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## A Semiotic Analysis of the Verbal and Non-Verbal Slogans Used in the Day of Ashura

### A B S T R A C T

Slogans serve multifaceted purposes. They elucidate intricate concepts, articulate group philosophies and objectives, foster identification, spark violent conflicts, and anticipate future expectations. This study delves into the examination of the slogans articulated by Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) or his adherents during Ashura revolution in response to the deviations in Yazid's rule. The primary objective is to unravel the meanings embedded in the visual signs, encompassing both denotation and connotation, inherent in these slogans. Employing Barthes's (1968) semiotic theory, the researchers scrutinize six selected images, each featuring impactful slogans sourced from various websites. The analysis reveals that these images encompass a fusion of verbal and non-verbal signs. Furthermore, the study finds that slogans not only have denotative meanings, but are also rich in various connotations. The inclusion of colour in conjunction with the slogans in the images is a deliberate strategy to capture the reader's attention and evoke psychological responses.

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## تحليل سيميائي للشعارات اللفظية وغير اللفظية المستخدمة في يوم عاشوراء

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### ملخص البحث

تخدم الشعارات أهدافاً متعددة الأوجه، حيث توضح المفاهيم المعقدة، وتوضح فلسفات المجموعة وأهدافها، وتعزيز الهوية، وإثارة صراعات عنيفة، وتتوقع التوقعات المستقبلية. تتناول هذه الدراسة الشعارات التي طرحها الإمام الحسين (عليه السلام) أو أتباعه رداً على انحرافات حكم يزيد خلال ثورته. الهدف الأساسي هو كشف المعاني المضمنة في العلامات البصرية الشاملة للدلالة الكامنة في هذه الشعارات. وباستخدام نظرية Barthes (1968) السيميائية، قام الباحثون بفحص ست صور مختارة، تحتوي كل منها على شعارات مؤثرة مصدرها مواقع مختلفة. ويكشف التحليل أن هذه الصور تشتمل على مزيج من الإشارات اللفظية وغير اللفظية. وبالإضافة إلى ذلك، توصلت الدراسة إلى أن الشعارات لا تمتلك معاني دلالية فحسب، بل إنها غنية أيضاً بدلالات متنوعة. إن الجمع الألوان بالتزامن مع الشعارات داخل الصور هو استراتيجية متعمدة لجذب انتباه القارئ وإثارة الاستجابات النفسية له.

**الكلمات الافتتاحية:** السيميائية، نظرية بارث، اللغة اللفظية وغير اللفظية، الشعارات، عاشوراء

## 1. Introduction

Hartman & Stork (1972) defined semiotics as the scientific study of linguistic and non-linguistic signs. Barthes's (1968) semiotic theory is based on two levels of significance: "order of signification," denotation, and connotation. The denotation refers to what appears on the image; this means the image generates the denotation. The connotation is the sign that can be derived from the signifier of any denotation sign (Lail, 2018). A slogan consists of memorable words and phrases, catchphrases, and mottoes that stand out in political campaigns and marketing with a social purpose and can be considered to have the power of pure spirits. Muslim scholars have given Hussein slogans special treatment because they were composed by Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him), his family or some of his companions (Al-Tublaani, 2016). The Ashura movement of Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) was the most violent and bloody fight for truth and justice in history. All attempts to thwart Imam Al-Hussein 's revolution , which roused the nation and toppled the Umayyad thrones, have failed. Additionally, all attempts to divert the revolution from its rightful purposes, ruin its landmarks, or stifle its flame will fail. These efforts include distorting the image of the uprising, fabricating stories and myths about it, and stripping it of its Islamic significance (Bakhsh & Hussain, 2015).

The Day of Ashura stands as a significant occasion marked by the utilization of both verbal and non-verbal slogans, particularly by followers of Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him). However, there is a notable gap in scholarly exploration regarding the semiotic aspects of these slogans. Understanding the deep meanings encoded in these expressions, encompassing both linguistic and visual elements, remains a crucial but unexplored dimension. Consequently, there is a need to conduct a comprehensive semiotic analysis to unveil the layers of meaning embedded in the slogans associated with the Day of Ashura.

Based on the above-mentioned gap, the researchers aim to examine and analyse the linguistic components of the slogans used during the Day of Ashura by identifying their denotative and connotative meanings. The study attempts also to explore the visual aspects of the slogans, including symbols, colours, and other non-verbal cues, to discern their semiotic significance and impact. By addressing these objectives, the study endeavors to provide a nuanced understanding of the semiotic dimensions of the verbal and non-verbal slogans associated with the Day of Ashura.

The researchers employ Roland Barthes's (1968) semiotic framework as a methodological tool to systematically dissect and interpret the complex layers of meaning embedded in both verbal and non-verbal expressions.

## 2. Semiotics

Semiotics is a method for analysing meanings by examining the signs (such as words, images, symbols, and so on) that convey meaning (Bignell, 2002). It studies communication focusing on spoken or written language and all communicative signs or signals. For example, when individuals communicate, they may utilise gesture or intonation patterns and words to express thoughts. Semiotics offers a unified framework for analysing how these elements communicate meaning (Mertz, 2013).

Saussure (1857-1913) and Peirce (1839-1914) served as the foundation for an area of study that aimed to comprehend the processes underlying the generation and understanding of signs. Saussure (1959) described the sign as a form consisting of gestures, letters, physical sounds, etc., which they are called the signifier, and the image or concept that the signifier refers to, which he called the signified. He later identified the connection between the two meanings (Sebeok, 2001), as seen in Figure 2.1 below.

