

Tattooing as a Social Symbol: An Investigation of the Cultural and Communicative Significances Among Youth

الوشم كرمز اجتماعي: دراسة في الدلالات الثقافية والاتصالية لظاهرة الوشم لدى الشباب

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Received Date:28/02/2025

Acceptance Date:15/09/2025

Abstract

This study investigated the phenomenon of body tattooing and its resulting communicative meanings and connotations. Furthermore, it aimed to explore the forms and types of tattoos, and the extent to which they express community culture and the social and psychological state of individuals. The descriptive methodology was employed to conduct this research. The findings highlighted that tattoos possess communicative meanings and connotations that reflect the individual's psychological or social condition, or even the lived reality. Additionally, tattoos carry cultural significance specific to the community to which the individual belongs. Moreover, tattooing represents a collection of symbols embodying the culture of a people in the world, bearing historical and social dimensions and connotations. This effectively reflects the integration of cultural behaviors among individuals.

Keywords: Tattoo; Body; Anthropology; Communication; Culture.

ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة للبحث في ظاهرة الوشم على الجسد وما تخلفه من معاني ودلالات اتصالية. كما تسعى للبحث في أشكال الأوشام وأنواعها وما تعبر عنه من ثقافة المجتمع والحالة الاجتماعية والنفسية للأفراد، تمت الاستعانة بالمنهج الوصفي، خرجت الدراسة بمجموعة من النتائج، أبرزها أن للأوشام معاني ودلالات تواصلية تعبر عن حالة الفرد النفسية أو الاجتماعية أو حتى عن الواقع المعاش، إضافة إلى ذلك فالأوشام تحمل في طياتها معاني ثقافية خاصة بالمجتمع الذي ينتهي إليه الفرد. ناهيك عن أن الوشم يحمل دلالات الثقافة المجتمعية الخاصة بالشعوب.

كلمات مفتاحية: الوشم؛ الجسد؛ أنثروبولوجيا؛ اتصال؛ الثقافة.

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1. Introduction

After initially being confined to medical inquiries and certain philosophical schools of thought, the body emerged in the 1970 as a central locus of discourse. Scholars across various social and human sciences began examining the diverse actions and behaviors stemming from it. By the mid-1980s, the body had assumed a significant position in anthropology, to the extent that its study led to the establishment of a fully developed subfield—"the anthropology of the body."

For anthropologists and anthropology researchers, questions of power and oppression cannot be addressed without first challenging dualities such as civilized/primitive, culture/nature, mind/body, self/object, self/other, and so forth. Since then, the body has become the subject of a vast array of inquiries informed by theoretical and ethnographic perspectives. According to Baudrillard, "the body is the site where social relations directly take place," while for Giddens, "the body is the medium of personal expression in the ongoing project of human identity". In his view, the body mirrors both individuality and collective affiliations.

With the rise of intellectual movements advocating freedom of the body, thought, and cultural behavior, tattooing began to spread across societies, regardless of their level of primitivism or modernity. It came to be regarded as a social or cultural art carrying various symbolic meanings, which later evolved to convey nonverbal communicative messages reflecting a lived reality or a psychological state experienced by the individual.

As indicated in the literature, tattoos have been deeply embedded in cultural traditions and explicitly functional in certain meanings they embody. Practically, tattoos resembled writing or served as a framework for mutual communication based on producing bodily marks or scars, thus forming a means of communication through the integration of tattoos into actions within a socially agreed-upon context. Often, the tattoos inscribed on the skin consist of meaningful symbols and communicative indications that convey particular ideas and suggestions.

This is precisely the focus of our study, which investigates the various communicative messages and implications conveyed by tattoos, as well as their different cultural meanings. We do so by posing a central question:

What are the different communicative indications and messages carried by tattoos on individuals' bodies? Do these symbols represent a form of expression of lived reality, or are they an expression of a psychological state? And what are the various cultural implications associated with some tattoos?

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Objectives of the Study:

This study aims to investigate a set of objectives and goals, primarily:

- Examining the history of writing and drawing on the body (tattooing).
- Identifying the various types and forms of tattoos.
- Exploring the symbolic connotations that tattoos carry in different societies.
- Investigating the diverse communicative messages conveyed by certain tattoos.

The Importance of the Study:

This study is among those examining certain aspects of social actions and behaviors within individuals and groups. It addresses a novel topic centered on exploring the various communicative meanings and connotations generated and conveyed by tattoos that individuals apply to their skin. The study delves into a research domain related to the anthropology of the body, focusing on how bodily practices are enacted through these inscriptions and drawings, which harbor communicative meanings and distinct cultural symbols.

