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Madhubani Painting—Vibrant Folk Art of Mithila

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Abstract

This article traces the historical journey of a unique art-form, that of the painting of walls, floor-spaces and on the medium of paper, of Madhubani painting, referring to the place from where it became famous from the region of Mithila in North Bihar. The land of its origin being India, the social and cultural context is also explored. The article aims to document the main artists in the field, who have given their lives in preserving this form of painting and been applauded by the Government of India for their efforts. The painting style has ancient origins and it has caught the eye of both Indians and foreign art enthusiasts. The different sources from which the colours are derived for use have also been noted. Now the art-form finds expression in walls of public places like railway stations, in addition to traditional spaces and during social events. There have been National Award winning artists and the art has made long journeys. The art has combined both the traditional and contemporary themes and been transferred to apparel, upholstery, tableware and sold as artwork for modern homes and interiors. Novel themes have found a place in the art to give it a new appeal. The artists who have made a contribution in revival and sustenance of the art have been listed, with their short biographies in the article, along with interesting illustrations of this vibrant, colourful and timeless art-form.

Keywords

Madhubani, Mithila, Wall Painting, Madhubani Painting, Mithila School of Painting, Aripama, Folk Painting of India

1. Introduction: *Madhubani Painting*

A very interesting news-item in 2017 was that artists have painted the walls of a railway station! The station is that of Madhubani, with an ancient art-form from the land of Mithila. Madhubani locates 190 km from Patna, the capital of Bihar

in India. This art is popular in North Bihar and originally in some parts of Nepal. Though this art is now well known to the world, news items like this help refocus the world's attention to an ancient art form which originated in the land of Mithila to which Madhubani belongs. This art is mostly referred to as "Madhubani painting". **Figure 1** shows women artists decorating the walls of the Madhubani railway station in Bihar. **Figure 2** depicts a bright mural drawn at the station.

The Indian epic Ramayana is well known and Lord Rama is believed to have commissioned a painting during his wedding to Sita, daughter of King Janaka of



Figure 1. Artists at the Madhubani railway station, Bihar (Source: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/painting-the-town-in-madhubani-4997613/> (newspaper image) (accessed 12.03.2020)).



Figure 2. Mural, Madhubani Railway station, Bihar (Source: <http://indianexpress.com/photos/lifestyle-gallery/mithila-artist-transforms-madhubani-railway-station-with-traditional-madhubani-paintings-for-free-4930059/2/> (newspaper image) (accessed 12.03.2020)).

Mithila to capture the event. The term Madhubani means *forests of honey*. Also it is a place in Mithila whose art form has become synonymous with liveliness and colour. In the present times, Madhubani is a market town and most of the painters work in villages like Jitwarpur, 3 km away. Mithila painting and Madhubani painting are interchangeably used, though the term Mithila art is an umbrella term which includes art on paper, apparel, pots, dishes, fans and other items both decorative and utilitarian. The journey of the art can be well understood by and trace its history and evolution over the years, including the techniques and colours used for the paintings. Also the contributions of the artists who were initially anonymous housewives and later came to their own by sheer merit and Government and other support, can be studied to get the total story of this art form.

2. Historical Backdrop: *Echoes from the Past*

Regarded as the *Mithila School of painting*, it originated mostly in North Bihar and depicts religious stories in painting. It is called commonly called *Madhubani painting* which is done mostly by women (Anand, 1984). This vibrant art of Madhubani art is being created since many centuries in some parts of Bihar in India; in fact there is no concrete evidence as to when it actually began. The art was first highlighted as “Maithil” painting (Archer, 1949), a British Civil Servant in 1934 who went there after an earthquake. He also explored Purnea, Darbhanga and adjoining areas when he got a chance to go to the area again in 1940 as Provincial Census Superintendent. The findings came as an article in *Marg*—a magazine of arts in 1949. A research on the historiography on Madhubani in (Neel, 2010) mentions Pupul Jayakar who as Chairperson of Handloom Handicraft Export Corporation took a lot of interest in the painting style while initiating a drought relief programme and even wrote about it in 1970s and early 1980s. Madhubani got noticed when the painting shifted to the medium of paper in addition to walls by women from villages around Madhubani, like Rashidpur, Leheriagunj and Harinagar. The art started reaching the middle class and art enthusiasts. The art got national recognition when artists like Jagadamba Devi, Sita Devi were given National awards by the President of India. This art form is well-liked by the European and Canadian people among others. The exhibition Expo-70 in Japan and Asia-72 further established this art form ensuring sales of the paintings, which were made on paper, instead of the regular floor or walls of the villages. Neel Rekha in her research mentions that there were indirect references to the art in regional texts from the 14th century onwards; while trying to explore its transformation from folk art to a fine art. The art has become more visible and the elite of Bihar has responded well to the popularity of the art form and looked at it as an expression of their cultural heritage. Further she notes that the award winning artists are well travelled and exhibitions have been held in France, Germany and the USA. These women also represented a kind of “women power” in predominantly patriarchal Bihar, though men are doing paintings

too and making a mark. Some foreign scholars have studied the art like Erika Moser, a German folklorist, Yves Vequaud and a French journalist who encouraged the other caste women to reflect their day to day life in their paintings. A *Mithila Museum* has been established in Japan by Tokio Hasegawa, a Japanese visitor to Madhubani. Nowadays one gets to see the art form on saris, trains, picture galleries, walls of railway stations and private drawing rooms. However, as noted, Madhubani painting needs to be constantly protected from the effects of commercialization (Thakur, 1981). But innovation is inevitable which can be taken as either dilution of the art or as some freshness being infused to a traditional art form.

To step back in time it is mentionable that Mithila is an ancient land north of the Ganges (Thakur, 1981). Madhubani is the heart of Mithila. There are extant remains of cities of ancient rulers at Mithila. It is the land of the ancient Maithilis bounded on the North by the Himalayas, on east by river Kausiki, south by the Ganges and west by the Gandaki. The land is around 25,000 square miles; parts of it in Nepal. Mithila has been the land of the Janaks. Vaishali was a renowned Buddhist and Jaina centre. Many geniuses have walked this land; Kapila; founder of *Samkhya* philosophy, Gautama Aksapada (author of *Nyaya-sastra*), Jaimini, founder of the *Mimamsa* school. The area has been with the Vaidehas, the Licchavis, the Magadhans, Mauryas, Guptas and Karnata dynasty. It came under Mohammedan rule in 1324. After that the land was ruled by the Oinavara dynasty for about two centuries. Mithila is also known as Tirhut or Tirabhukti. The Mughals subdued this dynasty; however the Khandavala dynasty was founded (1556-1952) when Mughal Emperor Akbar gave Tirhut to its founder Mahesa Thakura.

Mithila has been a Buddhist and Jaina stronghold too. *Tirthankaras* were born here and Lord Buddha had come to Vaishali. The land of Mithila has been culturally very rich. Architecture, sculpture, painting, music was very popular among the kings and the people. Sculptures in bronze, stone and ivory have been found in Mithila. Images of all deities have been found. Folk arts were also well developed. Silver miniature objects and carved wooden images were made by artisans of Mithila. Painting on walls has been an intrinsic part of life done mostly by women as already mentioned. On religious and social occasions like *vratas*, the women decorate the walls with lively artwork which captivates the mind and soul of the onlooker. Mithila painting is categorised under folk art. The artists paint on walls, canvas and on the floor; *bhitti*, *pata* and *aripana* respectively.

Folk art has mostly been started for utility purposes or for rituals. Mostly the depictions are religious in nature. In Mithila, painting was mostly done on the wall or the floor since yore. The wall paintings are also called *bhitti-shobha*. In southern Bihar (now Jharkhand), it is called *urehana*. Mithila art in its sophisticated form is practiced by *Brahmin* and *Kayastha* caste women. The other castes worked on utility items for use in their homes. There seemed to be refinement in the work of the “kulina” women (the *Brahmins* and *Kayasthas*), traceable to the

patterns made during Vedic sacrifices; the components of *samskaras* and *vratas* being very prominent. *Aripanas* are created according to the *samskara* and the patterns originated between 1097 A.D. to 1550 A.D. under the Karnatas and the Oinavaras and were carried on during the Khandavalas, also called *Darbhangaraj* upto recent times.

The art of *aripana* or drawings on the floor is a legacy, handed down through generations. The *aripana* is an important part of occasions and during festivals. The women get to learn and execute the *aripanas* as they learn it as a part of growing up, naturally. The main lady who does the drawing is called the *aripana denihari*.

Aripanas relating to worship of different Gods and Goddesses are made during different *pujas* and rituals. The art is taught by mother to daughter and the painting tradition is continued. The *aripanas* are done in different ways; *mandala* drawings and the *tantric* designs, *vrata mandalas*. *Aripana* or *alepana* is derived from the word *alimpana* which means the art of drawing *ali* (wall) and that these drawings made for *vratas* are believed to act as a channel for invoking nature's energies. These *aripanas* as line drawings on the ground are done during ceremonies (Thakur, 1981). It figures among the 64 arts mentioned in the ancient treatise *grihasutra*. They are made in the courtyard, at entrance of the house among other places. *Aripanas* are traditionally made with a mix of rice powder and water called *pithara*. The colours red, green, yellow and black are also used along with vermillion (*sindoor*). Various deities of Hinduism like Shiva-Parvati, Radha-Krishna, Vishnu-Lakshmi are depicted.

The *aripanas* are of different types: The *sarvatobhadra* is a diagram drawn during *Tulasi puja*, *Durga puja* and in *vrata*, usually done on an initial format of one, three, five, seven or nine dots of vermillion as two triangles, one pointing to the sky and one to the earth. This motif is believed to be the source of all *mandalas* in *vrata puja* and the *yantras* used in the *puja* have also evolved from it; drawn near the Tulasi plant in the courtyard of the Brahmin and Kayastha homes of the Mithila region. The *sarvatobhadra* used to be drawn during Vedic sacrifices. *Aripanas* symbolises the presence of *Shakti*. The *aripanas* are closely related to Tantric cults. The *astadala*, another type of *aripana* is an 8 petalled lotus drawn for the Durga Puja. This is also used for the worship of Lord Vishnu. The eight petals symbolises the eight *siddhis*. On the eight petals are depicted the *sankha* (conch), *khadga* (sword), *damaru* (drum), *chakra* (disc), *pasa* (mace), *sala* (spear), *padma* (lotus) and half moon with dot (*bindu-yukta ardhachandra*). During worship of Lord Vishnu, his various forms are depicted. The other *aripanas* include *saddala aripana*, *swastika aripana*, *dasapata aripana* and *madhu-sravani aripana*. *Aripana* is a ceremonial art and done on occasions like the thread ceremony, marriage, *Batsartli* (worship of Bat tree (banyan), a symbol of long life. Also made during *Nag-panchami*; the worship of snakes, *Satyanarayana puja* as well.

Other castes, who have been called Harijans by Mahatma Gandhi and now called "Dalits", from castes like Chamar, Dusadh and Ahirs, have taken up

painting which depict their heroes like Rahu, Salhesa (actually Vedic God Indra) and Govinda. They also made narrations of their daily life and ritual practices. This art developed at Jitwapur, 3 km from Madhubani town and also got accepted by art lovers. As already stated, men joined painting activity and socially relevant themes too found a place (Neel, 2010).

3. Madhubani Murals: *The Writing on the Wall*

The folk paintings of Mithila region are made on walls; the murals are what is commonly understood as Madhubani painting. These paintings are made on the walls of houses at Madhubani at Jitwarpur, Ranti, Darbhanga, Saharsa and Purnea. In 1967-68 this painting form got a fillip by the efforts of Sri Lalit Narayan Mishra, Foreign Trade Minister, Upendra Maharathi and Bhaskar Kulkarni, artists (Thakur, 1981). It is a feminine art mostly made by women who are housewives. Some important artists have been Maha Savitri Devi of Ranti, Sita Devi of Jitwarpur, Baua Devi Jha, Jagadamba Devi and Mahasundari Devi who have become world famous. **Figure 3** is an iconic painting by artist Sita Devi depicting Radha-Krishna along with a “gopi” or cowherd girl, a popular theme.

The style of painting varies from village to village. The ones made by the upper castes, Brahmin and Kayasthas have a unique quality of space. There are small figures and large figures juxtaposed with each other. The symbols used in the painting resemble those on pottery found at Harappa, an important Indus valley civilisation site. Folklore has it that women of King Janaka’s household used to paint on walls. Urmila (Lakshmana’s wife) made his image on a wall and worshipped it when he went to the forest with his brother Lord Rama and Sita-devi during his exile. This is from the Indian epic Ramayana. The Sonars, Ahir



Figure 3. Radha-Krishna, Madhubani painting (Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed 12.03.2020).

and Dusadhs also do paintings but only isolated households got involved but with time more have come to the field.

A girl was given the designs in paper form when she gets married so that she can use in her new home, and also introduce new designs. The area of Mithila has been under Brahminical domination which has had an influence on all aspects of life in Mithila. The process of painting has given a medium of expression to the women. These women are natural artists and don't really follow any norms. Though some artists are well known many faded away after creating awesome art.

The wall paintings in Mithila homes are mostly executed on the wall of three places. The *Ghosain-ba-ghara*, room of the family deity, the *Kohabara ghara*, room for newly-weds and *kohabara ghara ka koniyan*, the verandah outside the *kohabara*. The *kohabara* room has paintings mostly of mythological stories and legends made of red coloured mineral pigment, *gairika* (Thakur, 1981). **Figure 4** is an example of a *kohabara* painting by artist Sita Devi. Not all paintings are narrative in nature, some depict nature; plants and animals. **Figure 5** shows a stylized peacock, the national bird of India. There are themes of the paintings like the *Harisauna piya ka chitra* done with vermillion depicting the life of two girls. The *Ghosain ghara ka chitra* is also a type of wall painting. The *Sarovara-chitra* is a family pool and depicts fish, turtles etc. Inside the bridal chamber *nayana yoginis* with articles which they carry on their heads is painted in four corners. The verandah outside has paintings of rural scenes of the Mithila region. **Figure 6** depicts the Mahavidyas, a concept from Indian mythology; which refers to the group of ten aspects of "Adi Parashakti", all forms of Goddess Parvati in Hinduism. Sometimes the paintings are made on paper, pots, fans and earthen-dishes. The art from lacks symmetry, animals are depicted to symbolize



Figure 4. *Kohabara*, Mithila painting (Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed 12.03.2020).



Figure 5. Peacock depiction, Madhubani painting (Source: Wikimedia Commons accessed 12.03.2020).



Figure 6. *Mahavidyas*, mythological Madhubani painting (Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed 12.03.2020).

energy and character. The turtle symbolizes union, fishes depict fertility, lotus and bamboo represent the genders, female and male respectively. All this is translated sometimes into strange figures, with a fantastic dimension with float-

ing images (Tiwari, 2018). The net result is one of brightness and a burst of energy.

