ISSN: 2437-041X مجلة أنثروبولوجيا
E-ISSN:2588-2325 مجلد: 12 عدد: 01 السنة 2026

Weaving social ties: weaving as a conventional form and vehicle of community identity

Hilal Alhabsi*, assistant pofessor in sociolgy, A'Sharqiyah University (Sultanate of Oman), hilal.alhabsi@asu.edu.om

Aicha Nairi, assistant professor in Product design, Monastir University (Tunisia), Aicha.nairi@isammh.u-monastir.tn

Received:29/10/2025 Accepted:16/06/2026 Published:30 /06/ 2026

Abstract:.

Far from being reduced to a mere craft technique, weaving constitutes a symbolic language through which collective conventions, community affiliations, and forms of social distinction are expressed. Indeed, aesthetic choices and patterns are not only material elements but also vectors of memory, transmission, and cohesion. Woven fabrics thus become agents of non-verbal communication and social conventions that structure relationships between individuals and communities, while offering a space for both personal and collective expression.

This article explores weaving as a cultural practice endowed with a strong social and identity dimension. Furthermore, we aim to explain how this artisanal practice can be understood as a system of signs contributing to the construction and representation of identity. This reflection is thus situated within an anthropological perspective attentive to the connections between materiality, symbolism, and social practices.

Keywords: weaving, communication, non-verbal, text.

* Coresspendant Author's.

INTRODUCTION

Unlike other arts such as painting, weaving is a technique that produces an object based on the interlacing of animal or plant-based threads. Indeed, unlike embroidery where motifs are added to the fabric, in weaving they are intrinsically incorporated within the interlacing of warp and weft threads. In other words, as the product develops, its motifs—regardless of their complexity—gradually take shape until the end of the process.

At first glance, the art of weaving primarily served to produce objects intended for utilitarian functions, such as protection against weather conditions and climatic variations. However, these textiles are by no means limited to fulfilling the instinct of preservation; they also operate as expressive media. They intrinsically convey a multitude of representations, images, and values. Moreover, while societies have developed sophisticated systems of visual communication to promote artistic expression, textiles constitute a complementary medium to oral memory. They function as systems of ethnic identity, kinship, lineage, values, and beliefs. These multiple connotations also implicate the weaver, whose tactile-visual memory engages them both bodily and socially.

Communication also emerges as a means for artisans to connect with their audiences, to disseminate messages embedded in their woven products, and simultaneously to convey their identity while shaping consumers' perceptions.

Taking as a starting point the framing of the notion of nonverbal communication, this article first seeks to examine how woven pieces can generate such nonverbal contact and be transformed into semantic objects. After demonstrating how this ancestral weaving technique can be approached in a manner analogous to a literary text, we will then interrogate the process through which this ancestral "text" is converted into a conventional social form.

1. Woven pieces as a means of non-verbal communication

1.1. Non-verbal communication

Communication, as a branch of linguistics, is a vast and highly complex field. Words—whether new or old, spoken or written—constitute one of its primary objects of study. Empirical and theoretical research has demonstrated that they are highly significant and effective tools for expressing thoughts, emotions, and ideas. However, linguistic studies also show that nonverbal communication—that is, the process of sending and receiving messages without words—is often more expressive and powerful than verbal communication. The way something is said can, at times, carry greater significance than the content itself. In fact, this nonverbal dimension can even entirely surpass the verbal content of a message. There exist numerous "channels" of nonverbal communication. Facial expressions, vocal tones, gestures, bodily movements, touch, scents, and spatial positioning all play a role in the transmission of meaning.

The first scientific study of nonverbal communication was published by Charles Darwin. Since the mid-nineteenth century, thousands of research projects in archaeology, biology, cultural and physical anthropology, linguistics, primatology, psychology, psychiatry, and zoology have been conducted, yielding convergent and rational results. These studies have firmly acknowledged the significance of nonverbal communication and have established a widely recognized framework of nonverbal cues.

Theories that address the percentage of human nonverbal communication yield results that vary considerably and are difficult to verify. Indeed, each of us responds to thousands of nonverbal messages every day. We react emotionally to wordless messages, often without knowing why. Nonverbal messages are particularly powerful and persuasive, as they are processed by the brain in older and deeper centers than the areas that developed later and are dedicated to speech.

In fact, nonverbal signals are produced and received below the level of consciousness.