Methodology Used:

This study falls under the umbrella of socio-anthropological research, which calls for a precise description of the investigated phenomenon followed by realistic analyses and interpretations. Consequently, the descriptive approach—one of the methodologies employed in qualitative studies—has been adopted.

2. Defining the Study Concepts

2.1. The Concept of Communication

Angel Parkinson defined communication as “an organized, systematic, and also spontaneous process that involves sending and transferring information and data from one party to another, on the condition that the transferred data and information are comprehensible and acceptable to their intended recipients.” Other scholars maintain that communication is “a set of actions, expressions, and forms that occur among human beings for the purpose of informing, hinting at, and instilling emotions and ideas, and conveying shared meanings for the sake of persuasion based on facts, evidence, and proofs.” (Bashir & Hamid , 2009, p. 18)

Al-Alaq also defined communication as “one of the cornerstones of direction, involving the flow of information, instructions, directives, orders, and decisions from an individual or group to other individuals or groups, with the aim of informing, influencing, or initiating change toward achieving predetermined objectives. In this sense, Al-Alaq refers to the formal communication adopted in business organizations and similar entities, although his definition also encompasses communications among individuals outside official or traditional work frameworks.” (Bashir & Hamid , 2009, p. 18)

2.2. Types of Communication

Communication in Terms of Language is Divided Into:

First: Verbal Communication: This encompasses all types of communication in which the “spoken word” is employed to convey a message from the source to the recipient, with the utterance being perceived by the receiver through hearing. The use of language in human communication began when societies developed and became capable of formulating words that symbolize specific meanings, to which individuals collectively refer and upon which they rely to organize their relationships and express their emotions. A group of linguists devoted themselves to the study of word semantics, and their efforts led to the emergence of General Semantics, a field that aims to purge human thought of linguistic fallacies. (Amer, 2011, p. 26)

Second: Nonverbal Communication: This category refers to nonverbal communication, sometimes termed the “silent language.” It encompasses all forms of communication that rely on nonverbal cues. Some scholars subdivide this form of communication into sign language, movement and action language, and the language of objects. For example, the use of pharaonic costumes and artifacts on stage is intended to convey a pharaonic atmosphere and era to the audience, allowing them to experience it throughout the theatrical performance. (Amer, 2011, p. 27)

2.3. The Concept of Tattooing

The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics defines tattooing as a practice of marking specific areas of the human body through puncturing, cauterization, or similar methods. Simone Wiener conceptualizes tattooing as the process of engraving a drawn symbol onto the skin. It represents either a permanent inscription, owing to its enduring presence on the body, or transient imagery, as it may symbolize a specific life phase. This practice creates abrasions or injuries that render the symbol or image visible on the body, situating it at the intersection of the imaginary and the symbolic. Wiener notes that “the tattoos adorning the hands, chests, lips, and faces of rural communities are not arbitrary... Rather, they trace back to ancient history when people lived in primal societies that venerated certain animals

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and feared natural phenomena such as waves, winds, rain, and thunder.” (Taileb, 2021, p. 513)

In this context, tattooing emerges as a form of writing that seeks to immortalize the transient and anchor the fleeting. It is a blood-inscribed script that endeavors to preserve memory and etch identity into emptiness. This signifies a blood-based ritual through which symbolic elements—whether cultural, civilizational, or historical—are safeguarded from oblivion by becoming an inseparable part of the tattooed individual. Thus, these elements evolve from fleeting, ephemeral memories into permanent fixtures, cementing the tattoo artist’s mastery in embedding tattoos. This artistry enables them to fill voids on the tattooed body. According to Zoroaster, the practice of blood-writing on the body represents a foundational cultural practice within certain societies. (Taileb, 2021, p. 513)

2.4. The Concept of the Body

The body stands as one of the foundational concepts explored in both ancient and modern thought. It has occupied the minds of thinkers and philosophers across eras, generating divergent perspectives. While some view it as a tangible material mass connected to the world through a defined form, others reject the notion of the body as a closed material entity. Instead, they conceptualize it as an open space that interacts with the world. For David Le Breton, the body constitutes a cultural and social construct—a wellspring of life, movement, and consciousness. Conversely, Farid Zahir posits it as a pre-existing, a priori entity that precedes the soul, regarding it as our primary metric of existence. (Al-Dhaheiri, 2017, p. 85)

