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A Semiotic Approach to Title Narrative in the Novels of Seddik Hadj Ahmed Al-Ziouani

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Abstract

This study adopts a semiotic approach to the title structure in the novels of Seddik Hadj Ahmed, with the aim of uncovering the semiotic dimensions embedded in these titles, demonstrating their relationship with the narrative structure of the novels, and exploring their connections with the components of the narrative world. It also seeks to identify the semantic semiotic systems and examine the patterns of relationships among these different textual structures in order to uncover the narrative project that Al-Ziouani aspires to embody.

Keywords: Approach; Semiotics; Narrativity; Title; Relationship.

The title is considered the most significant and influential textual threshold among the various components of the text, given its initial connection with the reader. The importance of a semiotic approach to the title lies in its status as a critical method that regards the title as a condensed semantic charge through which the explicit, implicit, and deeper meanings of the text are revealed. The novel lends itself to a semiotic approach because of its ability to uncover the messages conveyed by the writer through the text and beyond its language, employing analytical and interpretive tools that identify semantic and semiotic systems of a social, ethical, and ideological nature.

The study also seeks to undertake a semiotic approach to the title structures in the novels of Seddik Hadj Ahmed by deciphering the codes of the titles, unpacking their semiotic charges, and identifying the features they share, as well as the indicators they contain that reflect the meanings of the narrative text. It also aims to reveal the overall semantic trajectory of his novels, examine their narrativity, and explore their relationship with the components of novelistic narration.

Central Research Problem:

What are the semiotic dimensions manifested in the title structures? What are the manifestations of narrativity in the title structures, and how are they reflected in their symbolic and semantic formations? What kind of narrative project does Seddik Hadj Ahmed aspire to embody?

Given the methodological advantages of the semiotic approach, particularly its analytical tools, such as description, semantic analysis, and interpretation, it was adopted as the methodological framework for studying the structures of these titles.

The semiotic approach is one of the most important text-oriented approaches used to investigate the explicit and implicit semantic and symbolic meanings of the title. The title performs numerous functions, the most significant of which relate to the reader: "The title is considered a procedural key to engaging with the text in its semantic and symbolic dimensions."ⁱ

There is a close relationship between the title and the text, as the former is influenced by the nature of the latter and its degree of artistry. The more artistic the text, the greater the suggestiveness and ambiguity of the title. Its forms also vary according to its function, which may range from identification and clarification to an aesthetic function.

Considering the title as one of the essential components of the text and one of its major thresholds, functioning as a paratext parallel to the body of the work, examining the title provides insight into the text's most significant symbols and codes. Some of its semantic dimensions, such as disclosure, elucidation, and revelation, are directly demonstrated by its linguistic meaning.

In his narrative writings, the Algerian novelist Seddik Hadj Ahmed has focused on the vast Sahara in general and the Algerian Sahara in particular. He portrays it as a geographical space including diverse cultures, peoples, and tribes; as a cradle of successive civilizations; and as a passage for African migrants heading toward exile and diaspora, whether voluntarily or under duress. Seddik Hadj Ahmed has established a narrative project centered on the Saharan space, incorporating his reflections from his visits to Mali, Niger, and some neighboring African countries. These experiences have made him more aware of these environments and the issues and cultures they encompass.

Semiotics

The novel is one of the literary genres that has most readily embraced the semiotic approach, owing to its ability to penetrate the deeper layers of texts, uncover their elusive connotations through interpretation, and trace the messages conveyed by the writer from behind the veil of language, which reflects the realities of social life with all its conflicts and events.

Al-Saeed Al-Warqi views the novel as "a representation of life through an organic structure that corresponds to the very spirit of life itself. This formation is grounded in the developing event, which takes shape within the framework of the novelist's point of view, through characters interacting with the events and with the environment in which those events unfold, ultimately embodying a dramatic conflict with a dynamic inner life."ⁱⁱ

Semiotics has constituted a shared field of inquiry among researchers from various disciplines, while literary criticism has been among the fields and disciplines most concerned with it. It has undertaken the task of deciphering the codes of signs through which texts articulate themselves.

