

## SENSUALITY IN SOCIOCULTURAL ASPECT

Elena PAPCHENKO<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

The role of senses in the decision of fundamental philosophical problems concerning how exactly a human cognizes outworld is highly acute. Sensationism formation has had some certain stages in culture history. Symbolic meaning of colour has been changing simultaneously in several aspects over a period of all the history of mankind development becoming a part of social and individual experience. As in the case of human vision differences in acoustic sense can also be explained by culture media. Vast cultural tradition of odour practice is not just included in the world culture treasury, but can in many ways be used in modern life.

**Key words:** sensationism, colour, odour, sound, symbol, culture media

Culture being a system of historically developing superbiological programs of human activity, behavior and communication which are the condition of reproduction and change of social life, keeps, transmits and generates programs of people activity, behavior and communication. These programs form social experience in their complexity and dynamics. That's why cultural heritage is not only a mark of cultural development level of previous generations. It is also a key of understanding of many contemporary processes.

The role of sensationism in fundamental philosophical problem solving concerning such questions as how exactly a man cognizes outward things is extremely important. Formation of sensationism passed certain stages in the history of culture. Symbolic colour meaning has changed simultaneously in several aspects becoming a part of social and individual experience for all history of human development<sup>2</sup>. As in the case of vision of a man, differences of hearing perception are also explained by cultural environment. A vast cultural tradition of odour using does not only come to a thesaurus of the world culture but can also be used in modern life in many different ways.

Colour was equivalent to a word and language of colour was widely used in sacral ceremonies and household activities at the rise of culture. Colour symbolism has a primordial origin. Since the moment of its origin colour symbolism is closely connected with magic and religion. Colour was considered as an attribute of magical, sacral and godlike forces and in some cases as Divine as itself. As archaeological, historical and ethnographical investigations show mystical presentations of a man and colour symbolism were closely connected. An analysis made by B.A. Bazymova allows to state that a content of a colour symbol is changed in a certain manner depending on historical and cultural environment<sup>3</sup>.

Investigating different cultures which existed at different time and different places, similar symbolic meanings of colours are found out. It is especially seen in a widespread colour triad of white, red and black. Semantic value of enumerated colours is similar for a lot of nations. White colour is a personification of peace and life of happiness and prosperity. Red is a personification of success, triumph, wealth, and blood. Black is associated with gloomy things<sup>4</sup>. Only Japan is an exception because white colour is thought to be funereal but if we take into account that Japanese people are Buddhists, so death is only a line separating past existence from the future. Future that is unknown and will be filled with events like white sheet of paper is filled with a text. In accordance with famous Orientalist A.N. Meshcheryakov a special method of visual absorption of environmental world and itself is characteristic of delicate Japanese culture<sup>5</sup>. Modern Japanese people can distinguish a lot more tone colours than European people with the help of eyes and words. That's why Japanese designers are thought to be the best in the world

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<sup>1</sup> Candidate of Philosophical Sciences, associate professor of the department of philosophy Technological Institute of Southern Federal University, Russia

<sup>2</sup> Yanshin P.V. (2000). *Introduction to Psychosemantic of Colour*. Samara: SamGPU.

<sup>3</sup> Bazyma B.A. (2007). *Psychology of Colour: Theory and Practice*. St. Petersburg: Rech. P. 13 – 14.

<sup>4</sup> Garyaeva M.A. (1990). *Epochs in the Mirror of Writ*. Moscow: Znanie. P. 9.

<sup>5</sup> *The Book of Japanese Habits* (2006) / Red. A.N. Meshtcheryakov. Moscow: Natalis: Ripol Classic. P. 18 – 21.

today. There is a physiological theory explaining peculiar vision method in Japan<sup>6</sup>. However this theory does not explain why other Mongoloid nations do not have so rich colour vocabulary and peculiar colour style as Japanese people have. It can be considered more likely with not only physiology.

