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Philosophical terms of “periodic theory” in the works by the 14th century Azerbaijani poet Nasimi

Abstract. The problem of cyclical cosmology in Imadaddin Nasimi’s poetry has not yet been examined in sufficient detail in modern Nasimi studies, particularly with regard to the lexical differentiation between the cosmic circulation of the heavens and the inner return of the human soul. A clearer description of this distinction may contribute to a more accurate reading of Sufi poetic language in medieval Azerbaijani Turkish literature. The purpose of this article was to identify, classify, and interpret the lexical units through which Nasimi conveyed the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of cyclical cosmology. To achieve this aim, the study applied close reading, semantic and etymological analysis, and descriptive, comparative, and classificatory methods, with selected references to classical Sufi thought. The analysis indicated that the exoteric dimension is represented by a relatively stable group of cosmological terms connected with celestial movement, the layered structure of the heavens, and planetary order. Lexical units such as “dawr”, “dawrān”, “falak”, “dawr-i falak”, and “charkh-i aflāk” appear in Nasimi’s poetry not simply as astronomical designations, but as components of a poetic model of universal order. The esoteric dimension, in turn, is expressed through a distinct lexical sequence associated with descent into material existence and ascent toward the divine source. Terms such as “ma’dan”, “nabāt”, “tu’ma-yi haywān”, “ins u jān”, “marja’”, “šu’ūd”, “urūj”, and “rujū’” form a semantic pattern that can be understood as describing ontological and spiritual progression rather than reincarnation in its doctrinal sense. The results may be used in Nasimi studies, historical lexicology, the interpretation of Sufi poetic discourse, and university courses on medieval Turkic literature

Keywords: Hurufi doctrine; exoteric dimension; esoteric dimension; celestial spheres; ontological return; lexical units; reincarnation

INTRODUCTION

The existing scholarship has made a significant contribution to the study of “dawr” and the “devriyye” tradition, yet several aspects of the subject remain insufficiently clarified. One of the main achievements of existing research has been the attempt to define the doctrinal, literary, and historical framework of cyclical cosmology in Turkish and related Sufi traditions. At the same time, the linguistic and terminological expression of this doctrine in earlier Azerbaijani Turkic poetry has not yet been systematically examined. A major contribution in this field belongs to N. Gedik

& M. Kılıç (2021), whose comparative study of Shaykh Azeri’s Persian Urūciyye and Turkish “devriyyes” helped situate the tradition within a wider Persian-Turkish Sufi literary continuum. Their study draws attention to the comparative poetics of cyclical return and highlights recurring cosmological structures within the “devriyye” tradition. At the same time, N. Gedik (2016) monograph demonstrated that the corpus of poetic “devriyye” was not confined to the 17th century, as it includes materials from the 12th century onward and also covers 14th-century poets such as

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Nasimi. Therefore, the unresolved issue is not the absence of early material from scholarship, but the fact that Nasimi's place in the historical development of cyclical ontology has not been sufficiently clarified from a linguistic and terminological perspective.

Another study by P. Aytach (2011) is on the fundamental terminology of "devriyye" texts. She identified the principal concepts through which the genre expresses the movement of existence from divine origin into multiplicity and then back toward its source. The work contributed to the clarification of the metaphysical vocabulary of "dawr" and shows that the genre is built around a stable doctrinal system. However, the study is mainly terminological within the framework of the "devriyye" genre itself and does not investigate how such terminology may function in the poetry of Nasimi or in earlier Azerbaijani Turkic literary discourse.

Z. Oktay-Uslu (2020) and S. Sengul (2024) approached the subject from another angle by studying Alevi-Bektashi literature as a discursive tradition. Their works are methodologically significant because they show that such texts should not be treated only as isolated literary artifacts, but also as part of a performative and communal interpretive culture. This perspective broadens the field of inquiry and helps explain the social and hermeneutic life of texts related to cyclical cosmology. Nevertheless, the author's focus is not on the philological reconstruction of the stages of "dawr" in a single medieval poet, and therefore these works do not resolve the question of how these stages are articulated in Nasimi's poetic language.

Study of the circular model of existence in Ottoman Akbarian Sufi writings, conducted by K. Madono (2022), is one of the most relevant contributions to the metaphysical side of the problem. They explained "dawr" as a circular movement from divine unity into multiplicity and back toward the divine source, thus clarifying its doctrinal place within the framework of "waḥdat al-wujūd". This article provides insight into understanding the theoretical structure of cyclical ontology. Yet its corpus belongs to Ottoman Akbarian Sufism, and it does not address the linguistic realisation of the same ontological model in 14th century Hurufi poetry.

D. Terzioğlu (2022) research on confessional ambiguity in the Ottoman Empire is likewise important for situating cyclical and emanationist ideas within a broader intellectual context. Her work shows how mystical, theological, and philosophical categories intersected in Ottoman religious thought between the 15th and 17th centuries. S. Kuehn's (2024) chapter on Albanian Bektashi materialities also contributes to the subject by demonstrating that the "cycle of creation" was expressed not only in texts but also in symbolic and visual religious culture. These studies provide relevant contextual perspectives; however, neither of them offered a direct linguistic analysis of the terminology of cyclical return in Nasimi's poetry.

A. Karakaya-Stump's (2025) comparative study of Alevis and Alawites further enriched the field by addressing the historical and theological development of Alevi traditions and their doctrinal categories. Although this study is not centred on Nasimi or on the philological structure of "devriyye", it is relevant insofar as it helps contextualise the later intellectual and doctrinal environment in which

cyclical ideas continued to circulate. However, it did not solve the specific problem of how the terminology of cyclical return functions in Nasimi's works as a linguistic system.

Thus, the main scholarly gap became clear. Existing studies have clarified the comparative, doctrinal, performative, and metaphysical dimensions of "dawr" and "devriyye", but the terminology of the theory of cyclical return in Nasimi's poetry has not yet been systematically examined from the linguistic point of view. The purpose of this study was to identify and interpret the lexical units through which Nasimi expressed the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of cyclical cosmology in his poetic language. Therefore, the central research question of the present study concerned how the terminology of cyclical cosmology is organised and semantically realised in Nasimi's poetic discourse, as well as how this terminology differentiates between the exoteric circulation of the celestial spheres and the esoteric ontological return of the soul. A central analytical task of the article was to distinguish the "batin" concept of cyclical return from the doctrine of reincarnation (tanasukh). For this reason, the selected terms are examined in relation to two interconnected dimensions: first, the metaphysical journey of the soul through descent and ascent; and second, the representation of gradual formation and transformation in nature. Thus, the methods are applied directly to the poetic texts in order to reveal how Nasimi encoded cyclical ontology through a structured terminological system.

The present study adopted a paradigmatic approach to the interpretation of these categories, drawing primarily on "Matla-ul-itikad" ("Source of Faith"), a scientific treatise on Tasawwuf philosophy by the 16th-century Azerbaijani poet and thinker M. Fuzuli (1958). Although discussions of periodic theory in scholarly literature usually focus exclusively on its "batini" (internal) dimension, this approach appears incomplete. M. Fuzuli's conceptual framework is considered particularly valuable, as he lived close to Nasimi's time and operated within the same Tasawwuf intellectual environment, which allows for a more historically and philosophically grounded interpretation of the theory. In "Matla-ul-itikad", M. Fuzuli explained the two categories of periodic theory as follows: "Zahir is the rotation of the layers of the sky, planets, and stars that can be observed. "Batin", on the other hand, takes place at the level of elements" (Golpinarli, 1992). This definition clearly indicates that the "Zahiri" category encompasses visible and observable cosmic processes, whereas the "batini" category refers to invisible, metaphysical, and ontological processes related to the inner structure of existence. This dualistic framework provides a crucial methodological basis for analysing the terminology and conceptual structures associated with periodic theory in Nasimi's poetry.

The study was carried out within a diachronic linguistic framework and was based on selected poetic texts by Imadaddin Nasimi containing lexical items related to cyclical cosmology, creation, descent, ascent, and spiritual return. Since Nasimi's poetic language is deeply shaped by Hurufi (Babayev, 2007), symbolism and the figurative code of Tasawwuf literature, the terminology examined in this article is analysed not only in its literal meaning but also in its metaphorical, doctrinal, and contextual functions.

Semantic analysis was applied to determine the meaning of the selected lexical units in their poetic context and to distinguish between their exoteric and esoteric uses. Particular attention was paid to terms referring to the movement of the heavens, the stages of creation, the soul's descent into the material world, and its return to the divine source. Etymological analysis was used to trace the origin of the relevant terms and to clarify their development within Arabic, Persian, and Turkic lexical layers. This made it possible to identify which terms belong to the inherited Sufi-Hurufi conceptual vocabulary and how they function in Nasimi's poetic discourse.

The descriptive method was employed to present the lexical material systematically, while the classificatory method was used to group the terms into semantic categories, such as cosmological terms, anthropological terms, and terms denoting descent, ascent, and return. The comparative method was applied by comparing the use of these lexical units in Nasimi's poetry with their treatment in classical texts associated with cyclical cosmology, including M.A. Cemâl (n.d.), N. Mîsrî (n.d.), and I.H. Erzurûmî (n.d.). In addition, M. Fuzulî's (1958) “Maṭla‘ al-İ‘tiqād” was used as an important source for interpreting the terminology of Tasawwuf. Through this comparison, the study identified both shared conceptual patterns and the distinctive linguistic features of Nasimi's terminology. The inductive method was used to move from individual textual examples to broader conclusions about the structure of cyclical-return terminology in Nasimi's works. The principal linguistic corpus of the study was derived from works of K. Heydarova (2024), which provided the lexical basis for identifying, systematising, and interpreting the relevant terms.

COSMOLOGY, HURUFI SYMBOLISM, AND THE CONCEPT OF “DAWR” IN NASIMI'S POETRY

The thematic and conceptual range of Nasimi's poetry reveals his familiarity with Qur'anic thought, Islamic theology, philosophy, Hurufi doctrine, medicine, and astrology. Hurufi doctrine emphasises the metaphysical significance of letters as fundamental elements of existence. In this framework, letters (“ḥurūf”) are not merely linguistic units but carry deep ontological and cosmological meaning, reflecting the structure of the universe and the human being. This understanding of Hurufi metaphysics and the ontological role of letters is widely supported in the scholarly literature (Babayev, 2007; Usluer, 2009; Mir-Kasimov, 2015). This intellectual breadth confirms his place among the most learned and conceptually sophisticated poets of the medieval East. As a mystic and philosopher, Nasimi became one of the leading exponents of Hurufi metaphysics. At the same time, he remained closely connected to the vernacular, composing much of his poetry in Azerbaijani Turkic. This not only broadened the expressive capacity of the regional literary language but also enabled the articulation of complex metaphysical ideas in a native linguistic medium.

Nasimi's poetic discourse is deeply embedded in the symbolic system of Tasawwuf, constructed in what is conventionally termed the “Mantıq al-Ṭayr” (Language of the Birds). This allegorical mode of expression renders his semantic structures multi-layered and often opaque to the uninitiated reader. Grasping the poet's intended meanings

requires a specialised scholarly background in Tasawwuf terminology, Hurufi ideology, and the broader intellectual traditions of the period (Pala, 1989). Consequently, Nasimi's language functions not merely as an aesthetic medium but as a complex semiotic system that encodes cosmological and religious concepts. A particularly significant yet under-researched dimension of Nasimi's worldview is the periodic theory. In his works, this theory manifests through two distinct but interconnected categories: The Zahiri periodic theory and the Batini periodic theory.

The Zahiri periodic theory refers to the rotation of the visible layers of the sky, planets and stars. The terms of astrology, such as “dawr” (rotation), “dawrān” (orbit), “dawr-i qamar” (the lunar cycle), “falak” (celestial sphere), “dawr-i falak” (rotation of the heavens), “tās-i falak” (the celestial vault), “chanbar” (the hoop/circle), and “charkh-i aflāk” (the wheel of the spheres) are observed in Nasimi's work. The semantic and symbolic meanings of these terms have been analysed in detail in lexical and literary studies, such as H. Remzi (2018). Nasimi's astronomical vocabulary is shaped by the medieval geocentric model of the universe, according to which the Earth occupies the centre and is encircled by successive celestial spheres. In this cosmological framework, “falak”, “Kursi”, and “‘Arsh” denote not only elements of the celestial hierarchy but also symbolic units of mystical and cosmological meaning. For this reason, the present article considered them primarily as components of Nasimi's terminological system rather than as objects of independent cosmological description.

Among the central terms of this cosmological vocabulary, ‘dawr’ and ‘dawrān’ occupy a particularly important place. Nasimi utilised the terms “dawr” (دور) and “dawrān”, both of Arabic origin, to articulate the movement of celestial bodies. The term “dawr” specifically denotes rotation. In his poetic discourse, Nasimi referred to the celestial bodies according to the medieval geocentric hierarchy, situating them within their respective spheres. He explicitly names the planets “Shams” (the Sun), “Mushtarī” (Jupiter), “Marrīkh” (Mars), “Zuhra” (Venus), “‘Uṭārid” (Mercury), and the satellite “Qamar” (the Moon). Furthermore, the poet emphasises the orbital motion of “Keyvān” (Saturn), noting that it “comes by rotating” (“dawrān edib gəlir”), which underscores his awareness of the distinct, slow-moving cycles characteristic of the outer celestial spheres. In the following verse, I. Nasimi (2004) provided a systematic enumeration of the celestial bodies, illustrating their order of rotation:

Chün Mushtarī, Marrīkh u Shams nawbatların eda tamām,
Zuhra, ‘Uṭārid la Qamar, pas dawr ila Keyvān gəlir.

(Translation: When Jupiter, Mars, and the Sun complete their turns, followed by Venus, Mercury, and the Moon, then Saturn arrives in its rotation).

The term “dawrān” (دوران), used as an astrological concept, primarily denotes rotation or “going around”. However, in a figurative sense, it also signifies “time” or “epoch”. Nasimi employed both meanings in a single verse, suggesting that while the celestial sphere (“falak”) has been rotating for aeons, it has never witnessed a beauty comparable to the human being, who is the ultimate manifestation of God:

Hüsn ichinda görmamish mislin falak,
Bunca dawrânı ki, dawrân eylamish.

(Translation: The sphere has not seen your likeness in beauty, throughout all the rotations/aeons it has performed)

“Falak” (فلك) is an Arabic term whose primary meaning is “sky” or “heavens”, specifically denoting a “celestial layer” or “sphere” in the context of medieval astrology. Nasimi extensively utilised this term in various combinations, such as “dawr-i falak”, “tās-i falak”, and “charkh-i aflāk”. Another significant term in his cosmological vocabulary is “charkh-i mu‘allaq”, which refers to a celestial sphere that rotates while suspended in space. The first component, “charkh” (چرخ), is Persian for “wheel” or “circle”, while the second, “mu‘allaq” (معلق), is Arabic for “suspended”. Through this term, the poet expresses a profound curiosity regarding the essence of the cosmos, as seen in the following verse:

Bu doquz charkh-i mu‘allaq nadan oldu tartīb,
Falak altında dönan kawkab-i sayyār nadir?

(Translation: Of what were these nine suspended spheres composed? What is the wandering star (kawkab-i sayyār) that rotates beneath the sphere?)

In this verse, Nasimi’s inquiry reflects the medieval attempt to understand the ontological substance of the heavens and the nature of the “wandering stars” (planets) within the geocentric system, shown on Figure 1.

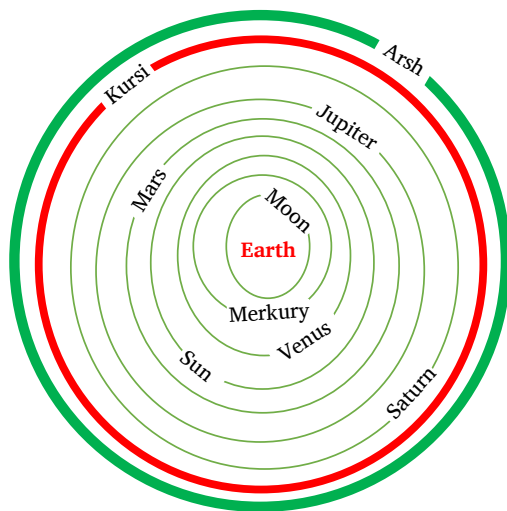


Figure 1. The geocentric system of the universe adopted during Nasimi’s time

Source: developed by author

Furthermore, Nasimi employed the term “tās-i falak” to signify the “dome of the sky”. The word “tās” (ساط) refers to a wide, round bowl or basin in Arabic. When combined with “falak”, it creates a powerful metaphor for the vaulted heavens. The poet used this imagery to describe the impossibility of fully capturing the mysteries of Divine Love:

Fikr edaram ki, yazayım zarraca ‘Ishq sirrini,
Baħr midād, āghāch qalam, tās-i falak davāt olur.

(Translation: I contemplate writing but a speck of the secret of Love; (yet even if) the ocean was ink, the trees were pens, the dome of the sky would become the inkwell (and it would still not suffice).)

“Dawr-i falak” denotes the rotation of the celestial spheres. In a significant panegyric, Nasimi addressed the Prophet Muhammad using the Arabic honorific “Khayr al-Bashar” (The Best of Mankind). He asserts that the celestial sphere, in all its perpetual rotations, has never witnessed a comparable figure within the human race:

Ādamī naw‘ində mislin görmədi dawr-i falak,
Shol cahatdan gar sana Khayr al-Bashar dersam nola?

(Translation: The rotation of the sphere has seen no likeness of you among the human race; what wonder then if I address you as the Best of Mankind?)

Another key term, “charkh-i aflāk”, refers to the nine celestial spheres of the medieval cosmos. This term expresses a complex universe consisting of spheres rotating within one another. Nasimi, aligning with the ideological foundations of Hurufism, posited that the nine layers of the heavens and the earth are fundamentally the dominion of the “letters” (“ḥurūf”), which are the building blocks of existence (Esterabadi, 2012):

Charkh-i aflāk u samāvāt u zamīn,
Bunların mülküdür, ey ahl-i yaqīn.

(Translation: The wheel of the spheres, the heavens, and the earth – all these, O people of certainty, are the property of (the letters).)

CYCLICAL COSMOLOGY, ESOTERIC EVOLUTION, AND THE METAPHYSICS OF RETURN IN NASIMI’S THOUGHT

The Persian term “chanbar” (چنبر), meaning “circle” or “hoop”, serves as a potent symbol of the universe in Tasawwuf. Metaphorically, it is often interpreted as the “circle of fate” or the cyclical nature of trials. Nasimi employed the specific combination “chanbar-i ‘Ishq” (the circle of Love). In this context, “‘Ishq” represents the Divine Essence. The “circle of Love” signifies the arduous path and the all-encompassing nature of divine devotion:

Chakhdi sāchı Nasīmi-yi chanbar-i ‘Ishqa neylasin,
Chanbar anındır, oynasın dawr-i qamarda chanbarı.

(Translation: Her hair has drawn Nasimi into the circle of Love, what can he do? The circle is Hers (God’s); let Her play the hoop in this lunar cycle (dawr-i qamar).)

Nasimi, who frequently communicated through the esoteric “language of the birds” (“Mantiq al-Ṭayr”), utilised “hair” (“sāch”) as a symbolic signifier for the Qur’an in his poetic discourse. This metaphor suggests that the divine revelation, like a complex web, draws the seeker into an

arduous path for the sake of Divine Love. In this context, the term “chanbar” represents the “circle of fate” or the “divine hoop”, signifying that Allah is the ultimate Sovereign and the owner of all cyclical turns. In the second hemistich of the verse, the poet invokes the Prophet Muhammad by referencing the term “dawr-i qamar” (the Lunar Cycle). According to ancient and medieval astrology, each celestial body governs a cycle lasting 1000 or 7000 years. The spiritual dispensations brought by prophets were believed to be intrinsically linked to these planetary periods and their respective astrological rulings.

Prophet Muhammad was born during the Qamar (Moon) period, which denotes the rotation and duration of the lunar cycle. Within Islamic esoteric tradition, the authority and judgment of the Qur’an are coextensive with the duration of this lunar cycle, often referred to as “dawr-i Muḥammad”. While the term “dawr-i qamar” literally refers to the roundness and orbital movement of the Moon, it also carries a socio-eschatological connotation, as some traditions associate the end of this period with an increase in worldly mischief and intrigue (“fitna”).

The “bāṭinī” category of the periodic theory is perhaps the most controversial, as it is frequently conflated with reincarnation (tanāsukh). This conceptual framework was first established in the Islamic world by the “Ikhwān al-Ṣafā” (Brethren of Purity) (Ikhwān, 1957) and further developed by I. Miskawayh (1985). Strong advocacy for this theory continued through prominent Sufi thinkers, including Muḥyiddin Ibn al-‘Arabī, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Nāṣir Khusraw, Feyzī-Hindī, and Yunus Emre. Proponents of this theory primarily ground their arguments in the Qur’anic verse: “Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return” (al-Baqarah 2:15) (Quran, n.d.).

Muḥyiddin Ibn al-‘Arabī (1165-1240) described the esoteric cycle as follows: “The substance of a human descends from the Essence (“al-Dhāt”) to form and manifestation, specifically to the level of “a’yān al-thābita” (fixed archetypes). From there, it descends through the intellect, passion, nature, “hayūla” (prime matter), and “jism al-kull” (universal body), eventually reaching the realms of plants and animals. Its potential increases until it attains the level of “khuḷāṣat al-marātib” (the summary of all ranks). Once the spirit is breathed into it, it becomes “nushūr al-insānī” (human resurrection/emergence)” (Golpinarli, 1992). According to Ibn al-‘Arabī, although the soul separated from the Divine Source passes through plant and animal stages, it only “resides” or culminates at the human level. This is the crucial distinction between the periodic theory and reincarnation. Ibn al-‘Arabī explicitly condemned reincarnation (“tanāsukh”) as blasphemy (“kufr”), as it denies the traditional Islamic concept of the afterlife.

In the context of Tasawwuf, the periodic theory is defined as: “The journey of the Divine Light leaving Wujūd al-Muṭlaq (the Absolute Being or God), moving through soil to minerals, then to plants, animals, and finally to the human being – created as the “noblest of creatures” (“ashraf al-makhlūqāt”). Emerging in the human image and ascending to the level of “al-insān al-kāmil” (the Perfect Human), the soul eventually returns to its original Source. This entire process of departure and return is termed a “cycle” (“dawr”)” (Uzun, 1994).

M. Fuzuli (2005) interpreted the ontological circulation of the soul as a process of composition and disintegration: “The elemental essences occasionally acquire the capacity for composition. By combining with one another, they gradually circulate through mineral (“ma’danī”), vegetable (“nabātī”), and animal (“ḥaywānī”) forms, deriving a specific spiritual influx (“ifāḍa”) from the celestial world at each stage. This phase of the cycle is termed “kawn” (existence/generation). Conversely, when these constituent parts separate and gravitate toward their respective spheres, transitioning from the world of composition to the world of isolation and simplification, the process is termed “fasād” (corruption/disintegration)”.

This Aristotelian-influenced framework of “kawn wa-fasād” (generation and corruption) finds its poetic manifestation in Nasimi’s “qasida” beginning with the “matla”: “Bu jism evina, taliba, seyr edarak chün jân galir” (O seeker, as the soul enters this bodily house to journey...). In this work, Nasimi delineated five distinct stages of the esoteric cycle:

1. Ma’dan (Mineral): Representing rocks, minerals, and metals – the first stage of corporeal existence.
2. Nabāt (Vegetable/Plant): The stage of growth and initial biological life (also referred to as “shajar”).
3. Tu’ma-yi ḥaywān (Animal Sustenance): Literally meaning “animal fodder/prey”, this stage signifies the transition to sentient life characterised by flesh and blood.
4. Ins u Jân (Human and Spirit): The attainment of the human state, where the physical and spiritual worlds intersect.
5. Tu’ma-yi Insān (Human Sustenance/Sacrifice): The final stage leading to the “Perfect Human” (“al-insān al-kāmil”) or the ultimate return to the Divine Source.

According to Nasimi’s cosmological hierarchy, existence emerges from the soil through a systematic progression: stones and minerals (“ma’dan”) give way to plants and trees (“nabāt/shajar”). This is followed by the creation of sentient life characterised by flesh and blood, termed “tu’ma-yi ḥaywān” (animal sustenance/life). The process culminates in the formation of the human being (“tu’ma-yi insān”). A crucial metaphysical moment in this cycle is the entry of the soul into the human form. Nasimi described the soul as a “flying spirit without arms and legs” (“bī-dast u pā parran”), which descends into the corporeal vessel to grant it life. This transformative sequence – moving from inorganic matter to complex biological organisms – bears a striking conceptual resemblance to the theory of organic evolution proposed by C. Darwin (1859), particularly in its emphasis on transformation and continuity within existence. Such parallels with evolutionary thinking have also been discussed in both Western and Eastern intellectual traditions (Atesh, 1975; Gulluje, 2024). But while C. Darwin’s theory is rooted in biological naturalism, Nasimi’s “evolution” is a teleological process driven by the Divine Will, where matter is constantly refined to eventually host the human spirit. This parallel was substantiated in this study by examining the following sources and terminological transitions within Nasimi’s poetic corpus.

