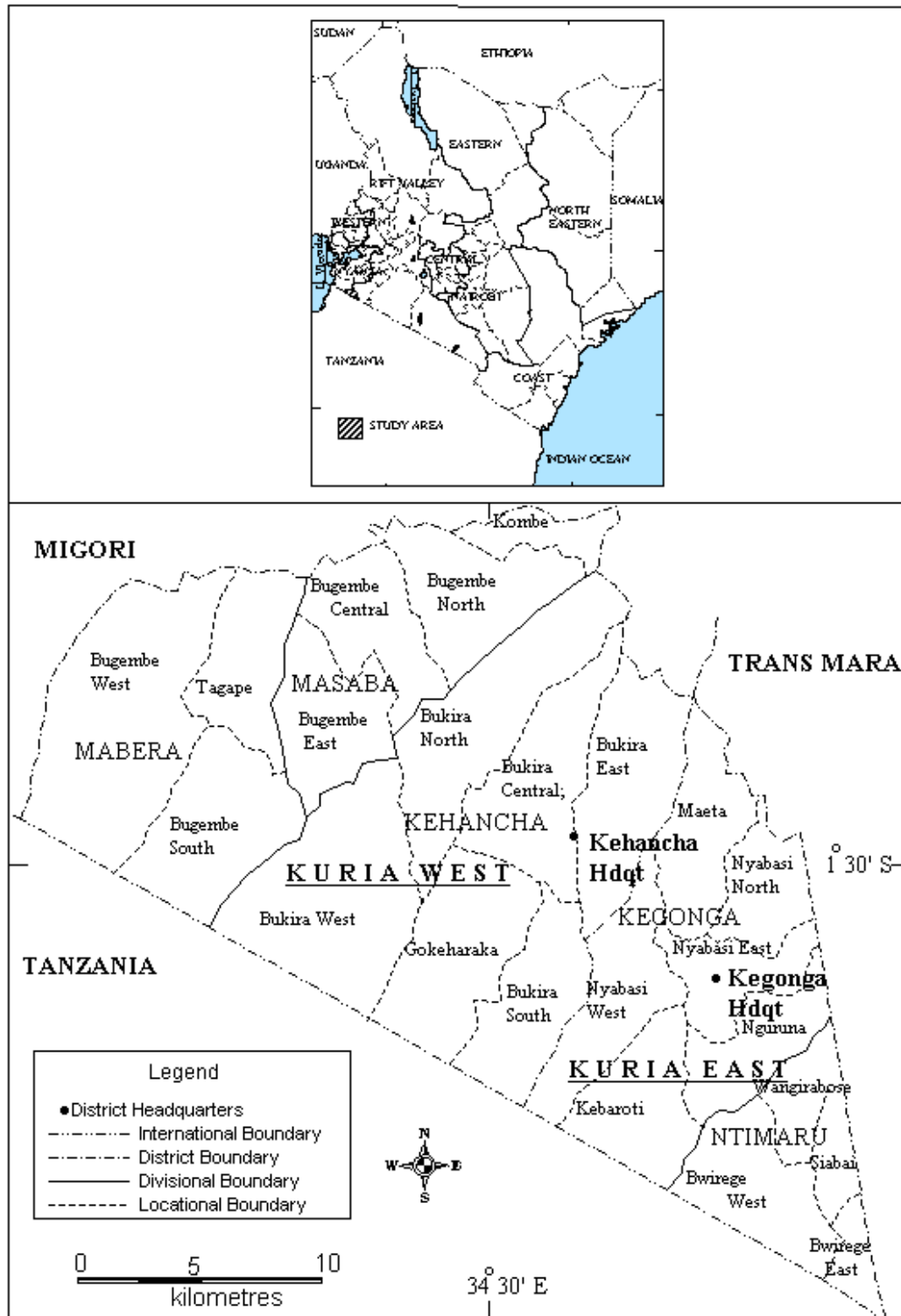


Figure 6: Map of the study area

Source: District Development Plan Kuria District 2008-2013



### **4.3 Population and sample**

The population constituted all Kuria speakers who were participating in the FGM ceremonies between 2014/2015 as relatives, friends or invitees during the ceremonies. A sample of 20 participants was purposively drawn from this population. From each of the 2 divisions I recruited eight women making a total of 16. The female interviewees were those women who had undergone FGM in the past, either willingly or not. These were selected because they had experienced FGM, had heard and sung the songs and were married now performing their respective gender duties. They were also old enough to give consent. The remaining four participants were men; there were two men from each division (two who had daughters and two who were yet to). Identifying ten informants from each division enabled me to realise diversity, inclusiveness and regional balance in data collection. To identify participants, two key persons were informed about the project and its expectations. They also underwent a telephone briefing on what to consider when identifying informants, which included:

1. They must be from the Kuria community
2. They must have competence in Kuria language
3. They must understand Kuria culture and traditions
4. The women must have undergone FGM
5. They must be over 18 years of age
6. They will be from diverse socioeconomic groups
7. Their education will range from no education at all to the highest level of education
8. The men will be two fathers who have daughters and two other men who do not.

In some cases, snowball sampling method (see Mugenda & Mugenda 2006) was used to identify interviewees; whereby an identified interviewee was asked about anyone with specific characteristics I was looking for and where/how to locate them. As an example, since there were only a few women with a postgraduate level of education in the community, the interviewee with postgraduate education from Ntimaru led to identifying the one from Kegonga.

#### **4.4 How the interview participants were recruited**

Recruiting interview participants was carried out purposefully and strategically based on each participant's appropriateness. The key requirement I made at the beginning was that they would be aware of Kuria values and traditions; they would be free to speak about them, and be willing to participate. Interviewees were recruited in September 2014 while I was still in York. I made contact with two key people who were living and working in Kuria: one was a primary school teacher in a local primary school who was to identify participants from Ntimaru division and the other a secondary school teacher who identified participants from Kegonga division. Once identified, I made a list of the participants with their characteristics. I made phone calls to each of the participants explaining my intentions and asked if they could participate in my research as interviewees. Only two women from those who were identified declined and the rest agreed. Those who declined were replaced. The initial call was made to introduce myself to them and ask for their consent. I then promised to call them to arrange when to meet once I arrived in Kenya. Once in Kenya, I met each of the participants and explained to them again about the research and the reason I was conducting it. I made it clear that the study was for my PhD programme and that they will be answering questions on FGM and gender aspects. I also answered their questions, some which included whether they would be arrested by the area chief and police if they participated. I reiterated that they will not and showed those who were doubtful the clearance letters. for research The participants did not have any other fears since we spoke the same language and they viewed me as one of them who is abroad studying. For each group of four women there was one man. I also contacted an extra man and two extra women just in case anyone from my sample changed their mind in the course of the study, although this did not happen. I then informed them of the following:

1. Their rights and role in the research.
2. The confidentiality and purpose of the information they give.
3. They were to be provided with sufficient information about all the aspects and stages of the research project that involved them.
4. They were informed of the objectives of the research project.
5. They were informed that data was to be treated with utmost confidentiality and be stored in secured places.

6. They were made aware that the data to be collected was only going to be used for the purpose of academic work and specifically for the current PhD project.
7. They were informed that anonymity was to be maintained and were asked not to mention people by names or families' names, but to refer to any person as a community member, a man or woman or officer.
8. They were informed that data was to be viewed by the researcher, supervisors and examiners only, and in the case of anyone else their consent was to be sought first (they have since given consent for the data to be shared worldwide and disseminated in different ways).
9. They were informed that it was a voluntary exercise and they had the right to withdraw from the project at any point without any consequences or giving reasons.

Thereafter, their willingness to participate was sought by asking for their consent. Those willing to participate were asked to sign consent forms and they were given a copy for their own records (see Appendix 4: Consent form). In order to ensure I got fully representative data, I selected a diverse range of interviewees including the literate and illiterate, young and old, male and female, urban and rural (see Appendix 2 for biographical details of the interviewees).

#### **4.5 Research design**

Designing this research was not a linear process which followed straight-forward steps. The research design was primarily *emergent* (developing) (Dahlgren et al 2007). Emergent research design allows for flexibility and the researcher can add different aspects as insights are gained throughout the process. Changes can be made from identification of the problem, formulating research questions, collecting data, analysing, drawing conclusions and presenting results. A qualitative design was adopted with the aim of producing descriptive data (spoken words and observable behaviour). Qualitative research investigates phenomena occurring in natural settings and the researcher brings personal values into the study (Creswell 2003, 2007). This is in line with CDA principles where a researcher makes explicit their personal and political position in the research (Fairclough 1992, 2001; Meyer 2001; Wodak & Meyer 2001). A key approach in qualitative research is ethnography which entails

immersing oneself in a phenomenon and studying human behaviour in everyday occurrences. Data are gathered from a range of sources but participant observation is the main method used (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007).

Although it was not entirely ethnographic, this research drew on ethnographic methods, particularly interviews and participant observation, which have been described as useful for studying naturally occurring social phenomena (Silverman 2001) and linguistic methods such as recording and analysing texts. It was, therefore, a linguistic ethnographic study (see Creese 2010). Linguistic ethnography views language and society as mutually shaping (Rampton et al 2004), and holds that an 'analysis of language can provide fundamental and distinctive insights into the social and cultural production' (Perez-Milans 2015: 2) in everyday activities of its speakers. This relates to Fairclough's (2001) idea of the dialectical relationship that accrues between social structures and language, a position which I adopted in this study. As well as conducting interviews, I observed the non-verbal behaviour of those singing FGM songs, the listeners and the interviewees and made field notes and recorded FGM songs (this was the main method of data collection), and the ethnographic part. The linguistic part entailed a close-linguistic analysis of the data using CDA. The study went beyond description to critical discourse analysis of gender practices and changed from time to time. For instance, I had not planned to take observation notes while recording songs but this could not be avoided. I frequently noticed something that was interesting and relevant and quickly noted it down. This included the interactional setting, the physical setting and mode of interaction. Most of these are explained in Chapter 3.

Before the actual data collection commenced, I sought ethical clearance from York St John University Research Committee (see details in section 4.10). Once this was granted, I conducted pilot interviews with other PhD students. This was to test my interviewing skills, ensure the data collection tool provided room for probing and that the recorders were in good working condition and could transfer data to other devices for back-up. Once in Kenya I made calls to the respondents. We agreed to meet at the chief's camp in Ntimaru and Kegonga district headquarters where consent papers were signed and the venue and date for the interviews set.

I sought permission to conduct research in the district from both the county education

office in Migori and the district education office at Kegonga. I also secured clearance from the division education offices in Kegonga and Ntimaru. For security purposes, I obtained a letter from the local chiefs of the sub locations where I was going to conduct research. Together with the consent forms signed by the participants I was formally cleared to conduct research in this region.

At some point news went around that the Bwirege East circumciser had been arrested and was being held at Kehancha police station and that the elders were earnestly looking for a replacement, but two days later I was informed that she had been bailed and was going to be back in a day's time. I received all this information from the five families who had given me permission to accompany their girls to the circumcision ground and who had become informants and friends. I had built trust with the mothers and supporters of the girls after assuring them that I only was interested in the ceremonial songs and not the FGM activity itself. The council of elders announced that boys' circumcisions would continue the following week but girls' ceremonies would wait a little longer. During this time, I collected preparation songs and other relevant information. When it was announced that the first pair of girls would be circumcised the following day, I received two calls from the family whose girl was first on my list. She was to be circumcised two weeks after the initial ceremonies, while the next girl was to be circumcised two days after this. They gave me the date, time and the ground where she would be going. After the first two girls, eight were circumcised after a week and this opened the season for all others who were set to be circumcised during that season.

#### **4.6 The Data**

Three sets of data were collected between November 2014 and January 2015:

- FGM songs
- Interview responses
- Field notes

A multi-method approach was adopted whereby three data collection methods were employed: audio-recording, interviewing and observation/taking field notes. These methods were selected because they were the most appropriate to enable answering of the research questions. From the audio recordings, I intended to get data in the

form of songs, which I analysed for linguistic features. These features enabled me to answer the first question, *‘Which lexical items and metaphors are employed in Kuria female circumcision songs?’*

From the songs’ analysis, it was possible to show how specific word choice and usage named and labelled different social actors and actions and therefore find answers to the second question, *‘What discourses are prevalent in the songs and how are they reproduced, legitimated (and / or challenged) in the interviews?’*

From the interviews, interviewees’ opinions were obtained on the aspects of gender relations, FGM songs and ceremonies, to answer the third question *‘In what ways do they construct gender identities and power relations among the Kuria people?’*

Once the three questions were answered, conclusions were drawn. These led to answering the fourth question, *‘What is the effect of these constructions on perpetuation of FGM among the Kuria people?’*

Data needed to address these questions were collected by participating in the ceremonies, recording songs and through conducting interviews. Table 4 summarises the data needed to address each research question.

<b>Research question</b>	<b>Primary data</b>	<b>Other data sources</b>
<i>Which specific lexical items and metaphors are employed in Kuria female circumcision songs and restated in the interviews?</i>	Transcribed songs and interviews	Field notes

<i>What discourses are prevalent in the songs and how are they enacted, legitimated (and/or challenged) in the interviews?</i>	Transcribed songs and interviews	Field notes
<i>In what ways do they construct gender identities and power relations among the Kuria people?</i>	Transcribed songs and interviews	Field notes
<i>What is the effect of this construction on the perpetuation of FGM among the Kuria people?</i>	Transcribed interview recordings	Field notes

Table 4: Summary of research questions and data addressing them

In the data, five categories of circumcision songs were identified (those performed days and months before FGM during invitation, those performed the night before, those performed on the way to the FGM grounds, those performed during the cut and those performed after, during healing). These were grouped into three periods: before, during and after FGM, and they had different messages meant for the girls. The messages were conveyed through lexical items and metaphors which represented men and women (and FGM) in different gendered ways.

#### **4.7 Methods of data collection**

This research made use of participant observation and field notes as additional methods to the primary methods of audio recording and interviewing. The value of using different methods is that they can complement each other and offer different perspectives, thus providing a rich picture of the situation under scrutiny. Using a multiplicity of methods also helps to generate multiple accounts of the same phenomenon, representing different angles of the topic under investigation for the purpose of triangulation (Angouri 2010). Both observation and interviews made it possible to map out similarities and differences of opinion about FGM. Multiple

methods also help to address the issue of reliability and validity (Miles & Hubberman 1994; Burns 2000). The researcher is able to get data from different settings, and in case there are marked differences in the accounts given and comparing with the observations and field notes, the researcher is able to approach claims in a more contextualised form. It also helps the researcher to grasp the tacit understandings involved in social action (Bosire 2013). Data collection took place between the months of November 2014 and January 2015. The most active period was December 2014 when the ceremonies were at their peak. November was preparation month and the songs sung during this time carried messages of invitation to the relatives, kin and friends. January was the healing month and songs focused on socialising the girls into their adult roles. I discuss each of the methods used to collect data in the following sections.

#### **4.7.1 Audio recording FGM songs**

Female circumcision songs were recorded (using a digital recorder) and analysed because they carry messages about the Kuria culture, values and general expected behaviours of the members of the community. By recording the songs, the intention was to demonstrate that the linguistic features used in the songs are not just simple choices but have been carefully selected to achieve certain goals; they are not neutral but gendered.

The songs were audio recorded as they were being performed. There was no specific time set to record them and I walked with the digital recorder and recorded each song at any point it was being performed. This required that I accompany the specific girls and the song producers during different stages of the process. The song producers were the people participating in the FGM ceremonies especially in the singing of the FGM songs. They were mostly females accompanying the candidate and a few males who normally joined in or played the instruments. Usually there was a soloist who led the singing and the rest (the chorus) who responded, plus the instrument players. The focus of the research is on the songs themselves and not the producers. The producers only acted as the carriers of the messages. The producers were alerted about the audio recording since it was done randomly and at any place and time that singing was taking place. The number of people producing the songs varied with the candidate.



The recorded songs were performed at different stages of the FGM ceremonies: during preparation, the day before, the night before, on the way to the grounds, during the cut, on the way from the cutting grounds, at the gate to the cattle corral and during healing (see a list of the recorded songs in Appendix 1: Analysed songs). Usually there are five major categories of FGM songs: the first category constitutes those performed during preparation time, weeks before the exact day. These carry messages of preparation and from them the girl and kin get to be reminded of what is expected of them as they prepare for the ceremony. They are told what their role is and how to behave or not, at this time. Secondly, there are the invitation songs. These call upon kin, relatives and friends to come and join in the events. They remind the girl that she is not just a member of the family she comes from but also a member of the entire community, and therefore all other members should enjoin to make her a proper member of their group. The third category constitutes those sung the day before the girl goes through FGM. Songs in this category of are mood relieving. They make promises that all is well, aiming to relax the girl's mind and assure her that it is just a matter of time and she will be graduating from one category of community member to another. The fourth category is those sung during the act. Although the actual act of cutting takes a matter of minutes, it is a life transforming event which is usually praised and described using figurative language in the songs. This instills courage and strength on the candidate making them able to face the knife as they anticipate crossing over to the other side of community life. The last category constitutes songs sung during the healing process. These carry messages welcoming the successful candidate to womanhood. They state the rules and regulations once a girl has become a woman and outline the responsibilities that go with it. They are celebratory in nature since they are sung only if the girl is perceived to have overcome and faced FGM bravely.

Although the songs have a long history, they have been performed since time immemorial, their messages keep changing with time. New themes are introduced spontaneously, but the old cultural themes are also maintained. For instances, words like computer, solar panel, soda, Obama, mobile phones which belong to the modern vocabulary can now be heard from time to time, this was not the case before the Kuria people experienced these phenomena. Note that, most of these words are used symbolically or as part of Kuria Imagery.

#### **4.7.2 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to provide supplementary data to the one from audio recorded FGM songs. I intended to obtain information about the informants' perceptions of gender and FGM. I therefore interviewed women and men to find out how they viewed each other, how they viewed gender roles and behavioural expectations and how they perceived female genital mutilation. I did this to examine whether their responses legitimated, challenged or subverted the claims in the songs. Silverman (2006) argues that interviews are useful when studying a phenomenon from the *emic*<sup>30</sup> perspective. They are also flexible because the interview question can be adapted, changed, or refined during the data collection process (Creswell 2003). The participants are given opportunity to, as much as possible and in different ways (Layder 1993), express their opinions, feelings and worldviews. Edley & Litosseliti (2010) argue that interviews are useful in obtaining different perspectives on the same topic, gaining information on views, attitudes, beliefs and why people think/feel the way they do, as well as examining shared understandings of the everyday life of particular groups (see also Litosseliti 2003).

I conducted semi-structured interviews with respondents who were adults from the Kuria community and who resided in Kuria district at the time of the research. As stated before, I conducted 20 interviews with 16 women and 4 men. I interviewed more women than men because the research is on female circumcision songs and I was interested in understanding more about FGM from the perspective of women who go through it. However, I could not leave out the male participants because I was also examining the gender constructions in this patriarchal society. Interviewing men would, therefore, provide a male perspective to the research especially by showing how Kuria men view FGM, FGM songs and gender relations in general. They were selected by virtue of their involvement in the circumcision ceremonies either as parents, relatives, friends or invitees (see Appendix 2).

#### **4.7.3 Interviewing process**

A semi-structured interview guide which contained 20 questions was used as a data collection tool (see Appendix 3). The questions had been translated to Kuria language

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<sup>30</sup> The locals' or natives' points of view.

and they were read aloud. I remained flexible enough to give opportunity for the respondents to talk as much as they wanted, as long as what they were saying was relevant to my project. Once all the questions in my guide had been answered, interviewees were asked whether they had any questions or would like to add anything to what they had said, and whether they were happy with what they had said. They were also asked whether there was anything they had said which they regretted and given the opportunity to identify parts of the data they did not want used. Interviews were conducted in the Kuria language as respondents preferred to use this language. Although all of them could understand Swahili, only a few could speak it fluently and only five could understand and speak English. Each interview took between 30 minutes and one hour. All interviews were audio recorded using a digital audio recorder and later transcribed.

Concerning the scope and limitation of the interview questions, the guide focused on FGM and gender expectations, roles and responsibilities. The aim was to collect data on how men and women are constructed and the impact of this on FGM in Kuria. I was interested in finding out whether the constructions (in the songs) are legitimated, challenged or subverted in the interviews. I therefore paid attention to how women described FGM and the rituals that go with it, how they described men, other women and uncircumcised women. The same process was followed for men. I later aligned the representations in the interviews to those in the songs. Anything else that was beyond this scope was set in the background or not considered at all (see appendix 6 for a sample of interview responses).

#### **4.7.4 Field notes**

Field notes are of great value when ‘recording nonverbal behaviours that cannot be audio recorded’ (Sunderland 1996:132). Silverman (2001) also observes that in making field notes one is not simply recording data but also analysing them since in recording, one is always selective and interpretive. The observer looks, listens, and understands before recording pieces of information as they occur. Field notes could be short notes, or expanded notes made immediately after every field work, a field journal to record any problems that arise during each stage of fieldwork or a provisional running record of analysis and interpretation (Silverman 2001; Atanga 2007). I made use of short notes which I recorded during the performance of the songs and interview schedules. I noted down all the relevant nonlinguistic aspects, when,

where and as they were taking place. These included gestures (because they are relevant in telling what happened and how it happened), laughs, smiles, body movements and other nonverbal behaviours which I considered useful to my work. I also recorded notes on cultural objects observed during the FGM ceremonies such as machetes (*ichibanga/imihyo*), spears (*amatimo*), shields (*ichinguba*), umbrellas (*imiavuli*), and whistles (*ibibirri*) and so on. I sought the meanings associated with each of these during interviews. Comments from these notes were not considered as primary data but have been included in some instances as explanations to interviews and as part of setting the context (see Chapter 3).

Field notes were complementary data to the songs and interview responses. For each field note a title and the social actor(s) (either male or female) involved were written down. The participants were identified using numbers and codes for anonymity purposes. It is these codes that were used to identify who said what and where when doing the analysis later on. In most cases field notes were taken while recording songs but there were some instances during interview sessions where I noted down things I needed to remember during analysis or a comment that made an impression on me. I also made notes on when the participants laughed or commented on something outside the issue at hand. I wanted to take these comments into my analysis and thesis to enrich it.

Once I completed the audio recordings of both the FGM songs and semi-structured interviews and taking down field notes, I travelled back to the UK where I did the analysis. I left my contacts details, both phone and email address, with the respondents and told them to feel free to contact me if they remembered something they think might be useful or in case they wanted something they had said not to be used.

#### **4.7.5 Transcription**

Van Lier (1988) observes that in a classroom context, and this is relevant here too, transcription cannot include everything that is relevant. It may not include nonverbal information, intonation, pauses, et cetera. It will not include those things that cannot be seen or heard. Such gaps can, however, be filled with the use of field notes (Atanga 2010). The relevant issues that cannot be addressed by transcription of audio recording can be recorded in the field notes. This is why I had to write down notes of

everything that I thought was relevant but which could not be captured in the audio recording. Once back in York, I played all the songs and listened to all of them again to ensure they were clear enough, that I could identify the words in the songs, and that I had all the songs that had been recorded. I then did the same for the interviews. Borrowing elements from Gail Jefferson's (1984) Transcription System, Duranti's (1997) guideline on word transcription, Sunderland's (1996) and Edwards' (2003) suggestions on what to consider when transcribing, I was able to identify what to include and what not to. Jefferson's is an elaborate transcription system which if used in its entirety would have produced unnecessarily detailed transcripts which are hard to read (Johnstone 2000) and make the transcription exercise extremely tedious (Satia 2014). I adapted Jefferson's system into a lighter (but detailed) form of transcription as suggested by Jorgensen & Phillips (2002) whereby I only focused at the orthographic level and included all the words that were relevant for my analysis while ignoring everything else including noises, pauses, murmurs, hesitations and other extra-linguistic features.

The actual transcription process involved playing the song and transcribing each line. I kept pausing to type and playing again. I spent hours and hours doing this until I was satisfied that I got them right. Transcription was done word for word because in the analysis I use CDA which does not focus on minute details as does CA. However, I made sure I captured as much detail as possible. This was advantageous because detailed transcription as Dornyei (2007:246) notes 'allows one to know [his] data thoroughly'. I transcribed 23 out of the 30 songs I had audio-recorded. The remaining seven had been performed on the way back from the circumcision grounds and were more of celebration than singing. They were characterised by music, dancing, whistling, ululating and noise, there were no lyrics or clear words to be written down. I left these out. Once all the songs had been transcribed, I grouped them into categories: those that were performed during preparation; those performed on the night before the circumcision day; those performed on the way to the grounds; and those performed during healing. Note that those performed returning from the grounds were left out as well in this categorisation (see appendix 1: Transcribed songs).

#### **4.7.6 Translation**

My understanding of both Kuria and English was useful and necessary at this stage. I did not have to look for a translator. I did all the translations on my own. However, I had to bear in mind and deal with my own biases because, as Atanga (2007) observes (see also Temple 1997), however competent the ethnographer is in a language, they should be aware that translation is far from being a theoretically neutral activity and that their own perspective, both professional and personal will influence their translations. With this in mind, I tried to represent the translated data as accurately as possible in English, while at the same time trying to provide a true representation of what was in the songs. The translations were also verified by two other people who are proficient English and Kuria speakers. This was a test for me to ensure I had got the translations right. The Kuria-English translation is not word for word because if it were done this way, meaning could not be comprehended in the English version. I had to rely on the context and cohesion to relay the exact meaning and where some words did not have equivalents in English, I provided an equivalent or a description (for instance *nyagatoke*). I purposefully selected 23 songs for analysis. These made a sample and my point of focus for analysis. I referred to these for elements supporting or contradicting identified discourses in the interviews. The analysed songs are listed in the appendix section (see Appendix 1: Analysed songs) for future reference.

#### **4.8 Data analysis**

After transcription, translation and categorisation, I went through the notes I had kept throughout the entire fieldwork period. This was to identify and categorise the discourses and items I had noted down, either from observation or from interacting with the songs' producers, before actual analysis. I then prepared the texts for analysis. Preparation involved: initial reading through the text; formatting the data files in terms of font size; highlighting key points in my notes and printing and making a backup for each data file, particularly for the songs. Secondly, I did a close reading of the songs with an aim of familiarising myself with the content and gaining a deeper understanding of the discourses therein. I made a list of all the discourses that occurred in the data. These were the key issues/ideas that seemed relevant to my analysis. I did this until no new discourse emerged. I then selected items for analysis basing on a judgemental sampling method which 'allows us to choose a case because

it illuminates some features or process in which we are interested' (Silverman 1993:387). After this I categorised linguistic items and discourses I was interested in, copied and pasted items together according to how related and different they were or how they could support my arguments once I started analysis. I used colour codes to separate main from sub-discourses as well as contradicting ones. I also colour marked items that were predominantly repeated and matched items to discourses they evidenced using arrows. I reduced unnecessary overlap in the categories because some linguistic items fitted into more than one discourse. I considered texts which were not assigned to any category to establish whether they were relevant in answering the research questions. I decided to approach my analysis from the most dominant discourse to the least, and numbered these accordingly.

Once preparation was completed, I started the song analysis. First of all, in relation to each song, a summary was written, followed by an outline of the lexical items and metaphors identified. Thereafter, particular attention was paid to the specific gendered discourses that constructed men and women in different ways. Where the same lexical item was used for both men and women (although this was rare), it was noted down. Of importance was how men and women (circumcised and uncircumcised) were being positioned in relation to each other, and the lexical items used to represent these three genders, their roles and behavioural expectations. Two tables with a list of lexical items and metaphors that had been identified and which were relevant in answering the research questions were drawn. In these tables there were two sections, one with lexical items representing men and another with items for women. The analysis then started by focusing on the items that were more obvious and those that seem to be explicitly gendered. In each case, I noted why I thought that was the case and the reason for the selection of a particular item. After this, the same was done for the metaphors and linked to the specific gendered discourses they realised. Once I completed analysing the songs I proceeded to interviews, following the same procedure of examining lexical items then metaphors and using these as cues for identification and naming of gendered discourses. I based my analysis on Fairclough's (1992, 2003, 2015) CDA and Sunderland's (2004) gendered discourses approach. Sunderland provides a model for identifying and naming discourses and relies on Fairclough's linguistic categories and van Leeuwen's (1996) representation of social actors' approach to provide evidence for the discourses in the texts.

#### 4.8.1 Language items analysis

This was the first part of the analysis which involved immersing myself in the data (Wodak 1999) from which linguistic categories emerged as prominent in relation to my first research question. I focused on lexical items and metaphors which were evident in the songs and interviews. This involved identifying the words used for each gender, their meanings and implications. I particularly focused on ideologically loaded words. Where there were overlaps I noted this down. I then moved on to metaphors, identified the gender being symbolised and the meanings of the metaphors. I related these to the social context in which the songs are produced and consumed. At times, I had to decide which meaning and implication the metaphor was portraying whenever there were two interpretations. For instance, the *rock* metaphor and the *bare rock* metaphor (see sections 5.1 and 6.1). Under transitivity I focused on how the social actors were being represented (agency patterns). Particularly which gender was being represented performing material processes (van Leeuwen 1996) who were therefore agents (and active), and which one was represented as the goal/recipient or instrument (hence passive), after which I drew conclusions. This completed my analysis at micro-level (lexical items and metaphors).

I then focused on discursive analysis where I looked at how the identified linguistic features (lexical items and metaphors) contributed to maintaining unequal power relations, legitimating, dissimulating or reifying the state of affairs in the Kuria context and how they represented/positioned some groups of social actors as more powerful in relation to others (Fairclough 2003). I examined whether women were being repeatedly denigrated and trivialised or positioned in subordinate (or dominant) roles (as suggested by Alemu 2007). I considered recurring items but also paid attention to those that appeared once, bearing in mind that lexis relates to ideology because the meanings of words and wordings of meanings are matters which are socially variable and socially contested; they are facets of a wider social and cultural process (Fairclough 1992). Selection of one word for another is done intentionally for a particular goal; when analysing lexis, emphasis is on key words (Fairclough 1992), those that are significant, the recurring items and phrases. However, marginal instances of single lexical items or phrases may also be important (Fairclough 2003) due to their ideological underpinnings. Fairclough (2010) stresses that words are not



neutral, choices can be used to normalise the power of particular groups over others (see also Wodak 2001) and to advance certain ideologies. Choice of words for a particular subject indicates a society's interest, attitude and feelings towards that subject.

#### **4.8.2 Gendered discourses analysis**

To cover particular aspects in my data that Fairclough's textual analysis does not account for, I used Sunderland's gendered discourses approach to identify, name, and describe gendered discourses as they emerged in the songs, and the traces through which each of the discourses was realised, and shuffled between the discourses and the relevant linguistic features until there were no more discourses to be identified. I then examined what gendered identities and asymmetrical power relations were being constructed, maintained and reinforced and with what consequences, after which I related these to FGM. I did this for songs first, then examined how the discourses I had identified were being re-contextualised in the interviews. Focus was on whether a discourse I had identified and named from the songs was being reproduced, affirmed, subverted or challenged in the interviews. I examined how the songs' producers drew on texts and discourses outside the songs, for instance on political and leadership discourse (reference to Obama (former president of the USA), Machage (former MP for Kuria Constituency)), war and ethnic clashes discourse (reference to different valleys that were once war zones), farming discourse (reference to plants and animals both literally and metaphorically). This was my approach to achieve intertextuality and interdiscursivity according to Fairclough (1992). In my discussion chapters (Chapters 6,7 and 8), I show how texts in the songs and interviews draw from and influence others and how discourses (both those evident in the texts and those circulating in the wider Kuria society) are interlinked in different constellations, orders and networks (Reisigl & Wodak 2001; Sunderland 2004). I identified, named and classified three main discourses (proper woman discourse, economic value discourse, and power and control discourse) which were being shored up by several sub-discourses (see Chapters 6, 7, 8).

When analysing gendered discourses, the first task was to identify and name the discourses. Discourses are not 'fixed, timeless and universal, but continuously open to contestation and change' (Baxter 2002:94). According to Sunderland (2004), identification of a discourse requires co-construction by the language user with the

text and elements of its production. Features of the text act ‘on the one hand as *traces* of the production process, and on the other hand as *cues* in the process of interpretation’ (Fairclough 1989:24). Through the analysis of a text, an analyst can justify the interpretation being made. This will lead to ‘showing that your interpretation is compatible with the features of the text and more compatible than others’ (Fairclough 1992: 232).

Both Fairclough (1992) and Sunderland (2004) suggest checking whether one’s identified, named and interpreted discourses are recognised by others coming from the same field or outside it. I did this internally with members of the language research unit (LIdIA) at York St John University and with my undergraduate Gender, Language and Sexuality students at York St John University. I also involved other language and gender scholars in discussions during international conferences and in most cases, they supported my selections, and where questions were raised, corrections were made. Even with these checks, I made it clear that the linguistic features I had identified were relevant and, according to me, enough evidence of the discussed gendered discourses by listing and discussing these features in Chapter 5 (data summary and analysis overview).

Once discourses had been identified, I commenced the naming process being informed by previous literature, particularly feminist readings. Sunderland (2004) argues that one can only identify and name gendered discourses if they are aligning themselves with the feminist approach (see also Lazar 2005). Chouliaraki & Fairclough (1999:56) state that ‘the label we use is not so important (there is no closed list of [...] discourses, and there are relatively few that have subtle names either for analysts or for participants); the important point is that [a discourse] is recognisable as [a particular type of language]’. I have named most discourses using names given by feminists as found in previous literature but for other discourses I have coined names drawing from the Kuria context (an example is the *proper woman discourse*). While looking at the gendered discourses, I paid close attention to the roles of men and women represented in the songs and interviews; what actions they were performing and what activities they were involved in or were expected to engage in.

#### **4.9 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity has been defined as a process where a researcher turns a critical gaze on himself/herself (Finlay 2003). Reflexivity played an important role because my research involved direct intersection with people through interviews. These people shared a language with me, and I might have understood all the issues on which I was interviewing them since this is my community as well. I was working with them as an insider and outsider at the same time. I had several titles while in the field: I was perceived as their daughter, their sister and aunt, but at the same time I was a researcher, an analyst of gender and discourse, a female to some of them and more importantly one researching on FGM. This last one made them have doubts and even though they did not ask why I was interested very much, I reminded them from time to time. With all these I knew too well that I was tied to the people and issues I was investigating in one way or another. Even though I may have similar or different views and beliefs on the issues that were under investigation from those of the participants, I clearly knew that the position I take could aid or impede my objectivity as a researcher. For instance, my position as a learned female in the community where girl education is not emphasised could influence the research process in one way or another. With this background in mind, I put measures in place to ensure my researcher position did not have significant impact on the results of the data collection and analysis process. First, I assured the participants that the study was strictly academic, and reassured them that I was one of them and to those who were older than me asked them to view me as they would their daughter and to my peers, as they would interact with their friend.

My position as a researcher who has read widely on areas of language and gender and discourse analysis helped me to be critical of values that are taken as given in Kuria society, during analysis. I piloted the interviews and from this I knew what to focus on and what to avoid. One thing I had to stay clear of is revealing my position (albeit with difficulty) as an uncircumcised woman, and an anti-FGM crusader or explicitly showing that I was not supportive of the FGM practice. I noted that some of the participants felt superior to me because they had undergone FGM while I had not, but others felt inferior arguing that I had been educated in the West while they had not. This however did not hinder our interaction or affect the interview process, we related well and had a rapport throughout the study. One aspect that helped most

is that I focused more on my position as a researcher and a linguist and reminded the participants about this from time to time while ensuring I did not influence the process in any way. To make sure my position did not have a negative impact on my study, I made use of triangulation. This was also a measure to ensure my conclusions could be validated. Triangulation involves using more than one method of data collection (Silverman 2001). Silverman has argued that triangulation is important if the researcher wants to double check their findings. As a critical analyst, I also made use of Bloor & Bloor's (2007:5) suggestions of making myself a stranger 'to observe what is going on in a way that an alien studying our planet would do'. I tried to make the familiar look strange by detaching myself from my own personal and automatic interpretations of what is going on and seeing events from a different perspective, a suggestion given by Simpson & Tuson (2003). Reflexivity therefore enabled me to identify and reflect on my values and experiences, list how they might be shaping my understanding of the issues under investigation, restate my purpose and remain focused.

#### **4.10 Ethical considerations**

Issues of ethics always occur in social research. In my case ethics concerned factors such as informed consent of the participants to participate in the research, to be audio recorded, for their names to be used, anonymity and acknowledgement, confidentiality and vulnerability of the participants and the sensitivity of the topic under investigation. Being aware that the practice of FGM is illegal for those below 18 years in Kenya and because I was going to be dealing with human participants, I had these ethical issues to consider: One was how I was going to research something illegal and the other was on whether I was going to interview children. The other thing that posed a challenge was whether I was going to meet willing participants particularly because there had been some arrests and court charges of those involved in FGM cases in Kuria in the past and people had reportedly been negative towards some researchers whom they feared could inform on them. All these meant there were ethical issues to address before-hand.

I secured ethical clearance from the York St John University research committee after making it clear that I was going to investigate circumcision songs and as texts and not FGM itself as a practice. Although the practice is illegal, the songs are not. The

two relate only in the sense that the songs are performed during the FGM ceremonies and had not been previously recorded or published. The only way I was going to access them was by participating in the ceremonies. About the respondents, I made it clear that I would only interview women of 18 years and above who had been circumcised already. These were adults who could give consent. Permission was thereafter sought from the relevant administrative offices and participants' consent forms signed before data collection could commence. With respect to participants' willingness to be involved, I informed them beforehand what my research was about and did this during data collection as well and answered their questions. I obtained both their informed written consent and spoken consent before the interview sessions. On confidentiality and anonymity, I clearly explained to the informants that they had a choice to participate or not on each occasion before the interviews. I assured them that their names will not appear anywhere and that the study was purely academic. I also informed them that they would be audio recorded. They assured me that they did not have any problem with that. The concept of voluntary informed consent is at the center of research ethics in social sciences. Human subjects are entitled to know the nature, purpose and implications of research to autonomously choose whether to take part in it or not (Bosire 2013). Accordingly, my informants were informed and reminded that they had a choice to participate in the study and could disengage at any point without prior notice. Regarding participants' names, I had planned to use false names for example *gati* or *robi* among others but later changed this to codes such as F1 for females and M1 for males because I realised that *gati* and *robi* were still real Kuria names. Codes would assure anonymity more than false names could.