In the whole it is difficult to do generalization about certain symbolism of any colours<sup>7</sup>. Although black and white (or light and dark) have diametrical meanings and they are opposed to each other nevertheless as it was noted above in some cultures these colours have reciprocal value.

For the majority of cultures white colour symbolizes cleanness, truth, innocence and beneficence or divinity though it has some negative meanings such as fear, cowardice, and coldness. Nevertheless white is a positive aspect of the antithesis «black – white» in many symbolic systems<sup>8</sup>. An Indian tradition to express a suitable emotional state by colour invests white colour with a meanings of cosmic tune, kindness because it characterizes a cast of sacrificers (Brahmins), which kept traditions without changes during millenniums<sup>9</sup>. At the same time almost everywhere black colour represents negative forces and sorrowful events. It also symbolizes darkness of death, ignorance, despair, grief, sorrow, evil and inferior levels of universe (another world, abyss in alchemy) and dismal prophecies.

The history of high cultures of Egypt, India and China has a lot of such analogies. Such kind of colour symbolism predominates also in Christian ceremonies. Clothes of catholic priests and monks strictly ordered by regulation also date to this ancient presentations as and different colours which are used at the time of penitential by different nations.

There was the same hieroglyph *iwēn* for marking such words as «colour» and «substance, character» in the Egyptian language<sup>10</sup>. Colour was understood as a reflection of the true inwardness of things, of their souls but not of their exterior. We can see such perception of colour in many spheres of Egyptian life. Colour was often mentioned as a term of event's essence or thing. For example: «to make green» literally means «to create good»; «to make red» on the other hand means destruction. There is no preference to one colour or to some colours in palette of Ancient Egypt. Each colour has certain function, preference. Symbolism of each colour is many-sided and opens colour's meaning from different aspects. For example: Egyptian people considered white colour as a symbol of cleanness and holiness. Black colour was not opposed to white colour. More over black was not considered as a colour as itself was thought as a negation of any colours.

Colour played one of the main roles in Byzantine culture due to synaesthesia and associativity of its perception<sup>11</sup>. Colour was a powerful activator of the extramental and psychological and therefore was an essential epistemological factor. Colour structures of painting contributed deeper perception of philosophical – religious stuff, which was mentioned by even Byzantine thinkers. In such a way colour was one of the main modification of beauty and held a prominent place in the system of aesthetic categories.

Symbolism of colours and their interpretation in different cultures are confirmed by contemporary theories about connection colour with emotionally strong-willed status of not only a certain man but also of the whole communities.

As L.N. Mironova<sup>12</sup> states in history of culture colours were used to denote certain properties, qualities, notions and ideas (dark blue denotes wisdom, truth; red denotes male; yellow denotes female etc.), which did not always correspond to even one (archetypical) aspect of their meaning. In connection with it argumentation of so-called symbolism of colour can be made according to structurally anthropological criteria of K. Levi-Stross<sup>13</sup> within chromatic analysis of representative data in history of art, in myths and in rituals.

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<sup>6</sup> Fumio A. (2009). *Physical Beauty of the Japanese* // Questions of Philosophy. №1. P.71-74.

<sup>7</sup> Tressider J. (2001). *Dictionary of Symbols*. Moscow: FAIR-PRESS. P. 400 – 401.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. P. 23.

<sup>9</sup> Serov N.V. (2004). *The Colour of Culture: Psychology, Culturology, Physiology*. St. Petersburg: Rech. P. 131 – 136.

<sup>10</sup> Grebennikova O. (2004). *Colour by Eyes of Soul. Symbolic Language of Ancient Egyptian Painting*. // Novyi acropol. №2 (39), P. 32-37.

<sup>11</sup> Bychkov V.V. (1977). *Byzantine Aesthetics. Theoretical Problems*. Moscow: Iskusstvo. P. 102 – 107.

<sup>12</sup> Mironova L.N. (1993). *Semasiology of Colour in Human Psychology Evolution* // Problems of Colour in Psychology. Moscow: Nauka, P.172-188.