From a linguistic perspective, the meaning of *sima* (mark/sign) derives, for example, from the following hadith: "He used to brand the charity camels; meaning he would mark them using branding (with fire)." A man is said to have *ittasama* when he adopts a distinctive mark by which he can be recognized. The original letter *ya* is a *waw*. *Sima* and *Al-wisam* refer to the marks or designs branded onto a camel.ⁱⁱⁱ

According to Julia Kristeva, semiotics is concerned with speech and signs as objects through which phenomenon in life and language can be perceived, as well as everything capable of constituting a

system. "Semiotics is the study of signifying systems, encompassing languages, which may be referred to as semiotics."^{iv}

Meanwhile, Saussure views language as a system of signs laden with ideas and meanings, such as the system of alphabetic writing used by those who are deaf and mute, or symbolic rituals.^v

Therefore, the field of semiotics includes the study of both linguistic and non-linguistic signs within a system of language. Among its most significant functions are its persuasive and aesthetic functions, which serve to engage and attract readers.

Léo Hoek defines the title as "a set of linguistic signs that may be placed at the beginning of a text in order to identify it, demonstrate its aesthetic content, and attract its intended audience."^{vi}

The presence of the title at the beginning of the text establishes semantic order and coherence, allowing its meanings to unfold within a unified and clearly structured system. Jamil Hamdawi argues that "the title is what names, identifies, describes, establishes, and confirms the text; it announces its legitimacy as a text to be read. It also achieves the text's coherence, harmony, and structural correspondence, removing ambiguity and obscurity from it."^{vii}

Textual titles can be divided into the following categories:

The Main Title: This usually occupies part of the cover and its front matter, or is placed in one of its corners. The meanings of the text unfold from it, partially revealing its identity.

The Subtitle: This follows the main title, supporting and reinforcing its meanings and serving to complete the meaning conveyed by the main title.

The Generic Title: This is the title that identifies the type and literary genre of the text, such as poetry, a story, a travel narrative, a novel, or a play.^{viii}

Title Functions

Gérard Genette categorizes the functions of the title into four types, which he identifies as follows:

- **The Identifying Function:** It gives the book a title that distinguishes it from other works.
- **The Descriptive Function:** It applies when the title contains a description associated with the content of the book, its genre, or both.
- **The Suggestive Function:** It is employed when the title relies on suggestion, symbolism, and allusion to convey meaning.
- **The Attracting Function:** It is used when the author uses the title to attract the reader's attention and encourage them to purchase and read the work.

The most significant function through which the author conveys condensed connotations is the suggestive function. This function encourages the reader to delve into the text, enticing them to engage in the reading process while also guiding them toward specific interpretive paths.^{ix}

4. Title Importance

The title serves as an indispensable technical-semiotic symbol that encapsulates the major connotations of the text. It serves as the primary starting point for decoding and approaching the text, as well as the essential key to its comprehension.

"The reader begins to deconstruct the text from its title in order to reconstruct it by discerning its semantic and symbolic dimensions. This process initially illuminates the text and makes it possible to highlight its obscure semantic and symbolic aspects. Therefore, the title is a technical key in the hands of the semiotician, which he employs to delve into the depths of the text."

See: Abdelmalek Chahboune, *The Title in the Arabic Novel*, p. 19.

The title establishes the identity of the text, ensures its coherence, and enables the writer to dispel its ambiguity. It is also through the title that the text begins to produce and generate its semantic dimensions.

See: Abdel Nasser Hassan Mohammed, *The Semiotics of the Title in the poetry of Abd al-Wahab Al-Bayati*. Cairo: Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabia, 2002, pp. 7–8.

It is “a linguistic sign placed above the text to identify and define it, while enticing the reader to read it.”

Abdelkader Rahim, *The Science of Title: An Applied Study*. Dar Al-Takwin, Syria, 1st ed., 2010, p. 45.

