

## SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE KANJI FOR THE CHARACTER ONNA HEN IN THE MANGA KARIAGE KUN VOL. 49

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### Abstract

Kanji are Chinese letters that originated in mainland China during the Han era, with each character having a unique meaning and significance. Kanji letters first appeared in Japan in the fourth or early fifth centuries. In Japan, kanji letters are part of the *hyoui-moji* set of letters that express meaning. The majority of kanji have two pronunciations: *onyomi* and *kunyomi*. *On-yomi* is a method of reading kanji that uses ancient Chinese pronunciation. Meanwhile, *kun-yomi* is a method of reading characters in Japanese. *Bushu*, or basic characters, are the most significant portion of a kanji because they can communicate a broad range of meanings. Understanding the meaning of a kanji, both as a fundamental character and when joined with other kanji-forming characters, can be facilitated by being familiar with each *bushu*. *Bushu* can also simplify the process of seeking up a kanji's definition in a dictionary. Semiotic analysis is the pertinent theory in this study because kanji is a sign. The study of signs is known as semiotics. In an attempt to learn more about *bushu* in a kanji, the author looked into *onna hen*, one of the *bushu* characters that are employed in kanji. The reason the author picked *bushu* is that *onna hen*, are examples of basic kanji. The manga *Kariage kun Vol. 49* is the source of the data. According to the research's findings, each kanji's *bushu onna hen* represents the tasks and responsibilities that are allotted to women, including sweeping or going to the market. There are also some that exemplify the characteristics of women, like bearing children. A different kanji, meanwhile, stands for the function and standing of men and women in marriage.

**Keywords** – *Kanji Character, Bushu, Japanese Language, Meaning*

### Introduction

Japan is an East Asian country with a distinct writing system. Japan's writing system was initially based on the Chinese kanji writing system. Kanji are Chinese letters that originated in mainland China during the Han era, with each character having a unique meaning and significance. According to Henshall in Bahri (2013:2), Kanji is considered to have been created around 2000SM-1500SM and was initially used in China along the Yellow River. It originated from the shape of an object depicted in pictographs, and it is estimated that there are over 3000 symbols inscribed on bones, stones, and bronze implements, most of which are forecasts. Then, as time passed, kanji became more concise, and by the third century BC, kanji had changed to a simpler form and had undergone standardization. Kanji letters had grown to nearly 50,000 characters by the 200th century.

Kanji letters arrived in Japan around the fourth or early fifth century via the Korean peninsula. In Japan, kanji letters are part of the *hyoui-moji* group of letters that express meaning. The majority of kanji have two pronunciations: *onyomi* and *kunyomi*. *On-yomi* is a

method of reading kanji that uses ancient Chinese pronunciation. Meanwhile, kun-yomi is a method of reading kanji in Japanese (Nandi in Bahri, 2013: 2-3).

Kanji letters are the forerunners of other Japanese letters, such as hiragana and katakana. Hiragana letters were developed during the Heian period and are also known as 女手(onnade) because they are more commonly used by women. They are currently used to write native Japanese vocabulary and particles. Meanwhile, katakana was originally used to copy Buddhist scriptures. Katakana letters are now used to write foreign vocabulary, such as English or other foreign language vocabulary. According to Katoo (in Sudjianto and Dahidi, 2004: 55-56), the letters used to express Japanese writing in Japan are kanji, hiragana, katakana, suuji (numbers), and romaji (Latin letters).

According to Sudjianto and Dahidi (2004: 56-57), kanji letters are one of the most difficult aspects of learning Japanese for students. Not only by students who do not have a 'kanji cultural' background, but also by students who do, such as students from Taiwan or Korea. One of the reasons learning kanji letters is difficult is because there are so many of them. Monbusho (Japan's Ministry of Education) established 1200 kanji letters that were required to be studied in elementary school in 1900. The kanji taught in elementary and middle school (9 years) are known as jouyou kanji and are made up of 2136 kanji letters.

Kanji characters are made up of several lines or strokes. Endo (in Sunarni, 2021: 48) claims that kanji can be divided into two parts based on its constituent elements. First, single kanji, or kanji letters made up of only one element. 木(ki) represents a tree, for example. Second, combined kanji (awase moji) or complex words, i.e. kanji composed of multiple elements. Bushu is an important part of compound kanji.