#### **4.11 Challenges during field study**

I encountered several challenges but most of them did not significantly affect my research. I understood that investigating FGM songs which were part of the ceremonies and the genital cutting practice which is illegal in Kenya meant there would be limitations. The first challenge was recruiting participants over the phone because I had to have them ready and informed about the research before travelling to Kenya. I therefore had to make long phone calls either in the morning or evening where network connection would be reliable and explain my research and intentions to involve the participants. This was economically straining; it was however managed

well, since my contact person had sent me all the phone contacts and played a key role in informing the participants beforehand that I was going to do academic research not to arrest them.

The other challenge came after the Ntimaru zone chief had been assaulted and his home torched. One of the female interviewees was hesitant to be interviewed after this incident for fear of being attacked too. However, I reassured her that she would be safe and added that it was purely for my academic work and I was assured of my own protection and the protection of my interviewees at any time they were with me. This settled her fears. The main challenge was that the female initiation rituals were delayed for three weeks following the arrest of the Ntimaru circumciser. We had to wait for her to be bailed out of police custody since the council of elders did not have enough time to consult their 'gods' or to get another circumciser. This also meant that other divisions could not start the ceremonies, because the first 8 girls (*amananei*)<sup>31</sup> must be circumcised on the same day to pave way for the others. I spent this time collecting preparation songs. Once the bail was paid, the circumciser was released and the FGM ceremonies commenced a day after her release.

#### **4.12 Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the methods used in this research. The first section presented the location of the study and the research design. It also described the preparation for data collection, the actual data and collection procedures, detailing both audio recording of songs and semi-structured interviews. I have also described the preparation for analysis including transcription, translation and coding (categorisation). I then detailed how I used the theoretical framework in the analysis, particularly Fairclough's linguistic features and Sunderland's gendered discourses. The last section dealt with reflexivity, ethical considerations and challenges faced. In the next chapter I present the data summary and analysis overview.

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<sup>31</sup> These eight were the inaugurators of the cutting ritual (*inyangi ya esaro*). They represent the eight ancestral clans according to Kuria mythology. On the day of their cut, they line up symbolically based on generational seniority of the clans (*abasae, abanyamburiti, abagamunyeri, abamaina, abachuma, abamairabe, abagini, abanyangi*).

## **Chapter 5: Data summary and analysis overview**

### **5.0 Introduction**

After engaging with the data, I came up with distinct categories of linguistic features which responded to my question: how are men and women constructed in the female circumcision songs? These included lexical items and metaphors. With these I was able to identify specific gendered discourses that constructed men and women in different ways. In the following section I start by discussing the identified lexical items and metaphors in the FGM songs and interviews. This is at text level according to Fairclough (2001). These will be used as cues and traces in the identification, naming, description and interpretation of gendered discourses (according to Sunderland 2004) which I discuss in the next chapters (Chapters 6, 7 and 8). With this analysis of vocabulary, I will be referring back to my first objective which is to 'identify the lexical items and metaphors in Kuria female circumcision songs and to describe whether they refer to men or women and in what ways'.

### **5.1 Linguistic traces of gendered discourses in the songs**

#### **5.1.1 Lexical items**

Table 5 summarises some of the lexical items used in the songs. Selection of the lexical items is done purposefully and based on the systematicity and frequency of use. Attribution of the lexical items to either men or women has been done basing on the context in which each word is used, either with a noun or pronoun relating to men or women. To analyse the linguistic structures in the songs, I rely on Halliday's (1985, 1994, 2004) framework for classification. Halliday's framework is based on a view of language as involved in three kinds of meaning-making (meta-functions): ideational, interpersonal and textual (see section 2.3.2). With this framework, I analyse language at word level focusing on attribution and process types.

<b>Men</b>	<b>Circumcised women</b>	<b>Uncircumcised women</b>
<p><b>Attributive nouns</b></p> <p>Shield-(5)</p> <p>Slaughterer-(4)</p> <p>Thunder-(3)</p> <p>Mushroom-(2)</p> <p>Iron rod-(2)</p>	<p><b>Attributive nouns</b></p> <p>Rock-(17)</p> <p>Server-(4)</p> <p>Water fetcher-(4)</p> <p>Soda-(3)</p> <p>Solar-(3)</p> <p>Ship-(2)</p> <p>Bomb-(2)</p> <p>Tree-(2)</p> <p>Chicken-(1)</p> <p><b>Descriptive nouns:</b></p> <p>Her beauty lies in her:</p> <p>Teeth-(5)</p> <p>Necklaces-(3)</p> <p>Beads-(3)</p> <p>Beautiful hair-(2)</p> <p>Belts-(2)</p> <p>Earrings-(2)</p>	<p><b>Attributive nouns</b></p> <p>Uncircumcised-(7)</p> <p>Dog-(1)</p>
<p><b>Material process:</b></p> <p>Brings-(8)</p> <p>Runs-(7)</p> <p>Reaches-(5)</p>	<p><b>Material process</b></p> <p>Spreads-(7)</p> <p>Serves-(5)</p> <p>Closes the gate-(4)</p>	<p><b>Material process</b></p> <p>Embarrasses-(4)</p> <p>Touches the circumciser-(2)</p>



Goes-(4)	Opens the gate-(4)	
Splits -(3)	Gives birth-(3)	
Rules-(3)	Laughs-(3)	
Kills-(2)	Cooks- (2)	
Protects-(4)	Adorns- (2)	
Gets-(3)	Entices-(2)	

Table 5: Selected lexical items in the circumcision songs and their frequencies (the number in brackets indicates the frequency of the word in the songs)

Table 5 shows that men are represented as being involved more in material processes than circumcised and uncircumcised women. It is clear that those actions which have to do with strength, material things of value and daunting activities are associated with men while women are assigned processes and actions that have to do with cooking, serving, beauty and adornment; these are culturally perceived to be weak. This representation is pre-eminently unequal and contrastive. It reveals the patriarchal status of the Kuria society. The woman is being represented as a weak object whose only strength lies in performing her domestic duties and in her beauty, both natural (teeth) and artificial (ornaments); both of which are meant for men's admiration. Among the Kuria, domestic chores and focusing on beauty are considered weak engagements compared to men's activities such as fighting in battles and working away from the house/home. Men are represented as powerful leaders, fighters, and protectors and in some instances dangerous and destructive. Women are never constructed as being active except in the domestic sphere, while men are actively involved in physical action: running, splitting trees with bare hands and so on. This involvement in material processes has been described by Halliday (1985) as a way of differentiating those who wield power from those who do not. Showing men being involved in material processes leads one to infer that men are practical and have courage and potential to act while women do not. The wording of the songs therefore reflects the unequal social status of Kuria men and women.

The analysis of material and behavioural processes is similar to what Talbot (1995) found while analysing James Herbert's novel, *Lair*. Though Talbot did not use processes, she found that the hero (a man) was attributed transitive verbs (meaning he was more active) while the women characters were attributed intransitive verbs

(were passive). Women were frequently being acted upon or were just reacting to men's actions. The men's actions were represented in verbs such as '*reach, grab, shield and take*'; conversely, women character's actions took intransitive verbs like '*stand, lean back and watch*' (Talbot 1995:123-137). Talbot concluded that the novel was not just a comedy book but a site where masculine dominance and aggression were reproduced. In the circumcision songs, men take verbs such as *split, rip, run, shoot* while women's actions include *cook, serve, laugh and adorn*. The song below illustrates some of the unequal representation evident in the FGM songs which show men being portrayed as more active and agents while women are recipients.

Extract 5.1 (Song 14)

*Father is a man*

*He is enough to **go** to England*

*To **rule** the community of the mighty*

*When he wants to **come** back he won't hide*

*He will **come** with a big car that will be **speeding***

*With beads in there shining*

*Women will collect the beads and adorn themselves*

.....

*Mother what can I relate you to*

*What I have **brought** you is beautiful hair*

*So you can **give** to Esther and Deborah*

*So that they can grow and know that our cattle are worth*

The father goes to rule in England (the irony of this is that I am writing this thesis from England, being a Kuria woman, this is contrary to societal expectations), he comes back with a big car, which carries shining beads. The women collect the beads and adorn, after which they walk around enticing men. In the same song, the mother is given beautiful hair which she distributes to Esther and Deborah. Although through the word '*give*' the woman seems to be a provider, her action is just intermediary to that of the man. This distribution is not an act of providing but one of serving, because she has received and is giving out thus making her an instrument and not the source. This secondary placement of the mother makes her subordinate to the father who has provided the adornments. It constructs women as recipients waiting to receive from a man and puts the men (the providers) in a power-holding and controlling position. Kuria people hold a very strong position in terms of gender division of labour to an extent that it is taboo for a married man to clean a house because that is considered

to be a feminine duty and performing it makes him a woman and therefore weak. Constructing him as performing power-related activities in the songs, while she does not, is therefore a reflection of cultural expectations of gender.

### 5.1.2 Metaphors

Table 6 contains a list of some metaphors used to describe men and women in the songs, with their frequencies in brackets. An explanation of the use and application of the metaphors is also given after. Only the gender specific metaphors are explained, so the *rain* metaphor is not because it refers to both men and circumcised women.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Circumcised women</b>	<b>Uncircumcised women</b>	<b>Both men and circumcised women</b>
<b>Metaphors</b>	Shield-(5) Thunder-(4) Mushroom-(2) Iron rod-(2)	Rock-(17) Soda-(3) Solar-(3) Earrings-(2) Bomb-(2) Ship-(2) Tree-(2) Chicken-(1)	Dog-(1)	Rain-(4) Irrigate-(4)

Table 6: Metaphors in the female circumcision songs and their frequencies

In this section I give a brief explanation of the metaphors identified in the songs that refer to men and women.

A *shield* is a protective instrument that is carried by warriors going to war and stays at the front side to repel arrows from the attacker. It is normally made of wood covered with animal hides and skins; it therefore cannot be penetrated by any arrow. In this way, anyone who carries a shield is sure of protection. This metaphor is used to describe men implying that it is only men who are ‘shields’ and therefore endowed with protection roles.

Through the *shield* metaphor, a Kuria man is constructed as a protector. He protects his people (his household and the larger society in general) from all enemies. Among the Kuria, every man is always expected to be ready to face any human enemy or

animal that might be invading his home. This is why each mature male member has a sword, shield and a spear used to protect his family. He protects his mother and other family members if his father is dead without minding about the kind of danger he might be exposed to. The ability to own these items gives a man power and strength to do anything in his home and outside. This ownership puts him in a higher position, hierarchically above the woman. Historically, whenever there is any form of invasion such as a wild animal attacking a homestead or neighbouring communities such as the Maasai or Kipsigis attacking Kuria homes, the role of women is to scream and alert the community members while men go out to fight the enemy. A family that has many sons is considered most secure because the enemy would be afraid of attacking such a family. The metaphor, '*there are many shields in that family*' is used to refer to a home that has many sons. On the other hand, one without a son is considered vulnerable and prone to invasion. For instance:

Extract 5.2 (Song 4)

*Uncle you are **shields**, you are **shields** that have been painted*

*The **shields** that are **carried** by **strong** men who go after the cows*

*They **bring** back the cows from the enemies the enemies that rule*

In extract 5.2, the man is compared to a shield. The song further states that the shields are carried by strong men. Strength is used in this case as one of the qualities of a 'proper' man, meaning those men who are not strong are regarded as women. They are weak and cannot carry shields. They cannot face enemies in the battle-field either. They stay at home (just like women do) when real men are going into war. This metaphor therefore justifies and reinforces the role and position of a Kuria man.

*Thunderstorm* is a common phenomenon in Kuria and Kisii highlands. The occurrence of thunder is always destructive and leaves behind a trail of property loss and sometimes deaths. In Kuria, there have been cases where thunder strikes and lightning splits huge trees into pieces and reduces homes to rubble. The thunder metaphor constructs a man as having incomparable physical strength, which is what he needs to perform duties such as leading other men to face enemies in times of invasion. The destructive nature of a man instils fear in those under his control and

gives him authority over those he rules. The damaging nature of thunder cannot be prevented or stopped - it has to take its course since it is natural. A Kuria man is compared to thunder owing to his expected physical strength and energy.

Extract 5.3 (Song 10)

*Our men are like **thunder***

*They **split** trees with their hands*

*If there is cry for help from Muyuyi (name of a place) they will **reach***

*They will **stand firm** with **shields***

*With **shields** and **protect** our people*

*Our men are like **thunder***

*They **protect** us till we are safe*

In extract 5.3, the thunder metaphor is explicitly employed to ideologically construct men as powerful and re-state their expected behaviours in society.

A *mushroom* is a fungal growth which characteristically takes the form of a domed cap on a stalk. The stalk functions as a pillar supporting the cap. In most cases the cap is wider and heavier as the mushroom grows while the stalk is normally thin but sturdy enough to take the weight on its head. A Kuria man is metaphorically constructed as a mushroom in order to represent him as a pillar that supports the head, which contains all those who depend on him for support and provision of nutrients, thus constructing him as a provider. The shape of the mushroom is such that there is only one pillar with the head depending on it. The man is taken to be that pillar, while his family members and other property constitute the head. Although the head is always heavy and rests its weight on the pillar, depending on it for everything, mostly for nutrients from the soil, the pillar still stands strong supporting it and providing all that is needed. Without the pillar, the mushroom cannot stand and this shows how important a man is to his family and his community. It shows the role of the man in the stability of his family and pre-eminently positions the man as more important. Any time the pillar falls the whole mushroom is destroyed.

Extract 5.4 (Song 4)

*Uncle is worth he is worth like **irinyansaka (mushroom)***

*He is like **irinyansaka (mushroom)** from Kiribo the one with a long root*

Extract 5.5 (Song 10)

*A father's home is **strong***

*Like a **mushroom** from Kiribo it spreads*

In extract 5.5, the home of a man is described as being strong like *irinyansaka (mushroom)*, the one from *Kiribo*<sup>32</sup> with a long root. This shows that a man needs to be strong, because, it is only a strong man that can erect a strong homestead, where his people are well protected from enemies and any looming danger. Therefore, not only does a man have to be a strong pillar to support his family in all ways but also his home needs to be strong enough. This is why men whose homes are misshapen and sloping are always ridiculed and described as women. Physical strength in men is an expected attribute that separates them from women. Men who are not strong enough to undertake their social roles as expected are perceived to be lesser men. The terms 'lesser man' and 'woman' exist in a hierarchy. One who is a lesser man is less valued than a proper man but more valued than a woman; lesser man is viewed as more positive than woman. Some interviewees considered it better to be referred to as '*temosaacha oheene hai*' (not a proper man) than as *omokari* (woman). The expected strength of men is also metaphorically inscribed in the songs as iron rods.

*Iron rods* are heavy metal bars which are used to make doors and spears. They are strong and durable and cannot be easily broken. They are normally burnt in a furnace for days before they can be twisted to the required shape. A Kuria man is metaphorically constructed as an iron rod to show his expected strength and ability to face any eventuality. Like an iron rod the man is expected to be firm in his decision making and be well founded in his leadership ability. The physical strength is a quality that a man must have to perform his socially ascribed duties such as protection, providing for his family and ruling his community. A home that had many

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<sup>32</sup> Kiribo is a name of a place. According to Kuria mythology it is a large area that is uninhabited with a lot of bushes and forests and which is perceived to be very fertile. The Kuria believe that when their population will have surged beyond limits, some of them will settle in this area.

sons was described as booming and heavy since it was assured of utmost protection. The use of this metaphor is similar to that of the 'shield' metaphor, both of which are used to ideologically construct men as different from women and to legitimate their dominant position in society.

Extract 5.6 (Song 10)

*A mother's house **booms***

*If there are **iron-rods** inside they **shoot** out*

*They **spread** in the cowshed and reach out to the ponds*

This ideological representation of men as strong is repeated in song 14, thus emphasising the importance of having many male children in a homestead and putting men in an elevated position over women. Having described metaphors used to describe men in the songs I now describe those associated with women.

The *rock* metaphor is the most frequently used, with the word *rock* being mentioned 17 times in the songs. Among the Kuria people there are diverse types of rocks and stones depending on the size and use. The one used to scrub feet is a stone (*irisambuini*). The one used to grind millet is a rock (*orogena*). The one used to air-dry grains is a rock (*orotare*). The rock metaphor used in the songs borrows from the grinding stone which, according to Kuria mythology, does not wear down despite repeated usage, nor does it age. A small rock is called *akagena*. A normal one is *irigena* while a big one is *ogogena*. The word *egotare* which borrows from the airing rock<sup>33</sup> is used in a negative way and has a negative connotation to mean non-productive. Whenever it is used for a woman it means she is barren. *Egotare* literally means a large wide rock lying over a large area, making it unfit for crop production.

From the data, the word *rock* has three meanings and interpretations. The two types of rocks used in the songs are *akagena* (small rock) and *irigena* (normal rock) while *orotare* (bare rock) is used in the interviews (see section 7.2.1 for a detailed description of bare rock (*orotare*). Small rock (*akagena*) is used for a girl who is being prepared to be circumcised; it is therefore common in the songs that are

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<sup>33</sup> A rock extending over a large surface, on which grains are air-dried before being crushed into cooking flour.

performed during preparation and the day before circumcision. That she has accepted and is ready to undergo FGM makes her a small rock, meaning she is prepared to withstand any pain and/or can bear it, just like the grinding stone does. Once she is circumcised she becomes a rock (*irigena*). The word 'rock' normally has a reference to a man, a firstborn son is described as the 'rock of the family' and any man who has been successful is also described as a 'rock'. Therefore, once circumcised, the woman becomes a rock, she becomes dependable (one of the characteristics ideologically associated with men) by virtue of the fact that she has borne the pain. She becomes a proper member of society by being initiated into womanhood. She can now perform the duties that those who have not undergone FGM are not allowed to. She can be married at any time and most importantly she can bear children. With FGM comes an elevation of a woman's low status to a higher status, a status that puts her nearer to a man even physically (she is allowed to have sexual relations, marry and get pregnant). This also positions circumcised women at a higher power level than those who are not.

In songs 3 and 9, the *rock* metaphor is repeatedly used. In song 3, performed before a girl goes for FGM, it is the *small rock* that is used, while in song 9, performed after FGM, she has become a *rock*.

Extract 5.7 (Song 3)

Our sons dance slowly

A **small rock** of a woman was born

Extract 5.8 (Song 9)

She has become a **rock**

.....

She has become a **rock**

Eye ee eye

Our child has become

She has become a woman like others

She has become a **rock**



The *soda* and *solar*<sup>34</sup> metaphors are used together in reference to the circumcised women. When I asked the songs producers why they said; ‘she has become a soda,’ the response was that before circumcision she could not be ‘eaten’ (literally to mean she could not give in to sexual relations) but now she has a right to ‘be taken’ like a soda. She is now sweet for men to drink from her ‘source’. This means with FGM a girl is free to engage sexually with any man who wishes to seek her hand in marriage in the same way a soda is available for anyone who can afford it. It contradicts the assumption that FGM enhances virginity and sexual purity as stated in most FGM literature (see section 3.2.4). On the other hand, the solar metaphor is used to mean she can illuminate herself, and attract men towards her. Solar panels are a recent phenomenon in Kuria. Only a few homesteads that are considerably rich can afford them. They are considered expensive but of great value, compared to the usual cloth lamp (*ekoroboi*), or tin lamp (*etara*) whose light is not as bright as that of a solar charged battery. Without light there is darkness, the use of the ‘solar metaphor’ for circumcised women therefore shows their value compared to the uncircumcised whose use is short-lived. The circumcised women are ideologically perceived to be a bright light that can be seen from a distance and which attracts many suitors just like a bright light attracts many insects. The metaphor also suggests that as solar lights last longer, the women will perpetuate the continuity of the family line of the men who marry them. This underpins the expected roles and behaviours of a Kuria woman. The two metaphors are only used with reference to the circumcised women; therefore, one who is not circumcised lacks these qualities. It is only after circumcision that one becomes sweet and attractive. This is used to legitimate the circumcision ideology and to normalise it.

Extract 5.9 (Song 9)

Our child has become has become a woman like others

She has become a **soda**; she has become a **solar**...

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<sup>34</sup> The word *soda* used in the songs refers to the soft drink produced and distributed by the Coca Cola Company, while *solar* refers to the solar panels used to tap sunlight energy.

Apart from being ascribed the metaphors of *soda* and *solar*, women are also metaphorically constructed as *earrings* in the songs. Earrings are accessories which women wear to enhance their beauty. Among the Kuria people, they are considered to be both beautiful adornments and a sign of beauty when worn. The *earrings* metaphor is used with reference to circumcised women only. The women are said to be beautiful and compared to earrings. The context in which it is used suggests that they are so beautiful and attractive to the extent of making men act in ‘manly’ ways to get these ‘earrings’. They go to face enemies from whom they take cattle by force, with these cattle they pay the dowry and get the beautiful women. In this case women have been objectified, like commodities that can be exchanged for cattle; they have value attached to them. This is a form of dehumanisation and subordination of women. The metaphor also implies that those who have not undergone FGM are not beautiful, so they cannot attract men or be married. This leads to their alienation, particularly because marriage is considered the norm and not getting married a deviant behaviour.

Extract 5.10 (Song 8)

Our women are like **earrings**

Those that we see and run fast

We go to get cattle from our enemies

We get the enemies’ cattle by force and bring them home

Through these metaphors, gender identities are constructed and the FGM candidate consequently socialised into the values of her community and coerced into undergoing FGM. The emphasis is on the woman as an object and the man as the active risk taker. From the interviewees’ responses (see Chapter 6), representation of women as beautiful objects has a great social impact on the growing girls. The young listeners internalise these values and behaviours and take them to be common sense, including those which are detrimental to their own interests. The girls grow up understanding that it is their responsibility to remain beautiful in order to attract men. By being beautiful (and circumcised) they are assured of marriage and giving cattle to their fathers and consequently of being considered valuable in the community.

*Bomb* and *ship* metaphors are also used in reference to circumcised women. Bombs are destructive while a ship can withstand stormy waters. In Kuria, these two metaphors are normally used to refer to men. They are used to show men's strength and ability to withstand any difficulties, particularly when facing enemies in war and during ethnic clashes. In this case, however, they are referring to a woman, a circumcised woman, one who has given birth and has children. Such a woman has acquired status and is perceived to be as strong as a man. She is compared to a bomb that hit Machage's (the former Kuria Member of Parliament who had the tallest building in the district) building and destroyed it. This shows that a woman who has withstood FGM has the ability to exercise her power and is able to act destructively, like a man, and therefore commands the respect of the community.

This reference is made to women who have undergone FGM meaning that one who has not is powerless.

Extract 5.11 (Song 13)

Mother what can I compare you to?

What can I compare you to eeee ee?

You are like a **ship** a **bomb**

The one that sounded in the skies

Eee ee in the skies

The one that hit Machage's tall building

Eee ee Machage's tall building

Such constructions underpin the value attached to motherhood which is only allowed after FGM, thus making female circumcision a necessity.

The *tree* and *chicken* metaphors are used in the songs to emphasise the expectations of a Kuria woman to bear children unrestrictedly. She is told to give birth like a tree which has taken deep root near a source of water and which bears fruit from season to season. This emphasises the importance of motherhood among the Kuria. As noted earlier, a Kuria home that has many children is considered rich. This is why the woman is encouraged to keep giving birth in order to propagate her husband's family line and make him rich. The woman is also reminded to guard her children like a

chicken does her chicks. This reiterates the role of a woman as a carer and nurturer. Once a baby has been born, it is the sole responsibility of the mother to ensure they grow up to be a respectable human being. Child care is primarily a woman's duty with men being uninvolved or remotely involved. Some men, particularly those who are more polygamous, with up to five wives, do not even know their children's names. The woman, therefore, uses what the man brings home to feed her children and to ensure they have a place to sleep. These are domestic duties which tie a woman to domestic spheres; she has no time to go out. This reaffirms the 'woman as domestic' and 'woman as private' discourses (see section 6.3) which legitimate and naturalise the status quo. This functionalisation is a form of subservience and subordination of women and is perpetuated through FGM songs. It is only women who have undergone FGM that are allowed to give birth and consequently care for children. If anyone who has not been circumcised becomes pregnant it is treated as a curse and she is ostracised. This, therefore, reaffirms the role of FGM in what is ideologically perceived to be empowering Kuria women but which is in real sense destructive to their interests.

The tree and chicken metaphors are used in song 5.

Extract 5.12 (Song 5)

Spread uncle's wife, spread, give birth and spread

Spread, give birth and spread like a **tree** that has roots deep down

Give birth like a **chicken** gives birth and guards

The last metaphor in this section is the dog metaphor which is used in the songs with reference to the uncircumcised girls only. The word *dog* is an insult when used to refer to a human being. When a person is called a dog, it is demeaning and shows they are worthless and animalistic. He/she is compared to an unidentified person who can be kicked around and can wander anywhere just like dogs do. He/she is referred to as half being and a non-entity. In Kuria, dogs are not treated as pets as they are in the UK. They are wild animals, ferocious and dangerous. In most cases they fend for themselves by hunting and when they die they are not accorded any burial but just thrown into the bush to rot and be forgotten. Being compared to a dog, the

uncircumcised girl has been animalised, devalued and shown to have no identity. No one respects her. This is why the girl being prepared for circumcision is asking for an *orogoye* ‘sisal cane’ (a string made from sisal fibre, which is believed to inflict unbearable pain when used as a cane) to ‘beat the night away’ so that she can quickly be circumcised and rid-of the state that has made her be compared to a *dog*.

Extract 5.13 (Song 23)

The one with dry legs (the cock) please crow

So I can be taken off this bad uncircumcised state

The state that has barred me from being greeted *nyamwita*  
(*respectable woman*)

The state that has made me be called a **dog**

Being greeted *nyamwita*<sup>35</sup> is an honourable reference and state, which every young woman looks forward to and which the girl will supposedly not experience unless she undergoes FGM. This is why she is impatient to get to morning. Metaphors do ideological work (Koller 2004) and by using such a demeaning reference as dog to refer to the uncircumcised girls, the goal is to evoke negative images of an unwelcomed and unidentified being. This contributes to alienation and stigmatisation of the uncircumcised, putting pressure on them to undergo FGM in order to be accepted, and consequently legitimating their suppression and subordination while celebrating FGM.

## **5.2 Linguistic traces of gendered discourses in the interviews**

### **5.2.1 Lexical items**

Table 7 presents a summary of the main lexical items used in the interviews. The focus is specifically on the nouns and material processes since they have been used unequally. I analyse those that differentiate women from men in a gendered way.

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<sup>35</sup> Nyamwita’ is derived from the Kuria name Mwita which is used for firstborn sons. Nyamwita means a female who has borne a first male child.

<b>Men</b>		<b>Circumcised women</b>		<b>Uncircumcised 'women'</b>	
<b>Nouns</b>	<b>Material processes</b>	<b>Nouns</b>	<b>Material processes</b>	<b>Nouns</b>	<b>Material processes</b>
Omogaaka-married mature man -(153)	Ogotema-to cane-(32)	Umukungu-married mature woman-(129)	Ogotetwa-to be married-(96)	Omosagane-uncircumcised girl-(73)	Okoba Enda-to get pregnant-(20)
Ichitugo-cattle-(47)	Gotara-to wander/go for a walk-(16)	Umuisseke-circumcised woman-(71)	Abaye-she has become-(52)	Irinyinya-uncircumcised (derogatory)-(38)	Ukugumirri-to bear-(16)
Omosacha-married man (29)	Kurisia-to herd cattle-(3)	Omokari-married woman-(43)	Ukuibora-to give birth-(35)	Umukuuri-crier-(3)	Ugukura-to cry-(15)
Umumura-man-(26)		Omokare-brave-(13)	Uguikara-to sit-(33)	Omoba-coward-(3)	Ugusukiri-to embarrass-(14)
Ehamuri-a rule-(15)		Esota-soda-(2)	Ukuigora ikihita-to open the cattle corral's gate-(22)	Irikunene-uncircumcised (derogatory)-(2)	
Esauti-a say/voice/ authority-(14)		Ekebagasi-labourer-(2)	Ogosoywa-to be given presents-(12)		
Umurisia-uncircumcised boy-(3)		Iriraya-prostitute-(2)	Ogokeria abaiburi-greet parents-(10)		
Ibiboko-canes-(3)			Akembe-to entice men-(8)		
			Gotara-to go and practise prostitution-(2)		
			Kurisia-to graze cattle-(1)		

Table 7: Selected lexical items in the interviews and their frequencies

Table 7 depicts that lexical items are used in the interviews to construct men and women in a contrastive and binary way in the same manner it was portrayed in the songs. Words such as voice, authority and canes are only used with men. On the other hand, circumcised women are said to be brave and providers of labour while uncircumcised women are described as cowards and criers. The choice and use of linguistic items in this case creates hierarchies, legitimates asymmetrical positions and maintains the status quo. It is also worth noting that even where a word has two or more meanings the positive meaning is used for men while the negative one is for women. Consider the verb *gotara*<sup>36</sup> (*to wander*) which is to *take a walk* when used with men but to *go and practise prostitution* if it is a woman.

From the interview data, there are three forms of representation: positive representation (use of words such as *voice, power, authority, bravery*) which is used mostly for men and some circumcised women (those considered to be proper women), neutral representation (enacted through words such as *beauty, strength*) for the circumcised women and negative representation (with words such as *cry, embarrass, coward*) which is associated with the uncircumcised. Using more positive words for men and circumcised women and denigrating vocabulary for uncircumcised women is a way of trivialising and demeaning women. It reinforces gender inequality while denying uncircumcised women any form of legitimate identity except through FGM.

In terms of material processes, men are reported to be involved in caning and herding cattle while circumcised women are said to be involved in greeting parents, opening cattle corrals and enticing men. Although women are seen to be involved in material processes, these are largely *domestic*. Uncircumcised women are only associated with such behavioural processes as getting pregnant, bearing pain, crying and embarrassing (being an embarrassment to the family). It is worth mentioning that the getting pregnant described here is not the same as giving birth associated with circumcised married women (note the word choice). The uncircumcised woman's

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<sup>36</sup> The verb *gotara* has different meanings depending on the context of use and subject of reference. Some of these are: take a walk (used when the subjects are men), practise prostitution (women), play games (children).

being pregnant is considered to be a curse and a shameful act to her and her entire family. It is hugely abhorred whereas for the circumcised woman, giving birth is welcomed as a blessing to the family and is celebrated.

### 5.2.2 Metaphors

	<b>Men</b>	<b>Circumcised women</b>	<b>Uncircumcised 'women'</b>
<b>Metaphors</b>	Shield-(3) The tough one from the river-(1) Tall buildings-(1) Bombs-(1)	Rock-(6) The tough tree-(4) Bare rock-(2) Dry tree-(1)	Dog-(3) One who defecates in the cattle corral-(2) One with a foul smell-(1)

Table 8: Metaphors in the interviews and their frequencies

In this section I provide an explanation of the metaphors identified in the interviews. Table 8 shows that the most common metaphors used in the interviews are: shield, tough one from the river, tall buildings and bombs, rock and tough tree, bare rock, dry tree, dog, one who defecates in the cattle corral and one with a foul smell.

The *shield* metaphor has been used in the interviews to re-construct the role of the man as protector just as it was used in the songs (see section 5.1.2). The interviewees unanimously and explicitly stated that it is the role of the man to protect his family. When the man of the house is no more, his brothers and male cousins take the responsibility of ensuring his wife, children and property are safe. They erect a home for the widow and build a cattle corral. In such cases they are exercising the 'shield' roles.

The *tough one from the river* metaphor is used to indicate the power and authority that rests with a Kuria man such that he cannot be disciplined by any other person – especially not by his wife or his children. Even when the mistake is clearly a man's, nobody rebukes him. The reason given is that he is the ultimate depiction of discipline and power. This kind of metaphorical use is a discourse strategy used to legitimate hegemonic masculinity (which naturalises the traditional authority, power and control of men over women). The metaphor is used to reinforce the 'man beating woman discourse' which is ideologically perceived to be an acceptable cultural



practice. It is taken to be the norm for a man to beat a woman but as unexpected for it to happen the other way round. This legitimates domestic violence while reinforcing the dominant position of men and subordination of women. F5 says:

Extract 5.14 (F5)

When a woman has made a mistake a man can cane/beat her very hard. A man when he makes a mistake nobody beats him. He is **the tough one from the river**

The *tall building* metaphor is used in the interviews with reference to men. During performance, the songs producers praise their sisters and say *rosei romogongo* (my sister) and if it is their brother they say, 'brother what can I compare you to, you are like a tall building; you are bombs that hit Burundi'. Note that *tall building* and *bomb* metaphors have been used in the songs too but with reference being made to circumcised women. The song producer compared the mother to a *bomb* that hit Machage's *tall building*. I described this depiction of a woman as a bomb (in the song) as 'contradicting discourse' because in normal circumstances such metaphors are only used for men. When used for women there is a particular goal to be achieved - in this case it is to construct the woman who has gone through FGM, has been married, has had children and has prepared her daughter to undergo FGM as commanding power similar to a man's (see section 5.1.2 for a description of the *bomb* metaphor and section 8.3 for a discussion of the 'contradicting discourse'). In the current case, however, the metaphors *bomb* and *tall building* have been used to refer to men and to show that their power is not just local. The interviewee uses Burundi (a country in East Africa) as the target compared to Machage's building (a building in Kehancha Kuria). This shows that a man's power surpasses local boundaries. It also shows that even though a woman can be powerful, it would only be internal (domestic) while a man's power goes beyond borders (outside). A man goes out to exercise his power and destructive strength.

The *rock* metaphor in the interviews is used to construct circumcised women in the same way it is used in the songs. Female interviewees state that when a girl sits still and does not cry while being cut, they sing that she has become a rock, and did not feel the pain. On the same note, they add that when she is told that she is a rock it makes her brave and courageous. When a girl has withstood the pain, and has not

shown any signs of fear or crying, she is like a rock, she can be cut and not feel any pain.

Extract 5.15 (F16)

She will be cut and not feel any pain because she is a **rock**. Today we will circumcise a **heavy one**. It is a **heavy one** that we are taking. The one on which they will **hit** and become **blunt**

A *tough tree (iriharaga)* is a type of a tree that is indigenous and which grows in dangerous animal-infested forests. It is hard (tough) in nature and difficult to cut and would take several men to fell it. It is used for construction, particularly to erect the middle pole in a man's hut. The tough tree metaphor is used to propagate the FGM ideology by making the girl believe that she is as tough as *iriharaga* and the razor blade will hit her genitals and turn blunt. This metaphor is also used to underpin the strength associated with being circumcised and is employed as a discursive tool to convince girls to undertake the cut. The tree is said to be tougher than the rock such that whenever a sharp object hits it, it becomes blunt. This 'hit and become blunt' discourse is used to emphasise the strength associated with bearing the cut and to trivialise the cutting action. It is a pro-FGM strategy employed and naturalised through repetition. It is accepted by the other members of the society as the norm. These two metaphors are traces of the 'proper woman discourse' (see section 6.1.1). They also legitimate the position of the circumcised woman over the uncircumcised and propagate FGM by constructing it as the only way to gain status, strength, power and identity.

A *bare rock (egetare)* is a type of rock that lies in a large area, in most cases found in farms. It makes the area it lies on unproductive and no crops can be planted on such ground or on the bare rock itself. And because it cannot reproduce, it is only used as a surface to air clothes or dry grains. The bare rock metaphor is used to refer to a woman who has not borne children. For instance, in extract 5.16, F3 says:

Extract 5.16 (F3)

What makes a Kuria woman earn respect is when you get pregnant and give birth in your matrimonial home. The mother to such a woman will say my daughter has become a **proper woman** and established herself in that home. If you go and stay for long they say that this is a **bare rock**. Because in a

Kuria family if you have not borne a child you will be sent  
away

F3 states that, when a woman cannot reproduce she is of less value to the family. She is described as bare rock. Like the bare rock she has made the farm unproductive, meaning she has stopped the propagation of her husband's family line. This metaphor is used to advance the 'compulsory motherhood discourse' (see section 7.2.1) by depicting bearing children as the essence of a woman's existence in her matrimonial family. Even if the bare rock is used for other things such as airing linen and drying grains, it has made the farm lose its main role of reproduction. In a similar way, although the woman performs other duties and domestic chores, she still lacks that one most important aspect of womanhood, motherhood, which is ideologically perceived to be the most valuable state in this context.

The *dry tree* metaphor is used to refer to a woman who is barren. Like the bare rock metaphor, the dry tree metaphor underpins the necessity of giving birth and the troubles that come with being childless. This is also a trace of the 'compulsory motherhood discourse' (section 7.2.1) and 'heterosexual marriage as the norm discourse' (section 8.1). A woman who has not borne children is described as a 'dry tree' to mean she is of less economic value, just like a dry tree which is used only minimally (as firewood).

Extract 5.17 (MD2)

When she stays in the home she is married to for more than three years without giving birth, she is not a person. She does not have peace; she is demeaned and insulted, her husband is told that 'marry another wife; you have brought a **dry tree** home'

Note that this metaphor is only used for women who cannot bear children while there is no equivalent for men who do not have the capability to reproduce. This shows that among the Kuria, it is ideologically perceived that only women can fail to bear children. Such gendered depictions in the society position 'maleness' as the perfect gender while 'femaleness' can be broken – in need of fixing, thus contributing to hierarchies and inequalities. This is normalised and indoctrinated through discourse then passed down generations through the songs.

The '*dog* and the *hyena*' metaphors are used to refer to uncircumcised women. The dog metaphor is used here again in the same manner it was used in the songs. The uncircumcised woman is devalued and compared to a wild animal. Her place is not among the people. This is why she is described as a dog and a hyena. Note that these descriptive nouns are used when the girl is being escorted to the FGM grounds to undergo the cut. They are therefore a strategy to enhance the perceived negative status that being uncircumcised puts one in and to emphasise the need to get out of such a position.

Extract 5.18 (MWD2)

When she is being escorted, they shout and insult her. They say an **uncircumcised** woman is a **dog**, she **defecates in the cattle corral**, she is a **hyena**. Because they take it that an uncircumcised woman is not a valuable human being in the Kuria community

These metaphors are traces of the 'proper woman discourse' and 'woman for economic value discourse'. They underpin the belief that it is only a circumcised woman who is of economic value because she will be married off and fetch cattle for her family. Being compared to a dog and a hyena therefore is a way of degrading the uncircumcised and depicting her as of less value. It is also a strategy used to legitimate FGM as the only way to gain recognition and a socially sanctioned identity.