Consequently, the title constitutes a distinctive element in the literary work: it is the primary threshold crossed by the reader on his path toward the text’s signifiers and meanings. By virtue of its unique semiotic codes, it opens up vast channels of interpretation.

The title displayed on the front cover is considered the main title, and it is the most prominent and influential element in shaping the semiotic sign that prompts interpretation.

See Abdelhak Belabed, *Thresholds: Gérard Genette from Text to Paratext*, introduction by Said Yaktine, Arab Scientific Publishers and Al-Ikhtilaf Publications, Algeria, 1st ed., 2008, p. 67.

Linguistic Levels of Titles and Their Semiotic Dimensions

In its condensed and highly concentrated form, the title is closely connected to the text it names, reflecting its various dimensions and trajectories. It is through the title that the text’s meanings begin to take shape and unfold.

“It is an important semiotic sign that prompts us to reread and awakens within us new creative energies.”^x

The Semiotics of the Title in the Novel *Mamlakat Al- Ziwan* (2013)

The title constitutes a structure in its own right and forms an independent discourse or text. It serves to introduce the content of the text while also complementing it and being complemented by it.

The title serves as a gateway into the literary text, and its terminological significance derives from its linguistic meaning.

The title is “a linguistic segment, shorter than a sentence, that represents a text or a work of art.”^{xi}

Lexical Level

The significance of the lexicon in the semiotic study of the title lies in its role as an important point of entry into such an analysis. Lexical items are distributed across semantic fields, and these lexical choices are closely connected to the text’s meanings. This makes it possible to examine how the lexicon is employed in the titles of his novels.

One particularly striking title is that of his first novel, *Mamlakat Ziwan*, which marks the beginning of Seddik Hadj Ahmed’s narrative works. The novel explores social life in the Adrar region from ancient times. Its title consists of two nouns. The first, “*Mamlakat*,” (Kingdom) is a signifier that evokes a semantic field with numerous civilizational connotations. It reflects both a political dimension associated with organized governance and a social dimension represented by the *ksour* built in the Tuat region of the Sahara and preserved as historical landmarks that have withstood the passage of time. The second element, “*Al-Ziwan*,” evokes nature and agriculture, particularly palm trees and dates. It also reveals an economic dimension through the trade in dates. The title consists of two words linked by a genitive construction, which constitutes a relatively weak grammatical relationship. In reality, however, it does not refer to an actual kingdom, but rather to a quasi-kingdom, with an element of exaggeration.

Syntactic Level

This level examines the relationships established among lexical items, through which they acquire multiple and highly condensed meanings. Linguistic structure constitutes the backbone of language and lies at the heart of the communicative process. Through it, the writer’s techniques of lexical selection and the extent of his creativity in employing them can be discerned.^{xii}

The structure of this title consists of a nominal sentence comprising a subject and a predicate, as follows:

Mamlakat: the predicate of an omitted subject, understood as “*this*,” and it is the first term in a genitive construction.

Al-Ziwan: a genitive complement, marked by the overt *kasrah* at the end of the word.

Thus, the subject, “*this*,” has been omitted, while the predicate, “*Mamlakat Al-Ziwan*,” is stated. The phrase “*Mamlakat Al-Ziwan*” does not merely refer to a kingdom; rather, it evokes the history of Tuat within Saharan society amid new transformations and the conflicts that arise between history, memory, and the present. It portrays the harshness of life in the mud-brick *ksour*, the inhabitants’ distance from the city, the difficulties imposed by the natural environment, and the disagreements and constant conflicts among them. This weakness in the relationships and conflicts among the inhabitants of the *ksour* is expressed through the grammatical genitive construction between “*Mamlakat*” and “*Al-Ziwan*.” The genitive construction represents a relatively weak grammatical relationship. This sense of fragility can also be perceived in the use of mud to build the *ksour*, whose foundations cannot withstand the passage of time. Similarly, this weakness is reflected in “*Al-Ziwan*” itself, as the term refers, in the Touati dialect, to a dried date-palm stalk.

