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MORPHOLOGICAL PATTERNS OF ARABIC MAṢDARS AND THEIR ADAPTATION INTO OLD UZBEK LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This paper examines the morphological patterns of Arabic verbal nouns (maṣdars) and the ways in which they were adapted into Old Uzbek (Chagatai), using Alisher Navoi's Mahbub ul-qulub in the 1998 academic edition as its textual basis. It first outlines the classical and modern descriptions of the maṣdar and distinguishes the lexically conditioned (samāʿī) patterns of Form I verbs from the largely predictable (qiyāsī) patterns of the derived Forms II–X. A targeted set of Arabic-origin items was then checked against Arabic lexicography and against the forms actually attested in the text. Only items with a verified verbal source are treated as maṣdars; nouns of place, participles and primary nouns such as adab are excluded. The attested material covers every major pattern group, from faʿl (ṣabr) and fiʿāla (siyāsa) to tafaʿʿul (tawakkul), iftiʿāl (intiqām) and istifʿāl (istighfār). Adaptation operates on three levels: orthographic and phonological adjustment of the word end (loss of final hamza; the -at and -a reflexes of tāʾ marbūṭa); integration into Turkic inflection and derivation (possessive and case suffixes, plural -лар, privative -сиз, -лиқ/-лиғ); and verbal integration through light verbs such as қил- and кўргуз-. A further layer of Persian morphology (privative бе-, iżāfa, -дор, -жўй, -пеша) shows that Persian served as a channel of morphological mediation for part of this vocabulary, but the evidence does not justify assuming Persian transmission for every item.

Keywords: Arabic maṣdar; verbal noun; morphological patterns; Old Uzbek; Chagatai; Alisher Navoi; Mahbub ul-qulub; loanword adaptation; Persian mediation

1. Introduction

The literary language of the Timurid period absorbed a large body of Arabic and Persian vocabulary. Doerfer notes that Navoi's own Muhokamat ul-lug'atayn uses a language containing 62.6 percent Persian and Arabic words, and that a number of Persian grammatical features were adopted in Chagatai.[1] Among the Arabic elements, verbal nouns are especially important, because they supply much of the abstract vocabulary of ethics, religion, learning and governance. Yet the presence of an Arabic word in a Chagatai text says little about its grammatical status, its route of borrowing or its integration into Turkic morphology.

Three problems follow. Not every Arabic-origin noun is a maṣdar, since nouns of place, participles and primary nouns often share the same roots. A borrowed maṣdar does not keep its Arabic form intact once it enters the Turkic system. And although many Arabic words reached

[1] Doerfer G. Chaghatay Language and Literature // Encyclopaedia Iranica. 1991. Vol. V, Fasc. 4. P. 339–343. URL: https://iranicaonline.org/articles/chaghatay-language-and-literature (accessed: 12.10.2026).

Central Asian Turkic through Persian, this must be shown for each item from formal or historical evidence rather than assumed.

The paper therefore asks four questions. Which Arabic maṣdar patterns are represented in Mahbub ul-qulub? What formal adjustments do these maṣdars show in the text? How are they integrated into Turkic inflection, derivation and verbal syntax? And where does the text provide positive evidence of Persian mediation? The analysis is morphological and historical-linguistic. The semantic classification of the same vocabulary and questions of semantic change lie outside its scope.

2. Materials and Methods

The primary source is Mahbub ul-qulub in volume 14 of Navoi's Mukammal asarlar to‘plami (Tashkent: Fan, 1998), prepared for publication with notes by S. G‘aniyeva.[2] The edition gives the text in Uzbek Cyrillic transcription of the Arabic-script original. It was consulted in the electronic copy of the ziyouz.com library, in which Mahbub ul-qulub occupies PDF pages 2–135. That copy does not reproduce the printed pagination, so references in this paper ("p.") give the PDF page together with the part and chapter of the work, which allows each quotation to be located in any copy. All Chagatai forms and quotations are given in the Cyrillic of the edition, keeping its spelling and its occasional inconsistencies, with the editors' note numbers omitted; Arabic etyma are given in Arabic script and standard transliteration.