They provide us with the “look” and “feel” of our experiences, which are recalled long after words have been forgotten. In the context of the present study, nonverbal communication manifests itself through « conventional signs that are not innate » (Darwin, 1877, p. 81). Nevertheless, these signs—defined by the English naturalist and paleontologist—are employed to underscore the concept of relationships as applied to human societies. This raises the question of how woven fabrics can establish themselves and prevail as a vector of nonverbal communication. In other words, how do textiles communicate the identity (its origins, ethnicity, social category, etc.) of the person who wears them ?

1.2. Woven pieces as a source of non-verbal contact

Woven pieces constitute meaningful entities that transmit information and units of meaning. This dimension can be explored through a semiotic approach. The recourse to this discipline is explained not only by its scientific methodology in the study of signs and their related systems, but also by its capacity to account for the entire mechanism of meaning production. Indeed, “when referring to the articulation of the expression plane of a system of signs, one is referring to the presence within this system of signs with articulated signifiers, that is, signs whose signifier is a combination of elements belonging to the substance of expression which, when combined differently, can also be found in the signifiers of other signs within the same system. (Prieto, 1975).

In this regard, the foundations of the methodology of this science consist in focusing on the composition of a signifying system, whereby semiotics transforms visible data into signs integrated within the mechanisms of a system, and in identifying the signs and the rules on which the semiological system depends, as well as the codes that

unlock the messages.

Assuming that there is always a code—such as language, art, or other, more complex social elements—renders semiotic analysis an increasingly challenging task. It is also assumed that the semiotic system is composed of a set of subsystems that interact to generate meaning. For instance, in theatrical art, several signifying systems converge in a synchronized manner: language, visuals, gestures, clothing, lighting, space, and so forth all operate in symbiosis to bring meaning into being. Drawing on the works of Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco, we will address the semiotics of textile elements within the framework of our research, which is focused on silk weaving.

1.3. Semiotics and the Textile Object

In his approach known as the "semiology of meaning" of objects, Roland Barthes distinguishes between transitive value, which lies in the function of use, and signifying value, which embodies the significant and communicative function. This theory of sign analysis examines words, objects, images, and gestures not only as bundles of essential meanings, but also at the level of what they denote as referential meanings. The same methodology is applicable to human and social facts as well as to the bundles of meanings conveyed by objects such as textile fabric. Gradually, it also takes into account open conventional interpretative systems. More broadly, our study seeks to overcome the complexity of the communication phenomena at work in culture in order to better investigate textile objects. This effort aims to comply with the rules of semiotics, which strive to grasp secondary meanings—connoted meanings that reside beyond primary meanings, the denoted ones.

It was thought that the primary task was, in Saussure's words, to study the life of signs within social life, and consequently, to reconstruct the semantic systems of objects (clothing, food, ritual images, protocols, music, etc.). This remains to be done. Yet, as this already immense project advances, semiology encounters new tasks;

for instance, to study that mysterious operation through which any given message becomes infused with a secondary meaning—diffuse, generally ideological—which is referred to as 'connoted meaning' (Barthes, 1985. p.228).

Indeed, the recognition of connoted meanings is a task that relies on deciphering the message conveyed by an individual, a group, or any social phenomenon. Concretely, it involves grasping the various moral, social, cultural, or ideological dimensions that any system of signs may contain. This effort to apprehend the paradigms underlying messages draws upon semiotics and the social sciences.

Following in the footsteps of Saint-Simon, Umberto Eco observes that, through human actions and reactions, there exist natural signs, conventional signs, and others whose properties derive from a combination of several different types of signs. This classification is adopted by Roland Barthes in L'Aventure sémiologique.

Before studying the semiotics of the object—which deals with mixed signs transformed into functional signs—it is first necessary to identify the properties of the object whose referent, in this case, is the textile product. This approach enables a clearer understanding of the communication process at work.

1.4. The Status of the Object in Semiotics

Bernard Floris points out that Roland Barthes attempts to delineate the contours of the object in a laconic tone: Commonly, we define the object as something that serves a purpose. (Floris, 2004, p.89).

On this occasion, he concedes by explaining that beyond the mere function of "serving something," and surpassing the vague definitions found in dictionaries—which are limited to immediately perceived appearances forming the denotative meaning—Barthes goes further. Following this same line of thought, the author notes that the French semiologist states : The paradox I would like to point out

is that these objects, which always have in principle a function, a unity, a use, we believe we experience them as pure instruments; whereas in reality, they convey something else—they are also something else: they convey meaning. In other words, the object indeed serves a purpose, but it also serves to communicate information. We could summarize this by saying that there is always a meaning that exceeds the object's use. (Floris, 2004, p.89).