The Semiotic Dimension of the Iconic-Semantic Level

In *Mamlakat Al-Ziwan*, the author explores the *ksour* of Tuat, which constitute an extension of his identity, the cradle of his childhood, and the memory of the desert, with its vastness and mythological worlds. In this novel, particular emphasis is placed on cultural heritage in its multiple forms through the evocation of the customs, traditions, and popular beliefs of the people of Tuat, as well as proverbs and folk arts, encompassing music, games, and traditional songs. Thus, *Mamlakat Al-Ziwan* marks the beginning of a journey through time and history.

Accordingly, the title of the novel conveys the perspective of a writer from southern Algeria and the desert, drawing inspiration from the desert environment and its historical and cultural context. The place, climate, and geography shape a way of life that differs from that of the coastal and mountainous regions. Therefore, the novel portrays the oases and *ksour*, along with their traditional customs and ways of life.

The nature of the title suggests a historical and narrative dimension, as it evokes the *ksour* of Tuat, their way of life, and their culture. The term “*Mamlakat*” evokes a sense of place, while “*Ziwan*” symbolizes agriculture and the inhabitants’ way of life. It also alludes to certain social groups within the *ksour*, including the upper social class and the farming community, represented through the signifier “*Ziwan*.” In this way, the title reflects and reinforces its narrative dimension.

The Semiotics of the Title in the Novel ‘Camarade Rafiq al-Hayf wa al-Dayaa’ (Camarade: Companion of Injustice and Loss) 2015:

The reader recognizes that the title is closely connected to the text it designates, as it constitutes a condensed text that engages with a larger text and reflects its various functions and dimensions. The title is one of the manifestations of attribution and connection. Thus, if the text, with its dispersed ideas, constitutes the signified, the title functions as the element to which these ideas are attributed; it represents the general idea, while the textual discourse develops the fundamental ideas that elaborate on the general idea encapsulated in the title.

Given its introductory nature and symbolic, suggestive character, the title functions as an active sign, charged with dense connotations and messages that the author directs toward particular groups: “They are semantic-semiotic systems that embody moral, social, and ideological values. They are encoded messages embedded with signifying signs, saturated with a worldview, and predominantly characterized by their suggestive nature.”^{xiii}

The Lexical Level:

The title consists of two elements, leaving room for silence and inviting reflection on the suffering of this Africa. These lexical components engage the reader through intense emotional associations and prompt them to read the novel by establishing a certain degree of coherence among its

constituent elements. This imparts a transcendental dimension from the outset, transporting the reader into the suffering and pain ensured by the African in his migration." Thus, the primary implicit signifier suggested by the title is migration.

Considering the title as a set of semiotic symbols, several semantic fields can be identified. The first is the field of African migrants, represented by the word *Camarade*, which expresses the bonds of friendship that unite Africans regardless of their nationalities or ethnic background. It is a signifier that points to irregular and unauthorized migration. Another is the field of African suffering in the host country, including the experiences of loss, displacement, and racism associated with migration.

The Semiotics of the Syntactic Level:

The structure of the title consists of a nominal sentence with various predicates, as follows:

- **Camarade:** The predicate of an omitted subject, understood as "*this*."
- **Rafiq:** The second predicate of the omitted subject; it is also a construct term.
- **al-Hayf:** A genitive complement, marked by the overt *kasra* at the end.
- **Wa:** A coordinating conjunction.
- **al-Dayaa':** A coordinated noun in the genitive case, marked by the *kasra*.

Thus, the syntactic structure of the title intensifies its informative force through the multiplication of predicates (*al-musnad*) alongside the omission of the subject (*al-musnad ilayh*) due to its contextual clarity. The objective was to report on the situation of African migrants in the diaspora and to depict their suffering. Linking these attributes, such as fear and loss, via a weak syntactic link genitive construction serves to qualify the scope, as not all migration constitutes hell. Meanwhile, relying on the particle of conjunction (*atf*) to enumerate the modalities of suffering denotes a shared condition among them."