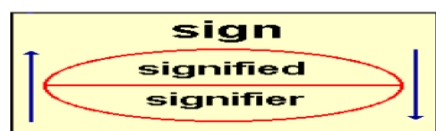


Figure 2.1 Meaning Element according to Saussure (Adopted from Chandler, 2007).

Saussure (1959) saw the relationship between the signifier and the signified as one that humans and cultures had arbitrarily constructed. To support his case, he said there was no apparent reason to use the term tree for 'a plant.' Any well-formed signifier may have been employed in either language; it is compatible with the orthographic, phonological, or another structure typical of the code it belongs to (Dyer, 1982).

Peirce (1974) referred to the signifier as something that represents a shape inherent in the physical strategy of representation, hand movements, the use of sounds, and so on for some referential purpose (Short, 2007). He referred to the referent as the object, separate from its (real-world) setting. He named the meaning derived from a sign the interpretant, implying that it included a type of 'negotiation' in which the sign-user assesses or replies to what the sign means socially, culturally, individually, etc. (Chandler, 2007; & Rose, 2001), as shown in Figure 2.2 below.

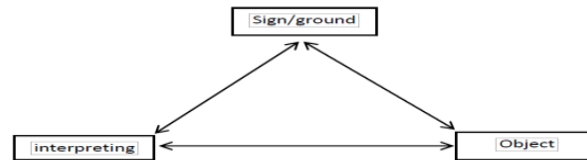


Figure 2.2 Triangle Model by Peirce (Adopted from Rose, 2001)

According to Barthes (1957), semiotics studies the form of ideas since the research emphasises signification rather than content. He described semiotics as the relationship between the signifier that results in the sign.

## 2.1 Barthes's Theory

Roland Barthes significantly impacted the discipline of semiotics, which he expanded from linguistics to visual images. He (1977) viewed images as direct analogue meaning transmitters. In the image, he established three distinct classes. The first class is the text of the linguistic message, which can be denotatively and connotatively analysed. Barthes demonstrated that this type of message serves two purposes to draw the viewer's attention. The most common in linguistic messages is responsible for attempting to direct the emphasis on a certain meaning among several others; this meaning primarily depends on the idea and morality of the culture and message that is less popular with corrected meanings; in this case, the text is merely a fragment of dialogue achieving its desired meaning through images that are either comics or cartoons (Barthes, 1968; & Hugh, 2009). The non-coded iconic is the second type, which pertains to the denotation analysis of what Barthes termed the "first degree of intelligibility"; images are described as viewed without codes. Nonetheless, Barthes insisted that connotation and denotation are required to comprehend an image fully, and he rejected the denotation explanation alone (Dweich & Muwafaq, 2020). The last type is the symbolic or coded iconic, the cultural message, which refers to the connotation analysis of the image as "rule-governed transpositions," referring to the viewer's cultural context. The image is independent of the intention of its creator, and it may have multiple meanings depending on its recipients (Lail, 2018).

## 2.2 Denotation

Barthes (1968) defined denotation as the order of signification that explains the link between signs and references to reality, resulting in clear, direct, and precise meaning. He described that this link between the signified and the signifier conveys the explicit meaning of the sign. The denotation meaning of a symbol is commonly understood and accepted

meaning in society. It includes the referential meaning, often called the literal common-sense meaning of a sign. According to Panofsky (1970), the denotation meaning of a sign refers to the clear and explicit image that all members of a culture or group recognise. The denotation meaning symbolises the dictionary meaning of a word or the nomenclature of an item.

### **2.3 Connotation**

Connotation is the ordering of signification that describes the link between signifier and signified, whereby the operative meaning is implicit and concealed. It refers to the sign that can be derived from the signifier of any denotative sign. In other words, each denotation has many connotative interpretations (Barthes, 1968). Barthes prioritised the connotation meaning of a symbol. The connotation meaning of a sign refers to the cultural meaning linked with a word; it relates to the interaction that occurs when the sign meets the reader's feelings and cultural values (Fiske, 2010). Barthes (1968) rejected the notion that the sign has a single level of meaning and said that it must be studied and analysed carefully to determine its infinite number of connotations. Therefore, the connotation is the connection between a sign and the reader's or user's sentiments, emotions, and cultural values. The meaning becomes subjective and inter-subjective (Lail, 2018).

### **3. Verbal and Non-Verbal Language**

Prabasari et al. (2018) argued that language includes visual and verbal signs. Signs can be visual, gestural, physical, or textual. According to Leonard (2012), verbal language is essential for communicating and expressing ideas on observations, emotions, and desires. Establishing a particular vocabulary helps select the right words for effective written and spoken communication. According to Lambert (2008), when individuals communicate without words, they employ body language. Thus, body language can transmit just as effectively as words, if not more so. Due to this, the term communication does not just relate to speeches, presentations, and words; but it also includes using body language without articulating any words (Guimares, 2013).

Nonverbal refers to all types of transmitted signals that are not linguistic (Neama & Al-Husseini, 2021). Eisenberg & Smith (1971) referred to nonverbal communication as all communication not encoded in words. Likewise, Levine & Adelman (1982) supported the notion that individuals occasionally communicate themselves more nonverbally than vocally. According to Short (2007), nonverbal communication includes physical behaviours known as intonation, gestures, body language, use of space, and voice usage.

