HSR London International Conference on Multidisciplinary Academic Research
(HSR-ICMAR) 2026
https://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/conference

DIACHRONIC TRANSFORMATION OF CULTURAL CONCEPTS: FROM THE ELEVENTH CENTURY TO THE PRESENT

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21780037

Abstract. This thesis examines the diachronic transformation of cultural concepts from the eleventh century to the present through textual and language-based evidence. The aim is to trace shifts in semantic core, peripheral meanings, and evaluative components. Methods include historical-semantic analysis, conceptual field modelling, and corpus-adjacent intertextual comparison. The novelty lies in proposing a mechanism-oriented map of change for key concepts such as adab, ilm, shahar, and mehnat across major historical stages.

Annotatsiya. Mazkur tezis XI asrdan hozirgi davrgacha madaniy konseptlarning diaxron transformatsiyasini til birliklari va yozma matnlar asosida tahlil etishga bag‘ishlangan. Tadqiqotning maqsadi madaniy konseptlarning semantik yadrosi, periferik qatlamlari hamda baholovchi komponentlarida yuz bergan tarixiy o‘zgarishlarni aniqlashdan iborat. Tadqiqot metodologiyasini tarixiy-semantik tahlil, konseptual maydonni modellashtirish hamda korpusga tayanuvchi matnlararo qiyosiy tahlil usullari tashkil etadi. Tadqiqotning ilmiy yangiligi «adab», “ilm”, “shahar” va “mehnat” konseptlarining turli tarixiy davrlardagi transformatsiya mexanizmlarini aks ettiruvchi konseptual modelning ishlab chiqilganligi bilan belgilanadi.

Аннотация. This study investigates the diachronic transformation of cultural concepts from the eleventh century to the present on the basis of linguistic evidence and written texts. The research aims to identify historical changes in the semantic core, peripheral structure, and evaluative components of cultural concepts. The methodological framework integrates historical-semantic analysis, conceptual field modelling, and corpus-informed intertextual comparison. The scientific novelty of the study lies in the development of a conceptual model that maps the mechanisms underlying the diachronic transformation of the cultural concepts adab (ethics/civility), ilm (knowledge), shahar (city), and mehnat (labour) across different historical periods.

Keywords: diachrony, cultural concept, semantic core, evaluative component, conceptual field, intertextuality, transformation.

Kalit so‘zlar: diaxroniya, madaniy konsept, semantik yadro, baholovchi komponent, konseptual maydon, intertekstuallik, transformatsiya.

Ключевые слова: диахрония, культурный концепт, семантическое ядро, оценочный компонент, концептуальное поле, интертекстуальность, трансформация.

The notion of a cultural concept is understood at the intersection of linguistics and literary studies as a cognitive construct that embodies the historical experience, values, and normative principles of a speech community through linguistic units and textual structures. Its internal organization comprises a

relatively stable semantic core and peripheral layers that undergo continuous modification under the influence of historical, sociocultural, and communicative factors. While the semantic core generally preserves its fundamental meaning over extended historical periods, the peripheral structure expands, contracts, or is reorganized in response to social change, communicative needs, and discourse- and genre-specific conditions. At the same time, the evaluative component is reconfigured as systems of social values evolve. For example, in Turkic written monuments of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the concept adab primarily denoted ethical conduct and norms of social behaviour; in subsequent historical periods, however, it gradually converged with the notion of adabiyot ("literature"), thereby acquiring broader aesthetic and institutional meanings [1].

From a diachronic perspective, the development of a concept's peripheral structure is closely associated with the expansion of the textual corpus. Whereas the written heritage of the eleventh century was relatively limited in volume, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed a substantial increase in printed texts owing to the development of printing technologies and the expansion of formal education. This process significantly enriched the inventory of linguistic units constituting the conceptual periphery and promoted their functional differentiation. Within the framework of historical semantics, such transformations are typically driven by metaphorization, metonymization, and terminologization. Furthermore, the relationship between the semantic core and the periphery is largely conditioned by the dominant discourse types characteristic of a particular historical period [2].