Bushu refers to the parts of a kanji letter that can be used to classify kanji letters. The provisions of bushu make it simple to find the meaning of a kanji in a dictionary, whether a kanji dictionary or a Japanese dictionary. Dictionaries published in Japan always include a list of bushu to make them easier to use (Sudjianto and Dahidi, 2004: 59).

The word bushu is derived from two syllables: bu, which means part, and shu, which means neck (Sunarni, 2021:48). According to Katoo (in Sudjianto and Dahidi, 2004: 59-63), there are seven types of bushu based on their position in a kanji. The seven types of bushu are as follows:

1. Hen偏, bushu is a character found on the left side of a kanji. Bushu such as ninben, kuchihen, nisui, onnahan, and others fall into this category.
2. Tsukuri 旁 is the bushu on a kanji's right side. Ritto, chikara, sanzukuri, and other types of tsukuri exist.
3. Kanmuri 冠 is the top bushu of a kanji. Kanmuri come in several varieties, including kusakanmuri, ukanmuri, hatsugashira, amekanmuri, and others.
4. Ashi脚, the bushu found at the bottom of a kanji, is a kanji. Hitoashi, rekka, shitagokoro, and shitazara are all examples of this type of bushu.
5. Tare垂,, a bushu with a right angle from top to bottom. Gandare, madare, yamaidare, and shikabane or kabane are all types of tare.

6. Nyou 繞 is a bushu that forms a right angle from left to right at the bottom. Shinnyou, ennyou, and sounyoo are examples of nyou.

7. Kamae 構, bushu that appears to surround the rest of the kanji. Dougamae or makigamae, tsutsugamae, hakogamae, kunigamae, and other types of kamae exist.

The presence of bushu in a kanji is significant because it contributes to the formation of meaning (Endo in Sunarni, 2021:48). Kanji is a symbol with meaning. As a result, semiotic analysis will be used to determine the meaning of the kanji with the character onna hen. According to Zoest (1993:1), semiotics is a branch of science focusing on signs and everything related to signs, such as sign systems and processes that apply to the use of signs. Semiotics is derived from the Greek word semeion, which means "sign." Semiotics is thus defined as a study of signs.

According to Ferdinand deSaussure, a sign is a unity that cannot be separated from two worlds, like a piece of paper - the surface of a signifier to explain 'form' or 'expression'; and the surface of the signified field to explain 'concept' or 'meaning'. Saussure compares the relationship between the signifier and the signified to a piece of paper, where one side cannot be separated from the other. Such is the connection between the signifier and the concept it represents. A bouquet of flowers given to someone (signifier) is inextricably linked to the concept of 'love' or 'affection' that inspired it (signified). Flowers with no meaning are not signs (Piliang in Meilantari and Ayuba, 2021:119).

In addition to Saussure, another semiotician is Charles Sanders Peirce. According to Danesi (in Meilantari, 2021: 120), Peirce refers to signs as representations and concepts, ideas, and objects as objects. Peirce defines interpretation as the meaning (impression, thought, or feeling) derived from a sign. These three dimensions have significance. As a result, Peirce regards semiotics as a triadic rather than binary element.

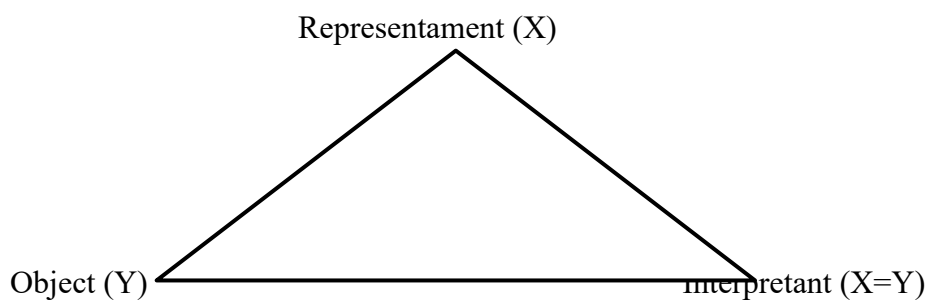


Figure 1. Peirce's Triangle of Meaning  
 (Source: Danesi in Meilantari and Ayuba, 2021:120)

Peirce's semiotic theory defines a sign as "something that represents something else," which theoretically translates into a sign is a representment that spontaneously represents an object. Representing objects in this context means relating them as a meaning-making process: there is a link between "reality" and "what constitutes human cognition." This understanding becomes clear when considering Peirce's three sign categories based on the relationship between objects and representaments (Hoed, 2014: 9).