The *one who defecates in the cattle corral* and the *one with foul smell* metaphors are used for the uncircumcised women. To defecate in the cattle corral is taboo among the Kuria people. It is believed that if you defecate in the corral you are a coward who is not brave enough to go out to the nearby bushes and relieve yourself. It therefore shows that an uncircumcised woman is a coward who cannot face the night in the same way she has not faced the knife/razor.

When I asked F6 how a circumcised woman is perceived this is what she had to say:

Extract 5.19 (F6)

Very well, she has been circumcised in the presence of everyone, they have danced and said 'today you have been taken off uncircumcised state, you have left the uncircumcised' they do not call her the **one with a foul smell** again, she has become a woman one who can bring home cattle,

a brave one who has sat and has been cut, now they can trust  
her

FGM has been described as one way of cleansing a woman and taking away the dirt that is alleged to be in the female genitalia (see section 3.2.5). Among the Kuria, it is believed that the clitoris releases a certain liquid which has a foul smell and which turns men away. Making a woman clean has been listed as one of the reasons why the Kuria people mutilate their girls. A woman who has not been circumcised is believed to be bad smelling and unattractive to men. Again, these are just ideologies which have been indoctrinated and normalised through language. They are taken-for-granted-assumptions which have been naturalised to advance men's power and female subordination and which this research is out to demystify and challenge as an initial step towards creating awareness and bringing about social change.

In summary, the lexical items and metaphors used in the songs and interviews are not neutral. They are selected to coerce the listeners who are women and girls into accepting the existing societal practices. By constructing women as submissive to men, supportive (not leading) and receptive of the power of men over women, the linguistic items are used to persuade those who listen to the songs to perceive gender inequalities as positive values that constitute the sociocultural accepted norms of gender practice and to view FGM as acceptable or even good.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

In this section I have drawn on Fairclough's CDA framework to identify and discuss the lexical items and metaphors used in the songs and interviews. I have explained the functions of these in enacting unequal gender positions in the Kuria society. One thing I noted is that gender roles and norms in both songs and interviews reflected those in the larger Kuria society. I therefore made a general conclusion that lexical items and metaphors in the FGM songs reproduce, legitimate and reinforce unequal gender and power relations in Kuria. I discuss this in details, in chapters 6,7 and 8. In the following sections, I explore the text by discussing its functions in the wider society (Fowler 1991). I reveal how the above linguistic items, which are cues/ traces of existing gendered discourses, are used to advance a hidden agenda about proper womanhood (Chapter 6), economic value (Chapter 7) and power and control (Chapter 8) discourses in the songs and interviews.

## **Chapter 6: Constructions of a proper Kuria woman (and man) in female circumcision ceremonies**

### **6.0 Introduction**

In the previous chapter I presented a list of lexical items and metaphors used in the songs and interviews, which construct men and women in binary contrastive ways, and are used as discursive strategies to legitimate asymmetrical gender and power relations and to position circumcised women over the uncircumcised. I have analysed these following Fairclough's (1992, 2003, 2015) framework of analysis, which presents categories of language items to focus on when conducting a critical discourse analysis. In the following sections I rely on both Fairclough's approach and Sunderland's (2004) gendered discourses framework to identify and name the gendered discourses in the texts. I marry the two approaches by discussing what a text contains in terms of language features and what it does in the context in which it is produced. Barker & Galasinski (2001) suggest that using the two together enriches investigations. The analysis and discussion that follows in this section (and the subsequent two chapters) addresses the three research questions:

1. *What gendered discourses are prevalent in the songs and how are they reproduced, legitimised (and/or challenged) in the interviews? (Do the interviewees confirm, challenge or subvert the discourses in the songs, in what ways?)*
2. *How are gender identities and power relations constructed among the Kuria people?*
3. *What is the effect of the constructions on the perpetuation of FGM among the Kuria people?*

The fourth research question, which is drawn from the first objective: *which lexical items and metaphors are employed in Kuria female circumcision songs and interviews*, has been dealt with in the previous section (Chapter 5).

The discourses identified and named are mostly interpretive ones (see section 2.2.3). I use Sunderland's naming framework: X discourse and/or X as Y discourse where the structure is mostly noun + discourse (e.g. proper woman discourse) or noun + as + adjective discourse (e.g. woman as domestic discourse). I have only used adjective + discourse (Sunderland 2004) when describing contradicting discourses. The analysis and discussion is distributed across three chapters. The current chapter

(Chapter 6) deals with *the constructions of a proper woman and man*. It focuses on the proper Kuria woman discourse, gender differences discourse, gendered division of labour discourses and FGM as a gateway to proper womanhood.

### 6.1 Proper woman discourse

The *proper woman* discourse is a conservative discourse which supports the subservient position of women. It sets the ground for asymmetrical arrangements whereby women are assigned specific gender roles, responsibilities and expectations to fulfil and thus sustains unequal power relations between men and women (Lazar 2000; Kosetzi 2007). I identified and named the *proper woman* discourse by myself because of its frequency in the songs and interviews. From the songs, it is clear that the main reason for circumcising girls in Kuria is to make them 'proper women'. A proper woman according to MD1 is one who performs her ascribed duties in her homestead once married. These duties are performed by circumcised women only: she is a wife, mother, carer, cook and server and she stays at home. Any transgressions from these are judged negatively or punished:

#### Extract 6.1 (MD1)

*...if a girl is not circumcised she cannot be married to a Kuria home, because if you are married to a home there are some many things you do there, in the morning you **open** the cowshed gate so if you are not circumcised you cannot **open** it. And in Kuria you are referred to as *irinyinya*<sup>37</sup>...*

F3 on the other hand says:

#### Extract 6.2 (F3)

*...no one can be married if they are not circumcised. If she is not, she goes to some homes and they cannot allow her to **open** the cowshed gate or **greet** people in the home because she is **irinyinya***

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<sup>37</sup> The word *irinyinya* does not have an equivalent in English. The closest meaning is *something useless*. Other associated Kuria terms are *irikunene*, *irikera*, *omosagane* all which carry degrading and insulting connotations and are used to ridicule uncircumcised women.

*If a girl is not circumcised she can never perform ceremonies, she cannot go through the cowshed gate or be found urinating in the cowshed. She is not allowed to mix with others. If she is a daughter-in-law in a home she cannot send-off/escort her sister-in-law when getting married, she is not allowed to take her personal-items box out of the house and bid her bye, nor can she partake in her adorning ceremony. She cannot give the relatives flour during a wedding or take her share of the meat from the cow slaughtered in a wedding*

Extracts 6.1 and 6.2 show that a proper woman is considered to be one who is circumcised, she is married to a Kuria home, she is allowed to open *ikihita* (cowshed gate), greet her in-laws and performs all other matrimonial duties accordingly. If she is not circumcised she is not a proper woman hence she cannot perform these expected duties.

The macro discourse of a 'proper Kuria woman' cuts across the songs and is reconstructed in the interview responses. It constitutes sub discourses such as woman as domestic, woman as carer, woman as server and woman as nurturer. Traces of these discourses include the lexical items and metaphors identified and discussed in Chapter 5. I discuss each sub-discourse in more detail in the sub sections below. I also examine the effects of such constructions in gender and power relations in Kuria and how this impacts on the continuing practice of female circumcision.

### **6.1.1 'Proper woman' discourse in the songs**

Through the '*rock*' metaphor, a woman is psychologically prepared to be strong even before being cut. She is expected to be as strong as a rock, fearless and resistant to pain; not to show any signs of fear when being circumcised. She is not to shake or touch the circumciser's hand, nor is she to pull her stomach inwards. Doing any of these would be interpreted as crying and disqualify her from being a proper woman even if she has been cut. In song 3, performed a night before the circumcision day, the girl is told she is a small rock of a woman.

#### Extract 6.3 (Song 3)

*Our sons dance slowly*

A **small rock** of a woman was born



Crying or showing signs of fear is considered embarrassing to the girl's family, her entire clan, relatives and friends who have escorted her. Crying, fear and disappointment to the family are negative attributes which are not expected of a proper woman. If she cries, her father is fined a cow or some goats to have her cleansed, since crying is considered a bad omen which could destroy her family through illness or madness. A girl who cries has to undergo cleansing to avert future misfortunes such as not getting a husband, not bearing children or not staying in her matrimonial home. These are believed to happen because crying offends ancestors. Awareness of these and other consequences such as being left to walk home alone and not receiving any gift, makes every girl do all she can to bear the pain in readiness for becoming a proper woman. Those escorting her are told not to worry, since she would not feel any pain, that she is ready '*guikara agome*' (to sit firmly) and feel nothing like a *rock*. In song 9, performed immediately after the girl is cut and therefore has been transformed to a proper woman, she is described as a *rock*.

Extract 6.4 (Song 9)

*She has become a **rock***

*She has become a **soda***

*She has become, she has become a **rock***

*She has become a woman like others*

Crying and other emotions are associated with cowardice and are described as women attributes which symbolise weakness. By not crying, the proper woman is elevated to the status of 'near maleness' because men are not allowed to cry or show fear. Therefore, by being circumcised, the status of a woman is raised towards that of a man to some extent creating a tripartite power hierarchy in Kuria society with men being at the top followed by circumcised women and uncircumcised ones at the bottom.

A proper Kuria woman is also constructed as domestic. This is in line with what Sunderland (2004) and Atanga (2012) have identified and named as *woman as domestic* discourse. This discourse is manifested in linguistic features used in Kuria FGM songs and is also prevalent in the interviews (see section 6.1.2). In the songs, for example, women are constructed as mothers, wives, carers, family cooks, and

family servers. All these take place in the home within the walls of their huts. Women are the primary domestic servers whose key role is housework. They are active only about and around homes. Main traces of this discourse are lexical items such as cook, serve, close the gate and open it. A respected Kuria home is one that expands and gets daughters-in-law who will perform these domestic chores and bring forth children. This discourse constructs a woman as being confined to the physical and social space of the home (see also Ellece 2012). Extract 6.5 summarises this positioning.

Extract 6.5 (Song 5)

*Aye yee I bless it I bless a father's homestead so it grows  
so it grows*

*So that it spreads till it gets the one who **closes the gate**,  
the one who **opens the gate** and the one who **fetches water**.*

*Aye yee with whistles sounding whistles children blowing*

'Woman as server' discourse is prominent in the songs. The woman described in extract 6.6 is said to have served using big containers. This shows that a proper Kuria woman is one who is able to serve her family enough food in big containers to make sure no one lacks. This reinforces and perpetuates the woman as domestic discourse because she always does this from home where she stays caring for her children and ensuring they are well cooked for and served to their fill. Her serving roles take place within her husband's compound. Any deviation from this is criticised or punished.

Extract 6.6 (Song 5)

*Mother has healed us; mother who gave birth to me has healed  
us*

*She has **served** us in a **big sisal basket***

*In a big bowl she has **served** us in a sisal basket in a big bowl*

In song 14, the serving duties of a woman are restated. The mother is given beautiful hair which she distributes to Deborah and Esther (her daughters) so that they can adorn themselves and become beautiful, and when she receives a belt she uses it to adorn herself. This presentation of the woman serving others before herself echoes the Kuria traditional practice of a mother cooking and being the last to eat. It is the

spirit of self-sacrifice in women which Lazar (2000, 2002) describes as other-centredness. In the Kuria context, a good (proper) woman is other-centred, she serves her husband first, then her children, followed by visitors (if any) and is the last to eat. This is a selfless caring trait expected of a Kuria woman, and is the case in many African cultures (see Kabaji 2005). Mulamba (2013) supports this from his study in Congo saying that in cases of hardship or shortage of food, the traditional African woman as a mother and wife is expected to serve the available food to her children and the husband thus sacrificing her own interests for the benefit of others. This is a common and expected trait and whoever goes against it is not considered to be a proper woman.

Extract 6.7 (Song 14)

*Mother what can I compare you to?*

*What I have **brought** you is **beautiful hair***

*So you can **give** to Esther and Deborah*

*So that they can grow and know that our cattle are worth*

*Mother you are heavy/worth*

*What I have **brought** you are **belts***

*So you can tie and go for a daughter in law in Wangirabose*

‘Woman as server’ discourse goes hand in hand with ‘woman as carer/nurturer discourse’ and they both shore up the ‘woman as domestic’ discourse. According to Wagner & Wodak (2006) women are mostly constructed as carers/nurturers in society. When women fail to fit these roles, they are often condemned. This care/nurture takes place in the domestic and private context. Specific caring practices ascribed to women include child care which is seen as a woman’s responsibility with the man coming in as secondary (Sunderland 2004). Any proper woman would therefore be expected to take up this responsibility.

‘Woman as carer/nurturer discourse’ is advanced in extract 6.8 through the ‘tree’ and ‘chicken’ metaphors used in the same song with the main role of the woman being depicted as ensuring the many children that she has borne are taken care of and guarded like a chicken does.

Extract 6.8 (Song 5)

***Spread** my uncle's wife **spread***

***Spread** and give birth like a **tree** that has roots deep down*

*Give birth like a **chicken gives birth** and **guards***

In song 5 the metaphors 'tree' and 'chicken' are used to describe the value of giving birth and caring for one's off-spring, duties perceived to be natural for women. Giving birth is taken to be a form of 'taking root' in a Kuria home (see also 'compulsory motherhood discourse' in section 7.2). When a woman has given birth, she has established herself in her matrimonial home. Her husband will have no reason to send her away, since she is reproductive. The woman is also expected to give birth like a 'chicken'; this suggests uncontrolled reproduction, giving birth to many children, one after another. In Kuria society, as is the case in many African societies, a woman who gives birth as quickly as possible earns respect among her peers and honour in the society at large. Many children also offer a kind of security in the sense that there is a greater chance that some will reach adulthood even if others die of childhood diseases or other calamities (infant mortality rate is still very high in the community, unfortunately I could not get official statistics for this). However, having many children comes with caring responsibilities that are shouldered by the woman. Child care is discursively constructed as a natural responsibility of women only (Atanga 2010). A woman who does not care for her children, in the way that a chicken does her chicks, is not considered to be a proper woman and is consequently disparaged.

A proper Kuria woman is also constructed as timid, shy and fearful, traits which make her appear vulnerable and dependent. This advances the 'woman as timid discourse', a discourse I have identified and named by analysing lexical items that position women as lesser objects that need protection and assurance (from men). This discourse is mainly advanced through the lexical item 'hide' which is found in songs where the woman is said to be hiding in the house and is encouraged to come out and meet the songs' producers.

Extract 6.9 (Song 6)

*Ahee **come out** brother's wife **come out** I am praising you*

*Ahee you are **hiding** from me eee yet I am praising you*

*I am praising you and you are **hiding** from me as if I bite*

This description positions women as insecure and in need of protection and validates the men's role as protectors, thereby legitimating male dominance and maintaining the status quo. That she is hiding in her hut re-states the 'woman as domestic discourse' by portraying that her place is inside the house and she has to be encouraged to come out of this comfort zone. This depicts her as a less confident and powerless being who is subject to control by others (men). It is an example of reaffirmation of asymmetrical gender relations, especially where men are being constructed as spending time outside the house and the compound.

The woman being bidden to come out of the house is described as the brother's wife. This underpins the 'woman as wife discourse'. As a wife, a Kuria woman has her roles and expectations predetermined. She is expected to bear her husband children, look after them, fetch water and firewood, cook, sweep the compound and cultivate fields. Women who do not fulfil these roles are ridiculed and they suffer socially and psychologically. The 'woman as wife' discourse is supported through linguistic items that depict the expected labour that a married woman is to do for her matrimonial family by virtue of the fact that she is married there. She is expected to wake up before everyone else in the morning, greet her husband and his relatives (in the expected order; males before females), open the cowshed gate, prepare breakfast and serve her husband and his parents, as well as his brothers.

A proper woman is one who is someone's wife, thus making marriage a necessary step, and FGM in extension since it is a requirement for marriage. In song 1, performed immediately after circumcision, when the girl is about to enter her home through the cowshed gate, she is reminded that she is now 'other people's' which means she will be married off soon. In this way, marriage and becoming someone's wife is presented as the next step after FGM and as something natural and expected for women; something that makes them 'proper'.

The main responsibility of a Kuria woman who has been married and earned the title 'wife' is to give birth and be a mother. Motherhood in Kuria is a woman's obligation. This role is acculturated into girls, right from birth through adulthood. The 'woman

as mother' discourse is articulated in the songs with the responsibilities of giving birth (to many children) and the provision of primary care being emphasised. The woman in song 4 serves her children food in big containers; she distributes adornment among her children. The woman in song 5 is reminded of her basic role of feeding her children and guarding them like a chicken does; the woman in song 8 has a full house that booms (a house that is full of male children) and the woman in song 13 is described as a mother of a brave son who is worthy of ruling England.

In the songs, therefore, the role of women as mothers and primary caregivers has been rearticulated. Performing this role gives them value in society and is realised in the lexical items and metaphors which are the traces of both 'gender differences discourse' and 'gendered division of labour discourse' where both women and men have specific roles and duties to perform in their homes and society in general. Through motherhood discourse the woman is constructed as deriving satisfaction and happiness by ensuring that others are served (see Lazar 2000). This concern for others' welfare is seen in the songs, where the mother receives gifts and distributes to others before keeping for herself, a characteristic that makes her a proper Kuria woman. The songs are, therefore, a powerful tool through which traditional and conservative ideologies are sustained and the discourse of properness, with regard to womanhood, reproduced and perpetuated over time. In the following section I discuss the 'proper woman' discourse in the interviews.

### **6.1.2. Interviews**

Proper woman discourse is reproduced and reified heavily by the interviewees. The respondents list myriad chores performed by a woman in her matrimonial home. Most of these constitute domestic chores thereby re-affirming the 'women as domestic' discourse. The woman is depicted as a cook; she cooks for her children, her husband, parents-in-law, and younger siblings-in-law especially those who are not married yet. This makes her a proper woman; everything else that is outside this is considered less important. F3, for example, states that if you feed your father-in-law well, when your husband beats you he comes to your rescue.

#### Extract 6.12 (F3)

*...you **cook** food and **give** to your father-in-law, when you **treat him well** even when your husband beats you the moment he hears*

*you start to **cry**, he will come to your rescue, and say do not kill so and so*

She adds that, '[...] and for your husband you have to make sure he eats well whenever he wants or else you will be described as a stupid woman'. This contributes to 'woman as cook' discourse which presents a woman as the main cook in the home. Mulamba (2013) argues that in some cultures, wifhood is associated with cooking expertise, and like beauty in a woman the cooking skills are seen as inherently positive. This is the case among the Kuria, where cooking is presented as naturally a woman's prerogative.

Extract 6.13 (F3)

*For your husband early in the morning you **make** him **breakfast** [...]when you **come** back from the **farm** you **give** him **porridge** and **prepare** **bath** water for him and he goes to take animals to graze. When he comes back in the evening he should find you have **cooked** him evening **meal** and **prepared** him **porridge***

Other domestic duties reported by interviewees to be performed by women in a Kuria homestead include: *Ukuigora ikihita, ogokeria abanto* (opening the cattle corral's gate, greeting people in the morning (F3). *Okorogera omosacha, nogokama iching'ombe ogokora entobeke iyumuirua* (cooking for the husband, milking cows, preparing special porridge for their in-laws (MD2))

These are all performed within the domestic spheres thus showing that women are always confined within their homes. Note that performing these chores is only expected of and permitted to women who have undergone FGM. Those who have not or who are yet to be circumcised are not considered proper and therefore are not allowed to perform them. This makes FGM a necessity for a woman to assume her domestic position. It is culturally perceived to be a form of, and criterion in, identity formation, which is key for a woman to move to the next phase of her life. However, even though FGM is constructed as empowering in the songs, the reality is that even circumcised women have no power outside their homes. They do not contest in elective posts against men, if they do, they do not win. In public meetings, they do not participate or do so only passively, as listeners. In most cases they stay in domestic zones. An uncircumcised woman is more restricted, in the sense that she is only allowed to do other duties such as being sent to the market, to the river, fetching

firewood and baby-sitting, which can also be performed by a child, stranger or anyone who is not a member of the Kuria community.

A proper Kuria woman is also constructed as a labourer. She is the main source of labour in the matrimonial home as seen in the description of what she does on a daily basis. This is similar to what Mulamba (2013) describes as the traditional African woman's burden and responsibility to the family. Mulamba states that when the couple comes home together from the farm or from any other work, the husband will take a rest while the wife goes straight to do household chores. Like labourers, wives do not rest at all. This is the case in a Kuria home as described by MD2.

Extract 6.14 (MD2)

*A woman **carries** a **baby** on her back, another in the womb early at 4am a Kuria **wakes** her up to **go** to the **plough**. Once you are back from the plough on her way back she **picks firewood** with which she **prepares porridge**. Once back the man asks for porridge and **bath water** which she **prepares** for him. The man goes for a walk (to wander) and the woman is left at home **taking care** of the **cattle** and **children, washing linen**. At lunch time the man comes back and asks for food*

F1 also states that in Kuria, it is the woman who knows what the children will eat and at what time. Most men go to spend time in the local market centre and only come back in the evening drunk and asking for their food.

Extract 6.15 (F1)

*...she is taken as the one who will find everything for the man to eat, **they (women)** have become **labourers/slaves***

In the same way, it was stated in the songs, the interviewees assert that a woman's role is not just to cook but also to care for her children, husband and other relatives. This underpins the 'woman as carer' discourse. Assigning women the caring roles reinforces the belief that women are naturally meant to perform these domestic roles which are perceived to be lowly (apart from giving birth which is of great value). As a carer, a woman looks after her children, teaches them and disciplines them; she is their socialising agent from the early stages of life.

Extract 6.16 (MD2)



*...a woman her major role is to **give birth**, to **cook** for her husband and **care** for children so they can grow in a family. Other roles include **washing** clothes for the husband*

Extract 6.17 (F4)

*A woman **takes care** of her children, **teaching** them and **warning** those who are being wayward **telling** them 'you are getting lost' and **reminding** them that 'since years ago this was not done like this...'*

Those who are not yet circumcised are not allowed to be involved in these 'noble' duties. If they insist, even those that they care for are free to turn down the care. For instance, 'a father-in-law can refuse to have his cowshed gate opened by a woman who is uncircumcised' (MD2). This freedom that is bestowed on some and not others is a form of empowerment that is denied uncircumcised women, just like freedom is denied women at large in the Kuria community. The caring and nurturing ability of a woman includes multi-tasking such as carrying the baby on her back while undertaking other domestic duties. Despite them being equal partners in the child-making process, men do not help out even when they are present. This is why they are back-grounded in child rearing and care in both songs and interviews. At no point is a Kuria man constructed as providing child care.

In the interviews, proper Kuria woman has also been constructed as one who stays at home at all times. 'Woman as one who stays at home' discourse depicts a culture that is restricting women from moving around and about and therefore going outside their domestic spheres. Socialising has widely been described as a form of empowerment (see Mulamba 2013). Among the Kuria however, the away-from-home socialising is perceived as a negative attribute which may lead women astray. It is therefore not described as going to socialise but to gossip. It is believed that once a woman goes to meet with other women, for whatever reason, she is taught too much, more than she needs. Staying at home is therefore believed to be good for women (since it keeps them away from gossip and other troubles) yet implicitly it is a form of denying them freedom. Restricting women from socialising among themselves is denying them empowerment while husbands can frequently visit public places without being asked where they have been and are therefore constantly being empowered. 'Woman as one who stays at home' discourse also reaffirms the 'woman as domestic' and 'woman

as carer' discourses. Performance of domestic chores and providing child care are given as the main reasons for restricting women to stay at home and are perceived to be positive in this context - a woman should not go out frequently and leave her children uncared for and her domestic chores unattended (see also Atanga 2010). Traces of this discourse are also found in words such as 'when he comes back he finds you'. F3 says for a wife to show respect to her husband, he should always find her at home to attend to his needs.

Extract 6.18 (F3)

*If you do not respect him **he comes back** from grazing cattle, and once he settles them in their shed you will not know where **he has gone to**, if you are not around, **he comes back** and goes straight to bed*

Compelling women to be around home is a form of controlling and constraining, which also constructs wives as functional since they stay at home to perform socially ascribed duties; those that are deemed necessary by the community. This confirms the 'gender difference discourse' discussed in the next section by positioning women as different from men, as normatively confined to the private zone and men as always going out and are therefore free.

The other gendered discourse I identified and discussed is what has been named by Sunderland (2004) as the gender difference discourse. I considered this to be an important discourse and analysed others that shore it up, such as: man as physically strong, man as protector and man as ruler/leader, attributes that are not associated with women. I contrasted these presentations to the 'proper woman discourse' (in the previous section) and looked at the effects of such constructions in power and gender relations in Kuria and how this impacts on female circumcision. I discuss this discourse in greater detail in the next section.

## **6.2 Gender differences and proper man/womanhood**

Proper woman discourse draws heavily on the underlying wider discourse of gender differences which has been described as a common-sense discourse (Sunderland 2015). Gender difference discourse is built upon the essentialist assumption that fixed, biologically-based differences between men and women predispose them to

perform different social roles. Sunderland (2015) proposes that the discourse of 'gender difference' is not only dominant in many cultural contexts, but is universal. She describes it as an over-arching or 'high-order' discourse. Against biological differences (see Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013), gender difference discourse supports the construction and representation of a proper Kuria woman and man as different. Constructions of men and women as different in most cases present women as dependent on men therefore sustaining unequal gender relations and maintaining the dominant position of men in society. For example, if a man is presented as a protector the first '*protectee*' is his woman thus positioning him as more powerful than her.

Sunderland (2004:52) states that the gender differences discourse is a dominant discourse that overarches much of the discourse circulating globally; it is a discourse that seems to be 'enjoyed, reassuring and indeed important to many people's sense of self'. Circulating with this discourse is what has been referred to as 'male as norm' discourse (Kosetzi & Polyzou 2009). Traces of this discourse include those features which support and legitimise the assumption that women and men are entirely different and that this is natural, or common sense.

The gender differences discourse maintains the thinking that women are like this; men are like that (Sunderland 2004). It helps affirm the existence of fundamental differences between women and men (Cameron 2003) and has been considered explicitly sexist because it supports category distinctions and representations of gender which work against women's interests, especially from a feminist understanding of patriarchy. It is characterised by a hierarchical male versus female duality and articulated in different linguistic practices in different contexts. The gender differences discourse in the current case sustains male dominance and female subordination by constructing men as occupying a higher position in Kuria society than women and therefore exercising power and control over women. Among the Kuria, gender differences are enacted in the ascribed roles and expected behaviours of men and women. Men are assigned different duties from women, normally the tough and physical ones. Neither group interrogates this gendered role allotment since they take it to be their social right. In the data, this state of affairs is represented through the linguistic choices. The choice of a particular word over another indicates a society's interests, preferences, attitudes and feelings towards a certain subject.

Different perceptions, attitudes and feelings about a Kuria man and woman and their differences are reflected in the female circumcision songs. Through language, men are represented as physically strong and performing manual duties while women are constructed as weak and dependent, performing what are ideologically considered to be less difficult duties.

### **6.2.1. Gender differences in the songs**

Traces of 'gender differences' discourse in the songs include lexical items *rip*, *split* which present men as physically destructive. At no point are women described using these linguistic features thus presenting them as different from men. In song 4, 'uncle' for instance, is described as a strong man who is able to *split trees with his bare hands* and *rip tree barks with his finger nails*. The strong physical attributes a man commands also include his speed, he can run to a far place in terms of distance and height without disappointing. The man goes to fight for his stolen cattle. He battles his physical enemies, conquers them and drives his cattle back home. Whenever there is a cry for help men from every village will respond by blowing a horn and hitting their shields. Then together they would go after the cattle following the footsteps where the cattle have left marks. This is called *okohahena/okohanena*. By presenting men as physically strong and not mentioning women the songs producers logically construct women as either weak or not concerned with physical strength and therefore as different from men. A similar case is whereby women are presented paying attention to physical beauty and attraction while at no point are men seen doing this (see sections 5.1.2, 7.1). Such constructions remove men from the cultural domain of beauty and women from any social aspects that require physical strength, and portray these activities as irrelevant to the respective groups. This consequently portrays the two groups as different and in a binary relationship.

Physical strength endows a man with the ability to protect members of his household from any physical or environmental harm by building a house (a man is not allowed to marry before building a house). He is to make sure it is properly grass thatched and no cold or rain goes through. A man whose house is sloping becomes a laughing stock. He is also expected to protect his family from any invasion by constructing a strong compound where thieves and wild animals will not break through. The only entrance left is a tiny gate for his cattle to pass. A man protects his clan from external

enemies. This is articulated through the *shield* metaphor and other traces in the songs such as:

Extract 6.19 (Song 10)

*If there is a cry for help from Muyuyi they will **run**  
With their **shield** and **horn** and **protect** our people  
They will **protect** us till we are safe*

Facing enemies is presented as a man's responsibility since he is strong enough to carry the shield, spear and arrows, and thus protect himself before protecting others. Through the thunder metaphor men are discursively constructed as strong and destructive; these attributes are not associated with women despite the fact that they do all domestic chores which equally require strength.

Extract 6.20 (Song 10)

*Our **men** are like **thunder**  
They **split** trees with their hands  
  
If there is a cry for help from Muyuyi they will **run**  
With their **shield** and horn and **protect** our people  
They will **protect** us till we are safe*

At times protection needs more than physical strength. It requires offering sacrifices to perceived supernatural beings which are believed to protect families from diseases, famine and misfortunes (see section 3.1.4). It is men who go to collect the herbs used in these sacrifices.

Extract 6.21 (Song 14)

*Our men are worth I can send them to heaven and they will **go**  
They will **bring Nyagatoke irikoroso**  
  
The one that grows in the middle of the cowshed  
  
To spread in the cowshed and to **protect***

One of those herbs is *Nyagatoke*<sup>38</sup>, a form of protective plant that is said to protect the home from 'bad people'. The description in extract 6.21 shows men using all means to protect their families including seeking supernatural powers. It is believed that a man is the one who is able to take extraordinary measures to protect his property while a woman is not. Men protect their property, particularly their cattle; by facing enemies in *Gogoga* (a no-man's land used as a battlefield) they defeat the enemies (who rule/who are known for their fierceness) and bring back their cattle because they have ability, strength and perseverance to face danger. The other places where men go to bring back stolen cattle from include *Giringani* (Song 18), *Serengeti* (Song 19) *Giringa* (Song 23) all of which are historically described as distant places and dangerous valleys infested with ferocious wild animals and occupied by ethnic groups who are perennial enemies of the Kuria people. Men have been constructed as protectors of their property, whereas at no point are women participating in security and protection matters. This positions women in the category of the protected thus subordinating them and constructing the two genders as essentially different.

Protection is not the only aspect through which men are presented as different from women. Men are positioned as ruling and leading other members of the society, something which women do not do. Among the Kuria there is a general view that men have the order, the rule, the voice and the authority which women do not have. This develops from the ideological perception that they are wiser and reliable (and women are not). Women on the other hand are perceived to be indecisive and jumpy; they do not keep secrets hence can betray the entire community when excited. This gendered perception is anchored in Kuria proverbs such as *tenkari ekobaha hai* (no female rules) and *mokari ana kehehe* (a woman is jumpy, to mean she cannot take a stand or settle calmly in one place) which are discursive strategies used to justify subordination of women and deny them leadership positions, while contrastive discourses such as *omosacha nana ehamuri/esauti* (a man is the one with a rule/voice) are used to legitimate continued male domination. In song 14, a Kuria man is described as 'man' because he has authority which means any man who cannot rule

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<sup>38</sup> This term does not have an equivalent in English but is generally described as a herb that is believed to have protective powers. The seedling is sought from far distances and planted in the middle of a cowshed. The Kuria believe that as long as this particular herb remains healthy without withering, members of the household are assured of their ancestors' protection.

is viewed as belonging to the lower calibre of men and not celebrated as much. According to the Kuria, men who are rulers and leaders occupy a higher position than those who are led, because they are presumed to be lesser and also since they are in the same category as women, a group that never occupies leadership positions.

Extract 6.22 (Song 14)

*Father is a man*

*He is enough to **go to England***

*To **rule the community of the mighty***

In another instance, 'father' is compared to Obama (President Barack Obama of America) who has Kenyan roots. The fact that he ruled in the USA which is perceived to be a powerful nation makes him a powerful man. It is stated that he campaigned for votes and defeated white American opponents. This shows what a proper man can do: he has power to lead, and rule (including ruling abroad), abilities which a woman does not have and is not expected to.

Extract 6.23 (Song 17)

***Father** what can I compare you to*

*You are like **Obama** the one of America who asked for votes*

*He emerged **victorious** and was **rewarded***

A Kuria man is also constructed as a provider. Through the *mushroom* metaphor, the man is discursively portrayed as the sole provider with all other members of his household depending on him. Constructing man as the sole provider portrays him as different and as occupying a higher position in relation to the woman who has to depend on him for everything (see a description of *mushroom* metaphor in section 5.1.2). 'Man as provider' discourse goes hand in hand with 'woman as private and man as public' discourse because he goes out to fend for his family, and to cities for work while a woman stays within the home to oversee domestic matters and therefore depends on him for both material and non-material things. This in turn gives a man more power than the woman thus sustaining unequal relations. Extract 6.24 shows a man providing adornments for girls.

Extract 6.24 (Song 14)

*Father... will come back with a **big car** that will be speeding*

*With **beads** in there shining*

***Girls** will **pick** the **beads** and **adorn** themselves*

*They will **walk** around **enticing** men*

*So that that their **fathers** can **get cattle***

When the man goes away he comes back with beads, necklaces and belts, women collect these and adorn themselves. In this case, a woman is constructed as active, an agent, working on her appearance, adorning herself with objects provided by a man. She is using resources given to her and skills to entice a man and for men's admiration - what some feminist writers refer to as 'male gaze' (see Kosetzi & Polyzou 2009; Atanga 2012). This presentation of women as beautifying themselves advances the ideology of women's bodies not being proper and always in need of alterations. Feminist writers, for instance Smith (1987), have discussed the phenomenon of women altering their bodies arguing that female bodies are forever imperfect and need grooming, dressing and painting. According to this, women need to make their bodies look better than they are and are caught up in the struggle for 'good' appearance. Smith does not at first view women as sex objects who are constructing themselves for the benefit of male gaze, but rather as constructing their own identities as women. However, Smith (1990) relates women's changing of their bodies and appearance in general to men's desires, arguing that appearance constructs the woman as an object 'attractive to man' (1990:175) thus supporting the argument that men look at women and women watch themselves being looked at (Baker 2008).

Kosetzi (2007) states that women buy clothes and shoes, go to the hairdressers, have their hands manicured not only in order to become more beautiful and desirable but ultimately to get married. A similar case is presented in extract 6.24 where it is stated that women will entice men so that their fathers can get cattle - once the two sides settle on the number of cattle. This presentation is traditional and gender biased because at no point in the songs are men preoccupied with appearance. It therefore constructs them as different from women by showing that their focus is not on the same things (especially not on beauty and appearance). Jeffreys (2005) argues that beauty practices ranging from makeup to plastic surgery of all kinds are harmful



cultural practices and constitute an aspect of women's oppression. The case presented in the songs is such that, women will be attractive to men only if they have adorned themselves and it is at this point that their fathers will get cattle by marrying them off. This presents men as controlling women's activities, albeit indirectly, and marriage as being a result of a woman's effort.

In the songs, it is clear that women adorn themselves, not only to become more desirable/beautiful but ultimately in order to get married. This means that preoccupation with appearance is a means to an end - marriage. The 'women's bodies need beautification' discourse draws heavily on marriage, a status that makes a Kuria woman 'proper' (see section 8.1). It also underpins the 'compulsory heterosexuality' discourse in the sense that women are engaged in these kinds of activities to entice men and not other women.

### 6.2.2 Gender differences in the interviews

In the interviews, the 'gender differences' discourse is also prevalent with the expected duties of men and women being restated along gender difference lines. Men are constructed as free and independent while women are constrained and dependent. Traces of this discourse are evident in what both genders do as presented in F3's list: a woman has to cook for both her children and relatives, without forgetting to cook for her husband and father-in-law and to always stay at home to attend to the husband whenever he 'comes back'. She ensures that her house is clean and pots are washed. The man on the other hand goes out 'to wander' or herd his cattle; he goes to the farm too. While the man takes care of chores outside the house, the woman's focus is inside the house. Note that the man is not presented as waiting to attend to his wife's needs hence portraying the served versus server dichotomy. MWD1 also presents a list of duties performed by both men and women which explicitly mirrors the traditional heteronormative gender roles in the Kuria society.

#### Extract 6.25 (MWD1)

*She does laundry, cooks, goes to the farm, takes care of cattle when I am not around, opens cowshed gate, wakes children up, gets the plough out, then we go to the farm at that time I am asleep. A man ensures that the home is neat, well erected,*

*ensures **children have clothes**. A woman does not erect a home, even when the man is no more his brothers will do it*

In a Kuria home, a man is ideologically perceived as supreme. He is positioned as different from other family members. He is feared because he can cane both women and children (see section 8.2). Although it is a woman who instils discipline in her children in most cases, a child who is becoming wayward is reported to his/her father to be caned hence re-affirming the father's higher position and power over all the other members of his family. This portrays him as different.

Extract 6.26 (F16)

*A **man** is feared because they say 'he will **cane/beat** me' when children have made a mistake both parents discipline them together, but when a **woman** has erred she is **caned** by her husband, even to an extent of breaking her leg (she laughs)*

Property ownership is another aspect which emerged in the interviews through which men are constructed as different from women. A Kuria man owns such properties as land, coffee, cattle and a car. All these are perceived to be of higher value compared to what a woman owns; cooking pot, cooking hearth and firewood, all which are only applied within the house. This separation reaffirms the 'woman as nurturer' discourse since all that a woman owns are those items she uses to prepare food and serve her family with.

