

## **SPATIAL ORIENTATION "RIGHT-LEFT" IN ISLAMIC MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The paper examines the spatial orientation "right-left" as a form of expression of value asymmetry in Islamic multimodal communication. The study is based on the procedural logic of Islamic thinking, the theory of conceptual metaphor and the author's model of fractal reproduction of semantic structures. The material is video recordings of Muslim sermons and interviews with practicing Muslim women. It is shown that the difference between the right and left sides reproduces a hierarchical relationship between order and deviation in both institutional and personal speech. The body acts as a carrier of the semantic structure, maintaining the distinction between the permissible and the erroneous within the framework of a single cultural scheme.

**Keywords:** Corporeality, spatial orientation, right-left, multimodal communication, metaphorical gesture, hierarchical relationship, fractality, Islamic preaching.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The perception of space in culture is organized not only in vertical coordinates, but also in horizontal differences, which acquire normative significance. In the Islamic tradition, the right-left orientation performs an important semantic function, consolidating the distinction between right and rejection, between permissible and forbidden, between order and violation. These differences are reproduced not only in theological discourse, but also in everyday practice, through ritual prescriptions, everyday norms, and bodily actions.

The analysis of spatial orientation requires a multimodal approach, in which gesture, bodily schema and speech structure are considered as a whole. In this context, the gesture to the right or to the left becomes not an accidental movement, but a way of bodily participation in the formation of a sacred difference. Through the body, the border between the normative and the marginal, between the ordered and the chaotic is fixed.

The purpose of this work is to consider the "right-left" orientation as a stable semantic structure of Islamic multimodal communication, based on bodily experience, sacred tradition and cultural norm.

### **2. Theoretical foundations of the analysis**

The analysis of semantic differences in Islamic culture is based on the logic of the relationship between the Actor and the Undergoer, formulated by A.V. Smirnov. In this model, God is thought of as the source of action, and man and the world as perceiving and realizing this action. The structure of Islamic thought is not built around essences, but around a directed act, where the distinction between initiator and executor is fundamental. The relationship

between the Actor-Action-Sufferer sets a hierarchical model of the world, in which the distinction between the source and the receiver formalizes the order of meanings.

The theory of conceptual metaphor by J. Lakoff and M. Johnson explains how bodily experience becomes the basis for the organization of abstract concepts. Spatial landmarks — right and left, up and down — form cognitive schemas that are fixed in language and culture. In particular, the metaphor "**right is good / left is bad**" reflects the preference of the right side in everyday actions, its association with correctness, order, Control. These schemas arise from sensorimotor experience, but then acquire normative significance, determining the ways of categorization and distinction in social practice.

In contrast to universal cognitive metaphors, in the Islamic context, this distinction acquires the status of a cultural norm that reproduces the semantic asymmetry between order and deviation, between what is permissible and what is wrong. deviations from the sacred order. This semantic structure is **fractal in nature**: the distinction between right and left is repeated at different levels, from ritual to everyday bodily practices, from institutional prescriptions to spontaneous gestures. Regardless of the scale of reproduction, the basic hierarchical distinction between the parties persists as an expression of the fundamental relationship between the source and the receiver.

### **3. The Theological and Empirical Basis of the Islamic Horizontalism**

The "right-left" value asymmetry in Islamic culture has a stable basis in sacred texts, prophetic practice, and religious and everyday norms. In the Qur'an, the distinction between the right and left sides is recorded as a marker of moral evaluation. Thus, on the Day of Judgment, the righteous will receive the Book of Acts in their right hand, while sinners will receive it in their left. This distinction sets not just a spatial metaphor, but a normative distribution of meanings: the right side correlates with the correct, with approval, with acceptance; the left one is with deviation, condemnation, punishment.

In the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, the right side is consistently assigned to actions related to purity, order, and dignity. It is reported that the Messenger of Allah began on the right side when dressing, eating, ablution, and entering the mosque. The left side is associated with actions related to the removal of impurities, cleansing, leaving the toilet, and taking off clothes. This distinction forms a stable normative scheme in which the right-left marks the distinction between the sacred order and the actions associated with its maintenance or restoration.

In ritual practices, the distinction between the right and left sides is reinforced through prescriptions about the sequence of actions. In namaz, a special role is played by the final salam, performed first to the right, which symbolically reflects the preference for the right side as the side of blessing and completeness. Although the prayer itself is not built on a horizontal axis, it is in its final part that the bodily confirmation of the value asymmetry is recorded.

Thus, the distinction between right and left in the Islamic tradition is formed as a normative semantic scheme enshrined in sacred texts, everyday and ritual practices. This distinction is not arbitrary and serves as an empirical basis for the subsequent reproduction of the semantic hierarchy in bodily communication.

#### 4. Metaphorical gestures and empirical research

Metaphorical gestures are bodily movements that express abstract meanings and relationships that do not have direct spatial localization. They form a single semantic statement with speech, allowing the body to participate in the formation of conceptual differences (Cienki and Müller, 2008).

The empirical study was based on two types of material: videos of Muslim sermons from the YouTube platform and semi-structured interviews with practicing Muslim women. In the sermons, fragments were analyzed in which gestures were accompanied by speech accents associated with moral instruction, theological statements and examples from the Sunnah. The interviews recorded episodes of personal stories about religious experiences, choices, mistakes, and finding faith.

The analysis was based on the comparison of the direction of the gesture (right, left) with the function of the speech utterance. Attention was paid to those cases where movement played a meaning-forming role, emphasizing the difference between affirmation and warning, between right and wrong. Gestures were recorded by direction, phase (fixed position or movement), type (pointing, hand) and synchronicity with key speech moments.

The results showed a stable relationship between the direction of the gesture and the structure of meaning. In sermons, a gesture to the right accompanied statements about following the path of the Prophet, about fulfilling the precepts, about correct behavior. Movement to the right was recorded at the moments of approval, instruction, completion of the logical fragment. On the contrary, a gesture to the left arose at the mention of errors, deviations from the truth, violations of the Shari'ah precepts. In narrative interviews, a similar orientation was preserved: movement to the right was accompanied by memories of the right decision, of taking the right path; movement to the left – stories about past mistakes, trials, awareness of one's own mistakes.

Regardless of the genre of the statement and the degree of formalization of the situation, the difference between the right and left sides retains its semantic load. This confirms the fractal nature of the right-left value asymmetry in Islamic culture: the same distinction is reproduced in ritual, preaching, everyday speech, and spontaneous bodily expression.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

The spatial orientation "right-left" in Islamic culture reproduces a stable value asymmetry, enshrined both in sacred texts and in everyday practice. The distinction between the right and the left is framed not as an accidental cultural convention, but as a bodily anchored expression of the hierarchical relationship between order and deviation, between what is permissible and what is violated.

Empirical analysis has shown that gestures accompanying both sermons and personal religious speech continue to reproduce this asymmetry: movement to the right correlates with the affirmation of the right, movement to the left with the marking of deviation, warning, condemnation. In this way, bodily action becomes a means of maintaining sacred distinction even outside the ritual context.

The right-left orientation in Islamic multimodal communication retains a fractal structure: the distinction between the parties is repeated at all levels of religious experience, from

normative to spontaneous expression. The body acts as an expression of meaning, formalizing the difference between order and deviation within the framework of a single semantic scheme.

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