Peirce categorizes signs into three types based on their relationship to their representament: icons, indices, and symbols. An icon is a representation of a sign that has the

same natural shape or similarity to the object. A person's photo, for example, is an icon of themselves. An index is a symbol that indicates that a representation and an object are causally related. For example, smoke indicates a fire. Meanwhile, a symbol is a sign whose symbolic meaning is based on social convention, whether through agreement or consensus (Wulansari et al. 2020:52).

There has long been research on the meaning of kanji. Bahri (2013) used Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics to study kanji with the fundamental characteristics of ukanmuri. Bahri discovered that there is a clear correlation between the meaning of kanji and bushu. In the theoretical domain, this research and Bahri's research are comparable. Sunarni (2021) conducted additional research on kanji, discussing its meaning and symbols with bushu onnahan as a representation for women. Sunarni (2021) conducted additional research on kanji, discussing its meaning and symbols with bushu onnahan as a symbol for women. After analyzing the kanji, Sunarni came to the conclusion that the female symbol with bushu onnahan represents the honorable qualities of Japanese women who become wives and mothers. These qualities include being authoritative, trustworthy, and helpful, but they also have the trait of being unconvinced, false, selfish, and jealous. The study of kanji with onnahan characters carries on the work of Bahri and Sunarni, particularly in the area of semiotic analysis employing the theory of Charles Sanders Peirce.

Kanji is a meaningful pictographic character. Bushu, a component of the kanji, is crucial to deciphering its meaning. Bushu onna hen (女編) is the form of bushu that will be used in this study. The basic kanji, or onna kanji, is pictographic in nature. The meaning of the basic character 「女偏」 onnahan is primarily associated with matters concerning women. Such as the kanji 「姫」, signifying princess or royal daughter. This study looks for additional meanings in other than the one that uses the character onna hen to represent women in the kanji. Since there are many kanji that use onna hen, the research only uses kanji that belong to the noun category and are panel titles in the manga Kariage Kun Vol. 49. Masashi Ueda wrote the manga that was published in 2010 as Manga Kariage Kun Vol. 49.

## Methods

Qualitative research is being conducted here. Because of the more qualitative character of the data collection and analysis, it is known as qualitative research. In this research, a qualitative method was employed to investigate the meaning of the kanji for the character onna hen. Sugiarti et al. (2020:19) define qualitative research methods as research that places an emphasis on quality, quality, and research evidence. The main source of data for this study is the kanji from Kariage Kun vol. 49, which are categorized as nouns in the manga and have bushu onna hen. Data was gathered through literature studies.

In this study, content analysis methods are used for data analysis. Content analysis was done in two ways: (1) grouping kanji with the manga Kariage Kun Vol. 49 panel title, onna hen; and (2) grouping signs according to how the kanji with the character onna hen relates to representament, object, and interpretant. (3) The meaning of the character onnahan in kanji. Informal methods are then used to present the analyzed data. Sudaryanto (1993:145) defines the informal method as a presentation made with common language.

## Finding and Discussion

In the manga Kariage Kun Vol. 49, there are four kanji that have bushu or onna hen characters, which are nouns. Peirce's semiotic theory of the relationship between representament and its object will be used to analyze the relationship between the kanji and bushu onna hen, as well as the kanji that follow. Then search for each kanji's meaning. These are the analysis's findings.