Extract 6.27 (MD2)

*A woman cannot inherit land, a **man's** position is above; whatever he says is done. **He** is the one with **all property, a home, land, cattle** all are his*

F7 confirms this when she says that most valuable properties belong to a man and a woman cannot use them, if she does she will be punished or sent away. She says:

Extract 6.28 (F7)

***Land, cattle** are **his**, you as a woman do not have yours you are like a bark of a tree, and you did not come with anything*

F7 in the extract above, uses the *bark of a tree* metaphor to emphasise the fact that a woman does not own any valuable property in her matrimonial home. Like the bark's

temporariness, she is of value only when she is considered to be useful, as soon as she is perceived to be of no value she ‘falls off’. This is why she owns items that are temporary while a man, like the real tree itself, is permanent and so are the items he owns. This discursive construction portrays the two genders as different and consequently positions men above women. With regard to FGM, MD2 states that a man who is the head of the family and the girl’s father has a significant role to play in FGM; he is the key player in buying what a girl needs for circumcision and in making the initial decision for a girl to undergo FGM. He reiterates the roles played by a woman in implementing the man’s decision:

Extract 6.29 (MD2)

*He gives out **money** for circumcision, **buys** clothes for the girl, and **buys** a cow to be slaughtered or a goat. It is a man who brings and the woman cooks. **The woman collects firewood, gets cooking flour, prepares cassava, and cooks obosara** (a sour drink) [...] a **man finds and brings** home and a **woman takes care of it***

In the interviews, men are also constructed as public and thus different from women who are represented as private. ‘Man as public and woman as private’ discourse is identified and named by Atanga (2010). It is a discourse that is anchored in beliefs and ideologies that legitimise gendered roles causing them to be perceived as normal and for the interests of the society. For instance, the common belief that ‘women should give up their jobs to be the primary caretaker to their children and men to hold leadership positions’ (Jones 2016:4) potentially portrays the two as different. This means men would be active outside the home as opposed to women who are mostly expected to remain at home. Traces of this discourse in the interviews include phrases such as *man going for a walk while a woman stays at home. He goes out...when he comes back... he should find her.*

Extract 6.30 (F8)

*The **man comes** back from the **farm**, he **drinks porridge** and **goes** for a walk (to wander), then he **comes** back for **lunch**, **eats** and **goes** for a walk*

This wandering/walking is a hegemonic discourse in Kuria and it shows how free men are compared to women who are always confined within the compound. Any

freedom is always associated with power and being freer than women makes men more powerful and dominant and re-affirms the 'good woman stays at home' discourse discussed earlier. The fact that a woman has to ask for permission from her husband before going out, while the husband does not, also supports this discourse.

### **6.3. Gendered division of labour and proper womanhood**

Gendered division of labour is a common traditional practice in patriarchal societies. It is entrenched in cultural beliefs, including gender differentiation and is perceived to be useful. Gendered division of labour forms the basis for subtle discrimination and disadvantaging of women and in the sustenance of male supremacy. In Kenya, there are outright discriminatory practices against women which are perceived to be normal and unproblematic and are legitimated as part of culture (for instance wife beating) but there are also subtle ones such as inequitable division of domestic chores which is deeply ingrained in most Kenyan cultures. Gender differentiated roles are seen as normal and are celebrated (Kitetu & Sunderland 2000). They are, therefore, worth examining in discourse analyses. From the FGM songs and interviewees' descriptions of male and female roles and domestic practices, it is not hard to identify 'gendered division of labour' discourse' (identified and named by Sunderland 2004) which closely relates to gender difference discourse. It builds on the description of the domestic and economic chores ascribed to both men and women. Men are constructed as performing high level duties while women perform low level (domestic) ones. Respondents stated that among the Kuria people, women undertake up to 80% of household labour, the remaining 20% is done by children, mostly girls. The few men who are involved in domestic chores are viewed as weak and said to be controlled by their women.

#### **6.3.1 Gendered division of labour in the songs**

Division of labour discourse in the songs constitutes those traces that index what men do and the importance attributed to these, against what women do. For instance, while men are presented as fighting in battles, being protectors and providers, women are cooks, servers, supporters and nurturers. In song 4, the uncle is sent far away, to heaven to bring *nyagatoke*. The uncle also goes to *Gogoga* to bring back cows which had been stolen by the enemies. All this time his wife is at home, doing household chores not because she has no ability to do the things a man can do, but because social

norms do not allow her to do them. Any woman who goes against the norms is viewed as deviant.

The woman is also prominent in the song but only in terms of cooking, serving and adorning herself before going out to bring home her daughter in law - duties that a man does not do. Instead, he is constructed as husband, father, independent and public. He is both a leader and decision maker - duties that a woman does not do. In song 14, father goes to a far land to rule the community of the mighty and he comes back with a big car.

Extract 6.31 (Song 14)

***Father** is a man*

*He is enough **to go to England***

*To **rule the community of the mighty***

*When he wants to **come back** he won't hide*

*He **will come with a big car that will be speeding***

This gendered division of labour where men perform high level duties while women perform domestic chores, seems to be the norm because there is no point in the songs where we see any overlap. Each member of the Kuria society is socialised to master their duties and understand their socially expected behaviours. The songs, therefore, function to perpetuate traditional gender relations and sustain the status quo.

Extract 6.32 (Song 4)

***Uncle** is valuable I can send him far*

*He will **run to bring us necklaces** shining and we get them*

*And **belts** so that we adorn ourselves and go for a daughter in law from Wangirabose*

The man is depicted as the provider in the family; he brings necklaces for the women. At no point are women portrayed giving objects of value to men thus showing that it is only men who give while women receive.

### **6.3.2 Gendered division of labour discourse in the interviews**

From the interviewees' description of the men's and women's roles it is not hard to identify who occupies a higher position between the two genders. Gendered division of labour is evident where a woman's daily life is dominated by housework and care for the family members' welfare. She cares for the father-in-law, husband, children, other family members, relatives and visitors. Note that even with the many chores that a woman performs, the culturally implicit criteria for appreciation of a wife remain that she has to take care of her husband, properly feed the family and be fertile; her gendered identity has to meet these societal expectations and if not then she is not a proper woman. Failing to fulfil these social duties is seen as a social error which is detrimental to a woman's positive social image. This is a case of what has been described by Sunderland (2004) as the 'discourse of deficit'.

In the interviews, it is stated that a Kuria woman performs certain duties in both her matrimonial home and home of birth which are performed by (circumcised) women only. For instance, she escorts her brother when he is going to marry, and if there is a wedding she is the one to collect meat on behalf of her husband's homestead from the common cowshed. She helps her sister or sister-in-law to pack her belongings when getting married, she cooks and serves the visitors. A man on the other hand finds and slaughters a cow for visitors and ensures that women in his home have served food to all visitors. This division of labour is strictly prescribed and there is no crossing of the boundaries. Everyone knows where the line is drawn, a woman cannot do a men's duties in the same way a man cannot do women's chores since to do so is considered weak. However, for her to perform her duties a woman must have undergone FGM. If not, even when her husband allows her to do it, her father-in-law 'will stand firm and say he does not want to be served by an uncircumcised woman' (MD2). Her mother-in-law will also set boundaries such as not being allowed to cook in her hearth. This depicts that the older men have more power than the younger ones who in turn have more power than women. Circumcised older married women too have power over younger ones, who have power over uncircumcised ones. The fact that she can only perform most of her socially ascribed duties after undergoing FGM makes the practice an obligatory path to walk in her journey to womanhood. I discuss this aspect in detail in the next section. MD1 says:

Extract 6.33 (MD1)

...**she** is to **collect meat** (*from the cowshed*) she can't, she would have **sent off the elder brother** to go and marry, she cannot. If she was circumcised she does all that but if not circumcised, then she is half a person<sup>39</sup>...

#### **6.4 FGM as a gateway to proper womanhood**

In the songs, FGM is presented in two main ways: as the most important, normal and natural thing to go through; and as an easy task to undertake. This normalisation of FGM and trivialisation of the pain serves to make it expectable and acceptable among those who have not gone through it. The words used to describe the importance of the cut show the role of FGM in identity formation. Those who go through it are described as belonging to the community while the ones who do not, or who do not undergo it properly, are said to belong to the Luo community<sup>40</sup>. This stripping off of one's identity as a Kuria woman serves to instil fear of loss of one's name and belonging among her people thus compelling young girls to give in.

Extract 6.34 (Song 1)

If you **embarrass** us in broad daylight

**Go** and be circumcised in Luo land

With those who circumcised teeth, feet and finger nails

Extract 6.35 (Song 3)

And we are telling you to bear it, to be strong

If you **embarrass** us go that way

**Go** to the uncircumcised the Luo

Those who circumcise teeth and umbilical spots

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<sup>39</sup> The word 'half a person' is alternately used with 'half-being'. This reference to an uncircumcised woman was made by MD1. Upon probing, he explained that it is only circumcised women who are considered to be normal human beings. Those who are not, are neither humans nor animals, they are in between – 'half beings'.

<sup>40</sup> The Luo are a Nilotic group of people who are the immediate neighbours of the Kuria. They do not practise FGM.

‘Failing to bear the pain appropriately, embarrassing and going to Luo’ are repeated in songs 12, 13, 14 with the girl being admonished against touching the circumciser’s hand since that is taboo. Note that one who touches the circumciser’s hand (song 12) or pulls her stomach up (song 14) is equivalent to the one who is not circumcised at all and therefore not a proper woman even if she has been cut. Such girls are ostracised and cast away to the Luo community because they are considered to belong among those who do not ‘circumcise properly’.

The words *prick*, *pick*, and *touch*, which carry connotations of less pain, are used to refer to the act of FGM, instead of *cut* which conjures images of more pain. This choice of verbs that trivialise the act is done purposefully to make FGM sound as an easy undertaking and to lessen the effects of the act. It makes the candidate feel that it is not too bad. After all it is just a prick. In actual fact, the female genitalia is cut and not just touched as stated in the song. It is the role of a critical analyst to reveal how discourse is used to coat reality with lies in order to persuade listeners to accept intended messages and consequently perpetuate intended ideologies and practices. A critical discourse analysis works to uncover hidden agendas being perpetuated through these discourses as an initial step towards challenging or subverting them. The following song extract contains examples of mitigating verbs used to describe FGM.

Extract 6.36 (Song 7)

Eyee ee aye ee

She **pricks** like a **beauty prick**

If she is **picking**, let her **pick**

In song 12 the producers state that ‘when you bear it, it is nothing; it is as easy as grinding *millet* or stirring *porridge*’ (my emphasis). In song 13 they add that it does not take long, it is just two seconds, ‘the circumciser bends just twice and gets up’ (songs 13, 15, 21, 24). This trivialisation of FGM act makes it sound easy and painless. Using verbs that portray everyday actions such as *grinding* and *stirring* which the girls are used to, and which they find easy and enjoyable, is a discursive strategy employed by the songs’ producers to clear doubts of pain and assure the girls that it is not something unusual, but just normal like any other activities they undertake every day. Similar messages are expressed in extract 6.37 where the cutting



act is described as an action of beautifying a girl, hence reinforcing the ‘woman’s body needs readjustment’ discourse discussed earlier.

Extract 6.37 (Song 21)

Eee yee she **pricks** like a **beauty prick**

Daughter of my sister sit still sit still

Ee **twice** she will **touch** and **get up** ee

#### **6.4.1 FGM as a gateway to proper womanhood in the interviews**

The respondents emphasise that if one is not circumcised they are not considered proper Kuria women and therefore are not allowed to perform the duties expected of Kuria women. They are not to be married in Kuria, they should not give birth, they are not to interact with other members of the community neither are they to offer their services to others. In fact, it is restated here (just like it was in the songs) that they should go and live among the Luo who do not circumcise their girls; that is where they belong. This is a strategy used to create social boundaries between *them* and *us*, with *us* being more powerful and legitimate than *them*. The girls want to stay near the power locus, therefore, they give in. Other traces of this discourse are found in words of the interviewees who describe why FGM is such a vital stage for one to become a proper Kuria woman.

Extract 6.38 (F1)

If they [girls] **get pregnant** before being circumcised they will be ostracised. If they are **circumcised** the council of elders **does not destroy** them (if they get pregnant after being circumcised but before marriage).

Once a woman brings forth children, she is considered to be a proper and established woman in her matrimonial home and community. However, among the Kuria people it is only giving birth after FGM that makes one a proper woman. If one gives birth before FGM, it is considered a curse and the mother and her baby are cut off from the community. Once circumcised, the girl becomes a woman; she is ready for marriage and motherhood. She is also allowed to perform all other duties of a Kuria woman. F3 states that when a girl is being circumcised there are some parts of her genitalia that are removed to make her a woman so that she can be ready to have her

own home. She becomes an adult because there is no one who can be married without being cut. In general, therefore, among the Kuria people, properness in terms of womanhood is achieved by undergoing genital mutilation, getting married, giving birth and performing domestic duties properly.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

To summarise the findings presented in this chapter, Kuria female circumcision songs present popular discourses regarding the status of men and women in a stereotypical patriarchal way. Emphasis is put on physical attributes of women and the toughness and chivalry of men. The songs never make an effort to change the traditional and conventional view of men and women in Kuria society; neither do interviewees challenge the skewed position presented in the songs. They tend to perpetuate the status quo. The wording (in the songs) and rewording (in the interviews) of gender ideologies associated with men and women is a clear indication of how language is used as a means of disempowerment and for misbalancing gender relationships. Presentation of women commanding power only within the domestic sphere makes marriage necessary for them, since it is the only way through which a woman can access her 'power space'. And because marriage requires circumcision, I can at this point say that female circumcision songs become ideological tools for the perpetuation of the practice of FGM.

## Chapter 7: Economic value discourse

### 7.0 Introduction

In this chapter I continue discussing the construction of women and men in Kuria female circumcision songs and the reconstructions in the interviews. I specifically explore discursive constructions of women as objects with economic value. I analyse, under the economic value discourse, sub-discourses such as: woman as the source of life, property, object and labourer; and man as property owner. I also discuss the construction of motherhood as an economic aspect. All these are based on linguistic cues/traces in the songs and interviews identified in Chapter 5.

#### 7.1.1 Women and girls for economic value in the songs

A Kuria woman is constructed as a source of life, which lies in her ability to reproduce and ensure the future of her husband's family line is assured. Women do not only bear life but they nurse it, cherish it and give warmth and care to it since all human life passes through their bodies (see Atanga 2010). Muwati et al (2011:2) identified a similar situation among the Shona and the Ndebele people of Zimbabwe and stated that among these two communities, a woman is a source of life 'the defining centre-piece of African existence'. Women give life and nurture the life they give birth to and this is understood to be their main value and contribution to society. The other aspect is that a woman gives life to not only another woman but to a man.

##### Extract 7.1 (Song13)

*A woman's son is strong*

*He is enough to rule in England*

The presentation of a woman's son as strong, strong enough to split trees and rip tree barks using palms and finger nails, as seen previously, means she gives birth to the all-powerful and strong human being, a man who is strong enough to rule the community of the mighty (England). This may be interpreted as representing women as equally powerful as men or may-be more powerful.

Apart from being a source of life, women are also constructed as properties. Before marriage, girls are regarded as their fathers' investments or commodities for sale. In Kuria, it is normal to hear a man with many daughters boasting to his friends that

'*eno nemali yane*' (this is my property) while referring to his daughters. Girls/women are viewed in terms of their economic value once they reach marriageable age, when their fathers can get wealth in the form of cattle paid as dowry. This is the case in many African cultures (see Wangila 2007). For instance, among the Kikuyu, Kisii and Maragoli of Kenya, the girl's family receives cows, sheep, goats and other material things from prospective sons-in-law in exchange for their daughter. Poor men live long lives of bachelorhood since they cannot raise the required dowry in exchange for a wife. The dowry is higher if the girl is considered to be beautiful because it means she can attract many suitors (this is why women are encouraged to pay attention to their physical beauty). The exchange of a girl for cattle and other commodities reduces her to the status of an object that can be sold to the highest bidder.

Extract 7.2 (Song 2)

*She is **other people's woman***

.....

*Now we bring cattle*

.....

*You were lying on the bed*

Song 2, performed at the girl's home just before she enters through the cowshed gate after circumcision, reiterates that she is now other people's woman, emphasising her readiness for marriage. The performers are however quick to mention that it is time for cows to be brought in, thus re-emphasising the fact that although she is ready to be a wife, it will only happen after cattle have been brought in. This mirrors the seller-buyer exchange whereby the buyer only gets the commodity after a payment has been made and it equates the woman to goods that can be traded for economic gain. Uncircumcised women are perceived to be of less economic value since their marriage prospects are zero or negligible compared to the circumcised ones who attract suitors and therefore bring in wealth. Uncircumcised girls are married outside the Kuria community, particularly among the Luo, who only pay as little as two cows compared to the 15 to 30 cows paid by Kuria men.

In Kuria, a man possesses the ultimate authority at home concerning property ownership and use. According to Kuria sociocultural norms, all the properties that have value attached to them, both at home and outside, belong to men and these include: land, coffee farms, cattle and vehicles. The belief is that a woman is not wise enough to own property. She will misuse or dispense of it recklessly. This mirrors what Sunderland (2004) found while studying gendered discourses in American award-winning children books. Sunderland found that the family's head of ten cows belonged to Willy's father. Willy's mother was prominent in the story but almost always in a domestic setting, carrying out some domestic task thus showing a gendered ownership of property. Among the Kuria, men own both human and non-human property. Even what a woman calls hers is a man's, given the fact that she herself is man's property. Once a man pays dowry to his bride's family and marries, he views the woman as his property (purchased goods). He, therefore, has a right over her; he makes decisions for her, provides for her and protects her in exchange for her loyalty and bearing him children (male children) for the continuation of his family line and provision of labour (I discuss this aspect in detail later). This is why any woman who does not 'produce' children is not worthy of protection from her husband. She loses respect in the community because she is considered to have nothing to offer. Extract 7.3 shows a man possessing both a car (high-value goods) and beads/necklaces (low-value-goods) thus legitimising the 'man-owns-everything' discourse.

Extract 7.3 (Song 14)

*He will come with a **big car** that will be speeding*

*With **beads** in there shining*

*Girls will take the beads and adorn*

Extract 7.4 (Song 4)

*Uncle is valuable I can send him far*

*He will run to bring us **necklaces** shining and we get them*

*And **belts** so that we adorn ourselves and go for a daughter-in-law from Wangirabose*

As a man's home expands (in size and number), so does his power, masculinity and control. He gains fame and respect among his peers. His home gets many daughters-in-law: one to close the gate, another to open it and the other to fetch water. The home also has children because any home that does not have children is considered short lived since there is no guarantee of the next generation. All members of such a homestead are answerable to the man, who is the head, and every object within it can only be used with the man's consent. This control of both material and non-material things gives a man a lot of power, which a woman is not entitled to.

Extract 7.5 (Song 5)

*Aye yee I bless it I bless a **father's homestead** so it grows  
so it grows*

*So that it spreads till it gets the **one who closes the gate,**  
the **one who opens the gate** and the **one who fetches water***

*Aye yee with whistles sounding whistles **children** blowing*

The economic value discourse is shored up by the 'woman as object discourse' that recurs in both songs and interviews. In the FGM songs a Kuria woman has been economically objectified through the *earrings* metaphor. In extract 7.6, the *earrings* metaphor functions in two ways, it positions women as objects and also functions as an aspect of beauty that makes women the objects of gaze which men see and desire to own.

Extract 7.6 (Song 8)

*Our women are **earrings***

*Those that we see and run fast*

*We go to get cattle from our enemies*

*We get the enemies' cattle by force and bring them home*

Other traces of the 'woman as object discourse' include the lexical items *adorn* and *entice*. In Extract 7.7 women collect beads and adorn themselves; they then walk around enticing men. This presents them as objects in the market. Men have to see them so that they can admire and select which one to pick and own. Once married, women become men's property with their main agenda being to bring forth children.

If the children are girls they grow up, entice men, get married and become ‘other men’s property’ and the cycle repeats itself.

Extract 7.7 (Song 14)

*Girls will pick the beads and **adorn** themselves*

*They will walk around **enticing** men*

*So that that their fathers can get cattle*

‘Woman as object’ discourse is similar to what Ndungo describes as *woman as economic asset*. Although Ndungo does not call it a discourse nor does she do a linguistic study, she stresses that among the Kikuyu of Kenya women are viewed as economic assets. Apart from her domestic role, a woman’s importance is attached to her economic value, ‘her father is paid dowry when she gets married and this is regarded as a major source of income’ (2006:28).

Related to the ‘woman as object’ discourse, is the ‘woman as object of gaze’ discourse. Kuria female circumcision songs construct women as objects of beauty worth looking at by men, and meant for admiration. They are expected to spend time adorning themselves for the ‘male gaze’ (Kosetzi 2008). They are defined by their beauty and appearance. Traces of this discourse include beautiful *teeth* and *hair* to behold. Kuria women are also said to be attractive like necklaces. This presentation can be captured in what Tam & Yip (2009) have described as the purpose of existence. They state that in men’s perception, the purpose of a woman coming into the world is to bring beauty, while the meaning of a man’s existence is to conquer the world. This is why there are idealistic masculine images of men as protectors, rulers, leaders and conquerors, which are presented in folk practices such as circumcision songs. Women on the other hand are there to be seen. In extract 7.8, ‘uncle’s wife’ is hiding and the singer insists that she comes out of her hiding place so that her teeth can be seen which in actuality means admired. The lexicon describing her teeth as being arranged in an orderly manner (like arrows in an arrow pocket) is used to praise her beauty and to appropriate her as an object of admiration. This legitimates the belief that a proper woman has to be physically perfect and admirable in order for her to be economically valuable. If she is less attractive, she is less valuable in monetary terms. It therefore supports the ‘women’s preoccupation with beauty’ discourse.

Extract 7.8 (Song 18)

*Laugh with me my brother's wife*

*Laugh with me so I can see your **teeth***

*How they are they are **arranged** like **arrows** in the arrow pocket*

### **7.1.2 Women and girls for economic value in the interviews**

Drawing on interviewees' responses, I discuss the economic value discourse basing on the lexical item *ekebagasi* (labourer) as used by MD2. He gives examples of daily chores performed by women which he compares to those of a labourer. The labour provided by women in their matrimonial home is considered to be an aspect of economic value to the husband and his family. 'Woman as labourer' discourse constructs women as the main source of labour in their matrimonial homes. In traditional African societies, the woman has more responsibilities and does more chores (see Mulamba 2013). She does weeding, farming, housework chores and child care, all of which form the backbone of a family's economy and the existence of a home.

#### Extract 7.9 (MD2)

*A woman carries a baby on her back, another in the womb early at 4am a Kuria wakes her up to go to the **plough**. Once you are back from the plough on her way back she **picks firewood** with which she prepares porridge. Once back the man asks for porridge and bath water which she prepares for him. The man goes for a walk (to wander) and the woman is left at home **taking care of the cattle and children, washing linen**. At lunch time the man comes back and asks for food*

The 'woman as labourer' discourse goes hand in hand with the 'woman as domestic' discourse because she does the chores within the homestead and in domestic circles. Her economic value as a labourer is one of the aspects that retain a woman in her matrimonial home. If she lost her capability to perform her daily chores, due to illness or disability, her husband marries another woman. However, if it was he who was the victim the woman is expected to stay with him, nurse and care for him. This reflects the unequal position of men and women in this context.



## **7.2 Compulsory motherhood and economic value**

The 'compulsory motherhood' discourse focuses on female fertility and relates to the 'women and girls for economic value' discourse whereby a price tag is attached to women and girls. It is also related to the 'woman as domestic' discourse which reinforces the role of a woman as child bearer, carer and nurturer. According to Atanga (2007:186), in Cameroon, a woman is constructed as valuable because she is 'the mother of the world, as the mother to men, to women and to Jesus'. In Kuria, a woman who bears children is seen as reproductive and of economic value. If she gets male children she is praised for providing protection and perpetuation of her husband's lineage. If she gets girls she is still valuable, since they will be a source of wealth through dowry once they are married off. This makes child-bearing and motherhood a necessity and a valuable economic output. The importance of female fertility is evident in the data, with childlessness being abhorred.

### **7.2.1 Compulsory motherhood in the songs**

Apart from circumcision and marriage, the title of mother gives women status in Kuria society. Failure to have children puts a woman in an insecure and suffering position as her status in the household and community at large is threatened. Any woman suspected of barrenness and infertility is described as *a dry tree*. This metaphor buttresses the unproductivity and unprofitable nature of such a woman. A dry tree is one that has died and cannot reproduce anymore. Barrenness therefore is a breach of the essential condition of the marriage contract. If a wife is unable to 'give her husband children', he is allowed to send her back to her parents or put her aside and take another. Barrenness is associated with death - death of the womb and the family line. Women in Kuria society are only of value and economic benefit if they are fertile. When the baby is born, the women ululate five times if it is a boy but only four times if it is a girl (see other differences in section 3.1.6). This shows that a man is considered to be superior right from the day of his birth. These differences symbolise the value the society attaches to the two sexes. The fact that it is the women who promote this socialisation through the FGM songs shows that gender ideologies have been deeply internalised and accepted by women. They not only act in conformity with the dictates of the gender status quo, but also perpetuate these while contributing to their own disadvantage.

Other traces of the ‘compulsory motherhood’ discourse include the *tree* and *chicken* metaphors used in the songs to reflect the expectations of a Kuria woman to give birth to many children.

Extract 7.10 (Song 5)

*Spread my uncle’s wife spread*

*Spread and give birth like a tree that has roots deep down*

*Give birth like a chicken gives birth and guards*

‘Compulsory motherhood’ discourse closely relates to ‘proper woman’ discourse (see section 6.1.1) where it was revealed that a woman is proper only if she is a mother. In this case, however, motherhood is perceived to be an economic activity because of the material benefits that come with children. Motherhood is therefore compulsory for Kuria women and they do not have a choice of having children or not.

### 7.2.2 Compulsory motherhood in the interviews

‘Compulsory motherhood’ discourse is also prominent in the interviews, with both men and women respondents stating that any respectable woman should be one who has borne children. Traces of this discourse include linguistic features: ‘*give birth immediately*’, ‘*get children quickly*’ and metaphors like ‘*dry tree*’ and ‘*bare rock*’. These two metaphors are used to emphasise the consequences of an inability to bear children. In extract 7.11 bearing children is seen as valuable to the woman and to her family and her husband’s family.

Extract 7.11 (F3)

*...when you go and give birth immediately your father says this child of mine has protected my cattle. You are respected by both parents...your father-in-law says you have returned my cattle<sup>41</sup>*

The concept of giving birth as quickly as possible is re-emphasised by MD2 who states that a woman may have a baby on her back and another in the womb. This suggests that women in Kuria community are not given time by their husbands to

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<sup>41</sup> The woman is said to have returned to her matrimonial family, the equivalent of the cattle that were given to her father as dowry.

space out the births of their children or are either not aware of or not using contraceptives since this may interfere with their natural ability to conceive as soon as a child is born. He says:

Extract 7.12 (MD2)

*A woman carries a **baby on her back, another in the womb** early at 4am a Kuria wakes her up to go to the plough*

In the interviews, compulsory motherhood is presented as important for a married woman to be assured of her established place in the matrimonial home. When she has not succeeded in having a child after three years, the husband is coerced to marry another wife by his immediate family and reminded of this by relatives and distant family members. This shows that the need for children extends from the family unit to the entire community thus reinforcing the perception that child bearing is a social expectation.

Extract 7.13 (F3)

*...a Kuria woman you are respected when you **get pregnant** in your matrimonial home and **give birth**. Because if you do not **give birth** in a Kuria home you will be sent away but when you are married and immediately you **get pregnant** your father says his cattle are safe. You **earn respect** from both parents*

.....

*When you go and stay for long without a child they say that is a **bare rock** ... so to be respected you give birth, wean the child and give birth to another*

Once a woman gets pregnant this is perceived as an economic gain, because children are believed to have economic value; they come with economic advantages such as being a source of labour, protecting the home and community, raiding other communities for cattle and bringing in wealth when married. MD2 fortifies this by stating that a woman's worth is being active in her domestic work but importantly in performing her major role which is child bearing.

Extract 7.14 (MD2)

*...a woman's main role once married to a family is to **give birth**. If she stays in a home for more than three years she is not a person. She is mistreated very much, she is called names. Her husband is told to 'marry another wife; you have brought a dry tree home'. The value of a woman is just in **giving birth** if she does not then she has no value*

Even if a married woman is industrious and carries out all her domestic and social ascribed duties accordingly, if she does not bear children people keep asking 'why does she not bear children?' This shows that the primary duty of a married woman is to give birth after which she can perform her other duties in peace.

It is important to remember that, although a woman who is fertile and gives birth to many children is an asset, she is not allowed to do so without undergoing female genital mutilation. In times past, when a girl who had not undergone FGM became pregnant she was killed in the night or cast away into the bush or escorted to a far-away community and left there to die. These days, MD2 says, she 'destroys' her family. She can become a mad woman or die mysteriously and if she is a married woman and gets children before undergoing FGM, MD1 says, 'they will die'. To avoid these, her family is forced to pay a heavy fine of goats or sheep of a particular colour for her to be cleansed. If the family cannot afford this, then her future lies at the mercy of the council of elders. However, a girl who has undergone FGM, even if she gets pregnant before being married, will get a man to marry her and is therefore of economic value. This state of affairs puts a lot of importance on FGM, to the extent that when a girl is approaching adolescence, her parents organise for her to undergo FGM to avoid the 'shame' of getting pregnant before being cut. Therefore, while having children is a celebrated status for a woman, having them before undergoing FGM is considered to be a curse that can lead to long-term consequences. MD1 says:

Extract 7.15 (MD1)

*...if you insist and marry a girl who is not circumcised they can go behind you [they can bewitch you] and whenever you **get children** they die, so when you are asked what went wrong, people will say it is because he married *omosagane* who is not circumcised...*

From both the songs and interviews it is clear that both motherhood and FGM are perceived to be of great economic value and key in the making of a proper Kuria woman. I discuss how FGM is economically valued in the next section.

### 7.3 FGM and economic value

A higher economic value is attached to women who have undergone FGM than those who have not. As mentioned earlier, when a circumcised Kuria woman is getting married, her father asks for between 15 and 30 cows, and this is the expected number according to Kuria traditions. However, among the Luo, a neighbouring community, the dowry paid is between two and five cows. This is why the men (who are the immediate beneficiaries) insist that their daughters get circumcised so that they are married within the community and not outside where dowry rates are very low. If she has not undergone FGM she is considered unmarriageable<sup>42</sup> because her prospects of getting married in Kuria are very low with higher chances of getting married in other communities (and by extension low dowry). MD1 says:

Extract 7.16 (MD1)

...if she doesn't want to be **circumcised** she doesn't want to be **married** here

F5 is quick to state that it is not only her immediate family that benefits from a girl's FGM but also the villagers and community members where the girl comes from. They all view her as an economic asset because of the free food and drinks they are offered on the circumcision and wedding day. They do not associate with an uncircumcised girl because by being uncircumcised she has 'denied' them these 'niceties'. The value of circumcised women is also expressed by F16 who uses market lexicon to describe the selling and buying of women in marriage contexts in Kuria.

Extract 7.17 (F16)

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<sup>42</sup> Kuria men do not propose marriage to uncircumcised women. If a Kuria woman refuses to be circumcised, she can only be married outside the Kuria community – in most cases such women marry into the neighbouring Luo community, which does not circumcise at all.

When a woman has been circumcised she will bring in cattle which we will use, we will **buy daughters** in law once we **sell** that **woman**, and we will **bring daughters in law** home so that a family can spread

Kuria is not the only community that believes in no-FGM-no-marriage-no-motherhood ideology. Among the Rendile, a community that lives in Northern Kenya and one that practises FGM as a requirement for marriage, it is taboo for uncircumcised girls to become pregnant. If an uncircumcised and unmarried girl becomes pregnant she is forced to have an abortion. This is explained by one man, 'if we bear children with an uncircumcised girl we lose all the respect in the community' (Shell-Duncan et al 2001:117). The child is not spared either, 'you must have a circumcised mother to be accepted' he adds. In this case, therefore, marriage is entangled with FGM in legitimating reproduction.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed constructions of gender in Kuria female circumcision songs and their reconstructions in the interviews under the 'economic value discourse'. I have specifically explored the discursive construction of women as property and objects with economic value and men as property owners. I have argued that there is value attached to the young girls who are viewed in terms of their economic benefits once they reach circumcision age. Through circumcision, both family and friends gain economically. Once the girls approach marriageable age they are viewed as goods ready for sale to accrue wealth for their families in the form of cattle paid as dowry. Their economic value increases once they bear children who are also perceived to be property for future economic benefits. This state of affairs sets the ground for the maintenance of inequalities and propagation of FGM. In the next chapter I discuss the 'power and control' discourse.

## **Chapter 8: Power and control discourse**

### **8.0 Introduction**

Among the Kuria, men have the final say in both private and public matters. By virtue of this, they control all the happenings in the community. Women have to agree with what men say even if they are not happy with it. Men are the sole decision makers; they preside over community ceremonies and occupy leadership positions. All these are high level duties associated with power and which earn them respect among other community members. Any time a woman tries to perform these perceived male duties, she is criticised and warned against ‘sitting on her man’s head’ (which means disrespecting him). In this section, I discuss the relation between power and gender by examining how men’s dominant position and women’s subordination is constructed, legitimated and perpetuated through discourses in the FGM songs and interviews. I particularly focus on how this is depicted through heterosexual marriage and domestic violence.

### **8.1 Heterosexual marriage, power and control**

In most cultures, especially those in African states, marriage is considered an important milestone in a woman’s life. Girls are socialised under explicit prescriptions and practical exercises for proper womanhood which include getting married, being good wives and mothers. They are brought up to behave accordingly and be able to carry out what are culturally perceived to be female duties. Marriage is presented as benefitting to not only women but also their families. The naturalness and inevitability of marriage remains a main discourse in Kuria society. Due to its prevalence, women would not prefer to remain uncircumcised because this may prevent them from achieving a form of fulfilment that only comes with marriage. Because men are stereotyped as strong and powerful, they are considered to be protectors of women and marriage is seen as a source of protection, happiness, fulfilment and glory<sup>43</sup> for women. Getting a husband or wife, on the other hand, is considered to be a compulsory milestone in every Kuria’s life. This relates to Rich’s

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<sup>43</sup> Married young women are perceived more positively than single mature women.

(1978, 1980) concept of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’(see section 2.2.4 for details on heterosexuality and heteronormativity).

In this section I examine how language is used in FGM songs to legitimate heterosexual marriages as the only natural and expectable forms of marriage in Kuria society where marriage is considered the norm and not getting married perceived to be a deviant behaviour. Although current research has shown that those who are not heterosexual are less marginalised, this is mostly the case in Western cultures not in African states where such couples are declared outcasts and even killed<sup>46</sup>.

### 8.1.1 Heterosexual marriage, power and control in songs

Consider the following phrases which have been commonly used in the songs and which are evidence of heterosexual relations.

*Omokari wa mamei - uncle's wife*  
*Omokari wa rosei romogongo - brother's wife*  
*Omoka mona wane - wife to my son (daughter-in-law)*

These advance the heterosexual marriage, discourse by portraying heterosexuality as common sense.

#### Extract 8.1 (Song 1)

*It is now I come*  
*You were lying on the bed*  
*She is **other people's woman***  
*You were lying on the bed*  
*Now we bring cattle*

The lexicon used states that once circumcised, she now belongs to other people, to mean she is marriageable at any moment and therefore under control of another man, separate from her father. In Kuria, the recognised marriage is a heterosexual one which is defined as a union between a man and a woman, with all other forms of marriage being described as taboo. The main goal of any heterosexual marriage among the Kuria is to bear children who have economic value attached to them (see

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<sup>46</sup> In Kenya, homosexuality is illegal and one can be jailed, fined or killed for exhibiting behaviours ideologically perceived to be associated with homosexuals.



section 7.2). Therefore, other forms of marriage are despised because couples in these relationships are perceived to be unable to produce children.

Other traces of 'heterosexual marriage as the norm' discourse are found in the following song lines with both men and women being called by names which indicate that they are in heterosexual relations.

Extract 8.2 (Song 4)

Aye yee live longer **uncle's wife** live longer till you sleep  
on beds

.....

**Uncle's wife** why are you hiding from me  
You are hiding as if I bite

In song 18, it is the brother's wife who is being praised but is hiding.

Extract 8.3 (Song 18)

Laugh with me my **brother's wife**

Laugh with me so I can see your teeth

How they are they are arranged like arrows in the arrow pocket

Come out my **brother's wife** come out

I am praising you but you are hiding from me you are hiding as  
if I bite

I praise you but you hide as if I bite

More traces are evident in the earrings metaphor where men see beautiful women (*ibichengeche*) and run to get cattle from enemies so that they can marry them.

Extract 8.4 (Song 8)

**Our women are earrings**

Those that we see and run fast

We go to get cattle from our enemies

We get the enemies' cattle by force and **bring them home**

Other traces are also found in the circumcision songs with women being constructed as enticing men so that their fathers can get cattle (paid to make the marriage official)

or being in heterosexual relations. The fact that they are only enticing men and not other women shows that they have internalised the societal heterosexual expectations.

Extract 8.5 (Song 14)

*He will come with a big car that will be speeding*

*With beads in there shining*

**Women** *will collect the beads and adorn themselves*

*They will walk around **enticing men***

*They will **entice men** so that that their fathers can get cattle*

It is worth noting here that it is only circumcised women who are allowed to enter into heterosexual relations. Those who are not are barred from even visiting homes where there are prospective husbands. Once they have undergone FGM, women can have heterosexual relations with men of any age and status. These restrictions normalise FGM, making it the only option and, according to this community, an invaluable stage before heterosexual marriage. Shell-Duncan (2001) presents a similar scenario among the Rendile people of Kenya where marriage is only permissible between a man and a woman and only after FGM.

### **8.1.2 Heterosexual marriage, power and control in the interviews**

The ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ discourse is also identified and named by Sunderland (2004) in her analysis of a text titled ‘*a dream wedding*’. The discourse suggests that those who are marrying are normally couples in a heterosexual relationship with such couples being expected to live happily ever after. Traces of ‘heterosexuality as the norm’ discourse are evident in the interviews in the current study. In all the interviews conducted, it was at no point suggested that men and women were in any relationship other than a heterosexual one (*omogaka numukungu*/man and woman). All the man’s roles towards his partner entail what a man does to his wife who is a woman and vice versa. This naturalisation of heterosexual relations rules out other forms of relations and constructs male-female relations as the norm. In all cases it is the man who is the dominant partner in these relationships, with the woman taking the subordinate-submissive-supporting position. The respondent in extract 8.6 states that a normal home is one where there is a man and a woman in a heterosexual relation each performing his/her ascribed social duties accordingly.

