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The Anthroposemiosis of Social Organization in the Hassani Community: The Case of Female Marital Status

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Abstract: *The Hassani community draws heavily on the nonverbal language component for the sake of social organization. The female marital status constitutes an absorbing non-word aspect, wherein social organization of women's relations gives rise to dense semiotic and communicative weight. Along with this focus, this article has endeavoured in the light of the anthroposemiotics theory to probe into how women in the Hassani community have recourse to natural cosmetic substances to physically unfold their marital status. The article in effect dissected the female marital status on the grounds of three major body parts, namely: hands and feet/eyes designating celibacy status and divorce, widowhood and marriage respectively. The work findings by way of synchronic analysis cast light on the semiotic and communicative code underlying the Hassani social organization in the case of woman's marital status. Within the confines of anthroposemiotics and communication paradigms, the interpretation of meaning, the structural-processual aspect of nonlinguistic interaction and the conventionality of symbolic coding lay down the bulk of the theoretical grounding to approach social organization in the Hassani community.*
Keywords : *Anthroposemiosis ; sign ; code ; paradigm ; syntagm.*
Résumé : *La communauté hassani s'appuie fortement sur la composante du langage non verbal pour des raisons d'organisation sociale. L'état matrimonial féminin constitue un non-mot absorbant, où l'organisation sociale des relations féminines donne lieu à un poids sémiotique et communicatif dense. Parallèlement à cette focalisation, cet article s'est efforcé, à la lumière de la théorie anthroposémiotique, de sonder comment les femmes de la communauté hassani ont recours à des substances cosmétiques naturelles pour épanouir physiquement leur état matrimonial. L'article décortique en effet l'état matrimonial féminin en fonction de trois grandes parties du corps, à savoir : les mains et les pieds/yeux désignant respectivement le célibat et le divorce, le veuvage et le mariage. Les résultats du travail par analyse synchronique éclairent le code sémiotique et communicatif qui sous-tend l'organisation sociale hassani dans le cas de l'état matrimonial de la femme. Dans les limites de l'anthroposémiotique et des paradigmes de la communication, l'interprétation du sens, l'aspect structurel-processuel de l'interaction non linguistique et la conventionnalité du codage symbolique constituent l'essentiel des fondements théoriques pour aborder l'organisation sociale dans la communauté hassani.*
Mots clés *: Anthroposémiose ; pancarte ; coder ; paradigme ; syntagme.*

1. Introduction

Signs, be they verbal or nonverbal, are texts endowed with meanings (Sebeok, 2005; Noth, 1995). Nonverbal cultural signs are a type of texts and are deemed a signifying system to provide information and construct reality. Culture, by definition, is inevitably existent within two distinct paradigms: material and intangible (Williams, 1990). In this respect, cultural signs appertain to culture and, likewise, come into existence both tangibly and symbolically. Among cultural signs are those used in the

Hassani community to unveil the female marital status. They are culturally-bound for being material and signifying production of the Hassani culture and a remarkable text for study and interpretation.

The paper in hand correspondingly seeks, in light of semiotics theory, to scrutinize the process of anthroposemiosis or signification systems underpinning the production of the human symbolic activity as to the female marital status. The work fundamentally centers around the dissection of the anthroposemiosis and communication processes of the symbolic behaviours and structures germane to marital status and their attendant semiotic weight worth interpreting. The following sections elaborate on the bulk of mainstream semiotics, methodology and analysis of the work data, handled below under the headings assigned to each.

2. Review of the literature

This theoretical review seeks to touch upon the anthroposemiotic and communicative literature to approach some cultural signs in the Hassani community. It shall investigate mainstream anthroposemiotics and communication, particularly signs, codes, anthroposemiosis or semiosis and a set of linguistic dichotomies such as langue/parole, competence/performance and paradigm/syntagm, to mention just a few, in addition to a wide range of terminologies pertinent to the study of social organization via the female marital status in the Hassani community. Below is an elaboration on the bulk of anthroposemiotics and communication theories.

2.1. *The anthroposemiotics theory*

T. Hawkes (1985, p. 124) and P. Cobley and L. Jansz (2000, p. 6-37) thrash out the semiotic literature bequeathed by the Swiss Linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. They assert that Saussure and Peirce have – independently, albeit at approximately the same era (Deely, 1990, p. 114) – set up semiology or semiotics respectively as the rationale for the empirical study of signs and any signifying system of meaning production in human society. Saussure actually has been most often quoted as being the founder of semiology as ‘’the science that studies the life of signs within society’’ (Saussure, 1969, p. 16; Cobley, 2005, p. 259). As to Peirce, he contributed to institute an independent field addressing the meanings borne through signs and symbols, hence semiotics (Martin and Ringham, p.2000:1), as ‘’the theory of signification, that is, of the generation or production of meaning’’ (Martin and Ringham, 2000, p.117).