The sociological term for mastering nonverbal and verbal forms is strategic competence, the second category of communicative language after linguistic competence. This demonstrates the significance of nonverbal communication. Verbal and nonverbal communication are so tightly intertwined that they nearly never occur independently. All verbal communication will substantially entail nonverbal signs such as hand gestures, eye movements, and smiles. So, verbal signs focus on texts and words, while non-verbal pertain to pictures (Prabasari et al., 2018).

#### 4. Slogans

Today, slogans are an integral part of contemporary public life, whether on the street, at a bus stop, in an office, at a market, or in another public place. The origins of slogans date back to antiquity when individuals banded together to form tribes for mutual protection. Slogans are not new nor exclusive to a particular culture; they have been for as long as language has existed and are often deployed to focus attention and incite action (Sherif, 1937).

Sharp (1984) stated that a slogan is an anglicisation of the Gaelic word "slaughairm," which means "army cry" or "war cry", and was formerly employed by Scottish clans. Its objective was to motivate clan members to fight courageously for the clan's defence or expansion of its honor. According to Stewart et al. (2012), a slogan is a brief, appropriately worded term, phrase, or expression that suggests action or loyalty or motivates people to choose and fight to realise some principle or decisive issue. Slogans are important symbols of a culture, defined as carefully prepared words or statements that inspire behaviours elicit emotional reactions, and serve persuasive purposes (Denton & Shankel, 1980). Several groups or civilisations could share a symbol or be wholly unique to a single group or culture, revealing information on its ideological origins. In this context, it is necessary to recall the persuasive power of slogans.

Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) appeared in the desert of Karbala as a symbol for free men and a slogan for revolutionaries across centuries and generations. People wrote ceaselessly, yet neither the ink nor the expressiveness dried up nor became stale. In his honor, revolutions were launched, blood flow never ceased, and aspirants to that noble road never lost their resolve. Slogans were yelled at in his honour, and enduring institutions were created. Neither did the multitude of voices that echoed the marvelously great Husseini insurrection subside. At Kufa, the Tawwabeen (repentants) movement was headed by Sulyman bin Sird al-Khuza'i and al-Musayyab bin Djbah al-Fazari. After that, al-Mukhtar bin Ubaidah al-Thaqafi and Ibrahim bin Malik al-Ashtar revolts were seen. They chose the motto "Revenge for Hussein's martyrdom" They sought out Imam Al-Hussein's (peace be upon him) murderers and killed them all. While fighting against the evil army of the Umayyads' unjust ruler Yazid, they put all slogans into practice (Al-Balagh Foundation, 1992).

#### 5. Ashura

Ashura is the tenth day of Moharram (the first month of the Islamic lunar calendar), commemorating Imam Al-Hussein's martyrdom (peace be upon him). Imam Al-Hussein bin Ali bin Abi Talib (peace be upon them) is the second grandson of the Holy Prophet and the third divinely appointed caliph, the third from the Ahlul-Bayt (Peace be upon them). Umayyad caliph Yazid murdered him at the battle of Karbala in 680 after challenging the unfair reign of Yazid and the illicit transfer of power ((Dabashi, 1989). Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) and his army marched to the desert of Karbala (a bleak desert plain in central Iraq), where they were besieged for ten days by Yazid's soldiers. His troops, their wives, and children were defeated and massacred at Karbala after being outnumbered by Yazid's forces and running out of food and water (Afary, 2003; & Rizwan, 2011).

Ashura has always been the school where Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) has always been the best teacher at this school. Ashura has been a historical event and a school

for teaching religion and belief, bravery and martyrdom, justice and the desire for freedom, ambition, religious enthusiasm and a revolt against evil, patience and perseverance, authority and leadership of Imams, sacrifices, and fortitude. In other words, it teaches all humans the true meaning of being human (Bakhsh & Hussain, 2015). Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) was a leader, a revolutionary, a saint, and a person with a brilliant and pure spirit. He revolted against an illegitimate monarch who innovated the religion and misled Muslims. Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) took a stance for people to comprehend their situation. It was a win-or-lose scenario. He could not win the war, but he triumphed in the revolution, as in his own words, "It is better to die fighting for truth, than to live under an oppressive ruler" (Al-Balagh Foundation, 2013, p. 5).

The Glorious Quran, the greatest Holy text, which can never be reached by the untruth, indicates in many Quranic verses the exalted position Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) attained in the eyes of Almighty Allah (Al-Balagh Foundation, 2013).

"مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا (٢٣)"  
(سورة الاحزاب)

"Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah, of them some have completed their vow to the extreme, and some still wait; but they have never changed their determination in the least". [Surat Al Ahzab (The Confederates), 33:23; (Ali, Trans. 2004, P. 1062)]

Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) endures eternally as a slogan for revolutionaries, a beacon for the liberated, and a source of struggle and emancipation. His memory extended to all languages of the globe, garnering him a dedicated following. In their opinion, it became a sacred slogan for upholding lofty moral standards and for every sacrifice based on truth and justice (Al-Balagh Foundation, 2013).

