

**Gendered Discourse about Women's  
Inheritance in Patriarchal Communities  
Case of Beni Weragh Community.**



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**Abstract**

Discourse on women's inheritance has gained momentum in recent decades. The question of who can rightfully own or control and therefore inherit is often highly linguistically gendered in many patriarchal communities. In the BeniWeragh community, the discursive notions of women's inheritance reinforce gender bias against the woman. The present article describes the way discourse and specific linguistic terms are invested to perpetuate women's exclusion from inheritance. To do so, we adopt the Fairclough approach to critical discourse analysis. This study suggests via its findings that discourse about women's inheritance in the BeniWeragh community in Algeria is highly gendered and supported by patriarchal ideologies and discriminatory customs which are the major deterrent to women's exclusion from inheritance. This article elaborates upon and reveals how gendered discourses produce and reinforce gender inequities, which continually and to some extent explicitly naturalizes women's exclusion from inheritance.

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Discourse and power, discriminatory customs. Gendered discourse, Gendered inheritance, Patriarchal ideology

**1. Introduction**

This article is undertaken to critically examine, from a linguistic perspective, the vital role of gendered discourse to reproduce the social status and power asymmetries in favor of men which are caused by the influence of the patriarchal ideologies and discriminatory customs. Therefore, current article explores the gendered ways of speaking about inheritance and how gendered discourses reinforce and perpetuate

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women's exclusion from inheritance in the BeniWeragh community. In other words, it determines the extent to which gendered discourses about inheritance demonstrate unequal access to inheritance between sexes. It seeks to expose how gendered discourses marginalize and subjugate the woman in the region.

In many patriarchal communities, including the BeniWeragh community in Algeria, debates about women's inheritance continue to involve women in the ongoing discourse over the normative content of discriminatory customs that support women's deprivation from inheritance. The study suggests that due to existing patriarchal customary practices women are particularly vulnerable and prone to lose the right of inheritance. This was often the case in the BeniWeragh community. The way of en-gendering discourse about women's inheritance further incorporates gender norms that result in differential power between men and women particularly in access to and control of the property.

In addition to what has been said, the issue of patriarchal ideologies and discriminatory customs create a world in terms of two genders masculine and feminine via certain gendered discourses to reestablish and maintain the inferior position of the woman in the social structure and to grant control, power, and supremacy to males over females. This type of gendered discourse naturalizes women's deprivation from their share of inheritance in BeniWeragh.

To fully examine the issue, the study adopts Fairclough's approach to critical discourse analysis to explore how gendered discourses reinforce and perpetuate women's access to inheritance in the community. Our objective is to shed the light on the social-historical, contextual set of values and beliefs that discursively construct barriers to woman's inheritance in the patriarchal communities. To gain greater depth in exploring research questions, the study refers to a set of observations and interviews to collect data which makes it qualitative as a methodological framework.

Gender has experienced a dramatic increase in attention; especially as women have shown an interest in adopting those topics to improve their status since they feel part of an oppressed group in male-dominated societies. Henceforward, the inspiration of this work stems from what the feminist movement and female researchers have achieved overtime in their struggle for women's rights.

The awareness about the use of gendered discourses to perpetuate gender bias against women in the BeniWeragh community was our starting point for this case study. We try to unveil the power relations between the two sexes which are reinforced via linguistic forms and discursive expressions. Our concern is to get deeper into the way gendered discourses are invested to reinforce women's exclusion from inheritance in BeniWeragh.

## **2. Genderizing Discourse**

Hundreds of books, dissertations, articles in numerous disciplines examine the intersection between discourse and gender for a variety of analytic perspectives.

It is widely held that men and women have different even –oppositional characteristics patterns of interaction. In fact, much of what we conceive of as femininity and masculinity refers to precisely these factors. Over the years researchers have identified certain linguistic features that signal masculinity or often more commonly, femininity. These linguistic markers of gendered discourse styles are seen to have a functional link to the traits and roles of men and women in the society (Cameron 2010:737).

We expect men to speak and act with strength; women comparatively are thought to act with weakness and more emphasis on feeling. Tannen (1990) highlights when women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy ,while men speak and hear a language of status and independence.