S. Ungar and B. R. McGraw put forth that the subject matter of semiotics pivots on ‘’the material practices, forms, and institutions of signs in culture’’ (1989, p. xii); culture constitutes ‘’a system of symbols and meanings’’(Schneider, 1976, p.197 ; Carey, 1989, p.51), a resource encompassing a set of ideas and symbols available for social action (Schudson, 1989, p. 155), ‘’a mechanism creating an aggregate of texts and texts as the realization of culture’’ (Lotman and Uspensky, 1978, p. 218). P. Cobley clarifies in similar vein that: ‘’just as semiotics is the name for the study of the action of signs (or semiosis), so anthroposemiotics is the name for the study of the human use of signs (or anthroposemiosis)’’ (2005, p. 154; See Deely, 1990, for further elaboration on

anthroposemiosis). For all practical purposes, this paper likewise shall draw upon the assumptions sanctioned by either semiotics or semiology on equal basis, in that it shall investigate the process of *anthroposemiosis* rather than *semiosis*, as it meets the academic orientation of the current work, that is, *anthroposemiotics*, *signification* and the configuration of sign systems by women in the Hassani society in the analytical part.

H. Wray provides this wording about semiotics as ‘’the study of signs, of semiosis or communication’’ which function ‘’in the mind of an interpreter to convey a specific meaning in a given situation’’ (1981, p. 4); semiosis here refers to ‘‘the process of making and using signs’’ (Sless, 1986, p. 2) or ‘’the action of signs’’ (Cobley, 2005, p. 259). A. J. Greimas avers that ‘’the human world as it appears to us is defined essentially as the world of signification’’ (1983, p. 3). On the grounds of this statement, semiotics reckons with the probe into the meanings yielded by way of signification, i.e. the process of ‘’the generation and production of meaning’’ (Martin and Ringham, 2000, p.117), which could be equated with semiosis. Hawkes correspondingly discusses the semiotic structures given rise to by individuals since they are sign-producers and sign-receivers within the process of semiosis by means of the five senses (1977, p. 134). It follows then that the process of semiosis or signification systems underpins the production of the human symbolic activity, i.e. semiotic behaviours and structures in culture.

Noteworthy here is that the semiosis process or signification can be held to function within the confines of Saussure’s *langue-parole* dichotomy (the French wording for language and speech respectively (Harris, 2005, p. 122)) germane to any system of communication, be it verbal or nonverbal (Martin and Ringham, 2000, p. 79). For the sake of illustration, despite its reference to word language, langue stands for the entire signifying possibilities, linguistic or nonlinguistic, available for use; parole, on the other hand, is understood to designate the particular or concrete actualization of an individual’s parole (Martin and Ringham, 2000, p.79); Langue is fundamentally ‘’utilized in the construction of an instance of parole’’ (Cobley and Jansz, 2000, p. 15).Saussure’s dichotomy has been significantly accentuated in light of Noam Chomsky’s *competence/performance*, referring to the individual’s abilities or totality of competencies and the particular actualization of an ability respectively (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 57-58). ‘’Each example of parole presents a particular performance’’ (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 57). This assumption unravels the analogy and intersection between both dichotomies.

Expanding the boundaries of the semiotic approach further to the central material of the field, a sign may be defined as ‘’everything that, on the grounds of a previously established social convention, can be taken as something standing for something else’’ (Eco, 1976, p. 16). Floyd Merrel in similar vein holds the view in light of Peirce’s assumptions that: ‘’in its simplest form, the Peircean sign has been defined as something that relates to something else for someone in some respect or capacity’’ (2005, p.28); a cross, to illustrate, is a present entity representing a religious identity known as Christianity. It follows further that signs operate within the circumscription of their ability as *pointers*, for they betoken absent, larger and more abstract concepts – moving from the existing tangible detail to the physically non-existent but *‘’invoked*

abstraction'' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 10). The sign as a pointer is concrete but the meaning it yields is abstract since it requires interpretation.

Traditionally, the interpretation of signs has been handled in light of two main structural models: dyadic and triadic (Cobley, 2005, p. 262); Cobley accentuates that "a sign is a factor in a process conceived either dyadically (signifier/signified) in accord with Saussure and his followers or triadically (sign/representamen/ object/ interpretant) in accord with Peirce and his "(2005, p. 262). The former scheme of a sign is a dichotomy, i.e. a twofold relationship, originally outlined by Saussure comprising a duality understood to have two planes termed the *signifier* and the *signified*. The signifier exemplifies the explicit material aspect of a sign, of a tangible presence (Cobley and Jansz, 2000, p. 10-11), whereas the signified symbolizes the referent (Cobley, 2005, p. 264), tacit immaterial element and functionally present when invoked (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 23). The exemplification provided above in defining signs clarifies the two entities shaping Saussure's dichotomy. With regard to the second structural scheme of a sign, Peirce has split signs discrepantly formulating a triad recognizing three components: ''A *representamen*/sign conveys information about the object it represents'' (Cobley, 2005, p. 250), the *object*, or referent for which the former stands, and the *interpretant* which encapsulates the meaning borne by the representamen about the object (Cobley and Jansz, 2000, p. 21-23; Merrell, 2005, p. 28). According to J. Deely, the interpretant component is ''the key to understanding the action of signs as a process'' (1990, p. 25), on condition that meaning originally emanates from its interdependence with the representamen and its object.