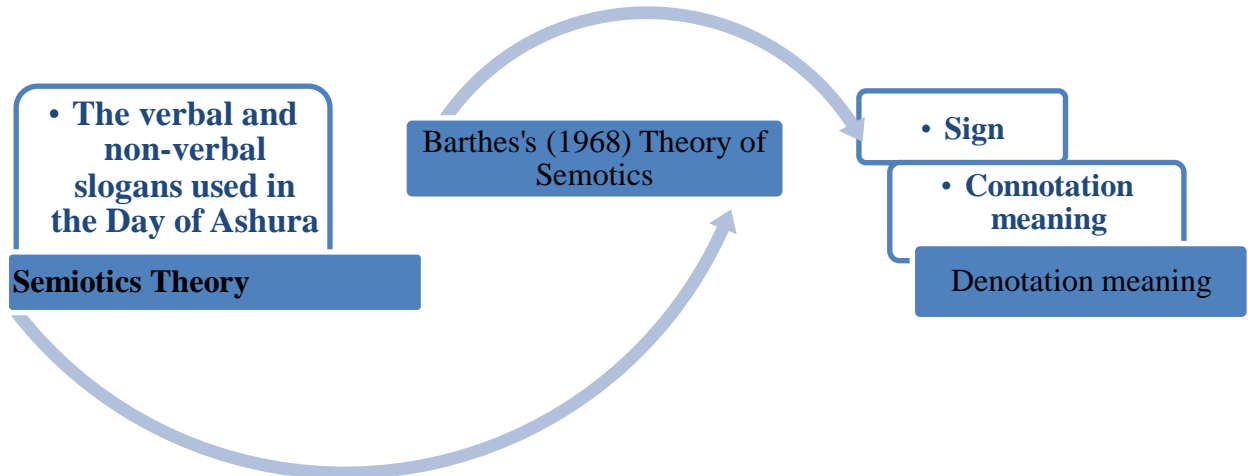
## 6. Methodology

The data used in the current study includes six selected pictures with slogans used on the Day of Ashura. The data (pictures) are taken from websites. According to Shahroodi & Farahni (2021), the slogans of Ashura are expressive and informative messages derived from the rich culture of Ashura, which is mainly rooted in the statements of Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him). The slogans started to raise the slogan of exacting revenge for Imam Al-Hussein's (peace be upon him) martyrdom by the Umayyads (Al-Balagh Foundation, 1992).

This study adopts a qualitative method to analyse the chosen data. Semiotics analysis includes Barthes's (1968) semiotic theory. Barthes's (1968) semiotic theory is based on two significance levels: denotation and connotation. Denotation is the connection between the signifier and signified in the sign and the referent of the sign (object) in external reality. Connotation is the connection between a sign and the reader's or user's sentiments, emotions, and cultural values (Lail, 2018).

The level of analysis used to examine the chosen data for the research is listed in Figure 5.1 below:

*Theoretical Framework of the study adopted from Barthes's (1968) semiotic theory*



**7. Data Analysis**

This section includes the analysis of data based on Barthes’s (1968) theory of semiotics.



**Figure 7.1** A slogan entitled "كل يوم عاشوراء وكل ارض كربلاء" *Kull yawm ‘Āshūrā’ wa kull arḍ Karbalā* "Every day is Ashura, and every land is Karbala"

7.1.1.1 Verbal	7.1.1.2 Non-verbal
"Every day is Ashura, and every land is Karbala"	A picture of the Day of Ashura that includes a slogan, a black flag, tents and fighters. The use of black and red colours in the background of the picture is clear.

**7.1.2 Denotation Analysis**

7.1.2.1 Denotative Sign
The above picture shows the Day of Ashura. It contains unclear fighters, a black flag and tents. The sky is in red and black colours. It also contains the slogan "Every day is Ashura, and every land is Karbala" in red.



**7.1.2.2 Denotation.** Ashura is the tenth day of Moharram in the year 680 CE, and it is the day Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) was martyred by Yazid's adherents. The day holds immense religious importance for both Sunni and Shia Muslims. Karbala refers to a desolate desert plain in central Iraq, where Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) battled and was martyred for re-establishing what had been forgotten. The slogan "Every day is Ashura, and every land is Karbala" is a famous slogan used in one form or another by several Muslim sages, religious scholars, and activists. Some scholars have connected this saying to Imam Al-Sadiq (peace be upon him). The saying "Every day is Ashura" suggests that the spirit of sacrifice and resistance displayed by Imam Hussein and his companions should be remembered and emulated every day, not just on the 10th of Muharram. Similarly, "Every land is Karbala" means that the struggle against injustice and tyranny, like the one witnessed in Karbala, is not confined to a specific location. Instead, it is a universal and ongoing battle that exists in every corner of the world.

### 7.1.3 Connotation Analysis

7.1.3.1 Connotative Signifier	7.1.3.2 Connotative Signified
<p><b>The slogan evokes a sense of martyrdom, sacrifice, and devotion. It suggests that every day should be lived with the same passion and devotion as Ashura, and every place should be treated as sacred and significant as Karbala. The slogan inspires followers to emulate the ideals of Imam Al-Hussein and his sacrifices for truth, justice, and standing up against oppression. It calls for a constant state of remembrance and commitment to these values.</b></p>	<p>The meaning of the slogan is that every day and place, in the name of Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him), there is a struggle against tyranny and the restoration of rights and justice. It encourages adherents to reflect on the principles of sacrifice, devotion, and resilience exemplified by Imam Hussein and apply them to their spiritual and moral growth.</p>