The procedure had three steps. First, candidate stems of Arabic origin were compiled from preliminary research notes and the chapter headings of the work, and all their inflected forms were retrieved from the electronic text by concordance search. Second, the maṣdar status, verb form and pattern of each candidate were checked against Lane's lexicon[3] and the grammars of Wright and Fischer cited below. Third, each attested Chagatai form was segmented into stem and affixes, and Persian-specific forms were checked against Steingass's dictionary. Because the electronic text has not been proofread, no frequency counts are claimed. The corpus examined is a targeted sample of the work, not an exhaustive inventory.

A word is treated here as a maṣdar only if it names the event or state of an attested Arabic verb and is formed on a recognised maṣdar pattern. On this criterion масжид, мактаб and мадраса (nouns of place), мударрис (an active participle) and адаб (a primary noun) are excluded, even though all occur in the text. Arabic quotations from the Qurʾan and hadith embedded in the prose are also excluded, because they are Arabic text rather than borrowed vocabulary.

3. Results

3.1 The maṣdar in classical and modern grammatical description

Sībawayh opens al-Kitāb by describing verbs as patterns taken from the expression of the "events of nouns" (أَحْدَاثُ الأَسْمَاءِ, aḥdāth al-asmāʾ).[4] The maṣdar thus names the event itself,

[2] Navoiy A. Mahbub ul-qulub / prepared for publication with notes by S. G‘aniyeva // Navoiy A. Mukammal asarlar to‘plami. In 20 vols. Vol. 14. Tashkent: Fan, 1998. Cited from the ziyouz.com electronic copy (PDF pages).
[3] Lane E. W. An Arabic-English Lexicon. London: Williams and Norgate, 1863–1893. Pts. 1–8 (entries for the roots cited).
[4] Sībawayh. Al-Kitāb / ed. by ʿA. M. Hārūn. 3rd ed. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1988. Vol. 1, opening chapter (باب علم ما الكلم من العربية).

without the tense and person added by the finite verb. The term maṣdar ("source") reflects the Basran view that the verb derives from the verbal noun, a point long disputed with the Kufan grammarians; European grammars render it as nomen verbi or infinitive. Wright and Fischer both stress the same structural point: the maṣdars of the simple verb (Form I) cannot be predicted from the verb and must be learned for each verb, whereas the derived forms have largely fixed patterns.[56] Ryding's modern reference grammar keeps this distinction.[7]

Several neighbouring categories must be kept apart from the ordinary maṣdar. The noun of single instance (ism al-marra, pattern faʿla) names one occurrence of an act, as in sajda "a single prostration" (سَجْدَة). The mīmī maṣdar is formed with the prefix ma-, as in maḥabba "love" (مَحَبَّة). The so-called artificial maṣdar (maṣdar ṣināʿī) adds -iyya to a noun or adjective, as in insāniyya "humanity", which appears in the text as инсоният (p. 57).

3.2 Patterns attested in Mahbub ul-qulub

Table 1 lists representative maṣdars by Arabic verb form, together with the form or forms in which each is attested in the text. Form I is the most varied group. Its maṣdars occur on nine patterns: faʿl (сабр, забт), fiʿl (ҳилм, рифқ), fuʿl (зуҳд, ҳукм), faʿla (тавба, ғафлат), faʿal (жадал), faʿāla (қаноат), fiʿāla (сиёсат, ибодат, ҳиросат, риёзат), faʿāl (вафо, ҳаё) and fiʿal (ризо). The pattern is a property of the individual verb, not of a meaning class.

The derived forms behave more regularly. Form II is represented by tafʿīl in таълим and таъдиб, and by tafʿila in тарбият, from the defective root r-b-w, where tafʿila is the regular pattern. Form III shows both of its patterns: mufāʿala in муҳофазат and fiʿāl in қисос (qiṣāṣ, from qāṣṣa). Form IV appears in эҳсон, инсоф and идрок; Form V in таваккул, таважжуҳ, такаббур and таҳаммул; Form VI in тавозуъ; Form VII in инбисот; Form VIII in интиқом, ижтиноб, ихтиёр and эътибор; and Form X in истиғфор and истиғно. No maṣdar of Form IX was found in the material examined. The contrast between адаб (excluded) and таъдиб (included) shows why the criterion matters. The Form II verb addaba "to discipline, educate" has the maṣdar taʾdīb, which appears in the phrase алар таъдибиға муртакиб "intent on disciplining them" (p. 24, Part I, ch. 18), whereas адаб itself is the base noun from which that verb is derived.