Cameron (2010:733)supports this by explaining that for the purpose of linguistic and sociolinguistic studies ,'gender' has often been defined not as biological maleness or femaleness, but rather as social differentiation of men and women in particular communities. Thus, gender -linked patterns of language use stem not only from men and women being naturally different, but from the way that difference is made significant in the organization of social life and social relations (ibid.).

Gendered discourse makes males and females communicate using different style of interaction. We are socially gendered how to communicate as male or female .Not only do we communicate gender in these ways, but we also do it with our words .Language plays a crucial part in doing gender and displaying ourselves as gendered. Julia Wood (2011) states that “women are born into a gendered society that identifying who they are, that guides our understanding of gender and shapes our personal gendered identities “(p.160).

### **2.1.Critical Discourse Analysis**

In the words of Wodak (2001), critical discourse analysis fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination power and control that are manifested in language.Discourse analysts use CDA to take an explicit position and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality. The analysts of CDA take the text and talk as a tool to explain them in terms of social power relations (Van Dijk,2001). CDA sees how these biases can mystify the actual nature of events in discourse. And the most interesting is the feminist approach in CDA which aims to analyze the relations between gender language use and power.(Lazer 2005,Litosselitu,2006). Also, sexism and the construction of gender identity as well as an appreciation of gender as a dynamic construct are key models while analyzing discourses within this approach.

CDA has become an important tool of research methodology in a variety of disciplines around the world. Critical discourse analysis offers a number of

contributions to developing the conceptual framework of discourse about the issues of gender identities and the ways in which they are constructed as part of discursive processes. Broadly speaking, Fairclough (1992-trans, 2001:1995) Kress, Vanleewen (1996) have proposed steps to advance CDA as an approach which links the detailed analysis of text which is practiced in linguistics with societal concerns about class, gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality. (Mayer and Wodak, eds, 2001).

### **2.1.1. Fairclough's Discourse and Structures of Social Power**

Discourse analysis is an analytical framework that was created for studying the actual text and talk in communication contexts. The notion of discourse views language primarily as social practice as it is associated with society. (Fairclough;1992). Yet, the term discourse also designates particular " modes of talking associated with particular social institutions, which points to the fact institutions produce specific ways or modes of talking about certain areas of social life, that is related to the place and nature of the institution (Kress, 1985).

To fully elaborate this claim, Norman Fairclough's exploration (2001) of the relationship between language, power, society, and ideology was one of the first seminal texts to emphasize one of the most compelling issues in pragmatics. Fairclough aims to go beyond the usual interpretive stage of ethnomethodology or descriptive socio- linguistic conventions, that is the raising of critical consciousness concerning the hidden ideologies and realities of social orders which can be considered as the outcomes of struggles of power.

As Fairclough (1992) points out, the importance of discourse lies in the fact that it contributes to the construction of 'social identities', to the structures of 'social identities', to the structures of 'social relationships', as well as to the creation of systems of knowledge and belief. It has been pointed out that personal discourse is shaped by society and those social roles are learned during childhood.

In Fairclough words (1992), language is linked to social realities and brings about social change. But he does not limit discourse analysis to the study of texts and specific discursive practices. He emphasizes a text as the product of the discourse process which is closely related to social structures in the production and interpretation. He examines critically a specific situation where inequality, ideology and power relations are instantiated in discourse. Fairclough's model of discourse analysis operates first with the dialectical relationship between the micro-structure of discourse. (Linguistic Features) and the macro-structures of discourse. (societal structures and ideology).

### **3. Disempowering Women Through Patriarchy and Discriminatory Customs**

Many scholars (Lim and Lerner) agree with the same idea that the term "patriarchy" refers to any ideology, belief, system, tradition, in a social or economic and political domain that reflects the male-dominated society and

male-centered culture. Undoubtedly, it permits and encourages the abuse and domination over women in a patriarchal system. According to Lim (1997:220), patriarchy is the system of male domination and female subordination in economy, society and culture that has characterized much of human history to the present day. The patriarchal and social institutions are responsible for the inferior or secondary status of women. Patriarch ideology keeps women away from power system.