The use of definiteness through annexation generally suggests a clear perception of the fate waiting the writer after migration and even the migrant himself, which is loss. The presence of the conjunction "*wa*" (and) in *Camarade* demonstrates a relationship of association between the coordinated elements, suggesting a series of striking and successive consequences resulting from the African migrant's experience of migration.

The Semantic Figurative Level and its Semiotic Dimension:

In his novel '*Camarade...Rafiq al-Hayf wa al-Dayaa'*', the Algerian novelist Seddik Hadj Ahmed addresses the issue of irregular migration among Africans, which begins in Niger, crosses the Algerian desert, and proceeds toward their dreams of the north and Europe, only to end in loss and disappointment. As social life becomes increasingly harsh and identities come into conflict, the title reflects the significations of lived reality, particularly the reality of migration toward an uncertain fate. The connotations conveyed by the title reflect the harsh reality experienced by African migrants after leaving their homeland and embarking on a journey toward the unknown.

The title has a clear narrative character, reflecting several narrative components, encompassing the character of *Camarade*, a name used to refer to African migrants in order to facilitate communication with them. It also contains references to certain events that portray the fate of the irregular migrant, such as wandering and loss. Moreover, it alludes to the desert setting, which serves as the principal passage crossed by Africans on their journey northward. The use of the declarative style is also consistent with the modes of narration and storytelling.

The Semiotics of the Title in the Novel '*Manna Qiyamat Shatat Al-Sahraa'* (Manna: The Resurrection of the Desert Diaspora) 2021:

The Lexical Level:

Three semantic fields can be identified: the field of place, in which the word "*Manna*" (a Tuareg term) refers to drought and aridity. These are cities historically associated with drought and aridity, conditions that have compelled their inhabitants to migrate, out of necessity, to neighboring cities and countries. The second is the field of destiny, represented by the signifier "*resurrection*," while

the third concerns the desert space and the harshness of life within it. Bringing these signifiers together within a single structure, the title suggests that natural disasters may give rise to social disasters.

The Syntactic Level:

The title consists of two nominal sentences, each formed of a subject and a predicate, as follows:

- **Manna:** predicate of an omitted subject, understood as “this.”
- **Qiyamat:** predicate of an omitted subject, understood as “this,” and it is a genitive construct.
- **Shatat:** genitive complement, and it is also a genitive construct.
- **Al-Şaḥraa’:** genitive complement, marked by the overt *kasra* on its final letter.

The predicate relies on the weak relational bond of genitive construction, as the desert represents a place of displacement and exile: it becomes a state of dispersion for the migrant and a dwelling place for the settled.

The Semantic Figurative Level and its Semiotic Dimension:

The novel chronicles the tragedy of *Manna*, a Tuareg term meaning drought and aridity, which affected the Azawad region of northern Mali in 1973. *Manna*, as a word/signifier, constitutes the central element from which the events of the novel unfold. It drove people to migrate and become dispersed across border relief cities in Algeria and Libya, and it nearly became a state of confinement and judgment.

The events unfold within a Saharan and African setting, addressing a historical moment of human displacement caused by the drought and famine of 1973 in the Tilmessi and Adghagh des Ifoghas regions of northern Mali. The Algerian Sahara became the principal destination, particularly the regions of Timiaouine, Tamanrasset, and Bordj Badji Mokhtar.

The novel depicts aspects of the daily life and cultural heritage of the Tuareg tribes in the Sahara before the drought in northern Mali, as well as in Djanet, Libya, Tchad, and southern Lebanon. Most of the events take place in the Algerian Sahara, particularly in Bordj Badji Mokhtar and Tamanrasset. The author evokes everything associated with Tuareg culture: names, surnames, places, food, tribes, ethnic groups, songs, and music, as well as the various landscapes of the Sahara, with its valleys, mountains, tribes, customs, cultures, and worldview. The novel also explores aspects of human relationships in the Sahara. Finally, through its scenes and events, the novel evokes forms of coexistence among the different cultures, ethnic groups, and tribes that share life and existence in the vast Sahara.