2.5. The Concept of Symbols

The concept of the symbol expands to encompass words, phrases, sentences, texts, and all conventional or mutually agreed-upon signs among their users. **C.S. Peirce** emphasized the role of the interpretant—the agent who engages in the semiotic interpretation of symbols. Meanwhile, Ferdinand de Saussure established the foundations of a new theoretical framework for studying symbolism. According to this framework, a symbol’s meaning is no longer determined by cultural content or the subjective experiences of social actors but rather by its structural relations to other symbols within the system. (Al-Zibari, 2017, p. 297)

3. Tattooing as a Socio-Anthropological Phenomenon

3.1. Types of Tattoos

The types and forms of tattoos or body drawings vary from one individual to another according to the society they belong to and their psychological and social state, where researchers have classified tattoos into: (Al-Zibari, 2017, p. 297)

Ornamental/Decorative Tattooing (Tatouage ornemental): This type of tattoo is widespread in the Arab region by coloring the lower lip in green and

on the chin, and it may extend from below the lips to beneath the chin, as it is also used as a method of beauty and femininity to adorn the eyelid edges with black, define the eyebrows, or frame the lips.

Amazigh women traditionally resorted to tattooing for ornamental purposes, particularly in the absence of colored cosmetics, as a means of distinction from men. The Danish painter Haikel Frenkel eloquently described the beauty of tattooed Amazigh women, stating: “One often encounters them in fields and rugged mountain paths, chanting lyrical cries whose beauty is rivaled only by the meticulously drawn patterns adorning their cheeks, chins, sometimes necks, and hands. These women embody a fusion of symbolic and graphic artistry—verdant greens and deep blues intertwine with the mythic allure of their faces, which radiate a beauty defiant of nature’s harshness, life’s adversities, and daily toils. It is a beauty where reality merges with imagination, nature intertwines with humanity, hues harmonize with features, and images resonate with sounds—where song becomes corporeal art inscribed upon the skin.” (Al-Zibari, 2017, p. 297)

Therapeutic / Preventive Tattoo: Certain indigenous and nomadic societies believe that tattooing serves as a protective practice, guarding against diseases, warding off the evil eye, and repelling malevolent spirits. As such, it is regarded as both a healing mechanism and a form of folk medicine. Additionally, it is utilized to conceal physical imperfections or deformities, such as hairless patches or vitiligo spots. Among African tribes, there exists a belief that the scars and marks left by tattooed incisions expel internal toxins from the body and fortify neural pathways, thereby functioning as a remedy for ailments like eye infections, migraines, and chronic headaches. Consequently, tattoos are ritually inscribed on areas of pain, particularly among elders or tribal chiefs, as a means of seeking blessings or invoking spiritual protection. These markings are commonly applied to the forehead, temples, knees, shoulders, back, feet, or ankles.

The cross symbol, in particular, is often employed therapeutically due to the widespread belief in its mystical capacity to heal afflicted or painful areas. This practice typically involves its application to joints, reflecting an intersection of symbolic ritual and perceived medicinal efficacy.

Occasional Tattooing: This type of tattooing is intrinsically tied to the sociostructural position of its bearer, typically embedded within events and milestones associated with their life cycle. It often functions as a collective practice among members of a community, governed by covenants of social belonging. These tattoos form part of a series of ritualistic practices—both traditional and emergent—categorized under rites of passage. Among the most significant is the birth tattoo, inscribed on infants during their earliest years, often on prominent areas like the face. Parents adhere to the belief that such

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tattoos safeguard children from malevolent envy (al-ayn), the evil eye, and psychosomatic ailments. (Al-Zibari, 2017, p. 298)

Wedding Tattoo: Women approaching marriage tattoo various parts of their bodies as an expression of readiness to assume marital responsibilities. Enduring the pain of the tattooing process symbolizes the transition from singlehood to marriage, signifying completeness, maturity, and the possession of fertility markers. Tattoos are reserved exclusively for marriage-eligible women. In Morocco, for instance, tattooing is associated with proclaiming a woman's maturity and preparedness for the institution of marriage by emphasizing her allure as an indicator of her fully realized beauty. It serves as a rite of passage into adulthood and a precursor to matrimony. A prevalent belief mandates that a woman's chin—at minimum—be tattooed prior to marriage.

