

## **HIERARCHICAL RELATIONSHIP IN THE BODY: THE TASHAHHUD RITUAL MOVEMENT AND ITS REFLECTION IN ISLAMIC MULTIMODAL COMMUNICATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The article discusses the ritual movement accompanying the recitation of Tashahhud as a form of expression of the hierarchical relationship between God and the World in Islamic culture. The analysis 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 of the study is video recordings of Muslim sermons and narrative interviews with practicing Muslim women. It is shown that the structure of the ritual movement of Tashahhud is reproduced in non-ritual communication, continuing to fix the difference between the source of action and the perceiving subject. Gesture becomes a bodily form of maintaining hierarchical order in the Islamic worldview.

**Keywords:** Corporeality, Tashahhud, ritual movement, hierarchical relationship, multimodal communication, metaphorical gesture, fractality.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The ritual movement that accompanies the recitation of Tashahhud in prayer is not only a fixed element of the Islamic rite, but also a bodily form of expression of the hierarchical relationship between God and the World. Raising the index finger in this context formalizes the difference between the source of the action (God) and the perceiver (man), fixing it at the level of a bodily gesture. This action not only accompanies the pronouncement of the formula of testimony, but structures the very relationship between the Agent and the Enduring within the framework of the ritual.

Outside the ritual context, similar movements are reproduced in various forms of religious communication, preserving their semantic difference. In Islamic culture, such gestures continue to form a hierarchy of meanings, maintaining the distinction between the sacred source and the perceiving subject. Thus, the ritual movement of Tashahhud does not appear as an isolated element of the rite, but as a model of bodily discrimination, capable of fractal reproduction within the framework of everyday communication.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the Tashahhud ritual movement as a form of expression of the hierarchical relationship between God and the World, to trace its reproduction in Islamic multimodal communication, and to show how bodily practice maintains the structural distinction between source and receiver.

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

The analysis of the ritual movement in Tashahhud as a form of expression of hierarchical attitude is based on three theoretical foundations. First of all, on the procedural logic of the Islamic worldview, formulated by A.V. Smirnov. In this logic, the world is understood as a

system of relations between the Actor, the action and the Endurer. God is the source of action, the initiator of order, while man and the world perceive and realize this action. The ritual movement captures this distinction by formalizing the structural relationship between the source and the receiver. What is important is the act of transmission itself, through which the difference becomes bodily tangible.

The theory of conceptual metaphor by J. Lakoff and M. Johnson explains how spatial landmarks form the cognitive schemas used to organize abstract concepts. Spatial differences, including vertical orientation, arise from the bodily experience of a person and are fixed in language and culture as a means of distinguishing meanings. Pointing up in a gesture becomes not just a direction of movement, but a representation of the semantic difference between the initiator and the perceiver.

Within the framework of this work, the ritual movement in Tashahhud is considered as a bodily form of expression of the hierarchical relationship between God and the World. Raising a finger fixes the difference between the transcendental source of action and the receiving subject. This model is reproduced fractally: the distinction framed in the ritual movement is repeated in various forms of religious communication, from theological discourse to spontaneous gestures.

### **3. The Theological and Empirical Basis of the Tashahhud Ritual Movement**

The ritual movement that accompanies the recitation of Tashahhud is rooted in the sacred sources of Islam and prophetic practice. Although the Qur'an does not distinguish Tashahhud as a separate ritual act, the formula of testimony (shahada) is a central element of the Islamic faith, providing a framework for the distinction between God and man. The pronouncement of the testimony is accompanied by a gesture that goes back to the practice of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him).

The hadiths describe that at the time of reciting Tashahhud, the Prophet raised the index finger of his right hand, sometimes making light movements with it. This gesture is interpreted as a bodily confirmation of the spoken words: "I testify that there is no god but Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is His Messenger." Pointing upwards symbolically fixes the distinction between the Creator and the created, fixing the vertical relationship between God as the source and man as the perceiver.

The ritual practice of namaz formalizes this gesture as a strictly normative action. The books of fiqh describe in detail the position of the finger, the moment of its lifting, and the form of movement. This emphasizes that the bodily act is not arbitrary: it fixes the semantic difference, formalizing it through the bodily schema.

Thus, the ritual movement in Tashahhud is a bodily form of reproduction of the hierarchical relationship between God and the World. It is enshrined in prophetic practice and is transmitted as a normative scheme that supports the distinction between the source of action and the perceiving subject at the level of bodily expression.

### **4. Metaphorical gestures and empirical research**

Metaphorical gestures are bodily movements that express abstract relations and semantic differences that do not have direct spatial localization. In Islamic culture, such gestures

reproduce the structure of differences enshrined in ritual practice. The ritual movement that accompanies the recitation of Tashahhud becomes a model for understanding how bodily schemas continue to record hierarchical relationships in non-ritual communication (Cienki and Müller, 2008).

The empirical study included the analysis of videos of Muslim sermons from the YouTube platform and narrative interviews with practicing Muslim women. In the sermons, there were cases of the use of gestures that reproduced the structure of the ritual movement of Tashahhud: raising the index finger up, accompanying accentuated statements about the uniqueness of Allah, statements about power, command, and revelation. In the interviews, episodes were recorded in which similar gestures arose in the process of talking about personal religious experiences, prayer experiences, and reflections on the connection with God.

The analysis showed that the gestures that reproduce the structure of the ritual movement of Tashahhud retain their semantic difference outside the framework of namaz. Raising the index finger accompanies statements about God's will, recognition of truth, and submission to the Divine order. In the narratives of practicing Muslim women, such movements were noted when describing the moments of inner conversion, turning to God with a request, and realizing dependence on the higher will.

Thus, the ritual movement of Tashahhud continues to function as a bodily form of expression of the hierarchical relationship between God and the World in non-ritual communication. Its reproduction in the gestures of preachers and believers testifies to the fractal nature of this semantic structure: the distinction between the source of action and the perceiver is preserved both at the level of ritual and in everyday bodily expression.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The ritual movement that accompanies the recitation of Tashahhud appears in Islamic culture as a visual bodily form of formalizing the hierarchical relationship between God and the World. In contrast to abstract concepts, this distinction is fixed at the level of bodily action, becoming part of everyday religious practice. The gesture of the index finger not only accompanies the pronouncement of the testimony, but fixes the structural difference between the initiator and the perceiver, between the Creator and the person.

This model turns out to be not local to the rite, but reproducible in a broader communicative context. The bodily reproduction of difference through vertical indication retains its function in non-ritual speech, forming semantic accents and maintaining the hierarchy of concepts. This is a manifestation of the fractal nature of the Islamic worldview: the same semantic structure is repeated at different levels, from ritual to gesture in live communication.

An analysis of the ritual movement of Tashahhud shows that Islamic corporeality is not just the background of religious life, but an active carrier of meanings, capable of transmitting and maintaining a hierarchical relationship through bodily action. Multimodal communication in the Islamic context relies on such bodily mechanisms, where the semantic difference is fixed through normative movement, reproducing the sacred order in everyday gesture.

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