**7.1.3.3 Connotation.** The red and black colours in the picture represented the end of a battle and symbolised sorrow. The picture used black and red so that their readers can understand the battle is always sad and frightening. The black colour also symbolised the fire. The red colour symbolised blood. The flag is designed in black; it stands and never falls. It symbolised Imam Al-Hussein's (peace be upon him) victory, and he is still alive. The slogan is written in a red colour. The red colour refers to Imam Al-Hussein's martyrdom, so the readers feel sad when they see this colour. The current slogan characterised Ashura and Karbala so that a critical and conclusive extrapolation could be made from a particular time and place to all periods and places. This slogan does not refer to the need to cry over Imam Al-Hussein 's (peace be upon him) hardships; rather, it symbolises the continual struggle against injustice, although he has interpreted it differently everywhere and at all times. This slogan signifies that in every period, humans have responsibilities that, if performed

effectively and on time, would result in the improvement of countries and the advancement of humankind. Thus, the tragedy of Karbala had nothing to do with battle but instead with avarice and injustice. It included the concepts of truth and falsity, good and wrong, and belief and disbelief. The current state of the Muslim world is so similar to that of fourteen centuries ago that one is confident that history indeed repeats itself. So, this slogan implies that the war between good and evil will continue and is not limited by time or place. It represents a message of eloquent semiotic content and influence of the recipient, Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) does not belong to a particular society, religion, or nation. He is the worldwide, borderless symbol of liberty and social justice.



**Figure 7.2** A slogan entitled " ثورة الحسين انتصار الدّم على السيف " *Thawrah Al- Hussein intisār al-dam 'alá al-sayf* " *"Hussein's Revolution, the victory of blood over the sword"*

7.2.1.1 Verbal	7.2.1.2 Non-verbal
"Hussein's Revolution, the victory of blood over the sword"	A picture of the Day of Ashura includes a slogan, a black flag containing the slogan "I am here, O Hussein", a tent, sword and spears. There is also the use of black and grey colours in the background of the picture.

## 7.2.2 Denotation Analysis

### 7.2.2.1 Denotative Sign

The background of the above picture is black and grey. The flag has the slogan "I am here, O Hussein" in white. The picture has the slogan "Hussein's Revolution, the victory of blood over the sword" and is written in red.

**7.2.2.2 Denotation.** The picture also describes the Day of Ashura. The denotation meaning of blood is the red liquid that circulates in the arteries and veins of humans and animals. A sword is a bladed weapon designed primarily for cutting or thrusting. Although the sword is an important symbol of power, authority, and martial skill, this slogan shows bloody victories

over the sword. This means the sacrifice and struggle of Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) and his followers in the Battle of Karbala were a victory of morality and justice over tyranny and oppression. Despite being outnumbered and outmatched in military strength and weapons, Imam Al-Hussein's (peace upon him) followers' sacrifice ultimately led to a greater victory for their cause. This slogan is used to express a commitment to fighting oppression and injustice and to honor the legacy of Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) and his followers.

### 7.2.3 Connotation Analysis

7.2.3.1 Connotative Signifier	7.2.3.2 Connotative Signified
<p><b>The slogan conveys the idea that Imam Al-Hussein's (peace be upon him) revolution was successful because it resulted in the domination or superiority of "blood" (which symbolises violence, sacrifice, struggle, etc.) over the traditional symbol of power and control represented by the "sword" (which signifies authority, military might, or force). It means that Imam Al-Hussein's (peace be upon him) revolution accomplished its goals and conveys that armed struggle played a pivotal role in its success.</b></p>	<p>The slogan can be interpreted as a metaphor for the power and triumph of the revolution led by Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him). The phrase "Hussein's Revolution" signifies that the movement was associated with the leadership and ideology of Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him), possibly emphasising his role as a revolutionary figure. The phrase "the victory of blood over the sword" conveys a symbolic meaning, highlighting that the success of the revolution was achieved through sacrifice, struggle, and determination rather than physical force or violence.</p>

**7.2.3.3 Connotation.** Grey and black colours are used to affect emotional strength. Too much grey leads to adding a rock-solid feeling to the Day of Ashura. Grey and black are associated with death and depression. They connote strength. Thus, the use of black is to convey the message that Imam Al-Hussein's (peace be upon him) revolution is to honour Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) and his followers, who sacrificed everything for the sake of Islam, to demonstrate that right is more vital than might, that the blood of the innocent can triumph over the sword of oppressors, and that it is possible to achieve victory despite being subjugated. The flag contains the slogan "I am here, O Hussein". This slogan connotes a form of devotion and supplication to express their solidarity with Imam Al-Hussein—moreover, the readiness to sacrifice and martyrdom in his cause. The colour white is used in this slogan to symbolise honesty, sincerity, purity, and the willingness to sacrifice for faith and justice. The slogan "Hussein's Revolution, the victory of blood over the sword" contains a series of symbols indicating that the victory of blood is a symbolic sign that Imam Al-Hussein's uprising had practically thwarted the Ummayyad policy to divert the Islamic march and plunge the nation, once more, into the darkness of ignorance. Imam Al-Hussein's (peace be upon him) revolution symbolises the struggle between virtue and depravity. This slogan

conveys that numerical superiority does not matter when right is pitted against evil. The attitude of Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) was not affected by the swords he faced in the Battle of Karbala. His purpose was more significant and influential than theirs. They inflicted severe wounds on his body, but they could not quell the inflammation of his rebellion. From his blood, Islam overflowed, and his martyrdom altered the trajectory of Islamic history and sowed the seeds of freedom to inspire future generations of Muslims to reject dishonour, save humanity, struggle for justice, and disseminate love and peace. This was accomplished by the insurrection reviving the spirit of jihad within the nation and adopting the choices of rejection, perseverance, and opposition to the current aberration. The message of this slogan is that Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) himself became victorious because he restored life and youth to Islam. The symbol of the slogan is Imam Al-Hussein's decisive victory against the Umayyads because the sacrifice of His Eminence obliterated all the pillars and foundations erected by Muawiyah to strengthen Abu Sufyan's family's regime.