4. Techniques of Painting: *A Labour of Love*

The wall surfaces are prepared by plastering with cow dung or first white-washed on which paintings are made. The paints were previously prepared but now they are procured from villages from the market town of Madhubani, Purnea with the supply coming from Kolkata. The colours used are *gulabi*, *nila*, *sindura*, *sugapankhi* (green). Originally black was made from burnt barley seeds, yellow from turmeric, or *chuna* (lime) mixed with milk from banyan leaf, orange from *palash* flower, red from the juice of the *kusuma* flower and green from *bel* leaves. Paintings of the Kayastha families have brown, yellow-ochre, turmeric and myrobalan (*harada*), madder red and black colours which are bought in modern times, mixed with goats milk. White colour can be got by mixing of rice powder in water. Colours used to create black is from soot, light brown is derived by mixing cow-dung and gum in fresh water. *Pipal* bark yields pink when dried and boiled in water. Blue colour is obtained from berries of an herb called *sikkar*. Dark green is from the Siam creeper and parrot green from the sepals of *gulmohar*. Red can also be derived from clay, yellow from pollen (Thakur, 1981), but nowadays other organic and mineral colours are being used. Figure 7 is a Madhubani painting housed at The Asia and Pacific Museum, Warsaw by artist Mudrika Devi.

Madhubani paintings have many colour settings: deep red, green, blue, black, light yellow and pink. Red is dominant in many paintings. A bamboo twig is used for drawing outlines. For filling colour *pihua*, a small piece of cloth tied to a twig is used. Women gather together and make the painting. A leader among

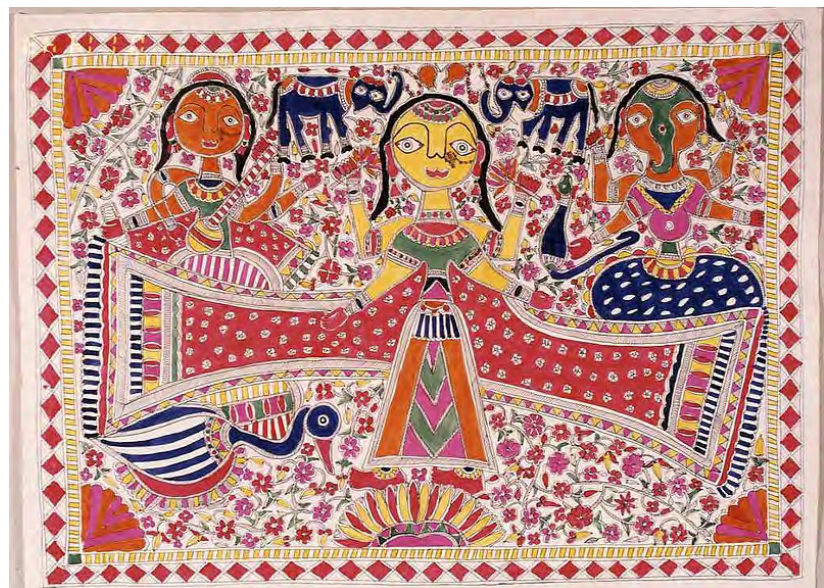


Figure 7. Lakshmi, Ganesha and Saraswati, Madhubani painting (Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed 12.03.2020).

them draws the composition and others fill in the colour. Younger girls assist the older women. *Kayastha* families keep paper notes of the artwork, to be made during ceremonies. It is even shared with the same caste from different villages. The styles get repeated but with variations, though the idioms remain the same. Now synthetic colours are also being used as seen in **Figure 8** for modern creations, since organic dyes take long to prepare.

5. Theme of the Paintings: *Varied and Timeless*

The favourite deity of the *Brahmins* and *Kayasthas* is Goddess Durga. Goddess Kali is an important deity in *Tantrik* rituals and *tantra* has had an important effect in the making of *Aripana* and wall paintings. The major motifs used depict flora, fauna, mostly natural life, also Gods, goddesses, lion, fish, parrot, turtle, bamboo, lotus, creepers, “swastika” among others. These forms are interchangeably used as per the ritual. Events like the thread ceremony, initial wedding formalities, final wedding rites, the renovation of shrines, all demand paintings. Paintings are made for both beautification and sanctification of the courtyard and threshold. *Kohabara* paintings augment well for the marriage. **Figure 9** depicts a painting done for the *kohabara*. The *kadamba* tree, sun, flowers, peacocks, moon, palanquin, tortoise, fish are all depicted. *Bhitti chitra* or wall paintings are drawn on auspicious occasions. Symbols used in Madhubani painting have their



Figure 8. Madhubani painting, modern art using synthetic colours (Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed 12.03.2020).



Figure 9. Kohabara theme, Madhubani painting. (Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed 12.03.2020).

own significance. Elephant, palanquin denote royalty. Sun and moon represent long life. Goose and peacock are symbols of welfare and calmness (Thakur, 1981). Lotus denotes good luck and the feminine, the bamboo denotes future progeny and the male gender.

During the thread ceremony or *upanayana*, Gods and Goddesses, sun and moon are depicted. Figure 10 depicts Goddess Durga in a painting. During weddings again sun and moon, a bamboo tree, a circle of lotuses, parrots, fish etc. are drawn. The lotus is female and the bamboo is taken as a male symbol. The parrots, turtles and fish are significant too. Parrots symbolise the love birds, turtles signify water and union of lovers. Fishes are symbols of fertility. Sun and moon represent life preserving qualities.

The human forms are linear and abstract. The *Brahmin* paintings have bright reds and yellows. They depict a particular subject matter. A lot of red is used and themes from *Bhagavata Purana* are commonly used. Scenes from the life of Lord Krishna, a favourite God of India, are seen. Other themes include the elephant, fish, tortoise, stylised tigers, floral forms etc. The paintings don't follow any logical patterns. Figures of animals, birds could be drawn to fill white spaces.

As already noted the Dalit paintings use themes of stories of their own heroes and have a quality by themselves. These paintings can be understood as a kind of self assertion. Madhubani art could be transforming into a fine art as per David Szanton, President, Ethnic Arts Association, U S A (founded in 1980) who writes about and curates exhibitions believes; owing to the combination of tradition and individual expression as seen in the works of Ganga Devi (Jain, 1997). Further, David Szanton opines that Madhubani painting should be referred to more as Mithila painting which would be a more inclusive term with its new styles and



Figure 10. Goddess Durga, Madhubani painting (Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed 12.03.2020).

lack of Western influence (Neel, 2010). However another school of thought will always feel that the *Kohabara* version is the authentic Madhubani and commercialisation of the form is destroying the tradition.

In spite of all this, this art is evolving with the times. It is getting depicted on saris, t-shirts, paper stands, bags, home décor and apparel like *dupattas* and *palazzos* in addition to public places and traditional surfaces.

6. Artists of Madhubani: *Inner World, Outer World*

6.1. Sita Devi

She is a celebrated artist of Madhubani art. She brought the art to the outside world from the rural homes. She was born in 1914. She is from Jitwarpur village at Madhubani in Bihar. She has got conferred with the State award in 1969, National award in 1975 and the Padma Shri in 1981. She got the Bihar Ratna Samman in 1984. She has encouraged the art among 1000 people in her village. Her art was sought after by many, including Presidents and prime-ministers of India! Because of her efforts and commitment, Jitwarpur has been developed to a large extent. She died in 2005.

6.2. Baua Devi

Baua Devi is from Jitwarpur in Mithila district, Bihar. She brought the wall

paintings on to paper in 1966. She was born to a Brahmin family and married off at 12 and during that year there had been a famine. To supplement her family's income the women in the region started selling their artworks using new media. She was encouraged by artist Bhaskar Kulkarni who helped her to showcase Madhubani artworks at New Delhi's Craft Museum. She was awarded a Padma Shri in 2017. **Figure 11** shows the artist, Baua Devi showcasing her work.

6.3. Ganga Devi

Born into a Kayastha family in 1928 in Mithila, Bihar, she was a Madhubani painter who took the art outside India, specialising in *kachni*, line drawings. She participated in the Festival of India in the US. She got the National award for Crafts and the Padma Shri in 1984.

6.4. Mahasundari Devi

Mahasundari Devi was from Ranti village in Madhubani, Bihar. She learned the art of Madhubani from her aunt at an early age. She broke social norms like the 'purdah' and became an active artist in 1961 and founded a co-operative society *Mithila Hastashilp Kalakar Audyogki Sahyog Samiti*. She got conferred with many awards like the National Award in 1982, Tulasi Samman by the Madhya Pradesh Govt in 1995 and the Padma Shri in 2011. Her art included clay, paper mache, *sujani* and *sikki* (grass arts). She died in 2013. **Figure 12** is an image of Mahasundari Devi at work.

6.5. Other Artists

Other artists active in Madhubani painting are Yamuna Devi, Shanti Devi, Chano Devi, Mudrika Devi, Phoolmaya Devi, Bindeshwari Devi, Chandrakala Devi,



Figure 11. Baua Devi, artist (Source: www.deccanherald.com/content/597118/jitwarpur-bihar-scores-hattrick-padma.html (newspaper image) (accessed 12.03.2020)).



Figure 12. Mahasundari Devi, artist (Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed 12.03.2020).

Shashikala Devi, Leela Devi, Godavari Dutta, Chandrabhushan, Ambika Devi and Manisha Jha who have got National awards. Jagannath Jha is another well known artist. Also Dulari Devi, Karpuri Dev, Mahalaxmi and Radha Kumari have made their mark as Madhubani artists.

6.6. Bharti Dayal

Bharti Dayal is a contemporary artist from Samastipur, Darbhanga district of Bihar, working in this field from 1984. She is actively propagating the art on media like acrylic and canvas. She has got recognition of the art as a fine art worldwide and has won many awards and held an exhibition at the Museum of Sacred Art, Belgium. She guided other women artists. She paints with natural and vegetable based colours (Dayal, 2016). She combines traditional art and modern topics of the day. She has won the National Award for Excellence in Crafts in 2006. Her painting in **Figure 13** “Bitiya” means daughter, in Hindi language, highlighting the girl child.

The image in **Figure 14** depicts *Kaliyamardana* from Lord Krishna’s life. As per legend Kaliya was the name of a poisonous *naga* living in the Yamuna river. The water around the *naga* bubbled and boiled with poison and no living thing could venture around it. A sole *kadamba* tree grew on its bank. Kaliya was living there because he had been chased away from Ramanakadwipa by Garuda, enemy of all serpents. Kaliya chose Vrindavan because Garuda has been cursed by a sage of Vrindavan that he would meet his death if he ever came to Vrindavan. Once Lord Krishna was playing with other cowherds next to the Yamuna. Their ball fell into the river. Krishna who had climbed the tree tried to retrieve it by

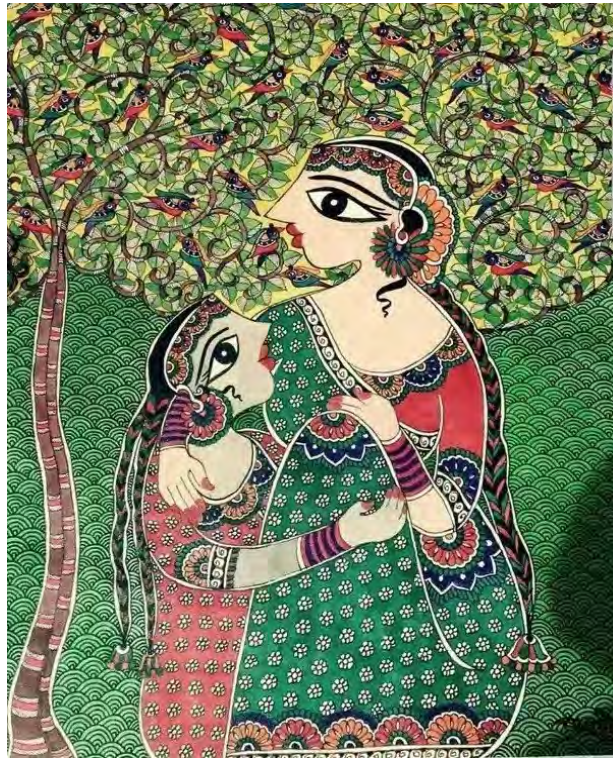


Figure 13. *Bitiya*, painting by Bharti Dayal (Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed 12.03.2020).



Figure 14. *Kaliyamardana*, Madhubani painting (Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed 12.03.2020).

jumping into the river. Kaliya rose up with his hoods and wrapped himself around Krishna's body. A great fight ensued; Krishna grew large to assume the weight of the universe and danced on Kaliya's hoods. The *naga* began to die, but

his wives came and prayed to Lord Krishna to release him. The *naga* surrendered and Krishna set him free to go back to Ramanakadwipa. Legend has it that he went to the netherworld and stayed there.

A painting with a depiction of a scene from the “Ramayana” epic is seen in **Figure 15**. This is the kidnapping of Sita, the wife of Rama, by the demon Ravana. Ravana is sitting on the backs of horses. Made in the *bharni* style (coloured), derived from the tradition of the Brahmins and Kayasthas.

A jail in New Delhi has Madhubani paintings on its walls as shown in **Figure 16**, which could probably set a trend for other institutions to encourage this practice.

Jitwarpur has produced artists like Sibani Paswan, Siva Lal Das, Rekha Das, Satya Narayan Koru and Joy Narayan Lal Das in the field, which has Governmental support with 38 centres in Bihar, 21 in North Bihar alone and assistance given for marketing of the finished pieces as well (Das, 2013).

Modern 21st century homes are always looking for something “different” or unique to enliven living spaces. **Figure 17** depicts a wall livened up using this art form. Madhubani art is thus helping in this regard with both retail outlets selling the paintings across India and with the advent of shopping through Internet portals, it is being sold online which goes a long way in sustaining this ancient art-form by providing livelihood to the artists and from it getting lost in the vicissitudes of time.

7. Conclusion: The Journey Continues

This ancient art which began as murals on walls and floors of village homes in North Bihar continues its journey with both the traditional motifs and the modern idioms juxtaposing each other as can be seen on walls, public spaces and in



Figure 15. Scene from the epic Ramayana, Madhubani painting (Source: Wikimedia Commons, accessed 12.03.2020).



Figure 16. Madhubani paintings on Mandoli sub-jail, New Delhi (Source: <https://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi-news/murals-graffiti-madhubani-paintings-mandoli-sets-art-free-on-delhi-s-jail-walls/story-EULW9ZWsjYmkt7GvOUUJ.html> (newspaper image) (accessed 12.03.2020)).