Among the most important ideas discussed about the origin and the existence of patriarchy, some theories insist that patriarchy is something natural and they do believe that man is born to dominate and woman is born to be subordinate. Again and again, they believe that this social structure should keep going and cannot be remodeled as the other systems of nature, claimed the traditionalists such as the works of Aristotle. On the other hand, other theories following Fredrich Engles (1942) stand against this view that patriarchy is not natural. It is socially constructed and it can be changed.

In this regard, Aristotle in his view, man is born to rule and the woman is born to be ruled. He said, "The courage of a man is shown in commanding a woman of in obeying" (Leaner 1989:8-11). According to the modern psychology which emphasizes its focus on male supremacy. Sigmund Freud (1977) stated that for women anatomy is destiny. In his view, a normal human is male (Freud 1977). The explanation of the origin of patriarchy by these theories have been challenged because there was no scientific and historical evidence. However, their analysis confirmed that patriarchy is man-made.

By the way of explanation, we will expose some of the principal theories that examine critically the origin of patriarchy and challenge male supremacy. Fredrich Engles, who is considered the first one who set an explanation of the origin of patriarchy in his book written in the 1800s "The Origin of the Family: Private, Property, and State." Starting with his assumption, Engles (1884) believed that woman subordination began with the rise of private property. In other words, the replacement of communal ownership of property by private male ownership of basic means of production and the neglecting of women's right in the possession. Consequently, the mother and the children right of inheritance was overthrown to set up the right of the father.

What was observed by the feminists is that patriarchy, in any and all forms, is the ultimate cause of all abuse against women, for them patriarchy is considered as the overarching social construct which ultimately supports abuse. In other words, patriarchy is associated with sexism and this latter is the underbelly of human suffering. Most feminist scholars' view of patriarchy is fairly common. Indeed, several feminist claims state that patriarchy is a systematic attempt to maintain male dominance at home and society. To put it in nutshell, Engles's

theory concerning the social explanation of why women were dispossessed and excluded from inheritance has had some evidence available today. The harsh reality that should be discussed is such theories or ideologies that contribute to distort, undermine and discourage attempts to eradicate gender inequalities. Needless to say, women within the patriarchal ideology have little to gain but a lot to lose by becoming subordinate to the husband.

### **3.1. Patriarchal Inheritance and Women's Exclusion**

The widespread exclusion of women exists in developing countries from owning or controlling property and inheritance. Men continue to have easier access to property and credit than women. Most practices of property ownership and inheritance are not based on customs and law but on perceptions of people or what is right or proper. The patriarchal societies are characterized by gender discrimination in the form of either total deprivation or partial deprivation. As a result, the patriarchal inheritance denies the women in general access to land or property because women as a separate class society are marginalized and subjected to maintain male dominance in society as men are the breadwinners and women the dependents.

First, inheritance is defined as " a perpetual " or continuing right which a man and his heirs have to an estate; an estate which a man has by descent as heir to another or he may transmit to another as his heir; an estate derived from ancestor to a heir in course of law " (Accurate and Reliable Dictionary, 2008). More precisely, the practice of inheritance in all kinds of movable and immovable parental property is a global property but some of the traditional societies are characterized by gender discrimination in the form of either total deprivation or partial deprivation. The exploitation of women in the matter of inheritance is not an old event of human history; rather it is one of the disparities perpetuating women's suffocation in different compartments of life throughout the world. Inheritance is an integral part of the family life and depriving child of each gender from entitlement in parental property is tantamount to diminish the conception of the family as a social unit (Leach, 1952).

On this view, inheritance systems are crucial opportunities for the transfer or exclusion from the transfer, of adult's accumulated physical and capital. These systems are regulated by cultural norms concerning social roles and relationships which are in turn determined and maintained by power differentials among members of societies. Hence, the study of the transfer of physical assets via inheritance practices is the study of social relations. Questions of who is excluded from inheriting particular assets address legal and political rights of property ownership in a society, as well as context, specific values, norms and dynamics of social organization. In particular, kinship systems and gender roles and discrimination is integral to the ways in which inheritance in different African societies are practiced and how these practices influence differential transmissions of wealth and property between husband and wife or parent and

child generations. (Elizabeth, Cooper, 2008). In some countries, inheritance laws and customary practices exclude individuals, and specifically women and orphaned children, from inheriting the property including land, housing and other husbands or fathers were alive ( see, Cooper,2008and Cooper,2010).