Table 1. Representative Arabic maṣdar patterns and their forms in Mahbub ul-qulub (maṣdar status verified against Lane; forms and PDF pages from the 1998 edition)

Verb form	Pattern	Arabic maṣdar	Attested form(s) in the text	Page(s)
I	faʿl	صَبْر ṣabr	сабр, сабру, сабри	54, 56, 82
I	fiʿl	حِلْم ḥilm	ҳилм, ҳилмни, ҳилму	82, 114
I	fuʿl	زُهْد zuhd	зуҳд, зуҳду	48, 101
I	faʿla	تَوْبَة tawba	тавба, тавбаи, тавбасининг	45–47
I	faʿāla	قَنَاعَة qanāʿa	қаноат, қаноатда	52–53
I	fiʿāla	سِيَاسَة siyāsa	сиёсат, сиёсатидин, сиёсатида	7, 24, 111
I	faʿāl	وَفَاء wafāʾ	вафо, вафосиз, вафодорлиқ	77, 81

[5] Wright W. A Grammar of the Arabic Language. 3rd ed., rev. by W. Robertson Smith and M. J. de Goeje. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896–1898. Vol. 1 (section on the nomina verbi).
[6] Fischer W. A Grammar of Classical Arabic / transl. by J. Rodgers. 3rd rev. ed. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2002.
[7] Ryding K. C. A Reference Grammar of Modern Standard Arabic. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Verb form	Pattern	Arabic maṣdar	Attested form(s) in the text	Page(s)
I	fiʿal	رِضًا riḍan	ризо, ризоси, ризосидин, ризосиға	8, 62–63
II	tafʿīl	تَأْدِيب taʾdīb	таъдибиға	24
II	tafʿila	تَرْبِيَة tarbiya	тарбият, тарбиятингни	39, 112
III	mufāʿala	مُحَافَظَة muḥāfaẓa	муҳофазат, муҳофазати	24, 61
III	fiʿāl	قِصَاص qiṣāṣ	қисоси	7
IV	ifʿāl	إِحْسَان iḥsān	эҳсон, эҳсондур, эҳсонға	76
V	tafaʿʿul	تَوَكُّل tawakkul	таваккул, таваккулим	50, 52
VI	tafāʿul	تَوَاضُع tawāḍuʿ	тавозуъ	57
VII	infiʿāl	اِنْبِسَاط inbisāṭ	инбисоти	44
VIII	iftiʿāl	اِنْتِقَام intiqām	интиқоми, интиқом	8, 126
X	istifʿāl	اِسْتِغْفَار istighfār	истиғфор	46

3.3 Orthographic and phonological adjustment

The most consistent changes affect the end of the word. Final hamza after a long vowel is lost: wafāʾ > вафо, ḥayāʾ > ҳаё, riyāʾ > риё, istighnāʾ > истиғно. The indefinite ending of the defective maṣdar riḍan also disappears, giving ризо. These changes matter morphologically, because they produce vowel-final stems that select a different set of Turkic suffix allomorphs (Section 3.4).

Tāʾ marbūṭa has two reflexes. Most maṣdars of the faʿāla, fiʿāla, tafʿila and mufāʿala patterns end in -at: сиёсат, ибодат, қаноат, ҳиросат, риёзат, тарбият, муҳофазат, риоят. A smaller group keeps -a: тавба, сажда, тажриба. The same double treatment of the feminine ending is familiar from Persian, where forms such as ḥarakat and maʿrifat are standard.[8] Other correspondences are orthographic conventions of the Cyrillic edition rather than sound changes: ʿayn and hamza are marked by the hard sign ъ (тавозуъ, тамаъ, таъдиб), and ḍ, ẓ, dh and z, distinct in the Arabic-script original, all appear as з (ризо, муҳофазат).

Vocalism provides one of the clearest indicators of the route of borrowing. The Arabic Form III maṣdar mudārāh “forbearance, courtesy” (مُدَارَاة) appears in the text as мадоро, in рифқ ва мадоросидин (p. 7, Part I, ch. 1) and зоти бемадоро (p. 24, Part I, ch. 18). The change of initial mu- to ma- and the absence of a final -t both match the Persian form madārā recorded in Persian lexicography, not the Arabic word.[9] The mīmī maṣdar maḥabba similarly appears as муҳаббат (in муҳаббатиға, p. 57), with the vowel and the final -t of the Persian form muḥabbat.