Having reviewed the concept of signs and the semiotic schemes structuring them, semioticians commonly sort signs into three chief classes determined via the relationship between the signifier and signified: *icon*, *index*, and *symbol* (Merrell, 2005, p. 31). An icon entails an affinity of similarity or resemblance between the sign and its semiotic object (Merrell, 2005, p. 31), like a picture featuring nature. An index centers around connection between the planes of a sign, in which the signifier interrelates with its semiotic object via ''some actual or physical or imagined causal connection'' (Merrell, 2005, p. 31), such as a wedding cake denoting the entire marriage ceremony or smoke pointing to fire. Ultimately, a symbol involves a relationship of arbitrariness between the manifest and tacit elements of a sign (Merrell, 2005, p. 31), like a cross implying Christianity. Worth considering here is that the arbitrary bearing of the sign segments on each other is determined by social convention (Deely, 1990, p. 68; Merrell, 2005, p. 31).

In addition to the terminology detailed above, the description of particular aspects of signs entails having recourse to more concepts such as *motivation* or *constraint*, *convention*, *denotation*, *connotation* and *metasigns* to fulfill this need. Being synonyms, motivation or constraint refer to ''the degree to which the signified determines the signifier'', in that one may demarcate a sign as highly motivated or constrained when the signified considerably serves the identification of the signifier (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p.26). Quite in accordance with Leeds-Hurwitz's assumption, W. Noth discusses "… motivation…of a sign by a signified "by way of *iconicity* (1995, p. 125); "the motivation of a sign by iconicity "involves using the icon sign category (Noth, 1995, p. 118).

An instance of a sign having high motivation is a photograph by virtue of the close analogy the image is commonly assumed to mirror. A political cartoon nevertheless need not hold up tremendous correspondence to the referent, and thus has low motivation or constraint. Second, convention marks the arbitrary"interrelations within the sign between representamen, semiotic object, and interpretant "(Merrell, 2005, p. 31). It relates to ‘’the degree of tradition or habit associated with a particular sign’’, in that the semiosis process often particularly reckons with *conventionality* which restricts both semiotic usage and interpretation (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 26); variation in convention – characterized by agreement and conformity amongst social actors – would hereby act upon the meaning and interpretation of signs.

A pair of scales is high in convention for its interpretation is contextually associated with justice. Third, denotation indicates ‘’the straightforward denotative meaning of a sign’’ (Cobley and Jansz, 2000, p. 41), wherein the relations between the sign and its object are fixed (Cobley, 2005, p. 178) in terms of what to be encoded or decoded. Connotation, on the other hand, signifies a "second-order meaning "of a sign, "often a cultural one, complementing denotation"(Cobley, 2005, p.174).

Noth accentuates the concept further stating that "the connotational theory of the symbolic is the one which defines the symbol as a sign to whose primary signifier a secondary meaning is added"(Noth, 1995, p. 118). This additional significance of a sign is acquired from the context in which it is applied (Martin and Ringham, 2000, p. 43). To illustrate, a pigeon denotes a type of birds but conventionally connotes peace. Lastly, R. Hodge and G. Kress shed light on the concept of metasigns suggesting that they are ‘’sets of markers of social allegiance (solidarity, group identity and ideology) which permeate the majority of texts’’ (1988, p. 80).

A metasign is held a distinctive label for it bears the knowledge framework within which information about other signs yet to disseminate should be construed and organizes the signifying units into a hierarchy, in that it classifies some as more general than others, and, therefore, conveys the construction knowledge about the related subordinate signs in rank (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 27). Clothing styles are relevant examples of metasigns as they mark geographic origin and identity.

In this respect, one may highlight the significance of a sign or *key*, also labelled *master*, *dominant* and *core*, symbols within culture emphasized by social actors in their use, by virtue of their crucial functionality to encapsulate and hand down cultural knowledge and meanings– whether religious, political or otherwise – and sanction cultural continuity (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 32). M. C. Bateson accordingly points out that the best conception of human life is to be accounted as a composition, "a continual reimagining of the future and reinterpretation of the past to give meaning to the present " (1990, p. 29). Being a social creation, the social world is a joint construction emerging through a community of creators cooperating mutually to generate ‘’an overlay of meaning laid across the natural world’’ by way of symbols to ultimately construct a coherent image of reality (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p.29-33), producing actually a social reality by symbolic work in the space taken up by social actors (Carey, 1989, p. 30. From a slightly discrepant angle to this function of symbols, W. Leeds-Hurwitz puts forward

the instrumental role of symbolic practices to change the world and communicate stances to potential competitors or even antagonists (1993, p. 34).

Equally important, J. W. Carey touches upon the social conflict over ‘’the simultaneous codetermination of ideas…and social relations’’, a struggle over social acts and practices (1989, p. 87); symbols constitute a functionally pivotal component of a power clash over the establishment of the norm underlying ideas appropriation, reality construction and interpretation (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 34). An extension of the symbolic functionality of signs draws attention to the recognition of symbols – like metasigns – as identity markers: ‘Displaying symbols is one way of announcing a particular identity or affiliation with a particular group, whether that be national, occupational, corporate, religious, or gender based’’ (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 34). Symbols manipulation likewise unfolds characteristics such as social status; the latter may be either *ascribed* – i.e. socially inherited – or *achieved* – meaning that through individual’s performance social status is acquired (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 35).