By the way of reminder, the Marxist Perspective in the 1970's known as Marxist feminine also places women in the marginalized class and confirmed that their exploitation and subjugation because of their subordinate status and men's dominance. In terms of property rights, the state has the responsibility to give out the inheritance in accordance to the prevalent law when a man fails to decide the matter by his own.

Evidently, many views have contributed to the marginalization of women from traditional inheritance such as land ownership. The dominant view that men are breadwinners and women the dependents; strong male vested interests in all land, including public land and the belief that land distribution to women further decreases from size and fragments cultivated holdings, in turn, reducing agricultural productivity (Argrwal .1994).

On this basis, customary law, traditions, social norms and attitudes believe that women cannot and must not own housing, land and property independently from a man, all serve to ban women from realizing their rights to inherit. Gray and Gulliver(1964) studies are based on the patriarchal inheritance system which is ruled by patriarchal principles that exclude widows and women in general. This is because customary law plays a major role in instigating unequal distribution that insists to deprive women and widows in particular from their right of inheritance. Family household which is mainly headed by male heirs pass on their inheritance to their male elder sons and so on. African customary laws have been seen as a problem for the role they play in creating and prorating unequal distribution of advantage and disadvantage within societies (Whitehead and Tsikata, 2003; Moore, 1986).

Overall, the private and domestic dichotomy has been based on existing values about culture and nature. Culture attempts to control and transcend nature, to use it for its purposes. Therefore, culture is superior to the natural world. The women are identified or symbolically associated with nature while men are associated with culture. Since culture seeks to control and transcend nature, then it is natural that women, by virtue of their close association with nature, should also be controlled and maintained (Moore ,1988:14).

#### **4. Research Methodology**

In attempting to explore the reality of gendered discourse about women's inheritance in Algeria. The research setting is the Beni weragh community in Ammi Moussa, situated in the West of Algeria. Further, the participants are 15

males and 15 females. Their ages range between 27 and 55 years old. They belong to the Beni Weragh community. The aim of selecting this sample is to get adequate information about gendered discursive practices about women's inheritance in the Beni Weragh community. To fit the needs and the purpose of research, the data are gathered from relevant methods such as observations and interviews. Initially, the purpose of collecting data was based on participant unstructured observation of space of investigation. Also, the present research perspective relies on interviews with participants to move past an explicit understanding of the discursive perspective about women's inheritance as well as the evaluation of the role of social norms, discriminatory customs, cultural assumptions and the explicit gender dynamic through their contribution to reinforcing women's exclusion from inheritance.

This means that the analysis adopted is typically qualitative as far as the current investigation is concerned. This analysis serves to enrich the data through direct connection with participants to better explore women's inheritance in the patriarchal communities in the light of the gendered discourse that perpetuates gender inequities. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) claim that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach ;"this means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret phenomena in terms of meanings people brings to them ."

## **5. Results and Discussion**

The current study is designed to analyze how discourse about inheritance reinforces gender stereotypes. The major focus is to examine the way discourse and specific words are invested to reinforce and perpetuate women's deprivation of inheritance. This work deals with the sexist language that subtly reproduces the social asymmetries of status and power in favor of men in matters of inheritance which are caused by patriarchal ideologies and discriminatory customs.

From this view, discourse is never neutral, it mediates and constructs our understanding of reality, reflects and shapes who we are, and is always caught up in social, political, economic, racial, sexual, gendered, religious and cultural formations. Therefore, we adopt Fairclough's approach which focuses on the signifiers that make up the text as the linguistic selections. The aim is also to identify through analysis the particular linguistic, semiotics and inter-discursive features of texts which are part of processes of social change, in ways that facilitate the productive integration of textual analysis into multidisciplinary research on change. It emphasises the social condition of producing and interpreting the text in relation to three levels of social organization (Fairclough, 1989); (a) the social context in which text is issued. (b) The social institutions and (c) the society at large.