**TRANSITIONAL FORMS AND
THE PRE-DARWINIAN EVOLUTIONARY CONCEPT**

The evolutionary perspective in Eastern thought is meticulously documented in several key treatises, including

works of M.A. Cemâl (n.d.), N. Mîsrî (n.d.), and I.H. Erzurûmî (n.d.). These works describe a cosmological process where the four elements (“anâşir-i arba‘a”), under Divine influence and the rotation of the celestial spheres (“aflāk”), undergo constant transformation. The stages described in the aforementioned treatises emphasise that the “creative material” of the universe consists of the four elements of nature. I.H. Erzurûmî (n.d.) provided a detailed account of this evolutionary progression in his “Mārifatnāme”:

“By the commandment and influence of the Almighty God, the celestial bodies and the spheres (“aflāk”) rotated and moved, transferring the four elements (“anâşir-i arba‘a”) to one another. As a result of their combination and separation, compositions changed; first, minerals (“ma‘daniyāt”) occurred, then plants (“nabātāt”) appeared over time, followed by animals (“ḥaywānāt”). When the animal reached its perfection, the human appeared. However, intermediate beings (“mutawassiṭāt”) appeared between these stages. Coral (“marjān”) appeared between minerals and plants; the female date palm (“nakhl-i khurmā”) appeared between the plant and animal kingdoms; and the ape (“maymūn”) appeared between the animal and human worlds” (Guzel, 1983; Tatji, 1997; Saluk, 2014).

In Arabic mythology and medieval Eastern thought, the ape or chimpanzee was often conceptualised as a “half-animal, half-human” being. It is of particular linguistic and philosophical interest that Nasimi employed the term “ins u jān” in his poetic discourse as a conceptual placeholder for this transitional stage, rather than the literal term for “ape”. This suggests a sophisticated understanding of the hierarchical ascent of life. Given these profound insights, it is plausible to suggest that the fundamental idea of evolution – later formalised by C. Darwin (1859) – may have its conceptual roots in the intellectual traditions of the East.

While this process is described as a long-term evolutionary stage, the periodic theory (“dawr”) maintains its

theological core: all beings were created by God. Each soul destined for a new human existence descends through these stages periodically – mineral, plant, and animal – and finally settles within the human form upon reaching the final stage of the cycle.

While the evolutionary process is viewed as a long-term progression of species in modern science, within the periodic theory (dawr), it is an ontological journey of the soul. According to this framework, every soul destined for a human existence descends through specific stages before settling within the human form. M. Fuzuli (2005) underscored this by stating that complex beings – minerals, plants, and animals – are formed through the influence of celestial bodies on the primary elements. Similarly, M. Ashkar (2000) noted that before attaining the human state, the soul exists as individual particles within the realms of non-living matter and plants, circulating through the world of matter by Divine decree until it manifests as human. This journey is conceptually represented as a complete circle, consisting of two symmetrical arcs:

- Qaws al-Nuzūl (The Arc of Descent): Also referred to as “mabdā” (the beginning), this semi-circle represents the soul’s descent from Absolute Existence through the Universal Intellect (“al-‘Aql al-Kull”), the nine intellects, the nine souls, the nine celestial spheres (“aflāk”), and finally the four natures and elements.

- Qaws al-Urūj (The Arc of Ascent): Also known as “qaws al-ṣu‘ūd” (the arc of rise), “rujū”, or “ma‘ād” (the return), this half-circle depicts the soul’s ascent from matter through the levels of minerals, plants, and animals, ultimately reaching the level of the “Perfect Human” (“al-inṣān al-kāmil”). Nasimi frequently employed these terms to describe the soul’s metaphysical “adventure”. In his poetic worldview, the human being is not merely a biological end-product but the point where the circle closes, returning the divine spark to its Source (Fig. 2).

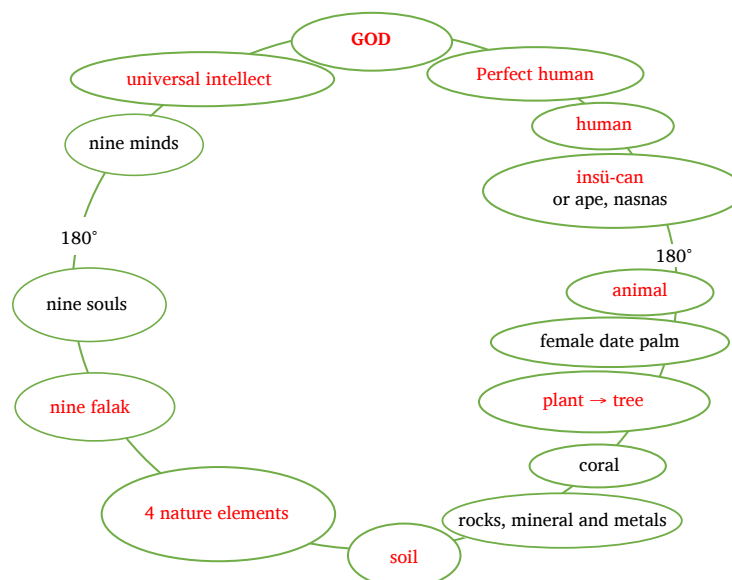


Figure 2. The “batin” periodic theory in Tasawwuf

Note: the left arc (qaws al-nuzul, descent) represents 180°, while the right arc (qaws al-uruij, ascent) represents 180°. The terms highlighted in red correspond to those attested in Nasimi’s works

Source: developed by author

A primary objective of this research was to distinguish the periodic theory (“dawr”) from the concept of reincarnation (“tanāsukh”), as they are frequently conflated. In Indian traditions, reincarnation involves an endless cycle of rebirth determined by “karma”, which determines the conditions of subsequent existence; a soul may regress into an animal or a crippled form based on its previous deeds (Rosen, 1997). In contrast, Islamic periodic theory posits a linear progression with a singular terrestrial culmination. According to the esoteric cycle, a “perfect being” (“insān al-kāmil”) either encounters no obstacles or swiftly overcomes them, completing the journey back to the Divine Essence. Conversely, “imperfect beings” struggle with material obstacles, which slow their descent (“nuzūl”) and ascent (“ʿʿūd”), often leaving them “stalled” on the path (Fuzuli, 1958).

Unlike reincarnation, where the soul might cycle back into lower forms, the periodic theory describes a singular journey. The soul descends from God once, passes through the necessary cosmic and material stages (mineral, plant, animal), and enters the human form. Following death, the soul enters the state of “Barzakh” (Purgatory) and awaits the Day of Judgment, where it is reunited with its bodily form for divine reckoning. Thus, the stages of the “dawr” are steps of a progressive refinement, not a repetitive cycle of punishment. I. Nasimi (1973) captured the beginning of this terrestrial journey – the moment of separation from the Absolute – in the following verse:

Ol ‘ālam-i iṭlāqdan, ol shams-i dīn Khallāqdan,
Ayrıldıghichün zarravash bu dünyāya nālān gəlir.

(Translation: Because it has been separated from that world of absolute freedom and from the Creator – the Sun of Religion – the soul arrives in this world moaning like a tiny mote).

In this verse, Nasimi emphasised that the soul enters the material world in a state of lamentation (“nālān”). This “moan” signifies the soul’s innate awareness of its separation from the “‘ālam al-iṭlāq” (the world of absolute liberation/divinity) and its longing to return to its Source.

TERMINOLOGY OF THE BĀṬINĪ PERIODIC THEORY

The following lexical units within Nasimi’s poetic corpus constitute the terminological framework of the esoteric cycle: “ma’dan”, “nabāt”, “ins u jān”, “tu’ma-yi ḥaywān”, “tu’ma-yi insān”, “dawrān”, “marja’”, “al-‘aql al-kull”, “ʿʿūd”, “urūj”, “rujū’”, and “mabdā’”. The first five terms (ma’dan (mineral), nabat (plant), insu-jan (humanity), tu’mayi-hayvan (sustenance of animals), and tu’mayi-insan (sustenance of humans)) are reflected as successive stages in Nasimi’s qasida, which begins with the opening line (“matla’”): “Bu cism evinā, taliba, seyr edərək çün can gəlir” (O seeker, as the soul arrives, journeying to this house of the body). This qasida is devoted to the esoteric theory of cyclical return (“dawr”). In the opening couplet, Nasimi raised the fundamental question of the soul’s primordial origin and its entry into the human body:

“Vardır sualım çün sana, vergil cavab, qalma dona:
Bu ruhi-qədimi mana, degil ki, sən qandan gəlir?”

(Since I have a question for you, give an answer; do not remain silent: Tell me, from where does this primordial soul arrive?)

This couplet introduces the central metaphysical problem of the poem: the pre-eternal nature of the soul and the mystery of its embodiment. By framing the issue as a direct question, Nasimi prepares the reader for the subsequent exposition of the soul’s passage through successive stages of existence. From the third couplet onward, the poet begins to describe the sequential unfolding of being. In accordance with a widely attested Sufi conception, the soul passes through different ontological levels in the form of particles (“zarrāt”): first through soil, then through the mineral realm, afterwards through the vegetal world, and finally into the animal stage.

“Çün xakdən edər səfər mə’dən, nabat olur şəcər,
Rövşən görər əhli-nəzər k’ol tö’meyi-heyvan gəlir”

(As it journeys from the soil, it becomes mineral, then plant and tree; Those with insight see clearly that it (then) becomes the sustenance of animals)

In this verse, the terms “ma’dan” and “nabāt” denote the mineral and vegetal stages of existence. The couplet presents them as successive phases in the soul’s ascent, culminating in “tu’ma-yi ḥaywān”, which signals its transition into the animal realm.

Nasimi then advanced to the next stage of the cycle, namely the movement from the animal level to the human one: “Çün tö’meyi-heyvan olur, o da ki, insü-can olur” (As it becomes the sustenance of animals, that too (eventually) becomes the human soul) (Nasimi, 1973). Here, the expression “ins ü jān” marks the human stage of existence and indicates a higher phase in the cyclical progression of the soul. Thus, the verse emphasises the continuity of transformation from lower forms of life to the human condition. Furthermore, Nasimi depicted the soul as arriving in a non-corporeal state, “without hands or feet”, and in motion, as if in flight; only thereafter does the fully embodied human being come into being:

“İnsana vasil olmağa bidəstü-pa pərran gəlir.
Çün tö’meyi-insan olur, ol ruh, ol heyvan olur,
Ətū dəri, iligü qan pəs tö’meyi-insan gəlir”

(To reach the human (stage), it arrives flying without hands or feet. As it becomes the sustenance of man, that soul becomes living; Then flesh and skin, marrow and blood – thus the sustenance of man arrives.)

This passage presents the soul as an immaterial entity prior to embodiment. The phrase “bidəstü-pa pərran” underscores its incorporeal nature, while “tu’ma-yi insān” indicates the stage at which it becomes united with human physical form. In this way, the verse describes the completion of the transition from non-material existence to embodied human life within the esoteric cycle.

The distinct representation of these two stages in Nasimi’s poetry suggests that he differentiates between “ins” (potential humanity) and “insān” (realised/perfected human being). The former denotes humanity as a general or

potential category, whereas the latter refers to the fully manifested human being. In the following stage, the soul, having emerged through this ontological progression, is associated with the divine image bestowed upon man:

“Çün tö'meyi-insan olur, insanü cismü can olur.
Pəs ruhi-insani olub, çün surəti-Rəhman gəlir”

(As it becomes the sustenance of man, it becomes the human, the body, and the soul. Then, becoming the human soul, it arrives as the image of the Merciful)

This verse marks the culmination of the anthropological ascent described in the qasida. The expression “insān” indicates the realised human being, while “şurat-i Raḥmān” (“The Image of the Merciful” or the divine reflection in man) points to the divine form reflected in humanity. Thus, the couplet presents man not merely as a biological being, but as the perfected locus of divine manifestation.

Raḥmān (the Merciful) is one of the ninety-nine Beautiful Names of Allah (“al-asmā' al-ḥusnā”). In Nasimi's poetic language, the phrase “şurat-i Raḥmān” is a clear allusion (“iqtibās”) to the well-known Prophetic tradition that Adam was created in the divine image. By invoking this expression, Nasimi incorporated the idea of sacred anthropology into the framework of cyclical return and presents the human being as the highest stage of embodied existence. One of the key lexical units employed by Nasimi in connection with the esoteric theory of cyclical return (“dawr”) is “mabda'”:

“Kaf ilə nun məbdə'imdir, mənşə'imdir kainat”
(Kaf and Nun are my origin; the universe is my source).

In this line, mabda' signifies the primordial source or first principle of existence. By referring to Kaf and Nun, Nasimi alluded to the divine creative command “Kun” (“Be!”), through which all existence comes into being. The verse therefore emphasises that both the cosmos and human origin are rooted in the initial act of divine creation. The word “mabda'” (أدبم), of Arabic origin, means beginning, source, principle, or origin. In Sufi metaphysics, it denotes the first point of emanation from the Divine. Within the context of this verse, the term does not merely indicate an abstract beginning, but the metaphysical foundation of existence itself, linked with God's command that initiates creation. The letters Kaf and Nun mentioned in the couplet symbolise the linguistic form of the divine imperative “Kun” (“Be!”). Through this allusion, Nasimi identified the origin of being with the divine word of creation and situates both the universe and the human self within the same sacred ontological beginning.

In Sufi metaphysics, the term “Aql-i Kull” (Universal Intellect) denotes the first universal principle of knowledge and divine order, often understood as the primordial intellect encompassing all existence (Tufekcizade, 2015). Nasimi referred to this concept in the following verse:

“Əqli küllü, Ərşi Kürsü, lövhü qələm Çar ünsür, nöḥ asımandır söz!”

(The Universal Intellect, the Throne and the Pedestal, the Tablet and the Pen, The four elements and the nine heavens – all are the Word!)

In this couplet, Nasimi asserted that “The Word” (the creative Logos) encompasses the Light of the Prophet Muhammad, the Divine Throne (“Arsh”) and Pedestal (“Kursi”), the Pen (“Qalam”) that writes the Destiny upon the Preserved Tablet (“Lauh”), the four natural elements (“Char Unsur”), and the nine layers of heaven. Nasimi compressed the entire cosmological order into a single metaphysical unity. The verse thus stresses the generative and comprehensive power of the divine Word. Here, Nasimi suggested that all levels of existence – from the highest intelligible principles to the material structure of the cosmos – originate through the same creative command. The couplet therefore reflects the idea of instantaneous creation: with the command “Kun”, the totality of being is brought into existence at once, in accordance with the divine will.

The term “Mabdā' al-‘ilal” (“the source of causes”) denotes the initial phase of the baṭīnī cycle and corresponds to the first 180-degree arc, known as “Qaws al-Nuzūl” (the Arc of Descent). In this context, Nasimi reinterpreted the problem of causality within a mystical framework and questions the sufficiency of conventional philosophical categories such as cause (“‘illat”) and effect (“ma‘lūl”):

Ey hikmətin rəisi, ma‘lūl ü ‘illəti qoy,
Əvval bu jövhəri bil kim, mabdā' al-‘ilaldır.

(O master of wisdom, abandon cause and effect; first know this essence, for it is the source of causes.)

In this verse, “‘illat” and “ma‘lūl” function as terms of rational philosophy, yet Nasimi deliberately set them aside in favour of a deeper metaphysical principle. The expression “mabdā'” “al-‘ilal” points to the primordial source from which all causal relations originate. Thus, the couplet emphasises that the soul's descent cannot be adequately understood through discursive reasoning alone, but must be traced back to its pre-eternal divine origin.

The concept of return within the cyclical process is expressed through the terms “rujū'” (return) and “urūj” (ascent). In one of his verses, Nasimi employed the imagery of the mine and the jewel in order to question the soul's destination and ultimate point of return:

Ma'dənsiz altın olmaz ü kənsiz degil göhar,
Ey gövhər-i yagāna, rujū'un na kənadır?

(Gold cannot exist without a mine, nor a jewel without a quarry. O unique jewel, to which mine is your return?)

This couplet is built upon the symbolic parallel between the jewel and the soul. Just as gold and precious stones cannot be separated from their source, the human soul too remains bound to its metaphysical origin. By means of the term “rujū'”, Nasimi foregrounded the idea that every being must ultimately return to the source from which it emerged.

The image of the mine (“ma'dan/kān”) is especially significant here, since it conveys not only material origin but also ontological rootedness. The “unique jewel” symbolises the singular soul, while the rhetorical question directs attention to its final destination. In this way, the verse

encapsulates one of the principal ideas of the *bāṭinī* cycle: descent from the source is inseparable from the necessity of return. This upward movement reaches completion in “Qaws al-Urūj” (the Arc of Ascent). Nasimi employed astrological terminology with particular precision in order to express the totality of his spiritual and ontological condition:

Ham ḥazīzam, ham urūjam, ham qarīnam, ham burūj,
Gardish-i charkh ü madāram, shahrinin mashhūruyam.

(I am both the lowest point and the ascent, both the conjunction and the zodiacal signs; I am the rotation of the heavens and the orbit, renowned in the city.)

In medieval astronomy, “ḥazīz” denotes the lowest point of a celestial body, whereas “urūj” signifies its upward movement or ascent. By uniting these opposites within a single poetic self-definition, Nasimi identified himself with the full cyclical motion of existence. The couplet therefore presents the human being as the locus in which descent and ascent, beginning and return, are brought into metaphysical unity. In Nasimi’s poetry, ascent toward the Divine is not expressed merely as mystical longing, but as a structured ontological process. The final phase of the *bāṭinī* cycle is articulated through such terms as “mōhbit”, “marjaʿ”, and “suʿūd”. The lexical unit “mōhbit” (Ar. طبعم), meaning “place of descent”, indicates the point at which the soul enters the terrestrial plane. Nasimi directly connected this descent with the Unique and Eternal Divine Essence:

Mōhbitimiz şifāti chün Zāt-i Qadīm-i Fard imish,
Vāḥid-i bī-zavālādir marjaʿ ıla süʿūdumuz.

(Since our place of descent is the attribute of the Eternal Unique Essence, our return and ascent are toward the Imperishable One).

In this couplet, “mōhbit” designates the beginning of the soul’s downward movement, while “marjaʿ” and “suʿūd” indicate its return and ascent. Nasimi thus framed the entire cycle within a theocentric model: the soul descends from the Divine source and ultimately returns to that same Absolute Unity. The verse emphasises that both the origin and the end of existence are grounded in the Eternal One.

The terms “suʿūd” (ascent) and “marjaʿ” (place of return) correspond to the second 180-degree arc of the cycle, namely “Qaws al-Urūj”. This phase signifies liberation from material limitation and reintegration into the Divine Presence. Nasimi further underscored that this spiritual ascent is inaccessible to those whose understanding remains incomplete:

Qāshın mīʿrājına süfī ırışmāk istār, ey hūrī,
Valī har qāşir idrākın urūju ırmaz ol yāya.

(The Sufi desires to attain the mīʿrāj of your brow,
O hūrī, but not every deficient intellect can ascend to that curve.)

This verse associates ascent with “mīʿrāj”, the supreme act of rising toward the Divine. The image of the eyebrow as an arch or curve becomes a symbolic expression of the path of elevation. By contrasting the aspiring Sufi with the

one of “deficient intellect” (“qāşir idrāk”), Nasimi stressed that true ascent requires spiritual insight and cannot be attained through ordinary understanding alone.

To better understand Nasimi’s emphasis on the “pure essence” (“pākīza jōvhar”), it is useful to consider the broader intellectual context reflected in classical Islamic philosophical thought. In *Maṭlaʿ al-Iʿtiqād*, M. Fuzuli (2005) discussed the gradation of being through a series of ontological categories, including “şūrat” (form), “hayūlā” (prime matter), “jism” (body), “nafs” (soul), and “aql” (intellect) (6, V, 92). Although Nasimi did not reproduce this scheme in a systematic philosophical manner, his poetic inquiry clearly resonates with such hierarchical models of existence. This perspective is reflected in the following verse:

Yārab, ol pākīza jōvhar kim, bashardir şūratı,
Qanğı ʿālamdan gəlir, adı nədən insān olur?

(O Lord, that pure essence whose form is human – from which world does it come, and why is it called “human”?)

In this couplet, the human being is presented not simply as corporeal existence, but as a “pākīza jōvhar”, a pure essence manifested in human form. Nasimi’s question is therefore not rhetorical in the ordinary sense, nor does it arise from ignorance; rather, it expresses gnostic wonder before the mystery of human origin. The verse highlights the idea that man is the final embodied manifestation of a higher ontological essence that has descended through successive stages of being. Thus, within the framework of the *bāṭinī* cycle, the human being appears as the point at which metaphysical descent reaches self-awareness and from which spiritual ascent begins. Nasimi’s terminology of “urūj”, “marjaʿ”, “mōhbit”, and “pākīza jōvhar” shows that the return to the Divine is not an abstract mystical aspiration, but the completion of an ordered ontological movement.

The results of the present study should be discussed within the framework of scholarship on “dawr” and the literary genre of “devriyye”, since Nasimi’s interpretation of cyclical return clearly belongs to the wider Sufi metaphysical tradition. S. Uludağ (1994) defined “dawr” as a Sufi doctrine explaining the coming of beings from God and their return to Him, and distinguished it from literal transmigration, emphasising its metaphysical character. M.I. Uzun (1994) similarly explained “devriyye” as the poetic genre in Persian and especially Turkish literature through which this doctrine is expressed. The concept of “devriyye” reflects the cyclical movement of existence, where the soul originates from the divine and ultimately returns to it, forming a continuous ontological loop. The devriyye tradition as a distinct literary and philosophical genre has been also extensively examined in the study of M. Tatji (1997). These definitions correspond to the results of the present study. In Nasimi’s poetry, too, cyclical movement is structured as descent and return rather than reincarnation. However, while S. Uludağ (1994) and M.I. Uzun (1994) formulated the doctrine and the genre in general terms, the present article focuses on the way this metaphysical model is lexicalised in Nasimi’s poetic language through such units as “maʿdan”, “nabāt”, “mabdā”, “rujū”, “marjaʿ”, “suʿūd”, and “urūj”.

A broader literary-historical context is provided by R.G. Saluk (2014). The author emphasised that “dawr” texts should be examined not only as doctrinal texts but also in terms of their conceptual and literary structure. This point is especially relevant to the present article, since Nasimi’s poems likewise show that cyclical return is not expressed through doctrine alone, but through a carefully organised poetic terminology. The common point between these studies and the present one is the recognition that “dawr” is based on ontological gradation and on the two arcs of descent and ascent. The difference is that R.G. Saluk discussed the theory at the level of tradition, whereas the present study demonstrates how it operates in the lexical texture of Nasimi’s verse.

N. Gedik (2016) contribution is particularly significant in systematising “devriyye” as a literary genre. In “Türk Edebiyatında Manzum Devriyye”, he showed that “devriyye” is a long and established tradition in Turkish literature rather than a marginal mystical form. In another study, he connected the genre with the intellectual legacy of Şadr al-Dīn Qunawī and the wider metaphysical background of Sufi thought. The present article agrees with N. Gedik (2016) in recognising that “dawr” poetry is structured around ontological stages and return to origin. Yet the difference is methodological: N. Gedik’s approach is historical and generic, whereas the present study is philological and lexical-semantic. It argues that in Nasimi’s poetry “dawr” is articulated through a stable terminological network in which each lexical unit marks a specific phase of the soul’s descent or ascent.

A directly relevant comparative example is the article by N. Gedik & M. Kılıç (2021) on Şeyh Âzerî’s Persian “Urûciyye” and Turkish “devriyyes”. Their study demonstrated that ascent, ontological gradation, and return form a shared conceptual basis across the Persian-Turkic mystical continuum. This supports the present study’s conclusion that Nasimi’s treatment of cyclical return belongs to a broader literary and metaphysical tradition. At the same time, their article is mainly comparative and genre-oriented, whereas the present study concentrates on Nasimi’s internal lexical system. Therefore, the main novelty of this article lies in showing that Nasimi did not merely allude to “dawr” as a general mystical doctrine, but constructs a precise terminology of cyclical ontology in which each term corresponds to a distinct stage within the metaphysical cycle. Therefore, the main novelty of the present article lies in its philological and lexical-semantic focus, as well as in the fact that the terminological system of “dawr” theory in Nasimi’s poetry is examined here for the first time in a separate and systematic manner.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study has shown that the theory of “dawr” in Nasimi’s poetry operates on two interrelated levels: the

“zāhir” and the “bāṭin”. On the “zāhir” level, “dawr” refers to the visible circular motion of the celestial spheres, planets, and stars. Nasimi expresses this cosmological dimension through a specialised astrological vocabulary, including such units as “dawr”, “dawrān”, “dawr-i qamar”, “falak”, “dawr-i falak”, “tās-i falak”, “charkh-i aflāk”, and “chanbar”. These lexical items indicate that his poetic language reflects the geocentric cosmological model transmitted from Greek antiquity into medieval Islamic thought.

At the same time, the study demonstrates that the “bāṭinī” dimension of periodic theory is the more conceptually central aspect of the doctrine in Nasimi’s works. This doctrine should not be identified with reincarnation (“tanāsukh”). Unlike reincarnation, which implies repeated transmigration, “dawr” in Nasimi’s worldview signifies the soul’s descent from the Divine Source, its passage through successive stages of existence, and its final return to the Absolute. In this sense, it represents a meaningful ontological movement rather than an endless cycle of rebirth.

The analysis of Sufi sources has also made it possible to distinguish two main interpretive models of the “bāṭinī” cycle. The first is the spiritual-path model, which describes the soul’s descent from God through the Universal Intellect, the celestial spheres, the natures, and the elements, followed by its ascent through mineral, vegetal, animal, and human forms toward the Perfect Man. The second is an evolutionary model, in which the motions of the heavens activate the four elements and generate successive forms of existence. This framework helps explain why Nasimi’s terminology reflects not only mystical return, but also a graded conception of ontological development. Another important conclusion is that Nasimi articulated this doctrine through a stable and coherent terminological system. Such lexical units as “ma’dan”, “nabāt”, “ins u jān”, “tu’ma-yi ḥaywān”, “tu’ma-yi insān”, “marja’”, “ṣu’ūd”, “urūj”, “rujū”, and “mabda’” function not as isolated mystical expressions, but as interconnected markers of distinct stages within the cycle of descent and return. Thus, the study establishes that “dawr” in Nasimi’s poetry is not merely a general mystical motif, but a structured cosmological and anthropological doctrine expressed through a distinct lexical system. Future research may further clarify this field by comparing Nasimi’s terminology of “dawr” with analogous lexical and conceptual structures in earlier and later Sufi, Hurufi, and devriyye texts.