Furthering the discussion of the semiotic approach, the occurrence of signs entails an indispensable consideration of *codes*. Technically, semioticians term ‘’the set or system of rules and correspondences which link signs to meanings’’ a code (Cobley, 2005, p. 170-171). M. L. Foster avers that ‘’to speak of a symbol, or of the meaning of a symbol, is misleading, for no symbol exists or has meaning except in relation to a network of other symbols. Symbolic representation implies configuration’’ (1980, p. 371). As worded here, the existence of a symbol and its meaning requires a network within which it is embedded relationally with other signs. It is laid down that ‘’Where there are signs there is system’’ (Culler, 1977, p. 91). R. E.

Cooley views code as ‘’a culturally defined, rule-governed system of shared arbitrary symbols that is used to transmit meaning’’ (1983, p. 242); it follows then that a code represents a conventionally established context or system by culture by which to configure signs and pass on meaning between social actors. J. L. Dolgin et al. accordingly spotlight the functionality of code in a community stating that: ‘’ groups have symbolic codes, or systems of signs, which give order to the beliefs held by their members "and which "represent a condensation of a complex set of motives, experiences, knowledge, and desire which they help to shape and express at the same time that they keep so much of it unsaid and below the surface"(1977, p. 6). A group, whether that be dominant or subordinate, sets up order of convictions by social actors in light of symbolic codes, which underlie an intricately condensed aggregate of social motives, experiences and knowledge.

Ultimately, this overview delineates some of the chief characteristics of codes. T. O’Sullivan et al. propose a set of descriptive terminology for further discussion of this concept (1983, p. 36-37). They suggest that codes are structured of a set of units ordered in *paradigms* from which social actors select one for use (O’Sullivan et al., 1983, p. 36-37). The units of a paradigm have some link by partial resemblance in terms of either form or meaning (Cobley, 2005, p. 233). Those units are susceptible to occupy the same place or substitute each other in the same set in a *"syntagmatic chain "*(Martin and Ringham, 2000, p. 98).

To illustrate, the traffic-light signals represent a paradigm whose items operate alternatively, and only one sign must function at a time to display a particular traffic regulation, hence meaning. A related term to paradigm is*syntagm*. O'Sullivan et al. point out that the units singled out from a paradigm are merged together syntagmatically into a message or text (1983, p. 36-37). In accordance with this assumption, a syntagm designates the consecutive linkage of units to produce meaning (Martin and Ringham, 2000, p. 129; Cobley, 2005, p. 273). An example of syntagm is the overall clothing a person wears at one time, whose composition hinges on items drawn from various paradigms. Worth remarking here is that ''paradigms are virtual rather than realized…. A member of a paradigmatic class may become realized by virtue of selection to occupy a before or after slot in an actualized syntagmatic sequence. Only one member of a class may be thus realized'' (Foster, 1980, p. 373). By and large, paradigms and syntagms are "sorts of order imposed on social and cultural reality "(Ben-Amos, 1977, p. 46); the social and cultural construction of reality draws largely on these two categories of signifying configuration.

Leeds-Hurwitz holds the view that the distinction Saussure makes between langue – *''a complete language''*, *''the larger set of infinite potentialities''* – and parole – the actual realization of utterances drawn from the former – discussed previously underlies heavily the description of paradigm and syntagm (1993, p. 57). She maintains that " just as analysts infer langue from parole, so they infer paradigms (the potential resource sets) from syntagms (the actual combinations)'' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 57).

The third characteristic of signifying systems handled in this discussion is worded by O'Sullivan et al. Stating that coding bears meaning which derives from common consensus and cultural experiences of its users (1983, p. 36-37). In this regard, J. Maquet unfolds that signification entails the existence of a particular group or ''a community of minds'' (1982, p. 9). For clarity's sake, the knowledge and social particularities of a community transmitted through codes are conventionally internalized symbolically in the minds of social actors, who likewise by collective consensus produce conventional social realities and hence appropriately interpret the meanings borne by any sign. O'Sullivan et al. emphasize the point that negotiation and meaning exchange involve the interaction between messages, cultural members and reality for the sake of meaning production and understanding (1983, p. 42).

The ultimate characteristic O'Sullivan et al. describe is that coding serves the classification, organization, perception, transmission as well as communication of material relating to social reality (1983, p. 36-37). In so doing, '' reality is already encoded, or rather the only way we can perceive and make sense of reality is by the codes of our culture…. What passes for reality in any culture is the product of the culture's codes, so reality is always already encoded'' (Fiske, 1987, p. 4). The codes of culture are the means social actors employ to encode reality and correspondingly decode. Encoding centres around bearing information through codes while decoding stands for the interpretative process of the encoded material; encoders and decoders having like codes and cultural experiences will encode and decode analogous or even identical meanings in texts (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 61-62). However, the process of encoding and decoding information might be influenced by the fact that codes are ''states of

dynamic equilibrium''(Krampen, 1986, p. 128), ranging between stasis and change , in that a single sign may bring about individually minor changes by minor members of a culture to subvert the expected meanings and ''gain a limited degree of autonomy or even power'', as an innovative form of resistance to the social organization established by dominant groups who appropriate power and meaning to guarantee the subordination of the former, and who likewise have recourse to codes since they are ''human inventions, designed to create order where chaos might otherwise reign'' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 64-66).