The word *Shatat* (diaspora) conveys and reinforces the state of disorientation expressed in the title *Camarade*. Thus, the title is reflected in the text despite its syntactic brevity, as through freedom outside the homeland were itself a form of dispersion. The word *Qiyama* (resurrection/judgment) functions as a semiotic symbol that evokes numerous absent texts. While it signifies warning and apprehension, it also symbolizes justice and retribution. This is one of the functions of the title: to stimulate the reader to question and interpret, as it evokes numerous absent texts.

The narrative dimension of the title is clearly manifested in the composition of this novel’s title, which alludes to several narrative components. It refers to the Saharan setting through the signifier *al-Şaḥraa’* (the desert), as well as through the cities of northern Mali affected by drought. It also contains an indication of time, represented by *Qiyama*, suggesting an unknown fate awaiting the migrants in exile and displacement. Moreover, it alludes to the characters, namely Africans who were forced to migrate and leave their homeland because of harsh natural conditions. Similarly, the mention of *Manna* evokes the events of the drought and famine that struck the region of northern Mali. The title also relies on the use of the declarative style.

The Semiotics of the Title in the Novel ‘Al-Tanfa: Aşurat al-Waks al-Ifriqi’ (Al-Tanfa: A Myth of African Wax) 2025:

Lexical Level:

The structure of this title includes several semantic fields, foremost among them the field of clothing, represented by *Al-Tanfa* fabric, a type of African wax-print fabric associated with popular clothing. This fabric is part of a widely traded and highly sought-after commodity among Africans across different regions. The title also evokes the field of African identities, particularly through wax-print clothing, which carries connotations of trade and consumption. Another semantic field is Africa, which encompasses its people's customs and cultures, followed by the field of mythology, with all that it entails in terms of dreams, misconceptions, and supernatural interpretations.

As is customary, the title highlights what brings Africans together and unites them rather than divides them. Wax-print clothing has brought together dispersed Africans in different parts of the world and has come to be regarded as an element of their identity. The reference to *Al-Tanfa* as a fabric and silk cloth alludes to the life to which Africans aspire through migration and to the possibilities they envision in the world of migration. Thus, the title is charged with deep connotations and emotions, prompting the reader toward a distinct literary reception through its dense suggestiveness and isotopic harmony.

Syntactic Level:

The title of this novel is divided into two parts, consisting of two separate sentences, both of which are nominal sentences.

Al-Tanfa: predicate of an omitted subject, understood as "this." The choice of the nominal sentence demonstrates permanence and stability, reflecting the enduring nature of this type of fabric and clothing, which unites Africans.

The second part of the title is structured as follows:

Asturat: predicate of an omitted subject, represented by the independent pronoun ("it"), and it is a genitive construct.

Al-Waks: genitive complement, marked by the overt *kasra* on its final letter.

Al-Ifriqi: adjective in the genitive case, marked by the overt *kasra*.

It is a nominal sentence through which the title expresses the idea that *Al-Tanfa* is an enduring myth that defies time, serving as a form of identity and culture for Africans wherever they go. It has also become a form of trade through which they make their living throughout the world and on various national, cultural, and religious occasions.

The Semantic Figurative Level and its Semiotic Dimension:

Through the central term, *Al-Tanfa*, the novel addresses the theme of African identities, specifically the identity associated with African wax-print clothing, culturally known as African wax.

The Manufacture and Production of African Wax-Print Fabric Imitated from Indonesian Plastic

The novel is structured around the coexistence of various cultures. It addresses issues of culture, identity, and alienation at the level of both the Algerian individual and the human being in general. It also explores the issues of colonialism and racial rule. The importation and distribution of *Al-Tanfa* fabric and dyes constitute a trade pursued by some of the novel's principal characters, while also contributing to the support of the Algerian Liberation Revolution against French colonialism.