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Філософські терміни «періодичної теорії» у творах азербайджанського поета XIV століття Імададдіна Насімі

Анотація. Проблема циклічної космології в поезії Імададдіна Насімі ще не була достатньо детально досліджена в сучасних дослідженнях Насімі, зокрема, щодо лексичної диференціації між космічною циркуляцією небес та внутрішнім поверненням людської душі. Чіткіший опис цієї відмінності може сприяти точнішому тлумаченню суфійської поетичної мови в середньовічній азербайджансько-турецькій літературі. Метою цієї статті було виявити, класифікувати та інтерпретувати лексичні одиниці, за допомогою яких Насімі передавав екзотеричні та езотеричні виміри циклічної космології. Для досягнення цієї мети в дослідженні застосовувалися семантичний та етимологічний аналіз, а також описові, порівняльні та класифікаційні методи з вибраними посиланнями на класичну суфійську думку. Аналіз показав, що екзотеричний вимір представлений відносно стабільною групою космологічних термінів, пов'язаних з небесним рухом, шаруватою структурою небес та планетарним порядком. Лексичні одиниці, такі як «даур», «даврән», «фалак», «даур-і фалак» та «чарх-і афлак», з'являються в поезії Насімі не просто як астрономічні позначення, а як компоненти поетичної моделі вселенського порядку. Езотеричний вимір, у свою чергу, виражається через чітку лексичну послідовність, пов'язану зі сходженням у матеріальне існування та сходженням до божественного джерела. Такі терміни, як «ма'дан», «набат», «ту'ма-ї хайван», «інс у джән», «марджа'», «су'уд», «урюдж» та «руджу'», утворюють семантичну схему, яку можна розуміти як опис онтологічного та духовного прогресу, а не реінкарнації в її доктринальному сенсі. Результати можуть бути використані в дослідженнях Насімі, історичній лексикології, інтерпретації суфійського поетичного дискурсу та університетських курсах з середньовічної тюркської літератури

Ключові слова: доктрина Хуруфі; екзотеричний вимір; езотеричний вимір; небесні сфери; онтологічне повернення; лексичні одиниці; реінкарнація

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Characteristics of its development over time and space**

Abstract. The aim of this study was to investigate the chronological development of prehistoric visual art, with a focus on its regional variations. The analysis was directed towards examining the artistic forms and techniques of various periods of prehistoric art, specifically from the Early Palaeolithic to the Neolithic, and their significance for the formation of symbolic systems. The research methodology was based on an analysis of four key aspects of art: the chronological development of artistic forms, regional differences in techniques and styles, the materials and techniques used, and the symbolic meaning of artistic objects. The study encompassed an analysis of rock art, megalithic structures, bone and stone carvings, ceramic artefacts, as well as objects associated with the symbolism of fertility, death and burials. The results of the study showed that prehistoric art was not only a means of artistic expression but also an important element of religious and social practices. In particular, depictions of animals reflected totemic beliefs and ritual functions, whilst abstract geometric symbols held deep spiritual significance linked to natural cycles. Geographical differences point to varying approaches to art across regions: from the rock art and megaliths of Western Europe to the carved objects of Eastern Europe and the symbolic ornaments of the Middle East. Figurines associated with fertility cults and artistic forms accompanying burials played a special role in rituals, emphasising the belief in life after death. Thus, the visual arts played a key role in reflecting the spiritual and social life of early societies, leaving vast scope for further research, particularly into the impact of environmental changes on the development of symbolic systems. The significance of the findings lies in deepening the understanding of the role of art as an instrument of social communication and ritual practice in early societies, which can be utilised in contemporary interdisciplinary research in archaeology, cultural anthropology and art history

Keywords: archaeological finds; cultural symbols; artistic techniques; abstract images; prehistoric art

INTRODUCTION

Prehistoric visual art is one of the oldest forms of human creativity, reflecting the worldview, religious beliefs, and social relations of the earliest human communities. The study of this art encounters a number of difficulties associated with the absence of direct sources of information and preserved artefacts. The interpretation of the content and meaning of works of prehistoric art is often complicated by

a lack of knowledge concerning the context in which they were created and the ways in which they functioned in the lives of early communities. Many aspects of prehistoric art remain insufficiently studied, making further research on this topic essential. The study emerged from the need to gain a deeper understanding of how artistic practices originated and developed in different regions of the world.

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Prehistoric art attracts the attention of many researchers who seek to uncover its deeper meaning, symbolism and influence on the social and cultural evolution of humanity. When studying this topic, there has been a problem with interpreting the content and meaning of prehistoric artworks, which has often been complicated by a lack of knowledge about the context in which they were created and their function in the lives of early communities. D.W. Zaidel (2020) noted that the development of imagination and symbolic thinking was crucial for strengthening social bonds and the survival of communities. The author emphasised that art became an important tool for social organisation and the formation of group identity, playing a key role in the evolution of human cognition. Researcher W. Davis (2017) argued that through the creation of visual images, early humans not only depicted their surroundings but also shaped idealised realities. These images were used for ritual acts and influenced collective thinking, helping to construct new conceptions of the world. The abstract images of prehistoric art remain poorly understood due to the scarcity of sources and artefacts. Author J. Onions (2024) noted that specific neural processes in the brain played an important role in the creation of symbolic images. He pointed out that these images were closely linked to ritual and social contexts, and that neuroscience could play a significant role in understanding such artistic forms.

The creativity of early humans has often been underestimated in terms of its impact on social change. I. Davidson (2023) analysed the link between art and social transformations, arguing that art helped to shape cultural heritage. He emphasised that it served as a vital mechanism for expressing both cultural continuity and change across different periods of societal development. The study of Neanderthal symbolic behaviour was complicated by the scarcity of material evidence. Researcher M. Garcia-Diez (2022) argued that Neanderthals possessed complex symbolic and graphic systems which they used for communication and rituals. This demonstrated their capacity for abstract thought and social organisation, indicating their cultural similarity to modern humans. Understanding the technical aspects of prehistoric art, such as the use of natural materials, also remained under-researched. Scientists I. Domingo & A. Chieli (2021) conducted a chemical analysis of pigments, which showed that prehistoric artists experimented with materials to create durable and long-lasting images. This highlighted their deep understanding of the properties of natural materials and their use for artistic purposes.

J. Robb (2020) examined the role of prehistoric art in the formation of religious and social structures; the author noted that rock art played an important role in religious rituals and the formation of cultural identity. It became an integral part of the spiritual life of prehistoric people and served as a means of transmitting ritual and social values. The significance of megalithic structures for social and religious change also remained a poorly studied aspect of prehistoric culture. L.G. Sanjuán *et al.* (2020) argued that the construction of such structures was not merely a technical achievement but also reflected social and religious transformations, particularly changes in social organisation and control over resources. The preservation of rock art faced contemporary challenges, such as environmental factors and human activity. A. Zerboni *et al.* (2022) emphasised

the importance of international cooperation and the use of cutting-edge technologies to preserve these cultural artefacts. They stressed the need to integrate modern methods to protect rock art from destruction. Stylistic variations in prehistoric art across different regions of the world required a deeper study of their impact on social identities. A.R. Armitage & A. Bonneau (2023) argued that these artistic forms were not merely aesthetic expressions but also served an important ritual and communicative function, shaping the social and cultural identities of various communities.

Taken together, these works highlight the significance of prehistoric art for understanding the evolution of human culture, its role in ritual practices and social structures, as well as the technical and cognitive aspects that influenced the creation of symbolic images. Despite a significant body of thematic work, the research faces many unresolved questions. The main problem lies in the lack of data on the conditions under which these works were created and their role in the life of communities. The symbolism of prehistoric art and its influence on social structures remain insufficiently studied, as do the cognitive processes that led to the emergence of abstract images. It is necessary to investigate more deeply how art influenced social change, contributed to the formation of cultural heritage, and reflected societal transformations. There was also a lack of knowledge regarding the symbolic activities of Neanderthals, the technical techniques of artistic practice, and the significance of art in the development of religious and social structures. Stylistic differences in art and their influence on social identities in different regions have also been insufficiently studied.

This study aimed to identify the main stages in the development of early visual art. The research also set out specific objectives: to determine the influence of social, economic and natural factors on the evolution of artistic practices; to analyse the process of cultural exchange between different regions and its impact on the development of artistic styles and the symbolic content of works; to investigate symbolism and ritual functions in the context of the socio-religious practices of ancient communities. The study analysed the stages of artistic development from the Early Palaeolithic to the Neolithic, with particular attention to key changes in the techniques and materials used by artists during different periods. This study also traced how changes in the social life of early humans influenced their artistic expression, demonstrating the close link between the evolution of social structures and the development of art. In addition, geographical differences in artistic practices across various regions were examined. Another important focus of this research was the study of the symbolism and meaning of prehistoric art.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY VISUAL ART

The earliest examples of visual art appeared during the Early Palaeolithic period, approximately 500,000-200,000 years ago, and bear witness to the emergence of symbolic thinking among early humans. Among the oldest examples are carved stones and bones found in various parts of the world, particularly in Africa and Europe. These objects may have had ritual or communicative significance. A well-known example is a mammoth tusk discovered in

Germany, on which simple geometric shapes are engraved. Furthermore, the early Palaeolithic saw the first instances of the use of pigments, such as ochre, which was used to paint bodies and objects. The use of ochre was considered a ritual act, and it has been found at many archaeological sites, including the Blombos Caves in South Africa. Engravings were found here on pieces of ochre dating back 75,000 years, indicating the initial stage of the development of symbolic art. One of the distinctive features of Early Palaeolithic art is the abstract nature of the images. They did not yet possess the concrete, realistic character seen in the later Palaeolithic, but already demonstrated humanity's capacity for abstract thought and symbolism. This is a significant stage in the history of human culture, as symbolic thought forms the basis for the development of all forms of art and communication (Giedion, 2023).

In the Middle Palaeolithic, which lasted from approximately 200,000 to 40,000 years ago, a further development of symbolic thought and artistic practices can be observed. Humans of this period, particularly Neanderthals, began to create more complex and structured symbols, which were used for ritual purposes or for social communication. Middle Palaeolithic images reflect new levels of abstraction, where meaning was invested not only in concrete forms but also in repetitive symbols such as lines, crosses and zigzags. These abstract elements can be considered an early form of visual coding. One of the characteristic aspects of Middle Palaeolithic art is the ritual practices associated with the use of pigments, such as ochre. Ochre was used to paint bodies and artefacts, as well as during ritual burials. For example, traces of ochre used during the burial of Neanderthals were found in the La Ferrassie cave in France, which may indicate symbolic ritual acts. This is supported by finds from caves in Spain, where handprints made with red ochre have been discovered, representing one of the earliest manifestations of Neanderthal artistic and symbolic activity (Fig. 1).

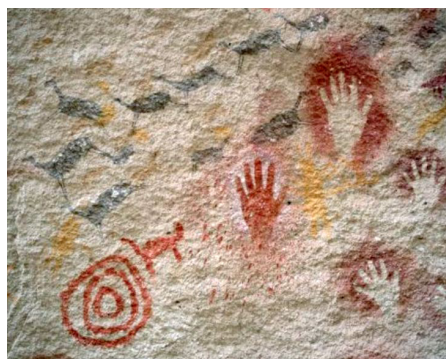


Figure 1. Neanderthal handprints, Maltraverso Cave
Source: Neanderthal handprints, Maltraverso Cave (2013)

Another important feature of Middle Palaeolithic art is the abstract engravings on bones and stones. In particular, a grid-like engraving was found in Gorgam Cave in Gibraltar, which may be one of the earliest examples of the deliberate use of abstract forms to convey meaning (Fig. 2). Such engravings may symbolise the first attempts by Neanderthals to create more complex artistic expressions and use them in social interaction.



Figure 2. Engraving in the Gorgam Cave
Source: Engraving in the Gorgam Cave (2023)

Symbolic images from the Middle Palaeolithic reflect an early stage in the development of more complex symbolic thinking. They had ritual and social significance, indicating that Neanderthals possessed a deep understanding of abstract ideas and their place in the lives of early communities (Bahn, 2024). Continuing the development of Middle Palaeolithic artistic traditions, the Late Palaeolithic (40,000-10,000 years ago) was marked by a flourishing of cave art. During this period, people, particularly Cro-Magnons, created complex, detailed and skilfully executed depictions of animals, human figures and abstract symbols on cave walls. Cave paintings from this time were distinguished by their realism and expressiveness, indicating a high level of technical and visual skill. One of the key features of Late Palaeolithic art is the use of natural pigments, such as ochre, charcoal and other mineral paints. For example, in the Lascaux Cave in France, large bison, horses and deer are depicted, characterised by natural plasticity and dynamism (Fig. 3). In the Altamira cave in Spain, similar realistic depictions of animals have also been found, which utilised the natural curves and irregularities of the walls to achieve a three-dimensional effect.



Figure 3. Bison paintings, Lascaux Cave
Source: Hunting scene, Altamira Cave (2003)

These drawings had symbolic or ritual significance. Many researchers believe that the hunting scenes, which were often depicted on cave walls, may have been used in magical rituals to ensure a successful hunt (Fig. 4). Other theories suggest that these images may have been linked to shamanic practices, in which animals acted as spirit helpers or totem symbols.

Late Palaeolithic cave art demonstrates a significant development of symbolic thought and highlights the importance of art in the social and religious life of early communities (Jacobs, 2022). Building on Late Palaeolithic traditions, Mesolithic art (approximately 10,000-5,000 BCE) represents a crucial transitional phase between

hunter-gatherer culture and Neolithic agriculture. Mesolithic art largely reflects changes in people's way of life as they gradually transitioned from a nomadic existence to a more settled one. This period is characterised by an increase in the number of abstract and figurative images found in rock art and carvings. A key feature of Mesolithic art is the simplified figures of humans and animals, often depicted in motion, which lends them a dynamic and expressive character. For example, numerous drawings depicting scenes of hunting and dancing have been found in Spain and France (Fig. 5). Human figures are schematic in appearance, with elongated bodies and simplified facial features, indicating the development of symbolism.

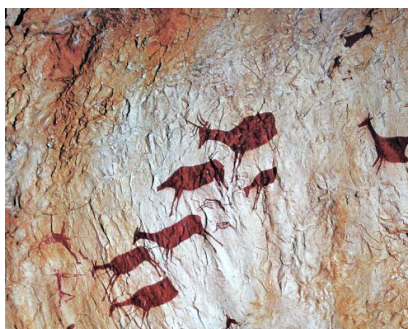


Figure 4. Hunting scene, Altamira Cave

Source: Hunting scene, Altamira Cave (2003)



Figure 5. Drawings of hunters, rock art of the Levantine tradition

Source: Drawings of hunters, rock art of the Levantine tradition (2023)

In addition to figurative art, the Mesolithic period is also characterised by an increase in abstract elements. Geometric symbols and patterns, such as zigzags, circles and lines, are frequently found in rock art. These may have been used to mark territories, ritual sites or to facilitate communication between different groups. Mesolithic art also demonstrates a gradual transition to a more settled way of life, which included new forms of social organisation and religious beliefs. This period is key to understanding the evolution of artistic forms, as it paves the way for the more complex structures and symbols of Neolithic art (Zilhão, 2020).

The transition from the Mesolithic to the Neolithic (approximately 7,000-3,000 BCE) was marked by major changes in people's lives, leading to the emergence of new artistic techniques and styles. This period was characterised by a shift to a settled way of life, the development

of agriculture and livestock farming, which significantly influenced the aesthetics and functionality of art. In the Neolithic, art became more structured and complex, with an emphasis on geometric patterns, stone carving, pottery and metalwork. One of the most widespread art forms of this period was pottery production. Neolithic pottery was characterised by a wide variety of patterns and decorative techniques. Engraving, stamping and painting were often used to decorate jugs, bowls and other household items (Fig. 6). Depictions of people and animals were also common motifs appearing on pottery and other objects.



Figure 6. Engraved Neolithic ceramic vase

Source: Engraved Neolithic ceramic vase (2023)

An important innovation of the Neolithic period was the construction of megalithic structures, such as stone circles and dolmens, which combined engineering skill with artistic vision (Fig. 7). Many of these structures had religious significance and were used for rituals, reflecting the development of more complex social and spiritual structures.

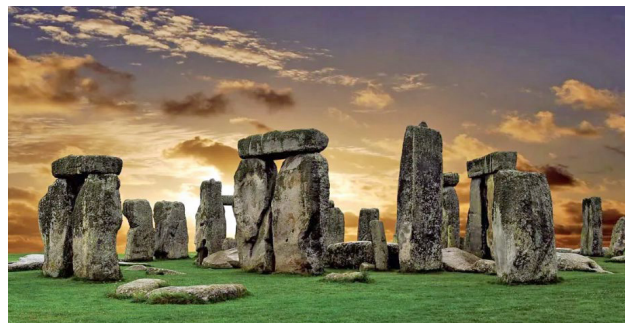


Figure 7. Stonehenge megalithic structure

Source: Stonehenge megalithic structure (2024)

Neolithic art also included rock art, which continued the traditions of the Mesolithic but became more abstract and geometric. Geometric motifs, such as spirals, lines and zigzags, are frequently found in rock art and may have symbolised spiritual or ritual concepts (García-Diez & Ochoa, 2020). This period was marked by significant developments in technical skills in art and engineering, which influenced the cultural and religious worldview of Neolithic communities.

GEOGRAPHICAL DIFFERENCES IN THE ART OF PREHISTORIC CULTURES

The art of Western Europe during the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods is characterised by two key strands: rock art and the construction of megalithic structures. These

art forms are significant not only for the region but also for the overall development of human culture. The rock art found in Western Europe is best known for its unique drawings, particularly in caves such as Lascaux (France) and Altamira (Spain). These predominantly feature depictions of animals, notably bison, deer and horses, rendered with realistic proportions and distinct lines. Such images may have served both ritual and magical functions, aimed at ensuring successful hunting and maintaining balance with nature. The use of various pigments and techniques to create three-dimensional effects on the uneven surfaces of cave walls reflects the high level of skill possessed by these early artists. Megalithic structures, such as Stonehenge in the UK, are among the most significant architectural achievements of Neolithic Europe. These structures consisted of huge stones arranged in circles or lines and were used for ritual purposes, including observing celestial bodies and conducting ceremonies. Megaliths held sacred significance, indicating the development of religious beliefs and complex social structures in the Neolithic societies of Western Europe. These two forms of art in Western Europe demonstrate both a desire to express symbolic ideas through depictions of animals and nature, and the development of engineering thought through the creation of complex ritual structures (Scarre, 2018).

Art in Eastern Europe during the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods was largely centred on carving bone and stone, leaving a rich legacy of artefacts. Finds from the territory of modern-day Ukraine and Eastern European countries are particularly significant. These artefacts reflect the deep symbolism and religious beliefs of early communities. One of the most famous examples of art from this region is the carved figurines and engravings on mammoth and deer bones (Fig. 8). In particular, numerous statuettes have been found in Ukraine, such as the Venus of Mizyn, which symbolised fertility and motherhood.

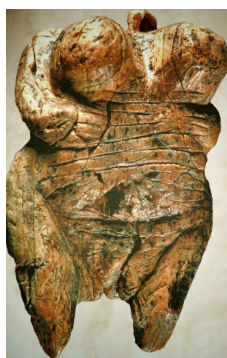


Figure 8. One of the figurines of the so-called Paleolithic Venus

Source: One of the figurines of the so-called Paleolithic Venus (2023)

These figures were usually carved from the bones of large animals and served as ritual objects, confirming the important role of fertility in the prehistoric worldview. Furthermore, the engravings on stones found in sites such as Kamiana Mohyla (Ukraine) provide significant evidence of the development of artistic thought in this region. Depictions of animals, people and abstract symbols carved

into the stones reveal complex spiritual conceptions of the surrounding world. Most often, the motifs were associated with hunting, ritual ceremonies and natural cycles. The art of bone and stone carving in Eastern Europe testifies to the high level of craftsmanship and the capacity for abstract thought among early humans, underpinned by symbolic beliefs that were an integral part of their cultural identity. The art of the Near East during the Palaeolithic and Neolithic periods demonstrates important examples of early symbolism and architectural ornamentation, which significantly influenced the development of culture in this region. The Near East, particularly the territories of modern-day Turkey, Iran and Iraq, is renowned for its early archaeological finds, which bear witness to the emergence of civilisational processes. One of the key examples of early symbolism is the cult images discovered in Neolithic settlements such as Gebekli Tepe in Turkey (Fig. 9). This monument consists of a series of stone pillars carved with abstract symbols, animal figures and anthropomorphic images. These carved elements served a ritual purpose and indicate the development of religious beliefs associated with totems and nature spirits.



Figure 9. Carved stone columns, Gebekli Tepe
Source: Carved stone columns, Gebekli Tepe (2016)

Another important aspect of Middle Eastern art is the development of architectural decoration. In Neolithic settlements such as Chatal-Gyuk, archaeologists have uncovered intricate frescoes and carvings that adorned the walls of buildings (Fig. 10). These decorative elements featured depictions of animals, hunting scenes and abstract symbols reflecting religious ideas and conceptions of the world. The frescoes from Chatal-Gyuk often depict scenes of wild bull hunting, which likely symbolised success and strength.



Figure 10. Fresco from Chatal-Gyuk
Source: Fresco from Chatal-Gyuk (2024)

Art from the Middle East during this period displays profound symbolism and a connection to religious practices. Architectural ornamentation and carvings bear witness to complex social structures based on religious rituals and the veneration of nature (Ozdogan, 2023). The art of North Africa, particularly rock art, has a close connection with the environment and reflects the way of life of the region's early communities. One of the most famous sites is the rock art in the Sahara, particularly in the Tassili n'Ajjer region (Algeria), where numerous depictions of animals, humans and abstract symbols have been discovered. These paintings, dating from approximately 10,000-4,000 BCE, bear witness to the complex relationship between humans and nature at that time. The images often depict scenes of hunting large mammals, such as elephants, rhinoceroses, giraffes and antelopes, which were common during this period in the region that later became a desert. Such scenes reflect the importance of hunting for survival and living in harmony with the environment. One of the characteristic motifs is the depiction of dancing figures, which likely represented ritual dances and shamanic rites aimed at ensuring hunting success and promoting the fertility of the land.

The rock art of North Africa also demonstrates changes in the region's climate and ecosystem. The paintings reflect a transition from a wetter climate to an arid one, which significantly influenced the culture and way of life of local communities. Changes in the fauna depicted indicate a process of gradual environmental change, which led to human adaptation to new conditions. These rock paintings are of great significance for understanding the early ecosystems and social organisation during the early stages of North African history. They reflect both spiritual beliefs and the realities of everyday life (Gallinaro, 2024). Asian art, like that of other regions, underwent a significant transformation during the Neolithic period, when the first pottery and symbolic drawings appeared. In many Asian cultures, early pottery not only served a practical function but also held significant ritual and aesthetic importance. Among the oldest examples of pottery are artefacts found in Japan, dating to the Jōmon culture (approximately 14,000-300 BCE). These ceramic pieces were distinguished by complex geometric patterns and relief decorations, indicating the development of symbolism and aesthetics (Fig. 11). Symbolic designs, often in the form of spirals, waves and lines, adorned the pottery and were likely associated with ritual ceremonies and beliefs.

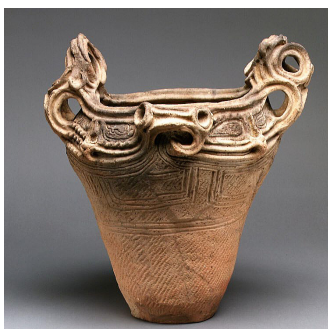


Figure 11. Ceramics of the Jomon culture

Source: Ceramics of the Jomon culture (2024)

Furthermore, early symbolic drawings were widespread in the cave art of Asia, particularly in China, where numerous rock paintings depicting animals, people and abstract symbols have been discovered. Drawings in Chinese caves, such as those in Yunnan, often depict scenes of hunting and ritual dances, testifying to their important role in the spiritual life of ancient communities. Ceramic artefacts and symbolic drawings, which emerged in Asia during the Neolithic period, reflect both the pragmatic and spiritual aspects of life (Hidalgo Tan & Hoerman, 2019). They bear witness to growing skill in working with materials and to the increasingly complex symbolic thinking that developed across various Asian cultures.

TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS OF PREHISTORIC ART

Natural pigments played a key role in the development of prehistoric art, providing the means to create images on various surfaces, including cave walls, stones and bones. One of the most common pigments was ochre – a natural mineral that varied in colour from yellow to red and brown, depending on its iron oxide content. Ochre was used not only for painting on walls, but also for body painting during ritual ceremonies, as well as for decorating everyday objects and tools. In addition to ochre, charcoal was also used as a black pigment, particularly for creating outlines and fine lines in rock art. Charcoal was obtained from burnt wood and was highly popular due to its easy availability and the ability to create clear, rich lines. Alongside these primary pigments, other minerals such as manganese and haematite were also used, allowing for a variety of shades and colours, depending on the natural resources available in a given region.

Methods of applying pigments ranged from using fingers to prehistoric brushes made from plants, hair or feathers. The technique of blowing pigment through a tube was also frequently used, allowing handprints or more complex patterns to be created on uneven surfaces. This technique was particularly widespread in the caves of France and Spain. Overall, natural pigments provided early humans with an important tool for expressing their worldview and ritual beliefs, fostering the development of symbolic thought and communication through imagery (Straffon, 2019). Carving on bone and stone was one of the oldest and most developed forms of art in early societies, requiring high technical skill and patience. This art form was closely linked to ritual and symbolic practices. People carved figures of animals, humans and abstract symbols on mammoth bones, deer antlers and stones, using prehistoric tools made of flint, obsidian and other durable materials. Carving techniques varied depending on the material. For carving bone, sharp flint knives or other pointed objects were used, allowing for the creation of precise and detailed patterns. For example, the famous Palaeolithic Venus figurines, notably the Venus from Willendorf, were created by carefully carving shapes from bone or stone (Fig. 12).