Establishing forms of resistance against those of order may occasion a clash of behaviours and thoughts between innovation and tradition which are better grasped in light of Roman Jakobson's assumption about order: ''the traditional canon and the artistic novelty as a deviation from that canon'' (1971, p. 87). In a similar way, Roland Barthes argues for the need ''to decipher the world in order to remake it (for how remake it without deciphering it?)'' (1982, p. 352). Deciphering or decoding as a way to understanding sanctions remaking the world; remaking in this sense implies innovation and change.

2.2. The communication theory

The communication theory involves the study of meaning and people's channels for the transmission of ideas, whether via words or non-word forms such as clothing, food, objects, to mention just a few (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. xv-xviii). Such theory recognizes communication as ''a system of social codes'' and studies praxis, roughly defined as ''situated knowledge'' which underlies social actors' theoretical cognizance so as to undertake social practices (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. xviii).

Praxis implies a connection between structure and process in communication (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. xx); according to Leeds-Hurwitz, structure stands for ''the social forms available to people as they participate in events'', while process refers to ''the ways in which they use those forms'' (1993, p. 66). She further puts forward that ''people rely heavily on preexisting structures: ideas they have about what is appropriate, norms they have internalized, assumptions they make about what is possible'' within two communicative aspects, structural and processual inspired by the ''behavioural repertoires'' that a community provides for social actors – that is, an accumulated knowledge of past and prior experiences (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. xx-xxi). It follows then that the structural aspect of communication encompasses the culturally-established knowledge as to the handling of social practice based on the recombination of past elements within a process.

A significant particularity of these two communicative aspects is that they are closely bound up, and thus should be considered jointly in analysis of the underlying patterns of social life; V. Turner in this light supplies this phrase to describe this correlation: ''the processual structure of social action'' (1974, p. 13).

From a slightly different angle appertaining to the communication theory, A. Donnellon assumes that ''the human system for interaction is essentially a set of communication codes consisting of elements and rules for the behavioral exchange of information'' (1986, p. 138); the behavioural exchange of information is the outcome of

the human interactional system or communicative codes which ground the necessary knowledge and governing principles for such purpose.

By and large, the concept of code centres around the larger signifying system within which the individual signs embed relationally and the governing rules for their usage by social actors. A. G. Smith accordingly puts forward that ‘’meaning is a product of coding, and coding is a form of behaviour that is learned and shared by the members of a communication group…. Coding is learned and shared, and any behaviour that is learned and shared is cultural’’ (1966, p. 6-7). Smith here argues for the conventionality of meaning production as it requires from the members of a communication group sharing the same coding and background knowledge. Leeds-Hurwitz in light of this assumption provides the following constituent elements appertaining to the communication of meaning, namely: ‘’(a) the message or text, (b) the person who created the text, (c) the people interpreting the text, and (d) the external reality to which both text and people refer’’ (1993, p. 60). She further argues that ‘’wherever emphasis is placed, ultimately meaning arises from the combination of the text, its creator, its audience, and the external world’’ (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 60).

Broadening the scope of this theory further, the linguist Roman Jakobson deems all communication to recognize six components or functions, and devises them and their relations as follows: addresser, context, message, contact, code and addressee (Martin and Ringham, 2000, p. 36-37). On the basis of this communicative scheme, communication, then encompasses a message initiated by an addresser (sender) destined for an addressee (receiver), entailing a contact between these two agents – which may be oral, visual, to mention just a few –which must be formulated on the grounds of a shared code –such as speech, numbers, writing, etc. –so that it would be intelligible, and lastly referring to a recognizable context to enable making sense (Martin and Ringham, 2000, p. 37). "

Jakobson's central point is that the message cannot supply all of the meaning of a transaction. Meaning derives also from the context, the code and the means of contact, in other words, meaning resides in the total act of communication"(Martin and Ringham, 2000, p. 37); the generation of meaning thus requires the interaction between all those elements within the communicative process. These assumptions shall be accommodated in further detail in the analytical part. What follows is a discussion of the methodology then analysis of the work data.

3. Methodology and Analysis

3.1. *Methodology*

The present paper subsumes under anthroposemiotics, and is principally a synchronic analysis and interpretative in nature;"synchronic analysis studies a sign system at a given point of time, irrespective of its history"(Noth, 1995, p. 118; See Cobley, 2005, p. 273 and Martin and Ringham, 2000, p. 128, for further discussion of synchrony). This paper accordingly probes synchronically into the anthroposemiosis and communication processes of the female marital status in the Hassani society with reference to celibacy, marriage, divorce and widowhood. Along with this focus, the

methodology of this work is quite particular: a sole procedure has been conducted so far to provide data.