**Figure 7.3** A slogan entitled "عاشوراء ثورة المظلوم على الظالم" *Ashura thawart almazulm ealaa alzaalim* "Ashura is the revolution of the oppressed against the oppressor"

7.3.1.1 Verbal	7.3.1.2 Non-verbal
"Ashura is the revolution of the oppressed against the oppressor"	A picture includes a slogan, a red flag containing "Ashura", a horse and a sun. There is also the use of black colour in the background of the picture.

### 7.3.2 Denotation Analysis

#### 7.3.2.1 Denotative Sign

The background of the picture is black. The picture contains a red flag with "Ashura," a horse, and a sun. It also has the slogan, "Ashura is the revolution of the oppressed against the oppressor."

**7.3.2.2 Denotation.** The denotation meaning of the slogan "Ashura is the revolution of the oppressed against the oppressor" is all those who oppose oppression, tyranny, and injustice. The fact that Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) and his people were immensely outnumbered yet fought with courage and without compromise is a shining example for

oppressed people of all faiths. The movement appears to be about reforming institutions and revolutionising all individuals to combat injustice wherever it exists and at any cost. After the Ashura massacre in Karbala, the anti-evil revolution of Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) and his loyal companions served as a model for other movements against oppression and tyranny. Ashura led to a revolt for the revival of all Islamic values, and Imam Al-Hussein's (peace be upon him) martyrdom was for the victory of divine justice and humanity.

### 7.3.3 Connotation Analysis

7.3.3.1 Connotative Signifier	7.3.3.2 Connotative Signified
<p>The slogan connotes a sense of resistance against those who seek to oppress or exploit others. It also connotes a sense of empowerment for those who feel marginalised or oppressed. It refers to evoking a sense of reverence for Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) and his sacrifice, as well as a commitment to upholding the values and principles that he stood for.</p>	<p>The connotative meaning signified by the slogan implies a sense of resistance, liberation, and justice. It represents a powerful uprising by those who are marginalised or oppressed, seeking to overthrow those in power who oppress or exploit them. The connotation of this slogan evokes a narrative of fighting against injustice, advocating for the rights and freedoms of the underprivileged, and rallying for a more equitable society.</p>

**7.3.3.3 Connotation.** The use of black in the background of the picture symbolises that Imam Al-Hussein's revolution resulted in the defeat of the Umayyad regime, obliterated all traces of it, and made it the target of one Shia insurrection after another until the establishment of Abbasid rule ultimately overthrew the dark regime. So, the black colour connotes the power of Imam Al-Hussein's revolution. The use of red in the flag affects the reader's psychological. The picture uses the sun to convey that Imam Al-Hussein's (peace be upon him) martyrdom at Karbala is a symbol of evidence of the moral victory of the oppressed over the oppressor, principle over compromise, virtue over vice, and right over wrong. Ashura symbolises the true face of the struggle against injustice—non-violent resistance. Imam Al-Hussein's (peace be upon him) rebellion, movement, and ideals continue to affect the consciousness and awareness of the nation profoundly. Imam Al-Hussein's revolution achieved a victory that no other revolution on earth had ever achieved because the primary goals for which he undertook the confrontation were accomplished, the most significant of which was the success of the movement in his open war against the Umayyad regime. The above slogan signifies that the free faithful become more determined to follow in its footsteps and adhere to its noble goals to ruin the oppression of the tyrants and overthrow the governments of the agents of the East and West throughout the vast Muslim world. Therefore, this slogan conveys that Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) was not advocating for authority and control. He chose to sacrifice his life in a fight against tyranny and injustice after refusing to follow a leader who claimed to be appointed by the Almighty Allah. This slogan is repeated

as a reminder that the struggle continues as long as tyranny and oppressive regimes remain in power.



**Figure 7.4** A slogan entitled "يا ثارات الحسين Yā la-thārāt al-Hussein" "O, for avenging Hussein"

7.4.1.1 Verbal	7.4.1.2 Non-verbal
"O, for avenging Hussein"	A picture includes a man whose facial features are not visible, holding a red flag and riding a horse, a slogan, and a mosque. There is also the sky in grey colour in the background of the picture.

## 7.4.2 Denotation Analysis

### 7.4.2.1 Denotative Sign

**The picture shows an image of a man whose facial features are not visible, riding a horse and holding a red flag with the slogan "O, for avenging Hussein."**

**7.4.2.2 Denotation.** "O, for avenging Hussein" is a slogan for the vengeance of Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him). The slogan was first used during the Tawwabun Uprising, led by Sulayman and Surad al-Khuza'i, and then in al-Mukhtar Al-Thaqafi's Uprising. The slogan was used to signal the beginning of the uprising and to encourage the lovers and followers of Ahl Al-Bayt (peace be upon them). The word thār signifies revenge against the blood "murderer" and "enemy". Its verb refers to killing a murderer as an act of vengeance, which means avenger for the blood. So, in this slogan, the avengers of Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) are addressed, who are invited to gather for revenge for his blood. It is a call for justice and vengeance for the brutal killing of the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon them) and his followers, who were oppressed and denied their fundamentals by the Umayyad government.