These figurines usually had symbolic significance and may have been used in rituals associated with fertility and motherhood. Stone carving also involved engraving and chiselling images onto large boulders and megaliths. For example, numerous depictions of animals demonstrating

detailed stone carving have been discovered at Kamiana Mohyla (Stone Tomb) in Ukraine. The engraving technique involved creating the outlines of a design by chipping away parts of the stone's surface. This allowed for the creation of clear and durable images that could last for millennia. These carved images reflected the worldview of early humans, including religious and social beliefs. They also bear witness to the development of technical skill and creative thinking in prehistoric cultures (Vandiver, 2022). Clay working and the production of pottery became one of the most important technical achievements in the development of early civilisations. From the Neolithic period, around 10,000 years ago, pottery came into widespread use for making tableware, storing food and creating ritual objects. A key milestone in the development of pottery was the discovery of firing techniques, which enabled the production of stronger and more durable items. Early ceramic items typically had simple shapes, such as bowls and jugs, with curved or straight sides. They were made by hand through modelling or by layering thin strips of clay on top of one another. This early stage of ceramic production generally did not use the potter's wheel, which appeared later. Ceramics were also decorated with carving or embossing, creating geometric patterns or symbolic images that may have had ritual significance (Fig. 13).



Figure 12. Venus from Willendorf

Source: Venus from Willendorf (2024)



Figure 13. An early clay pot with ornamentation

Source: An early clay pot with ornamentation (2024)

Over time, the technology of clay firing evolved significantly. Early firing kilns operated at relatively low

temperatures, which limited the quality of the finished products; however, more sophisticated kilns were later developed, enabling higher temperatures to be reached and the production of ceramics that were not only functional but also decorative. In many cultures, such as the Jōmon culture in Japan or the Trypillian culture in Ukraine, more complex decorative elements emerged, such as spirals and wavy lines, which emphasised the aesthetic aspect of the artefacts. Clay working and pottery production reflected both technical development and the religious and social aspects of ancient people's lives. This technology became the foundation for the further development of craftsmanship and trade across various cultures (March, 2020).

Megalithic structures became one of the most remarkable architectural achievements of early societies. These enormous stone structures, which appeared in various parts of the world, particularly in Europe, Africa and Asia, had not only practical significance but also fulfilled an important ritual and symbolic function. The most famous examples of megalithic architecture include Stonehenge in the UK, the dolmens of France and the megalithic structures in Malta. The construction of such structures required considerable engineering knowledge and labour organisation. The main technique involved lifting and setting massive stones, some of which weighed up to several dozen tonnes. Wooden rollers, ropes and platforms were used to transport the stones, enabling them to be moved over long distances. It is known that many megalithic structures were positioned with precise regard to astronomical phenomena, such as the summer and winter solstices. For example, Stonehenge is a precise instrument for observing the Sun's movement and was likely used for religious rituals associated with seasonal changes. The symbolism of megalithic structures was closely linked to religious beliefs and cosmology. These structures served as sanctuaries, places for ceremonies and rituals associated with the veneration of ancestors, the earth and the heavenly bodies. Furthermore, they served as social symbols of power and strength, as their construction required collective labour and coordination. Megalithic structures are not only architectural masterpieces but also a reflection of the worldview of ancient communities. They became symbols of the connection between humanity and the cosmos, reflecting a deep understanding of nature and humanity's place within it (Dolan, 2021).

With the development of metallurgy during the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, the use of metals in art became a significant step in the development of early civilisations. The first examples of metalwork appeared around 6,000 BCE, when people learnt to work with copper, gold and silver. These metals not only had practical applications in the manufacture of tools and weapons, but were also used to create decorative and ritual objects of great symbolic value. The earliest metal artefacts were simple in form, predominantly in the form of jewellery – bracelets, rings, pins and medallions (Fig. 14). They were produced by forging and casting, which allowed for the creation of delicate, intricately crafted objects. One of the most famous examples of early metal jewellery are the gold diadems and hairpins found in archaeological sites in Mesopotamia and Egypt.



Figure 14. A gold necklace from the time of Mesopotamia

Source: A gold necklace from the time of Mesopotamia (2023)

These artefacts emphasised the status of their owners and were often used in funeral rites, indicating their significance in religious beliefs. Metal in art also had a significant influence on aesthetics. Owing to their malleability and lustre, gold and copper became ideal materials for creating jewellery, as well as decorative elements for adorning weapons and clothing (O'Neill, 2022). For example, bronze swords inlaid with gold or silver served not only a military purpose but were also regarded as symbols of power and might. The use of metals in art opened up new possibilities for artistic expression, allowing for the creation of more complex and refined forms that reflected the social hierarchies and spiritual values of societies.

SYMBOLISM AND MEANING IN PREHISTORIC ART

In prehistoric art, animals occupied a central place as symbolic images, reflecting the deep connection between humans and nature. One of the main concepts associated with the depiction of animals was totemism – the belief that certain animals were considered spiritual protectors or ancestors of the tribe. Totemic animals held special significance, and their depictions could be used during rituals to establish a connection with divine forces or to ensure successful hunting and protection. For example, rock art in Northern Europe and Africa frequently features depictions of bison, horses, deer, lions and elephants. These animals not only reflected the everyday life of hunters but also held ritual significance, embodying strength, wisdom or protection. Such images could form part of shamanic rites, where animals acted as intermediaries between the human world and the spirits of nature. Furthermore, animals were often used as symbols of fertility and vitality. For example, depictions of bulls in the Neolithic art of the Near East and Southern Europe symbolised the fertility of the earth and nature. They may have been part of rituals dedicated to the cycles of nature, such as the changing of the seasons or the harvest. The symbolism of animals was an important element of prehistoric religion and worldview, influencing social organisation and ritual practices. Beliefs in the power and magical properties of totemic animals reflect a deep understanding of nature and the desire of prehistoric people to live in harmony with it (Rozwadowski, 2024).

Abstract symbols, particularly geometric shapes, were widely used in prehistoric art, reflecting complex symbolic systems and ritual practices. Images such as spirals, zigzags, straight lines and circles are found on cave walls, megalithic structures, and on everyday objects, particularly pottery. These symbols often had profound ritual and

spiritual significance, interpreted within the context of the social or religious beliefs of the time. The spiral, one of the oldest geometric symbols, is frequently associated with the cycles of nature, such as the changing of the seasons or the cycle of life and death. For example, spirals found on megalithic monuments, such as Newgrange in Ireland, may have symbolised infinity and rebirth (Fig. 15). Other symbols, such as zigzags, may have represented elements of nature, particularly water or lightning, which held an important place in the beliefs of many prehistoric cultures.



Figure 15. Spirals on Stone, Newgrange

Source: Spirals on Stone, Newgrange (2013)

Geometric shapes were also used to mark the boundaries of ritual or sacred sites, and could symbolise specific social statuses or group affiliations. For example, circles and squares might represent certain clan or tribal symbols used during ritual ceremonies or to mark territories. The interpretation of abstract symbols in prehistoric art remains complex, as their meaning often depended on the cultural and temporal context. Nevertheless, these symbols reflect prehistoric people's capacity for abstract thought and symbolic expression of their beliefs and worldview (Lorente, 2020). Prehistoric art is an important source for understanding the religious beliefs of early societies, as it was through depictions of gods, spirits and natural forces that people expressed their attitudes towards the mysterious and powerful world. Religious symbolism was closely linked to natural phenomena such as the Sun, Moon, stars, water, wind and lightning, which were regarded as manifestations of divine powers. Depictions of gods and spirits were frequently found in rock art and megalithic structures. In some cultures, for example in the Neolithic art of Europe, nature spirits were depicted as anthropomorphic figures with horns or wings, symbolising their power over certain aspects of the world (Fig. 16). Such images were often combined with depictions of animals, which were regarded as the sacred messengers of these deities.



Figure 16. The image of a horned god in a rock painting
Source: The image of a horned god in a rock painting (2014)

In many cultures, particularly in the Middle East and Asia, depictions of deities were often associated with the cult of fertility and vitality. For example, female figurines with voluptuous forms, such as the famous Venus from Willendorf, symbolised goddesses of fertility and motherhood, embodying the natural cycles of birth and death. Male figures were often depicted with elements of nature, such as horns or plant symbols, emphasising their power as protectors of the earth and animals. Another important theme was human interaction with natural forces through religious rituals. Scenes of ritual dances depicted in cave art may indicate ceremonies dedicated to nature spirits or gods who controlled the weather, harvests and other aspects of life (Eliade, 2022). Symbolism of fertility and life in prehistoric art was a key element of the religious and social beliefs of ancient communities. Figurines, drawings and other images associated with fertility were often used in rituals dedicated to the fertility of the earth, animals and humans, reflecting a deep understanding of natural cycles and their impact on life. Among the most common symbols of fertility were female figurines found in various regions of Europe and Asia. For example, figurines such as the Venus from Halgenberg are characterised by pronounced feminine forms with an emphasis on the abdomen and breasts, symbolising a woman's ability to bear children and continue the family line. These figurines were regarded as talismans bringing prosperity and fertility, and were used during ritual ceremonies associated with female deities.

In addition to figurines, rock art associated with fertility also held significant ritual importance. In many regions, such as North Africa and Europe, animals symbolising fertility, such as bulls or deer, were depicted on cave walls or stone slabs. These images were often associated with rituals dedicated to successful hunting or the reproduction of animals, which ensured the survival and prosperity of communities. Drawings depicting scenes of fruitfulness, hunting or birth played a significant role in rituals linking life and death within the context of natural cycles. This art not only reflected religious beliefs but also served as a means of communication between generations, passing on knowledge of rituals and the veneration of fertility (Abadía & Porr, 2005). The symbolism of death and burial held a special place in prehistoric art, as rituals associated with bidding farewell to the deceased played a significant role in the spiritual and social life of ancient societies. Funeral rituals were not merely an act of burying the body, but also a symbolic transition of the soul to the afterlife, which was reflected in numerous artistic forms associated with death. One of the primary forms of artistic expression in the context of death was engraving and carving on burial stones or tombstones. These objects often depicted scenes reflecting the deceased's journey to the afterlife or an encounter with the spirits of ancestors. A well-known example of such imagery is the engravings on megalithic slabs in Europe, which included intricate patterns and figures symbolising the soul's spiritual journey.

Furthermore, figurines and masks found in burials also held ritual significance. These objects may have symbolised guardian spirits or served as amulets to protect the deceased on their journey to the afterlife (Klaus Streb & Kolnberger, 2024). In many cultures, particularly in Egypt, funerary masks served as symbols of immortality and

rebirth, emphasising the belief in life after death. Rock paintings found in burial complexes also depicted scenes of ritual dances or sacrifices that accompanied the burial. Such images can be found in ancient caves across Europe and Africa, where scenes of death were sometimes combined with images of life, creating a symbolic cycle of rebirth. Artistic forms associated with death and burials reflected a deep belief in the spiritual world and the continued existence of the soul after physical death. These images and objects indicate the complexity of the religious concepts of prehistoric peoples and their desire to protect the deceased in the afterlife.

CONCLUSIONS

The earliest examples of art demonstrate the emergence of symbolic thought among early Palaeolithic people, when art served ritual and communicative functions. Over time, artistic techniques became more complex and symbolic content more varied. In the Middle Palaeolithic, people began to create more abstract images, using them during rituals. In the Late Palaeolithic, cave painting became an important means of communication and ritual expression, particularly through hunting scenes and depictions of animals. In the Mesolithic, art became simpler and more schematic, reflecting an adaptation to new living conditions, where hunting and gathering dominated over a settled life. In the Neolithic, the emergence of new techniques, such as pottery and architectural ornamentation, indicates the development of more complex social structures and religious beliefs. Cultural and artistic expression varied by region. In Western Europe, rock art and megalithic structures reflect the complex social and religious structures that prevailed in the region. In Eastern Europe, carvings on bones and stones demonstrate a high level of craftsmanship and spiritual significance, particularly totemic beliefs. In the Middle East, the development of symbolic architecture and religious imagery indicates the formation of cults and ritual practices. In North Africa, rock art reveals a close connection with the environment, reflecting people's adaptation to climate change. Asian art is characterised by the emergence of the first examples of pottery and symbolic drawings, which reflect the ritual and social needs of communities.

Early artists used natural pigments, such as ochre and charcoal, to create their masterpieces, particularly rock art. Carvings on bone and stone demonstrate a high level of technical skill and symbolic thinking, particularly in ritual contexts. Clay working and pottery became important technologies for the creation of both domestic and ritual objects. Megalithic structures combined engineering and religious aspects, reflecting complex ritual practices and beliefs associated with the cosmos. Metals also played an important role in art, particularly in the production of jewellery and ritual objects that emphasised social status and spiritual values. The symbolic use of animal imagery in prehistoric art reflects their totemic significance, as animals were regarded as intermediaries between humans and spiritual forces. Abstract symbols, such as spirals and zigzags, often had ritual significance and could represent natural phenomena or religious beliefs. Religious depictions of gods and spirits in prehistoric art testify to complex spiritual concepts and a belief in the divine forces of nature. Symbolism of fertility was reflected in female

figurines and drawings, which held ritual significance for ensuring prosperity and reproduction. Symbolism of death and burial found expression in the form of engravings, figurines and other funerary objects, which emphasised belief in the afterlife and the protection of the deceased's soul. All these aspects confirm that prehistoric art was not merely a decorative element, but performed important social, religious and spiritual functions, serving as an expression of profound conceptions of the world, nature and spirituality. Further research may focus on examining the influence of climatic and environmental changes on the evolution of

symbolism and artistic techniques in various regions of the prehistoric world.

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Первісне образотворче мистецтво: особливості розвитку в часі та просторі

Анотація. Метою даного дослідження було дослідити хронологічний розвиток первісного образотворчого мистецтва з акцентом на його регіональні відмінності. Аналіз був спрямований на вивчення художніх форм та технік різних періодів первісного мистецтва, зокрема від раннього палеоліту до неоліту, та їхнє значення для формування символічних систем. Методологія дослідження ґрунтувалася на аналізі чотирьох основних аспектів мистецтва: хронологічного розвитку художніх форм, регіональних відмінностей у техніках і стилях, застосованих матеріалах та техніках, а також символічному змісті мистецьких об'єктів. Дослідження охопило аналіз наскельних малюнків, мегалітичних споруд, різьблення по кістці та каменю, керамічних виробів, а також об'єктів, пов'язаних із символікою родючості, смерті та поховань. Результати дослідження показали, що первісне мистецтво було не лише засобом художнього вираження, але й важливим елементом релігійних та соціальних практик. Зокрема, зображення тварин відображали тотемічні вірування та ритуальні функції, а абстрактні геометричні символи мали глибоке духовне значення, пов'язане з природними циклами. Географічні відмінності вказують на різні підходи до мистецтва в регіонах: від наскельного живопису та мегалітів Західної Європи до різьблених об'єктів Східної Європи і символічних прикрас Близького Сходу. Особливу роль у ритуалах відігравали статуетки, пов'язані з культом родючості, та художні форми, що супроводжували поховання, підкреслюючи віру в життя після смерті. Таким чином, образотворче мистецтво відіграло ключову роль у відображенні духовного та соціального життя ранніх суспільств, залишаючи величезний простір для подальших досліджень, зокрема у напрямку вивчення впливу екологічних змін на розвиток символічних систем. Важливість отриманих результатів полягає у поглибленні розуміння ролі мистецтва як інструменту соціальної комунікації та ритуальної практики в ранніх суспільствах, що може бути використано в сучасних міждисциплінарних дослідженнях з археології, культурної антропології та історії мистецтва

Ключові слова: археологічні знахідки; культурні символи; художні техніки; абстрактні зображення; доісторична творчість

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Gender and its representation in contemporary visual art

Abstract. The aim of this study was to conduct a comprehensive examination of the evolution of gender representation in visual art from a historical perspective. The study examined the works of female artists such as S. Sherman, Y. Morimura, T. de Lempicka and Y. Ono, who challenged traditional notions of women in art and fought against systemic barriers. Particular attention was paid to the feminist critical thought presented by L. Nochlin, who analysed the structural problems complicating the representation of women in art. An assessment was provided of how historical and cultural contexts shaped the depiction of male and female roles across different eras. The influence of classical concepts on the creation of gender archetypes, which have long dominated art, was analysed. The study focused on feminist movements and their impact on the visual arts, and also examined contemporary trends in art, such as the influence of postmodernism and the critique of gender stereotypes. Artists such as J. Saville have actively explored new forms of expression and self-identification that go beyond traditional gender roles. The article also highlighted the impact of globalisation on contemporary art, which is fostering new approaches to the exploration of gender identity. Separate attention was paid to the social and cultural consequences of this evolution, including how contemporary art influences the emergence of new images and the re-evaluation of social standards. The study examined how artistic practices can contribute to broadening perceptions of gender and influence public discourse. The practical significance of the findings lies in deepening the understanding of gender representation in contemporary visual art, which can be used to shape a more inclusive art education, develop critical thinking in cultural studies, and support artistic practices that contribute to the rethinking of gender stereotypes

Keywords: artist; technique of representation; woman; painting; photography

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary cultural landscape, the issue of gender identity takes on particular significance, particularly in the context of the visual arts, which traditionally serve as a mirror of social processes and perceptions. The representation of gender in art reflects not only the aesthetic preferences of a particular era, but also the deep-seated social, cultural and ideological attitudes that shape perceptions of the roles of men and women in society. This study is particularly relevant against the backdrop of intensifying feminist criticism, growing attention to issues of inclusion, and the rethinking of traditional visual codes in a globalised world.

The study of gender representations in contemporary visual art allows not only to identify the dynamics of change in artistic practices but also to understand deeper transformations in public consciousness regarding gender roles.

As noted in the study by K. Ginis *et al.* (2023), art and design have long exerted a significant influence upon both the representation and construction of gender roles, seeking not only to visualise social beliefs but also to critically analyse and reconsider gender stereotypes. In a historical context, visual art not only depicted dominant cultural perceptions of gender but also played a role in their

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deconstruction and transformation. Within the contemporary context, visual art has become a powerful platform for the revision and reinterpretation of traditional gender roles. Over recent decades, economically developed countries such as Japan have demonstrated substantial transformations in perceptions of gender roles. In particular, studies conducted in the United States revealed that support for the concept of gender-neutral parenting increased by 20% in comparison with the previous decade.

Similar changes may also be observed in developing countries. For example, in India, the study conducted by G. Echesony (2024) revealed that attitudes towards women occupying leadership positions had improved significantly: 70% of respondents expressed support for women in leadership roles, a significant increase compared to 50% ten years ago. Similarly, in Brazil, a study by G. Spizzirri *et al.* (2021) showed that openness towards non-binary gender identities, which account for 2% of the country's population, has increased. These results point to global social changes that are also reflected in the visual arts, where new voices and perspectives are emerging that challenge traditional notions of gender. Changes in the perception of gender roles have contributed to transformations in the representation of gender in art, although these changes did not occur overnight. The authors A.A. Adeyoye *et al.* (2023) explained the statistics on mentions of women artists in art history by the fact that their works were often not attributed to them or were forgotten. For example, during Antiquity, women participated in the creation of art in ancient Greece, Rome, and Egypt; however, the majority of these works were either lost or forgotten because they disappeared over time or their authorship was attributed to other artists.

In 1986, the collective of female artists known as the "Guerrilla Girls" published a report concerning the number of women artists represented in commercial galleries. As noted by C.M. Topaz *et al.* (2022), the report revealed a serious underrepresentation of women, becoming a powerful call to action in support of equality and diversity within the art world. Although certain progress has been made since that time, studies such as that conducted by A. Aspegren (2021) indicate that even in 2018 only 20% of artists represented in galleries in the United Kingdom were women, highlighting the persistence of inequality. Analysis of the art market likewise demonstrates clear signs of disparity. Research by A. Kakar & C. Lesser (2023) showed that artworks created by women accounted for less than 10% of total auction sales in 2022. Of even greater concern was the fact that a substantial proportion of these sales related to the works of only five female artists, indicating a particular concentration of interest within a limited group of authors. The study conducted by F.Y.R.P. Bocart *et al.* (2022) revealed that paintings by women artists were sold at prices 18.4% lower than those of male artists, confirming the existence of systemic economic inequality within the sphere of art. However, the history of art demonstrates that women artists maintained a significant presence despite historical restrictions.

However, during the previous and present centuries, the representation of gender in art has undergone substantial transformation owing to the efforts of artists who deconstruct traditional gender stereotypes and create new

possibilities for expressing the diversity of gender identities. The aim of this study was to conduct a comprehensive analysis of contemporary gender representation in visual art. The objectives of the research were as follows:

1. To examine how changes in the portrayal of gender roles are reflected in art.
2. How changes in the portrayal of gender roles are linked to social and cultural transformations.
3. What role these changes play in the perception and integration of diverse contemporary gender identities.

The research methodology was based on an interdisciplinary approach combining cultural studies, art history and gender analysis. Methods employed included historical-comparative analysis, content analysis of artistic works, and a critical analysis of feminist theories and approaches to the representation of gender in the visual arts.

THE CONCEPT OF GENDER AND HOW IT DIFFERES FROM THE CONCEPT OF SEX

Gender is a complex and multifaceted concept to study, as it combines both biological and social components. It can be interpreted as an embodied social construct, where specific biological factors (such as hormonal profiles or genes) intertwine with abstract aspects shaped by social and cultural interpretations. Contemporary research increasingly employs the hybrid term "gender/sex", which emphasises the close interconnection between biological, physical and perceptual factors, on the one hand, and social and cultural aspects, on the other, in the formation of gender and sexual identities. This approach broadens the understanding of gender and sex, moving away from the traditional view that distinguishes them as two separate dimensions. Traditionally, sex has been perceived as a natural, biologically determined aspect, encompassing characteristics such as hormonal composition and genetic traits, whilst gender has been viewed as a social and cultural phenomenon based on stereotypes and expectations associated with sexual dimorphism. Feminist academic works, such as that by C. Mazzuca *et al.* (2020), have found that social and cultural constructs significantly influence the formation of gender identities, highlighting the importance of viewing gender as a dynamic and interactive phenomenon rather than a static category. This helps to better understand how cultural and social forces influence the way individuals perceive and construct their gender identity in different contexts.

The concept of "gender" began to be actively discussed in the legal sphere in the late 1960s, marking a significant milestone for the legal recognition of gender identity. One of the key events of this period was the legal dispute concerning the inheritance rights of Sir Ewan Forbes, a transgender man. Sir Ewan Forbes initiated legal proceedings seeking recognition of his right to inherit through primogeniture, basing his claims upon his gender identity. This court case became particularly significant because the medical community at that time had begun to focus increasingly upon the concept of "psychological sex" or self-identification, thereby emphasising the complexity and multidimensionality of gender identity. The conclusions reached by medical experts became an important argument in the judge's decision, which recognised Forbes's gender identity (Playdon, 2021).

However, a few years later, the situation changed during the divorce proceedings between April Ashley, a transgender woman, and her husband. In this case, the court issued a ruling based on biological characteristics, denying April Ashley legal recognition as a woman. This decision highlighted a narrow and reductionist view of gender, which, unfortunately, still persists in legal practice. The decision, based on biological characteristics, ignored the importance of self-identification and psychological sex, highlighting the controversy and complexity of issues related to gender identity (Playdon, 2021). Thus, these early medical and legal debates on gender not only paved the way for understanding gender identity as a more complex concept than a mere biological category, but also raised important questions about human rights, self-identification and legal recognition. They demonstrated how the legal system can interact with evolving understandings of gender and how important it is to adapt legal practice to new social and medical realities.

The distinction between sex and gender is gradually becoming more widely accepted and legitimised, particularly in Western cultures. In 1987, C. West & D.H. Zimmerman (1987) proposed the concept of “gender construction”, which encompasses a set of socially mediated perceptions, interactions and micro-political actions that interpret certain behaviours as manifestations of “natural” masculinity or femininity. According to the researchers, gender is a socially constructed category that emerges through interaction, involving the performance and social regulation of sex. In subsequent works, they emphasised that the understanding of gender performance largely occurs through identification with a particular sex category. Distinguishing between the categories of sex and gender, they noted that sex is determined by socially recognised biological differences, which are usually established at birth. In contrast, gender classification is used as a “substitute” for sex and is a socially constructed representation and indicator of sex, which must be perceived as self-declared. That is, the gender category requires corresponding actions and performance, which include external attributes and behaviour.

Regarding the limitations associated with a focus exclusively on gender performance, B. Hanckel & A. Shepherd (2024) argue that the concept of “doing gender” has been conceptually useful for understanding gender conformity and its reproduction in social interactions. However, this concept has its limitations, particularly in its ability to account for social change. According to Deutsch, “doing” is an excellent term that emphasises the constant creation of gender in everyday social interactions. However, if “doing” implies something completed or achieved, then “doing gender” may be more closely associated with the attainment and consolidation of gender difference rather than its deconstruction. This raises the question of whether the concept of “doing gender” can fully capture the dynamics of change in the realm of gender. A limitation of this concept is that it may fail to account for how gender norms and roles change in the context of social and cultural transformations. For a more complete understanding of how gender may evolve and how the transformation of gender identities may occur, it is necessary to explore not only the processes that define gender, but also the influences that may contribute to its rethinking and adaptation. Such a

broader understanding can help to better comprehend how social changes influence gender norms and roles in contemporary society (Afonina & Karpov, 2023).

In the field of gender studies, some scholars focus on the category of gender, emphasising that the ways in which it is constructed reveal possibilities or impossibilities within everyday social spaces. The works of A.L. Few-Demo & K.R. Allen (2020) and K.M. Keyes & J.M. Platt (2024) are significant in this context, as they propose a conceptual model of gender as a social structure that highlights and accounts for the influence of the category of sex on opportunities or limitations through various levels of social processes. According to the authors, the gender structure determines privileges and constraints based on gender category, which has an impact at three levels: at the personal level, shaping gender identity; at the level of interaction, where men and women encounter different social perceptions, even if they occupy the same structural positions; and in organisational spheres, where both cultural norms and the rules governing the distribution of resources and material goods differ along gender lines.