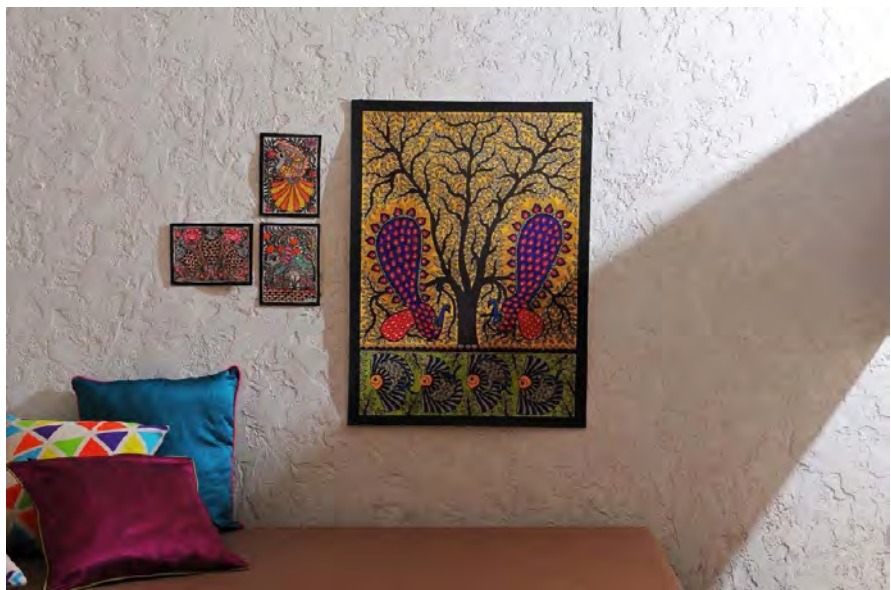


Figure 17. Madhubani panels, contemporary drawing room, 21st century (Source: jay-pore.com with kind permission from CEO Shri Puneet Chawla).

outlets selling the craft. As seen in the article, the traditional families will continue to make the paintings during ceremonies and the art form will adorn the rooms of newly-weds, the *kohabara*. On the other hand in addition to narrating a mythological event from the strong repertoire of Indian legends or depicting daily life and rituals, or depicting social themes and motifs of animals and birds, the paintings will find a place in public spaces and elite drawing rooms thus ensuring a market for survival. Also online e-commerce sites have begun selling the craft which augurs well to expand the market. So as we move on to the 21st century there will be more of Madhubani on different surfaces including apparel,

tableware, upholstery and home décor. Innovations will find a way to keep the art thriving and fresh in the eyes of the discerning global buyer who may also be an art enthusiast. The painting practice provides income and empowers women who also have a goal to empower others, which makes them aware of their rights and gives them confidence to deal with other social issues.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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The Development of Animation Movies in China: Analyses of the *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* and *Nezha: I Am the Destiny*

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Abstract

The movie of *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* and *Nezha: I Am the Destiny* were two dark horses in the year of 2015 and 2019. The success of the two films is not just the success of the box offices, to some extent, it connotes that China's animation industry has been able to stand a world stage. Such a standing reflects not only the progress of performing animation technology in China, but also a Chinese style animation being cognized by the world. This paper tries to present and analyze how the two animation movies succeed, by comparing with the early Chinese *Meishupian*, the Japanese anime and the American cartoons. Additionally, the paper argues that the development of Chinese animation can be seen as a key sector for the birth of a new national identity in the new century. The analyses of the use of traditional ink painting style, character-based Peking Opera, as well as the re-structured stories of the *Journey to the West*, and *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King* would be the case in point; they are the Chinese-rooted national culture and are challenging the Western-based film cultures.

Keywords

Monkey King: Hero Is Back, *Nezha: I Am the Destiny*, Chinese Animation, Development, National Culture

1. Introduction

With the productive development of Chinese movies, the animation industry has gradually become one of the main economic sources in China. The creation of Chinese animation started in the 1920s. It can roughly be divided into three competing steps: ink animation, (fine) art animation and animated films. In 1926, *The Big Room* was produced by Wan Brothers. It was China's first original

comic video, showing a painter who painted in the studio while a small naughty man who jumped off the drawing board, giving the painter a lot of troubles.

Nowadays, the concept of animation is different from the previous sense of comic videos or pictures; it is a comprehensive art, combining with cartoons, visual arts, music, and digital technology. In addition to this, the development of Chinese animation industry has always been influenced by Japanese anime and American cartoons. Though, this might result in an academic controversy that the focus on imitation and copying of the two foreign styles has greatly depreciated a qualified level of Chinese animation works. The Chinese animators have been working hard for this creative work and making a lot of contributions to the animation industry. In recent years, the Chinese government has initiated new policies to encourage artists to create better animation works. Within this context the term “development” is discussed in this paper.

The structure of the paper is arranged in five parts. Besides the above content set as an introduction, the second part briefly explores the phenomenon of copycat and an integration cultural style in China. The third section simply illustrates how Japanese anime and American cartoons impacted China’s animation industry. The fourth part explores the two movies *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* and *Nezha: I Am the Destiny* by comparing them with the previous character of heroes in China, the Japanese style of anime and the American cartoon characters to show how they shift from a moment of the copycat towards forming a Chinese-based cultural identity. The last section summarizes that, the trend of Chinese animation is gradually becoming a sign, of which animation can be seen as a new-born of China’s national spirit.

2. The Phenomenon of Copycat and Cultural Integration

The previous section mentions that ethnic and artistic styles are used to make animation products. And this, on the other side of the coin, implies that China has been always trying to establish its own animation culture. However, since China has opened its door to the world, the creation was potentially decreased its power, lots of *Shanzhai* and copying products emerged.

2.1. Copycat Phenomenon in China

Copycat, as a kind of socio-cultural phenomenon, certainly has the typical characteristics in process, that is, the word “imitation” is the key to approach it. One of the theories to explain the imitation behavior among social or group members is its memetics character, as He Ziran (He, 2005) notes. For instance, when a person hears something interesting, he passes the idea to his friend, and then his friend passes the idea to other friends. The process of delivering the idea becomes one of the forms of copying, meaning, by copying an idea people learn to use it in their socio-cultural lives. However, copycat is used broadly than memes, it happens in aspects of high-tech, education, or artworks.

Chen Weiqiu and Chen Kaiju (Chen & Chen, 2014) argue that the emergence

of the *Shanzhai* is in relation to the economic profits it would bring about. Taking *Shanzhai* products as an example, they can be cosmetic products specifying in chasing well-known brands, so as to quickly expand the market.

Shanzhai products and works saved a lot of time on market research, manpower, capital and other aspects of business. They are low-cost but high-profit products, becoming market competitors of the imitated objects. (Chen & Chen, 2014: p. 289)

Some argue that in contemporary culture forms, entertainment is a unique feature. TV programs, TV dramas, advertisement and movies are copycat-based. Though, such a copying is different from the above two forms, as it relates to the original given culture, but uses the term “spoof” to cater for audiences for developing an entertainment industry, as Wang Tao and Huang Jieru address:

A parody is a kind of derivation and imitation of the genus that consciously copies earlier movie works in styles and forms. (Wang & Huang, 2015: p. 248)

It just has to be said that the appearance of the copycat phenomenon is inevitable. They can be as similar as the memes, the *Shanzhai* and the spoof forms in every aspect of the creation process, taking an act without any sense in relation to freshness, interesting, imagination and innovation.

2.2. Integration Cultural Styles

The copied cultural products, to some extent, may target at improving the cultural level, but the action of “imitating” is undoubtedly a wrong way for the sense of creation. Then the term “integration” is established to highlight a sense of style and a sense of influence impacted by national and other cultures. Cultural integration is indeed addressed by lots of scholars and philosophers. The American cultural critic Saeed talks about nationality or cultural identity, he stresses that culture cannot be completely purified as a metaphysical independence, but understood by different types and characteristics, as a result of conflict and integration with other communities (Liu, 2018: p. 93).

For instance, in recent years, Asian countries come together to advance the common demands of well-being. They give each country opportunities to show their cultural strength. The integration of Asian cultures thus presents a positive trend that a fusion power has become a rich mine for mutual understanding, learning and developing among the region (Wang, 2019: p. 27).

China, in building its national power, has been gone through the process from integration to autonomy. In earlier years, Liang Qichao, who believed that the most fundamental foundation for China was to establish a modern country. Though, what Liang stressed was that, a Chinese sense of traditional civilization must become the premise of modernity (Li, 2019). Looking back at the decades of China’s development, the modern partially lied in China’s recognition of foreign cultural values, and awareness of learning from others, as Wang Shubo

(Wang, 2013: p. 163) notes that, the collision and assimilation between cultures has also become an unavoidable challenge for China, due to the competition among nations has become increasingly fierce in many fields and levels of communication.

In this sense, what seems more important is that, however, to maintain unique cultural characteristics of the nation under the trend of increasing convergence of other cultural elements. Such a maintaining particularly lies in China's accumulating a sense of nationality, and reaffirming a sense of cultural identity. The development of China's animation industry is a case in point.

3. The Impact of Japanese and American

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The above argues that cultural identity is not a simple learning of foreign cultures, but the preservation of its own stuff. As one of the largest movie markets, animation can bring huge communicative profits in the world. For decades, animation works have played a very extensive and profound role in the exchange and cooperation of cultures around the world. Watching animation movies has gradually become one of the wonderful and impressive moments in people's daily life. There are certain evidences to show that China had learned a lot from the animation works of Japan and the United States in the previous years, which greatly stimulated Chinese animation creators to think about how to satisfy the audience, and how to improve and develop their own works.

3.1. The Impact of Japanese Anime on China

Japanese animation has a beautiful style and a lot of themes, many of them have a significant power in movie market. Japanese animation, along with its television cartoons, enjoys tremendous popularity in China due to its cultural and geographical proximity.

Many Chinese animation creators can be said to have grown up with Japanese anime, works like *Slam Dunk* (*Guanlan Gaoshou*), *Digital Monster* (*Shuma Baobei*) and *Detective Conan* (*Ming Zhentan Kenan*) were popularly screened daily on different local television stations in China. Early in the new century, one of the Chinese animations *Mad for Music* (*Wo Wei Ge Kuang*) resembled styles of Japanese music and campus art, guaranteed a higher audience rating. The previous Japanese television drama serials, Japanese pops and Japanese fashion styles not only blew a gust of wind for Japanese maniacs, but also, they became potential motivations for the promotion of Japanese anime. Additionally, lots of Chinese video game designers inspired their work from Japanese anime, which had greatly attracted Chinese small children to play the game all the time. Nowadays, with frequent cooperation between China and Japan in animation industry, more post-edited animation works have been processed and produced in China, and more practices have been applied to animation creation, targeting at improving China's animation technology.

3.2. The Impact of American Cartoons on China

In addition to Japanese anime, the development of Hollywood animation is a valuable resource for China. Unlike Japanese anime, the created cartoon images make audience recall the pure emotion of romantic love; the main purpose for watching American animation is to enjoy its entertaining moments. The cultural characteristics of American animation are very obvious, setting characters by Western humor, and exaggerated expressions. Therefore, American animation in some respects can be considered as cartoons (Chen, 2014).

The style of American cartoon also plays a certain role in promoting the development of Chinese animation industry. Firstly, the exaggerated way of American cartoons uses an image language to indicate the culture, like *Mickey Mouse* and *Snow White*, taking Disney as a symbol. In this sense, cartoons, either make people laugh or entertain audiences, wisely inform the audience of both American spirit and sentiments. Secondly, lively and lovely cartoon stories show the way of how American understand lifestyles and cultures of different nations, embodying an open attitude of acceptance and cognition with others (Finch, 2011) such as *Mulan* and *Kung Fu Panda*.

The animation industry in both Japan and the US has had a great significance and influence on China. Lots of animation movies were produced in the past 40 years such as *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King* (*Nazhe Nao Hai*, 1979, directed by Yan Dingxian) which won the 1979 Ministry of Culture Excellent Film Award, and the 1981 Manila International Film Festival Animation Award, attracting old and new generations.

Lotus Lantern (*Baolian Deng*, 1999, directed by Chang Xiguang) won the 19th China Film Golden Rooster Award for the best art film. It learned from Hollywood techniques and achieved commercial success, marking the beginning of Chinese animation into commercialization and internationalization (Ding, 2019: p. 59).

However, China has also been practicing in its own way to develop the industry. The *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* (2015) and the *Nezha: I Am the Destiny* (2019) are representative works, starting to show the new forms and the new themes. The rest of the paper will explain the viewpoint, such an explanation is based on answering the following questions: What are the characteristics of the two Chinese animation movies? How the movies absorb the fine part of foreign animations to qualify their own styles? Why the movies can be said as one of the representatives of national culture?

4. Analyses of the Success of the Two Animation Movies

The movies of the *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* (2015) and *Nezha: I Am the Destiny* (2019) did not follow the images of the previous *Monkey King* and *Ne Zha*. In other words, the characters of both Sun Wukong and Ne Zha created as any types but the one in the *Journey to the West*, who was full of divinity, and was a hero of a great master, or the one in *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King*, an image of children's hero (Wu, 2016). They were rebellious at some point, brave but de-

pressed, and kind but indifferent. The presentation of the two works made audiences very impressive.

4.1. Characters of the Two Animation Movies

In the *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* and *Nezha: I am the Destiny*, the creation of the two characters was based on the background of the two mythological works, but was not taken into account by the orthodox needs in the first place. In the *Monkey King: Hero Is Back*, the character seemed to reach over the previous level in an unprecedented realm. For instance, the character changed from omnipotent to a seemed-selfish, evasive and tragic one, and more accessing to daily life. In *Nezha: I am the Destiny*, the boy bore the prejudices of the people of Chen Tangguan, and chose to be an “evil”, indicating kinds of prejudices in real life and their negation of human values (Ning, 2018).

Second, a series of new characters created in the two movies. *Jiang Liuer*, who infinitely worshiped *Sun Wukong*, and happened to be an accompanied monk. And, a cat and a pig appeared to work together, helping *Sun Wukong* stop the monsters. The emergence of these new characters can be taken as a prelude, closely connecting *Sun Wukong* with his mater and brothers in the novel of *Journey to the West*. In the movie of *Nazha: I Am the Destiny*, audience saw Ao Bing, the son of the dragon king, depicting largely different from *Nezha* in character and upbringing. Though, the contrary of the two characters led to a classic “love and hate” mode of interaction.

Thus, the richness of the characters in the two animation movies made the new narrations more layered and attractive, and the storylines were fuller and more engaging than their previous works.

4.2. A Sudden Increase of the Box Office

Monkey King and *Nezha* were the yearly animation hit box office in both 2015 and 2019. Taking the *Monkey King: Hero Is Back*, when the first time it was arranged in cinema, the schedule was not impressive, as other domestic movies were expected to play to get benefits. But within only one week, the *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* devoted to the largest number of the box office, occupying nearly 90% of the total 100 million. Among the films released in the same period as *Monkey King* were *Tiny Times (Xiao Shidai)* and *Forever Yong (Zhizi Hua Kai)*, the two were proved to over audiences’ expectations for their poor quality, hollow story and the procrastination of the plots. As audiences actively went to the cinema, the *Monkey King* finally broke the record with 956 million, making the total box office continue to rise up in the summer of 2015. The sudden surge of the box-office in both 2015 and 2019 also reflects a commercial value of Chinese animation movies.

4.3. *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* vs. Previous Chinese Meishupian

The image of *Sun Wukong* has been popular for decades. In 1964, *Uproar in*

Heaven (Da Nao Tiankong) marked a glorious page in the history of Chinese animation, taking Sun Wukong in Crystal Palace to fight with other kings. Sun Wukong was designed in a peach-heart face, with goose-yellow jacket, tiger skirt around waist, big red trousers, and a pair of black boots (see **Figure 1**). The so-called brave and vigorous description of Chinese characteristics of the hero (He, 2016: p. 80).

While in the *Monkey King: Hero is Back*, the character of a hero is somewhat unusual. It was designed as exaggerated, along with horse-like long face, sloppy clothes and irritable temper (see **Figure 2**). By protecting Jiang Liuer and the little girl, though, *The Monkey King: Hero is Back* shaped Sun Wukong into an image of a knight, and a mature elder brother with affectionateness and righteousness.

The different part also embodied in the background or environment combining with the character, and the term “hero” in this sense was constructed by the impression of the space and the narrative forms. The setting of the space of the *Uproar in Heaven* was based on the *Huaguo* Mountain (see **Figure 3**), the dragon palace (see **Figure 4**) and a few haven-based palaces (see **Figure 5**) in that *Meishupian*. The story unfolded in the constant appearance of such places where the decorative background of the traditional Chinese expressions was in a way of repetition and limitation. In other words, the heavens and the human world mainly served as the place where the story took place.