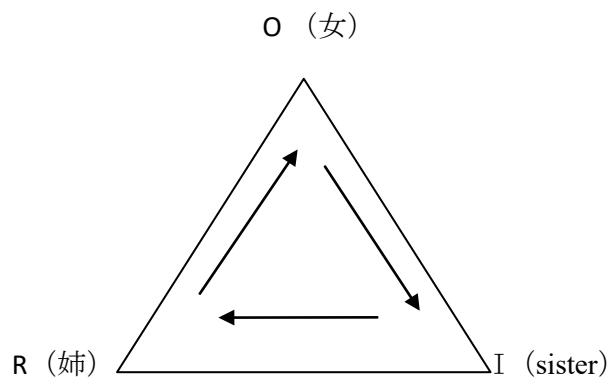
Data (1)

Kanji 姉(ane, shi)



Figure 2. Tittle of the panel: Kosupure no Oneechan  
 (Source: Ueda, 2010:20)

The character 姉(ane), which appears in Kariage Kun Vol. 49, is the onna hen on which Kanji is based. The story panel's title, コスプレのお姉ちゃん "Kosupure no Oneechan," translates to "Sister who is cosplaying (wearing an anime or manga character costume)." Using Peirce's meaning triangle, the kanji 姉 can be analyzed as follows.



Representament : 姉  
 Object : 女(woman)  
 Interpretant : sister

This kanji consists of a combination, the basic character 女偏 (Onna hen) which means woman, and the kanji on the right comes from the kanji 市, which at first the kanji 姉 was written with 姊 and then underwent a form simplification to become the form that is now known. Because the kanji 姉 originally comes from 姊, the analysis starts from 朮 which means tsuru no maita bou, a plant wrapped around a stem. In this case, the meaning of this kanji

formation is not clear, some experts say that this kanji is emphasized more in terms of its sound or pronunciation (シ) so as to simplify writing from initially using 市 to 市 with the same sound. Meanwhile, if analyzed from the kanji 市(いち) it means market. In some families, apart from the mother, it is the older sister who is used to going to the market.

Data (2)

Kanji 婚(kon)

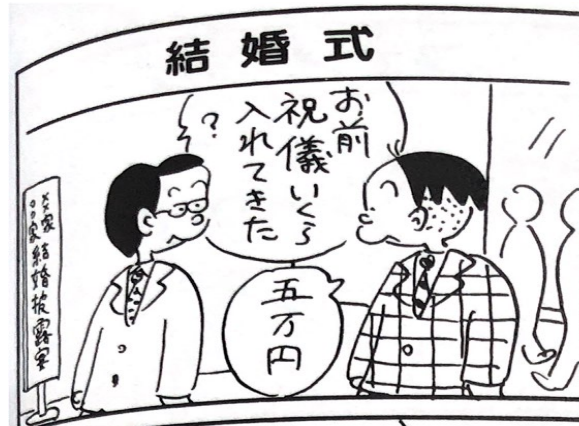
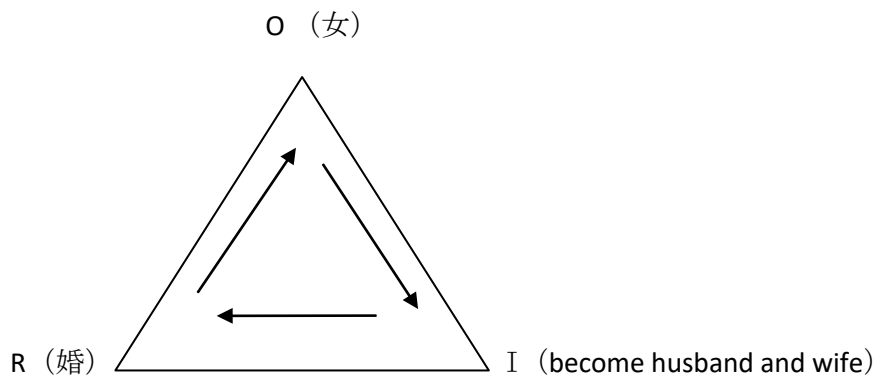


Figure 3. Panel's title "Kekkonshiki"  
 (Source: Ueda, 2010:50)

Kanji with the basic character of onna hen which is the panel title in the manga Kariage Kun Vol. 49 is the kanji 婚(kon). The following is Peirce's semiotic analysis of the kanji 婚.