<sup>13</sup> Levi-Stross K. (1985). *Structural Anthropology*. Moscow: Nauka.

Analyzing hearing perception we can note that possible differences are also explained with cultural tradition<sup>14</sup>. So inhabitants of some Southeast Asia countries (for example: Thailand, Sri Lanka, Indonesia) can distinguish quarter tone, at the same time European culture members can distinguish halftones. Nowadays it is proved that genetic difference is not the matter, the matter is the formation of auditory sensitivity in which factors of culture environment play the main role.

It is impossible not to touch music considering wonderful world of sound. Music has been used since the depths of unrecorded time to ecstasies, to enthuse, to stimulate aggression before the battle, to ease or to express feelings, to establish connection, to cure and so on and so forth<sup>15</sup>. Curative features of music were used to remove weariness and neuroticism, to improve mood and sleep. Musical instruments were compared to drug plants<sup>16</sup>.

Meanwhile each epoch, each culture has accented its aspects towards music content. Specific peculiarities of music, its capability to express the finest gradations of feelings, mental status and its effect on people and their deep world make intelligible that very major role which it has had as a mean of upbringing during all its history since high antiquity.

The role of music in ancient cultures is much talked about in extant tracts of those times and monuments of nation epos, works of literature and art. Many other countries of East also have the tendencies specific for musical culture of Egypt<sup>17</sup>. In Mesopotamia authority of music seems to capture both people and gods. According to ancient legends gods do not only listen to music but they are musicians and singers themselves and of course there are to be musicians in their retinue. Phonation of musical instruments is thought to have miraculous, and magic power. For example: in a story about goddess Ashtoreth who came down to hell tells about the sounds of hautboy that release the souls of dead people from the power of underground gods.

Chinese culture proposed a completed system of aesthetic, philosophical and scientific points of view at musical art. None of the scientific tracts could pretend to the completeness if it did not include any musical and theoretical or musical and aesthetic section. For ancient Chinese people music was the most immediate and complete expression of not only harmony of universal elements but also fine mission of a person to supply or complete «the work of Heaven»<sup>18</sup>.

As in other ancient East countries music in India came into all spheres of social life. The earliest source about music and dance is thought the work «Bharatanatyashastra». This work shows that music was a highly developed kind of art<sup>19</sup>. Ancient Indian musical aesthetics laid magic value to music and claimed music as a powerful force of influence on a person and on nature. Thereupon belief in divine origin of music emerged. It was reflected in the monuments of poetical, literary and scientific works of Ancient India.

In European culture after the collapse of West Roman Empire new musical instruments emerged in churches. Firstly it was an organ and very soon each procathedral was equipped with an organ<sup>20</sup>. In following epochs musical life of Europe discovered amazing wealth and variety.

In a fundamental work «The sunset of Europe» O. Shpengler states the following: «The history of musical instruments could be even more instructive if it was told not from technical points of view as it happened very often, but from the point of view of the latest mental depths recovering sound colouring and sound action. Because old-timey pointed desire to create an extensional infinite of sounds took place in Gothic time already as a counter to antique bell lyre and pipe (bell lyre, kithara; flute, sackbut) and an Arabian lute called into existence both dominant kinds of organistic (keyboard) and string instruments. <...> organ <...> and developed into independent instrument which was trying to take up the space <...>, without having any analogue in the history of music. Free organ playing of Bach and the music of his epoch indisputably represents the analysis of huge and spacious sound world. And quite as much it

<sup>14</sup> Hamori Y. (1985). *A Long Journey towards Human Computer*. Moscow. Mir. P. 75 – 76.

<sup>15</sup> Motet D. (2006) *Musicotherapy // Psychological Encyclopedia / Under the editorship of R. Korsini, A. Auerbakh - St. Petersburg: Piter*. P. 422.

<sup>16</sup> Alekperli F. (2008). *A Thousand and One Secrets of East*. Baku: Nurlan. P. 157 – 159.