The novel conveys a vision of African openness toward the countries of the continent, as one of the merchants expands his business through imports from Niger. He also transcends national boundaries through marriage when he marries a Mauritanian woman, as though the novel were portraying an appropriate model for relations with fellow Africans, relations based on organized trade and economic exchange, intermarriage, and the rejection of irregular migration.

The narrative dimension of the title is also manifested in this novel, first through the declarative style. The title also points to a broader spatial setting, namely Africa, through commercial

transactions involving the importation and sale of *Al-Tanfa* fabric. In turn, this alludes to a particular social group among the characters: the merchants.

After conducting a semiotic study of the various titles of Seddik Hadj Ahmed's novels, it becomes evident that the author traverses the vast Sahara, documenting the cultures, tribes, and peoples of the Sahara in general and the Algerian Sahara in particular. His journey begins with the novel *Mamlakat Al-Ziwan*, starting in the Tuat Sahara, with its ancient mud-brick *ksour*, portraying the realities of that period before peoples became interconnected. A brief comparison of the transition from the first title, *Mamlakat*, to the second, *Camarade Rafiq al-Hayf wa al-Dayaa*, reveals a shift from the stability represented by the kingdom to the dispersion and displacement represented by the signifiers of injustice and loss. This transition involves an element of antithesis and transformation, placing the reader in a state of uncertainty as they move from the connotative meaning of the kingdom to that of loss. Thus, the lexicon becomes associated with a primary connotation: the pursuit of life and personal survival.

The author subsequently addresses how the Sahara later became a passageway for various peoples, each bringing their cultures, customs, and religions, thus altering the tranquility of its inhabitants and their worldview. This was a form of imposed openness that brought harm to both sides. He then returns to the theme of migration, particularly forced migration resulting from natural disasters. This provided an opportunity to explore Tuareg society, characterized by a strong sense of collective identity and bearing many features and customs of African peoples. Through human relationships, coexistence with newcomers and solidarity among peoples became possible. This takes place among neighboring countries as a means of fostering humanitarian relations between states. This development ultimately leads to the novel *Al-Tanfa*, which points to a form of civilizational openness through trade and importation. Thus, his novels constitute a call for conditional openness among neighboring nations: for cultures to be exchanged insofar as they are united by a shared African identity, while preserving national and religious particularities. They also call for investment and cooperation, the regulation of migration, and the reduction of its risks. Therefore, the themes of migration and cultural exchange constitute enduring signifiers throughout these novels, as expressed through their titles. The African Saharan space is the overarching signified that unites the titles of Al-Ziouani's novels.

The titles also reflect the phenomenon of irregular migration by Africans through Algeria toward Europe, along with the disruptions that accompany such migration, including violations of state regulations and laws, such as seeking employment, engaging in begging, and possibly becoming involved in criminal activities.

A close analysis of Seddik Hadj Ahmed's novels reveals that, although they address diverse issues and themes, they all share the Saharan and African space as the setting and stage for their events. The author consistently makes the African continent a central subject from which he draws the raw material for his novels. Thus, these works establish the idea of coexistence among the tribes and ethnic groups that interact and engage in dialogue within the Saharan space.

The novels addresses the dream of crossing into Europe through irregular migration, which constitutes one of the overarching themes throughout his works, as well as Mamadou's journey from Niger to Algeria and the failure of his attempts to reach Europe through Morocco.

The novels also depict the way of life of the Tuareg tribes in northern Mali before the drought, as well as in the Algerian regions of Bordj Badji Mokhtar and Tamanrasset, portraying their daily lives and rituals within the Saharan space. There is a transition from the urban space and settled life in *Mamlakat Al-Ziwan*, where life is stable and the names of people and places are mentioned, to a life of mobility and nomadism in the Tuareg Sahara, where places and characters are referred to by Tuareg names. It is as though the author is comparing two societies within the same environment:

the vast Sahara, with its diverse geography, tribes, routes, religions, animals, customs, cultures, and worldviews.