Furthermore, Fairclough's approach is so useful because it provides multiple points of analytic entry .It is the interconnection that permits the analysts

to describe, interpret, and explain. So it enables the analysts to work with different types of analysis simultaneously rather sequentially.

Interviewer: Does the woman in BeniWeragh have access to inheritance?

### 5.1.Exclusion and Disguising Identity

Halima says, "No, she must not inherit"

Omar says, "No, No, The woman has not the right ."

Djilali says, " It is only the male who has the right to inherit in BeniWeragh community. "

Interpretation of discourse reveals that women appear to be excluded and marginalized in the matter of inheritance because most of the interviewees express the denial of women's right to inherit material homes and properties among the Beni Weragh community. In the BeniWeragh community, women do not have the right to inherit properties in any case, whether from her family or the death of her husband or increase of divorce. In BeniWeragh, all properties brought during the time of marriage remains the exclusive property of men. This is due to the social belief that daughters belong to someone else. Halima considers women's inheritance as prohibition she said, " she must not inherit.

Males interviewee *Omar* and Djilal believe that woman has not the right to inherit and claimed women's inability to gain and control the property. It is important to note that the concept of discourse in this usage is not purely a 'linguistic 'concept. It is about language and practice. The denial of rights based on gender excluded most women from property ownership and inheritance. Women's exclusion from inheritance is a way to disguise their identity in general and to discourage interrogation of their actions. Women are considered as inferior, powerless or undesirable social actors in the BeniWeragh community. As Fairclough (1982a:43 cited in VanLeeuwen, 2008:135) states, " Discourse is a place where relations of power are exercised and enacted."

### 5.2.Differentiation and Classification:

Interviewer: why does the woman in Beni Weragh have no access to inheritance?

Halima says, « **I'm female not male. I am not allowed to inherit.** »

Mouhamed says, « **She is female, she must not inherit** ».

Zahra says, « From childhood, our parents taught us that it is the male, not the female who must inherit because she is going **to get married and belongs to another family.** »

Gendered discourses differentiate between males and females in the matter of inheritance as two different and separated classes within the same community. The sexist discourse about inheritance eliminates women equality with men and empowers all forms of segregation between males and females. How gender is talked about and how people create and perform binary gender with language. Halima believes that she cannot inherit within Beni Weragh

community because she is female. Mouhamed claims that a woman is prohibited from inheritance because of being a female. How we speak about each other is also as important in the linguistic analysis as to how each gender speaks, because it is socially controlled.

Therefore, we must understand that femininity and masculinity are not innate but are based upon social and cultural conditions. Femininity and masculinity or one's gender identity( Burke, Stets and Pirog-Good 1988; Spence 1985) refers to the degree to which persons see themselves as masculine or feminine given too much interest to what it means to be a man or woman in society. Femininity and masculinity are rooted in the social (one's gender rather than the biological (one's sex ). Societal members decide what being male or female means. ( e.g.: dominant or passive, brave or emotional ).

This illustrates that women ( Halima and Zohra) have been completely excluded as wife, daughter or sister from the process of inheritance because of being a female and not a male. It is clear that the Beni Weragh community allows male children (Mouhamed) to inherit and excludes female who are expected to get married. It is due to the social belief that the daughter belongs to someone else. Thus, the patriarchal families deprive the woman to have access to credit, ownership property and inheritance. They are frightened about their properties being in the hands of another family (the husband of the woman). Fairclough defines discourse as "the representation of the world (Fairclough, 2003:124)". It involves the representation of processes, relations and structures of the material worlds, the 'mental world' of thought, feelings, beliefs, and the social world.

### **5.3. Dehumanization and Objectification :**

Interviewer: Why is the woman in BeniWeragh excluded from her right to inheritance?