Figure 1. Image of Sun Wukong in *Uproar in Heaven*.



Figure 2. Image of Sun Wukong in the *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* (Source: <https://image.baidu.com/>).



Figure 3. *Huaguo* mountain.



Figure 4. Dragon palace.



Figure 5. Haven-based palace in *Uproar in Heaven* (Source: <https://image.baidu.com>).

While the space of the scene of the *Monkey King: Hero is Back* covered not only mainland landscapes such as caves (see **Figure 6**), jungles (see **Figure 7**) and buildings, but also contained different sub-visions. For instance, the buildings in the film included not only various urban styles like inns, but also mountain temples (see **Figure 8**), and they could be seen as the sub-scenes. In fact, there were more than 90 scenes in the film, followed by constantly accumulated events, thus, the entire space was three-dimensional, and was constantly changing as well (Xie, 2017: p. 105).



Figure 6. Caves.



Figure 7. Jungles.



Figure 8. Mountain temples in the *Monkey King: Hero Is Back* (Source: <https://image.baidu.com>).

The third is about the artistic performance. Roles of the Uproar in Heaven were designed by the staged form of Peking Opera. The narrative expressions were mainly embodied by the performance of the characters. Though, due to a lack of the multi-model spaces, there was very little communication or interaction between the characters and scenes. However, in the *Monkey King: Hero is Back*, due to the benefits of the digital technology and its dynamic spaces, for instance, the scene of the eaves, balconies, even the stone lions, etc. had become an

indispensable part being interacted with the characters. In other words, detailed landscapes participated in the narrative communication. The combination of the two became a unique characteristic for expanding both the language of the space and the narration of the story.

From the comparison it can be seen that, multiple-scene is also the direction for Chinese animations to work for. To some extent, the use of three-dimensional dynamic in the two animation films added a lot of sensuous stimulations to audiences.

4.4. *Nezha: I Am the Destiny* vs. Japanese Styles of Anime

It is known that the character in an animation is the soul of its work. It may represent a direct expression of the storyline, by bringing a comparative sense of entry into the audience, or making spiritual connotations of the animation work.

Japan's ability to innovate in role-building has always been an influence. From *Doraemon* (Jiqi Mao, see **Figure 9**), *Crayon Shin-Chan* (Labi Xiaoxin, see **Figure 10**) to *The King of Pirates* (Haizei Wang) and *Naruto* (Huo Ying Renzhe, see **Figure 11**), roles were created simply but cutely, storing to audience with an imaginative and innovative sense of the animated world.

Another major feature of Japanese anime is the delicate and aesthetic qualities of character creation. From the above pictures it can be seen that, the use of different performance techniques such as bright colors and refined lines make the roles have higher degree of cognition, satisfying audience with visual aspects of both aesthetic application and aesthetic appreciation (Chen, 2017: p. 374).

While China's animation works appear to be different. In *Nezha: I Am the Destiny*, the design of Nezha was rather ugly (see **Figure 12**), corresponding to his grievous, rebellious and non-yielded characteristics. The use of Chinese style of watercolor painting art form, grey wall and green grasses (see **Figure 13**) in the process of character-shaping also had a strong cultural function. Meanwhile the use of the Chinese brush (see **Figure 14**) waved between the heavens and the earth, embodying oriental aesthetic philosophy, though, in a short lens.



Figure 9. *Doraemon.*



Figure 10. *Crayon Shin-Chan.*



Figure 11. *Naruto of Japanese anime* (Source: <https://image.baidu.com>).



Figure 12. *Image of Nezha.*



Figure 13. *The use of grey wall and green grasses in Nezha.*



Figure 14. The use of Chinese brush in *Nezha: I am the Destiny* (Source: <https://image.baidu.com>).

In this sense, the design of two Chinese animations paid more attention to the expression of the characters, the matching degree between characters and stories, along with their respective sceneries-corresponding.

4.5. The Two Animation Movies vs. The American Kung Fu Cartoon

China and the United States have a long history of producing Kung Fu movies. By comparing the image of the classic animated characters of the two Kung Fu styles, it is helpful to understand similarities and differences as well as to examine the cultural implications and transmission sown behind the form.

In both *Monkey King and Nezha*, the two images and behaviors adopted traditional Chinese drama elements and logos. For instance, color aspects highlighted the red, the yellow and the black, representing traditional symbols of Chinese culture. In other words, the dramatic treatment of colors, along with the actions painted a strong pessimism for both Sun Wukong (see **Figure 15**) and Nezha in the birth of a hero, though, the rebirth of the two characters, to some extent, strongly re-designated a mysterious force within Chinese tragic philosophy.

American's *Kung Fu Panda*, for instance, the main character A Bao, with his fat body and grassroots behavior, represented very Hollywood-style (see **Figure 16**). His exaggerated expressions and rich body language made the American national characteristics more vivid. Despite a bit of luck of A Bao, the process of a hero's birth embodied the social rule of fair play in American society (Yan & He, 2014: p. 21).

In addition, expectation of a hero and his value in Chinese culture lies in a noble moral character, ready to sacrifice the ego to ensure the interests of the public. The concept in both *Monkey King* and *Nezha* was particularly evident, in which sacrifice, reform, resistance and other distinctive symbolic characteristics were in compliance with the collective principles, so as to achieve Chinese-based image of heroes.

While again, in *Kung Fu Panda*, A Bao as a hero strongly revealed the individualism of an American character, implied a contradiction between the individual and the social order. In the movie, A Bao didn't have to abide by the long



Figure 15. Images of Sun Wukong in *the Monkey King*.



Figure 16. Image of *A Bao* in *Kung Fu Panda*.

and orderly moral norms, and his pursuit of personal liberation and his realization of personal dreams could exist along with his defects and fears (Yu, 2017: p. 134).

Furthermore, unlike American cartoon movies, either through images or dialogues, it can be seen that American humors would be everywhere. The two Chinese animation movies also reflected an oriental charm of humor. Take *Nezha* for instance, in the portrayal of Tai Yi, a fat, round face, wine bad nose and big belly poo were arguably oriental, but the use of Sichuan dialect born most of the laughing points (see Figure 17).

From the above analyses it can be seen that, the success of the two animation movies was twofold. First, in narration of a hero, the two creative works added new values. Both the *Monkey King* and *Nezha* lost their magic powers and confidence; they were weak and depressed at some point but gradually recovered themselves after being inspired by people around them. The whole process was like a modern Chinese educational program that strives to become stronger would always be the theme of Chinese national spirit.

In addition, in disseminating cultural values, the *Monkey King* and *Nezha* played an important role. They re-narrated Chinese old stories, making the two characters as national images of the country. Meanwhile, an increasing result of



Figure 17. Image of *Tai Yi* in *Nezha* (Source: <https://image.baidu.com>).

the box office showed that, the two works were capably competing with American cartoons and Japanese anime. They definitely opened a bridge between the Chinese animation industry and the rest of the world.

Furthermore, or purely from a cultural-based perspective, the so-called reproduction was gradually replaced by Chinese artistic and sentimental forms in the two animation movies. They are, in the way of seeking a breakthrough, and of finding their own styles to compete with both Japanese and American animation works.

5. Conclusion

This paper mainly analyzed how the two Chinese animations succeeded in 2015 and 2019, and found that the movies no longer copied the contents, copied the artistic styles and copied the technology of foreign countries, rather, they absorbed the essential part and advantages of foreign animations, acquired of the digital culture in their movie making, and established their own styles.

Then the term “development” in the title of this paper may include a series of elements, but all of which are in relation to the cognition of Chinese national culture. In the first place, the audiences of Chinese animation began to expand its scope from children to various age ranges, and from domestic to international. In their acceptance of the style of artistic forms, the language, the narration of the story and the digital technology, etc. these symbols showed a sign that the Chinese animation work began to shift its form and structure towards cultural transmission, disseminating Chinese culture in every possible aspect.

Added to this is that, animation is a form of cultural expression. In both producing an animation work and watching an animation film, the artists and the audience preferred to see something in the creation, remaining, or modifying. Whatever it should be, the spirit of Chinese nationality, the responsibility the character of a hero would choose to take, and the multiple versions of the artistic practice within Chinese animation forms became strong drives for Chinese animation makers to bear in mind, and to find the way for the development of their further works.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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The Compatibility of Higher Education Outcomes with the Requirements of the Labour Market in an Interior Design Programme in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the compatibility between the outcomes of academic interior design programmes and the needs of the labour market in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to fill gaps and ensure sustainable development. The study reviewed nineteen academic interior design programmes in different regions, both public and private institutions, and distributed two questionnaires to graduates and employees that assessed seven stages related to the design process and project management. The sample in this study consisted of sixty graduates and nineteen employers in the fields of design or architecture who hire local interior designers. The results indicated that interior design programmes do not fulfill the needs of the market because some regions do not have interior design programmes or the programmes are limited to women, and the image of interior design professions is not clear in some regions due to limited information in the community. Some study plans need to be updated and reviewed based on the latest changes in the labour market. The results also showed that graduates had good knowledge of and skills in the field of interior design, with some shortfalls in the project management skills required in the labour market, such as budget calculations and writing work contracts, timetables, and reports. This limitation may be due to a lack of communication between institutions and the labour market and weak academic guidance for students when choosing elective courses that support these skills. Finally, it is clear that the graduates had good communication, negotiation, persuasion and decision-making skills. The result of this study should help administrators of interior design programmes develop curricula that fulfill the needs of the labour market and help enrolled students increase

their knowledge and skills. Finally, the results can inform employers about the necessary training for their interior designers.

Keywords

Higher Education, Academic Programmes, Interior Designer, Interior Design, Professional Practice, Labour Market

1. Introduction

In the past, the Saudi labour market has offered all graduates from higher education institutions many options for work, but the situation has changed in recent years for some specialties (Al-Otaibi, 2007). Presently, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has a Promising Vision 2030 that has three axes: a vibrant society, a prosperous economy, and an ambitious homeland. With regard to the second axis, the vision focuses specifically on “providing opportunities for all, by building an educational system linked to the needs of the labour market”. Therefore, the role of higher education has become important through the development of academic programmes, which need to be compatible with the needs of the labour market.

1.1. The Role of Higher Education

Education is linked to economic development issues because of the contemporary trend of examining the degree to which education contributes to solving community problems (Ahmed, 2017). The role of higher education is not limited to making, providing, and transferring knowledge; rather, higher education is one of the driving forces of economic growth (Hendy, 2018; Ahmed, 2017). This means that its role is not limited to providing students with knowledge but extends to how this knowledge is activated in the labour market (Ahmed, 2017). Knowledge is the most prominent element of power and authority in societies around the world and cannot be ignored, as knowledge is the basis for transition from underdevelopment to development. Higher education institutions are social institutions that have been developed by the community to serve the community. Therefore, these institutions must be concerned with developing their programmes to ensure that their outcomes are compatible with the requirements of the labour market and community service, which are the reasons for their establishment (Dagher et al., 2016).

The lack of alignment between learning outcomes and the needs of the labour market may cause an important issue: unemployment, which affects countries socially, economically and politically (Al-Otaibi, 2007). Any deficiency in the outcomes of higher education can have serious consequences, including overcrowding and unemployment. There are many challenges imposed by fast development and globalization that can lead to problems, including the inadequacy of academic specializations for the labour market. Curriculum revision in uni-

versities occurs after the first cohort of students on the same study plan graduates, and the time needed to measure outcomes after the first cohort graduates range from three to five years.

1.2. Interior Design Profession

The Kingdom's 2030 vision enhances the national identity by establishing museums, events, and activities and reviving national heritage sites and constructing suitable housing for residents that meet their needs. In other words, the vision includes very large residential, health, educational and tourism projects; thus, interior design is one of the most vital and important professions in this vision. Al-Zahrani, stated that the interior design sector is one of the largest sectors in the Kingdom, but there is a shortage of Saudi interior designers. There is also a need for specialists in this field, especially with the rapid development and increasing growth in architectural projects and areas that involve interior designers (Al-Zahrani, 2016).

Interior design is considered a modern specialization in education in KSA, where the first department of interior design was established in 1999 at Dar al-Hekma Privet University, according to the official university website (Dar Al-Hekma, 2020). Practising interior design professionally requires academic support that is aligned with current labour market requirements, as higher education interior design programmes currently do not reflect a large number of specialized sectors in the field of interior design. This is perhaps due to the newness of the field in the Kingdom and the rapid development and continued growth of the interior design sector every year (Al-Zahrani, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to create ongoing external partnerships with the labour market and update the curriculum to match labour market needs (Hendy, 2018). It has been mentioned that there are deficiencies in the available information about the interior design specialization due to its newness, which has led to a misunderstanding of the speciality and a lack of clarity of vision (Alawad & Bettaieb, 2016; Samak, 2010). There are specialized areas in the field of interior design that can lead to a professional path (Samak, 2010). In addition to specializations that are similar in their outcomes, such as interior architecture, interior design also comes into direct contact with different professions about which the interior designer must be knowledgeable and constantly informed (Alawad & Bettaieb, 2016). Al-Zahrani recommended institutions open interior design departments and open a programme to fill the gap in the labour market (Al-Zahrani, 2016).

Interior design programmes have intellectual and applied value, as they defined as a complex system consisting of several chains represented by the designer, client, space, and design process (Alawad & Bettaieb, 2016). It is a multifaceted profession that provides technical and creative solutions for indoor environments to enhance quality of life for the individual. Samak defined interior design as "the complete innovative solution to an interior space, as it includes conceptual planning, technical, and applied solutions to enhance and confirm the desired results" (Samak, 2010). In addition, it involves creating internal

spaces and solving space problems to enable the performance of various activities based on user needs and the consideration of functional and aesthetic demands (Farran, 2019; Alawad & Bettaieb, 2016). An interior designer must have a large amount of specialized knowledge and skills that allow him or her to follow the rapid development of modern techniques in materials, lighting and acoustics (Alawad & Bettaieb, 2016) and address the needs and hopes of clients, which evolve based on development and globalization.

As academic programmes need a certain amount of time to develop their programmes, making it difficult for them to keep up with rapid change, studies that reveal the needs of the labour market are required to prepare graduates. Programme development is the responsibility of the academic department and involves creating a curriculum and syllabus that cover important topics and activities that enrich knowledge, develop skills and increase competencies. In addition, students should be motivated to develop themselves through, at the very least, elective courses that are aligned with modern trends in the labour market.

According to previous theory, the research problem is described by the following question: Are the outcomes of interior design programmes compatible with the needs of the labour market? The objectives of this study are to identify the knowledge and skills that students in interior design gain during their academic studies, to identify the similarities and differences between program curricula in the different regions of the Kingdom, to understand the needs of the labour market from the perspective of interior design programme graduates, and to study the limits of the KSA labour market with regard to interior design programmes. This study was carried out in 2019-2020.

This study is one of the first related to interior design, as previous studies were concerned with learning outcomes in general. The following benefits are expected from the results of this study:

- Helping the educators to develop academic programmes in universities considering the requirements of the labour market and including them in long-term study plans or short-term activities and topics.
- Helping students who are newly graduated or expected to graduate become familiar with the requirements of the labour market and develop their knowledge and skills through the appropriate selection of elective courses while contributing to increasing students' competencies in alignment with the needs of the labour market.
- Helping employers become acquainted with the outcomes of higher education institutions to contribute to choices that are consistent with their goals and provide necessary training to those who work for them.