As described in the study by C. Mazzuca *et al.* (2020), the current distinction between sex and gender essentially lies in the difference between describing people according to a concept grounded in the biological sciences and describing them according to an approach based on the social sciences. This suggests that sex is more closely linked to the anatomical and natural characteristics of the naked body. Gender is more closely related to the social aspects of physical appearance: the clothes worn, the actions performed by the body, and how that body is addressed by peers. Furthermore, “non-binary” genders, or gender expressions that do not conform to traditionally defined male and female roles, humanise people in contemporary culture, but also become the basis for punishing those who do not fit within these traditional boundaries. This “punishment” is most commonly applied to those who identify on the trans spectrum, as trans people often express their gender in ways that exist between traditional gender sanctions and the roles established for non-transgender people (Erikson-Schroth, 2022).

The idea that gender representation is a performance was developed by Judith Butler in her key works, particularly in “Gender Trouble”. She argues that gender is not a stable identity determined biologically, but rather the result of social and cultural performances that are constantly reproduced through specific actions and behaviours. According to this theory, gender-related actions, such as clothing choices, body language, manners and other external manifestations, are examples of how individuals perform or “do” their gender (Rafique & Mukhtar, 2019). These acts are not only individual but also a social practice carried out within a specific cultural and historical context. J. Butler and other researchers, such as L. Erikson-Schroth (2022), explain that these gender acts, although regular and seemingly stable, do not mean that individuals can constantly change their gender solely through these performances. Gender acts are performed within the framework of a pre-existing identity and often occur subconsciously as part of social construction. This means that individuals interact with gender norms and expectations that are already defined within their social context. It is important to note

that gender performance theory does not claim that one can change one's gender indefinitely through these acts. Instead, it emphasises that gender is a dynamic and complex social construct that is constantly reproduced through everyday activities, interactions and cultural practices. This allows for a better understanding of how personal and social conceptions of gender are formed and maintained in society, as well as how these conceptions can be subject to change and reinterpretation.

Gender and gender representation are complex and multifaceted concepts that go beyond biological definitions of sex. As research shows, gender is not a fixed characteristic, but a socially constructed identity that is shaped through interaction, cultural expectations and institutional norms. The concept of "doing gender" emphasises that gender identity is reproduced through daily practices and behaviours that are perceived and regulated by society. Gender representation, in turn, encompasses the external manifestations of gender, such as clothing, body language and other socially significant actions that signal belonging to a particular gender. It is important to recognise that these representations are neither natural nor immutable. Representations of gender depend on cultural and historical contexts and may change over time. Thus, gender and its representation are dynamic processes that are constantly evolving and require re-examination in contemporary society.

THE REPRESENTATION OF GENDER IN PAINTING: CURRENT TRENDS

In traditional art, the depiction of gender roles often reflected the social norms and constraints prevalent during specific historical periods. In Ancient Egypt, art played an important role in both religious and secular aspects of life. It served not only a decorative function but also had deep symbolic meaning, particularly in the context of depicting social and religious roles. Women were an important part of this visual narrative and were depicted in various social roles. For example, they were portrayed as dancers, musicians and mourners during ritual funeral processions. These depictions held symbolic significance and highlighted the importance of women in religious rites and public life. In tomb paintings and reliefs from the ancient period, women are often depicted in scenes of everyday life – working in the fields or preparing food. These scenes not only recorded daily activities but also reflected the importance of women in ensuring the stability of family and economic life (Adeloye *et al.*, 2023).

Furthermore, the art of that period depicted not only women from lower social classes but also those of high social status. For example, female pharaohs, such as Hatshepsut, were depicted in monumental works, testifying to their political and religious significance. Hatshepsut, one of the most famous female rulers of Ancient Egypt, was depicted in works of art with attributes traditionally associated with men. This was a symbol of her political power and legitimacy as a pharaoh. By the end of her reign, attributes such as the false beard and the royal kilt had become an integral part of her image, symbolising her equality with men in governance (Šehović, 2022). Such depictions emphasise that women could hold the highest positions in Egyptian society and use art as a tool to strengthen their political status. As for Ancient Greece, the patriarchal structure of

society had a significant influence on the representation of women in art. Although women were restricted in their political and social rights, they were often depicted in the context of domestic and private life, which was considered their primary sphere of activity. On vases and other works of art, women were depicted at weddings, in domestic scenes, or in funeral processions, reflecting cultural ideals of femininity and their duties in society. Women were depicted in the context of specific rituals and ceremonies, emphasising their symbolic role in maintaining social order.

However, it is important to note that these depictions were created predominantly by men and reflected male perceptions of women's roles within society. Artistic works of the fifth century BCE, such as scenes from Euripides' "The Trojan Women" or Aristophanes' "Lysistrata", frequently employed female figures in order to critique or emphasise particular social themes. Such representations generally served as a means of expressing male perspectives on women's roles in society rather than depicting the actual circumstances of women's lives (Bennett, 2019). This indicates that the representation of women in Ancient Greek art possessed a symbolic character and was more closely connected with social expectations regarding women than with reality itself. The Renaissance and Baroque periods provide further vivid examples of how artists depicted men and women in accordance with dominant social conceptions of gender. Women were often portrayed as passive, delicate, and confined to domestic responsibilities, while their roles in art corresponded to idealised notions of femininity and virtue. At the same time, men in art were represented as powerful, decisive, and frequently heroic figures participating in scenes of triumph and achievement (Puff, 2020). Such depictions supported and legitimised the rigid gender roles characteristic of these historical periods and reinforced the social norms of the time.

However, the history of art has seen no shortage of movements that challenged existing gender norms. One such movement was the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, founded in the 1850s. The Pre-Raphaelites aimed to portray women with an emphasis on their intellectual and emotional depth, dispelling the romanticised and static stereotypes that prevailed in the art of that period (Sayın, 2020). This movement portrayed women as active and independent individuals, seeking to provide a more nuanced perspective on the role played by women in society. Many of their artworks depicted women very differently from the classical tradition. The so-called "beauties" in the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's paintings were slender, delicate figures (in contrast to the rounded, sexualised nude women, such as in Botticelli's "The Birth of Venus"). They were often depicted in scenes of suffering, fainting, illness or on the brink of death, with pale skin and appearing helpless (Carman, 2019; Barcelos, 2024).

In the past century, feminist art movements have made a significant contribution to the critique of the male gaze and the objectification of women in art. L. Nochlin's (1971) famous essay on the factors behind the absence of women in the visual arts challenged the systemic barriers women faced in the art world and identified cultural and institutional factors that explain why women were less likely to achieve recognition in this field. Feminist artists such as Judith Sharp, Mary Cassatt, and Greta Montgomery called

for broader gender representation in art and emphasised the need to develop a more inclusive artistic narrative. Despite the efforts of feminist artists to change perceptions of gender in art, they have faced numerous challenges. Gender discrimination remains a significant issue, and the representation of the female form in art is often linked to prevailing understandings of the meaning of male and female identity. Historically, women have always been the subject of artistic depiction in art, and their depictions have often been nude. J. Berger (2008) argued in his work that nudity often means being an object for others, rather than simply being oneself. This observation confirms that many works of art depict women as objects rather than active participants. The term “gender discrimination against the female body” helps to explain why so many works of art throughout history have portrayed women as objects from a male perspective. Correspondingly, representations of “man as object” in the same sense are encountered far less frequently.

However, certain transformations in the representation of the female body can be observed in contemporary art. For example, É. Manet’s “Olympia” is a significant protest against traditional notions of nudity. By depicting a woman in a pose that rejects traditional notions of female modesty, Manet introduces a new perspective on how women are represented in art. As Berger noted, “when comparing Manet’s Olympia with Titian, one notices that the woman rejects her traditional place with a certain rebellion” (Berger, 2008). Contemporary art has introduced numerous new voices and approaches to the representation of gender. One such artist is T. de Lempicka, who in her 1929 work depicts a woman as the equal of a man in society, strong and free (Fig. 1). This painting became a symbol of the feminist movement in the 1970s, marking a new era in the representation of women in art (Akdemir, 2017).



Figure 1. Tamara de Lempicka, Self-Portrait in a Green Bugatti

Source: Google Photo

In 1989, the “Guerrilla Girls” movement initiated a detailed discussion concerning the representation of women in art by using a poster that questioned whether women needed to be naked in order to be represented in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This movement drew attention to gender-based bias in art, highlighting the number of female artists who failed to receive recognition, as well as

the manner in which women were depicted as nude objects. Founded in 1984, the “Guerrilla Girls” movement focuses its efforts on criticising and exposing manifestations of sexual and racial discrimination within the sphere of art, particularly in New York. The movement employs artistic and activist strategies to reveal inequalities in the representation of women and ethnic minorities in museum and gallery exhibitions. Many years after the organisation’s emergence, the “Guerrilla Girls” continue to engage in active work aimed at promoting change within cultural institutions and raising public awareness regarding issues of gender and racial inequality (Akdemir, 2017). Contemporary visual art demonstrates diverse approaches to the representation of gender. Art historians and artists frequently regard gender identity as fluid and multifaceted, thereby erasing traditional distinctions between masculinity and femininity. One such contemporary artist is Jenny Saville, a British painter known for her works that explore the human body and represent women in a new light. Her paintings address themes of identity, sexuality, vulnerability, and perceptions of beauty.

In the paintings of J. Saville, one can observe a deconstruction of traditional perceptions of the female body, where each work serves as a profound exploration of gender, corporeality, and identity. Her paintings create a sense of intensity and physical presence that challenges conventional standards of beauty (Meagher, 2023). For example, in the work “Propped” (1992), J. Saville depicts a nude female figure seated on a chair, characterised by coarse and powerful features that sharply contrast with traditional, idealised representations of feminine beauty (Fig. 2). Marks left by weight and pressure are visible on her thighs, emphasising the material reality of the body and the rejection of idealised forms.

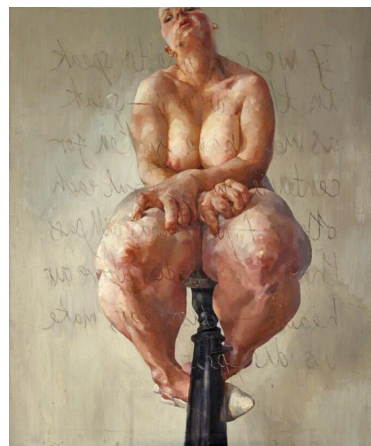


Figure 2. Jenny Saville, Propped

Source: Google Photo

In the painting “Plan” (1993), J. Saville explores the theme of corporeality through the image of a woman whose body is marked with surgical lines symbolising plastic surgery and the societal imposition of beauty ideals (Fig. 3). This raises questions concerning control over the body and the social pressure that compels women to alter their appearance in order to conform to established standards of beauty (Meagher, 2003).



Figure 3. Jenny Saville, Plan

Source: Google Photo

Another significant work, *Branded* (1992), depicts a distorted, excessively enlarged female body with the words “decorative”, “supportive”, and “delicate” inscribed upon the skin (Fig. 4). This work reflects the internal conflict of identity and societal perception, emphasising the ways in which women are objectified and judged solely on the basis of their appearance (Meagher, 2003).



Figure 4. Jenny Saville, Branded

Source: Google Photo

The paintings of J. Saville dismantle traditional perceptions of the female body by emphasising the realities of corporeality and gender identity. Her works reject socially constructed notions of beauty and reflect the internal experiences associated with bodily existence and self-perception, challenging viewers to reconsider their understanding of the female body and beauty (Meagher, 2003). The works of British artist S. Brown also fall into the category of art that deconstructs gendered notions. Brown is often discussed in the context of feminist art. Unlike earlier feminist artists, who actively questioned the canon that traditionally presented “male” art as a model of performative masculinity in the creation of large-scale works, S. Brown consistently asserts her own artistic authority. Although her works may be partly interpreted as feminist, what is most significant is that Brown considers her overall approach to art to be explicitly feminist (Gatt, 2022). In her works, S. Brown uses various elements to deconstruct gender

representation. In particular, the artist often depicts rabbits as substitutes for humans, which, alongside Flanagan’s works, evokes associations with the illustrations from “Peter Rabbit” by Beatrix Potter, as well as with the adult magazine “Playboy” or Hugh Hefner’s fantasy of “Playboy” bunnies. Historically, these cute little rabbits are known for their reputation for prolific breeding. They are used in Brown’s art not only to explore themes of sexuality, but also to deconstruct stereotypical notions of gender roles.

Brown skilfully uses rabbits as a metaphor for duality – innocence and eroticism. Her works, on the one hand, emphasise the softness and childlike associations with rabbits, but, on the other hand, introduce themes of sexual objectification and exploitation. Brown rejects the traditional portrayal of women as objects and explores how society imposes these stereotypes through popular symbols. In this way, she challenges stereotypes regarding femininity and the role of women in culture, using rabbits as a kind of mask to examine the complex interplay between sexuality, gender and power. Her works invite viewers to actively rethink their own attitudes towards traditional gender symbols and their role in public discourse (Gatt, 2022). In a cultural context, S. Brown’s work “Untitled” could easily borrow the arrangement of her rabbits and the colour scheme from Gauguin’s painting “Still Life with Three Puppies”, 1888 (Fig. 5). Her numerous rabbits, which occupy a central position in Figures 5 and 6, and the representation of crowds, distinguish the sexuality of the depicted creatures from de Kooning’s individual female forms. The use of crowds in S. Brown’s work demonstrates her approach to deconstructing traditional gender roles, where sexuality does not remain confined to the individual image of a woman; it extends to group dynamics (Gatt, 2022).



Figure 5. Cecily Brown, Untitled

Source: Google Photo

The depiction of crowds is a characteristic feature of traditional historical painting, where the composition is determined not by flat forms on the surface of the painting, but by the arrangement of human figures, which thus create a narrative within the pictorial space, as in Alberti’s Italian “history” (istoria) painting. In the spirit of “istoria” painting, which emerged in 15th-century Italy, such narrative paintings combine “a mixture of old people, young people, girls, women, youths, boys, birds, small dogs,

horses, sheep, buildings, landscapes and the like” and create an effect of intellectual elevation.

Thus, in the case of S. Brown, even if the story seems obscure or predominantly focused on the general themes of sex and violence, these elements can be seen in her painting “Untitled”, 1997 (Fig. 6), which evokes associations with the nightmares of F. Goya and scenes from the third panel of “The Garden of Earthly Delights” by H. Bosch. The motif of the rabbit has been used throughout art history, particularly in the works of H. Bosch, A. Dürer, E.H. Landseer, J. Beuys and J. Miró (Gatt, 2022).



Figure 6. Cecily Brown, *Untitled*

Source: Google Photo

An anachronistic element in Brown’s work is her connection to the tradition of the Old Masters. Her paintings employ unusual colour harmonies reminiscent of Watteau, particularly his orgiastic scenes of the Kermesse (possibly those held in the Wallace Collection in London, among others). Part of the experience of engaging with Brown’s paintings lies in recognising her knowledge of art history, which in turn reinforces her position within that very tradition (Gatt, 2022). Thus, contemporary art offers new perspectives on gender roles and the challenges faced by women, while simultaneously expanding the understanding of gender and culture. Such art not only reflects but also shapes new social norms, demonstrating the growing importance of diversity and equality in creative expression.

TRENDS IN THE REPRESENTATION OF GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY

Contemporary photography occupies a decisive and central position within modern culture. The majority of events of various kinds occurring across different countries are communicated to people through newspapers, magazines, the Internet, and television, and photographs undoubtedly exert significant influence across all these forms of mass media. In particular, much of an Iranian teenager’s perception and understanding of the Vietnam War is constructed through the images he or she has encountered relating to that event (Sattari & Mousavi, 2013). Since photography is commonly regarded by ordinary people as highly convincing and seemingly reliable, while also being mistakenly perceived as innocent and impartial, its effectiveness and influence continue to increase. As D. Bate (2016) notes,

photographs may create the illusion of transparent access to “reality” as the true language of photography. It is therefore unsurprising that photography has been described as the “eyes of modernity”, without which the contemporary world could scarcely exist. Over the past twenty years, with the spread of digital photography and mobile phones, a wider range of people than ever before has documented everyday events, street life, travel, and tragic incidents, and some of these photographs have gained considerable significance (Sattari & Mousavi, 2013).

The representation of the female figure in photography has been the subject of numerous academic studies. For example, N. Akdemir (2017) examined the work of female photographers and the representation of the female figure in contemporary visual art. The researcher identified several themes that female artists use in their photographs to reflect gender identity. The first theme, reflected in most contemporary photographs, is a critique of existing roles and representations of women through art. Notable figures include S. Sherman, a renowned American photographer and artist who skilfully depicts familiar female archetypes across different time periods in the world of photography and was recognised as one of the most influential artists of the last century (Chen, 2023). S. Sherman created the “Untitled Film Still” series – more than 60 black-and-white photographs taken in the late 1970s and early 1980s. These photographs, depicting Sherman in the roles of various female characters, explore the cultural stereotypes imposed on women through cinema, television and the media. The images resemble film stills, showing women in various situations – from domestic life to public roles. Due to the small format of the photographs (8 by 10 inches), the viewer has the opportunity to examine each image in greater detail, paying attention to the nuances of composition, facial expressions and the finer details of the costumes, allowing to immerse themselves in the atmosphere of the scene. Through these works, Sherman not only explores but also challenges conventional social notions of femininity, creating complex, multi-dimensional images that provoke the viewer to critically rethink the roles of women in culture.

Furthermore, “Untitled Film Still” also reflects ideas of self-determination and self-assertion. Sherman uses her own body and imagery to challenge traditional notions of female sexuality and social roles. Through these photographs, she questions authorship and the influence of the media on the perception of women. In turn, this prompts viewers to ask to what extent the images they see in the media shape their own perceptions of femininity and how these perceptions can be changed or challenged. Through her work, S. Sherman poses questions to society about the boundaries of identity and the challenges facing contemporary women in the context of global cultural and social transformation. In the “Untitled Film Still” series of photographs, the artist portrays various stereotypical film characters typically played by women, such as the ingenue, the working-class girl, the seductress and the single woman (Fig. 7). Sherman creates her works to resemble scenes from mid-20th-century Hollywood, film noir, B-movies and arthouse films. Her graphic works replicate the style, proportions and clarity of frames typically used in advertising materials. In this way, Sherman includes herself in these images, engaging in a conversation about stereotypical

perceptions of women. Each photograph looks like a scene from a Hollywood melodrama, whilst the real woman remains off-screen and is not idealised. In these photographs, S. Sherman not only criticises the factors that force women to conform to certain stereotypes, but also attempts to change the perspective of men who perceive women solely as objects (Akdemir, 2017).



Figure 7. Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still
Source: Google Photo

S. Sherman employs a range of emotions in her works in order to express a critique of existing gender roles. One of the emotions the artist frequently utilises is discomfort. In several photographs from the “Untitled Film Still” series, S. Sherman adopts a feminist approach by portraying women in passive and vulnerable poses, carefully constructing the staging and composition to create a sense of anxiety. In “Untitled No. 48”, she intensifies the vulnerability of the female figure by contrasting her form with the dense forest in the background, the overcast atmosphere, and the endless, mysterious road stretching ahead (Fig. 8).



Figure 8. Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still No. 48
Source: Google Photo

Similarly, in “Untitled No. 51” (Fig. 9), the woman is depicted within a spatial zone shaped like a triangle, formed by the staircase, the roof, and the wall. The woman is confined within two narrow frames: the triangular zone and the rectangular space of the painting itself. In contrast to the background, where objects are rendered on a miniature scale, viewers find it difficult to interpret the emotional state of the woman because her facial expression

remains unseen. The woman’s anxiety within the image is intensified through these two aspects, while the contrast of colours further amplifies the sense of unease that is characteristic of S. Sherman’s works (Chen, 2023).



Figure 9. Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still No. 51
Source: Google Photo

S. Sherman’s views in this series of artworks may also be supplemented by the explanation that films possess a structure functioning along the passive/active axis, in which the man occupies the position of active perception, while the woman remains on the passive side as the one “to-be-looked-at”. This is achieved in two ways: through the representation of the male figure within the frame and through the camera itself, which presents the woman and directs the audience’s objectifying gaze. In simpler terms, the woman in films is intended to be looked at (Chen, 2023). Another theme present in contemporary photography is violence against women. The theme of violence is reflected in the work of Y. Ono, the Japanese-American artist and singer. In 1964, she presented the performance “Cut Piece” in Kyoto, which was documented through photography. In the images, the artist stands alone on stage dressed in an elegant suit, with a pair of scissors placed nearby. Audience members were invited to approach one by one and use the scissors to cut away small pieces of her clothing. Some individuals acted cautiously, cutting only small fragments from a sleeve or the hem of a skirt, whereas others cut away the front of her blouse or undergarments. Y. Ono remained motionless and displayed no emotion until the conclusion of the performance (Akdemir, 2017).

This performance constitutes a symbolic representation of women’s vulnerability and defencelessness in the face of violence within society. It also exposes the boundaries between personal space and public intrusion, demonstrating how women become objects of physical aggression or even mere public curiosity. In “Cut Piece”, Y. Ono literally places her body at the disposal of the audience, thereby questioning traditional social roles and the power exercised through violence or the exploitation of the female body. This performance remains relevant nowadays, serving as a reminder of the continuing violence against women and the ongoing struggle for rights and safety within contemporary society. Y. Morimura represents another example of an artist demonstrating a progressive perspective on the

representation of gender in photography. Y. Morimura is a Japanese artist renowned for his self-portraits in which he transforms himself into famous characters, particularly women from art history and popular culture. Through this practice, Y. Morimura challenges constructions of gender, race, and identity. One of the Japanese artist's notable works is based on Man Ray's black-and-white photograph from 1920 depicting Marcel Duchamp in the role of Rose Sélavy, which Morimura later reinterpreted as the colour photograph "Doublenage" (Marcel) (Fig. 10). Rose Sélavy was Duchamp's female alter ego, adopted in order to explore ideas of sexual identity. Although the creation of this work is attributed to Duchamp, it was he who originally created the persona of Rose Sélavy (Gorman, 2013).



Figure 10. Yasumasa Morimura, Doublenage (Marcel)
Source: Google Photo

Using photographic techniques from the late twentieth century, Y. Morimura transforms Marcel Duchamp's black-and-white photograph of Man Ray in the role of Rose Sélavy into a colour print. The result is an image that appears garish and strikes the viewer with its combination of bright colours and the contrast in skin tones, whereas Duchamp's image possesses a mysterious, seductive atmosphere. Perhaps the failure of this work to convince the viewer of its originality can be attributed to the medium of the original artwork rather than to Y. Morimura's failure. In his appropriation, he transforms a black-and-white photograph into a colour one, whereas he usually transforms an already colour painting into a colour photograph. From Duchamp's photograph (Marcel), he creates his own artwork by reproducing the photograph, a medium which, like the portrait, was primarily used to depict a person based on their individual characteristics (Gorman, 2013). Y. Morimura raises the question of how an artist can create a face or identity in art that can be illustrated through style or imagery without being subject to inconsistency. In his work "Doublenage", he continues to explore how artists can express and question female identity, using the "self" to create the illusion of one's own identity. Y. Morimura not only grapples with the difficulties of creating a personal identity through photography but also depicts this identity as a product of consumer culture. His artistic practices allow to rethink traditional notions of how photographs shape identity (Gorman, 2013).

Furthermore, Y. Morimura actively employs the technique of self-portraiture, which enables to explore and deconstruct stereotypes and cultural constructs associated

with gender identity. By transforming himself into famous cultural icons and female characters, he not only brings issues of cultural identity to the fore but also examines processes of self-determination in a globalised world. Y. Morimura reveals how identity can be a construct shaped by cultural, social and media factors, rather than merely the result of internal self-expression. This encourages viewers to reflect on how contemporary art can serve as a tool for revealing and critiquing social norms and expectations, whilst also prompting them to actively re-examine their own perceptions of identity and cultural imagery.

The theme of stereotypes is central to the representation of gender in contemporary visual art, particularly photography. Research has shown that stereotypes relating to different races, cultures or ethnic groups are persistent and do not change quickly. Gender stereotypes are also subject to social factors and cultural context. Society has certain norms regarding a man's appearance and a woman's behaviour. This perspective has also been represented by artists in contemporary visual art, as it creates a positive context for gender-related inquiries. The examples given above also represent prejudices. However, the other side of gender, which is largely determined by sexual identity, is often reflected in contemporary art through stereotypes. With new approaches and ideas, artists' stereotypes have begun to dissipate, particularly within the framework of queer theory. However, the works of M. Foucault influence postmodernist criticism and the activities of artist-activists (Akdemir, 2017).

Regarding queer theory, N. Akdemir (2017) notes that one of its principal sources is the first volume of Michel Foucault's "The History of Sexuality" (1976), in which he argues that although sodomy as a violation of social norms had existed for a long period, the concept of the "homosexual" as a distinct type of human identity was developed within medical and legal paradigms during the late nineteenth century. Continuing the development of constructionist theory, Judith Butler, in her work concerning gender challenges and feminism, presented sexual and gender categories as performative (Yaghoubi-Notash *et al.*, 2019). She argues that the traits culturally defined as masculine or feminine, heterosexual or homosexual, are formed through processes of identification and identity development internalised by the socialised individual, as well as through the forms of behaviour that he or she adopts. According to Butler, every individual continuously performs a gender role, regardless of whether it is traditional or otherwise. Consequently, the issue lies not in whether one performs gender, but rather in which particular role is being enacted. By choosing to be different within this context, society may influence transformations in gender standards and the binary interpretation of masculinity and femininity. The idea of identity as a flexible and indeterminate phenomenon, not tied to any fixed "essence" but instead connected with performative activity, constitutes one of the central concepts of the queer approach to identity (Yaghoubi-Notash *et al.*, 2019).