Karim says, «**From childhood**, I have already heard this sentence, the woman is **a piece of property owned by men** .She must not inherit, she must be **obedient and submissive to her parents and her husband.** »

The interpretation of the findings demonstrates that women are excluded from inheritance because BeniWeragh customs do not regard the woman as a human being and should have equal rights similar to males. As Fairclough (1992) points out the importance of discourse lies in the fact that it contributes to the construction of social identities to the structures of social relations as well as to the creation of system knowledge and belief. It has been pointed out that personal discourse is shaped by society and social roles are learned in childhood.

At an early age, Karim does not only learn the difference between the two sexes but he also constructs the social and cultural differences between women and men in the BeniWeragh community. Karim realizes that the woman is property owned by him as a man and he is encouraged to control, oppress, and dominate that property. More importantly, Karim identifies that the woman should be obedient, submissive to him and in his mind inheritance is devoted only

to male children. We understand that the patriarchal culture of BeniWeragh depicts gender inequality in which men have dominant power over various spheres of activities whereas it represents women as the object as a piece of property owned by men. It is due to socialization which is fundamental social learning which occurs in childhood. Socialization is understood as the people acquire those behaviours essential for effective participation in society. The individual and society are mutually dependent on socialization essential for culture and the perception of society. (Hudges et al, 2002).

Interpretation of discourse revealed that girls are expected to be obedient, quiet, and submissive, to respect their parents and to be good housewives in the future. Discursive practices may have ideological effects \_\_\_\_\_ that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between (for instances) social classes, women and men, and ethnic /cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and the position of people“ (Fairclough and Wodak 1997:258). The woman is a piece of property owned by men which means that this social situation forced women to stay under the control of men. In this way, to keep women under men's control, patriarchy operates some social customs, traditions and social roles by socialization process. To preserve male supremacy, patriarchy created “masculine “and “feminine” characteristics, private, public realms by gendered socialization process.

#### **5.4.Activation and Passivation**

Interviewer :Why does the woman in Beni Weragh have not access to inheritance?

Miloudsays, “Male deserves to own property and inherits because he is **the breadwinner** whereas female must not inherit because she is going to get married. She does not need inheritance because she is just **a housewife**. “

The same message is repeatedly argued byMiloud that men continue to have easier access to property and credit than women. The patriarchal societies are characterized by gender discrimination in the form of either total deprivation or partial deprivation. Most practices of property ownership and inheritance are not based on customs and law but on perceptions of people or what is right or proper. Miloud claims that man deserves to inherit property because he has a responsibility as the breadwinner of the family. The patriarchal inheritance denies women in general to have access to land or property because women as a separate class society are marginalized and subjected to maintain male dominance in the community of Beni Weragh.

The patriarchal traditions of the BeniWeragh community give priority to men because they believe that men are active; they can work with their fathers to develop agricultural business or substantial enterprises.The marginalization of women from traditional inheritance such as land ownership is due to a

simplification and generalization of male gender roles as being the breadwinner of the household and doing manual/outside labour (to name only a couple), and female gender roles include being the homemaker and caretaker of the children and family. The dominant view that the reproduction and natural functions of women are childbearing and childrearing have been linked with the domestic as separate from the outside world. Consequently, men are stereotyped as being the economic head of the household, or the breadwinner. Men also believe that this is their role alone, they insist that their partners (women) must not inherit property to keep them financially dependent to the husband.

Gender is a common term that generally refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviour, activities and sexes i.e. men and women are having different roles and some major responsibility which they have to fulfil. Physically a female role is to look after the house, children, family, and relatives and on the other hand struggle for caring well, all these things made our women weaker and deprived of basic things. The cultural ideology devalues women, their roles and what they produce. This raises the question of the repression of woman because the patriarchal community of BeniWeragh sees a woman as passive, absent, and marginal. It appears that cultural and social norms at all levels contribute to the exclusion of women as property owners.

#### **5.5. Disempowerment Through The Ideology of Silence**

Interviewersaid, "Why do not women ask for their share in inherited property?"

Amina said, "If I get my inheritance share, something bad will happen and cause pain, danger, unwelcome consequences in my life. We were taught **to keep silent** and never think to ask for inheritance. »

Fatima said, "I prefer to keep **silent** and do not ask for my share in inheritance because my family will refuse because in our tradition the woman who asks for inheritance is recognized as deviant and rebellious one ."