Indeed, this linguist seeks to apprehend the object not only as everything that "presents itself to sight," nor merely as what "is conceived by the subject," but above all as a manufactured and transformed product — a finished material intended for consumption and endowed with a social purpose. Consequently, this latter dimension is likely to conventionally attribute meaning to the object, turning it into a channel of communication used to convey information. It is this semantic field, enriched by connoted meaning, that woven pieces are capable of conveying to the discerning observer.

1.4.1. Semantic value of the object

A product is given a name in light of its function. This function is conceived even before the stages of its production. For example, the cooler (or icebox) takes its name from its function, which is to preserve the freshness of a product. Once the object is designed and then used, it may undergo a kind of shift or transfer of meaning. This semantic expansion can be explained either by changes in use or by a total or partial reference to the circumstances of its invention. To illustrate this idea, Barthes gives the example of the penula. This fabric was originally conceived in the Roman military context as a protective covering against bad weather. Initially worn over the shoulders, it later evolved into a garment similar to a coat. Thus, since this attire recalls the original function of the penula and its military origins, it has retained the same name.

This designation is maintained because it conveys the military aspect associated with it, preserving both the purpose of the original

Roman military penula and other meanings of a material and social order. To better express the evolution of the object's meaning and function, Philippe Verhaegen states that "these signs are characterized by a double movement of semantization. On the one hand, the function gradually becomes imbued with meaning. The way humans operate within social groups implies that every use is necessarily transformed into a sign of that use. A function thus becomes a sign of that function. For example, a raincoat's initial function is to protect us from bad weather, but this function has become inseparable from the very sign of a certain atmospheric condition. This garment is inevitably nothing more than the realization of a model (or, in other words, the speech of a language). (Verhanengen, 2010, p.70).

In truth, objects convey meanings, communicate moods, socio-economic realities, traditions, and conscious or unconscious purposes. This communicative capacity is acquired through networks of social conventions that generate shared codes of communication, which are indispensable in any act of enunciation.

1.4.2. **The object: an estuary (or crucible) of the communication process**

In principle, any system of signals requires a communication network in order to function. This network materializes through a communication model or process that inevitably includes a coded message, a sender, a channel, a receiver, and a decoded message. Moreover, the effectiveness of this process depends on the presence or absence of obstacles that might hinder the proper transmission or reception of signal codes. This opposing factor is referred to as noise.

This model applies to textiles, clothing in general, and the silk fabrics of Mahdia in particular. Thus, the artisan who designs the garment and the woman who wears it constitute the sender, the first link in the communication chain. The garment serves as the channel through which the message passes—whether clearly conveyed or distorted—depending on the degree of interference or "noise."

The message consists of the ensemble of codes transmitted through the clothing medium: motifs, figures, material quality, colors, patterns, craftsmanship, social values, and many other symbolic elements. The receiver, on the other hand, is represented by the audience in contact with the product—whether a client, a spectator, a historian, a fashion designer, a husband, etc.

Throughout the entire process, the decoding of the message depends not only on the recipient's ability to interpret the embedded codes and norms, but also on the presence or absence of noise, which may either facilitate or hinder the comprehension of the message.

Often, in this form of non-verbal communication, whose functioning relies on a shared code between the sender and the receiver, the sign carries multiple meanings. This level of perception of the textile object endows the signifier with various referents capable of conveying information about a cultural environment, a dominant ideology, the history and heritage of a people, or even an individual's personal craftsmanship. This dimension is referred to as the connotative meaning of a sign.

By noise, we mean all the factors that intervene during the process and make the reading of the garment less perceptible. For example, ignorance of the significance of this silk fabric, the rise of ready-to-wear fashion leading to distrust of traditional clothing, the distancing from tradition, or the invasion of the market by counterfeit industrialized pieces.