Extract 8.6 (MWD1)

**A woman** [...] washes clothes, cooks, goes to the farm, takes care of cattle if I am not around, opens and closes the cowshed gate. **A man** checks to see if the compound is clean, well erected and ensures that children have clothes; **a woman** does not erect a home.

The pre-requisite for any marriage for both men and women in Kuria is circumcision. Interviewees unanimously state that the main reason why girls are circumcised is to make them marriageable. If they are not circumcised they cannot be married in Kuria. Men will not ask for their hand in marriage and even if they did their parents would not allow it. Then, even if they did allow it, the council of elders would ensure they 'do not live happily ever after' (MD1). Uncircumcised girls are thus married off to other communities and that is perceived to be a shame to their families. Kuria girls are socialised to understand that marriage within the community is in their own interests because 'when your husband beats you, you can easily walk back to your home or your family will hear of it quickly and come to your rescue. But if you are married where nobody can reach you, you can even be beaten to death and no one will know' (Rioba 2014). This underpins the legitimization of violence against women (see section 8.2) and shows how the 'beating' ideology is normalised to the extent that the Kuria people believe it to be universal and natural. Compulsory circumcision as a requirement for heterosexual marriage places girls who would otherwise not want to be circumcised in an awkward position, particularly because marriage is ideologically constructed as an honourable stage in life that defines a woman and which they would not like to forego. Because FGM is the requirement, marriage becomes impossible without it. In the following excerpts both male and female interviewees emphasise the centrality of FGM for heterosexual marriage.

Extract 8.7 (F5)

When a child is **circumcised**, she is **married**; one who is **not circumcised** is **not married**. She remains like that and stays there

Extract 8.8 (MD1)

...in our Kuria tradition and culture if a girl is **not circumcised** she **cannot be married** to a Kuria home...

F16 says that as a girl matures men keep watching and waiting and on the day of her circumcision they start asking for her hand in marriage, before then they cannot.

Extract 8.9 (F16)

An **uncircumcised** girl is **not sought for marriage** but on the day she **undergoes FGM** she **receives many proposals**. Once she graduates, she is a woman and can be **married** by any man

All these contribute to the normalisation of heterosexuality and marginalising all other forms of relations, thereby creating an unequal society. As a wife, a Kuria woman is expected to work hard and ensure her family remains intact. This leads to a discussion of a discourse I have identified and named as the ‘proper woman keeps her man’ discourse which is prevalent in the interviews. This discourse is a version of what has been named by (Sunderland 2004, Litosseliti 2006; Kosetzi 2007) as ‘how to get your man and keep him’. It is a discourse common in popular magazines for women and adolescent girls with advice being frequently given on what to do to get and keep a man (Sunderland 2004). This discourse is based on the assumption that there is a shortage of men and thus it is difficult for a woman to find one. Consequently, when she finds him she needs to do everything possible to keep him. Traces of this discourse in the interviews include cases where both male and female interviewees state that there are things you do to a man if you want to keep him from (supposedly) being taken by other women.

Extract 8.10 (F3)

*A **real woman** is one who knows how to **keep her man**. You have to know that when he comes back you must have **left food** (ubukima/ugali) for him, once he finishes eating he finds you have **made his bed** he goes to bed, then you **join him** and **ask him** how he has been and **move closer to him** (she laughs). [...]early in the morning at dawn once you are married you should not be a stupid woman and leave your man like that to be taken by other women. You **make him feel** that he has got a woman. At dawn you wake up and **prepare breakfast** for **him** and go to the farm together once you are back from the farm you **give him porridge** and **prepare bath water for him** then he goes to take the cattle to graze, once he comes back he finds you there, you have made the evening meal...*

The woman is constructed as putting effort to keep her man and this gives him power over her. It shows that he can discard her at any time he feels she is failing in her duties. This finding is similar to what Mills & Mullany (2011) observe about British woman’s magazines of the 1950s. In these magazines women are advised on how to prepare for their husband’s return from work by being tidy and making sure the house

is clean and quiet. This re-affirms the ‘woman as domestic’ discourse while supporting the ‘how to keep your man’ discourse. It positions women as vulnerable. Note that, in Kuria norms, a woman is to welcome her husband at whatever time he comes back without asking him any question. This state of affairs is what has been described as the ‘wife as accommodating’ discourse (Ellece 2011) where the woman is not to seek any explanation about where the man has been but has to ensure she asks and is given permission before she goes anywhere. This is a form of silencing of the woman (especially when the man can stay out till later or sleep away for as many as three days with no one asking him (MWD1)). It is justified by MWD1 who says that when a man goes out he is searching for what his family will eat but a woman needs to stay at home and do domestic chores.

Extract 8.11 (MWD1)

*A man for instance has a voice in the sense that a child cannot go somewhere for two weeks and come back. A woman cannot go for three months and come back to this home but a man can; that is a rule*

From extract 8.11, it is clear that a woman who wants to keep her man should not be away from home without permission. She stays at home so that every time he comes back from either ‘wandering’ or ‘searching’, he finds her at home. The ‘stay at home’ discourse depicts controlled movement meted out to women while positioning man as free and therefore dominant and powerful.

## **8.2 Violence, power and control**

Domestic violence is common in most patriarchal societies. Women are physically abused for trivial reasons including failing to cook and/or serve in time, serving cold food or serving a small amount of food. The yardsticks for the right time, quality and quantity of food are set by men (their husbands). Domestic violence in Kuria is a hegemonic discourse articulated from time to time through commonly used statements<sup>47</sup>. These are restated in the interviewees’ responses. Domestic violence is

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<sup>47</sup> Statements such as: *tiga gokora igo otagacha otemwe na mosacha wao* (don’t do this so that you are not hit/caned by your husband), *orakore igo naragoteme* (if you do that he will hit/cane you), or the exclamation *okore igo? Nache agoteme!* (You do that? He will hit/cane you!) are hegemonic discourses in Kuria. These are restated in the interviewees’ responses.

not just a likelihood but an expectation in a couple's lifetime. It is only men who perpetuate this practice and this shows that they are the ones in power because for one to beat another they must be in a more powerful position than their victim. In the case of Kuria, therefore, power is placed on the more powerful partner in a marriage, the man, hence giving him authority to beat the less powerful partner, the woman.

### 8.2.1 Legitimation of violence in the songs

In FGM songs, male violence is represented as the norm. Men go out to fight enemies; they kill them and drive their cattle away. When women entice men, men go to get cattle from enemies by force so that they can pay a dowry and get these women. However, this is not viewed as violence by the actors but as a form of bravery and chivalry and a way of expressing their strength and masculinity.

#### Extract 8.12 (Song 8)

*We go to **get cattle from our enemies***

*We get the **enemies' cattle by force** and bring them home*

This form of violence is not domestic. It is meted out to other people, but it is important because it depicts the strength and power of a Kuria man and forms the basis for his position in the society. Other traces of this discourse include lexical items found in song 11 where men *split trees* with their bare hands and *rip tree barks* with their finger nails. This depicts their violent and destructive nature which instills fear in their victims. In song 16 'uncle' is said to have killed a bull. Note that the word choice here is *kill* and not *slaughter*, this is deliberately used to depict the uncle as a strong, brave man who attacks the bull and overpowers it, and since bulls are violent (in this context) only a violent man can overpower one. Similarly, this is the case in song 18 where uncle kills a big sheep/a ram and song 15 where men's violence is depicted through the *thunder* metaphor. 'Brother' is said to be thunder and therefore associated with destruction. Although I did not find cases of violence against women in the songs, traces of violence are explicitly evident in the interviews.

### 8.2.2 Interviews

In section 6.1.2 it was revealed that it is the sole responsibility of the woman to cook. If she does not do it properly her husband gets angry and punishes her. This punishing her is a form of asserting his authority over her. It is made clear that a woman cannot

hit him back because 'she is a woman and he is a man' and because it is against cultural expectations. This is a way of legitimating an imbalanced form of punishing since the man also makes mistakes. That he can hit her while she can never beat him back shows that he has power over her, including corporal power. When asked why their husbands can hit them but they can never do it, female respondents felt embarrassed and laughed and some said it can never happen; only a few said because 'he got you from your home'. This is similar to findings from Simister's (2009) study on domestic violence in Kenya where both men (48%) and women (26%) agreed that there were situations when it was justified for a man to beat his wife and children if they misbehaved but not vice versa, just because he is a man. This demonstrates that it is a given that beating is a man's responsibility.

Extract 8.13 (F3)

...when **you are being beaten** the moment he (your father-in-law) hears **you start crying** he says do not **kill** so and so, he comes quickly and **rescues** you

Extract 8.14 (F1)

In terms of discipline it is the woman who is involved mostly, she teaches children and warns them against theft, a **man** only **beats** but a woman warns. For a man if he makes a mistake and you ask him **he beats you** even when he is the one in the wrong; that is the tradition.

F1 argues that the woman teaches her children and warns them, but the man beats them. Although both are depicted as agents here, the mother is portrayed as a carer and the father as a disciplinarian hence reaffirming traditional Kuria notions of femininity and masculinity.

Among the Kuria people, and in most Bantu communities (see Kabaji 2005), beating a woman is interpreted in two ways: a form of disciplining her and also showing that one loves her and is bringing her back. A man can use flimsy reasons to beat his wife just to fulfil these cultural expectations. It is said that a man who never hits his wife in his marriage and lifetime has been 'sat on' (to mean is being controlled by her). F6 says at times a man can pretend to be drunk just to beat his wife to fulfil this sociocultural expectation.

Extract 8.15 (F6)

[...] **a man** can pretend that he is drunk and come to **beat the wife**; he mistreats you by **beating** you **every time**.

These extracts show men exercising power, control and domination over their women and any action on the part of the woman to undermine the power of the man is countered by beating. It further shows that power relations in Kuria are reinforced physically as well as ideologically. Wives are portrayed as being in a constant process of punishment and rebuke from the men who are their husbands. The fact that women cannot beat men even if they are in the wrong legitimises the skewed gender position which seems to promote marital harmony but which works against women. Because men can beat women and not vice versa, they command authority, control and have a voice over their women as explained by MD1 who says that any time a woman tries to assert herself there would be negative long-term consequences including being sent back to her home or running away to practise prostitution.

Extract 8.16 (MD1)

[...] it is a man who has a voice and if a woman wants to have a voice it is not possible because there will be **canes** and the woman will be running to her home every time and then later she can go to wander around and to towns to practise prostitution.

From interviews, other sub discourses that shore up power and control discourse include 'man as decision maker' and 'man as leader' discourses which construct men as being in charge with the women obeying without questioning.

Extract 8.17 (F3)

*In Kuria traditions, in a home a woman cannot decide what to do; a **man tells you** that this is what we do here. Tradition has it that a **woman cannot rule** they say '**no female rules**' (proverb) because a **man always tries**. A **woman** cannot be elected as a leader because she is very **jumpy**.*

She adds:

*A Kuria **woman does not have a voice** especially over her husband if you try to have a voice they say you are 'putting your eyes*



*over your husband'* (a proverb which means looking down upon one's husband).

Apart from providing leadership to his family, a man is the sole decision maker about his home affairs. He decides and guides on how everything is conducted including the decision on a girl's circumcision and marriage.

Extract 8.18 (MD2)

*Men are the ones who **give guidance** in a family. They are the ones who **decide for a girl** to be circumcised. If a **son** marries an uncircumcised girl, it is his father who stands in the cowshed and breathes<sup>48</sup> that 'I will not have my cowshed gate opened by an uncircumcised girl'. **Men** are therefore taken to be people who are of **utmost importance** in a family. A man is the one who is recognised in a homestead. A woman does not have a voice in the home.*

Female interviewees argued that it is the sole responsibility of the man to make decisions concerning his children, property and even what his wife does. Any decision made by the man/husband cannot be contradicted without punitive consequences.

Extract 8.19 (F1)

*...he is the one who **decides** that a **girl is being circumcised**, he gets a cow, and the woman gets cooking flour, **if she does not want she will be caned**. The man then **buys clothes** for the girl a woman does not buy since she doesn't have money, **he buys a mattress** when the girl is circumcised the man **says you have become** a woman, be married.*

### **8.3 Contradicting discourses/discourses challenging traditional discourses**

Sunderland (2004) describes contradicting discourses as those that challenge traditional ideologies. They criticise conservative discourses, challenge patriarchal values and are progressive in nature; they show a change or subversion from the

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<sup>48</sup> Note the verb used is 'breathes' (*ahchera*), which is associated with authority and power, instead of 'says' (*agamba*), which is not.

norm. While studying Chola gang-girls, Mendoza-Denton (1996) found that the girls used make up to exert a form of power and reject sexualised femininity. The eyeliner, lipstick and hair styles worn by the members of the gangs portrayed them as hard, tougher and more masculine. The girls used makeup not to entice men nor for men's admiration (male gaze) as seen in Kosetzi & Polyzou (2009) and Atanga (2012) studies, but to establish themselves as powerful, intimidating and ready to fight. This challenges the traditional 'makeup-as-a-form-of- beauty discourse' which has always portrayed made up women as beautiful and soft (objects of gaze), as is the case in Kosetzi's (2007) work. Challenges to traditional discourses in the circumcision songs occur when, for instance, a woman is presented in a manner which would, in normal circumstances, be associated with a man. While studying sexual health education leaflets and posters, Jewitt & Oyama (2001) found that men and women were represented as equally active which is not always the case in most gender research, this is a challenge to traditional norms. Many representations show men as superior and women as inferior. Contracting discourse works towards a subversion of the negative discrimination against women, patriarchal values and the established normative status quo (Atanga 2010). Subversion and challenging have been used interchangeably by Sunderland (2004); subversion entails substituting one discourse (a negative one) for another that is more positive, while challenging simply means criticising a discourse without explicitly substituting it for another. Strength and power are two of the most popular ideals of masculinity. Men are often stereotypically represented as strong and powerful whereas women are always weak and powerless. However, there are instances when women are represented as strong and powerful in a similar way to men, in such cases there are goals to be attained.

### **8.3.1 Contradicting discourses in the songs**

Traces of contradicting discourses in the songs include the metaphorical use of the *rock*, *ship* and *bomb* while referring to women. All the three are associated with toughness, and 'bomb' relates to destruction. Destruction is associated with masculinity and in songs it is men who show destructive attributes by splitting trees with their hands and ripping tree barks with their finger nails. However, when these metaphors are used for women, there are objectives to be achieved. The reference of *rock*, *ship* and *bomb* to women who have been circumcised shows that by undergoing circumcision, they have acquired some '*manness*' and can now possess a form of

power that only lies with men. Ideologically, FGM gives women strength physically and elevates their status towards ‘manness’. The circumcised can now exercise control over the uncircumcised ones just as men control women.

Extract 8.20 (Song 13)

*My **mother** whom can I compare you to*

*You are like a **ship** in the sea*

*You are like a **bomb** the one that sounded in the skies*

*The one that hit Machage’s tall building*

### **8.3.2 Contradicting discourses in the interviews**

Contradicting discourses are also evident in the interviews, with women being represented in non-conservative ways. Among the Kuria, it is the sole responsibility of a man to provide for his family. As seen in the previous sections men go out to bring home what the family needs and women stay at home to prepare, cook and serve what has been brought. However, in the interviews, women have been constructed as doing more chores and duties than their husbands on average. They have also been constructed as providers of material needs with men being lazy and just wandering in the market. I view this as a contradictory discourse as it presents a deviation from the norm. Satia (2014) found a similar situation while studying letters of inmates in Kenyan prisons. In his case, women constructed themselves as breadwinners. They shouldered the responsibility of providing for their families and parents while their brothers remained unconcerned.

Traces of this discourse in the data include instances where women are constructed as working harder than men hence enacting the ‘woman as hard worker’ discourse. Here, women are portrayed as the main source of labour in their matrimonial homes, as seen in the description of what a woman does daily. Mulamba (2013:58) observes that ‘even when the husband and wife come home together from the field or from any other work, the husband will take a rest and wait for the wife to cook the meal despite her own fatigue’. This is the case in a Kuria home as described by MD2.

Extract 8.21 (MD2)

*Once back the man asks for **porridge** and **bath water** which she **prepares** for him. The man goes for a walk (to wander) and the woman is left at home **taking care of the cattle** and **children**, **washing linen**.*

Apart from being hard-workers, women are also constructed as providers. This portrayal, however, is only used with those who have undergone FGM. The main trace of this discourse lies in F1's statement that a woman is the one who finds what the family will eat while most men go to waste time (to wander) at the local market centre and only come back in the evening drunk and asking for their food. This position is supported by F2 and MD2. This provision is however not viewed positively as a man's. It is perceived to be a form of enslaving women.

Extract 8.22 (F1)

...**she** is taken as the one **who will find everything** for the man to eat, they (women) have become labourers/slaves

## **8.4 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have discussed the relation between power and gender by examining how men's dominant position and women's subordination is constructed, legitimated and perpetuated through discourses in the FGM songs and interviews. I particularly focused on how this is reinforced through heterosexual marriage and domestic violence. Under the third dominant discourse, which I have named as 'power and control' discourse, men are constructed as more authoritative in both domestic and public spheres (at times using corporal punishment and violence) while women are not. I have also discussed cases of contradicting discourses where (circumcised) women are portrayed in ways not consistent with the normative Kuria practices and have evidenced how this contributes to the perpetuation of FGM.

## **8.5 Summary of the analysis and discussion**

To summarise the three analysis chapters, I observe that three main discourses emerged. These reinforce predominant conceptions of gender in Kuria. The normative proper woman discourse portrays women as circumcised, wives, mothers, carers, and predominantly domestic, while men are depicted as providers, protectors and largely public. This discourse depicts not only how the Kuria world is but how it

should be, with any deviation from these norms being met with negative consequences. In so doing they transmit ideologies that justify gender hierarchies as natural and common sense. This in turn shapes the gender identities and power relations and provides a skewed view of masculinity, femininity and gender relations in both domestic and public spheres. The economic value discourse depicts men as property owners and women as part of the property. This is in congruent with existing social expectations in Kuria. At no point are these relational expectations challenged, showing that they have been largely accepted as the norm and part of life.

Under the 'power and control' discourse, male power and superior rank are reflected in the numerous expressions and images which are fused in the songs. The underlying aim is to portray the male being above the female physically and socially and to portray him occupying virtually all positions of authority. By being portrayed as the provider of all material and non-material things, his status has been elevated above that of the women. Women who are praiseworthy, on the other hand, only earn this through undergoing FGM, being kind, generous and hardworking, and through performance of motherhood and womanhood roles and duties. The three discourses reinforce the prevailing gender norms in Kuria which hold that men are family providers, protectors and property owners while women take care of the household duties and children but only after FGM, and these norms are largely ideologically reproduced and circulated discursively. This study therefore confirms that songs do not challenge existing gender hierarchies and asymmetrical gender and power relations in the larger Kuria context; they instead perpetuate the ideologies behind them.

Apart from this, language is also ideologically used to legitimate FGM by making it necessary and even positive (important) in the maintenance of the existing Kuria sociocultural network. In both songs and interviews FGM is constructed as inevitable, unavoidable and easy to go through. Circumcised women are constructed as valuable, beautiful, powerful, brave and trustworthy whereas uncircumcised women are constructed as worthless, unrecognised and unwelcomed. They are depicted as nonentities, dogs. The lexical items and metaphors used in both the songs and interviews reinforce the underlying cultural beliefs about FGM in Kuria. This in turn perpetuates the practice. Through the ideological work of discourse, binary and contrastive relationships presented in the songs are naturalised and passed on from

one generation to another. With time, they have become part of the Kuria people's way of life and common sense.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusion**

The original motivation for conducting this research was to examine gender and language in FGM ceremonies, particularly gendered discourses; how men and women are portrayed, and the relation of this to the perpetuation of FGM. The other motivation was to find out why women were perceived to be so lowly, while men were exalted. Women did not occupy any leadership or decision-making position and had to agree with what had been decided upon by men. I examined how this and other inequalities were discursively produced and legitimised in the songs and how they were rearticulated in the interviews. In this last chapter, I summarise the findings and the implications of the study to gender and feminist linguistics and to the wider society, after which I outline the recommendations and suggestions for future studies.

### **9.1 Summary of key findings**

Data were collected through audio recording, interviewing, field notes and observation. They were analysed, presented and discussed in four chapters: Chapter 5 is a summary of lexical items and metaphors identified in both songs and interviews with a discussion of their positioning of men and women and portrayal of FGM. These formed a background for the gendered discourses discussed in the three chapters that followed. In Chapter 6, I discussed the ‘proper woman discourse’ while Chapter 7 examined the ‘economic value discourse’. Chapter 8 focused on the ‘power and control discourse’ with a brief section on discourses that contradict these three dominant discourses. I summarise the thesis’ findings in the following section.

#### **9.1.1 Lexical items and metaphors**

The first objective was to find out ‘which lexical items and metaphors are employed in the FGM songs and interviews’ (see section 1.4), analysed in Chapter 5 of the thesis). I categorised lexical items and metaphors identified in the data into three categories: those that referred to men, to circumcised women and to uncircumcised women. Categorisation aimed at giving a broader picture of how the three groups that form a tripartite hierarchical gender structure in the Kuria community, were being portrayed and what the perception was about their position in the society.

The results showed that men's position is higher; they are dominant. They are represented as being more active and free, they are always away from home; they are involved in activities that require action, strength and courage. Through material processes men are constructed as different from women. Women on the other hand are subordinated; they are represented as being active within and around domestic spheres. This aspect of the findings, I argue, contributes to a broader picture of existing gender relations and positioning in the Kuria society. Men are active in doing things while women have things done to them or for them, and when women do things, it is only within the restricted physical environment of the home. This supports Sunderland's (2000) and Lazar's (2000) findings where men (fathers) are constructed doing things and being active in executive functional roles (realised through action structures); they are the executors and they direct actions while women are passive. The results have also revealed that FGM songs and interviews can be successfully analysed using Fairclough's (1992, 2001, 2015) three-dimensional model. This has been achieved through the analysis of linguistic traces (micro level), the gendered discourses (meso level) and the existing social structures of the Kuria (macro level).

In both Lazar' and my study, women are only active in cooking, serving, bearing children and minding about the interests of others (other-centredness), chores they perform within domestic spheres. These findings are also in line with previous studies on representation of gender (see Kosetzi 2007; 2008) where women have been constructed as dependent on men and as domestic (Atanga 2010; Ellece 2012). The binary representations in the songs are made explicit in the interviews, where it is restated that a woman should stay at home so that when her husband comes back he finds she has cooked his food. If not, it is anticipated that she will be hit/caned or he will go and she (wife) will not know where he has gone. Such constructions legitimate unequal gender and power relations and disadvantage women.

### **9.1.2 Gendered discourses**

The second objective was to find out 'what gendered discourses are evident in the FGM songs, how they construct gender and whether this is reaffirmed or challenged in interviews. This was addressed by examining the macro discourse of a 'proper woman' in the songs (Chapter 6) and its legitimation in the interviews, 'economic value' discourse (Chapter 7) and 'power and control' discourse (Chapter 8) together



with their sub discourses. These discourses are based on traditional gendered division of labour and gender differences which are ideologically enforced. Gender differentiation generally constructs 'proper' women as mothers, wives, circumcised and primarily domestic. They perform roles such as cooking, serving, family care and other chores associated with mothers and wives. 'Woman as mother, carer, timid and domestic' discourses are the building blocks for the 'proper woman' discourse. They are particularly dominant in the songs and are re-contextualised in the interviews where women are also constructed as (compulsorily) mothers and both men and women constructed as heterosexual.

The construction of women as timid legitimises male dominance by positioning men as protectors of women who need encouragement to come out of their comfort zones. Under the 'economic value' discourse women are constructed as objects, objects of gaze, property (they are equivalent to cattle) and properties owned by men in both songs and interviews. On the other hand, men are represented as property owners. In the interviews, a justification on why men own women is given: *they paid dowry to possess them*. Under the 'power and control' discourse women are constructed as powerless, constrained to domestic spheres and less confident while men are constructed as all powerful, rulers, leaders and active in public spheres. Because men own all property, have freedom to go out and come back and are the sole decision makers, these give them power over women who they control through domestic violence. In the interviews, domestic violence is constructed as normal and expected. These discourses are mainly traditional and conservative. They present different subject positions for men and women which in turn create unequal gender and power relations in the society. This is a case of how discourse is used to reproduce and sustain the status quo.

The identified discourses have accrued a natural commonsensical position in the Kuria society where they circulate without being challenged and have become part of life and of the Kuria linguistic repertoire. However, there were cases of contradictory discourses where women were constructed as strong and powerful. These discourses are examples of subtle sexism in operation as opposed to overt forms of 'female exaltation'. This reveals how hegemony operates because women who were represented as powerful using metaphors are those who had been circumcised and were mothers and wives hence underpinning the value of FGM while

positioning motherhood and wifehood as necessary. These two states shifted women's subject positions between powerful and powerless. By being circumcised women were positioned as powerful compared to the uncircumcised. But by being married and becoming mothers and consequently being restricted to domestic spheres, they were positioned as powerless compared to men. Findings on gendered discourses from both song and interview analysis support Lazar's (2000) and Atanga's (2010; 2012) findings that women are constructed as domestic while men are public. This represents asymmetrical representations and expectations about gender and reflects the current sociocultural condition in Kuria in particular and Kenya in general. This is because in most Kenyan communities, men are positioned above women. For instance, whereas motherhood, childcare and domestic chores are seen as naturally women's roles, men are providers and protectors, always active outside (at work or in business) and away from home. Unlike men, women are expected to pay more attention to their bodies in order to be attractive to men. These advance unequal power and gender relations and has therefore answered the third objective by showing that FGM songs constitute ideologies that state, reflect and reaffirm societal values and beliefs on gender identities, power positions, roles and expectations without any attempt to challenge them. I therefore argue that FGM songs advance asymmetrical gender relations and perpetuate unequal power positions.

### **9.1.3 How FGM is constructed**

The last objective was to find out how the practice of FGM was being portrayed in the songs and whether it was being legitimated or not in the interviews. Analysis focused on how men and women viewed female circumcision, circumcised women and the uncircumcised. From the lexical choices and metaphors, it became clear that FGM is venerated and the pain in it trivialised. The songs producers carefully select verbs such as *prick*, *pick*, *touch*, and *grind* instead of the verb *cut* which is the right verb for the type of FGM act performed in Kuria. In this way, the girls are meant to believe that FGM is easy and quick to undertake and not painful at all. Lexical items used for the uncircumcised women are negative or carry negative connotations with an aim of denigrating uncircumcised women and emphasising the need for FGM. Such words as one who *cries*, *embarrasses*, is a *dog*, *uncircumcised*, *coward*, and metaphors *crier*, *dog*, *one with foul smell* and *one who defecates in the cattle corral* are used to portray uncircumcised women negatively. In terms of power and

economic value, circumcised women are positioned as powerful and valuable while the uncircumcised are depicted as powerless and worthless hence putting pressure for them to undergo FGM. Through this hierarchical representation I address my last research objective '*how is FGM portrayed and what role do FGM songs play in perpetuating the practice?*' FGM is portrayed as good, important, easy and compulsory. The songs succeed to legitimate, reinforce and perpetuate the FGM practice.

I also examined how social actors are powerfully or powerlessly positioned in relation to each other and how they shift between these positions of power. The analysis indicated that social actors constructed as powerful are powerless in other ways. Circumcised women are powerful in relation to the uncircumcised because they have undergone the cut and are therefore considered proper women, but they are powerless in relation to men when they are constructed as being restricted to the walls of their houses. These positions are restated and confirmed in the interviews. I therefore argue that, in Kuria, both FGM and gender are power determinants. Interviewees draw upon and reaffirm discourses found in the songs. There are no cases when they challenge the dominant discourses. Through CDA therefore I have been able to uncover ideologies behind gender and power relations in the songs and interviews and to identify and interpret ways in which men and women are positioned as well as how FGM is perceived.

## **9.2 Contributions of the study**

To this end, this study has contributed to the fields of CDA, Gender and Language and Cultural Studies and to the wider social world in different ways. I have grouped the contributions into empirical, methodological and general contributions and contributions to health and human rights advocacy.

### **9.2.1 Empirical contributions**

This study has examined both inter and intra-gendered relations and discovered that there are inequalities in non-binary groups (for example between uncircumcised and circumcised women) within binary domains (such as the Kuria context) which are perpetuated through discourse. Investigating representations of different groups of women is in accordance with current gender and language research in the discursive

turn and one of the interests of 'third-wave' feminism. It has not only identified gendered discourses that have been identified by other scholars such as 'woman as domestic' (Atanga 2007) 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Kosetzi 2007), 'compulsory motherhood' (Ellece 2007) but has also discovered new gendered discourses not identified in previous studies for instance 'proper woman' discourse, 'woman as circumcised' 'woman as protected' and 'woman as timid'. These emerged as dominant in the songs and were largely confirmed in the interviews. The study therefore makes contributions to gender and language (which focuses on gender identities, gendered discourses and gender and power relations) and sociolinguistics (which studies the dialectical relationship between sociocultural aspects, norms and expectations and language).

Secondly this study contributes to current linguistics research by being the first (to my knowledge) to examine gender and language within FGM ceremonies. It has demonstrated that cultural ceremonies and songs embody gendered discourses, ideologies and norms. In the Kuria FGM songs there are conservative discourses, ideologies and norms with regard to gender and power which advance the status quo and are evidence of the conservative nature of the Kuria culture. The study has also pointed out some contradicting discourses indicating that social practices and gender roles are not resistant to fluidity even in patriarchal societies.

Apart from this, it has demonstrated that women are not a homogenous subordinated group in the men versus women hierarchical structures; that not all women are powerless. Although they may be constructed as subordinate in relation to men some women are dominant in relation to other women. This is in line with third wave feminism which advocates for an examination of gender in different contexts without treating one group as homogeneous (Mills 2002; Mills & Mullany 2011) and/or dominant or another as subordinate. It has pointed out that within any gender category there exist subtle elements of dominance and subordination in different degrees.

From a theoretical and analytical perspective, the study makes use of Fairclough's textually oriented CDA (1992, 2001 2003, 2015), Sunderland's gendered discourses (2004) and Lazar's (2005) FCDA approaches to analyse textual data. This has not previously been conducted in the analysis of FGM (cultural) songs, and this study is the first to investigate FGM using critical discourse analytical methods and to analyse

FGM songs using a multi-methodical approach. It therefore makes a contribution to discourse studies. Aspects from the three approaches have been merged in different ways: Fairclough's framework relates discourse to social structures and deals specifically with issues of language and power. It also provides different levels of linguistic analysis and categories to focus on. Sunderland's approach provides a guide for identifying, naming and interpreting gendered discourses based on their linguistic traces. Lazar's FCDA is the overarching approach since it particularly focuses on gender inequalities and discourses that disadvantage women as a social group and suggests ways of challenging them and empowering women. It also makes use of different methods of data collection and analysis. This kind of triangulation of both theoretical and methodological frameworks in investigating gender and FGM has not been done hitherto. The research extends the work conducted previously by other linguists; it has similar findings as those from studies which used CDA to investigate the relationship between gender and language in other contexts: Lazar (2000) in Singapore; Sunderland (2000) in the UK; Kosetzi (2008) in Greece; Ellece (2011) in Botswana; Atanga (2012) in Cameroon.

This study has indicated that CDA can be applied in the analysis of overt and subtle sexism in both binary and non-binary groups, within heterosexual domains. It has demonstrated that CDA is applicable in the examination of cultural ceremonies in general and analysis of FGM songs in particular. The study demonstrates that CDA can be applied to examining both implicit and transparent asymmetrical power relations in cultural songs. This is in line with findings from previous studies in different contexts (see Lazar 2005; Wodak 2015). It is therefore a contribution to CDA and the discourse theory in this way.

This study has gone some way to filling the gap in the literature in the area of Language and Linguistics in Africa and Kenya, two contexts which are still under-researched by demonstrating that there are gender issues in normative social practices which can only be uncovered linguistically. Although there have been previous studies in language and gender in Kenya (see section 2.2.5), this is the first research to be conducted on gender and language and their relationship to FGM and the first study to examine empirical linguistic data in Kuria. It has provided an analysis of Kuria society with regard to gender and is revealing in terms of how gender relations are constituted and legitimated. It has also provided insight into what constitutes the

Kuria culture and how the Kuria people operate while highlighting the relationship between gender, discourse, power and ideology in this sociocultural setting. As a pioneer study on gender and language in Kuria, this study is hoped to be a point of reference for future researchers interested in linguistics and other disciplines and focusing on the Kuria community.

### **9.2.2 Contributions to wider society**

Apart from the above academic contributions, this study has potential to create social impact.

It has demonstrated that language plays a role in legitimising and perpetuating the sociocultural problem of FGM among the Kuria people. It has depicted that discourse constructs and advances social inequalities in the society and has demonstrated that social issues and retrogressive practices are advanced, perpetuated and legitimised through discourse. The study has shown that this is done through mystification of sociocultural practices into norms and naturalising them until they are taken to be common sense and as part of life of a group of people (the Kuria people in this case). Language should therefore be used to challenge FGM in Kuria and other societies through awareness and equality campaigns. Campaigners need to focus on both inter and intra gender groups.

Human rights bodies such as WHO, UNICEF, World Vision will find this study useful as it has uncovered how language can be used to reinforce and legitimate unequal positioning of its users and perpetuate practices that violate human rights. Anti-FGM campaigners and organisations such as Maendeleo ya Wanawake, Action

Aid<sup>49</sup>, 28 Too Many<sup>50</sup> and others will find this work useful as it suggests a linguistic approach in the fight against FGM.

### 9.3 Recommendations

With regard to the ceremonies and the rituals that characterise FGM in Kuria, I would like to make general recommendations from the research findings. First, while in the field I realised that most people look forward to the celebrations because there is free food and drinks. They, therefore, want to cling to the practice in order to get these. It is clear that FGM songs, which are embedded in these ceremonies, fuel perpetuation of the practice by setting the right mood and merry-making time that people look forward to. A ban on the songs and ceremonies or a reduction of the celebrations may lead to low FGM rates. A ban on public declaration of FGM was witnessed in the 1990s among the Kikuyu people of Kenya. This meant that practitioners could only do it covertly and with time it has significantly reduced.

Secondly, campaigns against FGM should target provision of clear information about the health risks associated with the practice and focus on individuals, both men and women, at family level. In the interviews and while socialising with the men and women in the field, it became clear that they did not understand the health risks associated with FGM nor did they have any information about violating human rights when circumcising girls.

Thirdly, the social significance of FGM as the only gateway to marriage and subsequent success in life should be challenged. Most of the young women interviewed argued that they feared being unmarriageable (and therefore unsuccessful) if they did not go through FGM. Awareness campaigns involving

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<sup>49</sup> ActionAid is an international organisation working in 45 countries and whose aim is to free the world from poverty, inequalities and injustices. They have been actively involved in anti-FGM campaigns in Kenya and other parts of the world. See details here: [http://www.actionaid.org/search/apachesolr\\_search/FGM?gids\[0\]=429](http://www.actionaid.org/search/apachesolr_search/FGM?gids[0]=429). World vision organisation has also been involved in anti-FGM campaign in Kenya and Kuria and would find this study useful. Their activities are available through <http://www.wvi.org-female-genital-mutilation>.

<sup>50</sup> 28 Too Many is a charity based organisation working to end FGM in the 28 African countries where it is practised and worldwide. They involve partners, supporters and volunteers in different contexts. See details here: <http://28toomany.org/countries/kenya/>.

successful women who have not gone through FGM and who are married with successful families should target young girls - those yet to be circumcised - so that they can have role models and examples to emulate. This will go a long way to demystify the ideology that those who are not cut are immoral and do not get married or settle in their matrimonial homes. They must get inside the mind-set of the FGM practitioners and tailor the change agenda in ways that capture the sociocultural context.

From the data analysis and research findings and with regard to gender inequalities I would like to suggest that equality campaigns target change in people's mind set about women and men's roles, and social expectations. Gender equality laws should be emphasised and followed rather than traditional gender beliefs. Once equality is achieved in the domestic spheres and at the local village level, equity attitudes will spread to national, regional and global levels and lead to social change.

With reference to the role of popular ideologies in legitimising unequal gender relations, knowledge of these ideologies is an absolute prerequisite for successful ending of inequalities. This suggests another contribution CDA makes towards solving such inequalities and ending negative practices such as FGM. As the analysis of FGM songs has illustrated, a discourse analysis uncovers ideological beliefs which are communicated and reinforced through language and which justify and maintain the existing state of affairs. It is only when they are made explicit that such discourses can be challenged and resisted as an initial step towards change. Therefore, there is need for more research activities that make use of other approaches. Any research towards this course in the Kenyan and African context might find this research useful.

One of CDA's aims is to reveal how discourse can make a contribution to social transformation. It is upon this view that this study suggests a linguistic perspective in the development of interventions aimed at achieving a culture of social equality in the wider Kenyan context. This can be achieved through the dissemination of actions that promote gender equality such as publicity initiatives, policies and programmes aimed at improving equality positions in Kenya. Development of a more nationalised policy on gender, changes in gender representations in school books, media and other avenues.



Lastly, and most importantly, I would like to emphasise the need for change in songs. Activists should come up with anti-FGM and pro-gender-equity songs which could be disseminated to the local Kuria people through mass media outlets such as radio and TV. The messages in the songs should present men and women as equals and circumcised and uncircumcised women as the same. These songs, if heard repeatedly, will be internalised and the listeners may start to question the truth in the FGM songs once they are exposed to a discourse that challenges the now deeply ingrained beliefs which are circulating through them.

## **9.4 Limitations and suggestions for further studies**

### **9.4.1 Limitations**

I only interviewed 20 people out of the many that participated in the ceremonies during the 2014/15 season. Although these were selected from a diverse social and economic background I cannot confidently say that this was a true representation of the population. However, in qualitative research and discourse analysis focus is not on statistically representative samples. The sample offers insights into the opinions of the entire group and the degree of accuracy may vary (Krueger 1994). Although the findings from this research may not represent the opinion of all the members of the Kuria community, it is indicative of and a representation of the majority opinion. The respondents' responses showed similarity to the unequal gender and power positions articulated in the songs. The linguistic features and discourses articulated in the interviews were also dominant in the songs (which were my main source of data) showing that they circulated freely in the social conventions where both the songs producers and interviewees drew from and where the songs were produced and consumed. Litosseliti (2003) argues that results may not be generalisable or representative, but indicative, illustrating particular social phenomena. The data elicited in this research is therefore assumed to be indicative of the gender and language practices in the Kuria society.

