THE USE OF MORPHOLOGICAL PATTERNS IN ARABIC GRAMMARS OF TURKIC

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1. Introduction

The use of meaningful (mor)phonological patterns (wazn, bunya’, pl. ’awzān, ’abniya’) is very common in Arabic linguistic thinking. In this contribution we examine the way these patterns were used in Arabic grammars of Turkic, especially in the works of ʿAbū ʿHayyān al-Andalusī (d. 745/1345) and Maḥmūd al-Kāšgarī (11th century).

2. Patterns in the Arabic linguistic tradition

In the Arabic grammatical tradition, each word is analyzed in terms of a root that contains a certain number of base radicals. Most roots contain three radicals, but there are also roots with two-, four- or even five. For example the verb karuma ‘he was kind’ is built upon the three radicals k-r-m. In lexicographical works k-r-m is often placed in the same three-radical cluster as, say, r-k-m and m-k-r. A much later development is the alphabetic order in which k-r-m follows, e.g., k-r-', which starts with Ibn Fāris (d. 390/1000) (cf. Wild 1965, 66). Within a given entry the radical patterns are further ordered according to the vowels they contain.

In order to make the vowels stand out more, the Arab scholars use the paradigmatical root /f'-l/ (cf. Wright 1986), which in our example karuma yields fa’ula. In this case fa’ula is considered the wazn. In the lexicographical sequence the pattern fa’ula follows fa’ala. For Arabic words this system based on abstract patterns makes much sense. Verbs that have the same pattern usually possess similar qualities, e.g. transitivity; verbs of the type fa’ula are among other things usually intransitive and

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2 For the sake of brevity here referred to as morphological patterns.
most of them describe a state of mind or a quality (cf. e.g. Wright 1986, I, 30, see also Versteegh 1992). Verbs with the same verbal pattern have similar predictable morphological derivations, such as the formation of the verbal noun maṣdar. For verbs of the type faʿila one possible form of the maṣdar is faʿāla e.g. karāma ‘kindness.’ In regard to nouns of the same pattern the formation of the plural is predictable in the same way, the pattern faʿila may have the plural form fawāʾil, e.g. qāʿida—pl. qawāʿid ‘base.’ Fārābī (d. 350/961) writes in his Dīwān al-ʿAdab that plural forms, derived from a pattern which usually yields such plurals, are not included as entries (I:87). Also more or less predictable is the fact that the pattern faʿāla may refer to abstract nouns which are not usually pluralized (similar examples in Irtišāf I 73–97). In this respect the grammarians also indicate augmented radicals in Arabic patterns, e.g. ʿafʿala, ifṭaʿala, istafʿala, in which -a-, -t-, and -st- are augmented radicals which add a specific meaning to the root.

Another obvious motive for collecting words in the same pattern, is that this is handy when writing poetry. Words with the same pattern can easily be used in rhyme schemes (cf. also Wild 1965, 66).

The use of morphological patterns thus appears to have two basic objectives. The first is to determine which consonants in a given word are basic and which are augmented, or more precisely: to determine which ones are the basic radicals in a given word. This is for instance important in establishing a word’s etymology. In the second place the pattern is used for illustrating paradigmatic patterns, such as verbal conjugation, the building of regular plural forms and some types of declension, in which consonants (e.g. /w/ in /-uwna/ [m pl] and ’alif /”/ in /-a”t/ āt [f pl] are assigned special meanings (cf. Versteegh 1985). The scope of this article is limited to the first objective.

For Turkic the general advantage of bringing together words with similar patterns is evident too, but the morph(ono)logical arguments do not apply. In Turkic languages meaningful elements usually have the form of suffixes to a given stem, never infixes or prefixes, e.g. kas ‘cut,’ kas-di ‘he cut’ (3sg pt), kas-iš-di ‘they cut together,’ and qul ‘slave’—qul-lar ‘slaves,’ qul-juq ‘little slave,’ qul-juq-lar ‘little slaves,’ etc. From a given vowel sequence or consonant pattern no predictions as to plural and verbal conjugations can be made and the same is true for words that bear certain suffixes. In Arabic grammars of Turkic languages, some authors make reference to morphological patterns too.

If we disregard the consonant assimilation and vowel harmony, that is.