3.4 Integration into Turkic morphology

Once borrowed, a maṣdar behaves as an ordinary Turkic noun stem. Possessive and case suffixes attach to it according to the shape of the stem. Consonant-final stems take the third-person possessive -i, followed by the case suffix, while vowel-final stems take -si. The first chapter of Part I, on just rulers, shows both types in a single sentence: Фуқаро ва нотавонлар анинг рифқ ва мадоросидин осуда, залама ва авонлар анинг тиғи сиёсатидин фарсуда, “The poor and the weak are at ease through his gentleness and forbearance; the oppressors and

[8] Sadeghi A. A. Arabic Language i. Arabic Elements in Persian // Encyclopaedia Iranica. 1986. Vol. II, Fasc. 3. P. 229–231. URL: https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/arabic-i (accessed: 12.10.2026).
[9] Steingass F. A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary. London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1892.

their henchmen are worn down by the sword of his severity" (p. 7). In мадоро-си-дин the possessive takes its post-vocalic form, whereas in сиёсат-и-дин, ҳиросат-и-дин, забт-и-дин and жидд-и-дин on the same page it takes the post-consonantal form. The suffix chain on рифқ ва мадоросидин also covers both coordinated nouns, a group inflection characteristic of Turkic syntax. The stem ризо shows the same paradigm across several cases: ризоси, ризосидин, ризосиға, ризосин (pp. 8, 45, 62–63). Other persons are also attested: менинг таваккулим дуруст бўлди "my trust [in God] proved true" (p. 52).[10]

Plural marking shows the coexistence of two systems. The Form I maṣdar riyāḍa "ascetic discipline" takes the Turkic plural in қотиқ риёзатлар "severe disciplines" (p. 44, Part I, ch. 40), but appears with the Arabic sound feminine plural in риёзот суубатида "in the hardship of disciplines" (p. 54). The Arabic plural survives as a learned form; Turkic -лар is the productive one.

Turkic derivational suffixes attach freely to Arabic maṣdars. The privative -сиз is especially frequent: вафосиз "faithless" and ҳаёсиз "shameless" (pp. 28, 81), саховатсиз киши "an ungenerous person" (p. 78), инсофсиз (p. 15) and раҳмсиз (p. 89). One saying in Part III builds a balanced antithesis on two Form VIII maṣdars carrying the same suffix: Тилга ихтиёрсиз - элга эътиборсиз! "He who has no control over his tongue has no esteem among people" (p. 94). The adjectival -лиғ appears in тажрибалиғ улуғ ёшлиғ киши "an experienced person of mature age" (p. 106), and the abstract -лиқ in вафодорлиқ and хидматкорлиқ (p. 77).

Arabic maṣdars cannot be conjugated in Turkic. They enter predicates through light-verb constructions in which the maṣdar supplies the lexical meaning and a native verb carries tense, aspect and person. The definitional sentences of Part II supply many examples: восита асбобин рафъ қилмоқдур ва васила ҳижобин дафъ қилмоқ "it is to remove the apparatus of intermediaries and to repel the veil of means" (p. 50, chapter on tawakkul); ул афъолдин ижтиноб қилмоқдур "it is to refrain from those deeds" (p. 46, chapter on tawba); нафсни ҳабс қилмоқдур "it is to restrain the self" (p. 54, chapter on ṣabr). Besides қил-, the text uses кўргуз- (тахаммул кўргузмакдур "to show endurance", p. 55) and эт- (касб этар, p. 52; ижтиноб этиб, p. 118), and қил- itself is fully inflected, as in риоят қилибсен "you have shown care" (p. 28). The construction parallels the Persian compound verb with kardan, but the light verbs are Turkic.

3.5 The Persian morphological layer

A distinct group of formations shows Persian morphology applied to Arabic maṣdars inside the Turkic text. The Persian privative prefix бе- occurs in беҳаё, бевафо and бемадоро (pp. 24, 81). In the sentence қолғон вафосиз беҳаёлар аларни унутубтурлар "the remaining faithless and shameless have forgotten them" (p. 81), the Turkic and the Persian strategy of negation stand side by side in the same noun phrase. Persian second elements derive agent nouns and adjectives from maṣdars: ризожўй "seeking [their] contentment" (p. 9), зулмпеша "given to oppression" (p. 16), ҳилмшиор "marked by forbearance" (p. 83), вафодор "faithful" (in вафодорлиқ, p. 77) and ғамнок "grieved" (p. 41).