Learning outcomes are the final result of the knowledge and skills gained during the learning process and are based on the student's profile and specialization. The Saudi *labour market* is the job opportunities available in the government and private sectors that are compatible with graduate specialities and with the knowledge and skills that were acquired during university study.

1.3. Previous Studies

Badri (2017) studied challenges in the relationship between learning outcomes and the labour market for information sciences in the KSA by reviewing graduate statistics over ten years (2004-2014) and performing a content analysis of fourteen studies that explored the most important challenges in the relation between outcomes and the labour market in information science. Those challenges included a widening gap between the educational framework and the economic framework due to the weak partnership among educational institutions, governmental and private institutions, the lack of field training for students in external sectors, the absence of professional guidance, and weak academic guidance. The researcher also recommended a partnership between higher education and external sectors to ensure the quality of academic plans and training and graduate employment.

In another study carried out by Damanhori (2013), “Causes for Non-Adequate of Higher Education output the Requisites of the Saudi Labour Market”, the researchers measured the attitudes of academics at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. There were 218 participants and officials in human resources management in the private sector, and there were 270 participants. The study found that the most important reasons for the lack of alignment between higher education outcomes and the requirements of the labour market were an increase in the number of university enrolments and weak academic guidance in directing those admitted to the programmes aligned with what is required by the labour market. Additionally, the curricula did not align with the development needs of the labour market, there was a lack of practical experience among graduates, and the graduates had shortfalls in some skills, such as English language skills. The researcher recommended coordination between higher education institutions and external sectors to determine the needs of the labour market.

Al-Zahrani (2018) also examined the suitability of the outcomes of art education programmes with regard to the needs of the Saudi labour market according to Saudi Vision 2030. This study involved interviews with 7 experts from the education, design and museum sectors. A questionnaire was distributed to 117 graduates of the Department of Art Education. The study concluded that the educational outcomes were not compatible with the needs of the labour market except in three aspects: education, scientific research, and museums. The researcher recommended the establishment of a college for design and the establishment of specialized tracks to supply the labour market with graduates with specialized human resources skills and skills in various design specialities. Additional recommendations included coordination with community sectors to create future plans based on the needs of the labour market, communication with various organizations to train students and provide them with experience in how to deal with the labour market before graduation by studying the actual needs of the labour market and the creation and development of an approach based on those investigations.

A study by [Al-Otaibi \(2007\)](#) analysed the suitability of higher education outcomes for the needs of the Saudi labour market. The study followed the descriptive analytical approach and study found that a relative weakness in applied scientific disciplines compared to theoretical specializations. The authors also pointed out that graduates must have specialized capabilities and skills that are appropriate to the labour market and that specialization is needed in order to fill the jobs available in the private sector. The study recommended promoting practical specialized skills that serve the labour market, such as English and computer skills, and creating partnership agreements with the private sector to develop curricula and transfer modern labour market trends to educational institutions so that the labour market does not have to adjust to the outcomes of higher education institutions.

A study carried out by [Ahmed \(2017\)](#) revealed the extent to which higher education programmes and curricula respond to the needs of the labour market in Algeria from the viewpoint of university students of both sexes. The study involved 230 students in specific disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, literature and foreign languages. The questionnaire contained four axes that included programme content, alignment of content with the labour market, competencies and skills acquired by students, and graduation projects, and the results show that the educational programs' response to the needs of the labour market was weak on the overall score for performance.

In Jordan, [Ayroul \(2012\)](#) conducted a study aimed at revealing the degree of compatibility between the majors and programmes offered by Princess Alia College and Amman University College and the requirements of the Jordanian labour market from students' point of view and demographic variables. A questionnaire was distributed to the students, and a number of responses were received (766). The questionnaire was divided into five areas: graduate's match with the labour market, guiding students towards the labour market, compatibility between information technology skills and the requirements of the labour market, and students' performance, cognitive skills, and attitude development. The study results showed that the degree of compatibility between the majors and programmes offered by Princess Alia College and Amman University College and the requirements of the Jordanian labour market was moderate according to students' perspectives (2.68). The researcher recommended effective partnerships with governmental and private community institutions, conducting future studies on the harmonization of the outputs of higher education institutions and the labour market, working to offer specializations compatible with the labour market, and holding training courses for students before graduation.

A study by [Nicolescu & Paun \(2009\)](#), in Romania identified the quality of higher education services from the point of view of graduates and employers, as they are the main beneficiaries of higher education services. Many of the 2006 graduates from one college (School of Business and International Economics) from the Academy of Economic Studies responded, as well as a number of employers of graduates from the abovementioned institution. This resulted in a re-

sponse rate of 91.1%. In the two questionnaires, graduates and employers were asked about the skills and capabilities developed through higher education programmes and their compatibility with expectations and requirements. The study reported several results, including that graduates and employers have similar expectations of higher education institutions but to different degrees. The graduates emphasized acquiring knowledge, skills, and practical abilities, which they believed should be gained through their studies, such as the ability to absorb new knowledge, the ability to work in teams, and written and oral communication. Employers emphasized the moral and psychological characteristics of the individual when selecting employees, which are actually less related to skill acquisition through study. However, practical abilities are also important for employers and ranked second among the employer requirements, although the employers preferred that these be acquired through professional experience rather than undergraduate study.

Menon et al. (2018) studied graduate employment experiences and perceptions regarding the contribution of higher education to their careers and career prospects. Qualitative research was used to collect information from 58 university graduates in Greece and Cyprus. The results revealed that the graduates were generally satisfied with the quality of their education, but they pointed to many problems related to a difference between initial expectations and the reality of the labour market. The study results clarified the need for higher education institutions to review their study plans for compatibility with development and changes in the labour market to better prepare graduates. The participants also provided information about the skills and competencies gained through higher education and their use in the labour market, as well as between knowledge and competencies not based on knowledge acquired through higher education and the requirements of careers after graduation.

A study in Sweden by Lindberg (2010) examined the extent of judgement on the outcomes of a medical programme to prepare students to work as doctors. Personal interviews were conducted with 32 graduates and 123 professionals who had worked for a period of one to twenty-one years. Graduates were asked to assess the importance of each competency, their self-evaluation of their competence, and how these competencies are addressed during their medical training. The results indicated that there were deficiencies in the programme in preparing them satisfactorily. The study also clarified problem areas, finding that despite extensive practical training, medical education still faces some problems in the transition from education to employment.

It is clear that from previous studies that there are deficiencies in some programs to meet the requirements of the labour market as a result of several factors, including the shortage of partnership between educational institutions and the labour market, students training, academic guidance. To ensure rapid student engagement in the labour market, the previous studies suggested many recommendations, including the necessity of establishing effective partnerships with governmental and private community institutions, communicating with

various organizations to train students, and conducting future studies on how to adapt higher education learning outcomes to labour market needs.

2. Research Methodology

This study used the descriptive analytical approach and reviewed 29 Saudi universities in all regions of KSA, and 19 programmes were listed. We analysed the study plans of academic programmes for interior design at public (11) and private (8) universities and designed two questionnaires for 60 graduates and 19 employers in fields of design and architecture who hire local interior designers.

2.1. Academic Programmes

Researchers selected 19 study plans to analyse. The criteria for selecting universities are summarized as follows:

- Diversity of universities from different regions of the Kingdom to understand the differences among programmes in the Kingdom.
- Diversity of public and private higher education institutions to understand differences in their outcomes.
- The bachelor's degree was chosen to ensure that the outcomes were compatible with the programmes.
- Flexibility in the name of the programme's interior design curriculum, as it is not an obstacle in the labour market.
- Acceptance of different certificate types, such as bachelor of science or arts, as this is not an obstacle on the labour market.

The purpose of analysing study plans in academic programmes was to identify the knowledge and skills that interior design students acquire during their academic studies and to identify the similarities and differences among the curricula in the same programme. Academic programmes were listed on official websites for the colleges/universities, and personal contact between the researchers and the academic departments identified other study plans. The courses were classified according to their explicit names or their content, if available, with researchers acknowledging that many of the courses develop other skills, such as in the interior design studio.

2.2. Graduate Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to collect the data necessary to identify the professional skills required for an interior designer in the labour market. The questionnaires were distributed to recent graduates according to the following criteria:

- Not exceeding five years for graduation.
- Graduating from different regions of the Kingdom.

The purpose of this questionnaire was to measure the compatibility of the outcomes of the interior design major in Saudi universities with the needs of the labour market from the point of view of the graduates, such as where they

worked and what they controlled.

Alawad & Bettaieb (2016) divided the design process and project management into seven states as follows:

The first stage is the beginning of the project, in which the general project framework is defined, the time period for the implementation of the project is determined, the approximate budget and material cost of the project are established, and a mechanism is established for how to communicate between the project parties and schedule the design process.

The second stage is programming, which involves visiting the site, surveying it, collecting data, setting an initial work plan to start implementing the project and obtaining the customer's approval.

The third stage is conceptualization, which involves developing the initial idea for the project, revising after presenting it to the customer and receiving approval.

The fourth stage is development of the concept, which involves final drawings being approved in preparation for transition to the implementation stage and the selection of materials and lighting and other elements for purchase, such as furniture and accessories. Additionally, the chosen colours and final finishes for the design are determined, and the designs for the ceilings and floors are finalized and approved. This entire stage is conducted using an organized presentation method and presented to the client in order to receive final approval to start implementation.

The fifth stage is design implementation, which is when everything that was agreed upon in the previous stages is implemented by issuing purchase orders, preparing construction drawings for the implementation stages, selecting contractors, setting a timetable related to implementation and issuing work orders.

The sixth stage is supervision of implementation, which involves construction being supervised and ascertaining the accuracy of the complete design during application while avoiding errors and ensuring the quality of the materials used; the extent of their conformity with what was agreed in advance as well as the quantities of the materials; and coordinating the work and making sure that it coincides with the implementation plan.

The seventh stage is post-implementation, which involves amending incoming errors, following up on the initial operation, terminating the contract, and handing over the final project.

2.3. Employers Questionnaire

A questionnaire was distributed to more than 100 employers who have offices related to interior design, and 41 answers were received. Offices that did not have graduates from the University of the Kingdom were excluded, and 19 employer responses were analysed. This questionnaire measures the extent to which higher education outcomes correspond to the needs of the labour market. Employer opinions regarding the following topics were elicited through the questionnaire:

- 1) Personal, business and professional data.
- 2) New graduate skills in the field of interior design.

The same questionnaire was distributed to the graduates to determine the similarities and differences in opinions between graduates and employers.

3. Results and Discussion

The study plans have been analysed to identify the knowledge, skills and competencies that the student acquires during their studies to have a clear vision when analysing the results of the questionnaires for graduates and employers.

The researchers believe that development is a continuous process that starts from educational institutions through feedback from the labour market to ensure that students are engaged in the labour market and meet its needs.

3.1. Academic Programmes Results

This study analysed 19 study plans from different regions of the Kingdom as shown in **Figure 1**, and the proportions differ based on region size and whether the university is public or private. Through research into the universities, it was found that the Department of Interior Design is housed in colleges with different names, which may affect the programme in terms of policies it must adhere to even if the other programmes in the department are not related to design or architecture. This issue is especially relevant to materials related to college requirements and facilities that have no relationship to interior design or only serve interior designers indirectly, and these differences are illustrated in **Figure 2**.

Through the analysis, the study also found a difference among the study plans in terms of credit and contact hours, the number of years required for graduation, the proportion of core subjects, and elective subject materials and general materials as shown in **Figure 3**. These differences may affect students in terms of constructing a designer's profile, as there were different materials among colleges.

There was also a preparatory year in the first year of enrolment in the universities, and the programmes differed: some have a first year that is both specialized

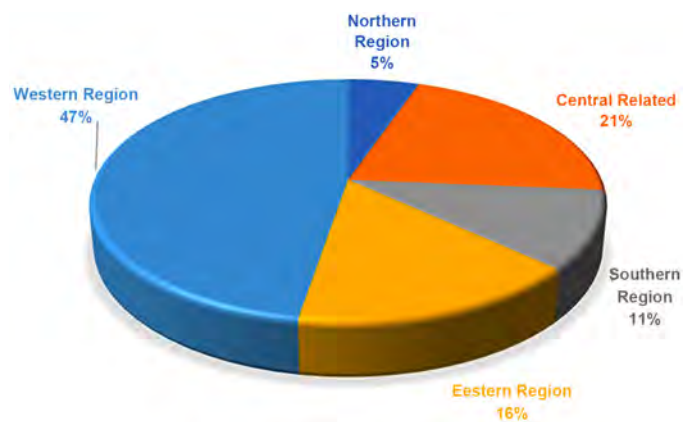


Figure 1. Regions of the Kingdom where the studied programmes are located.

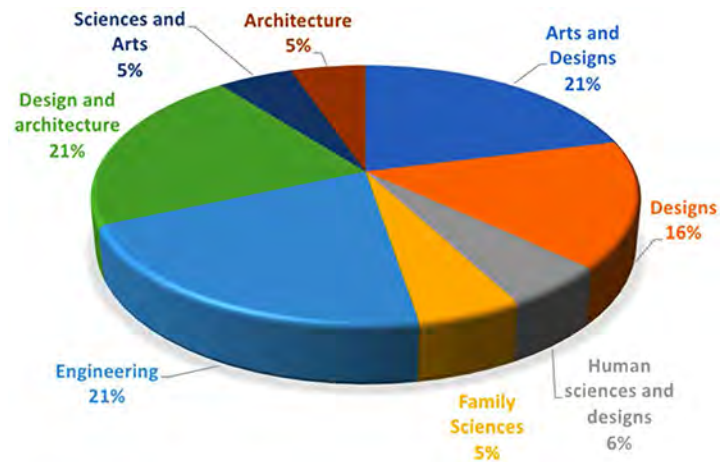


Figure 2. The colleges in which the interior design specialization is housed.

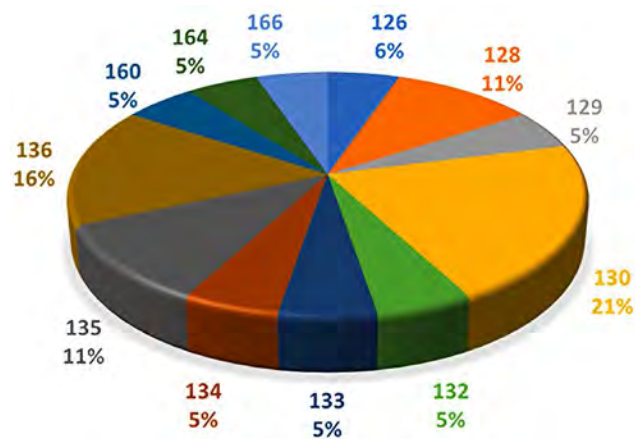


Figure 3. Differences in the number of hours required for the interior design programme.

and foundational, some colleges offer specialized subjects in the first year, and others offer general subjects, such as culture and writing skills and others, as **Figure 4** shows.

Researchers found it difficult to search for study plans and communicated with some colleges personally, which affected the impression of the programme and led to an unclear image of the interior design programmes. Some colleges failed to update their websites, which is an interface with link between them and the external community, leading to misunderstandings about specialization and a lack of clarity among students wishing to join the programme (Alawad & Betaieb, 2016; Samak, 2010). It was also noted that interior design programmes in colleges allow only female students despite the community's need for the profession, which is consistent with other reports (Al-Zahrani, 2016).