Djamila said, "I cannot speak and ask for inheritance because my brother will beat me. After all, he believes that he is the man and he is the only one who deserves the inheritance. I should keep **silent** to avoid the violence."

In the same context, gender-biased policies customary law, traditions, social norms, and attitudes cause women's inability to own housing land and property independently from a man, all serve to prevent women from realizing their rights to inherit.

The Findings implied that BeniWeragh women still keep silent and do not ask to have access to the inheritance. Fatima thinks that she must keep silent and not to be outspoken concerning the matter of her share in inherited property because she is afraid of her family's reaction. Besides, Fatima is scared of being stigmatized and marginalized by the panoptic community as a deviant and rebellious woman. Fatima has been silenced by the fear of what would happen and how she is perceived by the BeniWeragh community. Djamila prefers to keep silent to prevent the violence of her brother. Djamila's fear of abuse reinforces

her silence and forces her to abandon her right. The worst of all, Amina believes in BeniWeragh myth that if she gets her inheritance to share something bad will happen. She keeps silent and refuses to get her inheritance share to avoid unwelcome consequences. In other words, women's exclusion from inheritance is resulting from the patriarchal culture and practices to force the woman to abandon her right to inheritance shares. Women 's fear that their families will break off, expect of the violence and the strong belief in the myth that if a woman gets her inheritance share, something bad will happen and causes pain, danger or other unwelcome consequence in her life.

All these features lead to the ideology of silence that prevents women's empowerment. The ideology of silence is deeply embedded in BeniWeragh community. Fairclough(1989) argues the ideologies are embedded in language, our commonest form of social behaviours. In making the distinction between "the exercise of power through coercion and that through the manufacture of consent and acquiescence"(4). Fairclough recognizes that power is not just a matter of language, it is an ideology that is the main way consent and acquiescence is manufactured.

More precisely, their silence is not only about refraining from the actual speech, but also about enduring the pain of disappointment and degradation. The women have lost their right of inheritance because of unfamiliarity with their rights and acceptance of their secondary positions. Women have to allow themselves a chance to self-respect and self-transformation from voiceless object to speaking subject. The terrible consequence of remaining voiceless resulted in the dehumanization of women and the setting up of silence of the oppressed.

More importantly, women within BeniWeragh traditions are suffering in silence because they are socialized to be obedient and dependent to males. Patriarchy and gender ideology create male supremacy and women's subjection. The questions that arise within this framework, are to do with how some discourses maintain their authority, how some 'voices get heard whilst others are silenced. Michael Foucault (1980) claimed that discourses comprise bodies of knowledge that systematically create and reproduce particular social institutions (Holloway,1997,p.48;Hall,2000).Foucault wanted to reveal how certain discourses help sustain networks of social meaning which regulates and control people in ways that appear natural. (Searle ,1998,p246).He popularized discourse analysis by exposing links between textual resources and powerful social institutions, drawing concerns about domination and subordination associated with the intellectual traditions of Marxism and feminism. Women are oppressed to the point they cannot react or speak out against violence.

The ideology of silence made women weaker, oppressed and deprived of basic rights. Silence is the patriarchal weapon of control and power used by males

to preserve their supremacy and domination at all levels in the BeniWeragh community. Consequently, most women in BeniWeragh are victims of the patriarchal ideology of silence. They should act to ask for gender equality and combat to end their disempowerment.

### 6. Conclusion

Gendered discourse naturalizes the women's exclusion from inheritance. Most of the respondents agree naturally that women do not have access to inheritance in Beni Weragh community. Essentially, discourse about inheritance expresses gender inequality in which men have dominant power and control over various spheres of life whereas women are considered as an object as a piece of property owned by men. Consequently, the linguistic characteristics of gendered discourse about inheritance serve to prevent women from realizing their right to inherit and causes women 'inability to own land and property independently from men. Foucauldian discourse analysis explains that discourse is interwoven with power and knowledge to constitute the oppression of those "other" in our society, serving to marginalize, silence and oppression.

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