The process of identification and signification operates through Saussure's system of meaning. Indeed, Ferdinand de Saussure is recognized as the father of modern linguistics. He approached the philosophy of language through a scientific lens. His work had a major impact not only on linguistics but also on cultural studies. Saussure introduced three key concepts : the signifier (Sa), the signified (Sé), and the sign (Si). A signifier is an acoustic image or a graphic symbol; a signified is the concept associated with that acoustic image or

graphic symbol; and the sign is the combination of a signifier and a signified. Furthermore, Saussure asserts that "the link between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, or, since we mean by sign the total resulting from the association of a signifier and a signified, we can simply say: the linguistic sign is arbitrary. (Meunier, Peraya, 2010, p.51)

According to Ferdinand de Saussure, the linguistic sign is arbitrary because there is no inherent relationship between the signified (the concept) and the signifier (its acoustic image). In other words, the process of meaning and communication operates through a threefold combination that begins with a material or physical referent, from which an acoustic image is constructed and linked to a virtual signified. The formation of this combination is cognitive — that is, it is developed through a "mental construction" and a psychical activity.

1.4.3. The textile object, a channel of communication

The fabric, as a semantic object, thus communicates meanings that go beyond its material characteristics. This communication is possible because the patterns of woven pieces are symbols—entities that stand for other entities. According to the semiotic approach, the textile object functions as a language and is therefore systematically organized as such. In the same vein, Boris Cyrulnik states that "Every garment is thus a nonverbal discourse in which textile signs replace the sound signs of speech or the written signs of writing. (Cyrulnik, 1993, p.31) This perspective emphasizes the visual language of textile fabrics and confirms that all components of the fabric—such as shapes, colors, and materials—can be interpreted and unlocked through the scientific approach of semiotics, supported by the social sciences. Similar to literary texts, textile fabrics are subject to a linguistic code. They possess a denotative meaning that designates the referent, as well as a connotative one. However, the type of coding contained in woven items can only be metaphorically subjected to the linguistic code, as the fixed rules governing language have no direct parallel in the system of codes for clothing items in general.

Regardless of the complexity of the metaphorical construction of language and the differences between the clothing code and the linguistic code, it is clear that woven patterns reveal a conventionality of signs.

Furthermore, the decoding of codes depends on the context in which the woven fabrics are used. In other words, the combination of elements or the use of a particular style will carry meaning depending on the wearer, the occasion, and the location. Some authors suggest that the perception and interpretation of appearance operate holistically, as a gestalt, composed of cues from the physical message and the context. For this reason, it is necessary to consider both the wearer's physical environment and cultural context.

Social identity, individual tastes, and familiarity with a society's symbolic objects influence the meaning attached to clothing and the use of fabrics. From a semiotic perspective, the fabric code exhibits significant social variability in the signifier–signified relationship. Even if a woven fabric, in its material sense (the referent of a signifier), is the same for everyone, the connoted or evoked meaning (the signified) differs across social groups.

Moreover, styles, appearances, or trends carry meanings that vary depending on social groups. For example, different styles of woven objects evoke different associations according to the group.

2. Connection between Weaving and Text

From an etymological point of view, the verb "to weave" derives from the Latin texere, which means both "to braid," "to make a fabric," and "to connect the parts of a work of the mind." This directly relates to the word text, whose Latin origin textus means "weave" or "fabric." (de Roquefort, 1829). This refers to the meaning of the word text, whose Latin origin textus signifies "weave" or "fabric." This metaphorization may seem difficult to grasp, as there appears to be a dissimilarity between practical knowledge and imaginative

knowledge — between the hand and the mind. Yet, this semantic connection exists in catachreses such as “the thread of a novel” or “the thread of a narrative.” This semantic field reveals a resemblance between a text and a fabric, in which several threads intertwine and from which removing even one element alters the entire work. By analogy, a sequence of events is also called a “thread of actions.” Gradually, the terms weft and thread, both essential in the world of weaving, have been borrowed by authors and critics to conceive or analyze a literary text. Thus, they refer not only to the world of textiles but also to the entire realm of literary creation. Indeed, given its structure, a text is as unified as a woven tapestry. Firstly, its material aspect provides a set of indications about its nature and purpose. Secondly, its use of language allows one to uncover the meaning of the text not only by focusing on the morphology and phonetics of words but also through the syntax of sentences. This verbal dimension, whether oral or written, is studied through linguistics. Consequently, words and sentences are not deciphered in isolation but are understood contextually, insofar as they produce meaning effects and constitute the semantic aspect of the text. Moreover, a text possesses a pragmatic dimension, bearing the mark of a communicative act. In practice, it conveys a social context, relationships between author and reader, and intended purposes. Finally, every text also has a symbolic dimension, as it represents a cultural fact that reflects social and historical situations. It is one of the forms of expression that reveals a society’s attitudes and values. As Roland Barthes pointed out, this proximity is significant: “Etymologically, text means fabric.” (Barthes, 1973)