During analysis of the study plans for each programme, it was found that some plans include each component at different ratios. Programmes are keen to start to teach students design elements and principles, theories and concepts, and manual drawing skills through the study of the principles of architectural and engineering drawing and creative and critical thinking skills at the level of

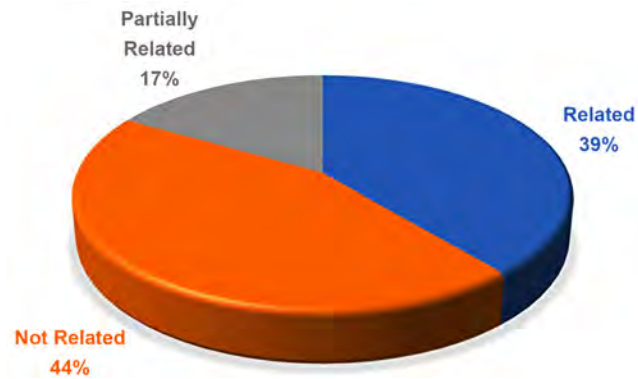


Figure 4. The different preparatory years for the major.

small spaces to suit the needs of clients. Students also study the foundations of raw materials and colour schemes and begin becoming acquainted with the design process. They start with a residential project with limited clients to unlimited clients, as the administrative, commercial, and even tourism fields require higher levels of knowledge and skills at advanced levels. Local identity and professional ethics are also emphasized. They also develop the ability to devise creative solutions to design problems with respect to national and international standards and guidelines for applying awareness of the relationship among cultural differences, social and political influences, limited resources, human behaviour and environments.

The interior design studio provides the physical and theoretical basis that enables students to apply what they learned in theoretical subjects and elective courses. There are also required subjects for each university and for each college, and here the role of academic guidance is to direct students to what suits them and support them, as the student can also take elective subjects from other colleges. It is possible to direct students to take subjects from, for example, the departments of law or marketing to support students' knowledge and skills through the study of subjects that are not included or lacking in the study plan.

It was also observed that the interior design programmes do not meet the needs of the market because some regions of the KSA do not have an interior design programme or have programmes that are limited to women. In addition, the image of interior design is not clear in some programmes due to lack of information available to society. This lack of information distorts the impression of interior design among students, parents, employers and even investors, and it does not conform to the requirements of academic accreditation in terms of clarity, transparency and advertising.

3.2. Questionnaire Results

There were 60 responses from graduates of interior design at Saudi universities. There were 19 responses from employers who have hired graduates of interior design programmes at Saudi universities, but half of that number were excluded due to the shortage of employees who were graduates of Saudi universities,

which has been reported before (Al-Zahrani, 2016). There is a lack of competencies among Saudi workers in the field of interior design, especially with regard to the field's rapid development and increasing growth.

The questionnaire included several axes based on the research of Alawad & Bettaieb (2016), which were used to divide the design process and project management into seven main stages. Table 1 shows the initial data, such as professional status, nature of the profession, and graduates general views of the programme, and Table 2 shows the location of the employers' offices.

It is clear from the graduates' answers that the number of employer is small for those participating in the questionnaire, which may be because the positions are filled by non-Saudi designers. The researchers excluded a number of questionnaires because there was no local designer working in the office. In addition, it is possible that this deficiency is because the graduates of interior design programmes are working as freelancers. It is worth noting that there is compatibility between the job description and the tasks entrusted to the graduate working in the interior design firm, which shows that the employer has knowledge of the job and tasks of the designer. It is clear from the previous table that approval for the extent of the programme's compatibility with the job market in the field of interior design is high (62.5%).

Table 2 shows the percentage of employers and their office locations across the regions of the Kingdom. A number of respondents were excluded due to the lack of a Saudi designer working in their office, and the goal was to measure the learning outcomes of Saudi universities and their compatibility with the labour market. There was a lack of interior design programmes and design offices in the area (Participant-P/Graduate-G/Employee-E).

It is clear from Table 3 that interior design graduates have strong communication skills and can coordinate between the different project teams, with 55% of graduates and 47.4% of employers reporting agreement with the related statement. Graduates (46.7%) and employers (47.4%) both disagreed that graduates

Table 1. Shows the initial data.

Occupational status			
Employee		Graduates	
15		45	
25%		75%	
Job description compatible with duties			
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree
6.3%	18.8%	18.8%	56.3%
General opinion of programme graduates regarding programme compatibility with the interior design job market			
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree
6.3%	25%	6.3%	62.5%

Table 2. Office locations.

Office Locations				
South	North	Central	Eastern	Western
5%	0%	35%	30%	30%

Table 3. Shows the beginning stage of the project.

The Question	P	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
An interior design graduate can coordinate the work of all project design teams	G	55%	10%	31.7%	3.3%
	E	47.4%	10.5%	42.1%	0%
An interior design graduate can estimate the approximate cost for projects	G	31.7%	5%	46.7%	16.7%
	E	36.8%	0%	47.4%	15.8%
An interior design graduate can write contracts	G	35%	3.3%	13.3%	48.3%
	E	9.1%	9.1%	72.8%	9.1%

could estimate the approximate cost of projects. Forty-eight percent of graduates reported that they strongly disagreed that they had the ability to write contracts, and 72.8% of employers reported that they disagreed with this statement. It is clear that graduates have the ability to communicate with others, as this task is addressed in the basic studio during the study period, but the cost of the project as a whole may include several considerations that graduates are unable to estimate, resulting in an inability to write contracts that depend on those considerations. It is clear that there is agreement between the graduates and the employers on these skills.

The questionnaire responses revealed that some graduates were deficient in some skills, such as setting budgets and writing contracts, although the analyses showed that related courses are part of the study plan. The researchers believe that either the full number of hours in the study plan were not completed or that the courses were elective, and the students were not guided with regard to the priority of important courses. These results are consistent with a study by [Damanhori \(2013\)](#), which found that regardless of the type of skill, graduates have some deficiencies in skills that the labour market needs.

It is clear from [Table 4](#) that the graduates of interior design programmes can inspect the project site and take measurements and initial drawings, with 50% of graduates and 47.4% of employers reporting that they agree with the relevant statement. Data collection was also a skill that 48.3% of graduates and 47.4% of employers agreed the graduates had. Graduates (56.7%) and employers (52.6%) agreed that graduates could develop an initial plan, and this statement had the highest percentage of “agree” responses; it was clear that the employers agreed with the graduates with regard to the answers. Agreement was reported from approximately half the participants who filled out the questionnaire.

[Table 5](#) shows that the graduates of interior design programmes can develop

Table 4. Shows the programming stage.

The Question	P	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
An interior design graduate can preview the site, photograph it, take measurements and draw a sketch	G	50%	28.3%	16.7%	5%
	E	47.4%	21.1%	31.6%	0%
An interior design graduate can collect project-related data	G	48.3%	40%	11.7%	0%
	E	47.4%	21.1%	31.6%	0%
An interior design graduate can develop an initial plan to start implementing the project	G	56.7%	11.7%	30%	1.7%
	E	52.6%	10.5%	36.8%	0%

Table 5. Shows the conceptualization stage.

The Question	P	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
An interior design graduate can develop an initial concept and create sketches	G	53.3%	45%	1.7%	0%
	E	68.4%	31.6%	0%	0%
An interior design graduate can come up with a variety of design ideas	G	51.3%	43.7%	5%	0%
	E	68.4%	21.1%	10.5%	0%
An interior design graduate can interview clients	G	48.3%	40%	11.7%	0%
	E	63.2%	26.3%	5.3%	5.3%
An interior design graduate can market his or her ideas to persuade the client	G	58.3%	31.7%	10%	0%
	E	68.4%	15.8%	15.8%	0%
An interior design graduate can identify modern technologies	G	61.7%	18.3%	20%	0%
	E	63.2%	5.3%	31.6%	0%

an initial concept and design ideas and then revise them after submitting them to the client and receiving approval. This skill had the greatest agreement, with 53.3% of graduates agreeing and 45% strongly agreeing and 68.4% of employers agreeing and 31.6% strongly agreeing. Graduates agreed (51.3%) or strongly agreed (43.7%) that they could come up with a variety of design ideas, and employers agreed (68.4%) or strongly agreed (21.1%) that graduates had this skill. Both graduates (48.3%) and employers (63.2%) agreed that graduates could interview customers, and 58.3% of graduates and 68.4% of employers agreed that graduates could market their ideas to persuade the client.

The highest percentage of agreement was found for the statement that an interior design graduate can identify modern technologies: 61.7% of graduates agreed, and 63.2% of employers agreed. It is clear from this table that the percentage of respondents reporting strongly agree or agree were highest for the statement that graduates had strengths in this stage related to communication skills and persuasion skills and skills for translating ideas into sketches because of the diversity of ideas and continuous access to modern technologies. They have knowledge of what is new, which has been shown before (Alawad & Bet-

taieb, 2016), and of the importance of informing the client and knowing what is new in the design world in terms of technology and materials.

The results in **Table 6** shows that graduates have the ability to choose materials, colours, lighting, and finishes in accordance with the design and that are available in the market, with 56.7% of graduates and 68.4% of employers reporting they agree with this statement. Reviewing the client's decisions and discussing and trying to persuade the client to adopt what is suitable for the project received a high percentage of agree responses from graduates (56.7%) and employers (52.6%). It is clear from this table that graduates can choose items for the project, meaning that they have good decision-making skills, and it is clear from the previous tables that they have negotiation and persuasion skills.

The results of **Table 7** show that graduates of interior design programmes can calculate the quantities necessary for design work, with 41.7% of graduates and 63.2% of employers reporting they agree with the related statement. However, graduates tended to disagree (51.7%) and employers tended to agree (57.9%) that graduates could estimate the timetable for completing projects. The level of agreement regarding graduates' ability to make decisions and issue purchase orders was 48.3% among graduates, whereas employers felt otherwise and did not agree (47.4%). These results make sense because if a graduate is self-employed, it is his or her responsibility to make purchasing decisions, while if the graduate work in an office, there are policies under which only the owner of the office has the power to make purchase decisions.

There was agreement between the graduates and employers that the graduates of interior design programmes cannot choose the contractors/workers to accomplish the requirements of the projects, with 60% of graduates and 52.6% of

Table 6. Shows the developing the visualization stage.

The Question	P	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
An interior design graduate can choose materials that are available in the market and correspond to the design	G	56.7%	28.3%	13.3%	1.7%
	E	68.4%	10.5%	21.1%	0%
An interior design graduate can choose colours that are available in the market and correspond to the design	G	56.7%	28.3%	13.3%	1.7%
	E	68.4%	10.5%	21.1%	0%
A graduate of interior design can choose lighting that is available in the market and aligned line with the design	G	56.7%	28.3%	13.3%	1.7%
	E	68.4%	10.5%	21.1%	0%
An interior design graduate can choose finishes that are available in the market and correspond to the design	G	56.7%	28.3%	13.3%	1.7%
	E	68.4%	10.5%	21.1%	0%
An interior design graduate can review decisions with the client and discuss and try to persuade him or her regarding what is in the interest of the project	G	56.7%	31.7%	11.7%	0%
	E	52.6%	26.3%	15.8%	5.3%

Table 7. Shows the implementation stage.

The Question	P	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
An interior design graduate can calculate the quantities needed for the design work.	G	41.7%	15%	33.3%	10%
	E	63.2%	5.3%	26.3%	5.3%
An interior design graduate can estimate the project completion schedule	G	31.7%	13.3%	51.7%	3.3%
	E	57.9%	0%	31.6%	10.5%
An interior design graduate can make decisions and make purchase orders	G	48.3%	16.7%	35%	0%
	E	31.6%	15.8%	47.4%	5.3%
An interior design graduate can choose contractors/workers to fulfil project requirements	G	30%	5%	60%	5%
	E	26.3%	5.3%	52.6%	15.8%
An interior design graduate can work in a multifunctional design team	G	55%	40%	5%	0%
	E	73.7%	26.3%	0%	0%
An interior design graduate can manage executive projects	G	36.7%	11.7%	45%	6.7%
	E	31.6%	5.3%	52.6%	10.5%

employers reporting they disagreed with this statement. The highest percentage of agreement among graduates related to their ability to work in a multifunctional design team (55%), and 73.7% of employers agreed with this. These results are compatible with those in the previous tables about the graduates' strengths in communication skills. Regarding graduates' ability to manage executive projects, 45% of graduates disagreed, and only 36.7% agreed. In addition, 52.6% of employers disagreed and only 31.6% agreed with this statement. The convergence of opinions regarding the implementation of a project may be due to the quality and size of the project.

The results of **Table 8** show that a similar percentage of agree responses were reported by graduates with regard to being flexible with changes to the project, avoiding errors in work through supervision, adjusting tables according to project circumstances, and supervising the implementation of projects. On the other hand, the employers reported a similar level of agreement regarding graduates' ability to be flexible with project changes, avoid errors and supervise implementation (47.4%) and graduates' ability to adjust tables (46.4%).

Finally, these results clarify that if there is disagreement in the previous schedule, the graduate will not be able to apply the abovementioned skills related to project management, but it is clear in this schedule that they are able to supervise and match written and agreed-upon work with real work, which indicates an ability to follow-up and supervise. With regarding graduates' ability to write reports, 48.3% of graduates strongly disagreed, and from 72.8% of employers disagreed.

The results show that the graduates have good knowledge and skills in the field of interior design, with some shortfalls in project management skills that are required in the labour market, such as calculating budgets, writing work

Table 8. Shows the supervision of implementation and after implementation stage.

The Question	P	Agree	Strongly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
An interior design graduate can flexibly handle project situations	G	48.3%	18.3%	30%	3.3%
	E	47.4%	5.3%	42.1%	5.3%
An interior design graduate can avoid mistakes through supervision	G	48.3%	18.3%	30%	3.3%
	E	47.4%	5.3%	42.1%	5.3%
An interior design graduate can adjust tables according to project circumstances	G	48.3%	18.3%	30%	3.3%
	E	46.4%	6.3%	42.1%	5.3%
An interior design graduate can supervise project implementation	G	48.3%	13.3%	35%	3.3%
	E	47.4%	10.5%	36.8%	5.3%
An interior design graduate can write reports	G	35%	3.3%	13.3%	48.3%
	E	9.1%	9.1%	72.8%	9.1%

contract timetables, and writing reports. On the other hand, it is clear that the graduates have good communication, negotiation, persuasion and decision-making skills.

Although programmes do not update their curricula until they have graduated a cohort of students and measured outcomes, it is possible that there is an obligation to provide academic guidance to aid students in choosing optional and general courses and various activities to support the acquisition of required skills. This may coincide with previous reports (Badri, 2017) finding that weak academic guidance affects the learning and ability of students to engage in the labour market. In this study, there was no weakness in English language skills or computer skills, as shown previously (Al-Otaibi, 2007; Al-Damanhour, 2013) because the interior designers were skilled in the English language. It is a requirement to update designer information because it is one of the basic skills. Computer skills are one of the simplest skills, and there are even specialized programmes in design, such as AutoCAD, and 3D Max, that the designer relies on to complete work.