### 7.4.3 Connotation Analysis

7.4.3.1 Connotative Signifier	7.4.3.2 Connotative Signified
<p>Imam Al-Hussein's name implies a sense of loyalty or pride in one's country and a desire to seek justice for any perceived wrongdoing against them. The slogan refers to a particular political ideology or allegiance, associated with the legacy of Imam Al-Hussein or the situation that led to the call for vengeance. It also refers to a fervent desire for vengeance or retaliation, fueled by strong emotions and possibly associated with a specific person or cause.</p>	<p>The slogan signifies a sense of longing or yearning. The word "O" at the beginning of the slogan suggests a strong emotional appeal, indicating a deep desire for something, in this case, avenging Imam Al-Hussein. The word "avenging" implies the desire to seek revenge or take retribution for a perceived wrongdoing or injustice. It connotes a sense of anger or frustration.</p>

**7.4.3.3 Connotation.** According to some narrations, "O, for avenging Hussein" will also be the slogan of Al-Mahdi (peace be upon him). So, using man connotes Imam Al-Mahdi (peace be upon him). The use of famous humans aims to trust Imam Al-Hussein's revolution. It also aims to attract readers to allegiance to Imam Al-Hussein and a dedication to upholding his values and principles, including resistance against tyranny and oppression. Muslims frequently use the slogan "O, for avenging Hussein" to express their sorrow and rage over Imam Al-Hussein's (peace be upon him) and his companions' martyrdom at the Battle of Karbala. It is a connotation of mourning and remembrance in theirs, and it is a call to action for those who want to keep the memory of Imam Al-Hussein (peace upon him) alive and seek justice for the injustices he suffered. It also conveys solidarity with the Muslims and a shared responsibility to uphold the values and principles that Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) stood for. The sign of this slogan is a sense of urgency and a determination to seek justice for the wrongs done to him. This slogan symbolises a willingness to sacrifice and take action, whether through peaceful means or more violent means, to ensure that the memory and legacy of Imam Al-Hussein (peace upon him) are kept alive and his message of resistance against tyranny and oppression endures. It is essential to emphasise that while the slogan may sound violent, Muslims do not advocate violence or revenge. So, the message of the slogan is that they pursue justice through peaceful means and uphold the Islamic values of compassion, mercy, and kindness since Muslims cannot take revenge on Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) in this age except through the struggle for justice and the need to resist tyranny and oppression at all costs.



**Figure 7.5** A slogan entitled "يا منصور أميت" *Yā Manşūr Amit* "Oh, Victorious. Bring Death"

7.5.1.1 Verbal	7.5.1.2 Non-verbal
<b>"Oh, Victorious. Bring Death"</b>	A picture of a man holding a black flag containing a slogan. There is also the use of the sun at sunset in the background of the picture.

## 7.5.2 Denotation Analysis

### 7.5.2.1 Denotative Sign

**The picture is at sunset. It depicts a man holding a black flag. The flag contains the slogan "Oh, Victorious. Bring Death."**

**7.5.2.2 Denotation.** This slogan was used in the battles of Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali (peace be upon them). It was also used in the revolts of Muslim Bin 'Aqil, Mukhtar Al-Thaqafi, and Zayd Bin Ali. It was stated during the battles that Muslims chanted to inform one another of their impending victory. It was also used as a secret code between Muslim soldiers at night. It is frequently used as a political slogan or protest refrain in the Arab world, especially in countries where political unrest or discontent with the governing government exists. It is also used to rally support. The denotative meaning of this slogan is quite straightforward. So, it is taken; literally, the slogan means, "Oh victorious one, give us victory." This slogan was commonly conveyed as "Yā Mansūr Amit", or without mansūr, which briefly means "It's time for you to rise." The word "mansūr " means "victorious" or "successful," and "amit" means to bring death.

## 7.5.3 Connotation Analysis

7.5.3.1 Connotative Signifier	7.5.3.2 Connotative Signified
<b>This slogan signifies a sense of rebellion against an oppressive force or situation. The phrase "Oh, Victorious" denotes a sense of triumph and dominance. It implies a longing for liberation and a desire to overthrow an unjust system. The phrase "bring death" implies a ruthless, destructive force. It represents a desperate call for change, even if it means drastic measures. The phrase "Oh, Victorious" combined with "Bring Death" creates a contrast and tension between victory and death. It can evoke a sense of aggressiveness, boldness, or even a call for action that involves sacrificing lives in pursuit of a greater cause or outcome.</b>	The slogan signifies a sense of militarism and nationalism, as it refers to a willingness to use force to achieve one's goals. The word "Victorious" implies a sense of national pride or superiority. This slogan also connotes a sense of religious or mythological references, as it invokes the idea of a powerful and triumphant figure. So, it refers to a specific mythological hero. The slogan may be used ironically or satirically to comment on the absurdity or danger of violent or aggressive behavior. In this case, the slogan signifies a sense of criticism or warning against such behaviour.