In addition to linguists, historians have also identified this proximity in the Latin languages. John Scheid and Jesper Svenbro have pointed out that the use of this metaphor dates back to the Greco-Roman period. Thus, in the first two works of ancient Western literature, The Iliad and The Odyssey, Homer employs an extended metaphor: “Friends, there is someone inside who weaves on a great loom and makes a beautiful song heard.” (Homère, 1934). This passage takes us directly into the world of weaving and vividly

expresses the proximity and the original analogy between the fabric and the text, between the beauty of the woven material and that of the written work. Here, the term song does not refer to a musical production performed with the human voice, but rather signifies a written text. Later, this poetic text would be adapted to a melodic sound, thus becoming a musical composition.

On the other hand, this metaphor has been adopted by other oral societies, such as the Indo-Europeans. In a chapter entitled Phèdre's Cloak: Prehistory of the Text in Greek Lands, John Scheid and Jesper Svenbro point out the close connection between text and weaving. In the present era, this meaning continues to accumulate layers of significance that reinforce the relationship between *text* and *weaving*. Consequently, this metaphor finds its roots in a post-industrial world where both the word and manual labor risk losing their value. This interpretation suggests that writing a text is equivalent to performing manual work, like any other craft activity. The two authors therefore assert that this metaphorical proximity reveals an aesthetic richness that, in turn, revives the deeper meaning of traditional weaving.

The writer and linguist Mohand Akli Haddadou considers weaving in Berber civilization to be a fundamental means of female expression. "If she practices it, it is essentially to satisfy a personal need for expression, often without any real impact on the material value of the object," (Haddadou, 1993, p,171), he states. The graphic composition of the fabric woven by Berber-speaking women was created without any preliminary drawing or model. In other words, the woman is guided by her imagination, her thoughts, her desires, and her emotions. She reproduces her mental and emotional richness in the form of abstract motifs that subsequently convey a set of messages. Like a writer composing a text, the creator of the fabric requires, above all, imagination and a need for expression to achieve a coherent and harmonious composition. For, indeed, any work of art first and foremost demands imagination and the impulse to express oneself.

At this point, a question arises—one that we will attempt to address in the following sections: given this metaphorical proximity between text and weaving, can weaving be considered a craft profession or an art form ?

What primarily interests us is to analyze and comment on this proximity between text and weaving, without considering their artistic or craft nature. Thus, if we begin to identify the common points between the two terms while taking into account their utility or functionality, we arrive at the following observations:

Without weaving, humans cannot satisfy the need to clothe themselves, to protect their bodies, and to enhance their physical appearance. At the same time, without literature, humans cannot fulfill their needs for expression and for the enrichment of their person and soul. These two seemingly correlated and indispensable needs demonstrate the fusion between body and soul, between the tangible and the intangible. However, since both fabric and text are tangible goods, this initial interpretation can be challenged. Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish between the functional good and the symbolic good.

In its broadest and most common sense, a text consists of assembling a set of letters into words, which are then arranged into sentences—harmonious fragments that carry meaning. These elements, in turn, contribute to the creation of a coherent text, regardless of its type. If we compare the construction of a text to the process of weaving, we notice that they share several common points. Indeed, both activities pass through three stages. In literature, one moves from a letter to a word, and from the word to a text. Similarly, in weaving, a fiber is transformed into a thread, which in turn contributes to the creation of a fabric.

If we examine each of these stages more closely, a second connection emerges: consider letters. They reveal differentiation linked to their linguistic origins—Latin, Arabic, etc. Likewise, fibers

vary according to their nature—vegetable, animal, artificial, etc. For instance, a thread has its own structure and possesses qualities that define it: flexible, rigid, simple, ornate, and so on. A word is distinguished by its richness, visible in its style of writing; it may appear in uppercase, lowercase, bold, italics, etc. In other words, the appropriate technique is dictated by the writer's intended purpose and by the codes imposed by convention.

Similarly, a fabric can be simple or complex, plain or elaborate, neutral or emphatic. By selecting and interlacing words with varied semiotic and grammatical properties, one obtains a homogeneous textual surface that defines a meaningful text. The same principle applies to fabric production: through the collection and systematic assembly of threads of different types, colors, and/or lengths, a woven surface is created, resulting in a finished textile.