The methodology of this study, for all practical purposes, has been essentially handled by way of participant observation of the master symbols utilized by women through natural cosmetic substances such as *henna* and *kohl* on hands/feet and eyes respectively, which stand out with considerable prominence at the reach of social actors for interpretation. In other terms, for being a member of this society and sharing the same background knowledge and cultural particularities with the sign encoders and decoders, I have undertaken the methodological procedure of data collection in light of my previous cognizance and current participant observation of the symbols communicated by females particularly in communal social events such as marriage, naming new-born babies, the return of pilgrims, cross-country relatives visit, to mention just a few, wherein most individuals of the tribe(s), relatives and friends rally together to celebrate. In social events as such, as a matter of fact, intricacies of anthroposemiosis and communication rise to prominence and become salient for observers, including marital status or otherwise.

3.2. Analysis

Having reviewed the bulk of theoretical grounding to approach the subject of this study then the attendant methodology, this part concerns itself with the analysis of anthroposemiosis and communication processes of the female marital status in the Hassani community. It encompasses six main overviews, each deals with a specific analytical datum. They are elaborated on below in turn under the heading assigned to each.

3.2.1. Paradigmatic analysis of the marital status code

The paradigmatic configuration of items as to the female marital status in the Hassani community exclusively recognizes three major aesthetic signs, germane to three body parts, namely: hands, feet and eyes. Such an assemblage of signifying units by way of cosmetic substances on these body parts structures the female marital status code. The female social actors, for all practical purposes, have recourse to this signifying system to bear specific marital information so that they would correspondingly construct an intricately gender-based social and cultural reality. Along with this focus, this signifying system of symbolic configuration sorts out paradigmatically two chief semiotic sets by virtue of variation in the anthroposemiosis process functionality on social actors' part. The semiotic configuration outcome hereby is yet to give rise to two paradigmatic classes.

The first paradigmatic class encompasses a sole sign, visibly recognized when a woman dyes her hands with ***henna*** – a reddish dye obtained from a tropical plant used especially on the hair. The dyed hands with henna altogether constitute a representamen or signifier, albeit the substance principally underpins the functional semiotic behavior; henna as a pointer in effect betokens a semiotic object denoting a cosmetic substance, while connotation that the interpretant or signified encapsulate is to be construed as celibacy.

As to the second paradigmatic class, a female social actor generates two representamens once she makes her eyes up with ***kohl*** – a black stone from which to extract a powder to darken the eyelashes including a very thin part of the skin of the eyelids – and/or dyes feet with henna. The upshot of this semiotic practice yields two representamens or signifiers denoting visibly semiotic objects understood as cosmetic substances and connoting the same interpretant or signified construed as a marriage-experienced female, whether that be in the case of widow, divorced or married women. These signifying pointers bear polysemic interpretant, in that social actors in the Hassani community interpret those representamens as referring to one of the aforementioned marital status.

3.2.2. Syntagmatic analysis of the marital status code

Having touched upon the paradigmatic classes of the female marital status, the syntagmatic configuration of signifying units underlies the second sort of order imposed on social and cultural reality. With regard to the celibacy paradigmatic class, a sole signifying item makes up the bulk of the two categories of semiotic configuration: paradigm and syntagm. When an unmarried woman seeks to unveil her marital status, she draws on the conventional semiotic practice in hand marked by the selection of the entire paradigmatic class due to its incorporation of a sole representamen to show up a syntagm without actual structure, since combination of semiotic items is absent.

The celibate woman's langue/competence apropos marital status accordingly consists of only one paradigmatic class of selection, which likewise sanctions a sole potential resource item to actualize a syntagmatic parole/performance.

As to the second paradigmatic class, the female social actors' behavioural repertoire within the confines of langue/competence recognizes two dominant signifying units, dyed feet and blackened eyes. Whenever there is a need to expose their marital status, female social actors select either the eyes or feet or both in the anthroposemiosis process after being associated with the aforementioned cosmetic substances. In other terms, a woman has at her disposal a twofold paradigmatic resource set from which the selection of a representamen adequately connotes marriage, divorce or widowhood status. Being potentially used individually or jointly at once, a woman's parole/performance is actualized syntagmatically once both signs are merged together. In this semiotic behaviour, the syntagm is structured by way of the items combination to consistently spotlight the female status above. Noteworthy here is that, notwithstanding it does not convey the same signification or is rather a symbolically latent sign, dyed hands with henna quite often accompany the semiotically active feet and eyes in the overall syntagm.

3.2.3. Power relations within the female semiotic behaviour

Given the staple findings arisen out of the synchronic semiotic analysis of paradigmatic and syntagmatic classes, the female semiotic behaviours are recognizably discrepant in terms of meaning density generated and reality constructed, whether that be on the part of celibate, widow, divorced or married women. In this sense, the latter paradigmatic class items stand out significantly against the former of celibacy, as they subsume under

an intricately dense langue/competence giving rise to three potential resource units as to three life experiences. The signifying upshot thus ineluctably begets meaning disparity and symbolic ascendancy of the semiotic behaviours encapsulated within women'parole/performance of the experienced social actors over that appertaining to the celibacy paradigmatic class.