**7.5.3.3 Connotation.** The sunset in the background conveys a sense of optimism and determination that victory is possible and is willing to work for it. The black and sunset symbolise bravery. The slogan above carries a sense of urgency and a call to action. This slogan implies that "may blindness overcome you" is an implicit threat or curse, implying that the ruler or government figure is blind to the needs and concerns of the people and will suffer the consequences of their actions. This slogan is a powerful visual symbol of opposition to oppressive or unjust rulers or governments in the Arab world. The symbol of this slogan is a direct message to someone perceived as victorious or successful, asking for their assistance in achieving a particular objective or result. It gave Muslims faith and confidence in achieving victory and instilled in them the courage and sacrifice to fight confidently with great exertion. As a consequence, Muslims were able to face adversity with great patience and fight relentlessly. It conveys a powerful message that the people are not blind. Nevertheless, the slogan suggests that people are not blind and are aware of the injustice and oppression they face. It is a message of anger and frustration. The use of the words "yā mansūr" (victorious) and the curse "a'mat" (bring death) is directly addressed to the oppressive ruler or government figure to convey a message of anger and exasperation. This slogan expresses distress over people's injustices and grievances and calls for change. Additionally, it is a message of solidarity. The collective "yā" (oh) implies a message of solidarity among the protesting individuals. It suggests that the people are united in their opposition to the oppressive ruler or government official.



**Figure 7.6** A slogan entitled "*Hayhāt minnā l-dhillā* هيهات منا الذلة "Never to Humiliation"

7.6.1.1 Verbal	7.6.1.2 Non-verbal
"Never to Humiliation"	A picture includes a slogan, a man whose facial features are not visible, holding a sword and riding a horse. There is also the use of brown colour in the background of the picture.

## 7.6.2 Denotation Analysis

### 7.6.2.1 Denotative Sign

The picture shows the Day of Ashura. It contains a man riding a horse, whose background is covered with the slogan "Never to Humiliation."

**7.6.2.2 Denotation.** "Never to Humiliation" is a famous slogan by Imam Al-Hussein (peace be upon him) on Ashura. It signifies "We have been humiliated for too long" or "We have had enough of humiliation." The word "Hayat" means "I arranged" or "I prepared". The preposition "Minna" means "from us". And the word "adhhdhilla" means "humiliation" or "oppression". This slogan expresses frustration and discontent with the state of affairs. It is a potent symbol of resistance and a call for change, adopted by numerous social and political movements throughout the Arab world. Therefore, it can be understood as a call for people to take action and stand up for themselves and their communities instead of passively accepting their situation. It calls for resisting the status quo and creating a more just and equitable society.

### 7.6.3 Connotation Analysis

7.6.3.1 Connotative Signifier	7.6.3.2 Connotative Signified
<p><b>The slogan connotes a sense of dignity and self-respect, as it suggests a commitment to upholding one's honour and integrity. It refers to expressing a desire to avoid situations that would compromise one's dignity or self-worth. It refers to a sense of cultural or social norms related to honour and shame.</b></p>	<p>The slogan signifies a sense of resistance and defiance against those who seek to humiliate or degrade others. By asserting that one will never be humiliated, the slogan refers to a willingness to stand up against oppression and injustice. The slogan alludes to a feeling of empowerment and strength because it denotes a refusal to allow humiliation to weaken or defeat one. It inspires a sense of resilience and determination in the face of adversity.</p>

**7.6.3.3 Connotation.** The use of red in the background of the slogan catches the eye when it is seen for the first time. The red colour is associated with blood. So, the positive of the red colour shows revolution, power, and enthusiasm for Imam Al-Hussein's revaluation. This slogan conveys a sense of regret and self-criticism through its connotation. This slogan implies that individuals or groups have failed to take responsibility for their lives and have instead allowed themselves to descend into a state of disgrace and humiliation. It means a warning against ignoring one's responsibilities and failing to take action to enhance one's situation. It implies that people will become vulnerable to degradation and disgrace if they do not assume responsibility for their well-being; it also signifies that groups can avoid or surmount humiliation and disgrace if they accept responsibility for their lives and actions. This means that humiliation and disgrace are not inevitable but result from ignoring one's responsibilities and failing to take action to improve his circumstances. People can avoid disgrace and humiliation by being proactive, taking charge of their lives, and working towards their objectives. So, it is one of empowerment and self-determination, encouraging them to take charge of their destiny and not rely on others to solve their problems. It carries a powerful message of resistance and defiance in the face of oppression and injustice. It expresses frustration and anger towards those who have failed to safeguard the dignity and rights of the people and who have permitted them to be humiliated and oppressed. It also conveys a powerful message of resistance and empowerment. It has been utilised by various social and political movements in the Arab world to demand change and struggle for justice.

This slogan also criticises those in authority who have failed to protect the dignity and liberties of the people they govern. It calls for accountability and demands that those in authority attend to and resolve the people's concerns. It, therefore, seeks to affirm that those who follow the Prophet and his holy household should not submit to evil-doers' will.

## **8. Conclusions**

This study is analysed by adopting Barthes's (1968) semiotic theory to analyse selected slogans related to the day Ashura. The following conclusions have been drawn after observing and analysing several selected pictures. Researchers discovered that each picture contains both verbal and nonverbal signs. The verbal sign can be analysed in the slogan. Meanwhile, non-verbal signs include pictures, illustrations, pictures of people, the use of colour, and so on. The presence of verbal and non-verbal elements reinforces the message of the slogan. It attracts the reader's attention, provides information, and subtly persuades them. The researchers also found that these slogans have denotative meanings and are full of meanings and different connotations. The denotation level involves a direct relationship between the signifier and the signified with an explicit meaning. It is what is depicted in the pictures. Researchers found that connotation analysis has a variety of purposes for the signs created by these slogans. Although the slogans have distinct meanings, they share the same goals. Messages of devotion to the principles of Islam, bravery, and resistance against tyranny and oppression are used to achieve the goals set by slogans. These pictures also contain specific colours to create a psychological effect on the reader and are important in building Imam Al-Hussein's revolution's popularity.

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