The other limitation is that during transcription I only focused on the orthographic word level and ignored phonological features such as hesitations, pauses, tonal variation, pitch variation and other extra-linguistic features. This meant that my analysis and interpretations are at word level. Although this is not a problem in CDA, as it would have been in CA, I have lost some features which would have been

important in my conclusions. For instance, how men and women reacted to certain questions. However, I noted some of these in my observation notes and have incorporated them in my analysis chapters (see for instance section 8.2.2).

#### **9.4.2 Suggestions for further study**

The focus of this study was limited to the gender and language practices in the female circumcision ceremonies with the focus being on songs. There is a need to research gendered discourses in other ceremonies such as birth celebrations, dowry negotiation ceremonies, death ceremonies and naming practices and make comparisons.

Although my analysis of FGM songs in relation to Kuria and Kenya is significant, I have not examined the rituals that go with the cutting. Neither have I uncovered all aspects of the Kuria (economic, political and social) in relation to gender and FGM in this thesis; this requires further research.

The other key areas to focus on include the appropriateness of alternative rites of passage and the role of mass media in FGM and gender equality campaigns. It is also necessary to examine the relationship between language/discourse and exclusion and marriageability to find out how these factors contribute or not to gender inequalities.

Comparative studies focusing on gender constructions in cultural practices could also be conducted in other Kenyan communities to find out if there are any similarities or differences.

I have pointed out that there is a need for the introduction of a discourse that challenges existing ideologies and deep-rooted social norms. A study that focuses on change of attitudes and perceptions with regard to gender roles and inequalities, FGM and uncircumcised women would be important.

### **9.5 Personal reflections, validity and reliability**

#### **9.5.1 Reflections**

Throughout the process I have been reflexive about my position as a researcher, right from the initial choice of the topic, data collection methods and analytical approaches used in this research project. Wodak & Ludwig (1999) argue that researchers must

be constantly reflective and aware of what they are doing while analysing and interpreting the data. Throughout the process I had to remind myself of my subject positions and role while ensuring that my biases do not negatively affect the study.

Apart from being a researcher, interviewer, recorder, observer, transcriber, translator, analyst and interpreter in this research, I took on other titles: I was a daughter, sister, friend and a member of the Kuria community. Being a Kuria woman who understands the cultural practices and could speak the same language meant I was an insider; it made it easier for me to again access, create a rapport with the participants and interact easily. Researching my community had other benefits to me in that I was able to identify the discourses articulated in the songs and by interviewees and relate with the social context. I understood what was taking place and could interpret it in the same way other members did. I was thus able to convey to the readers the connotations of some of the Kuria words and how certain aspects and discourses are perceived while drawing from the Kuria context. Wodak (1997) argues that an insider's perspective is important because when looked from an outsider's point of view discourses are analysed in isolation, the sense of context is lost because of limited knowledge and as a consequence the interpretations made are only partially valid. However, even with these advantages, I do not state that one should only study their communities or contexts they are familiar with.

However, I had other identities which made me an outsider. I was educated, pursuing a PhD in Europe and an uncircumcised Kuria woman. These three identities meant I was different from the interviewees and the songs' producers and this had a bearing in the research process right from setting the objectives, analysing and interpreting. It had both advantages and disadvantages. Being uncircumcised meant I did not believe in the FGM practice and therefore whereas everyone perceived it important and useful, I did not. The advantage of this was that I was able to critique the rituals and the whole process of 'becoming a woman' because I perceive myself to be a proper woman even without the cut. I saw problems in normative practices and questioned what others accepted as inevitable and expectable. Being educated I had been exposed to a different discourse, an egalitarian, progressive discourse. I understood that women had equal rights to men and that FGM was a violation of human rights.

Having studied CDA and gender and language, with their concerns about ideology, power and inequalities, I was able to identify asymmetries without either viewing women as a homogeneous group, or perceiving all women as powerless and subordinated by men. I understood the role of discourse in mystifying socially conventionalised realities and therefore viewed every aspect of the ceremonies and the cutting rituals with a critical eye. I searched for underlying meanings beyond literal meanings of every word in the songs, every metaphor and proverb I heard and asked what impact they had in social relations. I have therefore conveyed to the reader as much as possible all (or most) of what has to do with Kuria FGM, gender and power practices from an insider's perspective. The disadvantage is that I might have read meanings into expressions in different ways from those intended by the songs producers but this was countered through triangulation, particularly by incorporating responses from interviews in the analysis where the gendered discourses identified in the songs were largely confirmed.

Being a critical discourse analyst I understand the importance of having a stance (Fairclough 2001; van Dijk 2001) and hence I aligned myself with the powerless, the uncircumcised women in this context, while gearing towards challenging the practice and suggesting ways of emancipating women. Even so, I did not view myself as an expert who would uncover all hidden agendas in the songs, but sought to find out how the listeners interpreted messages in the songs, whether they confirmed them or subverted/challenged them and what impact this would have on their social relations and continuation of FGM.

With regard to my analytical approaches, I adapted parts of Fairclough's (1992, 2003, 2015) CDA framework in this research. The model emphasises an analysis of discourse as text, discursive practice and social practice. I combined this with Sunderland's (2004) gendered discourse approach which highlights the process of identifying, naming and interpreting gendered discourses. Sunderland (2004:11) suggests that 'the analyst must not rely only on available discursive traces in the data but also on her 'own informed insights about wider discursive and social practices'. An analyst should, however, not take their position as the ultimate truth. They should focus on being objective and remain reflexive, always documenting their stance (Kosetzi 2007). Fairclough (1989:167) emphasises the need for self-reflexivity and

consciousness during analysis and interpretation in order to avoid ‘acting as if explanations are theory-independent or theory-neutral’.

The analysis in this thesis is not exhaustive. There are other elements that cropped up during analysis and I came up with more questions than I had started with. For instance, hegemonic masculinity was subtly challenged in the interviews. However, I understand that when investigating a cultural aspect an analysis cannot be completed in one project, there are always questions which require answers and which had not been considered at the beginning of the research. This is allowed in CDA because ‘we choose to ask certain questions about social events and texts and not other possible questions’ (Fairclough 2003:14). The only questions I focused on were those related to linguistic features, gendered discourses, gender and power relations and perpetuation of FGM. Everything else was back-grounded and listed down for future studies.

### **9.5.2 Validity and reliability**

Jorgensen & Philips (2002:173) have listed factors that determine validity and reliability in critical discourse analysis studies: interpretation is based on a range of different textual features and not one, the questions posed to the text are answered fully and any textual feature that conflicts the position taken is accounted for, the results are presented in a transparent way such that the reader can test the claims made, the analyst presents extracts of the data in the analysis chapter hence giving the reader a chance to test the claims made. I have presented data extracts in the analysis chapters (see 5, 6, 7, 8) and have listed all the songs in the appendices (Appendix 1) so that my readers can verify my analysis.

In terms of reliability Sunderland (2004) suggests that the discourses identified by the researcher should be recognised by others coming from the same field or outside it. I have discussed some linguistic features and discourses I identified with members of the Language and Identities in Action (LIIdIA) research unit at York St John University and incorporated the suggestions made. The analysis and results have also been critiqued by scholars from both linguistics and other fields through my presentations in conferences and workshops and the data extracts have been used for teaching language gender and sexuality modules where students from various cultural backgrounds analysed the songs and identified different gendered discourses. Similar

patterns to my identifications emerged. This made my identification, naming and discussions more refined. Although I do not argue that results from this research can be replicated, because social processes and practices change from time to time, they do say something about different gender groups and are indicative of the Kuria society; any researcher investigating a similar social group with similar characteristics using similar methods is likely to come up with similar patterns.

## **9.6 Conclusion**

Globalisation and gender equality campaigns have not resulted in many changes in Kuria. 21<sup>st</sup> century innovations have had little or no impact on the way men and women relate in this society, which is largely patriarchal. Kuria women are still generally perceived as subordinate, less capable and uneducated consumers, who belong in the domestic sphere and are objects of economic value. These are inherent in traditional institutions and sociocultural practices. The gendered discourses identified in this study are examples of conservative discourses which contribute to maintaining the status quo. They are based on gender differentiation and gendered division of labour. They are manifest in FGM songs (and interviews) where they circulate as taken for granted, accepted truths which with time have become undisputed. The need to demystify such discourses and uncover gender imbalances and asymmetrical power relations formed the basis to this study. It is essential for academics to continuously raise awareness of how such inequalities are perpetuated through language and how they engender and maintain FGM practice. This will contribute to challenging ideologies behind such practices and ultimately bring about change in the cultural environment and transform the physical, emotional, psychological lives of Kuria women and girls.

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## Appendix 1: Analysed songs

### Song 1

*Eye eyeee*

Eye eyeee

*Eye eyeee*

Eye eyeee

*Rero nosarwa gobare*

Today you will be circumcised in broad daylight

*Hano oretusukiria gobare*

If you embarrass us in broad daylight

*Noregenda gosarwa kobagaya\*2*

Go to and be circumcised in Luo land

*Bagosara amaino ni birogo*

With those who circumcised teeth and feet

*Na nkomo cha biara*

And finger nails

### Song 2

*Weiya weiya tamokeria*

Weiya weiya greet her

*Nko getanda wakaraye*

You were lying on the bed

*Iga bono nsasa ngucha*

It is now I come

*Nkogetanda wakaraye*

You were lying on the bed

*Muiseke wabanto bande*

She is other people's woman

*Nkogetanda wakaraye*

You were lying on the bed

*Iga boono torente ichingombe*

Now we bring cattle

*Nkogetanda wakaraye*

You were lying on the bed

*Weiya weiya tamusioma*

Weiya weiya face her

*Nkogetanda wakaraye*

You were lying on the bed

### **Song 3**

*Eye ee, eye ee*

Eye ee eye ee

*Bamura ba weito tinga ng'ora eye tinga ng'ora ee*

Our sons dance slowly

*Kagena mwiboye ka mokari eye ka mokari ee*

A small rock of a woman was born

*Eye ee eye ee na togotebi ugumirri, eye ugumirri ee*

And we are telling you to bear it, to be strong

*Hano watusukirria ogera hayo eye gera hayo eyee*

If you embarrass us go that way

*Ogenda botasarwa kobagaya eye kobagaya eye*

Go to the uncircumcised the Luo

*Kobasara amaino na binyobu eye na binyobu eye*

Those who circumcise teeth and umbilical spots

*Eye ee eye ee*

Ee ee eye ee

**Song 4**

*Aye yee otohoniri mamei wabo baba otohoniri utuiteye endahu*

Aye yee you have healed us

*Aye yee nyamaguta unyiteye endahu nyamaguta nyamarandi konda*

Uncle you have healed us you have killed a billy goat for us

*Aye yee ogende karai mamei wabo baba ogende karai orarre ibitanda*

The one filled with fat and fat guards in the stomach

*Aye yee ichigotero orarre ibitanda ichigotero nemesago geko*

Live longer uncle, live longer till you lie on beds

*Aye yee ibibirri mamei wabo baba ibibirri abana baragambia*

Lie on mattresses with pillows on them

*Aye yee numurito rero ototereye utuchochiri ibiriba bichooye*

Let children blow whistles you are worth

*Aye yee ibitibache ibiriba bichoye ibitibache hamwe na amaroma*

You have rained on us and irrigated us till wells, pot holes and ponds are full of water

*Aye yee taitabiri itabiri omogogi numurugi numuyi wa amanche*

Aye yee bless the slaughterer, the cook and the one who fetched water

*Aye yee ogende karei omokari wa mamei ogende karai orarre ibitanda*

Uncle's wife live longer till you lie on beds

*Aye yee numurito mamei wabo baba numurito omotome ahatambe*

Uncle is valued he is worth to be sent far

*Aye yee narakenye motome kurioba naraimoke arête nyagatoke*

If sent to heaven he will go and bring nyagatoke to spread in the cowshed

*Aye yee irikoroso arête nyagatoke irikoroso ere korenda bori*

Uncle is like a big mushroom from Kiribo the one that has a long root

*Aye yee numurito mamei wabo baba numurito wanga irinyansaka*

Uncle is a man he splits trees with his own fingers, finger nails and palms

*Aye yee ere kiribo wanga irinyansaka ere kiribo nyamuri motambe*

Uncle is valuable I can send him far

*Aye yee numurito mamei wabo baba numumura nemete agosari*

He will run to bring us necklaces shining and we get them

*Aye yee nibinyege nemete agosari nibinyege na nkomo cha biara*

He will run to bring us necklaces shining and we get them

*Aye yee nomonene mamei wabo baba nomonene motome ahatambe*

*Aye yee narakenye atoretete emesanga geramenia tuyi torasora*

He will run to bring us necklaces shining and we get them

*Aye yee nimichibi tosore omokamona wangirabose ora akururia*

And belts so that we adorn ourselves and go for a daughter inlaw from Wangirabose

*Aye yee numurito mamei wabo baba numurito rero atotereye*

Uncle is valuable he has rained on us

*Aye yee wanga karei mamei wabo baba wanga kare i wang'ana nyamwaga*

Uncle what can I compare you to you are like Nyamwaga

*Aye yee niyo enene wang'ana nyamwaga niyo enene niyo etakuinarwa*

The big town that cannot be rounded by the old men who preside over ceremonies

*Aye yee na basubi niyo etakuinarwa na basubi abakori ba nyangi*

Uncle you have reached Gogoga where cows had been stolen to, those that have spots

*Aye yee nomorabu wahika gogoga chiragura chira chi macheche*

Uncle you are shields, you are shields that have been painted

*Aye yee nichinguba mamei wabo baba nichinguba chira bakon'gora*



The shields that are carried by strong men who go after the cows

*Aye yee nichinguba chira bakong'ora abakumahe baya guchisora*

The shields that are carried by strong men who go after the cows

*Aye yee kobabisa baya guchisora kobabisa bara bakobaha*

They bring back the cows from the enemies the enemies that rule

*Aye yee numumura mamei wabo baba numumura motome ahatambe*

Uncle is a man I can send him far among the enemies to bring the cattle back

*Aye yee kobabisa motome ahatambe kobabisa agende guchisora*

To bring back clean cows that fight to lick at the salt stones

*Aye yee ichindabucha agende guchisora ichindabucha ichinsara mang'eng'i*

To bring back clean cows that fight to lick at the salt stones

*Aye yee wang'ana ke omokari wa mamei wang'ana ke ndeigwa oranyibisa*

Uncle's wife why are you hiding from me

*Aye yee oranyibisa omokari wa mamei oranyibisa mona nkoromande*

You are hiding as if I bite

*Aye yee mona inchoka mona nkoromande mona inchoka era ya amanyansi*

As If I bite like a venomous snake that hides in the grass

### **Song 5**

*Aye yee wang'ana he baba wanyiboye wang'anahe*

Aye yee what can I compare her to

*Aye yee atohoniri baba wanyiboye atohoniri atuihoreye guikanga*

What can I compare my mother to she has healed us

*Aye yee guisogohe atuihoreye guikanga guisogohe*

She has healed us and has served in a big bowl, and a big sisal basket, a big bowl

*Aye yee agende karai baba wanyiboye agende karai arare amakora*

Live longer mother till you sleep on banana leaves

*Aye yee namakora ararre amakora na amagama na amari ga abana*

Till you sleep on banana leaves *amagama* and *amari ga abana*

*Aye yee nguitabiri umugi go omogaaka nguitabiri guyi gorakina*

Eee I bless it I bless a father's homestead so it grows so it grows

*Aye yee goseboke gunyore umusiiki numuiguri numuyi wa amanche*

So that it grows and grows till it get the one who closes the gate, the one who opens the gate and the one who fetches water

*Aye yee nibibirii biyi biragamba ibiriri abana baragambi*

Aye yee with whistles, sounding whistles, children blowing

*Aye yee oseboke omokari wa mamei oseboke wibore wanchare*

Spread my uncle's wife spread

*Aye yee wanchare wibore wanchare mona omokwe mona omomera nse ee omomera nse*

Spread and give birth like a tree that has roots deep down, a tree with roots deep down

*Aye yee mona engoko wibore oseresengi mona engoko*

Like a chicken give birth like a chicken gives birth and guards

*Aye yee ngosoke omokari wamamei numurito kigire ngosoke*

I respect you uncle's wife I respect you

*Aye yee numurito kigire ngosoke numurito rero ototereye*

You are respectable I respect you you have rained on us

*Nakora gukuigwa numurito si rero ototereye*

I have always heard that you are respectable but today you have irrigated us

*Aye yee utuchochiri rero ototereye utuchochiri ibiina bichoye*

U have irrigated us you have rained on us till boreholes are full

**Song 6**

*Ahee atohoniri ee iga rose ro mogongo atohoniri ee*

Ahee he has healed us brother has healed us ee

*Iga rose ro mogongo arohoniri atuiteye irihuntwa*

Brother has healed us he has killed a ram for us

*Ahee nyamaguta ee iga atuiteye irihuntwa nyamaguta nyamarandi konda*

He has killed a ram full of fat and fat guards in the stomach

*Ahee ogende karai ee iga rosei ro mogongo ogende karai orare ibitanda*

Ahee live long brother live long till you lie on beds with mattresses and pillow on them

*Ahee ichigotero ee iga orare ibitanda ibitanda ichigotero ee iga rosei romogongo ichigotero nemesago geko*

Ahee mattresses ee sleep on beds beds with mattresses and pillow on them

*Ahee wang'anake ee iga rosei romogongo numumura ee iga rosei romogongo numumura hano ikura giringa*

Ahee what can I relate you to brother you are a man when there is a cry from Giringa

*Ahee narairure ee iga nikura giringa narairure ee iga nikura giringa narairure arete nyagatoke*

He will run when there is a cry in Giringa he will run and bring Nyagatoke

*Ahee irikoroso ee iga arête nyagatoke irikoroso ee iga arête nyagatoke irikoroso rekoranda bori*

The one seedling that spreads in the cowshed

*Ahee tansekera ee iga omokari wa rosei otansekera mahe ameino gao*

Ahee laugh with me brother's wife laugh with me so I can see your teeth

*Ahee mona gare ee iga mona gatabaini mona umugwa mona ugwui gichogo*

How they are how they are arranged like arrows in the arrow bag/pocket

*Ahee tarichoka ee iga omokari wa rosei tarichoka ee iga omokari wa rosei tarichoka ndaigwa ndakogora*

Ahee come out brother's wife come out I am praising you

*Ahee oranyigunya ee iga ndeigwa ndakogora oranyigunya ee iga ndaigwa  
ndakogora oranyigunya mona nkoromande*

Ahee you are hiding from me I am praising you you are hiding from me as if I bite

**Song 7**

*Eye ee eye ee*

*Iga ngotara are mona entaro eye mona entaro ee*

She touches like it is a beauty cut

*Nyore ngosora are tiga asore eye tiga asore ee ye*

If she is picking let her pick

*Bamura ba weito tinga ng'ora ee ye tinga ng'ora ee ye*

Our sons dance slowly

*Baba wanyiboye wang'ana ke ee ye wang'ana ke ee ye*

Mother dance slowly

*Baba wanyiboye tinga ng'ora ee ye tinga ng'ora ee ye*

*Icho nurintingana mang'abu ee ye na mang'abu ee ye*

Tomorrow you will dance with feathers

*Bamura ba weito na bamura ee ye na bamura ee ye*

Our men are men

*Nerakure giringa mbarakenye ee ye mbarakenye ee ye*

If there is a cry for help in Giringa they will run

*Bahore nyarera na nyang'era ee ye na nyang'era ee ye*

They will get the brown cow and the black one

*Nekemori kenyo keratiri ee ye keratiri ee ye*

And the calf will run beside

*Rosei ro mogongo ong'ana ke ee ye ong'ana ke ee ye*

My sister what can I relate you to

*Ong'ana maringo kilintoni ee ye kilintoni ee ye*

You are like the proud Clinton

*Wasiri mkuu Tanzania ee ye Tanzania ee ye*

You are like the prime minister of Tanzania

*Agosaba omosata isiraeli ee ye Israeli ee ye*

The one who asks for help from Israel

Eye ee eye ee

**Song 8**

*Eye ee eye ee*

*Abamura ba weito na bamura*

Our men are men

*Bamura ba weito tinga ng'ora ee ting'a ngora ee yee*

Our men dance slowly dance slowly

*Nkagena moiboye ka mokari eye ka mokari ee ye*

A small rock of a woman was born

*Baba wanyiboye tinga ng'ora abamura ba weito nabamura tinga ng'ora*

Mother who bore me dance slowly our men are men dance slowly

*Baba wanyiboye nomokare*

Mother is a brave one

*Bamura ba weito nabamura erakure giringa mbarairore*

Our men are men if there is a cry in Giringa they will shoot

*Batebete ekeng'ori kia abamura baringe na nyarera na nyang'era*

They will shoot men's shield and return with the brown and the black cow

*Nkemori keyo keratiria*

And its calf will run

*Baba wanyiboye wang'anake*

Mother what can I compare you to

*Inyumba yu mukungu erabobora na moma gamo garichokia*

A woman's hut booms if there are iron rods they shoot out

*Gacharare bori komariba hari chakaraye ichinkongano*

They spread in the cowshed and in the ponds where they spread the huge ones

*Baba wanyiboye tinga ng'ora nkagena weiboye ka mokari*

Mother dance slowly It is a small rock you bore

*Baba wanyiboye wang'anake ong'ana irimeli irikombora*

Mother what I can compare you to You are like a ship like a bomb

*Baiseke ba weito mbichengeche mbio tokomaha torakenya*

Our women are like ear rings Those that we see and run fast

*Tuya tuchisora icha babisa togenda korona icha babisa*

We go to get cattle from our enemies We get the enemies' cattle by force and bring them home

Eye ee eye ee

### **Song 9**

*Eye ee eye ee*

*Iga rero abaye esota ee ee*

Today she has become a soda

*Eye ee eye*

*Iga abaye irigena*

Today she has become a rock

*Abaye abaye esota*

*Abaye abaye irigena*

She has become she has become a rock

*Eye ee eyee*

*Iga omona weito abaye*

Our child has become

*Abaye umuiseke ki abande*

Has become a woman like others

*Eye ee eye ee*

*Abaye abaye esota abaye abaye esola abaye abaye irigena*

She has become a soda, she has become a solar, she has become a rock

*Omona weito abaye abaye umuiseke kia abande*

Our child has become a woman like others

*Abaye esota abaye esola abaye irigena abaye*

She has become a soda, she has become a solar, she has become a rock

*Eye ee eye ee*

### **Song 10**

*Eeee eeee ee*

*Inyumba yu mukungu erabobora eeee ee erabobora ee eeee ee*

A mother's house booms

*Moma gamo garichoke ee garichoke eeee ee*

If there are iron rods in, they shoot out

*Gacharange bori komariba ee eeee ee*

They spread in the cowshed and reach out

*Hari chakaraye ichinkongano ee eeee ee*

Reach out to the swamps where big cattle lie

*Ichinsara mang'eng'i inchinkongano ee eeee ee*

Reach where cattle go to lick salt

*Egori ngosamba ere mona ebara ee eeee ee \*2*

The urge itches like salt it itches

*Mona ebara mona iya kon'gora mona ebara ee eeee ee*

Like salt used to paint it itches

*Ndaigwa tirigire regende botasarwa kobagaya ee eeee ee\*2*

Makes some to refuse and go to the uncircumcised

*Umugi gomogaaka ngonyonyere ee eeee ee*

A father's home is strong

*Mona irinyansaka re Kiribo ee eeee ee*

Like a mushroom from Kiribo it spreads

*Abamura ba weito mbanga nkoba ee eeee ee*

Our men are like thunder

*Metē bagosaria na amaboko ee eeee ee*

They split trees with their hands

*Hano erakure muyuyi mbaraikari ee eeee ee*

If there is cry for help from Muyuyi they will reach

*Mbatemetwe ekeng'ore ni chinguba ee eeee ee*

They will stand firm with shields

*Ni nguba bakenge aba weito ee eeee ee*

With shield and protect our people

*Bamura ba weito mbanga nkoba ee eeee ee*

Our men are like thunder

*Mbaratokengere tuhike gotora ibiginguri ee eeee ee*

They protect us till we are safe

Eee eee ee

### **Song 11**

*Abohoniri ee ee ayee tata wanyiboye ee ee aye abohoniri aguiteye akarahu*

He has healed us ee ee aye father has healed us he has killed a billy (male goat) for us

*Karichana ee ee aye nyamuringo muya*

The good one ee ee the one with a good shape

*Agende karai ee ee ayee tata wanyiboye ee ee aye agende karai ee ararre amakora*



Live long ee ee aye father live long and lie on banana leaves

*Ararre amakora ee ee ahee na amagama ee ee yee tata wanyiboye*

Lie on banana leaves and *amagama* ee ee yee father

*Agende karai ee ee ararre amakora na amagama*

Live long ee ee sleep on amakora and amagama

*Agende karai ee ee aye hano ikura muyuyi naraikari ee ee atebete ekeng'oria*

Live long ee ee when there is a cry from Muyuyi he will reach there he will strike men's shield

*Naraikari ee ee ahee tata wanyiboye hano ikura muyuyi*

He will reach there ee ee father if there is a cry in Muyuyi

### **Song 12**

*Ehee eeee ee*

*Hano ugumirriyi nkaga buchwa ee eeee ee*

When you bear it, it is nothing

*Hano namoroche arahigama ee eeee ee*

When i saw her kneeling I thought she was grinding

*Ngakanya ngosea are mosagirri ee eeee ee*

I thought she was grinding so I could stir for her

*Hano ugumirriyi nkaga buchwa ee eeee ee*

When you bear it, it is nothing

*Reno regotoria ndemaraga*

The one who touches her is a sinner

*Tirigire regende botasarwa kobagaya ee eeee ee*

She will go to the uncircumcised the Luo

*Hano namoroche arasigama ee eeee ee*

When I saw her kneeling

*Ngakanya ngosea are mosagirri*

I thought she was grinding so I could stir for her

Ehee eeee ee

**Song 13**

*Eye ee eye ee rosei romogongo nkohe enkoro ee nkohe enkoro eeee*

Eye ee eye ee my sister I'm giving you a heart/ strength/courage

*Ogere komosari nyamagera ee ee nyamagera eeee ee*

A heart to take you to the circumciser Nyamagera

*Masubo narayi aragonera ee ee aragonera eeee ee*

Masubo those who are old are sleeping

*Nani ngusubande isubo ndito ee ee isubo ndito eeee ee*

I 'm celebrating a big celebration

*Iya erara bori ngento buchwa ee ee ngento buchwa eeee ee*

Those who sleep in the open are nothing

*Monto akang'a sahi ya mogoya ee ee ya mogoya eeee ee*

Someone give me a sisal rope

*Nchabere obokenye boke ng'ora ee ee boke ng'ora eeee ee*

So I can cane the night with it to dawn fast

*Hano ogatusukirri ogere hayo ee ee ogere hayo eeee ee*

When you embarrass us go that way/ don't come back

*Ogende botasara kobagaya ee ee kobagaya eeee ee*

Go to the uncircumcised the Luo

*Abamura ba weito tinga ng'ora ee ee tinga ng'ora eeee ee*

Our men dance slowly *ee dance slowly*

*Nkagena moiboye ka mokari ee ee kamokari eeee ee*

It's a small rock of a woman we bore

*Nkabere akuihinya agorroka ee ee agorroka eeee ee*

She only bends twice and gets up

*Rosei romogongo ugumirri*

My sister be strong, bear it

*Baba wanyiboye wang'ana hai ee ee wan'gana hei eeee ee*

Mother what can I compare you to

*Wang'ana irimeli irikombora ee ee irikombora eeee ee*

You are like a ship in the sea

*Rera rerrucha igoro koyo ee ee igoro koyo eeee ee*

You are like a bomb the one that sounded in the skies

*Regatema egoroba ya mchage ee ee ya machage eeee ee*

The one that hit Machage's tall building

*Machage akura akahonchora ee ee akahonchora eeee ee*

Machage cried until he turned

*Akaya kuripoti komonene ee ee komonene eeee ee*

He reported to the seniors

*Omonene akagamba gayo make ee ee gayo make eeee ee*

The senior said that is a small issue

*Omona wumukungu numurito ee ee numurito eeee ee*

A woman's son is strong

*Naisere kogamba bongeresa ee ee bongeresa eeee ee*

He is enough to rule in England

*Bamura ba weito tinga ng'ora ee ee tinga ng'ora eeee ee*

Our sons dance slowly

*Hano watusukirri uya harai ee ee uya harai eeee ee*

If you embarrass us go far

*Rosei ro mogongo nkohe enkoru ee ee nkohe enkoru eeee ee*

My sister let me give you a heart/strength

*Baiseke ba weito tinga ng'ora ee ee tinga ng'ora eeee ee*

Our daughters dance slowly

*Icho muritinga na mang'abu eeee ee*

Tomorrow you will dance with feathers

*Ni chisirimbi chimo moratiria ee ee moratiria ee ee*

With whistles blowing you blowing them

#### **Song 14**

*Aye ee rosei ro mogongo nkohe enkoru eee ee*

Aye ee my sister let me give you a heart/ strength/courage

*Ogere komosari nyamagera ee ee nyamagera ee ee*

To take you to the circumciser Nyamagera

*Hano ugumirriyi ngento buchwa ee ngento buchwa eeee ee*

When you bear it, it is nothing

*Hano ogasanya enda kuya igoro ee ee kuya igoro eeee ee*

But when you pull your stomach inwards

*Ogenda botasarwa kobagaya ee ee kobagaya eeee ee*

Go to the uncircumcised the Luo

*Komasara meino na binyobu ee ee na binyobu eeee ee*

Those who circumcise teeth and umbilical spots

*Tata wanyiboye numumura ee ee numumura ee eee*

Father is a man

*Naisere kogenda bongeresa ee ee bongeresa eeee ee*

He is enough to go to England eee e England eeee ee

*Agambere iritongo ria abanene ee ee ria abanene eeee ee*

To rule the community of the mighty

*Arituna kuringa taribisa ee ee taribisa eeee ee*

When he wants to come back he won't hide

*Aricha nogogari gorakenya ee ee gorakenya eeee ee*

He will come with a big car that will be speeding

*Nemesanga gemo geramenia ee ee geramenia eeee ee*

With beads in there shining

*Abaiseke bachore bakembere ee bakembere ee ee*

Women will collect the beads and adorn themselves and entice men

*Bakembere sowabo ichintang'ana ee ichintang'ana ee ee*

They will entice men so their fathers can get bulls

*Chabu kiburuha kibuchoge ee kibuchoge ee ee*

Those that are brown and black

*Inyumba yu mukungu erabobora ee erabobora eeee ee*

A woman's house booms

*Nyora moma gamo garichoke ee garichoke ee ee*

If there are iron-rods inside they shoot out

*Gacharare bori komariba ee ee komariba ee ee*

They spread in the cowshed and down to the ponds

*Hari chakaraye ichinkongano ee ichinkongano ee ee*

Where they lay the heavy ones

*Baba wanyiboye wang'ana he ee wang'ana hei ee ee*

Mother what I can compare you to

*Kere nkoretaye marasta ee marasta ee ee*

What I have brought you is beautiful hair

*Otomere Tebora na Esta ee na esta ee ee*

So you can give to Deborah and Esther

*Bayi barakina baramanya ee baramanya ee ee*

So that they can grow and know

*Ichin'gombe cha weito ni ichindito ee ni ichindito ee ee*

That our cattle are worth

*Baba wanyiboye numurito ee numurito ee ee*

Mother you are heavy/worth

*Kere nkoretete nimichibi ee ee*

What I have brought you are belts

*Osorre omokamona wangirabose ee wangirabose ee ee*

So you can tie and go for a daughter in law in Wangirabose

*Abamura ba weito bang'ana hei bang'ana hei ee ee*

Our men what can I compare them to

*Bamura ba weito nabarito ee ee nabarito ee ee*

Our men are worth they are heavy

*Mbatome kurioba mbarairore ee mbarairore eee e*

I can send them to heaven and they will go

*Barete nyagatoke irikoroso ee ee irikoroso ee ee*

To bring Nyagatoke the special herb

*Rekoranda bori reragita ee ee reragita ee ee*

That which will spread around the cowshed and make a compound

*Rigite etagachi ya boreo ee iya boreo ee ee*

That will protect the compound on the right-hand side

### **Song 15**

*Eye ee eye ee*

*Rosei romogongo ugumirri ee ugumirri eeee*

My sister bear it ee bear it

*Nkagena toiboye ka mokari ee eek a mokari eeee ee*

It is a small rock of a woman we bore

*Hano namoroche nkamotoma ee ee nkamotoma eeee ee*

When I saw her I undermined her

*Nkabere akuihinya agorroka ee agorroka ee ee*

Twice she bends and rises

*Hano namoroche nkamotoma ee nkamotoma ee ee*

When I saw her I downplayed her

*Ngakanya ngosea are mosagirri ee mosagorri ee ee*

I thought she is grinding I stir for her

*Bamura ba weito bang'ana hei ee bang'ana hei ee ee*

Our brothers, what can I relate them to

*Bamura ba weito banga nkoba ee ee banga nkoba ee ee*

Our men are like thunder

*Mete bagosari na binyege ee ee na binyege ee ee*

They split trees using hands

*Na nkomo cha biara na binyege ee ee na binyege ee ee*

Using finger nails and hands ye ee eye ee

### **Song 16**

*Abohoniri ee ee ee aee*

He has healed us ee ee ee aye

*Mamei wabo baba ee ee ee aye*

Uncle has healed us

*Abohoniri ee ee ee aguiteye entabiara*

He has slaughtered a cow for us

*Aguiteye entabiara ee ee aye*

The one that doesn't give birth

*Nyamaguta ee ee ee aee nyamarandi konda*

The one full of fat guards in the stomach

*Aguiteye entabiara ee ee aye*

He has slaughtered that which does not give birth

*Nyamaguta ee ee nyamarandi konda*

The one full of fat and fat guards in the stomach

*Mamei omona mwihwa ee ee ee aye*

My niece

*Iritundura ee ee ee aee reraranda bori reraranda bori ee ee ee aee*

She spreads like a vegetable that spreads in the cowshed

*Mamei mona mwihwa ee ee aee*

My niece

*Iritundura ee reraranda bori reranda bori ee rembuki etagachi*

That spreading vegetable that goes over the fence

*Iritundura ee ee aee omona muhwa*

The spreading vegetable eeee aeee my niece

### **Song 17**

*Ee ee yee bamura ba weito na abamura*

Eee ee yee our men are men

*Abamura ba weito tinga ng'ora nkagena moiboye nka mokari*

Our men dance slowly a small rock of a woman was born

*Ee yee baba wanyiboye tinga ng'ora baba wanyiboye nomokare*

Ee yee mother dance slowly mother is brave

*Eeye abamura ba weito nabamura*

Our men are men

*Eeye erakure Giringa mbarairure ee atebete ekeng'oria ikia abamura*

If there is a cry in Giringa they will run they will shoot men's shield

*Eeye baringe na nyarera na nyang'era nekemori keyo keratiria*

They will come back with the brown cow and the black cow with the calf beside

*Eeye baba wanyiboye wang'ana ke eeye nkagena weiboye nka mokari*

Ee yee mother what can I compare you to a small rock of a woman you bore



*Eeye inyumba yumukungu erabobora nyora moma gamo garichoka gacharare bori komariba*

A woman house booms if there are iron rods they shoot out they spread in the cow shed and the ponds

*Eeye hari chakaraye ichinkongano*

Where they lie the heavy ones

### **Song 18**

*Aee ee atohoniri aee aee*

Aee ee he has healed us

*Iga rosei romogongo atohoniri atuiteye irihuntwa*

My brother has healed us He has killed for us a a ram (big sheep)

*Aee nyamaguta ee iga atuiteye irihuntwa ee nyamarandi konda*

The one filled with fat and guards in the stomach

*Aee ogende karai ee rosei ro mogongo ogende karai orarre ibitanda*

Live long brother live long

*Aee ichigotero ichigotero ee iga orarre ibitanda ichigotero nemesago geko*

Live long till you sleep on beds, on mattresses with pillows on them

*Aee wang'ana ke hano ikura giringa narairrure arete nyagatoke*

Brother what can I compare you to Where there is a cry for help from Giringa you will run and bring *nyagatoke*

*Aee irikoroso iga arête nyagatoke irikoroso rekoranda bori*

You bring the seedling that spreads in the cowshed

*Aee tansekera ee iga omokari wa rosei tansekera mahe amino gao*

Laugh with me my brother's wife Laugh with me so I can see your teeth

*Aee mona gare mona gatabaini mona umugwa mona uguigichogo*

How they are they are arranged like arrows in the arrow pocket

*Aee tarichoka ee omokari wa rosei tarichoka ndeigwa ndakogora oranyibisa mona nkoromande*

Come out my brother's wife come out I am praising you but you are hiding from me you are hiding as if I bite

*Aee oranyigunya ndaigwa ndakoroga oranyigunya mona nkoromande*

You are hiding from me I am praising you but you hiding as if I bite

### **Song 19**

*Ee ee ogende karai tata wanyiboye ogende karai*

Ayee ee live longer father live longer

*Ee ee ogende karai eee ogende karai orarre ibitanda*

Live longer till you lie on beds

*Eee ichigotero ee ichigotero orarre ibitanda ichigotero chino charua mwanza*

With mattresses from mwanza Mwanza

*Ee ee kobasomi kobabiri bengo*

Ee ee among the educated who have gone far

*Ee ee tatanora tabega kwaheri ekengeresa tabega kwaheri ekengeresa gudi bai bai*