If contemporary works of art are analysed, numerous examples of these ideas may be identified. In particular, the photographer D. Arbus captured scenes from the everyday lives of sex workers, transgender people, and other marginalised individuals who are usually excluded from

mainstream American society. One of her photographs depicting a young man wearing hair curlers reflects Arbus's interest in questions of gender roles and identity (Fig. 11). The young man photographed by D. Arbus gazes directly into the camera while wearing hair curlers, with shaved eyebrows and painted fingernails, yet simultaneously retaining a conventionally masculine appearance. This photographic portrait may be interpreted as a reconsideration of gender identities through its ambiguity and contradiction. The young man exists within the space between what society expects from his physical appearance and how he himself wishes to be perceived by others. Through this image, viewers are encouraged to reconsider diverse forms of identity and to question established assumptions and social conventions (Akdemir, 2017).



Figure 11. Diane Arbus, Young Man in Curlers

Source: Google Photo

It is important to recognise that issues relating to gender roles and the portrayal of women in photography are constantly evolving. Despite achievements such as the works of S. Sherman, Y. Ono and Y. Morimura, research shows that contemporary photography continues to reflect and explore complex issues of gender identity, power and consumption. Understanding this process enables a deeper comprehension of how photographs may shape and influence perceptions of the world.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study showed that artistic works from earlier periods also frequently reflected the stereotypes and constraints characteristic of specific eras. For example, during the Renaissance and Baroque periods, men were

typically depicted as heroic and powerful figures, whilst women often appeared as passive and delicate. This reinforced traditional gender roles and cemented them in the public consciousness. In the Middle Ages and the Modern Era, women were often depicted through archetypes, which emphasised stereotypical notions of their nature. It has been observed that contemporary artists use their art to reflect and express the experiences of people who identify as transgender and non-binary. They explore themes of self-determination and self-identification through various media, including drawing, sculpture and video art. Changes in the representation of gender are also becoming evident in new media; virtual reality, interactive art and digital platforms allow artists to experiment with gender identities and create new forms of self-expression. Art that explores and challenges traditional gender norms not only enriches the cultural context but also helps foster a society more oriented towards inclusion.

Thus, contemporary visual art plays a significant role in re-examining and rethinking gender roles. Although historical stereotypes and discrimination persist, contemporary artists and movements are making significant strides in deconstructing traditional notions and broadening the understanding of gender, creating new opportunities to express the diversity of gender identities and ensuring a fairer representation of all voices in the art world. These changes not only shape new artistic practices but also contribute to social progress, providing an opportunity for a deeper understanding and acceptance of gender diversity. Prospects for further research lie in a deeper examination of the influence of digital technologies and new media on the transformation of gender images in art. It would also be worthwhile to examine regional characteristics of the representation of gender identity and their influence on the formation of global artistic discourse.

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Гендер та його репрезентація в сучасному образотворчому мистецтві

Анотація. Метою дослідження було всебічне вивчення еволюції репрезентації гендеру в образотворчому мистецтві в історичній ретроспективі. Під час дослідження вивчалися творчі роботи мисткинь, таких як С. Шерман, Я. Морімура, Т. де Лемпіцької та Й. Оно, які ставили під сумнів традиційні уявлення про представниць жіночої статі у мистецтві і боролися з системними перешкодами. Особлива увага приділялася феміністичній критичній думці, представленій Л. Нохлін, яка проаналізувала структурні проблеми, що ускладнюють репрезентацію жінок у мистецтві. Надано оцінку того, як історичні та культурні контексти формували зображення чоловічих і жіночих ролей у різних епохах. Проаналізовано вплив класичних концепцій на створення гендерних архетипів, які протягом довгого часу домінували в мистецтві. Дослідження акцентувало увагу на феміністичних рухах і їхньому впливі на образотворче мистецтво, а також розглянуло сучасні тенденції в мистецтві, наприклад, вплив постмодернізму та критики гендерних стереотипів. Художники, такі як Дж. Севілл, активно досліджували нові форми вираження і самоідентифікації, що виходять за межі традиційних гендерних ролей. Стаття також висвітлила вплив глобалізації на сучасне мистецтво, що сприяє виникненню нових підходів у дослідженні гендерної ідентичності. Окремо було присвячено увагу соціальним та культурним наслідкам цієї еволюції, включаючи те, як сучасне мистецтво впливає на виникнення нових образів і перегляд суспільних стандартів. Вивчено, як художні практики можуть сприяти розширенню уявлень про гендер і впливати на суспільні дискурси. Практичне значення результатів полягає у поглибленні розуміння гендерної репрезентації в сучасному образотворчому мистецтві, що може бути використано для формування інклюзивнішої художньої освіти, розвитку критичного мислення в культурних студіях та підтримки мистецьких практик, які сприяють переосмисленню гендерних стереотипів.

Ключові слова: художник; техніка зображення; жінка; живопис; фотографія

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The development of digital culture in the United Kingdom: From blogging and social networks to online gaming and memes

Abstract. The relevance of the study was driven by the rapid development of digital technologies and the growing influence of digital culture on social, cultural, and communicative processes in modern society. The study of the transformation of online communication in the United Kingdom allows for a deeper understanding of global trends in the formation of new forms of cultural self-expression and social interaction. The aim of the study was to highlight the main stages of the formation of digital culture and its influence on social processes in the United Kingdom. An interdisciplinary approach was applied in the study, combining cultural, sociological, and media studies analysis to examine digital practices in British society. During the study, diverse information was collected regarding key aspects of digital culture, specifically blogging, social networks, online gaming, and memes. The process of change in communication and social interaction caused by the development of digital platforms was assessed, and it was investigated how the internet facilitated the formation of new cultural phenomena and approaches to self-expression in British society. In the course of the research, it was established that digital culture in the United Kingdom developed in several stages, beginning with blogging, which created a platform for independent self-expression and the discussion of important social topics. Subsequently, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram transformed the digital space, opening opportunities for mass communication, content sharing, and the development of new forms of interaction. Online gaming and e-sports also became an important part of digital culture, forming powerful communities and influencing economic and cultural processes. Meme culture evolved from simple jokes to serious social and cultural markers that reflected the public sentiment and became a tool for expressing collective opinion. The work carried out revealed the significant influence of British digital culture on global cultural and social processes, confirming its importance as a tool for the formation and transformation of modern social consciousness.

Keywords: esports; media content; virtual self-expression; network interactions; online journals; virtual games; viral content

INTRODUCTION

Digital culture influences social and cultural practices, changing communication, entertainment, and political discourse. The United Kingdom serves as an example of this transformation, yet the development of blogs, social networks, online games, and memes within the British context requires deeper study. The specifics of the national development of digital culture in the United Kingdom remain

insufficiently researched. With the growth of blogging, social networks, and online gaming, British digital culture has acquired both local and global features. Platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, which are popular worldwide, have found a particular place in the United Kingdom; however, local cultural contexts, political conditions, and social moods play a significant role in shaping

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content and interaction styles, which necessitates detailed analysis. It is important to understand how the British audience adapts global trends to its own social and cultural conditions, and how this affects the overall character of digital culture in the country.

The internet has significantly transformed the political and media spheres, changing forms of communication, social interaction, and power relations. One of the important issues is how the internet creates new opportunities for communication between citizens and the authorities. R. Schroeder (2018) researched how the internet has changed political communications and social structures, opening new opportunities for interaction, which contributed to a shift in traditional forms of social interaction. Another issue concerns the impact of digital technologies on social identity. The question arises as to how the integration of digital platforms into everyday life changes ways of self-identification and interaction with the surrounding world. D. Miller & D. Slater (2019) applied an ethnographic approach to investigate this issue, showing how digital platforms intertwine virtual and physical realities, creating new social practices.

The problem of political polarisation in the era of digital platforms is also a pressing issue. Social networks can contribute to the isolation of users within their own information "bubbles", which strengthens the polarisation of society. Research by E. Dubois (2018) demonstrated that although social networks can facilitate isolation, active political engagement and a diversity of information sources can mitigate this effect. The formation of new social ties through digital platforms also attracts scholarly interest. An important question is how the internet allows people to maintain connections regardless of geographical distance. L. Rainie & B. Wellman (2012) studied how the internet facilitates the formation of new communities that function independently of physical proximity. Economic inequality and exploitation, amplified by digital platforms, represent another key problem. The question arises as to how social media, despite providing communication opportunities, contribute to economic inequality and the control of user data. C. Fuchs (2021) investigated this issue through the prism of capitalism, showing that digital platforms often become instruments of exploitation by large companies. Digital technologies are also significantly changing interpersonal relationships, opening new opportunities for communication. The researcher N.K. Baym (2015) studied how digital platforms allow people to maintain strong social ties despite geographical limitations, and how this changes traditional models of communication. Young people actively use digital platforms to participate in social and political processes. The question arises as to how this affects their social engagement and their ability to influence societal change. H. Jenkins & I. Mizuko (2015) studied how digital platforms provide young people with new opportunities for content creation and the discussion of socially significant topics.

The formation of teenage identity through social networks is another important issue. In the work of D. Boyd (2015), it was researched how teenagers use social networks for self-expression and the development of their identity, showing that social media play an important role in the process of self-discovery. S. Turkle (2016) investigated how smartphones and social networks undermine the

capacity for empathy and deep conversation, which affects the quality of communication. The mediatisation of reality through digital platforms also changes the perception of the world. N. Couldry & A. Hepp (2018) studied this issue, showing how digital platforms influence interaction and the perception of reality. The impact of the internet on children is also an important question. The historical development of social media and its impact on society was researched by J. Van Dijck (2013). She showed that social media have become an integral part of social life, although they have also contributed to the growth of commercialisation and control over personal data. Blogging, as a form of digital self-expression, is also an important topic. The author J. Dean (2010) researched how blogs facilitate identity formation, but also pointed out the influence of market forces on their development.

The aim of the study was to examine the development of digital culture in the United Kingdom, specifically blogging, social networks, online gaming, and memes. The objectives included an analysis of the formation of digital culture from the late 1990s, an assessment of the impact of digital platforms on social interaction and communication, as well as a study of the role of British digital culture in a global context. The research methodology was based on a chronological and thematic analysis of the stages of digital culture development in the United Kingdom. In the course of the study, methods of content analysis and comparative analysis were used to examine the emergence of blogs, social networks, online gaming, and meme culture, taking into account their influence on social interaction, national identity, and global cultural processes. Particular attention was paid to the analysis of British digital platforms and their contribution to the formation of global digital culture.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: THE BEGINNING OF DIGITAL CULTURE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The origins of blogging in the United Kingdom date back to the late 1990s, when the internet gradually began to enter the everyday lives of British people. Technological development and the accessibility of internet connections created favourable conditions for the emergence of new forms of self-expression in the online space. One such innovation was blogs, which offered the opportunity to publish personal thoughts, news, and reflections to a wide audience (Porter, 1997). In the early stages, blogs were primarily text-based diaries where authors shared their thoughts and experiences. This new phenomenon was perceived as an alternative to traditional media, where information was often presented in a standardised form. Blogs became a personal space for expression, free from editorial control, which attracted the attention of many Britons, especially the youth and the creative intelligentsia. Among the first British bloggers were journalists, writers, and other cultural figures who saw in this a new way of communicating with an audience.

One of the first influential British blogs was Belle de Jour: Diary of a London Call Girl. The blog, launched in 2003, became an online sensation due to its openness and unconventional content. The author, writing under a pseudonym, recounted her life as an escort, blurring the lines between the private and the public. The blog rapidly gained popularity and was eventually adapted into a

book and a television series. Belle de Jour symbolised the breaking of traditional taboos and demonstrated the power of blogging as a tool for discussing complex and controversial topics. Another important step in the development of British blogging was made by Plasticbag.org – a blog launched in 1999 by Tom Coates, one of the pioneers of British online journalism (Fig. 1). His blog focused on culture and technology, particularly innovations on the internet. This blog demonstrated that the internet is not only an entertainment space but also a platform for discussing serious topics. It also became an example of how blogging can transform into an important source of information and cultural analysis (Tepper, 2003).



Figure 1. A screenshot of the homepage of one of the UK's first blogs

Source: Plasticbag.org (n.d.)

Early blogging in the United Kingdom was closely linked to online journals. The first digital publications emerged, beginning to create an alternative to print media. One such early project was The Register, which began operating as early as 1994 as an online journal dedicated to technology and information technology. Initially, its focus was quite narrow, but over time the journal began to cover a wider range of topics, thereby gathering a large audience among professionals and enthusiasts. The influence of The Register on the development of blogging lay in the creation of a platform for expressing independent views and analysis, which encouraged others to launch their own projects.

Online journals, such as Spiked Online and OpenDemocracy, also played an important role in shaping British digital culture. These platforms combined a journalistic approach with the freethinking nature of blogging, creating a space for discussion and the critique of social and political issues. For example, OpenDemocracy, launched in 2001, actively used the internet as a means to promote democratic values and the critical assessment of global political events (Fig. 2). This journal became one of the first examples of how digital media can facilitate democratic dialogue on an international level, engaging bloggers and community activists from around the world (Melville, 2005).

An important factor in the success of early blogs and online journals in the United Kingdom was their flexibility and ability to cover a wide range of topics that traditionally fell outside the scope of mainstream media. Themes related to sexuality, politics, technology, culture, and personal experiences gained a platform for discussion. Blogs became an important socio-cultural phenomenon that not only expanded opportunities for self-expression but also

influenced the way audiences interacted with information (Marlow, 2004). In the context of the development of digital culture in the United Kingdom, blogging and online journals played a key role in the establishment of open forms of communication. They created opportunities for discussing topics that might previously have remained on the periphery of public attention. The emergence of the first British blogs and online journals laid the foundation for the subsequent evolution of digital culture, which later led to the flourish of social media. The appearance of the first social networks in the United Kingdom occurred in the early 2000s, when the internet became more accessible to broad segments of the population and digital communication began to spread rapidly. These social networks were unique for their time, as they allowed people to communicate and interact online through text, images, and music, which had not previously existed in traditional means of communication. Social platforms of this type began to change the approach to social interaction and gradually became an important element of British digital culture (Bryman & Hardy, 2009).

History will not stop for Europe

In 2001, a series of profound changes were underway within the European Union. The same was true then as now: Europe needs a new argument.

Frank Vibert Susan Richards

17 May 2001



A euro in the night sky. Metropolico.org/Flickr. Some rights reserved. Europe needs a European argument.

Figure 2. One of the first articles published in the online journal OpenDemocracy

Source: OpenDemocracy (2001)

One of the first major social networks to appear in the United Kingdom was MySpace. Although MySpace was created in the USA, it quickly gained popularity in the British internet space due to its flexibility and the customisation of user pages (Fig. 3). MySpace allowed users to create profiles that contained not only text information but also music, photographs, and other multimedia elements. For Britons, this network became an important platform for self-expression, especially among young people and musicians.



Figure 3. MySpace social network logo

Source: Variety (2016)

MySpace significantly influenced the music industry in the United Kingdom, creating a platform for young performers who could independently publish their music and reach a large audience without the need to collaborate with record labels. Notably, the British musicians Arctic Monkeys gained immense popularity precisely through MySpace, where their tracks received significant resonance among users even before they signed a contract with a record label. This example demonstrates how social networks created new opportunities for the promotion of music and culture in the United Kingdom.

Another important social network that played a key role in the development of British digital culture was Bebo (Fig. 4). Founded in 2005, Bebo quickly became one of the most popular social networks in the United Kingdom and Ireland. This platform had similar functions to MySpace, yet it targeted a younger audience. Bebo allowed users to create profiles, communicate with friends, share photographs, and participate in various social groups.

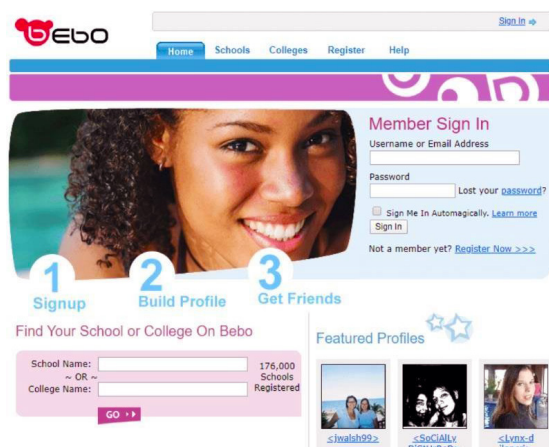


Figure 4. Main page of the Bebo social network

Source: Webdesignmuseum (2005)

One of the features of Bebo was the ability to create a “love triangle,” where users could select their three closest friends, which became a unique reflection of social status in the online space. This interactive element made the network popular among teenagers who sought to display their social connections on the internet. Furthermore, Bebo introduced a system of “blogs” that users could maintain on their profiles, which became a popular function among creative youth. Through this platform, blogging and social media began to intertwine, forming new ways of self-expression. However, Bebo was not just a platform for communication. It also played an important role in the development of cultural trends and internet content. British users actively created and distributed new forms of online entertainment, such as memes and videos, which served as a precursor to modern digital culture. Bebo also became an important launching pad for early internet stars who used the platform to promote their content and communicate with fans.

In addition to MySpace and Bebo, other less prominent platforms also existed in the United Kingdom which, although they did not achieve the same level of massive popularity as those mentioned above, contributed to the development of social networks. For instance, the platform

Friends Reunited, created in the UK in 1999, became one of the first social networks aimed at reconnecting former schoolmates. It quickly gained popularity among the British audience and, by 2005, had more than 15 million users. Although it was a more niche platform compared to MySpace or Bebo, its success demonstrated the British interest in social networking even before these platforms became a global phenomenon. In summary, it can be argued that the first social networks in the United Kingdom – such as MySpace, Bebo, and Friends Reunited – facilitated the formation of new models of social interaction and self-expression. They gave users the opportunity to create and promote content, find new friends, and collaborate in the digital space. These platforms laid the foundation for the further development of social media and became vital elements of the early digital culture of the United Kingdom.

EVOLUTION OF DIGITAL CULTURE: FROM BLOGS TO SOCIAL NETWORKS

The transition from personal blogs to mass social platforms became an important milestone in the evolution of digital culture in the United Kingdom. While blogs initially allowed individual users to express their own thoughts and reflections in the online space, the new platforms of the early 2000s shifted the emphasis to interaction, instant communication, and multi-user connections. This transition not only transformed the way users interacted with information but also opened the door to new forms of self-expression, where the number of followers, likes, and reactions became important elements of social status. While blogs offered a platform for extended self-expression, the emergence of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram led to changes in the form and format of content that users created and consumed. One of the first major steps in this direction was the launch of Facebook in 2004, which quickly became a global phenomenon, including in the United Kingdom. Facebook expanded the opportunities for communication, allowing users not only to share their thoughts but also to instantly interact with the content of others. Britons quickly adapted to this platform, especially among the youth, who began using it to maintain social ties and exchange news.

One of the main features of Facebook was the integration of many functions that previously existed separately: blogs, forums, photo albums, and even events. This made the platform universal for users who wished to quickly publish information and interact with a wide audience. Facebook also facilitated the development of a new culture where short and instant messages began to replace long blogs. For many British users, this was the first step in the transition from personal blogs to broader, more interactive communication (Castillo de Mesa *et al.*, 2020). Twitter, which appeared in 2006, offered an even more radical change in the communication format. If previously blogs allowed for the publication of long texts, Twitter focused on short messages – initially limited to 140 characters. This platform quickly became popular among Britons, especially among journalists, politicians, and public figures. Through Twitter, users could instantly express their thoughts on current events, making the platform one of the main tools for political discussions and social movements. The unique opportunity to receive real-time feedback created new

possibilities for influence and participation in social processes, which was previously restricted only to journalistic circles and print media.

Instagram, which appeared in 2010, further changed the approach to self-expression by focusing attention on visual content. Users could quickly share photographs and short videos reflecting their lifestyle, travel, fashion, and other aspects of daily reality. Instagram became especially popular in the United Kingdom among young people and influencers, who used the platform to promote personal brands and create visual content. For British culture, this meant a transition from a text-centric internet space to a visually-oriented one, where images and videos began to dominate. It is important to note that with the emergence of platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, not only the ways of interaction changed, but also the users' expectations regarding content. They were now required to create short, clear, and often entertaining content more quickly and effectively. Social networks also facilitated the rapid dissemination of information and the creation of trends that could be born in one part of the world and quickly reach the British audience, influencing its culture and habits. Thus, the transition from personal blogs to mass platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram not only transformed the digital culture of the United Kingdom but also influenced the way people communicated, consumed information, and interacted with it. These platforms shifted the emphasis from individual expression to collective participation, where not only personal thoughts but also the ability to attract the attention of a large audience in a short time became important.

British users, from the very dawn of digital culture in the 90s, have played a key role in shaping and spreading global trends in social media. The emergence of platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram created an opportunity for them to step onto the global stage, where they could participate in discussions that transcend national borders. Britain became home to many influencers, bloggers, public figures, musicians, and activists who influenced global culture through their online platforms. This influence was particularly noticeable in political, social, and cultural issues that became objects of active discussion worldwide (Graham & Dutton, 2019). One of the main characteristics of British participation in social media was its active use for social movements and political campaigns. Twitter, with its capacity for instant reaction and wide dissemination of information, became a key tool for British politicians, journalists, and social activists. Political leaders, such as Boris Johnson, actively used this platform to mobilise their supporters and spread political ideas, especially during significant political events such as Brexit.

Social networks have transformed into a space where citizens can directly participate in political discussions, express their opinions, and become active participants in national and global changes. Furthermore, social media became a tool for supporting global social movements that found resonance in the United Kingdom. For example, although Greta Thunberg is a Swedish activist, the British audience became one of the key forces supporting the movement for environmental change. In networks such as Twitter and Instagram, British users actively disseminated messages about the importance of fighting climate change,

organised protests, and supported global environmental initiatives. This clearly demonstrates how social media can become a platform for transnational movements, uniting users from different countries around common goals.

The music industry in the United Kingdom has also been significantly influenced by social media, where platforms such as Twitter and Instagram have become an integral part of marketing strategies for British musicians. The band One Direction, created as a result of the television show *The X Factor*, used these platforms to build a global fan base during the initial stages of their career. Through active interaction with fans via Twitter and Instagram, One Direction managed to create a unique connection with their audience, which allowed to achieve international success. It is important to note that their approach to communicating with fans became a model for many other musicians around the world, and the British music scene, through social media, gained significant popularity in a global context (Lyons, 2020). Social media also facilitated the spread of viral content, particularly memes, which became an important part of global digital culture. British users actively participated in the creation and distribution of memes that not only reflected local political and social realities but also quickly became part of the global online discourse. One striking example is memes related to Brexit, which became popular far beyond the borders of the United Kingdom. These memes often combined humor with criticism of political events, making complex political issues more accessible to a wider audience (Kinane, 2021).

Beyond politics, British users have also influenced world trends in fashion, design, and other cultural spheres through social networks. British bloggers, particularly on Instagram, have had a significant impact on global fashion trends. They created content that became popular among millions of users worldwide, setting new standards for style and lifestyle. Their influence on the global fashion industry confirms the importance of social media in shaping modern cultural trends. Overall, the influence of British users on world trends in social media has been extremely significant. They have not only shaped trends in politics, culture, and social issues but also set new standards for communication and self-expression in the online space. Through the active participation of British users in global discussions, social media has become a key tool in forming new cultural and social norms that continue to influence digital culture around the world.

ONLINE GAMING IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

The online gaming industry in the United Kingdom has a rich history dating back to the 1980s, when computer games began to gain popularity through the development of home computers such as the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64. However, the real breakthrough in this field occurred in the late 1990s and early 2000s with the emergence of high-speed internet and technologies that allowed users to interact in real time through online games. The United Kingdom quickly became one of the leading countries in this industry, developing both local and global gaming platforms.

The first significant steps in the development of online games in the United Kingdom were taken by the company Jagex, which in 2001 launched the legendary MMORPG

(massively multiplayer online role-playing game) RuneScape. RuneScape became one of the most popular online games in the world, gaining millions of users due to its open-world structure, character progression system, and the ability to communicate with other players (Fig. 5). This game not only opened new horizons for British developers but also set new standards for the industry, making the United Kingdom an important centre for the development of online games (Tsang, 2021).

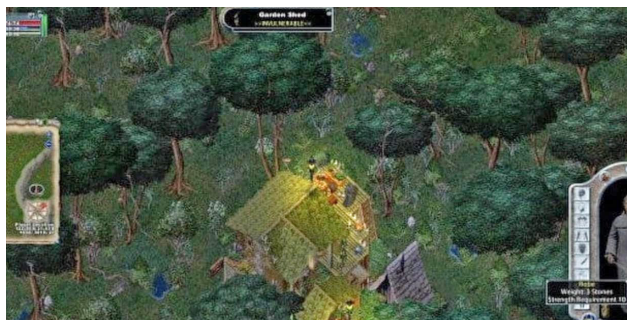


Figure 5. A screenshot from the game RuneScape
Source: MMORPG.GG (2021)

Jagex continues to remain an important company in the industry, and RuneScape – one of the most successful online games in history. The success of this game inspired many other British developers who began creating their own projects in the sphere of online gaming. For example, Codemasters, known for its racing simulators, actively integrated online functionality into its games, allowing players to compete with each other via the internet. As a result, British developers were able to maintain significant positions within the online gaming industry, influencing the global market. One of the important stages in the development of online games in the United Kingdom was also the creation of games for consoles with the possibility of multiplayer play via the internet. In particular, the Fable game series, created by the company Lionhead Studios under the leadership of the famous British developer Peter Molyneux, became an important video game with a multiplayer mode that allowed the British studio to win international recognition. Through the integration of the multiplayer element via Xbox Live, the Fable series became an example of how console games can successfully implement online functions while maintaining their storyline and atmosphere (Gonçalves *et al.*, 2023).