4. Conclusion

It is clear from this study that specialization is concentrated in some regions and is rare in other regions. The differences among interior design programmes are noted at several points, and these include the colleges in which the programmes are housed, which have different required hours and number of plans, and the proportion of core, elective and general courses. Additionally, there is a preparatory year in the first year of joining the programme, and the programmes differ, with some having a specialized first year that is foundational and some colleges offering some subjects in the first year and others offering general subjects that researchers believe will affect the students' knowledge and skills. Researchers encountered difficulty studying academic plans because some of them have

not been updated and are difficult to access, rendering it difficult to develop a mental image of the program. In addition, this shortage of information does not conform to academic accreditation standards in terms of clarity and advertising.

It was also noted that the interior design programme in some colleges is only for female students, despite the community's need for this profession. It was revealed through this research that the number of employees at interior design companies is limited compared to the number of graduates. In addition, there was limited compatibility between the job description and the tasks assigned to the employees at the interior design company, which indicates that the employer has knowledge of interior design jobs and tasks. Finally, it is clear that the graduates are generally satisfied with the skills and knowledge gained during their studies.

It is clear from the graduates' and employers' responses to all the questions that students have specialized skills but that they are deficient in some special skills related to project management that are required in the labour market and if they work as freelancers. Graduates have strong competencies in communication skills and working in a team, as well as in negotiation, persuasion and decision-making skills.

The researchers recommend that study plans be updated to align with the requirements of the labour market. Additionally, more academic guidance is needed during their studies to guide students to elective courses and activities such as workshops that meet the needs of the labour market. Joint work between the labour market and the academic department will help ensure programmes are updated to reflect new trends in the labour market.

Future studies should address the reasons behind the small number of Saudi employees in design and architecture offices, the impact general courses in the first year on learning outcomes and becoming an interior designer, the importance of the role of the designer in the development of the Kingdom, and the importance of creating accurate paths in interior design.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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Requiem: Psychological, Philosophical, and Aesthetic Notes on the Music of the Mass for the Dead

—Dedicated to the Victims of COVID-19 Worldwide

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Abstract

The article discusses the musical, psychological, philosophical and aesthetic essence of the Latin *Requiem*, the *Missa pro defunctis*, the Mass for the Dead. It examines in particular detail the famous Sequence *Dies irae*. Numerous *Requiems* up to the most recent ones are discussed and compared. Concepts from empirical aesthetics of Berlyne (1971, 1974) and Konečni (1979, 1982) are used to analyze the relationship between the hypothetical “power” of parts of the Mass (in psycho-aesthetic terms) and its effect on listeners. Historical reasons are examined for the difference in approaches to music for the services for the deceased between Western and Eastern Christian Churches (especially with regard to the use of instrumentation).

Keywords

Requiem Music, Requiem and Emotions, *Dies irae*, Mass for the Dead, Psychology of the Mass, Philosophy of the Mass, Aesthetics of the Mass, Orthodox Christian Liturgy, St. John of Damascus, St. John Chrysostom

1. Mass for the Dead—Preliminaries

Requiem aeternam dona eis Domine—Grant them eternal rest, O Lord. The very first line of the Roman Catholic *Missa pro defunctis* (Mass for the dead) implies a web of relations between the living supplicant(s), the deceased potential recipients of the extraordinary favor requested, and a hopefully beneficent God. The five Latin words contain implicit references to grief, fear, and hope, and thus to the most profound philosophical and psychological questions of human exis-

tence. Why were we put in this world if we must die? Is there another side? What will happen there? Can we hope finally to obtain peace? These are questions of deep contemplation and emotion, but also, in regard to the quality of the music through which ideas are expressed, also of musical aesthetics.

The word “requiem” refers to a musical form; it is a shorthand for the Mass for the dead, in the singular or the plural, performed for someone who has just died, or did so long ago, or who will die, usually soon. Note that in “*Requiem... dona eis Domine*” the word “requiem” is in the fourth grammatical case (the *accusative*), and that “eis” means “them”, so that the humble request is to give (eternal) rest to *them* not to us. In this sense, the mental stance of a relatively small number of composers who wrote requiems to be performed at their own funerals is somewhat incongruous. Nevertheless, this was almost certainly the intent of Luigi Cherubini (1760-1842) in his second Requiem, in *D minor* (1836), as well as of Charles Gounod (1818-1893) in his Requiem in *C major* (*opus posthumous*). On the other hand, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s (1756-1791) unfinished Requiem in *D minor*, and, for example, Franz Liszt’s (1811-1886) austere Requiem (1871) for organ, tympani, and four male voices, in the archaic Roman style recalling Giovanni da Palestrina (c. 1525-1594), are often placed in this category erroneously (Cormican, 1991; Merrick, 1987). In any case, the act of composing an elaborate, lengthy piece for one’s own funeral illustrates the enormous seriousness with which many musicians have regarded this musical form.

Almost invariably, composers who undertook the task of writing requiems, especially in the 18th and 19th century, were already very famous and did so at the peak of their creative powers. They were men mature as both musicians and human beings, who had experienced grief, joy, pain, and both the dashed and the rekindled hope. The Requiem Mass, more than any other musical form, explicitly deals with spirituality and metaphysics; thus a composer who has experienced the complexities and vagaries of life may have been more likely to have deeper sources of understanding and psychological inspiration from which to draw (cf. Abra, 1995).

2. The Context of Dying: Respect for the Deceased and for One’s Ancestors

A vast proportion of peoples on our planet, from Australian Aborigines, Amazon indigenous tribes, and Inuits on three continents, to contemporary Christians, Moslems, and Buddhists, all earnestly and publicly honor their ancestors. “Ancestor worship” is one of the first concepts that students of anthropology encounter. In many societies, paying homage to the dead culminates on a particular day of the year. Among Christians, both East and West, this is the All Souls Day; in Japan, the O’bon festival; in China, the Qingming festival (Tomb-Sweeping Day).

Worldwide, the respect for the deceased is often mingled with a certain degree

of fear, of insecurity, of soul-searching. The fear is not just of death itself, but of uncertainty, even among the highly educated, about the possible “other side”. The best educated realize that the magnificent Dante Alighieri of the *Divina Commedia* (1320) was no fool. At key life moments, doubt does not spare even the most intellectually atheistic or agnostic or self-assured. And then: can one annoy ancestors by one’s behavior—with dire consequences? Fears of insulting ancestors are especially strong in the Voodoo culture in Haiti, and the related Vodun beliefs in Bénin (formerly Dahomey) in West Africa. But they are not alone!

To return to the *requiem* as a musical form: To understand what it represents in the most general sense, one has to consider it as a *unique totality of instrumental and vocal sound* that inexorably relates the composer, the performers, and the listeners (at home, in a church, or concert hall) to the entire complex context of finality, of passing away, of the deceased (who have sometimes so recently been alive), of the unknown and the unknowable—a profound philosophical, psychological, and emotional enigma explored through something trivially called music.

The context of dying—whether one thinks of it in the abstract, or watches someone’s agony, or experiences one’s own, as one mourns, grieves, and fears—is so emotionally taxing, and so thoroughly captured in the text and *plainchant* (or *plain-song*, Gregorian chant, such as is still sung by the Benedictine monks of the monastery of St. Pierre de Solesmes near Le Mans in France) as part of the Requiem Mass, that one is tempted to go on a limb and say that the crux of this music for the departed, the dead, is incredibly simple: If one cannot be moved by it, one can hardly be alive.

3. Mass for the Dead—Ancient Origins

According to Alec Robertson (1968): “The origins of prayers to and for the dead that were to lead, over nine centuries, to the *Missa pro defunctis*, are to be found in the [Roman] catacombs, the underground cemeteries of the early Christians.” In Robertson’s work one can find transcriptions of a number of pertinent and penitent “graffiti” from the catacombs.

Here are some historical points from various insufficiently identified sources:

- “Memento for the dead” in the *Kyrie Litany* from the 5th century, which is the first reference to the dead in the Mass;
- In the Canon, the most solemn part of the Mass, from the 7th century, there is a prayer for the living and the dead, just before the consecration of bread and wine:

“Remember also, O Lord, Thy servants, N & N, who have gone before us with the sign of faith and who rest in the sleep of peace.”

And then, from about the 10th century, one can speak of a specific *Requiem Mass*. From various sources, some unreliable, others impossible to trace, one learns roughly the following: The Mass for the Dead is of Franco-Gallican origin.

Charles I, Charlemagne, the first Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, crowned in Aachen in the year 800, imposed the *Gregorian Antiphonale* on the Franks, but supplemented it with liturgy books already in use in France. By the 10th century, the so-called Roman liturgy returned from Franco-Germanic lands to Rome, having undergone many changes.

4. Liturgical Structure of the Requiem Mass

The full text of the Latin *Requiem Mass* reflects various psychological complexities and contains parts of *ordinarium missae*, parts of *proprium missae*, and important parts that are unique to it. *Ordinarium Missae* includes texts that are the same for every (daily) Mass, sung by the choir or the congregation; this material attracted many composers. Its parts are: *Kyrie*, *Gloria*, *Credo*, *Sanctus et Benedictus*, *Agnus Dei*.

As for *Proprium Missae*, items vary according to a Saint's Day or season of the year; they have not attracted composers for obvious reasons—they would be rarely performed. Its parts frequently are: *Introitus*, *Graduale*, *Alleluia* (or *Tractus*, 4th C., Eastern Christian churches); *Sequentia*, *Offertorium*, *Communion*. The first significant settings of the *Proprium Missae* are thought to be those of Guillaume Dufay (1402-1474) around 1430.

Missa pro defunctis formally belongs to the *Proprium* category but it can be performed at any time—it is not bound by the Church calendar. Here are the essential parts of the *Requiem Mass*:

Introitus (Processional chant, 9th C.)

Kyrie eleison ("Lord, have mercy upon us")

Graduale (A chant; 4th C.)

Tractus (Used here instead of the joyous *Alleluia*; continuous structure without refrain)

Sequentia (*Dies irae*; 13th-14th C.)

Offertorium (Bread and wine are ceremoniously placed on the altar; 9th-11th C.)

Sanctus et Benedictus (Acclamations: "Holy, Holy, Holy"; and: "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord")

Agnus Dei ("Lamb of God", a prayer to Jesus)

Communion/Eucharist (Partaking is done in remembrance of the body and blood of Jesus)

Many polyphonic requiems omit some of the above. For example, the *Requiem* by Johannes Ockeghem (c. 1410-1497), the earliest surviving polyphonic setting (1463?), lacks *Sanctus* and *Agnus Dei*. Others add parts: as just one well-known example, Giuseppe Verdi's (1813-1901) *Requiem* (1874) ends with the responsory *Libera me* from the burial service that follows the Mass. Charles Gounod added *Pie Jesu*, while Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) added both *Pie Jesu* and *In Paradisum*. The contemporary Russian composer Vyacheslav Artyomov's (b. 1940) *Requiem* (composed 1985-1988) is perhaps the most complete one,

with fifteen sections, including *Libera Me*, *Pie Jesu*, and *In Paradisum*.

In addition to the previously mentioned requiems [Ockeghem, Mozart, Cherubini (two), Gounod, Fauré, Verdi, Liszt], there are other well-known ones, such as by Hector Berlioz (1803-1869) in 1837, Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) in 1890, Max Reger (1873-1916) in 1915, Virgil Thomson (1896-1989) in 1960, György Ligeti (1923-2006) in 1965, and Alfred Schnittke (1934-1998) in 1975.

Readers should be reminded of composers who would have been excellent candidates for writing requiems but did not. All, however, wrote profound Roman Catholic music: Haydn (*Seven Last Words of Christ on the Cross*); Beethoven [*Mass in C major*, *Mass in D major (Missa Solemnis)*—and he is known to have said (Deane, 1981) that if he were to write a *Requiem*, Cherubini's would be his model (referring necessarily to Cherubini's first *Requiem*, in *C minor*, performed in 1817, ten years before Beethoven's death); G. Rossini (*Stabat Mater*); K. Szymanowski (*Stabat Mater*); A. Honegger (*Symphonie No. 3 "Liturgique"*—instrumental, but with movements entitled *Dies irae*, *De Profundis*, *Dona Nobis Pace*); O. Messiaen (*Nativité* etc.); and A. Pärt (b. 1935; *Te Deum* etc.; he may yet compose a requiem!). This list does not include Palestrina, Orlando di Lasso, and other great 16th C. composers of music for the Church.

Finally, for this section, one should be reminded of compositions carrying the name "Requiem" but which are not Roman Catholic *Missa pro defunctis*. There is, for example, Johannes Brahms's (1868) *German Requiem*, based on the Lutheran Bible; Benjamin Britten's (1962) *War Requiem*, set to poems by Wilfred Owen; and there is Dmitry Kabalevsky's (1963) *Requiem for those who died in the war against fascism*. There are also about thirty little-known, mostly non-religious, works with "Requiem" in the title, written in the 20th C. by American composers (DeVenny, 1990). Many are doctoral dissertation works. Perhaps the best known is the 28-minute *Poets' Requiem* (1955) by Ned Rorem, with movements *Kafka*, *Rilke*, *Cocteau*, *Mallarmé*, etc.

5. *Dies irae, Dies illa*

One must dig deeper into the structure of the Requiem Mass and examine the *Sequentia Dies irae, dies illa* ("Days of wrath, days of sorrow") to find the section most uniquely associated with the *Missa pro defunctis*. This sequence entered the Mass in the 13th or early 14th century. The author (perhaps Tomasso da Celano c. 1185-c. 1265), "drew his inspiration from the responsory *Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna*, sung in the *Absolution* at the end of the Mass", but its origin can perhaps be traced to the Vulgate Bible, with Prophet Zephaniah's (in the 7th century BC) "stern call for repentance and the abolition of idolatry," although he ends "with the 'Song of consolation'" (Robertson, 1968: pp. 15-16). Hellfire and forgiveness, stick and carrot.

Dies irae is not a part of either the *ordinarium* or the *proprium missae*, and has no equivalent in the Eastern Orthodox Mass for the Dead (St. John of Damascus, 675-749) or in other music specially composed for the Orthodox burial

(e.g. *Opelo*, 1883, of the Serbian composer Stevan Mokranjac, 1856-1914).

Robertson (1968: p. 17) states that “the enormous popularity of *Dies irae* does not justify ... its presence in the Requiem Mass”, but fails to justify this view. After all, Franz Liszt is quoted by Merrick (1987: p. 140) as exclaiming in its favor: “Despite the terrors of *Dies irae*...” My view is that in *Dies irae* one has a mixture of God’s anger that we have sinned and fallen from grace, thus forcing Him to make us die, and of our own anger at living a life with the knowledge of the imminence of death. Add to that the pain of witnessing the suffering and death of our loved ones (and even of our enemies?), and one has a very hot and bitter brew indeed. If one is a believer, the sorrow about what *could have been* is present alongside the anger and the pain, all these powerful emotions rising and subsiding, evoked and accompanied by the text and the music. *Dies irae* is indeed a multi-faceted, turbulent structure full of arousal-raising possibilities, one of the most important emotional centers of the *Requiem Mass*. It predicts the horror of the Last Judgement together with prayers for salvation on that day.