In its most classical conception, humans are guided by the energy of their thoughts, by the desire to transcend the immediate and to extend themselves across space and time. It is through ink and pen that they are led to compose their text on media that have undergone extraordinary evolutions throughout history. Driven by an imaginative impulse followed by reflection, a person moves their pen or pencil across the page, producing writing in the form of well-arranged, aesthetically pleasing words. In this way, inspiration is transmitted.

For the legibility of their reflection and imagined thought, the writer requires both paper and pen: a medium and an instrument for writing. The paper serves as the medium. Although a text can be inscribed on various supports, paper remains the most widely used in the world. To materialize the product, the pen acts as an instrument that etches the page, creating a tangible trace of every imagined thought and narrative reflection.

Here is another point of similarity between text and weaving. Likewise, the weaver has both a medium and a tool in their craft: the loom provides the support for all types of fabrics composed of threads,

while the shuttle (or comb) is the essential instrument of this activity. Hence arises the correspondence: loom = paper and shuttle/comb = pen or pencil.

The hand is present in both processes. One cannot write or weave without proper mastery of manual effort. However, in this context, the hand is not considered merely as a simple part of the human body, an extension of the arm holding the shuttle, comb, or pen. It is not only a means of acquiring the appropriate techniques or of exerting the muscular effort that the writer and the weaver employ when positioned before paper or the loom. Rather, it is also a medium for extending one's imagined reflection, an enhancer of thought, a mediator between the intangible and the tangible, between imagination and the need for expression, and between the tool and the support. One can thus say that the hand is an indispensable common instrument in both activities. It is a tool that ensures the smooth transfer from reflection to enactment, to materialization. It allows the writer to convey thoughts in a text with all their lexical, grammatical, and semantic variations. Similarly, in the weaver's world, the hand serves to materialize all kinds of imagination and sensations through a fabric rich in colors, textures, and patterns.

Our metaphorical approach is once again justified by this transition from a mere thought to the creation of a tangible product. As previously mentioned, the final product appears functional in the case of fabric and symbolic in the case of text. This interpretation is placed within a general framework: the textile, in its apparent state, is a fabric surface, primarily defined by its utility, which is manifested in its intended purpose for clothing or furnishing.

Regardless of its functionality, the assessment of this type of product also takes into account the aesthetics of the fabric, which is manifested in the appreciation of colors, patterns, and the quality of the textile material. Indeed, the evaluation of fabric quality varies from one person to another, depending on tactile sensations. It is this perception that distinguishes a smooth fabric from a spongy one, or a

flexible textile from a rigid one, and so on. From a semiotic perspective, this simple fabric transcends its functional value and is positioned among symbolic goods.

This activity is an ancient tradition, practiced notably by women. It is manifested in the creation of items that permeate our daily lives and our surroundings. It adorns our surfaces and walls and embellishes our bodies while reflecting the customs of the Tunisian citizen. This tradition is expressed through a harmonious composition, appropriate to the chosen color palette. It is represented not only in rugs of various names, such as the Klim and the Mergoum, but also in clothing fabrics, such as the Rdè, the Bakhnoug, and the Fouta. The images and patterns printed on these textiles may seem to serve merely a decorative purpose, yet they convey a profound message inspired by the weaver's environment.

With the specificity of its forms and colors, this type of fabric serves as a medium that contains an entire narrative — one that only its artisan can truly understand and whose codes only they can decipher. To some, this activity is merely a craft, like any other form of manual labor in different sectors. It is also seen as a source of income for the artisan. However, a closer reflection on the entire process reveals the deeper values generated by this practice. Clearly, it is a true exercise of imagination, a means of expression, and a material form laden with codes. It is recognized as a channel with its own language. In response to this superficial perception, Paul Vandenbroek thus concedes that "the representations—which, in fact, represent nothing—held for these women a profound meaning. (Azetta, 2000, p.16)

At first glance, since the narrative creator translates their inspirations into decipherable linguistic signs appropriate to their society, the question of the metaphorical proximity between fabric and text seems weakened and could lose its shared meaning. However, when referring to the textile structure, fabric — in the literary sense

— carries a transmission of meanings that are readable, accessible, and easy to analyze.