All the titles are syntactically formulated in the declarative style, which intensifies their informative potential while leaving the reader to infer the questions they raise. Migration, as a signifier, brings together the notions of death and life.

The pursuit of migration does not always stem from a search for life and survival; it also arises from a fascination with the grandeur of Western civilization and its mysteries, as well as from a desire to escape the political oppression from which the migrants have suffered.

There is a form of semantic contrast, along with an attempt to shatter this opposition. Thus, the title carries a sense of paradox... and antithesis...

Conclusion

The study reached the following conclusions:

1. After analyzing the connotations of the titles and relating them to their respective texts, it became evident that the formulation of the titles constitutes a direct reference to the novels and serves as a signifier of their content. The titles also reflect the author's prior evaluation and position, namely his sympathy with those groups who were compelled to migrate when security, in all its forms, became unavailable in their societies, as well as his rejection of the actions of some migrants who violate the laws and regulations of host countries.
2. By examining the structures of these novels' titles, it can be observed that the author employed multiple semiotic expressive and representational systems, encompassing rhetorical and figurative devices. These rhetorical and symbolic images endowed the titles with different semiotic dimensions.
3. Furthermore, phrasing the titles in this segmented manner created a semantic gap that draws the reader into the deep pathways of the text where connotations unfold freely, granting the title specific meanings through the plurality of interpretation (*polysemy*).
4. Some titles carry architectural symbols, such as *Al-Ziwan*, or socio-economic and commercial symbols, such as *Al-Tanf*, which enhance the semantic productivity of the title.
5. *Mamlakat Al-Ziwan* opens up interpretive possibilities by evoking a heritage symbol, which enriches the meanings of the title and enhances its semantic productivity. This symbol is effectively reflected throughout the multiple spaces of the text.
6. Identifying the semantic fields at the lexical level within the structures of the titles and examining their relationship with the narrative text, such as the field of misery, represented by signifiers such as loss, injustice, and displacement, goes beyond the superficial dimension of linguistic structure and composition. This enhances the aesthetic value of the title as an element that attracts and engages readers. However, a predominantly negative dimension characterizes these titles, particularly *Camarade* and *Manna*, as they contain signifiers associated with death and displacement, all of which contribute to the impetus for migration.
7. Migration within the open space of the desert, together with a return to past events or to former spaces, enables the text to transcend linguistic boundaries.
8. The structure of the titles relies on fragmentation, which constitutes a semiotic dimension that opens channels of interpretation for the reader.
9. The fragmentation in the structure of the title mirrors the psychological state of the migrant protagonist throughout his journey and his engagement with existential questions.
10. Length is often a feature of the titles of Ziwan's novels, which allows for the formation of numerous semantic relationships and associations.
11. These titles convey various social, human, and political connotations through a symbolic framework that reflects the expanding circles of poverty, displacement, insecurity, and

- deception. This has contributed to the erosion of values within these societies, prompting individuals to migrate in the belief that they were escaping the darkness of oppression toward the light of justice and equity.
12. The rhetorical and symbolic images employed in the titles provide them with various semiotic dimensions.
 13. The semiotic study of the structures of these titles reveals a strong semantic interconnectedness among them despite the differences between their respective texts. These titles refer directly to their narrative texts through processes of condensation and symbolism.
 14. It is noteworthy that the titles have a narrative character and refer to certain narrative components within the text, particularly the general features of the characters and, more specifically, the protagonist. They also demonstrate the setting in which the events unfold, which is often the desert, and refer to certain historical events, such as the drought affecting the Azawad regions in northern Mali.

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- ^{iv} Kamel Essam Khalaf, *The Semiological Approach and the Criticism of Poetry*, Dar Farha for Publishing and Distribution, 2003, p. 18.
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