Between adolescence and marriage, many Amazigh families, such as those in the Ait Skhman tribe of Morocco, practice tattoo plating (tasmīḥ) on young women to safeguard their virginity. This ritual underscores the interplay between bodily inscription, cultural norms, and the sociosymbolic regulation of female sexuality within transitional life stages. (Al-Zibari, 2017, p. 298)

Death Tattoo: In certain contexts, tattooing has been linked to the death of newborns. Consequently, a mother may tattoo her youngest child in a practice termed preemptive tattooing (washm al-istibāq), symbolizing hope for the infant's survival. Meanwhile, in Upper Egypt, women adorn the faces and hands of deceased unmarried girls with decorative motifs, particularly if the girl had reached marriageable age. This act reflects the belief that such ornamentation ensures her acceptance among the houri maidens of Paradise, honoring her eligibility for matrimony in the afterlife.

3.2. Forms and Symbols of Tattoos

For tattoos, there are multiple forms and symbols, where the tattooist (male or female) imitates or emulates shapes present in reality that involve certain symbolic references, ... among the common forms, we mention: (Attia, 2023, p. 229)

Animal Shapes: These animal motifs emphasize the enduring relationship between humans and animals, rooted in antiquity, through the adoption of specific totemic symbols. Among the most prominent animal forms are the dove and the serpent: the dove symbolizes freedom and peace, while the serpent embodies evil and treachery.

Palm Fronds: This form of tattooing, known as Tiwizi, is inscribed on the forehead as a central vertical line flanked by smaller branching lines. In the Maghreb region, it stands as a prominent symbol of adornment and triumph. However, in Algeria, it historically functioned as an identity marker distinguishing Indigenous communities from foreign settlers. Thus, tattooing transcends its aesthetic role to become a bearer of collective identity,

transforming the body into a legible text that can be "read" by others. The tattooed individual becomes identifiable through these symbolic inscriptions, which are subject to sociocultural interpretation and semiotic analysis.

Geometric Shapes: The female body in Maghrebi societies has become a privileged canvas for intricate geometric ornamentation. Tattoo artists began with simple dots—a fundamental geometric form—which evolved into straight lines and eventually circular patterns. In this context, French author Gaugry notes in her book *The Chaouia Woman of the Aurès* that Chaouia women in the Aurès region adopt a variety of tattoo motifs. However, the linear tattoos inscribed on a woman's chin or forehead feature a defined starting and ending point, symbolizing the societal boundaries these women are expected to uphold. These linear patterns, termed *al-sayyāla* (flowing lines), are typically applied by mothers to their daughters' foreheads post-puberty. While serving an ornamental function, they also communicate a message to the community: the girl has reached maturity and is now eligible for marriage. (Attia, 2023, p. 229)

The Star: This five-pointed star is a familiar symbol among Arab communities, traditionally tattooed on the back of the hand between the index finger and thumb. Within the local sociocultural belief system, it is thought to ward off the evil or malevolent eye (*al-‘ayn al-hāsida*) due to its five vertices. The number five has long been regarded as sacred for its perceived efficacy in repelling envious gazes, rooted in cultural narratives that ascribe apotropaic power to its numerical and geometric properties.

The Sun: These symbols carry distinct meanings, positioned in the same location as the star motif—between the index finger and thumb or on the cheek. Their symbolic significance revolves around notions of freedom and peace, reflecting sociocultural codes that link bodily inscriptions to collective aspirations or ideological frameworks. (Attia, 2023, p. 229)

3.3. Tattooing from a Communicative Perspective

Tattooing stands as one of the oldest forms of communicative culture, predating even organized sports. Cultural evidence indicates that tattooing—a corporeal art involving the insertion of pigment into the dermal layers of the skin—was widely practiced in ancient societies. Much like inscriptions on parchment, tattoos inscribed on the skin possess the capacity to preserve historical events through tangible visual details while simultaneously shaping individual identity. Sanders posits that evidence of tattooing's antiquity can be extrapolated from mummified priestly bodies, which are believed to have performed medical or fertility-related functions.