In the case of complex texts, a single meaning cannot be retained. Through a combination of complex and polysemous terms, the reader receives a text carrying multiple meanings: it can be read, understood, remembered, and interpreted differently depending on the reader's intellectual, cultural, and psychological competence. In truth, even if the text provides an answer that meets the reader's expectations and inquiries, only the writer holds the true meaning of the ideas they intended to convey. Naturally, this depends on the great power of interpretation and the valorization of the semiology of the term used. Similarly to the writer, the weaver chooses the colors of the threads, the shapes, and the composition according to their own intrinsic interpretation and logic.

Usually, in the classical sense of the term, the text and the fabric are meant to produce two objects with different purposes. However, despite their differences, both physical objects appeal in the same way to the mental realm. Indeed, they conceal an undeniable connectedness — a closeness that goes beyond the scope of a metaphor and takes on the status of a true, hidden identity.

3. From a Text to a Collective Social Conventional Norm

According to the Larousse dictionary, "convention" is a noun derived from the Latin conventio, from convenire, which means "to be the object of an agreement." Historically, it has taken on many meanings. In the expression "convention of people", it is synonymous with meeting, while the "National Convention" in France refers to the official government during the French Revolution between 1792 and 1795. However, the relevant meaning in our context is different. It refers to a phenomenon known as customs, traditions, or established practices. These different terms indicate that the phenomenon is not entirely homogeneous.

The members of the group interact with one another in specific ways to satisfy a common interest. A priori, a model of activity or a system of values prevails within the group, and its members behave accordingly, submitting to and conforming with it. In this sense, we may think of collective conventions, which "tend to take on a general and objective character that distinguishes them from ordinary contracts and brings them closer to law." (Morel, 1919, 417) The structure of the situation is such that there exists an alternative way to satisfy the common interest. Therefore, this collective satisfaction requires a meeting and coordination among all the participants. Although each individual tends to pull the blanket toward themselves, the common interest is optimal when the members of the group make concessions and behave appropriately. Conversely, uncoordinated or inappropriate behaviors within the group lead to less optimal results. Indeed, it is important to note that what is optimal for one member depends on how others act toward what unites them. Consequently, regularities depend on the appropriate attitudes of each member toward the unifying model over a certain period of time. Moreover, acting according to the common model has a self-regulating effect. The situation becomes optimal for each agent when everyone makes concessions for the benefit of others; hence the emergence of an agreement — an oral or written convention — that is binding on all.

Thus, the convention within the group is established through the conclusion and agreement on appropriate behavioral provisions that align with the interests of its members. The group, therefore, shares what is stipulated by any arrangement resulting from coordination. Although some members may display rebellious attitudes or oppose collective social conventions, "it is evident that any social practice that needs to be performed repeatedly will, for reasons of convenience and efficiency, tend to develop a set of such conventions and routines, which will be, de facto or de jure, formalized with the intent of making the practice known to new participants." (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 176). We also agree that convention, like tradition and constraint, embodies one of the fundamental concepts of anthropology and sociology,

whose meanings are often regarded as already known, even self-evident. We selectively revisit part of the literature on the idea that tradition is a process of continuous interpretation — a process of interpreting and reproducing the past within the present.

In nearly all the literature on norms, it is undeniably shown that norms foster conformity, adaptation to a certain mold, and that there is a strong correlation between people's beliefs and their attitudes. When the point of reference lies in tradition, norms refer to the "past, whether real or fictitious, to which they are linked, [and which] implies stable practices, normatively formalized, lending themselves to repetition." (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 176).

Generally, individual or collective beliefs are related to types of behaviors that are prescribed or prohibited within a given social context. They take on the status of normative beliefs, which are usually accompanied by a strong desire to see others adopt the permitted behavior and avoid undesirable or forbidden ones. However, it is not always evident that those who hold normative beliefs can consistently motivate people to act in accordance with their will and align themselves with the values they seek to establish as models to follow.

In reality, a norm cannot necessarily be identified with a recurrent and collective behavioral pattern. If we were to adopt a purely behavioral account of norms, nothing would allow us to distinguish shared standards of fairness from the collective habit of wearing woven fabrics on specific occasions.

Avoiding a purely behavioral definition means focusing on the role that expectations play in supporting those types of collective behaviors that we consider to be norms. Moreover, there are behaviors that can only be explained by the existence of norms, even if the behavior prescribed by the given norm is never actually observed. Norms can exert a significant influence within a population, even if

we never witness the corresponding behaviors that the norm is supposed to produce.