Representament : 婚

Object : 女(woman)

Interpretant : become husband and wife

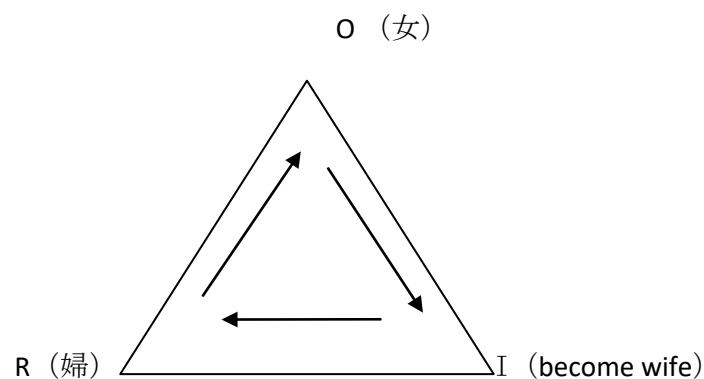
The kanji 婚 as a representament or sign, is a combination of the basic character 女偏 (Onnahan) which means woman and the kanji 昏 (kure). According to Kanji Jiten Online, the kanji 昏 has two meanings, namely dusk and change. So if analyzed based on the relationship between the representament and the object, this kanji means that with every marriage, women become more mature and change, in this case following their husband's family.

Data 3  
 Kanji 婦(fu)



Figure 4. Panel's Title: "Fufubessei"  
 (Source: Ueda, 2010:52)

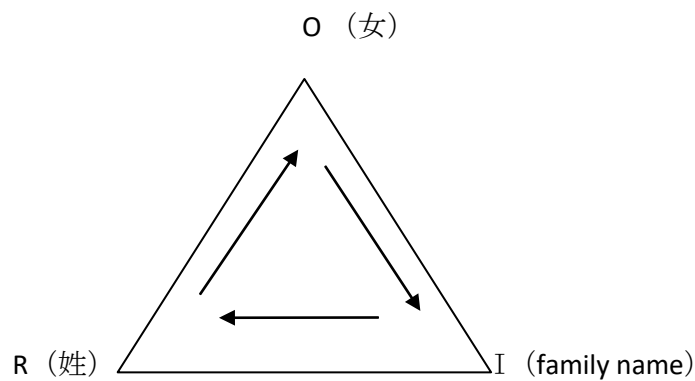
In the manga Kariage Kun Vol. 49, the basic character onna hen has two kanji. That kanji are 姓 (sei) and 婦 (fu). The story panel's title, "Fufubessei," translates to "Not changing the family name after marriage." The following is the first analysis of the character 婦 using Peirce's meaning triangle.



The basic character 女偏 (On}nahen), meaning woman, is the object of the representation, which takes the shape of the kanji 婦 (fu). In the meantime, the combination of the kanji 婦 (fu) is used to determine the interpretant. The character on the right is derived from the character 帚 (Houki), which was first created to mean "broom." When this kanji is studied, it indicates a married woman who cares about the house; one of her jobs is sweeping, as indicated by the kanji (婦).

Data (4)  
 Kanji 姓 (sei)

Aside from the kanji 婦(fu), the kanji containing the fundamental character onna hen can also be found in the kanji 姓(sei) in Figure 4. The meaning triangle of Charles Sanders Peirce is used to analyze the kanji 姓(sei).



Representament : 姓  
 Object : 女(woman)  
 Interpretant : family name

Kanji 姓 (sei), as a representation or sign, is a mix of kanji with the basic characters 女編(Onnahan) which signifies woman and kanji 生(nama) which indicates life, living, soul, raw, and giving birth. Based on the relationship between the representament and the object, the interpretant of this kanji is that a woman gives birth to a new soul, which inherits the family name or 姓(sei).

### Conclusions

According to the results of the kanji analysis for the character *onna hen*, which is the panel title in the manga *Kariage Kun Vol. 49*, every kanji with the fundamental character *onna hen* is a representamen. In this context, representation refers to a sign. In the meantime, the thoughts or concepts that follow are referred to as objects. The item in the kanji with the basic character *onna hen* refers to ladies or women in this research. Each *kanji's* meaning or interpretation indicates work and roles allotted to women, such as sweeping or traveling to the market. There are also those that depict the nature of women, such as having children.

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