For the sake of clarity, the resource units from the experience paradigmatic class are to mean that a social actor has experienced both being celibate and one or all of the three marital status associated with a woman after celibacy concurrently, except that they rise to prominence and supremacy exchangeably. This is conspicuous in the centering of the celibacy sign betokening its subordinate position by comparison with the rest, which are general and dominant metasigns heading the semiotic hierarchy since both signs designate two physical extremes, or rather the signifying and interpretative consistency of the semiotic practice to connote the marriage, divorce and widowhood experiences with all the attendant sexual and psychological behaviours and conditions. Yet, the semiotic value of power is to transpose from position primacy within the experience paradigmatic class with regard to divorce and widowhood into a subsidiary status to equate the celibacy paradigmatic class. This is so owing to the fact that these women have no privilege to the sexual behaviours and psychological conditions associated with the married female social actors.

3.2.4. Female marital status and communication

The analysis of the female marital status signs has so far handled them as being non-linguistic text appertaining to non-word language. Still, there is a pertinent bearing of semiotics on communication theory, in that the female social actors transcend the semiotic functionality of signs to have access to communication to fulfill thereby a whole host of communicative needs and transmission of ideas.

Being a system of social codes, the communication of the female marital status in the Hassani community reckons with the communicative praxis or situated knowledge available for social actors to draw on. Indeed, to undertake social practices with reference to marital status in light of the communicative value of signs, the female social actors have recourse to their theoretical cognizance of the praxis sanctioned by their behavioural repertoires. These symbolic behavioural repertoires lay down the bulk of an accumulated culturally-established knowledge that the Hassani community provides for social actors. Along with this focus, the female social actors make use of these behavioural repertoires on the grounds of two chief communicative aspects: structure and process.

For clarity's sake, the signifying units obtained from both paradigmatic classes make up the semiotic structural resources by which to meet communicative purposes, while process pertinently relates to the configuration of social practice based on the syntagmatic combination of resource units within the overall anthroposemiosis process. Being closely bound up and underlie the communicative patterns of social life through anthroposemiosis, structure and process of the female marital status trigger off two discrepant communicative contexts.

The first of which concerns the unmarried woman who counts as a sender of a message through the exhibited structure of the henna dye on hands, while the recipient could be whoever provided that she/he shares the same cultural knowledge by which to consistently interpret the message. Notwithstanding, there is a marked disparity of process and message meaning reception between women and men. With regard to women, the receiver construes the message to convey either an actually current affiliation with the celibacy group or a former affiliate member. On the other hand, the situation bears some absorbing social practice for the male recipient process. A man would potentially understand the message to be a transmission or an invitation to approach, flirtation or even serious engagement.

The second communicative context relates to the status of marriage, divorce and widowhood. Women within this semiotic matrix are senders of a message handled via the communicative structures at their disposal, namely: blackened eyes and dyed feet. Being so, these structures operate functionally within the communicative process mediating between the female senders and the other potential receivers, be they female or male social actors. Discrepancy in process and meaning reception likewise remarkably features in this communicative context on account of gender perception of the message. The female recipients in effect may interpret the transmitted message as an actual affiliate member within the experience social group, and, thus, it would correspondingly stand out as a metasign or marker of social allegiance and group identity between these female social actors, who permeate such tendencies through anthroposemiosis and nonverbal communication. The celibate female recipients, nonetheless, do not enjoy this communicative privilege, in that the metasign message to come across excludes them from interaction, and hence from affiliation with the experience female social group. As to men, on the other hand, the communicative process is quite different, for they receive the communicated message as a signal to break down any opportunity for approach or flirtation interaction with the married woman, and as a potential communicative invitation to interact with the divorced or widow women.

3.2.5. Gender and Power

Having probed into the semiotic and communicative aspects of the female marital status in the Hassani community, gender and power rise to prominence as a further thematic matrix by way of symbolic practice. Power is indeed gender-based with reference to the agents of practice, whether that be semiotic or communicative. In this sense, the male agency contradicts that of the female. To clarify, the male social actors are passive agents as they achieve no active assignment within the communication and anthroposemiosis processes, by virtue of lacking in langue/competence resource items for their behavioural repertoires in the handling of social practice and interaction of marital status. The male agency hereby is overwhelmed by passivity in terms of meaning dissemination and reality construction on the grounds of anthroposemiosis and interactional communication. Such passivity would hence underlie the subordinate power position of the male agency apropos of parole/performance in marital status.

The female agency nonetheless is endowed with tellingly sublime particularities. The female agents actually do enjoy intricately dense langue/competence by which to

set up symbolic and communicative ascendancy: they head paradigmatic and syntagmatic class items as well as communicative structure and process; anthroposemiosis and communication are therefore overwhelmingly encapsulated within the female parole/performance. Such semiotic supremacy enables the female agency to appropriate the power to communicate and organize social practice symbolically, and underpin meaning permeation, reality construction and social hierarchy.

3.2.6. Coding, interpretation and conventionality of social organization

The female marital status designates a telling aspect of social organization in the Hassani community by way of anthroposemiosis. Such social organization is realized in light of semiotic and communicative practices on the part of the female social actors. Anthroposemiosis and interaction are accordingly gender-based, in that the whole semiotic and interactive processes are exclusively undertaken by the female agency. Indeed, the social organization appertaining to the female marital status reckons with a conventional semiotic usage and interpretation within the anthroposemiosis process; anthroposemiosis here is low in motivation or constraint by virtue of absence of a close analogy between the signifier and signified, and is yet high in convention as to the relationality between the representamen and its referent. For clarity's sake, the signifying items of the paradigmatic classes reviewed formerly do not demarcate highly motivated or constrained signs, since the signified do not serve accurate identification of the signifiers. On the other hand, the usage and interpretation of these resource items are restricted by conventionality, which acts upon the meaning permeation on the grounds of consensus and conformity amongst social actors.