<sup>17</sup> Levin S. (1973) *Wind-Instruments in the History of Musical Culture*. Moscow: Muzyka. P. 5 – 22.

<sup>18</sup> Malyavin V. (2000) *Chinese Civilization*. Moscow: Astrel, Dizain. Informatsiya. Kartographia. P. 435.

<sup>19</sup> Edvars M. (2005). *Ancient India. Household, Religion, Culture*. Moscow: ZAO Centrpoligraph. P. 211.

<sup>20</sup> Koenigsberger G.G. (2001). *Mediaeval Europe, 400-1500 Years*. Moscow: Ves mir. P. 357 – 362.

corresponds to an internal form in particularly to West but not an antique, mathematical thought when string and wind instruments evolve into large groups of identical tonal quality colouring not by themselves but consistently to a human voice register (string quartet, woodwind instruments, brass choir). So, the history of nowadays' orchestra with all invention of new instruments and metamorphosis of old instruments virtually is the history of unity of some sound world that can be described in the terms of advanced analysis»<sup>21</sup>.

«In a certain manner the world outlook of a more sophisticated person <...> found its symbolic expression in fine arts and the number of them can not be calculated precisely. Even music refers to them. And if we deigned to include all different kinds of music in the investigation concerning evolution of art history instead of separating music from graphic-sculptural arts, we could move forward much more in understanding of the subject when talking about the development destined for a certain aim. But creative impulse acting in wordless arts, will never be understood until the difference between visual means and phonic means stops being considered as something more important than just an external feature. <...>

He or she (a member of antique culture – E.P.) touches marble by his or her eyes; he or she is almost bodily in contact with pastous sound of a pipe. His or her eye and ear is used by him or her as the receivers of all the impression allowed. For us they have already stopped being such receivers in Gothic.

Virtually sounds are something extensional, limited, or numerical-shaped in the same degree as for example lines and paints are; harmony, tune, rhyme, rhythm are like perspective, proportion, shadows and contours. The distance between two kinds of painting can be endlessly more than the distance between simultaneous painting and music. <...> Their inner language of shape is so much identical that the difference between visual means and phonic means disappears»<sup>22</sup>.

Wide cultural tradition of odour using does not only come to the treasury of the world culture but in many ways it also can be used in modern life. The most ancient evidences of odour influence on people were found in motives of decorative pictures of primitive people. The most ancient written document in which medicinal properties of odour are described is a cuneal tablet found in Sumerian<sup>23</sup>. Investigations of ethnographers, religion historians, and culturologiests also show the significance of odour in social life of ancient societies. In a vivid and peculiar culture of Ancient Egypt odour was widely used in religious exercises, sexual seduction art, perfumes and redolent odour and they literally interfused everyday life of the Egyptians<sup>24</sup>.

For root nations of America odour served to people like «photographs»: the ancient Reds kept odour related to certain essential events in remembrance of their events. They kept different odours in special cases made of bones, they smelt these odours when they wanted to recall desired past<sup>25</sup>.

In Ancient India there was a cult of an honorable aroma, all celebrations were followed by using of a great quantity of aromas. In the days of grief a sign of the deepest mourning was a total absence of aromas<sup>26</sup>.

In Ancient China as early as 2000 years before A.D. there were special guidances regulating the usage of aromas. Moreover time was modeled with the help of sound and odour, and a flamy watch on the basis of aromatic substance used for this purpose. Besides each hour had a unique odour. The Japanese used odor sense for time determination too. They had incense as a measure of time at that each hour had a unique odour. Cultural content of odour symbolism was determined by social and cultural context and exercises an aesthetic effect on people.

European countries tried to keep pace from East in comprehension of a complicated odour language. Aromas were used not only in cults on medicine, they were widely applied in perfumery, cosmetics, sexual seduction art<sup>27</sup>. Egyptian and Ancient Greek cultural traditions influenced greatly on

<sup>21</sup> Shpengler O. (2006). *The Sunset of Europe. Essays of the World History Morphology: Gestalt and Reality*. Moscow: Eksmo. P. 253 – 254.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. P. 464 – 466.