The online gaming industry in the United Kingdom has also flourished through the development of esports. One of the most important events in this direction was the creation of the British esports league, ESL UK Premiership, which gathered the best players from various online games, such as Counter-Strike: Global Offensive and League of Legends. The league quickly gained popularity among both players and spectators, creating a platform for promoting esports within the United Kingdom and beyond. British developers have also actively integrated mobile games into the online space. One of the companies that achieved success in this area was King, known for its game Candy Crush Saga, which integrated social functions and a multiplayer mode through Facebook and other platforms (Fig. 6). Although

it was primarily a mobile game, its social elements made it part of a broader online gaming culture where players could interact with each other through resource sharing, competing for rankings, and inviting friends to the game.



Figure 6. One of the interfaces
of the game Candy Crush Saga
Source: Candy Crush Saga (n.d.)

The development of online games in the United Kingdom was made possible by support from the government and investments in the industry. State programs provided financial support to young developers and also facilitated the development of technical infrastructure, which allowed for the creation of high-speed internet and servers for online games. This made the United Kingdom an important centre for the online gaming industry, attracting international companies and talented developers. In general, the early development of the online gaming industry in the United Kingdom is characterised by the growing influence of British studios on the global market, the active implementation of innovations in the field of multiplayer games, and the creation of conditions for the promotion of esports. This confirms that the United Kingdom continues to remain one of the leading players on the international online gaming arena. Gaming has become an integral part of British digital culture, shaping not only the individual experience of players but also creating powerful online communities that have transformed into centres of socialisation, cultural exchange, and economic development. This process included not only the active participation of players in the games themselves but also the creation of forums, streaming platforms, social networks, and esports events that became the basis for the formation of a unique digital culture in the United Kingdom (Mateos-Garcia *et al.*, 2014).

One of the key components of gaming's influence on digital culture is the formation of communities – digital spaces where players can communicate, discuss games, and interact outside the games themselves. In the United Kingdom, such communities began to appear as early as the beginning of the 2000s, when online games such as RuneScape gained immense popularity. These communities became platforms for exchanging knowledge, tips on game progression, and creating new social ties between players. It is important to note that these communities were not

limited exclusively to gaming issues – they also became places for discussing social, cultural, and political topics, confirming the broad influence of gaming on the digital culture of Great Britain. Over time, with the emergence of platforms such as Discord and Twitch, British communities became even more organised and structured. Discord, being the primary platform for voice and text communication, allowed players to create separate servers where they could discuss gaming strategies, exchange experiences, and organise esports competitions. Twitch, for its part, became an important element of British digital culture, where popular streamers not only broadcasted their gaming sessions but also actively interacted with the audience, forming strong social ties (Stavropoulos *et al.*, 2017).

One of the most influential aspects of the development of the British gaming community was the growth of esports. Esports in the United Kingdom gained particular popularity in the early 2010s through games such as League of Legends, Counter-Strike: Global Offensive, and Dota 2. British esports organisations, such as ESL UK, actively organised tournaments and leagues where the best players competed against each other. One of the most famous teams became Fnatic, which gained international recognition through victories in many prestigious tournaments. This success of British esports players confirms not only the development of esports but also its integration into British digital culture. Esports also facilitated the development of new forms of interaction between players and the audience. Tournaments gathered thousands of spectators in arenas and millions online. Platforms like Twitch and YouTube allowed viewers not only to follow matches but also to interact with participants through chats and comments. This created a unique format of digital sport, where spectators became part of an interactive community rather than just passive observers. Such a format of interaction contributed to the popularisation of esports among the younger generation of Britons, who saw it not only as entertainment but also as a career opportunity. One of the greatest achievements of British esports was hosting major international tournaments on UK territory. For example, in 2018, a major Counter-Strike: Global Offensive tournament was held in London, gathering the best teams from around the world. This event demonstrated that the United Kingdom has become an important centre for the development of global esports and a place where gaming is not just entertainment, but a professional activity (UK esports: Challenges and future opportunities, 2023).

Gaming and esports in the United Kingdom have had a significant impact on the economy. In recent years, the gaming and esports market has continued to grow, bringing significant revenue to the country. British companies have actively invested in the development of esports infrastructure, and the government has supported this sector through various funding programs. Thus, the influence of gaming on British digital culture has been immense, encompassing both social aspects through the formation of communities and the development of esports, which has become an important part of the entertainment industry in the United Kingdom. Gaming has created new forms of communication, interaction, and professional activity, making it one of the core elements of the country's modern digital culture.

MEME CULTURE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Memes in the United Kingdom have undergone a significant transformation, from modest internet jokes to complex cultural symbols that deeply reflect the moods of society. Initially, British memes were mostly local jokes that circulated within narrow internet communities. They were characterised by simple, often unassuming humor that was understood only by those who were closely familiar with specific aspects of British culture. Early memes emerged on forums and in the first social networks, such as Bebo and MySpace, where users began to experiment with graphic elements and short text messages. These memes were usually based on photographs or simple illustrations to which ironic or sarcastic captions were added. For example, photographs of British politicians of that time were often turned into objects of satirical ridicule, reflecting complex political realities in the form of accessible humor. At that time, memes had a more limited distribution due to a smaller number of internet users and insufficiently developed social networks. Despite this, even in the early stages, these internet jokes began to form an important part of the cultural consciousness of Britons. One of the key features of British memes was their dry humor and sense of the absurd, which is deeply rooted in British culture, particularly in literature and cinema (Shifman, 2013).

As F. Sobande (2019) notes, over time, memes began to reach broader audiences, moving beyond narrow internet communities and becoming part of national and even global culture. Owing to technological development and the growing popularity of platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, memes ceased to be exclusively internet jokes and began to play a more serious role in public discourse. Political events, such as the referendum on the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, created new opportunities for memes. Spreading through the internet, they became a tool for commenting on important social and political events, creating a space for criticism and humorous reflection on complex issues. As social media developed, memes began to play a more significant role in the public life of British people. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram created new opportunities for the rapid spread of memes among a large audience. These platforms also contributed to the globalisation of British memes, making them part of international digital culture. One of the most famous examples is Brexit memes, which spread online during and after the referendum. These memes often reflected conflicting sentiments in society, using humor to ridicule complex political situations. British memes play an important role in shaping both national and international identity, becoming a kind of reflection of social moods and cultural characteristics of the country. They are used as a way of communication that helps to satirise political, social, and cultural phenomena. Due to their flexibility, British memes can simultaneously reflect local realities and influence the global context (Galita & Bonta, 2022).

One of the striking examples of this process is memes related to politics. For example, Brexit memes became not just comic images or videos, but a tool reflecting deep political divisions in British society (Fig. 7). These memes highlighted various aspects of life during the political crisis, while simultaneously contributing to the formation of

a collective national identity through humor and self-irony. They also became part of international online discourse, turning into a cultural marker of British politics that is understood and used around the world (Kinane, 2021).

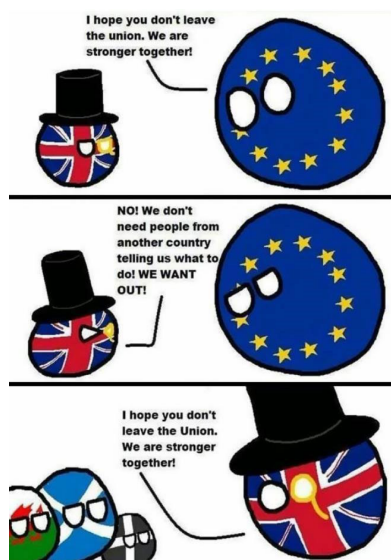


Figure 7. One of the numerous Brexit memes

Source: Google Photo

Another aspect lies in how British memes reflect national stereotypes. Memes that poke fun at typical British traits, such as restraint, a love for tea, or British politeness, are often used as a means of self-identification within the country (Fig. 8). At the same time, these memes gain popularity on the international stage, where they help create an image of the United Kingdom as a nation with unique cultural traits.



Figure 8. The Spiffing Brit – a meme personification of the traditional image of a Briton

Source: Google Photo

On an international level, British memes also serve as a tool for cultural diplomacy. Due to the globalisation of the internet, British humor, style, and social commentary are becoming part of international culture. For example, memes related to popular British series such as Doctor Who (Fig. 9) or Sherlock (Fig. 10) have gained global distribution and become part of international pop culture. They transform British cultural products into symbols associated with British identity all over the world.



Figure 9. A meme made from frames of the series Doctor Who

Source: Google Photo

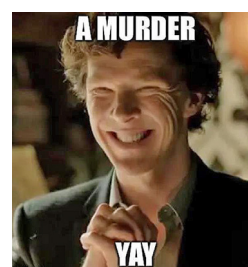


Figure 10. A meme from frames of the series Sherlock Holmes

Source: Bookbub (2020)

Memes help Britons comprehend their own identity in the modern world and, at the same time, serve as an important cultural tool that promotes the popularisation of British culture on the international stage. They make British identity more accessible to an international audience, whilst simultaneously influencing global trends. Nowadays, memes in the UK have become an integral part not only of digital culture but also of the country's wider contemporary culture. They have gone beyond mere jokes to become an important means of expressing public opinion, emotions and ideology. British memes cover a vast range of topics, from politics to pop culture, making them a universal tool for communication in the digital space. Their influence is not limited solely to humour – they act as a kind of social mirror through which society expresses its emotions, experiences and thoughts regarding events taking place in the country.

Political memes have become an especially powerful means of expressing collective moods. For example, events related to Brexit, the royal family, or recent political scandals do not escape the attention of British internet users. Through memes, people manifest their disappointment, hopes, irony, and even sarcasm toward political leaders or government decisions. As a result, memes become not only a form of entertainment but also a means of expressing civic engagement. Furthermore, British memes often poke fun at national stereotypes that are part of the national consciousness. For example, the love of tea, the weather, or famous British manners are constantly used in memes that satirise these aspects. However, they also emphasise

the cultural identity of the British, allowing the nation to laugh together at its own traditions, whilst strengthening a sense of community. Memes also play an important role in shaping pop-cultural trends. Popular TV shows, musicians and films often become the subject of viral content that spreads rapidly online. As a result, British memes take on not only national but also international significance, influencing global internet trends and shaping a certain image of British culture around the world. Memes are becoming much more than just funny images with captions. They are transforming into symbols that reflect social and cultural phenomena, becoming an important part of British identity in the digital media age.

CONCLUSIONS

In the course of the study, it was established that the development of digital culture in the United Kingdom encompassed numerous spheres of public life, from media to social interaction and entertainment. From blogs to modern social media platforms, British people have actively shaped the digital landscape, opening up new avenues for self-expression and public discussion. The formation of digital culture became a multifaceted process in which each stage of technological development added new elements to online communication and interaction. Blogs, which appeared in the late 1990s, changed the format of publications, giving users the opportunity to freely express their opinions outside the limits of traditional media. They created an alternative space where authors could freely share experiences and reflections, which stimulated the emergence of new forms of journalism and creativity. This format ensured freedom of speech and contributed to the further democratisation of the information space. At the beginning of the 2000s, social networks radically changed the nature of interaction on the internet. They became a powerful tool for information exchange, self-expression, and socialisation, integrating text, images, and music into a single whole. Through these platforms, British users were able to develop their creativity, overcome barriers between consumers and content creators, and participate actively in global processes. Social networks became not

only a method of communication but also an important factor in the development of professional activity in the online environment.

The gaming industry has also influenced modern British culture. Online games have created powerful communities where players do not just interact in the game but also form strong social ties, discuss strategies, and collectively create new digital experiences. The growth of esports has contributed to the development of new professional opportunities and significant economic growth in this sphere. Gaming has become an integral part of digital culture, influencing the way many Britons communicate, work, and relax. Memes, which were initially a simple form of internet humor, have transformed into an important tool for expressing public moods and collective opinion. They have become a way of ironically interpreting political, social, and cultural phenomena, establishing themselves as an element of national identity. Through memes, Britons can collectively react to current events, using them as a means of social commentary and communication. Over time, they began to influence not only the national discourse but also international digital culture. The digital culture of the United Kingdom continues to evolve, reflecting social, political, and technological changes. Britons remain active participants in global digital processes, contributing to the formation of new trends and communication styles that define the modern digital environment. Further research could focus on the impact of digital culture on various social groups, as well as on exploring less-studied aspects such as the dark web, online disinformation, and the role of digital culture among the ethnic and linguistic communities of the United Kingdom.

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**Розвиток інтернет-культури у Великій Британії:
від блогінгу та соціальних мереж до онлайн-геймінгу та мемів**

Анотація. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена стрімким розвитком цифрових технологій та зростаючим впливом інтернет-культури на соціальні, культурні та комунікативні процеси у сучасному суспільстві. Вивчення трансформації онлайн-комунікації у Великій Британії дозволяє глибше зрозуміти глобальні тенденції формування нових форм культурного самовираження та суспільної взаємодії. Метою дослідження було висвітлення основних етапів формування інтернет-культури та її впливу на суспільні процеси у Великій Британії. У дослідженні застосовано міждисциплінарний підхід, що поєднував культурологічний, соціологічний та медіазнавчий аналіз для вивчення цифрових практик у британському суспільстві. В ході дослідження було зібрано різноманітну інформацію про ключові аспекти інтернет-культури, зокрема блогінг, соціальні мережі, онлайн-геймінг та мему. Оцінювався процес змін у спілкуванні та соціальній взаємодії, викликаний розвитком цифрових платформ, а також досліджувалося, як інтернет сприяв формуванню нових культурних феноменів і підходів до самовираження в британському суспільстві. В ході дослідження було встановлено, що інтернет-культура у Великій Британії розвивалася в кілька етапів, починаючи з блогінгу, який створив платформу для незалежного самовираження та обговорення важливих соціальних тем. Надалі соціальні мережі, такі як Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, трансформували цифровий простір, відкривши можливості для масової комунікації, обміну контентом та розвитку нових форм взаємодії. Онлайн-ігри та кіберспорт також стали важливою частиною інтернет-культури, формуючи потужні спільноти та впливаючи на економічні й культурні процеси. Мем-культура еволюціонувала від простих жартів до серйозних соціальних та культурних маркерів, які відображали настрої суспільства і стали інструментом для висловлення колективної думки. Проведена робота виявила значний вплив британської інтернет-культури на глобальні культурні та соціальні процеси, підтвердивши її важливість як інструмента для формування і трансформації сучасної суспільної свідомості

Ключові слова: кіберспорт; медіа-контент; віртуальне самовираження; мережеві взаємодії; інтернет-журнали; віртуальні ігри; вірусний контент



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Global cinematic influences: Exploring the impact of Eastern aesthetics on Western cinema

Abstract. This study focuses on the intercultural exchange of cinematic aesthetics between Eastern and Western film traditions, as well as an analysis of how cultural influences shape narrative techniques, visual styles and thematic elements in world cinema. A study was conducted on the influence of Eastern aesthetics on Western cinema and vice versa; in particular, the influence of Japanese, Chinese and Indian cinematic traditions on Western cinema was analysed, as well as the influence of Western techniques and genres on the development of cinema in East Asia and India. The analysis involved the study of films, directorial styles and thematic elements that resulted from this intercultural exchange. The main findings of the study demonstrated that cinema is an important tool for cultural self-expression and intercultural dialogue, reflecting the social, historical and philosophical aspects of national cultures. During the course of the research, it was established that the intercultural exchange between Eastern and Western cinematic traditions led to the emergence of new aesthetic forms and styles in global cinema. In particular, Eastern aesthetics influenced the development of minimalism, symbolism, and philosophical subtexts in Western cinema, while Western editing techniques and special effects became significant for the modernisation of Eastern film industries. It was also found that cultural influences create conditions for the mutual enrichment of cinematic practices and the creation of new genres that combine elements of different cultures. The conclusions of the study emphasise the need for further examination of the mechanisms of this exchange in order to gain a better understanding of how cultural interactions influence cinematic practices and how they may be utilised for the further development of world cinema

Keywords: intercultural exchange; national traditions; culture; film; cultural interactions

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INTRODUCTION

Cinema is one of the most significant means of cultural expression and global dialogue. In the contemporary world, where globalisation encourages active cultural exchange, cinema has become a platform for interaction between different cultural traditions. One of the important subjects for research is the influence of cultural interactions on the formation of narrative techniques, visual styles, and thematic elements in world cinema, particularly the study of the influence of Eastern aesthetics on Western film art. Research into this issue allows for a deeper understanding of how the cultural characteristics of different peoples are reflected in cinema and how this process enriches world cinematography. The necessity of such research is due to the growing integration of national cinemas into the global context. Intercultural exchange brings numerous advantages, such as the enrichment of national cinematic traditions, the creation of new genres and styles, and the promotion of cultural dialogue. Through the exchange of ideas and techniques, filmmakers are able to create films that resonate with audiences in different parts of the world, regardless of their cultural background.

Various aspects of intercultural exchange and the influence of cultures on cinema have already been explored in academic works. Researcher M. Centeno (2020) analysed the influence of Japanese aesthetics on European directors, demonstrating how Western cinema has integrated Eastern elements into its works. In contrast, T. Gruenewald *et al.* (2018) investigated cinematic trends between China and the United States, examining how the work of directors from these countries fostered intercultural exchanges, techniques and cinematic aesthetics. Furthermore, film researchers and film scholars, such as S. Wang (2010), have examined the issue of globalisation's influences and hybridisation in cultural production, using the Chinese films "Crouching Tiger", "Hidden Dragon" and "Mulan" as examples. K.J. Kumar (2014) has researched popular visual culture in India and examined adaptation to the new demands of media technologies. E. Knudsen (2010) examined the interplay between emotions and feelings and their connection to narrative structure and Zen Buddhist ideas in transcendental realism in cinema. A. Ratn (2023) investigated the evolution of aesthetics under the influence of new media art practices and technologies in Western cinema in India. However, despite the existence of such studies, the topic remains underdeveloped, particularly in the context of contemporary globalisation processes. The current state of research shows that although there is a significant number of works devoted to the analysis of individual cinematic traditions, there is still a lack of comprehensive studies covering the mechanisms of intercultural exchange in cinema at a global level. Research into this topic is important not only for a better understanding of globalisation processes in the art of cinema, but also for laying the foundations for the further development of world cinema as a multicultural and multifunctional art form. However, this process also faces certain challenges. One of the main risks is the threat of cultural homogenisation, where national characteristics and traditions may be lost as a result of integration with other cinematic practices. Furthermore, there is a risk that cultural characteristics may be simplified or adapted in order to make films more appealing to an international audience, which could lead to a loss of national authenticity.

The problem addressed in this study lay in the fact that, despite the evident influence of cultural exchange on cinema, there are still gaps in understanding the specific mechanisms through which these influences are realised. There is also a need for a deeper analysis of how these interactions affect the development of cinema as a global phenomenon. This research aimed to investigate how cultural influences shape narrative techniques, visual styles, and thematic elements in world cinema, particularly through the analysis of intercultural exchange in cinematic aesthetics between Eastern and Western traditions. The research methodology comprised several complementary methods, enabling an investigation of global cinematic influences. This involved a comprehensive analysis of various elements, such as narrative structures, visual styles and thematic elements, with the aim of identifying the impact of cultural interactions on world cinema. Several key films were selected for analysis, reflecting the influence of Eastern aesthetics on Western cinema and vice versa. Among the selected films are A. Kurosawa (1950) "Rashomon", P. Schrader (1985) "Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters", Y. Zhang (2002) "Hero", A. Lee (2000) "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon", B. Lee's (1973) "Rise of the Dragon", S. Leone (1964) "A Fistful of Dollars", the Wachowski Sisters (1999) "The Matrix", L. Base (2001) "Moulin Rouge!" and D. Boyle (2008) "Slumdog Millionaire". The analysis was conducted using content analysis, which involves deconstructing the films to identify cultural elements that are borrowed or adapted from other cinematic traditions. Particular attention was paid to the analysis of symbolism, colour, editing, as well as philosophical themes reflected in the films, including their visual styles, narrative techniques and thematic elements. A comparative method was also used to identify differences and similarities between Eastern and Western approaches to filmmaking.

HOW CULTURAL INFLUENCES SHAPE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES, VISUAL STYLES AND THEMATIC ELEMENTS IN WORLD CINEMA

Cinema, as an art form, is deeply connected to the cultural contexts from which it emerges and which it reflects. Different cultures influence how stories are told, which visual styles are used, and which themes are explored in films. This influence can be seen in the unique approaches to narrative, visual aesthetics and thematic choices that characterise the cinema of different countries and cultures. Each of these cultures has its own unique characteristics that make its cinematic art special and recognisable on the international stage. Japanese cinema has had a significant influence on the development of world cinema for decades. Japan's unique culture, deep-rooted traditions and philosophical concepts have become an integral part of the aesthetic and narrative practices that are now known throughout the world. Japanese aesthetics, deeply rooted in the country's culture, largely define the visual styles of Japanese cinema. One of the key features is minimalism, which manifests itself in the simplicity and restraint of the frames. Minimalism, which emerged under the influence of Zen Buddhism and traditional Japanese art, often uses space as a key element of visual expression. This approach is characteristic of the work of Y. Ozu, whose style is known for its static shots and absence of superfluous details. In his

films, each scene is constructed in such a way as to allow the viewer to focus on the emotions and relationships of the characters (Reifman, 2022).

Another important element is the use of symbolism. In Japanese culture, great attention is paid to symbols that carry deep meaning. In A. Kurosawa's films, for example, symbols of nature – rain, wind, fog – are frequently encountered and used to emphasise the emotional state of the characters or the development of the plot. These symbols become an integral part of the narrative, adding an extra layer of meaning to the visual sequence. Japanese culture, with its deep philosophical roots, places great emphasis on the process of self-discovery and understanding the surrounding world. This is reflected in the non-linear narratives and multi-layered stories frequently found in Japanese cinema. A striking example of this approach is A. Kurosawa's 1950 film "Rashomon". The film employs a multi-perspective narrative technique, presenting the same event through the eyes of different characters. This allows the viewer to encounter various interpretations of the same event, thereby calling into question the objectivity of truth.

Furthermore, Japanese films often lack a clear climax or resolution, unlike traditional Western narratives (Lin, 2019). This reflects the Japanese understanding of life as a cyclical process that has no beginning or end, but is a constant transition from one state to another. This approach allows for the creation of deeper, more philosophical stories that pose complex questions to the viewer but do not always provide clear-cut answers. The themes of Japanese cinema often revolve around concepts of harmony with nature, honour, moral duty and family values. These elements are deeply rooted in Japanese culture and reflect Confucian ideas about the importance of social relations and individual responsibility. Films by A. Kurosawa (1954), such as "Seven Samurai", explore the themes of honour and moral duty, where the heroes must make difficult choices between personal desires and the common good. These themes have found their way into Western cinema, particularly in Westerns, where Eastern concepts of honour and duty have been adapted to American realities (Donovan, 2019). It is also important to note the focus on nature and harmony with it, which is a central theme in many Japanese films. For example, in H. Miyazaki's films, such as "Princess Mononoke" (1997) and "My Neighbour Totoro" (1988), nature serves not merely as a backdrop to events, but as a significant character possessing its own power and significance. This reflects Shinto beliefs about the divinity of nature and its harmonious interconnection with humanity. Indian cinema, particularly Bollywood, is one of the most influential cultural phenomena, reaching millions of viewers worldwide. The uniqueness of Indian cinema stems from its deep roots in the country's cultural and religious traditions (Bhati, 2024).

One of the most striking features of Indian cinema is its vibrant visual style. Indian culture is renowned for its rich colour, which is reflected in its films. Vibrant colours, opulent costumes, lavish sets – all these are an integral part of Indian cinema. The colourfulness of Indian films symbolises the vitality traditionally associated with cultural and religious festivals in India. This style not only enhances the films but also lends them an additional layer of meaning. Directors such as S.L. Bhansal are renowned for their

ability to create striking visual imagery that reflects Indian culture and aesthetics. In the film "Devdas" (2002), the use of colour becomes a key element of the narrative, heightening the emotional impact on the audience. Storytelling techniques in Indian cinema are characterised by a distinctive sense of drama and melodramatic elements. Indian films often feature complex plotlines that combine elements of romance, drama, struggle and family conflicts. This approach has its roots in the Indian literary tradition, where epic poems such as the "Mahabharata" and "Ramayana" present complex stories interwoven with moral lessons and cultural values (Sherfudeen, 2024). Furthermore, Indian cinema is renowned for its musical interludes, which form an integral part of the narrative. Music and dance in Bollywood films not only entertain the audience but also help to advance the plot, reveal the characters' emotions and highlight key moments in the story. Musical numbers in Indian films are often full of energy and colour, which strengthens the emotional connection between the audience and the characters. This approach to storytelling is unique to Indian cinema and differs significantly from other traditions. Indian cinema frequently addresses themes that reflect key aspects of Indian culture, such as family, religion and social relationships (Gadgil, 2024). Family has always been a central element of Indian life, and this is reflected in the cinema. Many Indian films explore the dynamics of family relationships, emphasising the importance of family ties, duties and traditions. Religion also plays a significant role in the plots of Indian films. Indian cinema frequently addresses religious themes such as karma, dharma and reincarnation, lending the films an additional layer of spiritual meaning (McAulay, 2023).

Chinese culture, with its unique historical, philosophical and artistic traditions, invariably influences visual styles, narrative techniques and thematic elements in cinema, making Chinese cinema distinctive and instantly recognisable. Chinese cinema is renowned for its visual richness and attention to detail, which are rooted in Chinese culture and philosophy. One of the key aspects of Chinese cinema is the use of harmony and balance in the composition of the frame. This approach has its origins in ancient Chinese artistic traditions, such as painting and calligraphy, where harmony between elements has always been an important part of artistic expression (Zhou, 2024). In many Chinese films, colour is of great significance, just as it is in Indian films. The colour palette typically emphasises the emotional state of the characters or conveys cultural meanings. For example, the colour red symbolises strength, passion or honour, whilst white is associated with mourning or purity (Guimei, 2007). Films by Y. Zhang (2002; 2006), such as "Hero" and "Curse of the Golden Flower", are excellent examples of how colour and visual composition become an integral part of the narrative, lending the films additional symbolic depth.