The paradigmatic classes' items are thus conventionally encoded within the anthroposemiosis processes, whose decoding likewise entails the contextual praxis and tradition that social actors have internalized to construe and disseminate meanings. Reality construction regarding the female marital status in the Hassani community circulates in similar vein, within the circumscription of conventional encoding and decoding of semiotic usage and interpretation.

It follows then that the underlying system of conventions confines coding to be a culturally defined and rule-governed signifying configuration of shared arbitrary symbols available for human action and transmission of meaning. Arbitrariness of symbolic configuration holds up a condensation of an intricate set of unsaid marital motives, experiences and knowledge of the female social actors, which quite often remain below the surface but functionally present when invoked, particularly in communal social events such as marriage, naming new-born babies, the return of pilgrims, cross-country relatives visiting, to mention just a few. Furthermore, symbolic codes give rise to the cultural particularities with reference to the behavioural exchange of information non-verbally and marking geographic origin and identity of women from the Hassani community, since the paradigmatic class items constitute tellingly remarkable metasigns.

Being virtual and abstract, the paradigms as potential resource sets operating in conjunction with syntagms as being the actual combinations are encoded within the

female social actors 'langue/competence and parole/performance respectively. This configuration lays down the grounds for marital status coding by which the members of the community, as combined minds, construct social reality.

Coding here along with this focus entails a culture-bound and context-specific knowledge apropos of the Hassani society, i.e. consensus marked by conventionally internalized social particularities required by individuals to generate, transmit and interpret meanings appertaining to social reality. Such a case implies that coding as to marital status is a learned and shared, hence cultural, form of behaviour between the affiliate members of the Hassani communication group; social actors share the same coding background knowledge. In so doing, the message triggered off by marital status coding, cultural members and reality interact altogether for the sake of meaning production, exchange and even negotiation. To fulfill these tendencies, the communication of meaning in light of marital status coding arises from the correlation between the text, i.e. henna and kohl symbols, its creator, i.e. the female social actors, its audience, i.e. the affiliate members of the Hassani community concerned with interpretation, and ultimately the external world –the contextual and cultural environment as a whole.

The coding purposes correspondingly seek the classification, organization, transmission, communication and perception of information relating to the social reality of marital status. The outcome then is yet to structure perceptions, encode and decode reality culturally regarding the social organization of marital status.

However, the process of encoding and decoding information of marital status in the Hassani community might range between stasis and change since codes are states of dynamic equilibrium. This characteristic is attributable to subversion of the expected meanings when potential minor female members violate the order and tradition of semiotic usage, whether that be intentional or otherwise. Indeed, it has become salient to notice that some young single women draw on new artificial cosmetic substances as to eye make-up instead of the natural kohl, and thus subvert the expected meanings and conventional order which might bring about chaos in the anthroposemiosis process.

This novel behaviour stands out worth considering as innovative practice and deviation from the traditional canon. Such behavioural novelty intrudes the process of marital status encoding to generate aberrant decoding of meaning; interpretative deciphering of the latter conventionally abides by tradition, but here –despite insignificance, reckons with new telling meanings and communicative intentions. This behavioural practice, as a matter of fact, might be due to the influence of media products of communication such as television and films, which transmit signifying resource items pertaining to alien cultures, on those social actors who integrate new semiotic practice within their local social codes. Meanwhile, they intervene out of idiosyncratic aberration in social organization far from the communal conformity.

Furthering the discussion of aberrant coding of semiotic practice, a female social actor might seek to structure a behavioural form of resistance against those established by conventional order, which could in similar vein occasion a clash of behaviours and thoughts between innovation and tradition, and hinder the process of accurate interpretation of meaning. One may infer that these single women have the intention to

negotiate the meanings of power endowed in the usage of henna and kohl by the females who used to or currently engage in a marriage relationship. As a consequence of this semiotic practice, the cosmetic symbols lose their semiotic value to convey and transmit conventional meanings: encoding here would not help the decoding or deciphering of the novel symbolized text. Overall, notwithstanding the innovative semiotic practice may seem insignificant, social organization of the female marital status is still highly conventional, and its encoding and decoding remain a traditional canon.

4. Conclusion

So far, this article has been concerned with setting forth some cultural aspects in the Hassani community. The mainstream of anthroposemiotics and communication literatures has been reviewed to approach social organization with reference to the female marital status. The article has in effect expatiated the cultural distinctive particularities of the anthroposemiosis and communication processes available for the female social actors to construct a gender-based reality. Along with this focus, the female agents have at their disposal conventional symbolic resource items by which to lay down an intricately condensed aggregate of social motives, experiences and knowledge germane to marital status, namely: celibacy, marriage, divorce and widowhood.

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