Father what can I compare you to

*Ee ee wang'ana hei tata wanyiboye wang'ana hei wang'ana Obama*

You are like Obama the one of America who asked for votes

*Ee ee wamerika wang'ana Obama wamerika agasaba ikura*

You are like Obama the one of America who asked for votes

*Ee ee akafaulu agasaba ikura akafaulu akahabwa esawadi*

He emerged victorious and was rewarded

*Ee iya karege akahabwa esawadi ya karege kairige angani*

He was rewarded with a plane the one that flies in the skies

*Ee ee igoro koyo kairige angani igoro koyo nkarigi irikongo*

It flies up in the skies trying to find where to land

*Ee ere guikarra nkarigi irikongo ere guikarra akaya kurinyorra*

It sought an airport everywhere till it found where to land

*Ee ee Serengeti akaya kurinyorra Serengeti Serengeti mama*

It found where to land within Serengeti Serengeti where mother comes from

*Ee ee newe omobe Serengeti mama neho omobe nabuga ichitinyi*

Serengeti where animals are kept where there is danger because of animals

*Ee ee nyamuruma chabo wansimba*

Those that roar like lion,

*Ee ee tatanora tabega kwaheri*

*Ee go go bid bye bye*

*Ee ee ekengeresa tabega kwaheri ekengeresa gudi bai bai*

Bid bye bye in English say good bye bye

### **Song 20**

*Eee yee ee*

Eee yee ee

*Ee yee na ngotara are mona entaro*

She pricks like a beauty prick

*Mona iya oboroyi gokebono ee ee*

Like a prick caused by a disease in the groins

*Mona iyo oboroyi bo ichimbaru*

Like a prick caused by a disease in the ribs

*Ee ee eee mona wa nyagati ikara ogome*

Daughter of my sister sit still

*Mona wa nyaboke ikara ogome ee ee ikara ogome ee ee*

Daughter of my sister sit still ee ee sit still

*Ee ye nkagena weiboywe nka muisseke ee ka muisseke ee ee*

It is a rock you were born a rock of a woman

*Ee ee nkabere akubiria agorroka ee ee*

She just touches twice and she is up

*Ee mona wa nyaboke ikara ogome*

*Nkagena weiboywe nka mokari*

It is a rock you were born a rock of a woman

*Nkabere akubiria agoroka ee ee*

She just touches twice and she is up

*Nkagena naiboye nka muisseke*

It is the rock of a woman I bore

*Ee ee mona wa nyagati ikara ukire*

Daughter of my sister sit still

*Baba wanyiboye tinga ng'ora ee ting'a ng'ora ee*

Mother dance slowly

*Nkagena weiboye nka mokari*

It is a rock you bore of a woman

*Ee ee bamura ba weito tinga ng'ora ee tinga ng'ora ee ee*

Our men dance slowly

*Nkagena moiboye nka muisseke ka muisseke*

It is a rock of a woman you bore

*Rosei romogongo tinga ng'ora nkagena weiboye nka muisseke*

My sister dances slowly it is a rock you bore of a woman

*Ee ee nkabere akubirria agorroka ee agorroka*

It is only twice she touches and gets up

*Ee baba wanyiboye tinga ng'ora ee tinga ng'ora ee*

Mother who bore me dance slowly dance slowly

*Ee nkabere aranabiri agorroke ee agorroke ee*

It is only twice she touches and gets up

**Song 21**

*Aee atohoniri ee ee*

She has healed us ee ee ee

*Aee baba wanyiboye atohoniri atuiteye akarahu*

Mother has healed us she has killed a billy (big goat) for us

*Ae akarichano ee ee baba wanyiboyi atohoniri ee atuiteye akarahu*

A fat one ee ee mother who bore me has healed us ee has killed a billy for us

*Aee atohoniri ee baba wanyiboye atohoniri atuihoreye guikanga*

Aee has healed us mother has served us in a harvesting basket

*Aee na guisahi ee iga nguikanga aihoreye na guisogohe na kahe kang'eini*

She has served us in the bowl in the harvesting net and in the big sisal bowl

*Aee ogende karai ee iga baba wanyiboye ogende karai orarre ibitanda*

Ee ee live longer mother live longer Live longer till you sleep on beds

*Aee ichigotero ee iga baba wanyiboye ichigotero chino cha abarero*

On mattresses on mattresses belonging to this generation

*Aee numuikumi ee iga baba wanyiboye numuikumi ee anga ababirira*

Mother is generous she is like those of *biriria*

*Aee aba nting'uri ee iga anga ababirira aba nting'uri abaruga mabere*

She is like those of *biriria* those who are generous

*Aee baruga amabere na amaguta na nyama ya boke*

Those who cook milk, cream and honey balls

*Aee numutiro ee baba numutiro ndai egetorogwe niche kugutira*

Mother is heavy i will go to the forest get a support stick and support you

**Song 22**

*Ee ee baba wanyiboye ongana ke ee ongana ke*

Eee ee Mother what can I compare you to

*Baba wanyiboye ikara ukirre*

Sit still and calm down don't bother

*Icho nuritinga na mang'abu*

Tomorrow you will dance with feathers

*Kagenwa waiboye ka mokari*

A small rock you bore of a woman

*Abamura ba weito na abamura*

Our sons are men

*Hano erakure Giringa mbaratioke*

If there is a cry for help in *Giringa* they will shoot/run

*Mbahora nyarera na nyagera*

To bring back the brown and black cows

### **Song 23**

Aeeee eee yeee eee

Aeeee eee yeee eee

*Bamura ba weito tinga ng'ora*

Our men dance slowly

*Icho muritinga na mang'abu*

Tomorrow you will dance with feathers

*Nyamohandi momo taragora*

The one with dry legs (the cock) please crow

*Ndusibwe obosagane obobe bono*

So I can be taken off this bad uncircumcised state

*Bogira ntakeiribwa nyamuita*

The state that has made me not be greeted *nyamwita*

*Bogira ndatokwa eresese*

The state that has made me be called a dog

*Tanga isiare yane iya omokoma*

Give me that cane that of *omokoma*

*Ntemere obokeye boke iga kwa*

So I can cane the night to dawn fast

*Ngende komosari nyamagera andusi obosagane obobe bono*

So I can go to the circumciser Nyamagera so she can remove the bad uncircised state

*Goko wabo tata ong'ana ke nyora nakonaha tarichoka*

My grandmother what can I compare you to If I have wronged you come out now

*Otore ekehe bori tusikane*

Put a sisal bowl in the middle of the cowshed we meet

*Ee baba wanyiboye ikara ukire kagena waiboye ka mokari*

Mother sit down and relax, it is a small rock you bore

*Ndanyore ngosora are tiga asore*

If she (the circumciser) is touching (the genitals) let her touch

*Abaiseke ba weito tang'onera*

Our women shout

*Kagena kaiboywe ka mokari*

The small rock of a woman was born

*Nyora ngosora are tiga asore*

If she's picking let her pick

*Ee rosei ro mogongo ongana ke*

My sister what can I compare you to

*Ongana maringo kilintoni ee kilintoni*

You are like Clinton the boisterous one

*Baba wanyiboye ongana ke*

*Mother what can I compare you to*

*Toraya komosari nyamagera*

We are going to the circumciser *Nyamagera*

*Iga nyora ngosora are tiga asore*

If she is pricking let her prick

*Iga ndabega kwa heri igswahili igiswahili gudi bai bai*

I bid bye in Swahili Swahili good bye bye



**Appendix 2: Biographical details of the interviewees**

Interviewee	Level of education	Occupation	Age	Location
F1	KCPE	None	25	Ntimaru
F2	Form 2	House wife	30	Ntimaru
F3	Class 6	House wife	45	Ntimaru
F4	None	None	49	Kegonga
F5	None	None	68	Ntimaru
F6	Class 5	Small-scale hairdresser	40	Ntimaru
F7	KCPE	Housewife	31	Ntimaru
F8	Class 7	None	56	Ntimaru
F9	KCPE	Housewife	27	Kegonga
F10	None	Housewife	54	Kegonga
F11	P1	Teacher	35	Kegonga
F12	KCPE	House wife	25	Kegonga
F13	KCSE	House wife	21	Ntimaru
F14	ECD	Teaching ECD	42	Kegonga
F15	KCSE	Hawker	38	Kegonga
F16	None	House wife	62	Kegonga
MD1	Form 2	Hawker	30	Ntimaru

MD2	P1	Teacher	35	Ntimaru
MWD1	Class 7	Coffee seller	40	Kegonga
MWD2	University	Student	23	Kegonga

Table 9: Biographical details of the interviewees

Key:

F- Female

M- Male

### **Appendix 3: Semi-structured Interviews Guide**

1. Why are girls circumcised in this community?
2. What roles are expected of a girl once circumcised?
3. What made you to go for FGM? If you did not decide who decided for you?
4. How is a girl who is not circumcised viewed by her peers and the society at large?
5. Are there any differences between a girl who is circumcised and one not? If yes mention some.
6. What lessons, advice and skills are those to be circumcised given?
7. What lessons, advice and skills are the initiates given?
8. What are the duties, rights and social expectations of a girl once circumcised?
9. Did you sing songs or hear any songs sang during your circumcision?
10. Mention some adjectives and descriptive words used in the songs for;
  - The circumcised
  - The uncircumcised
11. What role did the songs play during circumcision ceremonies?
12. Are there specific messages and words you heard in the songs?
13. Did the messages make you decide to undergo circumcision?
14. Why is FGM done by women and not men?
15. How has FGM benefitted you, your family and your community?
16. Are there any disadvantages of circumcision to the girl being circumcised, family and the community? If yes, mention some.
17. In your opinion, should the practice be upheld? Explain your response.
18. In general how are women and men viewed in your community?
19. In your opinion how are men involved in female circumcision?
20. Given an opportunity would you be circumcised again? Explain your answer.

#### **Appendix 4: Consent Form**

*Hello. My name is Joyce Wambura. I am a PhD student at York St John University in the UK. I am collecting information for my research project titled: ‘Gender and language practices in female circumcision ceremonies in Kuria Kenya’ and would like to ask you a few questions about female circumcision ceremonies and songs.*

*If you agree to be interviewed, I will be asking you about your ideas, attitudes and opinions on various aspects concerning women and men in your community, female circumcision and female circumcision songs. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions I will ask you. Your opinions are important to me and so I would like you to be honest and truthful in answering the questions.*

*The interview will take about 60 minutes. If at any point you do not want to answer any question, you do not have to and you can stop the interview at any time. I would like to record the interview proceedings and also take down brief notes of the discussion. Your name will be used in neither the recording nor the notes. The audio recordings and notes will be kept safely and will be considered private and confidential. They will be used for this study only and they will be destroyed afterwards. Any report from this interview will not use your names or any other. This is a voluntary exercise and you have a right to withdraw at any stage without giving a reason.*

***Full title of Project:*** *Gender and language practices in female circumcision ceremonies in Kuria Kenya*

*Name of*

*Participant.....Date.....Signature.....*

*Name of the researcher*

*.....Date.....Signature.....*

## Appendix 5: Some Interview responses

### F1-Female 1

JW: karibu sana mbe komahojiano gano

Welcome to this interview

F1: eee

ok

JW: eng'ana iga esaro nke?

What is the meaning of circumcision?

F1: esaro ni isherehe eno abakuria bagokora ogosara abana. Ogosarwa no gokora omonoto mokoro. Omosagane hano aya gosarwa nyora nageye gokorwa omokari.

Circucision is a ceremony by the Kuria people to circumcise their children. To be circumcised makes one an adult. When a girl goes to be circumcised she has gone to be made a woman

JW abakuria iganke bagosara abasagane

Why do the Kuria circumcise their girls?

F1: nimira yabo, hano barambe nda batarasarwa mbarayi gotabutwa. Hano babasara abagaaka bikimira tebakobarasari hei. Hano otarasarwa togotetwa hei, tukuigora ikihita kumugi hei, kunyangi takuya bori gosora ichinyi hei.

It is their culture, if they become pregnant without being circumcised, they will be thrown away. If they are circumcised the council of elders does not destroy them. if you are not circumcised you do not get married, you cannot open the cowshed gate in a homestead, in a ceremony you cannot go to the cow shed to get meat.

JW: uwe iganke wasarwe

Why were you circumcised?

F1: nangere esi nahamiribwi na tata akagamba iga taguikara nabasagane hai. Nkanga akahamiri mbaka nkaya.

I refused but I was forced by my father, he said he does not want to live with the uncircumcised. I refused, he forced me until I went

JW: hano osarwa niyeke ukuimukibwa

When circumcised how are youviewed

F1: hano osarwe abanto nkogamba bare iga heri, maana urure irinyinya, ora atasarwe bagamba iga nongwe ariya kana bamoberekera iga irinyinya. Ora asarwe numuiseke

When circumcised people say you are lucky since you have left the status of being something worthless, the one not cut they say, to whose homestead will she go, they call her something worthless. The one circumcised is a woman

JW: etofauti nehe kati ya ora asarwe na ora atasarwe.

What is the difference between the one cut and the uncut?

F1: etaho nkama buchwa tu. Nokore tu bakogamba iga numuiseke. Hano orambe nda bagamba ora nirinyia abae nda lakini ora asarwe tebagotondora hei.

There isn't any, it is just useless. It is because they say she is a woman. If you get pregnant before being cut they say she is something useless but if you are cut they don't care

JW: mawaidha ke akohabwa kabla araya gosarwa.

What advice is she given before being cut?

F1: niga atagacha akure tarasoywe hai. Ensera bagonchera baramuhira ka bagamba iga abaye umuiseke. Ora atasarwe bagamba iga renga gosarwa irinyinya reyo.

Not to cry because she will not be given any present. While on the way from the cutting grounds they say she has become a woman. the one not cut they say this useless thing has refused to be circumcised

JW: ensera bakuya gonchera niyeke bakubina bagamba

What about on the way to the circumcision ground, what do they say?

F1: nobosamba bakorea bagamba iga hano watusukiri ogera hano Qensera aguikara arasarwa bamotebi gia agumirri, hano asoki baririata bamotoni bagamba iga omona abaye abaye atetwe. Hano ahika kihita bagamba iga omona abaye ekebatari rero abaye esota.

They sing songs saying if you embarrass us go that way, when she sits down to be cut they tell her to be strong, when she is cut they ululate and praise her saying our child has become she has become ready, ready to be married, when she reaches home at the cow shed gate they say the child has become a light today she has become a soda

JW: hano aroka nke agokora

Once she graduates/comes out what does she do?

F1: niga abanto bamochere obokwe atetwe, abaru mbano bagotetwa, numuiburi akohamora san asana umogaka.

People come to seek for her hand in marriage, many get married, it is a parent who decides and mostly the father

JW: the songs they sing, what are the purposes of these?

F1: amabina gara bakubina nkomoha gare omoyo anga koboha abe omokare ange koba noboba bore bonswe

The songs encourage her not to fear, to be brave and have no fear

JW: esaro niyeke iguturi ora asarwe.

Of what benefit is circumcision to the uncircumcised?

F1: hano nyore nomosariku hano asarwa ngutuenekana bore. Kobaiburi nyora abaye umuiseke bono banyora isifa. Kobara bamuhire, kama eka, nyora nisifa, baragera ubukima ichinyama, banywa obosara.

If she is wayward, once she is cut this reduces. To her parents she becomes a woman and they gain praises, to those who escorted her, her larger family it is praises, they eat ugali and meat, they drink obhosara (sour drink)

JW: obobebe bwe esaro ya abasagane mbohe?

What is the disadvantage of female circumcision?

F1: hano basarwa batara nabarishia nyora omona nomoke tamanyere mangana hei lakini asareka hara bakobaberekera iga abakungu basareka namang'ana gayo. Okoberekerana iga babateta omona akina anara umutindo gora. Abamura baraha abaiseka imiavuli babaimukiri iga mbe mbo babateta.

when they are circumcised they walk with boys even when one is still young and does not know many things, she gets spoilt because they call them women and do those things, to call them women before being married a child grows up with that habit, the men give the women umbrellas to carry for them as their women

JW: esaro yabasagane niga egenderi

Should female circumcision continue?

F1: niga isire, mana tetofauti eho hai. Hano barange gosarwa mbarobohe iga hano baraibore ka mbarayi baratokwa iga namanyinya. Lakini hano basarwa hata baibore niga naratetwe kuyaorebe lakini omosagane atakarehe.

It should end because there is no difference. if they are not circumcised, they will be afraid of giving birth at home because they will fear being insulted as useless

things, but when circumcised even when they give birth at home it is said that they will be married to a certain home, but an uncircumcised girl will not dare

JW: omogaka wumugi niyeke akuhusika gosaro?

How is the of the home involved in the circumcision?

F1: newe akohamora iga omosagane narache ayi gosarwa, arusi itugo, umukungu nawe areta obose mana hano arange gosea naratemwe. omogaka agora ichingebo mana umukungu tana ichisendi, agora egotero, hano omona aringa kurwa gosarwa omogaka agamba iga obaye umuieske ikara otetwe.

He is the one who decides for a girl to be circumcised, he gives a cow, the woman on her side brings cooking flour, if she doesn't do this she will be caned, the man buys clothes because the woman does not have money, he buys a mattress, when the child comes back from being circumcised the man says you have become a woman get married

JW: ogasarwa wiki

Would you be circumcised again?

F1: a a, rero abaru banga, etaguturi gento

No no, these days many have refused, it doesn't help in any way

JW: umukungu wigikuria niyeke akuimukibwa

How is a Kuria woman viewed?

F1: kuimukibwa are iga newe aratune kera gento arête omosacha ora ararea yaani baba ibibagasi. Ogotorwa ehamuri iga tebarayi baragamba hei era omosacha agambere niyo erakorwe. Omogaka agoteta heri muturani lakini sasa agutiga nuwe umuwene ugutuna kera gento. Agotesa agotematema.

She is viewed as the one to find everything and bring for a man to eat, they have become labourous/slaves, they live under the law that they should not say anything, whatever the man says that is what is done. A man marries you lucky if you help each other but he leaves you to get everything, he makes you suffer and beats you every time

JW: Abasacha bo?

How about men?

Abasacha nkuimukibwa bare buya lakini nkaga chinde nkuburuga bare bakabo bo baikara baiserana. Enkaga eno bagutuna amatumizi bararenta nkuimukibwa bare buya.



Men are taken very well but at times they provoke their wives and they become angry to each other. When they are working and providing needs in the home they are viewed/treated well

JW: amajukumu gumukungu nke nake?

What are the roles of a woman?

F1: amajukumu hano arayi abe nomona aibore, hano ataiboye nogotokwa niga kana ono nke acha guikara arakora kumugi kono atakuibora. Ngokora are ichishughuli chonswe cha nyumba aigora ikihita akeri abaiburi. Omogaka ayi mogondo ache nyora omokoreye ichaye anywe halafu ayi kurisia.

Her roles include when she goes and gets a child, when she gives birth. If she doesn't she is insulted that 'what has this one come to do in this family, she is not giving birth. She performs all chores in the house, she opens the cowshed gate, she greets parents. When the husband comes from the farm he finds you have prepared tea, he drinks and takes cattle for grazing

JW: kumugi neng'we ana ehamuri

At home who has a say?

F1: nomogaka anayo, newe akohamora nke umukungu arakore, hano umukungu atora ehamuri abana nkomotarau bare lakini omogaka hano orange mbaka otemwe. Hano orahamore omogaka aho noratemwe. Umukungu nakahamora ukuruga bene. Omogaka newe ana ibinto bionswe, ichitugo umugi hata abana newe akogamba iga bano nabane. umukungu nkuiberekera are ibimori nomogaka aiberekera ichingombe. Koadhabu numukungu akuhusika, newe akohonya abana abakani kuiba, omogaka we nogotema bene, lakini umukungu narakohonye agokani ubuibi. Hano umukungu asari omogaka takamobera hai, lakini omogaka hano asari norayi kumuburi agoteme hata hano nyora newe asari. Eyo nedesturi banarre, umukungu tagotema mogaka hei.

It is a man who has it, he is the one who decides on what the woman does, when a woman puts a rule, children disrespect her but when a man does and you refuse you are caned. If you decide when the husband is alive you will be caned. A wife decides but only about cooking. A man has everything, cattle, the home even children belong to him, he says these are mine. A wife calls calves as hers and the husband the cattle. In terms of discipline it is the wife who is more involved, she warns children and tells them not to steal, the man does the beating only but a wife warns them against theft. If a wife makes a mistake the husband cannot forgive her, but if it is a man with a mistake and you ask him he will hit you even if he is the one on the wrong. That is a culture they are used to, a wife does not beat a husband.

JW: ona iriswari rere rionswi

Do you have any question?

F1: a a

No no

JW: asanti mbe kumuda goo

Thank you for your time

F1: haya

ok

### **F16-Female 16**

JW: Karibu komahojiano gano, asanti gukuhika koo

Welcome to this interview, thanks for coming

F16: haya

Ok

JW: ere mbere niga esaro nke ekomaanisha

The first question is, what does circumcision mean?

F16: esaro niga omona wekegeikoro asarwe atakaba irinyinya. irinyina hano reba goka ngoskia rere eka hano reibora ka. abanto mbakangere iga irinyinya tererabere ka hei atabutwa kuya kubiario. eyo nimira ya weito niyo ikugira torasara abana biekegeikoro. mbaka tosare kuhika ugukwa rono turikwa tobaiheniri. hano omona wekeigokoro asarwe narirua ichingombe tuchikore emeremo, togore abakamona, tuisere kuguria umuiseke oyo, torente abakamona ka eka ikine. lakini hano waba nomosagane oyo eka tigukina hei hayo beene ekobera baya baragotoka iga tamaha mona wabaye nugunyinya okanga gukinia eka.

Circumcision is for a female child to be circumcised so that she doesn't become something useless, when something useless exists in a home, she finishes the home if she gives birth at home. People used to refuse the presence of such a useless person in the home, she would be cast away into other communities, that is our custom which makes us circumcise our female children. We have to circumcise until we when we die, when we die we give them a chance, when a girl is circumcised she will bring in cattle, which will be used for some purposes, once we have sold our daughter we will buy daughters in law, we bring them home for a home to expand, but when you have an uncircumcised girl, the home does not expand, it remains there and they keep insulting you that 'look you have a useless thing and have not expanded the home'

JW: ora asarwe abanto niyeke bakumuimukia

How is a circumcised one viewed?

F16: numuiseke nyora abaye umuiseke umuya mbaremokora ichinyangi, baite entang'ana abamura babo baingore ubuhu mana nasarwe tabaye irinyina hei. ubuhu bora nkomotora bore emesararo abagaka bang'ona abakungu baririata bagamba iga bariyi omona umuhingo agenda moe asarara na hano wabo esarara.

She is a woman, she has become a woman, they prepare a ceremony for her, they kill a bull, the sons of the family will paint themselves green, because she has been circumcised she has not become something useless, the green painting gives her blessings, men shout and women ululate, they say they have set ready a child for a cowshed stick, she gets married and is blessed while her home is also blessed

JW: ora asarwe nke agokora keno ora atasarwe akonga gokora

What does the circumcised do which the uncircumcised cannot

F16: Ichinyangi chimira ya ka, nguitweka are egesengo. ono atasarwe gose agokorwa ichinyangi taguitweka keyo hei. egesengo kera nyora nobose bomo na amabere ngo ukuhira kunyangi yumumura baruga ubukima umumura aragera na amabere gara. bono witabiribwa iga okorre inyangi eyo. ora atasarwe nkonga bare tagakora gayo hei.

Traditional ceremonies at home, she carries a harvesting basket, one who is not cut cannot carry that, in the harvesting basket is cooking flour and milk, that is what you take to the ceremony when a son is marrying, they cook ugali the brother eats it with the milk, then you are blessed that you have prepared that wedding ceremony, for the uncircumcised they stop you from doing all that

JW: etafauti eho kati ya ora asarwe na ora atasarwe

What is the difference between the circumcised and uncircumcised?

F16: etofauti neho iga, ka kora akuya tagotereywe hei , nkuya are ko baya baramogonda bagamba iga kana oyo atayi gutuigorra kihita. hano bamokaniniri kuigora ikihita nyora bamongere niga bamurichoki. wiki hata nkuyare gokeria omogaka numukungu banga iga a a tetogokeribwa na oyo hei, nirinyinya.

The difference is that when she is married to a home she is not safe she goes there and they keep murmuring saying this one will not open our cowshed gate, when they have stopped her from opening the cowshed gate it means they don't want her, they want her to go away. Even when she goes to greet the father and mother of the home they refuse saying 'we don't want to be greeted by that one, she is something useless'

JW: ensera bagosemia omosaganae araya gosarwa niyeke bakomotebia

When preparing a girl to be circumcised what do they tell her?

F16: nkogamba bare iga omona weito nomokare bokongu anga irigena, narakebwe ange kuigwa mana nirigena rero ntorasare iriharaga niriharaga tukuhira reno narayi ateme ko atuhe. ensera bakuringa niga bagutinga bagamba iga omona weito akorre emeremo geno gisere abamura bahurania nichinguba iga omona weito numuya atosokeye abakungu bagamba iga aririri omona weito omokare ono atosokeye. hano ahika ka bara basarwe enkaga emwe ngucha bare bamosaba ichisendi chira asoyerwe abatuenera chiba ekebande kee eke gosoha gosaiga.

They say our child is very strong like a stone, she will be cut and not feel any pain because it is a stone we will circumcise today a large strong stone is what we are taking for circumcision, she (the circumciser) will hit on it and become blunt. When they are coming from the circumcision ground they dance and say our daughter has done a good job, men run up and down with shields saying our daughter is good she has shown respect, when she reaches home whose circumcised at the same time ask her for money that she has been gifted, she gives them some, this becomes her ticket to the age set.

JW: Amarina ngahe bakaberekeye ora akurre?

Which names are given to the one who has cried?

F16: Ora obohore numukuri banga gotarani nawe atabutwa na abasamba bande bamonga bamoberekera iga omoba. ora akarehere niriharaga nyora batemere kuiharaga.

The one who has shown fear is a crier, they don't walk together, she is discriminated against by other candidates, they don't associate with her they call her a coward. The brave one is a stone, they have hit on a stone

JW: obosamba bora bakorea niyeke buguturi ora akuya gosarwa

The songs they sing how do they help the one going to be circumcised?

F16: nakabononibwi akarihibwa aigwa iga tarache akebwe aigwe hei. ensera bakuya nkubina bare bagamba iga ehe uwe hano ogatusukiria ntokagutiga, bamotoka. Omosagane takogamberwa bokwe hei lakini royo bene rora asarwe ndo amakwe gakowansa gucha. rora arokere nyora abaye omokari bono niga atetwe. kera monto atuna iga amotete. obokwe hanno bogokengwa nyora nabagaka na abamura bakuhusika timukungu akoba ho hei.

They make her brave, strong and fearless, she is convinced she won't feel anything when being cut, when going to the circumcision ground they sing warning her not to embarrass them, if you embarrass us we shall leave you there, they insult her. An uncircumcised one is not asked for a hand in marriage, but on the day she is cut she starts getting marriage proposals once she graduates she is a woman ready to be married, everyone wants to marry her, when the marriage negotiations are under going, it is old and young men involved no woman gets close.

JW: efaida yesaro nke

What value does FGM have?

F16: omona ora asarwe ngotongerwa are amanoti komotwe amaru abanto bamaha iga ichintundura nchimotongeye amasendi. abanto nabo mbakarageye nobosara banywa.

The circumcised is gifted a lot of money notes which are pinned on her head, until people see that her relatives have given her money, other people eat and take a sour drink

JW: omogaka umugi niyeke akuhusika gosaro yomosagane?

How is the father involved in the circumcision of the girl?

F16: omogaka ngutuna are imburi agoga, umukungu atuna obose akore obosara. abagaka bikimira nabo nkorenta bare emete nimiri. baha umuiburi akiria omona ora egende amuikaria ange kurua amanyinga. soki abagaka bayo ngutuenerwa bare ichimbiri chira chikohabwa omosari abagaka bayo mbo bakohamora iga esaro nerabe eba. mbo bana esauti gosaro abaibri bono bahamora omona aya.

The man finds a goat and slaughters a woman finds cooking flour and prepares a sour drink, members of the council bring trees and roots they give to the parent who gives it to the girl going to be circumcised, she places some on a specially made piece of cloth and the girl sits on it so that stops her from bleeding, those council of elders men are given a portion of the fees paid to the circumciser, they are the ones who decide whether there will be circumcision or not, they are the ones with a voice over circumcision, the parents only decide for the child to go

JW: umukungu wigikuria kumugi niyeke akuimukibwa

How is a Kuria woman viewed in the homestead?

F16: takobanga meremo hei, nomogaka akobanga. inyangi nomogaka akaohamora. ibinto bino bika nomogaka akuiberekera. ikiumukungu nengoko nibinto biakohenchera okohenchera abana. omogaka newe akogamba lakini umukungu newe atana esauti, umukungu newe akuhuni kera enkaga, omogaka we nkobohwa are mana bagamba iga nache anteme. hano abana basari abaibri bonswe nkobatema bare. hano umukungu asari ngotemwa are nisiare hata atibwa omohandi, nigo akogotwa igo nyora omogaikoro angosere atigere mosacha wae. omogaka nguitawala are hata asari tegento ogakora hai, tokamotema hei mana amaboko gao namarosu. omogaka newe akaba omtangati mana nagosorre weinyu agakorenta ka, kera akogamba nkio gekoba, bagambere iga temogaikoro ana botawala hei

She does not plan for any home activities, it is a man who decides, it is a man who decides on ceremonies, anything at home belongs to a man, what belongs to the woman is a chicken and cooking pots, cooking for children, it is a man who has a

voice a woman does not, a woman just encourages but a man is feared because they say 'he will beat me', when children have made a mistake both parents beat them, when a woman has erred, he hits her using a strong stick, to the extent of breaking her leg, when she is hit she can run and leave her husband, a man rules himself even when he has made a mistake there is nothing you can do ,you cannot beat him because your hands are weak, a man is the one who leads because he got you from your home to his, whatever he says is what you do, they say no woman has a rule

JW: ubuya bumukungu mbohe

What is the value of a woman

F16: niga amanye mona akohencherra abana bae,ayi mogondo . umukungu newe agokora ichigasi ichincharu, uya mogondo ucha uruga, utuna ichinyinyi, we niga amunye, utune obose. omogaka hano amaha iga umugi gogotere niga ahagache, arebere omona sukuru.

She should know how to cook for her children, she should go to the farm, it is a woman who performs many duties and chores, you go to the farm, once back you cook you get vegetables, he just rests, you find cooking flour, when a man sees that the home is getting old, he repairs it and pays school fees

JW: ora asarwe mawaidha ke akohabwa

The one who has been circumcised, what advice is she given?

F16: ngotebibwa arenge iga agende asoke abaiburi, omogaka wae na hano amanye mona akohenchera mogaka wae, neho araikare moe, ora akuhika moe aringa nyora atamibwi nobokari, nyora ngotoka are abaiburi gose asasere omosacha, angere komoha ibiakore,nyore ageye guchimberi gotema ichimbaka angere kuruga, angere korogera omogaka gose abaiburi bae. omokari numuene agotamibwa omosacha amotebia iga toka irigosa reno rikurugi omokari neree. lakini hano omosacha agotema abaiburi bae omokari nkong'osa are. umukungu takahamorra omogaka hei nigo okomotebia iga asarri agoetebia iga nuwe orandagiri, bono umukungu oboora esauti. we ngokong'onera are lakini uwe tokamong'onera hei nigo ogokora igo akurugia.

She is told to respect her parents in law, her husband, and to know how to cook for her husband, that is when she will last in her marriage, the one who is married and goes back does not know how to be a woman, she is abusive to her parents or does not feed her husband, she goes to the neighbourhood to gossip without cooking for her husband or his parents, a woman is the one who loses direction and the husband says to her go! The mistake which sends a woman away is her own. When a husband is unkind to his parents the wife runs away. A woman does not decide for a husband, the moment she tells him that he has made a mistake he says, 'are you the one who will direct me' that makes a woman to lose a voice. He shouts at you but you cannot shout back at him, if you that he sends you away.

JW: one iriswali rere rionswe okahanchere kuburia

Do you have any question to ask?

F16: a a

No no

JW: asanti sana komajibu ghao

Thank you for your responses

F16: haya

ok

### **MD1-Male with daughter 1**

JW: Karibu mbe ko mahojiano gano, nendayi ndakuburi amaswali orajibu kugikuria, haara otaelewera wiki umburia nguchibu

Welcome to this interview, I will be asking you questions and you answer in Kuria, whenever you need clarification you will ask and I will explain.

MD1: umm haya

Yes ok

JW: erembere niga eng'ana iga esaro hasa kobana bigiseke nke ekomaanisha

The first one is, what does the word circumcision mean especially girls circumcision?

MD1: en'gana iga esaro ntokinere tokaginyora, ntonyoore irasara na nkogenderia ere gosara, boono hayo ho ntamanyeiga nke ekomaanisa lakini gukurua kobakoro yagasaare, mbaka beito tukinere tuiboywe tuginyorre tukinere erasaara, kwa hivo nkomaanisa erenge iga nerangendeeri gosara.

The issue of circumcision we grew up and found it, we found circumcision taking place and its ongoing to date, hence that is why I don't know what it means, but from older people there was circumcision, we were born, grew up and found it so it means it will go on.

JW: Ogosarwa nogokora ke?

What does it mean to be circumcised?

MD1: Ogosarwa, entana yu mumura ne entana yu umuiseke, entana yu mumura ngosarwa ore iga obe umumura, oberekerwe omonto mokoro, entana ya abaiseke nayo nkubingwa ere iga isire lakini toaramaha iga harabe ahakong'u, eramaanisa iga kumira yeito iya abakuria umuiseke ono atasarwe tagotetwa kuya kumugi gu umukuria hai, sasa ina maanisa iga hano oteterwe kuya kumugi gorra amang'ana

ngaho gano ukuya gokora amaru, maana mbe hano ogeye ngokea bore wigora ikihita, ndanyore mbe otasarwe toraigore ikihita kera kwa hivyo kugikuria nyora nkoberekerwa orange iga irinyinya, boono toramanye gotetwa, umumura umwene nkohanchana morenge nu umuiseke otasare lakini kobaiburi, nkuyere eba etabu mokorofishana na abaiburi bao kibidi hata osomborwa, halafu ntona iga ekeheta nyume ikiabanto ababebe, erawesa koba nigo okong'iri omotwe wikaye nawe bahete nyuma muyi moraibora hata abana banga koba, hano moburibwa mbe iga nke ekebebe, abanto baya barabora iga ndabora mbe nomosagane atetere ono atasare, sasa hayo mbe kubitie ere wiki hata umumura ora agotetere airaumu igambe nke nakoreye, nora naigwereye abanto bakoro nyora gano tegakuunyora hai.

To be circumcised is for a boy and a girl, for a boy you get circumcised to be a man and to be called a grown up, for girls it is being discouraged to end but that is going to be difficult, it means in our Kuria tradition and culture if a girl is not circumcised she cannot be married to a Kuria home, because when you are married to a home there are some many things you do there, in the morning you open the cowshed's gate so if you are not circumcised you cannot open it. And in Kuria you are referred to as irinyinya you cannot be married, you can fall in love with a man if you are not married but it will be a problem with the parents, you will fall out with the parents until you are unsettled. And there is something called going behind your back which is done by bad people, if you insist and marry a girl who is not circumcised they can go behind you and whenever you get children they die, so when you are asked what went wrong, people will say it is because you married omosagane who is not circumcised. There then even the man who married blames himself for what he did and wishes 'if I had listened to elders all these would not have happened.'

JW: Boono abakuria iganke bagosaara abasagane?

Why are girls circumcised in Kuria?

MD1: abakuria ngosara bare abasagane iga batetwe weito hano, bange gotetwa kubiario.

Kurians circumcise girls so that they can be married in our community so they are not married in other communities

JW: esababu yende?

Any other reason?

MD1: nagukugira kogosara omosagane, omosagane amang'ana namaru, hano habati mbaya erabaimiki abe nda atasarre karei hara nagatabuterwe kunyancha arebwa, rero numugi agosari, karei hara hano akabe nda atasarre nakageye atabutwa kunyancha arebwa nichinswi arakini rero iritongo iriene nkomosari rere tarayi kumugi aikare hai yaani araberekerwa iga irinyinya ono aiboreye kaatasarre, boono lasima asarwe. Tokanga gosarwa orange kuria hai, rasima ngosarwa ore, boono eyo tenchera yende eho hai, tiga iga nokohancha kwa abaiseke lakini umuiseke nkumueresa orange igo



amaha iga mbuya asarwe mana mbe ndanyore otagutuna osarwe tagutuna otetwe weito hano hai.

The other reason for circumcising girls, girls have many things, if by bad luck she gets pregnant earlier on she would be cast away, these days she destroys the home. Earlier on if a girl became pregnant before circumcision she would be thrown in the lake to be eaten but today the elders damage her she cannot be married to a home and stay there she destroys every home since she is called irinyinya who gave birth at home before being circumcised. So it's a must to be circumcised. You can't miss to be circumcised if you are in Kuria there is no other way. Sometimes it is not the will of the girl but when you explain these things to her she understands and sees the need and importance of being circumcised, because if she doesn't want to be circumcised she doesn't want to be married here.

JW: hano omosagane aisere ogasrwe nke na ke aisaine iga akore?

Once a girl is circumcised what can she do?

MD1: hano omona ora wigiseke aisere gosarwa ichtofauti nkoba chire ho, mabo ono agosarwa ahanchere iga asome, asoma na naho ono agosarwa atahanche iga asome, akenya gotetwa bato arenge omona omoke, nguchangia bare iga esaro ya abaiseke isire gukura ya hare bagosarwa igo baratetwa, halafu umuiseke ono asarwe tagotetwa kubiario hai, tibihanchere saana goteta abanto bano basarre hai, lakini kogotora gweito ndasima asarwe, lakini ono kama ijiwesere na akore buya, ngosoma arenge takonga gosoma hai, lakini ono wabo etachiwesere nkohatera are asokiri ere kananei aikara atetwa.

Once a girl is circumcised there is a difference, there are some who are circumcised and learn and others who run to be married while still very young this is why they want the circumcision to end because once they are circumcised girls get married while very young. A circumcised girl does not get married in other communities these communities don't like circumcised girls. But in our ability she must be circumcised, if her family is able she can go to school if not she can stop at standard 8 and wait to be married.

JW: Boono hano aisere gosarwa amajukumu ke na ke akuruhusiwa sasa iga akore gano atagakora atasarwe

Once circumcised what are the roles and responsibilities that she does which she cannot before going through it?

MD1: engaki eno atasarwa, tarengi iga hata ayi kumugi gono gona umumura hara engaki eno endapo barasumaacha numumura oko tekerenge iga yi kumugi gora hata biratarani hai maana nomosagane, lakini sasa ndanyore asarwe nabaye huru kwa sababu sasa hata aimuki enda numuiseke naratetwe numuiseke tomosagane hai, wiki ndanyore ahanchere aiyigire iga nagatetwa aisa gosarwa karai temonto aramofatilie hei maana asarwa karei resira.