Therefore, we must recognize that the semantic ambiguity surrounding the concept of a norm is common to all social constructs. There is no necessary and sufficient condition for a norm to exist — only a set of characteristics that any norm may display to a greater or lesser extent. Norms refer to attitudes and actions over which people have control and are supported by shared expectations about what should or should not be done in different types of social situations. However, norms cannot simply be identified with observable behavior, nor can they be equated with normative beliefs, since normative beliefs may or may not lead to appropriate action.

Conclusion

In light of indigenous traditions, weaving carries different meanings for different artisan weavers. It allowed them to express their multiple identities.

Indeed, this ancestral technique is not merely a particular way of producing fabric; it is inextricably linked to the historical value of its structure and to the identity of the community in which it is practiced. Furthermore, the analysis of woven products as a specific phenomenon, with connections to various social, economic, and cultural aspects of the time, continues to be a topic of current relevance, both in the international and national contexts.

The social value of this study increases and gains greater recognition as it becomes associated with new notions and concepts, such as the importance of preserving this ancestral technique, the active role of traditional knowledge in the dynamics of social change, and the central place of culture and creativity as key factors in human development.

List of references:

Azetta P-V. (2000). L'art des femmes berbères, Edition Ludion Flammarion Palais des Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, Paris.
Barthes, R. (1985). La cuisine du sens, In « L'aventure sémiologique » Coll. Points n° 219, Edition du Seuil, Paris.
Cyrulnik, B. (1993). Les nourritures affectives, Editions ODILE JACOB, Paris.
Darwin, C. (1877). L'expression des émotions chez l'homme et les animaux, Traduit de l‟anglais par les docteurs : Samuel Pozzi et René Benoit, C. Reinwald et Libraires – éditeurs.
Floris, B. (2004). L'information a-t-elle du sens In Science de la Société N° 63, système d'information organisationnelle, Presse Universitaire du Mirail, Toulouse.
Haddadou, M-A. (1993). Le guide de la culture berbère, Edition Paris Méditerranée. CNRS, Paris.
Hall, J. A. (2019). "Nonverbal Communication." Annual Review of Psychology, 70, 271–294.
Hobsbawm, E. (1995). Inventing Traditions, Cercom Éditions Parenthèses.
Homère, (1934). l‟Odyssée, new translation with introductions, notes and index by Médéric Dufour and Jeanne Raison, Librairie Garnier Frères, Paris.
Jean-Baptiste-Bonaventure de Roquefort Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue françoise, Volume 2. Décochant, imprimeur, éditeur, Paris, 1829.
Li, J. (2025). Anthropological Insights into Emotion Semantics in Cultural Heritage. MDPI Electronics.
Meunier, J-P Peraya, D. (2010). Introduction aux théories de la
Miller, D. (2008). The Uses of Value. UCL Anthropology.
Morel, R. (1919). Convention collective de travail et loi du 25 mars 1919, RTDCIV.
Padfield, J., et al. (2019). "Semantic Representation and Location Provenance of Cultural Heritage Information: The National Gallery Collection in London." Heritage.
Prieto Jorge, L. (1975). Etudes de linguistique et de sémiologie générale, Librairie Droz Genève Suisse.

Roland Barthes, Théorie du texte, Encyclopédia Universalis, http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/theorie-du-texte/ (accessed May 21, 2015).

Scheid, J et Svenbro, J (1994). Le métier de zeuz. Mythe du tissage et du tissu dans le monde gréco-romain, Editions La découverte, Paris.

Verhanengen, P. (2010). Signe et communication, éditions De Boeck Université, Bruxelles.

دهب، أماني محمد (2016) الاستفادة من الدلالات الأفريقية كمصدر للتصميم، مجلة بحوث في التربية الفنية والفنون، جامعة حلوان، مصر.

بن بركة، أسمهان (2021) النسيج التقليدي بجهة المنستير: المهارات والمنسوجات والدلالات الثقافية والشعبية، أرشيف الثقافة الشعبية للدراسات والبحوث والنشر، تونس.

معتوق، فاطمة بلغيث (2022) مجسمات النسيج التشكيلي العربي: العلامات التراثية الثقافية والمرجعيات العالمية، مجلة الموروث، معهد الشارقة للتراث، الامارات.