From the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries onward, the concept of ilm emerged at the intersection of the Turkic and Persian written traditions of Central Asia as a comprehensive cultural category encompassing both practical and theoretical forms of religious and secular knowledge. Its conceptual content is typically realised through lexical units denoting the agents, sources, and outcomes of knowledge. Components such as ustoz (teacher), kitob (book), maktab (school), and hunar (craft or professional skill) demonstrate the close association of the concept with major social institutions. In didactic works such as the Qutadg'u Bilig, ilm is presented as a fundamental prerequisite for good governance, justice, and human perfection, thereby reinforcing the strongly positive evaluative dimension of the concept [1].

Diachronic comparison further demonstrates a steady expansion of the collocational network associated with ilm. During the medieval period, its semantic field was primarily linked to notions such as craft, profession, and madrasa-based education. By the twentieth century, however, the emergence of terms such as fan (science), laboratory, and technology substantially broadened its conceptual periphery. This development reflects the process of terminological differentiation accompanying modernization, whereby the broader concept of ilm gradually gave rise to more specialised conceptual domains, including science and technology, representing a classical pattern of semantic specialisation [3].

From a diachronic perspective, the concept of shahar ("city") functions as a linguocultural model integrating perceptions of space, social order, and urban civilisation. Its semantic structure has expanded continuously in response to historical changes in urban development, economic exchange, and systems of governance. Whereas medieval sources primarily associate shahar with such notions as marketplaces, city walls, gates, rabot settlements, and neighbourhood communities (mahalla), the twentieth and twenty-first centuries witnessed the incorporation of peripheral elements including transport infrastructure, industrial zones, communication networks, and the service sector [4].

The acceleration of urbanisation has also increased the prominence of the concept of shahar in everyday discourse. As the proportion of the urban population expanded, urban experience became an increasingly normative component of linguistic practice, enriching the semantic field of the concept with notions such as centre, infrastructure, and district. From the perspective of historical semantics, these developments primarily represent a process of metonymic expansion. A concept that originally

designated a territorial entity gradually evolved into a multidimensional cultural model referring to institutions, systems of governance, and urban lifestyles. Consequently, the referential scope of the concept broadened, while its evaluative dimension came to reflect a dynamic balance between romanticised and pragmatic interpretations of urban life [2].

o explain the mechanisms underlying the diachronic transformation of cultural concepts, the internal structure of a concept can be represented as a multilayered model consisting of a definitional layer, a descriptive layer, and a normative-evaluative layer. Within this framework, the definitional layer remains comparatively stable over time, whereas the descriptive layer is continuously reshaped through metaphorical extensions and intertextual associations. By contrast, the normative-evaluative layer undergoes more substantial reconfiguration in response to changes in social values and ideological systems. The concept of mehnat ("labour"), for instance, was predominantly associated with craftsmanship and the legitimate acquisition of livelihood during the medieval period; in the industrial era it became closely linked to labour discipline and productivity, while in contemporary discourse it is increasingly connected with professional mobility, innovation, and the creative economy [5].

Diachronic evidence further indicates that the expansion of industrial production and formal education throughout the twentieth century substantially increased the presence of mehnat in official and academic discourse. Although the evaluative orientation of the concept has consistently remained positive, the underlying motivations for this positive evaluation have changed over time. During the medieval period, labour was primarily valued in terms of prosperity and craftsmanship; in the industrial era it was associated with planning and labour discipline, whereas contemporary discourse emphasises competence, innovation, and professional competitiveness. These developments illustrate the diachronic transformation of the evaluative dimension of the concept [3].

The historical development of cultural concepts is shaped not only by linguistic units but also by the evolution of genres and discourse traditions. Different discourse types activate different semantic features of a concept, thereby influencing its conceptual profile. Consequently, the same concept performs distinct communicative functions across didactic, epic, administrative, journalistic, and academic discourse. For example, in the literary tradition of Alisher Navoi, the concepts of adab and ilm function within an integrated ethical and aesthetic framework, whereas twentieth-century journalistic discourse increasingly associates them with modernisation, enlightenment, and social progress [6].