Symbolism also plays an important role in Chinese cinema. Films often use symbols that carry their own cultural significance, such as dragons, lotuses or mountains. These symbols reflect Chinese myths, legends or philosophical concepts, particularly Daoism or Confucianism, which adds another layer of meaning to the films and makes them unique (Linze & Desa, 2024). Chinese cinema is often characterised by epic narratives that reflect China's rich history

and mythology. Historical films, such as “Qin Shi Huang”, recount significant events and figures in Chinese history, using grand scale and epic battles to create a spectacular impression. Cyclicity, an important aspect of Chinese philosophy, is also frequently evident in the narrative techniques of Chinese films. For example, the concept of “yin and yang”, which represents the balance and interaction of opposites, influences the structure of films (Cather, 2021). This can be seen in cinematic works where events repeat or unfold in a cyclical pattern, emphasising the eternal nature of the struggle between good and evil, life and death. Such a structure facilitates a deeper understanding by the viewer of the cultural and philosophical foundations embedded in the film. Confucian values, such as respect for elders, the importance of family, loyalty and moral duty, are often central themes in Chinese cinema. Films such as “Sandstorm” (2013) explore the complex relationships between family members, emphasising duty and responsibility. Furthermore, Chinese cinema frequently addresses social themes such as class struggle, corruption, gender issues and rapid industrialisation. These themes reflect the contemporary challenges facing Chinese society and serve as a tool for reflection and critique of social phenomena.

Every region and culture has its own unique ways of creating and interpreting films, and these characteristics often become part of the global cinematic heritage. Western cinema, particularly Hollywood, holds a dominant position in shaping global cinematic trends, and its influence is felt in various aspects of film production, including narrative techniques, visual styles and thematic elements. Western cinema, particularly American cinema, is traditionally based on a classical narrative structure known as the “three-act structure”. This approach consists of an exposition, a conflict and a resolution, and is typical of Hollywood films. This structure makes it easy to capture the viewer’s attention and ensure emotional engagement through the development of characters and conflicts.

Furthermore, an important aspect is the individualistic approach to characters. Western cinema often focuses on a single character, their inner development, struggles and path to success, which aligns with the cultural values of individualism prevalent in Western societies. For example, in many American blockbusters, such as Ridley Scott’s “Gladiator” or Christopher Nolan’s “Interstellar”, the protagonist undergoes serious trials, overcoming personal difficulties and external obstacles. The visual styles of Western cinema also demonstrate cultural influence, reflecting an aesthetic that has become a symbol of commercial success. Hollywood films often stand out for their large-scale special effects, detailed sets and extensive use of digital technology to create epic scenes. This approach to visualisation reinforces the concept of the “viewer experience”, which has been a priority for Western cinema since the era of blockbusters (Lyu, 2023), initiated by films such as “Star Wars” or S. Spielberg’s “Jaws”. A close attention to detail in framing, lighting and colour is also characteristic of Western cinema. For example, in films by directors such as S. Kubrick or C. Nolan, colour palettes are used to create atmosphere and reinforce emotional themes, reflecting a cultural focus on individual impressions and experiences.

Thematic elements of Western cinema often centre on freedom, democracy, individual rights and self-realisa-

tion – these are core values of Western culture, particularly American culture. Films frequently explore concepts such as the struggle for justice, moral dilemmas, social inequality and alienation in the modern world. These themes are reflected across various genres, from science fiction to drama, and allow the culture to project its own ideals and dilemmas onto the global screen. Another significant theme is the idea of the “American Dream”, expressed through images of rising from poverty, striving for success and achieving great goals. Films such as “The Wolf of Wall Street” or “The Social Network” explore the highs and lows of people in their pursuit of material and social success, whilst simultaneously critiquing the ethical issues of modern capitalism.

INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE OF CINEMATIC AESTHETICS BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN CINEMATIC TRADITIONS

Intercultural exchange in cinema plays a key role in the formation of world cinema. This process, which involves the interaction, adaptation and borrowing of aesthetic principles, narrative methods and thematic elements between Eastern and Western cinematic traditions, significantly enriches both national film industries and global film culture. The process of intercultural exchange in cinema began to develop actively from the mid-20th century, when, following the Second World War, cinematic influences between East and West became more pronounced (Nakajima, 2021). Western filmmakers, particularly in the US and Europe, began to take an interest in the aesthetics of Eastern cinema, which they considered more meditative, philosophical and unique compared to traditional Western cinema (Centeno, 2020).

Eastern aesthetics, particularly Japanese, Chinese and Indian, have made a significant contribution to the development of Western cinema. One of the first major examples of the influence of Eastern aesthetics on Western cinema is Japanese cinema, particularly the works of the aforementioned directors A. Kurosawa and Y. Ozu. A. Kurosawa’s films, such as “Rashomon” (1950) and “Seven Samurai” (1954), had a significant influence on Western directors due to their narrative structure, use of movement and editing, as well as their profound philosophical themes. In particular, “Rashomon” (Fig. 1) introduced the technique of narration from multiple perspectives, which was innovative for its time. This influenced Western directors such as S. Leone and S. Kubrick, who adapted these methods in their own works (Reifman, 2022).



Figure 1. “Rashomon” (1950), directed by A. Kurosawa
Source: Google Photo

The works of Yasujiro Ozu, with their minimalist aesthetic, profound family dramas and static shots, have also served as a source of inspiration for many Western filmmakers. The director utilised traditional Japanese aesthetic principles, such as wabi-sabi (the appreciation of simplicity and imperfection) and Zen (the philosophy of inner peace), to create unique films. This differs from the Western approach to cinema, which is more often based on a linear and dynamic plot structure. Films by Japanese directors demonstrate the use of simple yet profound storylines, allowing the viewer to reflect more deeply on the characters' emotional states and their inner worlds. Although this approach is not typical of the Western tradition, it has significantly influenced Western directors, notably W. Wenders and P. Schrader, who have adapted these methods in their work (Hildenbrand & Gondar, 2019). In 1985, the German director W. Wenders made the documentary "Tokyo Ga"; in the film, Wenders travels to Japan to explore the legacy of Y. Ozu and his films, in particular by observing how his works reflected Japanese society and culture and what impact they have had on world cinema. The film reveals the profound influence the Japanese director had on W. Wenders, particularly in terms of aesthetics and narrative style. Wenders dedicated his film "Sky over Berlin" (1987) to him. Although this film leans more towards American cinema in style, the influence of Japanese aesthetics can be seen in its minimalist approach to narrative and the use of long takes, which give the viewer space to reflect on the characters' inner conflicts. P. Schrader's film "Mishima: A Life in Four Chapters" (1985) (Fig. 2) is one of the most striking works in which the influence of Japanese cinema, and Y. Ozu in particular, is evident in the film's structure and use of visual symbols. P. Schrader combines classic Japanese themes with modernist approaches, creating a complex and multi-layered narrative structure.



Figure 2. "Mishima:

A Life in Four Chapters" (1985), P. Schrader

Source: Google Photo

These examples demonstrate how W. Wenders and P. Schrader have integrated elements of Japanese cinematic aesthetics into their work, adapting them to a Western context and thereby enriching world cinema. Chinese aesthetics, which combines elements of Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, is characterised by a distinctive approach to harmony, balance and symbolism. In Chinese culture, harmony between humanity and nature, as well as between opposing forces such as yin and yang, are central concepts (Chang, 2023). These ideas are reflected in the films of Chinese directors such as Y. Zhang and A. Lee.

Y. Zhang, in particular, became famous in the Western world for his visually stunning films, such as "Hero" (2002) and "House of Flying Daggers" (2004). These films use colour as a key element of the narrative, where each colour has its own symbolic meaning, adding extra depth to the plot. The use of colour, harmony and symbolism in Yimou's works has influenced Western directors, who have begun to integrate similar approaches into their own work. The films of W. Anderson, known for his unique use of colour and symmetry, demonstrate how Chinese aesthetics can influence the visual style of Western cinema (Chen, 2021).



Figure 3. A scene from the film "Hero" (2002), directed by Z. Yimou

Source: Google Photo

Chinese martial arts, known as "Wuxia", have also had a significant influence on Western cinema. Films in the Wuxia genre not only popularised Chinese martial arts but also influenced the creation of new genres in Western cinema. Ang Lee's film "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" (2000) is one of the most striking examples of how Western cinema has adapted Chinese aesthetics in its films. The combination of sophisticated choreography in the fight scenes with philosophical themes and symbolism captured the attention of Western audiences and critics, earning numerous awards and acclaim.

The fight scenes in Bruce Lee's films, which combine kung fu techniques with Taoist principles of harmony and adaptability, have also influenced Western cinema. His films, such as "Rise of the Dragon" (1973) (Fig. 4), popularised Chinese martial arts in the West and became a source of inspiration for many Hollywood directors (Xu, 2023). Fight scenes combining speed, precision and philosophical undertones have become an integral part of many Western films, such as the Wachowski sisters' "The Matrix" (1999) (Fig. 5).



Figure 4. Bruce Lee in the film "Rise of the Dragon" (1973)

Source: Google Photo

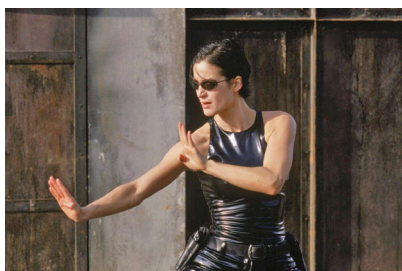


Figure 5. Carrie-Anne Moss in the film “The Matrix” (1999), Wachowski sisters

Source: Google Photo

Unique elements of Indian cinema, such as melodrama, music and dance, have served as a source of inspiration for many Western directors. For example, the cinematic style of Bollywood, with its colourful songs and dances, influenced the creation of Western films such as L. Basset’s “Moulin Rouge!” (2001) (Fig. 6). This film incorporates elements of Indian musical and dance culture, giving it a unique style. B. Luhrmann admitted that he was inspired by the aesthetics of Bollywood, where musical numbers are not merely part of the narrative, but an important tool for conveying emotions and advancing the plot.

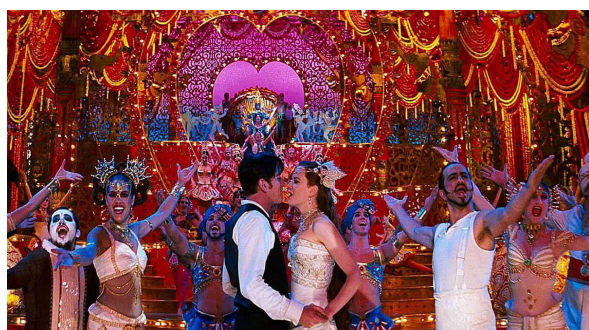


Figure 6. A still from the film “Moulin Rouge!” (2001), L. Base

Source: Google Photo

Furthermore, Indian themes and aesthetics are reflected in Danny Boyle’s film “Slumdog Millionaire” (2008) (Fig. 7), which, although produced by a Western filmmaking team, drew substantial inspiration from Indian cinema. The film combines Western narrative techniques with Bollywood visual styles and plot elements, creating a unique cultural fusion that achieved worldwide recognition.

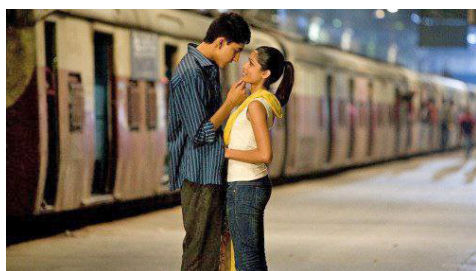


Figure 7. A still from the film “Slumdog Millionaire”

Source: Google Photo

Intercultural exchange in cinema is not a one-sided process. Western cinema has also significantly influenced the development of cinematography in East Asian countries. Western filmmaking, with its technological innovations, high-budget productions, and sophisticated special effects, became a source of inspiration for many Eastern directors (Wang & Yueh-yu Yeh, 2007). In the post-war period, Japanese cinema experienced a considerable influence from Western culture. This was partly due to the American occupation of Japan, which contributed to the spread of Western culture throughout the country. Many Japanese directors began incorporating Western narrative and editing techniques into their films, leading to the creation of a new cinematic style that combined elements of both Eastern and Western aesthetics. One example of such influence can be found in the works of Akira Kurosawa, who himself acknowledged the influence of Western directors such as John Ford on his art. A. Kurosawa’s film “Yojimbo” (1961) served as the basis for S. Leone’s western “For a Handful of Dollars” (1964), demonstrating how Western and Eastern cinematic traditions can interact and create new forms of artistic expression.

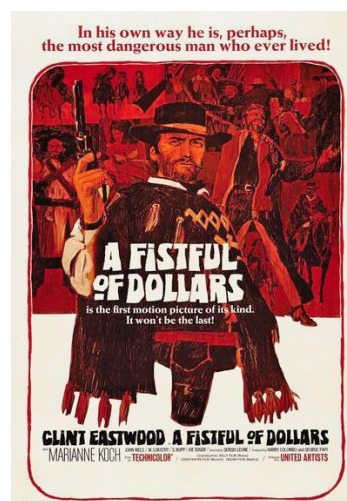


Figure 8. “For a handful of dollars” (1964) directed by S. Leone

Source: Google Photo

Chinese cinema has also been significantly influenced by Western cinema. This has contributed to the development of the Hong Kong action film genre, in which Western editing techniques and special effects have been integrated into Eastern aesthetics (Tsai, 2022). Directors such as J. Woo began to apply Hollywood techniques in their work, combining them with traditional Chinese themes and styles. J. Woo’s films, notably “Cool Boiled” (1992), were characterised by dynamic editing and complex fight sequences, which set the standard for the genre’s subsequent development in both China and Hollywood. Another example of Western influence can be seen in the works of Chinese director A. Lee. His film “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon” (2000) combines elements of Western narrative structure with traditional Chinese martial arts. Although made for an international audience, this film retains Chinese cultural ideas, such as the importance of harmony

and inner strength. The influence of Western approaches to filmmaking has become evident, yet A. Lee has retained cultural specificity, which has made his work successful on a global scale.

Indian cinema has also been influenced by Western cinema, particularly in terms of technical production and genre diversity. Bollywood films, known for their colourful melodramas and musical numbers, began to incorporate elements of Western genres such as thrillers, science fiction and fantasy. This allowed Indian directors to experiment with new forms of expression, combining Western techniques with traditional Indian aesthetics. One striking example of this influence is the film "Sholay" (1975), which is considered the Indian equivalent of a Western. This film combines Western genre elements with traditional Indian narrative, creating a unique cinematic experience. Musical numbers, which are an integral part of Indian cinema, also began to undergo changes under the influence of Western musicals, enabling Bollywood to expand its audience beyond India.

THE ROLE OF FILM FESTIVALS

AND CRITICS IN INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE

International film festivals play an important role in promoting intercultural exchange in cinematography. They contribute to ensuring that films from different cultures are presented on the global stage, enabling audiences and filmmakers from around the world to become acquainted with the aesthetic, thematic, and narrative characteristics of other cinematic traditions. This process not only enriches the viewing experience but also influences the development of global cinematic trends. International film festivals such as the Cannes Film Festival, the Venice Film Festival, and the Berlin International Film Festival are among the most influential in the world and play a leading role in promoting the cinemas of different countries. These festivals not only offer filmmakers a platform to present their work but also create a space for intercultural dialogue. For many Eastern directors, such as A. Kurosawa, Y. Zhang or S. Ray, film festivals have been the key to international recognition. For example, A. Kurosawa's film "Rashomon" became the first Japanese film to capture the attention of Western audiences following its screening at the Venice Film Festival in 1951. The film struck a chord and helped reveal to the world the unique character and poetic depth of Japanese cinema. The director and his work were highly praised by many film critics, notably Federico Fellini, who noted A. Kurosawa's incredible ability to recreate atmosphere and nature on screen, particularly the scenes in the forest with the sun's rays. "Rashomon", in addition to its deep national roots, embodied philosophical ideas close to existentialism, which made it resonate with contemporary Western intellectual thought. (Moussienko, 2017). In 1951, the film won the "Golden Lion" at the Venice Film Festival and the Italian Film Critics' Award, and later received prestigious awards in the US, including an "Oscar" for Best Foreign Language Film.

The Cannes Film Festival is one of the most important international film festivals. Every year, it brings together filmmakers from all over the world and serves as a unique platform for the cinematic debuts of directors from diverse cultural backgrounds. One of the key features of the Cannes Film Festival is its focus on art house cinema. This is why

films that explore national cultural themes hold a special place here, allowing audiences from different countries to discover new approaches and themes in cinema. For example, the films of S. Ray, one of India's most renowned directors, have won international awards and been recognised at Western film festivals, such as the Cannes Film Festival; he was the first Indian recipient of an honorary Oscar in 1992. S. Ray, whilst working within the context of Indian culture, was able to blend his unique stylistic and narrative approaches with influences from Western cinema, making his work universal and accessible to an international audience.

The Berlin Film Festival, known for its openness to social and political themes, has also become an important platform for cultural exchange. It has repeatedly showcased the work of directors from the East, such as the Chinese director Zhang Yimou, whose films explore cultural changes in China through the prism of personal stories (Lin, 2019). The festival helps ensure that films reflecting specific cultural and social contexts become accessible to Western audiences. Winning international awards at film festivals is a key element of intercultural exchange. Films that receive international recognition often draw attention to cinematic works that were previously less well-known. For example, the Golden Lion awarded to the film "Rashomon" marked a turning point for Japanese cinema, paving the way for other Japanese directors on the international stage. This demonstrated that cinematic works reflecting the cultural characteristics of a single country can resonate with a global audience.

Recognition at festivals also helps to strengthen ties between filmmakers from different cultures. Directors and producers participating in festivals have the opportunity to exchange experiences and ideas, which contributes to the creation of new forms of cinematic expression that combine elements of different cultures. For example, films that win at the Cannes or Venice Film Festivals are often released in various countries, expanding their geographical reach. Furthermore, awards at international film festivals often enhance the reputation of directors and their films within the international film community. Recognition at festivals can provide directors with the opportunity to work with international producers and financial partners, which facilitates the creation of joint film projects between different countries. Such collaborations can have a significant impact on the further development of intercultural dialogue in cinema, allowing elements of different cinematic traditions to be combined and new, unique forms of expression to be created. One example of such intercultural exchange is the development of joint film projects between Eastern and Western countries. Films that combine elements of both Western and Eastern cinema are becoming popular among audiences from different cultures.

Critics also play an important role in popularising Eastern cinema in the West. Reviews, articles and studies published in leading film journals have helped Western audiences to better understand and appreciate the aesthetics of Eastern cinema. Critics such as Roger Ebert and Jonathan Rosenbaum actively contributed to the popularisation of Japanese, Chinese and Indian films in the West, leading to a growing interest in Eastern cinema and further cultural exchange (Rosenbaum, 2008). Roger Ebert was one of the first influential Western critics to actively champion

Japanese cinema, particularly the works of A. Kurosawa and Y. Ozu. His reviews enabled Western audiences to gain a deeper understanding not only of the visual and narrative characteristics of Japanese cinema, but also of the cultural contexts underlying these films. R. Ebert repeatedly emphasised the significance of works such as A. Kurosawa's "Seven Samurai" and Y. Ozu's "Tokyo Story", calling them masterpieces of world cinema. J. Rosenbaum, another renowned Western critic, also made a significant contribution to the popularisation of Eastern cinema. His reviews and studies often focused on analysing Japanese and Chinese cinema, particularly the works of directors who blend traditional elements with contemporary narratives. Through his reviews, many viewers were introduced for the first time to the works of directors such as Hayao Miyazaki and Jia Zhangke.

In addition to individual critics, film journals such as *Cahiers du Cinéma* also play a vital role in cross-cultural exchange. They publish studies and reviews that analyse films from around the world, allowing readers to gain a deeper understanding of the contexts and stylistic features of cinema from other cultures. For example, the films of Satyajit Ray received broad recognition due to publications in leading film journals, which made his works accessible to Western audiences (Kumar, 2014). Intercultural exchange in cinematography also faces certain challenges, one of which is the risk that specific cultural aspects of a film may be misinterpreted or undervalued by audiences from other countries. Some films that receive recognition at international festivals may be adapted for global audiences, thereby losing part of their cultural identity. This issue is especially relevant for directors from Eastern countries, as Western critics and audiences may not always fully understand the cultural contexts and symbolism employed in Eastern films. Although film festivals strive to be inclusive and represent films from different regions of the world, the selection process can nevertheless be subjective and may reflect the cultural preferences of festival judges or organisers. As a result, some important works may fail to receive proper recognition on the international stage.

With the development of technology, the role of film festivals and critics in intercultural exchange is also changing. The internet and social media are playing an increasingly important role in promoting cinema, allowing audiences from all corners of the world to discover films that do not always make it to major film festivals. Online platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo, and streaming services enable independent filmmakers to showcase their work to an international audience without having to go through the selection process at traditional film festivals. In this context, the role of critics is also changing. Whereas reviews by professional critics in journals and newspapers once played a decisive role in shaping opinions about films, online reviews and audience responses on platforms such as IMDb, Rotten Tomatoes, and Letterboxd now exert considerable influence as well. These platforms create spaces for the exchange of opinions and impressions among viewers from different cultures, thereby encouraging intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. Another important emerging trend is the use of streaming platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video for the distribution of international cinema. These platforms enable viewers from

different countries to access films that were previously available only at festivals or within local cinema networks. For example, Netflix actively promotes international films, particularly from countries in Asia, Latin America, and Europe, thereby contributing to the popularisation of these works among global audiences.

CONCLUSIONS

In the course of this study, it was found that the intercultural exchange of cinematic aesthetics between Eastern and Western film traditions plays a crucial role in the development of world cinema. In particular, the analysis demonstrated that Eastern cinema, especially Chinese, Japanese, and Indian filmmaking, often focuses on themes of family, moral duty, and harmony with nature, reflecting the deeply rooted cultural and philosophical values of these regions. These themes, however, have also become global, as filmmakers from different parts of the world have begun incorporating them into their works, creating new forms of artistic expression that resonate with audiences regardless of their cultural background. Furthermore, after summarising the principal distinctions of Eastern cinema, it was concluded that Chinese cinema emphasises harmony and colour symbolism, which differs from the minimalist approach of Japanese cinema, characterised by restrained colours and simplicity of composition, whereas Indian cinema, by contrast, is distinguished by its brightness and vividness, significantly differing from both Chinese and Japanese cinematography. Indian cinema, with its melodramatic storylines and musical numbers, places greater emphasis on emotional drama and entertainment, unlike Chinese cinema, which frequently employs epic narratives and cyclical structures, distinguishing it from the more intimate and philosophical narratives of Japanese cinema. Japanese cinema often explores themes of alienation, self-discovery, and moral dilemma, whereas Chinese cinema commonly focuses on Confucian values and social issues, while Indian cinema is more centred on family values, love, religion, and social concerns within the context of Indian culture. Despite the similarities among Eastern cultures and traditions, they nevertheless possess their own distinctive features and significant differences in terms of visual styles, narrative techniques, and thematic elements.

One of the key findings of the study is the identification of the influence of Eastern narrative techniques on Western cinema, particularly the non-linear storytelling characteristic of Japanese cinema, which has found its way into the films of Western directors. At the same time, it was established that Western cinema, particularly Hollywood, has also significantly influenced the development of technical aspects in Eastern cinema, contributing to the modernisation of film production in Japan, China and India. The study also revealed that film festivals and film critics play a central role in facilitating intercultural exchange in cinema. They provide a platform for showcasing the work of directors from different cultures and regions, making cinema not only an entertaining medium but also a powerful tool for intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. The findings may serve as a basis for further research, particularly in the direction of a detailed analysis of the influence of specific national cinemas on world cinema. It is also worth examining the role of new technologies in

the process of intercultural exchange, which significantly influence contemporary cinema.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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Глобальні кінематографічні впливи: вивчення впливу східної естетики на західне кіномистецтво

Анотація. Дослідження спрямоване на вивчення міжкультурного обміну кінематографічною естетикою між східною та західною традиціями кіно, а також аналіз того, як культурні впливи формують методи оповіді, візуальні стилі та тематичні елементи у світовій кінематографії. Було проведено дослідження впливу східної естетики на західне кіно та навпаки, зокрема, було проаналізовано вплив японської, китайської та індійської кінематографічних традицій на західний кінематограф, а також вплив західних технік і жанрів на розвиток кіно в Східній Азії та Індії. Аналіз включав вивчення фільмів, режисерських стилів та тематичних елементів, які стали результатом цього міжкультурного обміну. Основні результати дослідження довели, що кінематографія є важливим інструментом для культурного самовираження і міжкультурного діалогу, відображаючи соціальні, історичні та філософські аспекти національних культур. У ході дослідження було встановлено, що міжкультурний обмін між східними та західними кінематографічними традиціями призвів до виникнення нових естетичних форм і стилів у світовому кінематографі. Зокрема, східна естетика вплинула на розвиток мінімалізму, символізму та філософських підтекстів у західному кіно, тоді як західні техніки монтажу та спецефектів стали важливими для модернізації східного кіно. Також було виявлено, що культурні впливи створюють умови для взаємозбагачення кінематографічних практик і створення нових жанрів, які поєднують елементи різних культур. Висновки дослідження підкреслюють необхідність подальшого вивчення механізмів цього обміну, щоб краще зрозуміти, як культурні взаємодії впливають на кінематографічні практики і як вони можуть бути використані для подальшого розвитку світового кіномистецтва

Ключові слова: міжкультурний обмін; національні традиції; культура; фільм; культурні взаємодії

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