In Bryan Turner's seminal work on the sociology of the body, he observes that "in premodern societies, the body served as a primary locus for the display of cultural markers such as social status, familial position, and tribal affiliation." Early tribal communities employed bodily scarification and

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tattooing to demarcate distinctions in rank, clan membership, family lineage, and ethnic identity. These corporeal inscriptions functioned as indicators of pivotal life stages and transitions, particularly in rites of passage that mediated shifts between social statuses. Such practices underscore the body's role as a semiotic medium, where cultural codes and collective memory are materially encoded. (Dwived, n.d, pp. 61-75)

Scholarly discourses on tattooing within disciplines such as psychology, anthropology, and sociology have predominantly centered on inquiries into the motivations, intentions, and functions underlying tattooing practices. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Sigmund Freud posited that tattooing serves as an expression of individuality, with tattoos functioning as images imbued with unconscious meaning—alongside their conscious significance. In his seminal work *Totem and Taboo* (1913), Freud drew on ethnographic accounts of early human societies, arguing that individuals inscribed totemic symbols onto their bodies as a ritual act. This practice, he contended, aimed to mitigate existential fears of abandonment, forge communal bonds, and reinforce adherence to social taboos. (Dwived, n.d, pp. 61-75)

Symbolic interactionism posits the individual as an active, creative "agent" engaged in purposeful interaction. Tattoos can be conceptualized as communicative tools employed for intentional symbolic expression. Consequently, tattoo bearers distinguish their bodies and identities from others, with tattoos exerting a profound influence on social interactions. In modern societies, acquiring a tattoo constitutes a deliberate, conscious decision. Building on the theoretical frameworks established by G.H. Mead (1934), Herbert Blumer (1969), and Erving Goffman (1959), the body emerges as a socially constructed phenomenon and a pivotal factor in social relations: it functions as an objective entity and a medium for communication and signification, rooted in practices such as fashion, hairstyling, and tattooing. Thus, tattoos—and other forms of body modification—serve as vital practices for analyzing how the body is socially constructed and mobilized for personal expression and communication. (Dwived, n.d, pp. 61-75)

The third perspective concerning the "functions" of tattooing is evident in anthropological scholarship, such as studies on tattooing practices in the Pacific; the cultural contexts of *tā moko* among the Māori people of Aotearoa/New Zealand; sacred totemic tattoos among Hindus that affirm cosmic relationships with deities and the afterlife; and Japanese *noyi* tattoos used for medical healing, empowerment, and sympathetic magic. At their core, tattoos convey meaning through the body, often narrating stories, myths, rituals, and achievements. They mark pivotal life events and transitions, power dynamics, and processes of cultural reproduction. Indeed, tattoos communicate with the world symbolically. Practically, humans engage in tattooing because

there is something to express that cannot be articulated through other communicative means.

In his seminal work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1976 edition), Emile Durkheim proposed that totems held significant status in the social lives of early societies. Totems resemble royal emblems or group insignia. Indigenous Australians and North Americans did not limit their carving and engraving to objects they owned—such as weapons, walls, utensils, boats, and ornaments—but also inscribed these motifs onto their own bodies. (Dwivedi, n.d, pp. 61-75)

3.4. The Symbolic Significations of Tattoos

Tattoo symbols can be observed in terms of their structure as either formative or pictorial, their composition as simple or complex, and their distribution across a single body part or multiple organs. Each choice carries symbolic significance, with designs tending toward simplicity when the tattoo serves therapeutic or protective purposes. Decorative tattoos, however, are the most semantically charged and intricate. Regarding the iconic correspondence between the tattoo symbol and its referent, symbols in traditional societies are often arbitrary (non-iconic) and lack direct alignment with their meanings, whereas in modern societies, symbols are increasingly motivated, striving for iconicity and alignment between signifier and signified. This shift underscores the individualistic nature of contemporary tattoo symbolism, contrasting with the collective symbolism of traditional and tribal societies—though exceptions exist in some communities. The placement of tattoos also varies according to purpose and gender. In North Africa, women traditionally tattoo scattered areas of the face—cheeks, forehead, chin, and neck—based on the belief that these are primary sites for attracting men, rooted in cultural notions of bodily fascination. Men, conversely, predominantly tattoo their hands. Historically, tattooed body parts were concealed, but modern trends lean toward visibility, except for the face, which remains a permanent public "interface" of identity. (Taileb, 2021, p. 513)

Decorative tattoo motifs inscribed on the body carry multiple semantic and mystical connotations, contingent upon the sociocultural context of the tattoo and the corporeal sociology of the bearer. These practices are governed by societal norms that map cultural values onto body parts according to their symbolic utilization rather than biological function. The social significance of a body part often determines its hierarchical status within the community, which in turn influences the symbolic weight of the tattoo inscribed upon it. This reflects the principle of correspondence between societal hierarchy and the symbolic hierarchy of inscribed corporeal signs.