The expansion of textual production through print culture and, subsequently, digital media has enabled cultural concepts to function across a broader range of genres and communicative settings. As a result, their conceptual peripheries have been enriched by new synonymic expressions, specialised terminology, and discourse-specific meanings. From the perspective of historical semantics, this process can be interpreted as recontextualisation, whereby the semantic core of a concept remains relatively stable while its peripheral meanings are reinterpreted in accordance with new communicative environments. Such developments contribute to the emergence of additional semantic variants and increase the polysemantic potential of the concept [2].

Another important factor in diachronic conceptual transformation is language contact and translation. Borrowed lexical units become integrated into existing conceptual fields, where they either occupy previously unfilled semantic niches or compete with established elements, thereby restructuring the internal organisation of the concept. Within the conceptual domain of ilm, for example, the increasing use of the term fan ("science") has contributed to the differentiation of the broader notion of knowledge, with ilm functioning as a general concept and fan acquiring the status of a more specialised scientific category. A comparable process is observed in the semantic convergence of adab and adabiyot, which reflects an internal mechanism of conceptual differentiation [5].

The historical expansion of educational institutions, lexicographic practice, and publishing activity has also accelerated the development of specialised terminology. New terms entered the conceptual system through semantic calquing, phonological adaptation, and productive word-formation patterns. Consequently, conceptual fields evolved into multilayered semantic structures in which elements originating from different historical periods coexist and interact. This process highlights the continuity between cultural heritage and contemporary linguistic development in the diachronic evolution of cultural concepts [4].

Table 1. Diachronic Conceptual Structure of Shahar ("City"): A Comparative Model

Historical Period	**Semantic Core**	**Peripheral Elements**	**Dominant Evaluative Features**
11th–13th centuries	marketplace, city gate, city wall	caravan, rabot, craftsman	order, security, prosperity
19th–20th centuries	urban centre, street, administration	factory, railway, printing house	progress, discipline, efficiency
21st century	infrastructure, transport, services	digital networks, logistics, tourism	convenience, competitiveness, sustainability

The conceptual model presented above demonstrates that the semantic structure of shahar has undergone continuous reorganisation throughout its historical development. Certain components, such as marketplace, have retained their central conceptual status, whereas others have gradually shifted from the semantic core to the periphery or have been replaced by elements reflecting new socio-economic realities. This structural representation provides a systematic framework for tracing diachronic conceptual change and may subsequently be supplemented with corpus-based frequency and collocational evidence to support quantitative analysis [2; 4].

The historical evolution of scientific discourse also illustrates the impact of terminological standardisation on conceptual development. As scientific terminology expanded during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, specialised lexical units became increasingly conventionalised, enriching the peripheral structure of the concept ilm ("knowledge"). This process reflects broader tendencies of semantic differentiation and disciplinary specialisation, whereby new scientific terms are incorporated into existing conceptual fields while preserving continuity with earlier stages of linguistic and cultural development [3].

Figure 1.