Persian syntactic morphology is equally visible. The iżāfa links a maṣdar to a following adjective in Тавбаи ҳақиқий "true repentance" (p. 46) and to a nisba adjective in Шайхи риёий

[10] For the Chagatai possessive and case paradigms see: Eckmann J. Chagatay Manual. Bloomington: Indiana University; The Hague: Mouton, 1966. (Uralic and Altaic Series; Vol. 60).

"the hypocritical shaykh" (p. 42). In the latter, риёий is itself the Persian-style nisba adjective of the Form III maṣdar riyāʾ, and it heads the chapter title Риёий шайхлар зикрида "On hypocritical shaykhs" (Part I, ch. 38). The Persian enclitic conjunction -y joins maṣdar pairs, as in фаҳму идрок (pp. 7, 15) and сабру таҳаммул (p. 82), and the Persian indefinite -e (yā-yi waḥdat) appears in Тавбаеким… "a repentance such that…" (p. 48). Doerfer lists iżāfa and the yā-yi waḥdat among the Persian grammatical features adopted in Chagatai.

Chronology supports a Persian channel for at least part of this vocabulary. Sadeghi notes that the majority of Arabic maṣdars and verbal nouns in Persian first came into use in the 5th/11th and 6th/12th centuries, well before the formation of the Chagatai literary language.[11] The evidence must nevertheless be read item by item: for сабр, илм or зуҳд the Arabic, Persian and Chagatai forms coincide and reveal nothing about the route. Positive evidence of mediation is present only where the Chagatai form has a Persian-specific shape (мадоро, муҳаббат) or where the maṣdar is built into Persian derivational or syntactic constructions.

4. Discussion

Arabic maṣdar patterns entered Old Uzbek as properties of individual lexical items, not as productive rules: in the material examined no Arabic maṣdar pattern was applied to a Turkic root. The pattern still marks a learned register for a reader trained in Arabic, but the grammatical categories of the Arabic noun (case endings, the definite article, gender) are lost, and the maṣdar is reanalysed as a bare stem available to Turkic morphology.

The verbal character of the maṣdar is not lost but relocated. The Arabic verbal paradigm behind each maṣdar is replaced in Chagatai by a periphrastic construction, maṣdar + қил-, эт- or кўргуз-, in which the borrowed noun keeps the event meaning and the native verb supplies the finite categories.

A consistent ordering emerges in the hybrid forms. In every hybrid formation examined, the Arabic maṣdar forms the innermost layer, Persian derivational elements are attached to it, and Turkic inflectional suffixes stand outermost: вафо-дор-лиқ, бе-вафо-лар-и (p. 82), ғафлат-кирдор-роқ (p. 74). No case was found in which a Turkic suffix is enclosed by Persian material. The layering reflects the history of contact: Arabic vocabulary reached the Turkic literary language largely through, or together with, a Persian learned tradition, while Turkic morphology remained the grammatical frame.[12]

5. Conclusion

Navoi's Mahbub ul-qulub contains Arabic maṣdars from all the major Arabic pattern groups: the lexically conditioned patterns of Form I and the regular patterns of Forms II–VIII and X. Identifying them requires a strict grammatical criterion, because Arabic origin alone does not establish maṣdar status: nouns of place, participles and primary nouns must be excluded, and the noun of single instance, the mīmī maṣdar and the artificial maṣdar marked separately.

[11] Sadeghi A. A. Arabic Language i. Arabic Elements in Persian // Encyclopaedia Iranica. 1986. Vol. II, Fasc. 3. P. 229–231. URL: https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/arabic-i (accessed: 12.10.2026).
[12] Boeschoten H., Vandamme M. Chaghatay // The Turkic Languages / ed. by L. Johanson, É. Á. Csató. London; New York: Routledge, 1998. P. 166–178.

The adaptation of these maṣdars proceeds on three levels: adjustment of the word end, especially the loss of final hamza and the -at/-a treatment of tāʾ marbūṭa; full integration into Turkic inflection and derivation; and verbal integration through light verbs. A Persian layer is clearly attested in the morphology, but it is demonstrable for particular items and constructions rather than for the vocabulary as a whole. A complete account would require a proofread concordance of the whole text and comparison with Arabic-script manuscripts.

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