Returning to the prevalent symbols in collective tattooing, the meaning of a tattoo is typically saturated with the symbolic significance ascribed by the community. This is determined by contextual factors tied to cultural usage and

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the social attributes of the bearer. For instance, a sword tattoo on prisoners may signify hostility, authoritarianism, or violent tendencies in their behavior. However, when combined with a heart symbol, it could denote a readiness to sacrifice for love or similar emotions, or express emotional vulnerability from a failed relationship. In traditional or folk collective tattooing, the sword symbolizes heroism, courage, and a willingness to fight and struggle.

The crow and owl, conversely, represent omens of misfortune and ruin, while roses and flowers symbolize friendship and affection. A water pitcher (*ibrīq*) and prayer rug signify purity and spiritual cleanliness. The crescent and star, as Islamic symbols, reflect optimism and religious affiliation. Despite Islam's prohibition of tattooing, these symbols persisted in tattoo designs for significant periods. The decline was gradual, with initial restrictions focusing on banning human and animal imagery, eventually leading to the near-extinction of traditional tattooing practices in many Muslim-majority societies. (Taileb, 2021, p. 513)

In ancient Egypt, the palm tree tattoo symbolized fertility, productivity, and abundance. The green bird, on the other hand, represented victory and benevolence, rooted in the mythological narrative of Isis and Osiris—a tale emblematic of the triumph of good over evil. Laypeople integrated these symbols into their folk practices, embedding them across various cultural mediums. The fish motif signified prolific offspring and abundance, with the fish itself serving as a metaphor for womanhood, symbolizing fertility and protective qualities.

3.5. The Symbolic References of Female Tattoos

Male tattooing practices differ from female ones, as women traditionally tattoo the front of their bodies, while men limit their tattoos to areas such as the hand, forearm, and biceps. Discussing female tattooing necessitates an understanding of its cultural underpinnings, as tattooing itself embodies a specific cultural framework and carries communicative messages within that sociocultural matrix. Female tattooing is institutionalized through a dual relationship that connects women and men to their surrounding environments. This "existence" constitutes a set of semiotic phenomena with which humans negotiate relationships of attraction and repulsion, interaction and connection, ultimately defining their stance toward them.

These semantic phenomena belong to cultural systems established through diverse mechanisms of sign production. Their aim is to create communicative mechanisms reliant on encoding and symbolism. Any sign, regardless of its form, derives its meaning from its cultural context, making it a constitutive element of a specific cultural system. Fundamentally, every sign originates from a particular cultural system, as cultural semiotics posits that all cosmic phenomena, human creations, and natural entities are saturated with symbols and signs. These are organized into multiple, interrelated systems

capable of unifying diverse human phenomena precisely because they are cultural products. In this way, the sign is justified as a cultural artifact. (Attia, 2023, p. 229)

4- Conclusion

Based on the preceding analysis, it can be argued that tattooing, as a social phenomenon, carries a constellation of cultural, psychological, and communicative dimensions. These dimensions collectively form a cultural imprint that reflects the sociopsychological conditions experienced by individuals within their communities. Moreover, tattooing serves as a cultural artifact imbued with meanings and connotations that articulate the societal culture in which the individual is embedded.

As a social act, tattooing can be anthropologically interpreted as an expression of cultural behavior enacted by individuals within their communities. It also functions as a medium of non-verbal communication through which individuals convey messages about their social, psychological, or lived realities. Tattoos vary in forms and types, each carrying embedded symbolic and communicative meanings that reflect the individual's state and are intended to be perceived by others. While this pertains to the semiotic and cultural dimensions of tattooing, we must also consider whether these bodily inscriptions harbor latent social and psychological risks—such as driving individuals toward criminal acts like suicide, violence, or other dangerous pathologies. Given that tattooing often contradicts Arab-Islamic cultural norms and is far removed from being a positive communicative act within such societies, the following research recommendations are proposed:

- Investigating Communicative Meanings: Prioritize research into the diverse communicative and symbolic meanings of tattoos practiced by individuals in Arab societies.
- Cultural Symbolism Analysis: Explore the cultural significances embedded in tattoos inscribed on the bodies of Arab individuals.
- Anthropological Focus: Intensify anthropological studies on the body and the sociocultural implications of tattoos and scarifications practiced by individuals.
- Leveraging International Scholarship: Utilize foreign studies that provide analytical interpretations of bodily symbols and inscriptions.
- Deviant Behavior Correlation: Examine cultural and communicative meanings of tattoos that may signal intent to engage in deviant or criminal behaviors, such as suicide.

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