Before circumcision she is not even allowed to visit a home where there are unmarried men, even if she is talking to a man from that home or walk with the man because she is an uncircumcised girl but once circumcised she is free to even get pregnant because she is now a woman she can be married at any time she wants nobody will follow her up.

JW: kumugi hara neng'we akohamora iga omosagane ayi gosarwa

In the family who makes a decision for a girl to be circumcised

MD1: kumugi hara omonto ono akohamora, nabaiburi bae omona oyo iga ahikere, kumugi hara ntona taata na baaba, hasa ono nkunyora aikaye nomona ora numukungu, umukungu newe akurusi irpoti iga ore mogaaka omona onoono narache ayi gosarwa gose omona ono ahikere owa gosarwa omona ono umuenendo goe gono tetoramanye kumutiga mpaka moka hai tiga asarwe, omogaaka hano atebibwi niga ajitayarishe kogora ibinto bia kuya gosarwa

In a family decision lies with the parents, when they see that the girl is ready, both father and mother mainly mother who is always with the girl the mother reports to the father that 'father this girl is ready to be circumcised, ' or ' my husband, this girl's ways we cannot wait till next season it is good to have her circumcised,' the man then prepares and buys the requirements for circumcision,

JW: ora atasarwe kuria hano niyeke abanto bakumuimuki?

How is a girl not circumcised viewed in this community?

MD1: ono atasarwe kuria hano oyo kuimukibwa are kie egento kama omonto ono ataho, nusu monto akuimukibwa kwa sababu mbe ndanyore atasare nkunyora are isita enene bokong'u, ngokong'a arenge ka taratetwe weito hano hai lasima atetwe isiko, hata abe omonto mokoro nomosagane bado.

If you are not circumcised in kuria here you are viewed like something like someone who is not there, or half-being, because if she is not circumcised she gets a lot of problems, she matures and ages at home she is not married here unless outside the community and even when she is old she is still viewed as a girl an uncircumcised girl.

JW: ora we asarwe niyeke akumuimukibwa?

How is a circumcised girl viewed?

MD1: ora we hata aibore numuiseke irina ree teroho rono reganchenchi hai numuiseke, numuiseke.

That is a woman even on giving birth her name cannot change anymore, she is a woman, she is a woman

JW: eotofauti eho kati ya ora asarwe na ora atasarwe kebore bakuiyimiki abiene na kebore abanto bakobaimiki?

Is there a difference between the circumcised and circumcised in how they view themselves and are viewed by others?

MD1: sasa etofauti neho, kwa mfano morenge abaiseke bebere ka uwe omotangi halafu oonde naho omoke uwe omonene wanga iga tugutuna osarwe hai omoke ora asarwe, ndanyore mura omoinyu akorre inyangi, abotoreye omanyere iga inyangi nuwe okagekore lakini sasa tokagekora kwa sababu mbe tosaare hai.

Now there is a difference, for instance if there are two girls in a home one the elder one refuses to be circumcised and then you the younger one is circumcised, if the son of the home weds the older girl cannot do the wedding yet she is the one supposed to, it is the young one who will do it since the older is not circumcised

JW: nke na ke ogakorre?

What and what could she have done?

MD1: kama kogokenga inyama eno keenge iga wimuki, toraimuki hai, muro omoinyu ora omonene ora nuwe ukumurichoki araya goteta sasa otasare toramurichoki hai, ndanyore osare amang'ana gayo gonswe nuwe okogakora, na nuwe ogotangata kosorwa owambere, ndanyore osarwe, uringere mongo agujalie okabotorra, arabu eka kobasubati nuwe omonene nawabotorra sasa igo ndanyore umumura arakora kumugi goyo inyangi nuwe beene oratunwe nuwe orache gokora inyangi eyo, nuwe oraimuki ichinyama chiyo, nuwe oraimuki egesengo, lakini ndanyore otasare norenge nusu monto

She would have picked meat from the cattle shed during the wedding, she cannot she would have sent off the brother to go and marry she cannot. If she was circumcised and later luckily married properly if there is a wedding at her home she is the first to be called she has respect and a name, she is sought for to collect the meat and to pick the egesengo but if not circumcised she is half a person/being and cannot do these.

JW: ensera omosagane agosemibwa araya gosarwa mashauri ke akohabwa?

When a girl is being prepared for circumcision what advice is she given?

MD1: omona ora wigiseke enseno agosemibwa araya gosarwa nkurichoka atorwa egento keraberkerwa iga ehende kumunywa, mana gukurichoka hara ngusikana ore abanto ababebe, abanto bano hande batara baraye buya, boono egento kera nguzuia kere engaka era asarwe takurwa amanyinga hai, iyende niga ngotebibwa are iga engaka era akogenda ange komagamaga, ange guituraturania, gose kogwa, kwa sababu eyo ni mira iga mana era nkama inyangi ukuya gokora, hano oramagemage hayo mbobebe ogokora, nerenge iga otachereye mbele ogende mbaka gokebega hara uyi wikare osarwe uringe.

When being prepared the girl is brought out of the house to the gate then something called ehende is placed on her mouth because when she is leaving her home she meets bad people who did not sleep well, that thing protects her so that when she is circumcised she does not bleed so much. Then she is told to walk face forward without turning to sides or hitting her feet on the stones accidentally she should never fall because traditionally this is a ceremony and she cannot do these things if she walks looking side to side that is not good. She should look ahead walk straight, reach the field, go sit down, get circumcised, and come back.

JW: ekende nke agotebibwa ensera akuya gonchera?

What is she told while on the way to the circumcision field?

MD1: nobosamba beene nkunyora baramunyera nabaramotobia iga wange koboha norabe umuiseke

They sing to her and keep telling her not to be afraid she is going to be a woman

Q: obosamba niyeke bakorea baragamba?

What do the songs say?

MD1: Nkorea bare baramotoni barangamba iga:

They sing praising her and saying

Rero nosarwa gobare

Hano oretusukiria gobare

noregenda gosarwa kobagaya\*2

Today you will be circumcised in broad daylight

If you embarrass us in broad daylight

Go to and be circumcised in luo land \*2

JW: ensera ho aikaye arasarwa nke bakomotobia

When she is sat going through circumcision what is she told

MD1: ensera aikaye arasarwa nokogoterwa akogoterwa maana omosagane nkogoterwa iga aikara asarwa kwa nguvu kabisa na nkomotobia bare iga wange guitetemoka, wikare ukire osarwe, bono ongaka era asire ho bakuririata, bagamba iga obaye kare obaye.

When she is sat, she is held by force and told not to shake, to sit quiet and be circumcised, when she is finished they ululate and say you have become you have become already, you have become already

JW: obaye ke?

You've become what?

MD1: obaye umuiseke

You have become a woman

JW: bono baririata bagamba iyeke?

What do they say in the ululations?

MD1: ariririririri omokare, nomokare torentere tetorentere ono achere gutusukiria hai

Aririririririri, a brave one, it is a brave one we brought, we did not bring one to embarrass us

JW: hano bahika ka ho?

What about at the home

MD1; sasa ka kihita kuhika bare aimera iribina ndeho reno bakumunyera atarasoha nyumba

When they reach at the gate she stands up and they sing a song before she gets in.

Bagamba iga

They say

Weiya weiya tamokeria nomokari wabande

weiya weiya greet her she is other people's woman

JW: obosamba bora niyeke buguturii omosagane ora akuya gosarwa?

How does the singing help the girl going to be circumcised?

MD1: obosamba bora efaida eno bonayo nokomokora angekoboha ange kogankana, nkomokora bore araba umuchangamfu anga koba namawaso go oboro gose iga hei akuya ayaguitaki nyora asohere karei ko orobancha hara gokewancha ke gosarwa koraini

The importance of the singing is to strengthen the girl, to make her not fear anything not to shake to be brave and not to think of the pain or think twice about where she is going, on realisation she finds herself in the field, and already in the queue

JW: kobosamba mora gamo amarina gano bakoberekera ora obohere gosarwa na gano bakoberekera ora akarehere?

Are their words used for those not circumcised and those circumcised in the songs

MD1: ono akarehere nkumusifu bare iga nomokare, kemang'oni yaani, taitetmokere hai lakini ono obohere aaria reyo ndikure taritiga, hata norachese ukurre utigwe uche umwene, reyo ndikure nditusukiriya terena gasi hai, reyo ndegotere omosari okoboko

The brave one is praised and called a brave one, they ululate and say she did not shake but the one who is not, is abused and called names, she is even left to go home alone, if she cries they mock her and say she held the circumciser's hand.

JW: esaro era niyeke iguturi omona ora asarwe?

What is the importance of circumcision to the circumcised girl?

MD1: omona ora aisere gosarwa akubaliywe ko bakuria abaye umuiseke orebe sasa nkoberekerwa iga, oyo numuiseke orebe

Once circumcised one is accepted among the Kuria people she has become a woman, she is called someone's woman.

JW: kobaiburi bae bo

And to the parents?

MD1: umuiburi nkogenda are aramanya iga natigere umuiseke nyumba ono asarwa, nguikara are aramanya iga nena umuiseke

A parent whose daughter has been circumcised walks around knowing that he has left a woman in the house, or sits anywhere confidently knowing that he/she has a woman

JW: esaro ena bobebe bore bonswe?

Does circumcision have any disadvantages?

MD1: uni nkomaha nde iga teena bobebe bore bonswe hai hano erarusibwe ho notoranyore etabu maana nehe torayi gutuna abiseke bano basarwe totete mbe kwa sababu ora atasare tetora tete hai, hayo ho ubuya bwe esaro bore iga ngosarwa bare batetwa weito hano kwa maana mbe ndanyore ogeye otete bukira gose bogaya mono sasa kumira yeito iya bakuria mbaka okore inyangi na mbe entana yi chimbiri tetona cho hai iyeke oragende kurua hano mbaka bogaya uyi gokora inyangi ho mbaka utune ichigari nacho mbe negarama mbaka mbe otete weito hano hara okogenda nokogoro orasoki amang'ana gi inyangi oraikara.

In my opinion, it does not have any disadvantage. If it is scrapped, we will be in big trouble, because where will we get circumcised girls to marry? Because we cannot marry uncircumcised ones! That is where the goodness of circumcision is. Because

if you go to marry from Bukira or Bogaya you will need to do a wedding and because we don't have money how will you walk from here to Bukira or Bogaya for a wedding, you will need vehicles which are very expensive, so you must marry from here where you will just walk on foot, you finish wedding plans you sit and relax.

JW: komaoni gao esaro eno ya abasagani ni iga egenderi gose?

According to you should female circumcision continue?

MD1: esaro eno yabana bigiseke neragenderi ndinyora irisira ninyene irisira lakini okohamiribwa tekoho hai esaro yo nerangenderri mana kama sasa igo mbe mbagamba iga teresare hai lakini serikali inyene yaroche iga yagotere hata abamoe basarwe lakini mbe sasa esaro eno tokomaha serikali yagotere abasamba beito na abanyabasi bakarara hamoe natekerenge iga barare hamoe hai kwa hivo neragenderi

Female circumcision will go on, if at all one day it will come to an end, it will on its own, but coercing us to stop it will not help because even this season they had said it was not going to be carried out but it did, the government even arrested some people who were circumcised and they slept together with those from nyabasi which is not allowed traditionally but it went on

JW: umukungu wigikuria niyeke akuimukibwa kuria kono?

How is a Kuria woman viewed in this community?

MD1: umukungu wigikuria ono atetwa nkuimukibwa are kebore mohanchaine gooka, abanto bakoro baara nkuimukibwa bare kama abanto ba maana kwa sababu hano otaimukiri abanto ba maana hano baraguisere ne etabu hano torange kobaimuki kama aba maana nkuibora tore abana abake bo baisesa kohatera kuibora, nabanto bakoro, umukungu ora ndanyore otagutuna iga ache wao gose weinyu omona wao arawesa gosareka gukugira mbe umukungu ora angere komomaha lakini umukungu ora hano ahayo nkmaha are abana baara omona ono niyeke akoba aratuna iriogo arakoha umukungu kama oyo nkoba are owe heshima.

A Kurian woman who is married is viewed according to how you love each other in the family, old women are respected as important people because if you don't respect them when they get angry with you there will be trouble. If we don't take respect them and we are giving birth and bringing up our children and they don't. if you don't want the woman to come to your home your child may fall sick or lose mind because the woman has not seen them well, but if you allow them to your home they always tell when the child is unwell and can find herbs for to give to the child and such a woman is respected.

JW: abagaaka bo niyeke bakuimukibwa?

How are men viewed?

MD1: abagaaka hano ahayo nomonto wa maana kwa sababu mbe ndanyore atahayo nisita eho, maana namang'ana amaru aguturi, ichitugo chihayo omogaaka newe akomaha ichitugo enseno abana bageye sukuri, umugi tegokogwa omogaka ahayo hai, omogaaka nkoremera arenge, hano atahayo hata itugo nerabore ka, kana mbe ng'we aragemahe

When a man is around he is a very important person because if he is not there, there will be a huge problem he prevents many issues from occurring, he takes cows to graze the home cannot fall he repairs and gardens the compound. If he is not there, there will be no cattle in that home because no one will take care of it.

JW: ubuya bumukungu wigikuria mbohe?

What is the value of the Kuria woman?

MD1: nyora namanyere amang'ana amaru hata hano nkaga abanto baguitana ahayo nkubieresa are mona bakinere, abakani iga tiga tetogakore igo, nahano okanibwe numukungu omonto mokoro iga tatiga keyo tekerenge igo hai arafu umukungu ora ndanyore orakora inyangi newe agukueleza ono anarache agokorre inyangi era numusubati orebe, newe asoki kera gento, ono arache agende ubutube ndebe

She knows so much, even when people are fighting and she is around she explains to them that this is not how we grew up and tells them 'stop we don't do it like this' and when you are stopped by a Kuria woman you have to. When you are wedding, it is the woman who tells you who to pick to prepare your wedding, if she says it is somebody's daughter who has had all the traditions finished she will do it.

JW: kumugi hara neng'we nkunyora ana esauti ho?

In the family who has a voice and a say?

MD1: nomogaaka arenge ne esauti rero mbonswebakaba nayo, karai hara nomogaaka akagambere, nomogaaka akabaye ne esauti enene lakini rero baragamba iga tahinyia esauti tabisa umunywa okore umugi hande nkunyora ore umogaka newe ana esauti hano nanyora umukungu aratuna abe ne esauti traramenye hai kwa sababu ibiboko mbirayi biraba mo umukungu arang'osang'osa kuya wabo arafu saa ingine iga nokong'osang'osa ahete hayo ayi gotara ayi oboraya. Boono abagaaka nebo bana ichisauti.

It is a man who had a voice, today all may have it, today they say you shut your mouth and build a family. Whenever a man has a voice and a woman want to have a voice it is not possible because there will be canes and the woman will be running to her home every time and then later on she can go to wander around and to towns to practice prostitution. So, it is the men who have the voice.

JW: Ona iriswali rere rionswe

Do you have any question?



MD1: a a

No no

JW: Asantimbe kumuda goo

Thanks for your time

MD1: Haya

ok

### **MD2-Male with daughter 2**

JW: Esaro ya abasagane nke ekomaanisha?

What does female circumcision mean?

MD2: Kubuiseke esaro eno tena maana gukugira hata kurwa karai karai ekebara gekorwe tiyare ho hai, nabagaaka bacha kurwa bakagereta gukugira ya obobembegwe omonto asarre umumura ahane ekenama gosaiga yae asokiri onde aya komha anyora we numusike anawe angee kohana ekenama amaha iga oga namutigere bakaimoka gotora ho esaro ya abaiseke gukugira ya obobembegwe tu.

For womanhood, this circumcision does not have any meaning, from earlier on it was not there, it is men who brought it due to greed, when one circumcises a male he gives meat to his agemates, the one sees that he does not have a boy but a girl he feels defeated so they started circumcising girls because of greed

JW: Boono iganke bagosara abasagane

Why do they circumcise girls?

MD2: Ngosara barenge abasagane iga hat abo babarusi kurua gontana yobona kuya kobonto bokoro iya ubuiseke hano aisere kobaensera atarasarwa nomosagane ensera asarwe aberekerwa iga umuiseke abarwa iga nomonto mokoro hata arawesa gotetwa. Ngosara bare abaiseke bayo iga, hano basarwa basoki barooka bahatera amang'ana ga obosamba bagenda gwitingo na gwitingo hara ne esoko bakuya gutuna iga otetwe korri abagaka banyore iching'ombe.

They circumcise girls to move them from child level to adult level so that they be counted as adults who can be married. When they have been circumcised they go to the dance field, there they are marketing themselves, so that they be married and for men to get cattle

MD2: Esababu yende barangamba iga omona ora atasarwe tagakora ichinyangi gooka hai, kwa hivyo mbaka basare omona ora korri ndanyore newe umuiseke omonene gose umusubati omonene gooka eyo gose hare sowabo na nyakwabo ache abakorre ichinyangi enseno ndache nyore abana baabo baara barakora ichinyangi

The other reason is that they say if a child is not circumcised she cannot perform ceremonies at home, they must circumcise that child so that if she is the first daughter she will perform ceremonies when her siblings are getting married

MD2: Tatu omona ora hano ndanyore atasarwe tagosoha bori gokengerwa ichinyama chira nkunyora chirenge bori hasa ichinyangi embotora hai. Hano asarwa nkohabwa are eheshima iga abaye omonto mokoro.

The third reason if a child is not circumcised she does not enter the cattle shed to collect meat distributed during a wedding. If circumcised she is respected because she has become an adult

JW: Ichinyangi nkama chihe?

Which are these ceremonies?

MD2 embotorra nehayo eno nkunyora umuiseke aratetwa arakora inyangi engombe egogerwa bori, ichisaro chiyo beene. Umusubati ono atasarwe takaya kuimerera oonde arasarwa nawe taheteye gosaro hai, na hano ndanyore omogaaka arenge iga niga akore ichinyangi chi igikuria kama isube kamatagakora ichinyangi chiyo numukungu wae ono atasare hai, umusubati ono atasare tagataangata omogaaka ora kogokora isubo hai. Na enseyo beene hano ndanyore uni ndege omogaaka wikirege nchagoywe iga omosari ora wa abarisia taho tengasara abarisia getare iga mokane nasare hei.

Officiating a marriage, when a daughter is being married a cow is slaughtered in the cow shed, the circumcision ceremonies themselves. If not circumcised a girl will not be allowed to support a girl who is being circumcised, if the man wants to celebrate maturity, he will not do it if he has an uncircumcised wife. If a man is identified to be a circumciser of boys he will not circumcise them if his wife is uncircumcised.

JW: Omona ora atasarwe niyeke akuimukibwa na abanto boroberi

How is an uncircumcised girl viewed by neighbours?

MD2: onto ono atasarwe nkuimukibwa are nabanto kujichichi kama omonto ono atana bwera maana baragamba iga hane ndanyore hata akure nisiko agotokerwa tagotokerwa bori hei. Omonto ono atasare hata hano akabaye nda atasarwa abe nda, nkuyare gotabutwa. Nkuhirwa are gukiaro aya atigwa ho.

Someone who is not circumcised is viewed in the village as a useless person, they say if she dies she will be buried outside not in the cow shed, if she gets pregnant, she is cast away/thrown away, she is taken to a far- away community and left there

JW: Gukiaro kama kehe?

A community such as?

MD2: Bukira Bugumbe, nyabasi hata ikwabe. Alafu hano ndanyore arenge kugichichi hayo ono atasarre takuimukibwa kama omonto wubuera hei. Bara bareng'eine nawe nebo bakomota bokong'u ndanyore baisesa gosarwa nebo mbe bakomoberekera iga omosagane bokong'u hata sukuru nkomotoka bare, aya aragenda ana ewasiwasi soki abande baara baya baramomaha iga nomonto ono atana bwera. Baya baramoberekera iga omosagane nkaga chinde baramoberekera iga irinyinya

Such as bugumbe, bukira, nyabasi or even massailand. And if she is in the village and uncircumcised she is not taken to be a useful person. Their agemates abuse her themost, especially if they have been circumcised, they abuse her the most, they call her uncircumcised even at school, she walks fearfully and others view her as auseless person, they call her irinyiinya

JW: Etafauti eho kati ya bara basare na bara batasare ke bore bakuiyimukia?

What is the difference between those circumcised and those who are not, in the way they are viewed

MD2: abanto bano batasare kabisa hano oteta ono atasare hata kugichichi hano otaikaye buya nyora ngokoyerwa koyerwa ore, hano otikaye sawasawa norayi gutaki nyora uhirre mokao ageye gosarwa.

Abakungu hano nyora omonto atasare asokiri abaye nda aratuna kuibora, hano oramutige hano kubikungu bino bikuiburya ka hano mbiramosare.

Those who are not circumcised if you marry one in the village if you are not careful you will realise when you have already taken her for circumcision. When an uncircumcised girl becomes pregnant at the time of giving birth, if you leave her with those old women those midwives will circumcise her during labour

JW: ora aisere gosarwa nke agotarajiwa iga akore?

What is expected of one who has been circumcised?

MD2 nguikara barenge abakungu, na abana baara barabaigia irimenya rekomenya nomosacha na gosoka omosacha, okorogera omosacha, barabaigia hata nenkanyora nogokama iching'ombe, ogokora entobeke iyumuirua. Lakini abana nsiko chine ngosarwa bare kehayo bawansa kobarankana. Elimu era yaisa gotabutwa banga kuigibwa yagira hata amaroyi amabebe gano gacha mana abana baara ngotaratarata bare ovyoovyo mana nyora bahaywe ubuhuru baberekeywe iga nabanto bakoro.

Uuhuru bonde bono bakohabwa, nkorokibwa barenge iga sasa babaye abanto bakoro, muya gwitaki hata umuiseke ataretetwa nyora awansere gotara na abana bikimura hata na abagaaka abanto bakoro, nkuyamore gwitaki nyora omona oyo hata gooka nyora abaye nda karai.

They sit down and older women instruct them on how to live with a man and how to respect a man, how to cook for a man, to milk cows, to prepare an inlaw's porridge. But these days girls are circumcised and they start walking around, the early teachings have disappeared, this has caused many diseases, girls walk around aimlessly because they have been given a go ahead, they have been called adults, they start messing around with men even old men, within no time she gets pregnant

JW: ehaki yabo hano baisere gosarwa neehe?

Which rights do they have after circumcision?

MD2: abana bano ehaki yabo enseno baisere gosarwa mbana ehaki ya korenta omonto ka, ono agutuna amotete. Mbana ehaki ya kuikara na abaiburi babo, san asana esaro keno gokora omona hano aisere gosarwa, ngutuna are iga atetwe hata abaharimu ngototobia barenge iga hano omona asarwe emeka gera gembere asarwe arure baringere sukuru, omona oyo nkuyare asombora sukuru kweli hata atuna gotara na abahilimu mana aroche iga abaye omonto mokoro mbareng'aine nabaharimu bara

Once circumcised, they have a right to bring someone home, who will marry them, they have a right to sit with the parents. Even they want to get married, teachers say once the girls have been circumcised they become unruly, they disturb teachers even wanting to sleep around with teachers, they view themselves as the teachers equals

JW: Amabina gaho gano bakubina engaki eno bakuya gosarwa?

Which songs do they sing when going for circumcision?

MD2 iribina reno nkamanya ndera rekuya guturung'ana ora akurwa gosarwa baramotengera, barabina baragamba iga abiene omota tuchere, mbono ngucha nkogetanda nakaraye, tacha totengere omona, abaye omokare, asarwe mona ekebwe ekebatali, babina barainara omona baramotagera bagamba iga omona ora akarehere abaye omogaikoro gaikoro, bono sasa nana hata ehaki ya kuimukia omosacha atore bore mana atonkorohere, oronde nkaigwa umukungu onde aragamba iga egento kereboywe. Bono sasa omona oyo na obohene bo kuya gotetwa na korari nomosacha na kuibora abana.

I know the song performed when coming from the circumcision grounds to receive the one coming from circumcision, they dance singing and saying, the owners of the child we have come, it is now im coming I've been sleeping on the bed, come let us dance, a child has become a brave person, she has been circumcised she has become a light, she has become brave, she has become a real woman. She has a right to take a man to bed, she is an adult. One day I heard another woman say, 'the thing has been pricked open'. She has right to be married and to sleep with a man and bear children.

MD2: Obosamba bohayo bono bakorea barakarihia abasagane bara. Omorentia agamba iga nyamohandi moomo taragora ngende komosari nyabikebi niyi gutuna ubuiseke bonsombora. Abakungu baragamba abande baraimukia, ee nyamohandi

moomo taragora tumuhire komosari. Agende gutuna ubuiseke aringe ache koba umukungu. Ora umuene akuya gosarwa newe amabina gara gagusifu tegagusifu ono atasarwe hei, nkomokejeli gare, nkomotoka gare

There are songs which they sing to encourage the girls. The soloist says the one with dry legs, crow so I can go to the circumciser the one with knives, to get woman hoon which has really bothered me, other women respond saying crow so we can take her to the circumciser to seek womanhood so she can come back and be married. The songs praise the one going to be circumcised, they don't praise the one not circumcised, instead they mock her, they insult her

Ono akuya gosarwa newe been bakobenera oonde ora atakuya gosarwa tebatondoreywe nawe hai hata abe omosagane ono atare iga nkuyare gosaro tebaana ree hai getatiga ono akuya beene.

They only sing for the one going to be circumcised, they don't have time for those who are not

JW: Obosamba bora niyeke buguturi omona ora akuya gosarwa?

How do the songs help the girl going for circumcision?

MD2: kuguturia omona ora nogotobia omona ora iching'ana kori agende akarehe egekebi kera kiwembe

They make her strong so that she can be brave and face the sharpness of the razor blade

JW: kumugi gora gogosara omosagane omogaaka niyeke akuhusika?

In a home where a girl is being circumcised how is the man involved?

MD2: Omogaaka nibinto arache agorre omosagane ora, amogorre ichingebo cha kumuhira gosaro, soki atune chinyinyi chino abageni barache banyere, gose agoge eng'ombe gose imburi, ahakikishe iga abakungu bachere kumugi gwichoye bano baramorongekere omona kuya gosaro. Bana mokae mbo bakorareka abanto mana omona ora wigiseke tamanyere abanto babo bonswe hai.

Umukungu ngosemia arene ememera, n ahata ensera akurichoka arahia omosagane gosaro nkuyarengememera, nora wiki nasemiri akagata gake igo kano omona ora aguikara ko enseno omosari ahikere ihise hira hihimera hio omosari akaorekerea aganto kara agutuna akenge, karichoka agakenga.

A man will buy things for the girl, clothes that she will wear to the circumcision, he then gets food for the visitors, he can slaughter a cow, or goat and make sure there are enough women in the home who will escort the girl to the circumcision ground, together with his wife, they invite the visitors because the girl does not know all their relatives. The wife prepares yeast flour, even when she sets off to take the girl for

circumcision she carries yeast flour and a piece of cloth for the girl to sit on when being cut, when the girl sits down she throws the yeast to the organ being cut and the circumciser cuts it.

J:W Ubuya buesaru mbohe komonaora ageye gosarwa?

What value does circumcision have to the one who has gone through it?

MD2: etana bwera, kofamilia era arure nera abantu baimokere nubugichichi bogaichora kometwe gebo iga ono newe tosarre weito kono omotangi newe arayi aratokorra ichinyangi. Eyo niyo ubuera boyo. Kugichichi kera omona ora are efaida eno bakunyora kana tokoragera ukuene, nubukima ninyama peke yake.

It does not have any value, to the family where she comes from, it is just that people have become very local thinking when they circumcise the first borne she will perform ceremonies. That's the value. For the village, the value they get is just eating only, it is just ugali and meat

JW: Obobebe mbohe ubuesaru?

Does circumcision have any disadvantage?

MD2: gokoreng'ana nabatalamu nko gamba bare iga omona enkaga eno ndinyora araibora narigwa oborro bonde gukira bora bano batasarre bakuigwa, pili egento kera kegokengwa nkio itransformer ya amapenzi. Kofamilia era arure araya gosarwa tebobebe bore bonswe bokoba ho hai lakini hano omona ora arasarwe akurua arue amanyinga kupita kiasi nerabidi baimuki eng'ombe kuguria na gutuna ichimbiri cha kuhira omona ora sibirari ange gukwa. Wiki orawesa esaiga erawesa gokobandiri iga ogehe ekenama asoki hano igucha isukuru igucha igorwe nyora otomeye egarama eno okahereye omona sukuru.

Specialists say when the circumcised woman will be giving birth she will undergo more pain than the one who has not been cut. secondly, the thing that is cut is the transformer for love. For the family there is nothing wrong, but once she is circumcised and bleed too much, they will be forced to take a cow sell it and look for money to take her to hospital so she doesn't die. Again your agemates might force you to give them the thigh of a cow and then when schools open you would have spent so much money more than you would have used to take the child to school

JW: Esaru niga egenderri?

Should FGM continue?

MD2: hane nkanyorre nuni nko gamba kuria kono esaru yabasagane negasira, mana tena buera hai. Hano abana beito basarwa neho bagosareka bokong'u, barayaha ntango, esaru nkugibinga nde mia mia gikugira nkuringia erenge amagenderio geito nyuma. Abana biegesacha mbo kene bagosoma, abana biegekari gukugira eno bagosarwa sarwa tebagosoma hai. Kebore egakora isire, temanyere mona togakora

abana abasacha bayi barateta abaiseke bara batasare. Kere gikugira abasagane bahara iga baraya gosarwa nkera omona akomaha iga hano arasarwe neho arangohe kunyora omosacha. Lakini hano anga gosarwa nguikara arenge igo mbaka ahamora gotetwa kuya aharei isiko

If I were the one making decisions in this kuria FGM would be over, because it has no value. When our children undergo FGM that is when they completely get spoiled, they prostitute so much. I am against FGM a hundred percent because it interferes with our development. Our young men go to school but the women as soon as they are cut they get married. I don't know what we can do so that our young men marry uncircumcised women from our community because what makes girls to want circumcision is the fear that if they are circumcised that is when they will get a husband quickly. But when not cut they stay for long and later decide to be married outside far.

JW: Abakungu niyeke baki mukibwa kujamii ya abakuria?  
.....

How are women viewed in the Kuria community?

MD2: gokoreng'ana nijamii ya abakuria omona Ogenda obokwe asoki ohana ichong'ombe ichincharu, wimuki umukungu wao kama omobagasi, kama omombohi, uya oramaha iching'ombe chira wahirre wabo oraimuki iga wamogorre boono nokamotomera kebore ugutuna hata narahetere ichisiare kebore ugutuna.

Umukungu abereka omona mogongo noonde arenge konda inkio saa kumi nyora umukuria amuturre nkuigembe arenge, na hano ichingombe chirache chisarri entana yae egetemo keno arache atemwe kura kera iching'ombe chigotemwa ngetobu. Umukungu hano murure kuigembe ensera mugucha ka aratenya ichinkwe ache kogokora ikirunguri nigo mukuhika kai go omosaba amanche ga gwisaba hano urichoka ikirunguri getarahea niga eresese kana iganke otakang'aye gento gukuru tore turre mogondo iganke otakang'aye ikirunguri.

Asoki oheta ogenda gotara umutiga hayo ana iching'ombe ana abana arahura ichingebo, hano ikuhika saa saba uringe uche komosaba ubukima na nakarisi newe arakenya arahorra omona, iching'ombe. Bono abakuria bano bakora abakungu baba ki ibimbohi. Umukungu tana mweya ronde hai. Ichisiare nkogamba chire, wiki omona mokoro aratemwa?

It depends with the family of the Kuria, you woo a lady and visit her family you pay a huge dowry, then you come back and take your wife as a slave, seeing the cows you gave to her family, you think you bought her, you cane her as you want, you beat her as you want. A woman carries a baby on her back, another in the womb early at 4am a Kuria wakes her up to go to the plough. If the oxen err in the garden she is beaten thoroughly, more than the oxen are hit. Once you are back from the plough on her

way back she picks firewood with which she prepares porridge. Once back the man asks for porridge and bath water which she prepares for him. If she delays the man insults her 'you dog why have you not given me anything to eat?' since we came back from the farm you have not given me porridge. The man goes for a walk (to wander) and the woman is left at home taking care of the cattle and children, washing linen. At lunch time the man comes back and asks for food. The Kuria have made their wives to be slaves, caning them, an old person being caned!

JW? Abagaaka bo niyeke bakuimukibwa

How are men viewed?

MD2: abagaaka nkuimukibwa bare kama abanto ba muhimu sana hano omogaaka ata gooka eka eyo kama nyora yasira. Abagaaka mbo bakohana ubushauri gooka. Mbo bakohamora iga omosagane oyo agende gosarwa gukugiara tarache ankorre ichinyangi atasarwe hei. Umumura hano ateta ono atasare, omogaaka newe arabe bori ahechere agambe iga tinkwuigorwa ikihita na ono atasarwe hei. Abagaaka baimukibwa iga mbo abanto ba muhimu sana. omogaaka newe akogondoreka kama omontowa maana gooka. Umukungu tana sauti gooka hei

Men are viewed as people of value, if there is no man in a family, that family is lost, it is men who give advice in a family, they are the ones who decide that a girl is going for FGM because she cannot perform ceremonies in his home if she has not. If a son marries an uncircumcised girl, it is a man who stands in the cow shed and breathes, he says I will not have my cow shed gate opened by an uncircumcised girl. Men are therefore taken to be people of utmost importance in a family. A man is the one who is recognised in a home. A woman does not have a voice in a home.

JW: Amajukumu gumukungu ngahe?

What are the roles of a woman?

MD2: Amajukumu gumukungu, nokorogera omogaaka. Lakini amajukumu gumukugnu amanene kabisa hano ateterwe kuya kumugi egento ke mbele aibore. Hano arache aikare kumugi goyo ateterwe emeka Zaidi ya etato ataraibora oyo temonto hai. Nkunyora are etabu aya aratokwa tokwa hata nkaga chinde mosacha wae aratebibwa iga tateta omokari wonde, wareta omote omomo ka. Kwa hivyo omokari amajukumu gae amanene nukuibora, okohenchera omogaaka na okomaherra abana bakine kofamili. Amajukumu gande nagakohorra omogaaka ichingebo.

The roles of a woman are, to cook for a husband. But the most important role is when she is married to a home, the first thing is to give birth. If she stays in a home for more than three years without giving birth she is not a person. She is mistreated very much, she is called names. Her husband is told to 'marry another wife; you have



brought a dry tree home'. The value of a woman is just in giving birth to cook for the husband and care for children, if she does not then she has no value. The other role is to wash clothes for the husband

JW? Omogaaka we?

How about a man?

MD2: amajukumu nokorenda efamili hano ndanyore eadui ere yonswe erasoha kumugi nomogaaka arache aitane nayo. Agande omogaaka newe akohagacha umugi, umukungu teroho rono hata akarina kunyumba iga ngosereta are hei. Hano ndanyore inyangi erenge kumugi, irijukumu riomogaaka newe agutuna ichinyinyi chino abanto bararagere, eng'ombe arusi egogwe. Nibinto bira bionswe birenge kumugi nibiae. Entana yidisciplini omogaaka numukungu ndanyore baratuna iga abana babo nesoko bagotane babe mbo bakohana omofano umuya.

His role is to protect the family, if there is an enemy of whichever sort attacks a home it is a man that fights it, the man also builds a home, a woman cannot on any day climb to repair the roof of the hut. If there is a ceremony in a home it is the man who finds a cow for people to eat. Everything in a family belongs to him, on the discipline, a man and woman if they want their children to be disciplined they must give a good example

JW: Emali yo niyeke bakogawa?

How do they share property?

MD2: email ni yomogaaka, hata orente email uwe umukungu orente email ka, hata egari hayo ogokora egasi orente ka ni ya omogaaka ekoberekerwa hata ndanyore numukungu agegore. Kere gionswe gikumugi ni kio omogaaka. Hata ndanyore ogorre engoko ka hano eyo tiyao hei niyane

Property belongs to a man, a woman even if you bring anything home, even a car if you bring from where you work, it belongs to a man even if it is a woman who bought it. Everything in a home belongs to a man. Even if you have about a chicken and brought it home it is not yours but his.

JW: umukungu nke akuiberekerra?

What belongs to a woman?

MD2: umukungu ninyongo ya nyinyi nibihorro na amagiha nichinkwe ne ekorro ge kuruga. Kere ekende gionswe ge ka koyo emali ere yonswe ekaguribwa ichimbiri ni ya omogaaka, hata oboroti.

For a woman it is a cooking pot, vegetable, cooking stones, firewood and sufuria (cooking items), but everything else in a home which can be sold for money belongs to a man including land.

JW? neng'we akoreta emali ka?

Who brings property home?

MD2: Omogaaka newe akoreta email, nomogaaka akairusi hata kama nukuya kuiba aya kuiba umukungu we nkuyare gutaki nyora bichere ka bino atamanyere hare birure. Hata ndanyore muikaya morasumacha kuhusu iga torente keno torente keno umukungu nubushauri ararusi lakini oboamuzi nobomogaaka. Wiki umukungu tagatamera email era bila kuburi, weiya weiya witerwe, hata ndanyore umukungu oyo agorre eng'ombe ichere ibiare ekemori taragiguri hata kwa nia ichiya ya kolba ifees, tarayi ka hei. Umukungu nkuibora are umuiseke amukinia ahika rora atetwa email ni yomogaaka. Ndanyore umukungu aratua eng'ombe mabka asabe omogaaka na ndanyore angere risire.

It is a man who brings home property, it is a man who goes out even if to steal, a woman just sees them being brought home without knowing where they have been coming from. When you sit down discussing that we bring this and this, a woman will just advise but the decision will be made by the man. Also a woman cannot use anything at home without the permission of a man, if you do that! You will be killed!, even when a woman buys a cow, once it reproduces a calf she cannot sell it even if with good intentions like paying school fees, she cannot do that and go home. A woman bears a daughter and brings her up, on the day she gets married the dowry becomes a man's. if a wife wants a cow she must ask a husband and if he says no, that is it.

JW: umukungu wigikiria ubuera boe mbohe?

What is the value of a Kuria woman?

MD2: nkuibora beene ndanyore atakuibora oyo atana bwera

It is just to give birth, if she doesn't give birth she has no value.

JW: Ona irisuari rere rionswi?

Do you have any question?

MD2: a a

No no

JW? Asanti mbe kumuda ghoo

Thank you for your time

MD2: Asanti

Thank you