<sup>23</sup> Kavina T. (1994). "Perfume" *Civilizations* // Otchag. №8 P.56.

<sup>24</sup> *Perfumes for You* (1999)/ Red. by V. Sidorenko, T. Krasnolutsckaya. Rostov-on-Don. P. 79.

<sup>25</sup> Bushen T. (1986). *Creators of Aromas and Beauty*. Moscow. P. 15.

<sup>26</sup> *Religious Traditions of the World* (1996). In 2 volumes. V. 1 – Moscow: Kron-Press. P. 47.

<sup>27</sup> Kolobova K.M., Ozeretsckaya E.L. (1959). *How Ancient Greeks Lived*. Lenigrad: Gospedizdat. P. 69.

Roman civilization in the sphere of odour usage. Cultures and religions were changing with time but odour art continued living and developing. However it should be noted that specific character of culture overlaps on common to everybody reflex of odor perception. So for European members incense odor is associated with religious mood at the same time Buddhist has a much different odour. Beyond that point it should be noted that odor perception depends on not only psychophysiological but also cultural factors. In particular there are differences in odor perception and odor meaning by different nations. So the investigations of J. Bruner<sup>28</sup> show that West culture members minimally call attention to odour role in human activity apart from perfume manufacturing and gastronomy. At the same time Chukchees are just the opposite of West culture members, their odor sense is advanced so much that they can distinguish thinnest nuance of odour. Moreover they smell round each other alongside neck as greeting. Chukchees often describe things with the help of odour. At the same time West culture members use visual, gustatory and tactile characteristics to describe things.

Amorous aboriginals of Philippine Islands gift to each other pieces of their clothes saturated with aromas of their bodies<sup>29</sup>. Karjyaks – an ancient Siberian nation – do not have a word «love» in their vocabulary, instead of «love» they use a word «smell», «smack». Tibetans nose instead of kiss to express intimate familiarity. Ancient lyric poetry telling about it is full of calls towards sweet smelling darling.

In shared cultures in which members show frankly their emotions (Arabian, Mediterranean, Latin-American nations) sensationism plays a great role in human life. According to observations of A. Almani and A. Alvan «possibility to smell each other pours oil on troubled waters. For them odor sense is a method “to be switched on” into other people. Refusal other people to smell means to make a shameful act. In some provinces of Middle East marriage brokers invited to look at the bride sometimes request to smell the bride. Their aim is not to be sure of her cleanliness; more like they look for some weariful odour of her anger or displeasure. Burmises express their affects to cuddle mouths and noses to cheek and inhale highly odour of others. Inhabitants of Samoa express their affects also with the contact of their noses and smelling each other. As for Americans they other way round keep the distance and suppress their odor sense»<sup>30</sup>.

In such a manner colour, sound, and odour senses have an effect on a person on physical, psychological and social levels. However in the majority of cases we do not realize their value in our life to the full extent, as evidenced by that fact the majority of initiated investigations in this sphere is natural-science. Also there is a wide sphere which is left to investigate a psychological aspect of colour, sound, and odour perception. Nevertheless colour, sound and odour are not only biological and psychological but also surely they are cultural phenomena. Consequently investigation of sensationism in a social and cultural aspect is the issue of nowadays.

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<sup>28</sup> Bruner J. (1977). *Cognitive Psychology*. Moscow: Progress. P. 99 – 102.

<sup>29</sup> Haladzhan N.N. (1995). *Aroma as a Category of Aesthetics*. Report / MEGU. Academy of Pedagogics. Moscow: academy pub. MEGU. P. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Lebedeva N.M. (1999). *Introduction to Ethnic and Cross-Cultural Psychology*. Moscow: Kljuch-S. P. 166 – 167.

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