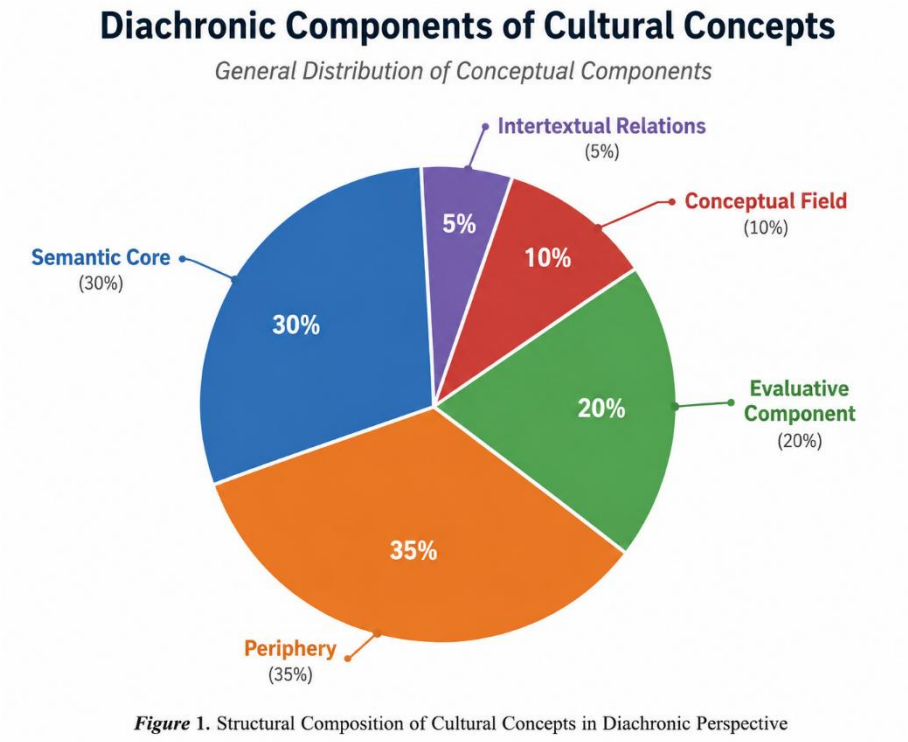


***Figure* 1.** Structural Composition of Cultural Concepts in Diachronic Perspective

Table 2. Diachronic Development of the Ilm Concept in the Corpus

Table 2.

Historical Period	Number of Lexical Units	Corpus Size (thousand pages)
11th–13th Centuries	15	5
14th–18th Centuries	22	12
19th Century	35	25
20th Century	60	80
21st Century	75	120

Table 2 presents the diachronic development of the concept ilm by comparing the number of lexical units associated with the concept and the expansion of the textual corpus across different historical periods. The gradual increase in both indicators reflects the enrichment of the concept's semantic field and the diversification of its conceptual structure over time. The numerical values are intended to illustrate the proposed conceptual model rather than represent corpus frequency counts.

Table 3.

Historical Period	Core and Peripheral Elements	Evaluative Component	Direction of Semantic Change
11th–13th Centuries	Marketplace, city wall, city gate, mahalla	Romanticization	Metonymic expansion; the city conceptualized primarily as a territorial entity
14th–18th Centuries	Rabot, mahalla, commercial districts	Mixed evaluation	Development of social institutionalization
19th Century	Industry, roads, administrative system	Pragmatization	Urbanization and infrastructural growth
20th–21st	Transport, service	Combined evaluation	Expanded referential

Centuries	sector, communication networks	(romantic and pragmatic)	scope and continued metonymic expansion

The table illustrates the diachronic transformation of the concept shahar by comparing its semantic composition, evaluative profile, and dominant directions of semantic development across historical periods.

The findings demonstrate that the diachronic transformation of cultural concepts from the eleventh century to the present is characterised by the relative stability of the semantic core and the continuous renewal of peripheral components under the influence of historical, sociocultural, and communicative factors. The analysis identifies recontextualisation, terminologisation, metonymic expansion, and the shifting of evaluative motivation as the principal mechanisms driving conceptual change.

Comparative analysis and conceptual modelling further reveal that the concepts of adab, ilm, shahar, and mehnat evolve without eliminating earlier semantic layers. Instead, these layers are reactivated and reinterpreted within new communicative and discursive contexts, indicating that conceptual evolution is governed by the complementary processes of continuity and innovation.

The principal theoretical contribution of this study lies in demonstrating the effectiveness of a diachronic approach for explaining the interaction between cultural memory, historical experience, and contemporary communicative needs from a conceptual-semantic perspective. From a methodological perspective, the proposed conceptual field model, the core-periphery framework, and the comparative diachronic matrix provide systematic analytical tools for investigating conceptual change and establish a foundation for future corpus-based research in historical semantics, cognitive linguistics, and linguocultural studies.

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