The essential truthfulness of the claims in the preceding paragraph can be illustrated by the profound effect of *Dies irae* on a prominent classical music critic, Basil Deane. Writing about Cherubini’s first *Requiem* in *C minor* (1817), he states: “The short *Graduale* ends in a quiet atmosphere on a sustained *G major* chord. Then the silence is shattered by a clangorous outburst from the brass, followed by a thunderous stroke on the gong. The *Dies irae* has begun and we are transported from a world of cloistered contemplation to that of Dante’s *Inferno*” (Deane, 1981). And in regard to Cherubini’s second *Requiem* (in *D minor*, 1836): “The *Graduale* is entirely unaccompanied, an unusual treatment... But the opening bars of the following *Dies irae* show that Cherubini had a specifically dramatic purpose in mind. For the first time in the work the violins enter with a surging figure that culminates in a great outburst by voices and orchestra to the opening words of the poem. From then on, the music moves with overwhelming impetus, illustrating precisely and succinctly each phrase of the vivid text” (Deane, 1979).¹

The poem is written in trochaic metre, each line of each of the eighteen three-line stanzas having eight syllables; the lines are rhyming. Here are a few stanzas: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 8th, 9th, and 16th. As for the English translation, it is given by Robertson (1968: p. 17) as coming from “a *Manual* of 1673, and is perhaps by J. Austin (d. 1669).” One also finds in Robertson (1968: p. 17) the following statement: “According to John Julian’s *Dictionary of Hymnology* (1892) there were at that time over 150 English translations of the Sequence, and several have been added since.”

¹In this article, when discussing the effects on listeners of the *Requiem Mass* and of the *Dies irae*, “emotions” are frequently mentioned. It is essential to note that this does not in any sense imply support for the erroneous claims in the “music-causes-emotion” literature that *absolute music* may give rise to listeners’ *fundamental emotions*. The *Requiem Mass*, or any *Mass*, is not *absolute music*. It contains text that is sung and numerous non- or extra-musical meanings. The entire context, significantly beyond the *instrumental sound* alone is one of *sadness*—and perhaps hope (Kivy, 1990; Konečni, 2008, 2013).

Dies irae, dies illa, Solvat saeculum in favilla: Teste David cum Sibylla	Ah, come it will, that direful day Which shall the world in ashes lay As David and the Sibyl say
Quantus tremor est futurus, Quando iudex est venturus, Cuncta stricte discussurus!	How men will tremble and grow pale When Justice comes with sword and scale To weigh the faults and sort the fates of all!
Tuba mirum spargens sonum Per sepulcra regionum, Coget omnes ante thronum	A trumpet first shall rend the skies And all, wherever laid, must rise And come unto the Bar in prisoner's guise
Rex tremendae majestatis, Qui salvandos salvas gratis, Salva me, fons pietatis	Dread King, to thee thyself run I, Who savest the saved, without a why, And so mayst me, thou source of clemency
Recordare, Jesu pie, Quod sum causa tuae, viae: Ne me perdas illa die	Think! Who did once thy pity move And drew thee from thy throne above? Cast me not off, at last, thy former love!
Confutatis maledictis, Flammis acribus addictis; Voca me cum benedictis	And then, those great Assizes done, And all the cursed i' the fire thrown, Say: 'Come ye blessed', meaning me for one

A few brief words about how different composers dealt with the *Dies irae*. Mozart has two repeats of the first two stanzas. But according to Wolff (1991/1994: p. 96), "Mozart's starting point in the selection of his principal key [*D minor*] was, we may be certain, the Dorian mode of the Sequence's 'Dies irae', which thus comes to impress itself decisively on the entire Requiem, even if the medieval melody associated with the mode is never actually heard." Liszt and Dvořák address the first three stanzas (including *Tuba mirum...*). Gounod interferes with the metre: The first two lines of the first stanza, then their repeat, then the third line. Verdi deals with the text operatically, Reger in the Late Romantic style. Honegger's instrumental *Dies irae* lasts only 21 seconds. Artyomov's tremendous *Dies irae* lasts 7 minutes and 28 seconds, about one-tenth of the length of his entire *Requiem*, and thus is both in absolute terms and proportionately the longest such section in any Requiem.

6. Relevant Principles from the Psychological Aesthetic Analysis

The following discussion stems from a branch of psychology called *empirical aesthetics*, and specifically from the work of the eminent psychobiologist and aesthetician Daniel E. Berlyne (1924-1976), and of the present author, one of whose doctoral mentors at the University of Toronto (1970-1973) was Professor Berlyne. The sources in question are Berlyne (1971, 1974) and Konečni (1979, 1982, 2015).

With regard to the analysis of works of art, including music, it is useful to dis-

tinguish three categories of variables, that is, three categories of attributes or properties that any work of music and visual art possess (examples are from music):

Psychophysical properties: dynamic range, instrumentation, timbre, mode, tempo, use of voice, etc.

Referential (or “meaning”) properties: associations that are made through text and sound to the existentially important outcomes.

Statistical properties: these can be mathematically expressed, for example, in information theory terms, and include properties such as novelty, complexity, violation of expectations (surprisingness), and incongruity.

All three categories of properties or attributes can independently and jointly affect the listeners’ physiological arousal (especially the sympathetic part of the autonomous nervous system). Furthermore, one can meaningfully speak of the *hedonic appeal*, *pleasure*, that one receives from fluctuations of arousal (within certain boundaries).

Most pertinently, one can with good reason think of the various decisions that a composer makes as *musical artistic devices* that are related to the three categories of variables outlined above. Many of the decisions involve a very high degree of musical knowledge, including form, instrumentation, orchestration, and a thorough familiarity with the past and contemporary works. Intuition and subconscious manipulation of musical ideas almost certainly play a part, and so does “inspiration” that often implies striving for innovation, for pushing or breaking the boundaries of, for example, a musical form.

Compositional decisions undoubtedly affect arousal-level fluctuations, producing what Berlyne (1971) has called arousal boosts, drops, jags, and boost-jags. This can happen in both small-scale and large-scale musical structures—involving the type of instrumentation, thematic development, relations between sections of a musical piece, dynamics, tonal closure, and dissonances (Konečni, 1986a, 1986b). Some of these ideas are perhaps more appropriate for the description of the goals and devices of composers before the 20th C., but many remain valid in contemporary compositions, such as those that deal with devices the characteristics of which fall on the psychophysical (timbre more than dynamics) and statistical (surprisingness, aleatorics, unpredictability) dimensions—referentiality perhaps less so.

Let us first briefly, without detail and complications, examine a simple example—the likely arousal-level fluctuations of listeners exposed to a classical musical form, the *sonata* (also sometimes called the *sonata-allegro* form). The standard sections are: fast movement, such as *allegro* (engaging the audience, raising arousal); slow movement, such as *adagio* (reducing arousal, for example, for the purpose of calm contemplation); a *scherzo* or dance, such as *minuet* (moderately raising arousal for entertainment); and ending with another fast movement, such as *presto* or *vivace* (presumably leaving listeners in an “up”, “happy” mood).

Turning now to the more complicated context of the Roman Catholic *Mass*:

The Church—both intuitively and from many centuries of experience—understands the significance of arousal-level fluctuations, possibly even better than do composers. Furthermore, the Church is aware of the positive relationship between the hedonic appeal of music and listeners' receptivity and openness to the religious message. Therefore, precisely the order, sequence, in which the *text* of the *Mass* has been laid out over time already takes such factors into account and facilitates the task of composers' setting the text to music.

Here I offer a representation of the relationship between the traditional components of the *Mass*—specifically in reference to the great *Mass* in *B minor*, BWV 232, of Johann Sebastian Bach—and listeners' hypothetically experienced “power” of the music, where “power” summarizes the effect of arousal-raising and arousal-moderating devices that have been outlined above with regard to the three categories of psycho-aesthetic variables (Figure 1).

Briefly, the arousal-potential (“Power”) peaks of the *Mass* are *Gloria* and especially *Sanctus* (acclamations: “Holy, Holy, Holy”). The physiological thrills or chills associated with these peaks have been discussed elsewhere (Konečni, 2005, 2011; Konečni, Wanic, & Brown, 2007). The comparative “valleys” (especially *Credo* and *Agnus Dei*) are unlikely to imply listeners' detachment, but rather deep contemplation and “being moved” or “touched” in the language of the *Aesthetic Trinity Theory* of Konečni (2005, 2011).

7. “Power” of Music and Church Doctrine East and West

Before discussing this issue explicitly in music, it is useful to consider first a comparable issue in the visual arts. Presumably because of the prohibition of images in the Old Testament, there was hostility to their use in early Christianity, but this position was later gradually relaxed. Until, that is, in the 8th C., the powerful *iconoclastic* movement reaffirmed the belief in the absolute transcendence and invisibility of God and insisted on the total abolition of pictorial representation. However, there was much popular support for the veneration (not worship) of images, led by monastic communities. After much struggle, sometimes unseemly, the view advanced especially by St. John of Damascus (John

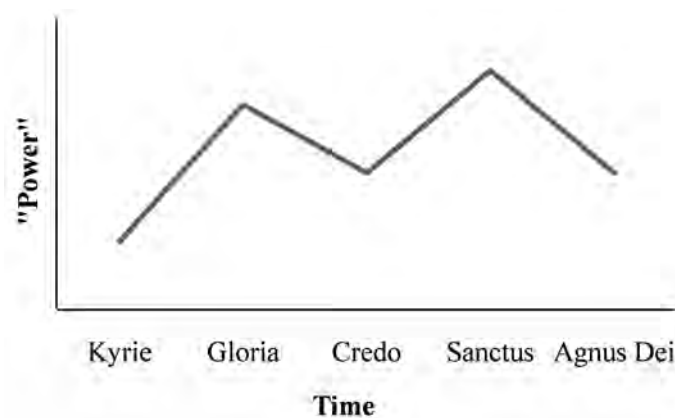


Figure 1. Arousal Potential (“Power”) over time.

Damascene, the “golden speaker”) prevailed: “God, though invisible by nature, can and must be represented in His human nature, as Jesus Christ” (Meyendorff, 1926: p. 23).

Consider, then, the momentous importance for all humanity, the visual arts both East and West, of this decisive defeat of iconoclasm at the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 AD (this was the last of seven ecumenical councils of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church). Thus, one now has the great Western religious paintings and the magnificent Eastern frescoes and icons.

The somewhat analogous, but even more consequential, issue in music has to do with the use of instrumentation in Church service. In this regard, East and West diverged early and to this day the Eastern Orthodox Church believes that the voice of God is best and sufficiently expressed without any adornment, through the human voice alone. In contrast, the Western Church moved from the pure Gregorian plainchant first to polyphony and then to instrumental accompaniment. Because of such developments, Orthodox composers have had very limited choices in liturgical creativity. It is clear that the possibility of instrumentation not only hugely increased the range of compositional choices of Western (Roman Catholic and Protestant) composers, but also the number and type of arousal-raising and arousal-moderating devices at their disposal. Western religious music could thus become more multi-faceted and more “beautiful”—although some would say “prettier”, at the cost of losing ancient purity and depth.

Orthodox Churches of, for example, Bulgaria, Russia, and Serbia are heirs in the Slavic world of Byzantium, for by the 6th C., the ancient Christian Churches in Alexandria (Coptic) and Antioch (now Syria) had broken off with Constantinople (the “Second Rome”) over various schisms. Incidentally, it is worth remembering that from the 6th to the 11th C. Constantinople was the richest and most powerful city in Christendom. Many complicated, painful, and indeed sordid events (such as the sacking of Constantinople in 1204, in the Fourth Crusade, by the Western “Latins”) ensued over the centuries.

To make a long story short, from the standpoint of musical aesthetics, in Russia and Serbia there is *Liturgy* (the equivalent of the Roman Catholic Mass), which is a Eucharistic service of the Eastern Orthodox Church. There are several versions, the most celebrated being the *Divine Liturgy* of St. John Chrysostom (347-407 AD), Archbishop of Constantinople, “the golden-mouthed”, renowned for his intelligence and eloquence. In this *Liturgy*, musical instruments are never used and for a long time there were male voices only. A number of Orthodox composers have tackled it, notably Pyotr Ilych Tchaikovsky and Sergei Rachmaninoff.

Tchaikovsky’s Op. 41 (1878) is a deeply felt, obviously *a cappella*, composition that consists of settings of texts from St. John’s *Divine Liturgy*. In an 1878 letter to Nadezhda F. von Meck, Tchaikovsky wrote: “The Church possesses much poetic charm. I very often attend services and consider the liturgy of St. John

Chrysostom one of the greatest productions of art. If we follow the service very carefully, and enter into the meaning of every ceremony, it is impossible not to be profoundly moved by the liturgy of our Orthodox Church” (Modest I. Tchaikovsky, 1904: pp. 237-238).

Rachmaninoff’s Op. 31 (1910) is an Eastern Orthodox *Liturgy* that consists of twenty sections for unaccompanied mixed choir. The 2nd (“Bless the Lord, O My Soul”), 10th (*Nicene Creed*), and 12th (“We Praise Thee”) sections contain solo passages for alto, basso, and soprano, respectively. Rachmaninoff wrote the following to Nikita Morozov: “I have been thinking about the Liturgy for a long time and strove to write it. I suddenly became fascinated with it and then finished it very quickly. Not for a long time have I written anything with such pleasure” (Moody, 1994).

Additional comments should be accorded at this point to the previously mentioned Vyacheslav Artyomov and his (Latin) *Requiem*.² Artyomov stands alone as the only Russian, or indeed as the only Orthodox, composer to have been drawn to the *Missa pro defunctis*, the pinnacle of Roman Catholic musical structures. Especially given his profound Russianness and his sincere Orthodox Christianity, surely such a choice of musical form is musically, socially, and psychologically of interest. At least three facts should be noted. First, Artyomov’s music suffered an official boycott for some twenty years prior to 1985. Second, the dedication of his *Requiem* is: “To the Martyrs of the Long-Suffering Russia”. Third, this composition was certainly not meant for church performance: 78-minute duration, six soloists, two choirs (one children’s), a symphony orchestra, some 250 performers in all. And while the entire detailed structure of the Requiem Mass is present, this is, in a sense, a musical representation of a *generalized idea of the Requiem*: of agony, death, and, hopefully, redemption.

Perhaps precisely in order to be able to deal with martyrdom on a gigantic scale and the breadth of emotions and musical ideas it inspired in him, Artyomov may have opted for the ancient and firm, yet “alien”, structure of the Latin *Requiem Mass* as a vehicle that would harness and discipline his ideas and musical forces. In this light, it is also perhaps not surprising that Artyomov gave such, previously mentioned, prominence to the setting of *Dies irae*. This powerful, archaic text, with both the divine and human emotions of anger, grief, and forgiveness, and the philosophical implications of terrible sin and infinite grace, rises to the demands of the occasion. In Artyomov’s *Requiem*, ancient sensibilities and mysticism of Orthodox Christianity and the unspoken sounds of mediaeval Church Slavonic gently emerge between the lines of the formidable Latin text, mellowing it.

8. Final Thoughts

At the time (1988) when Artyomov completed his *Requiem*, one ventured to think that on the threshold of the new millennium a sublime fusion could occur

²A small part of this article draws on unpublished symposium lecture and concert program notes by V. J. Konečni (1997a, 1997b) regarding Vyacheslav Artyomov’s *Requiem* (1985-1988).

between the sentiments of the Old and New Testaments, between East and West, Orthodoxy and Catholicism—among Rome, Constantinopolis, and the Third Rome, Moscow. As of this writing, in late April of 2020, this hope has sadly not materialized.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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