

THE MANIFESTATION OF CULTURAL CODES IN METAPHORS: THE CASE OF MAHBUB UL-QULUB

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Abstract

This article investigates the metaphors found in Alisher Navoi's Mahbub ul-Qulub from a linguocultural perspective, focusing on the role of cultural codes in the formation of metaphorical meaning. The identified metaphors are categorized into several cultural-code groups, including nature, spatial (locative), anthropomorphic, military, axiological, object-domestic, and musical-cultural codes. Drawing on examples from the text, the study examines the semantic features, cultural background, and artistic functions of each category. The findings demonstrate that Navoi's metaphorical system embodies national cultural values, collective experience, and a distinctive conceptualization of reality, thereby contributing to a deeper interpretation of the literary text.

Keywords: Metaphor, linguocultural studies, cultural code, nature code, spatial code, anthropomorphic code, military code, axiological code, object-domestic code, musical-cultural code.

Introduction

Metaphor is one of the most significant figurative devices that extends the lexical meaning of a word, enriching it with new semantic content and artistic expressiveness. Through metaphor, an idea is conveyed not only in an imaginative manner but also with greater emotional impact and aesthetic appeal. It enables the perception of reality from a new perspective by establishing semantic associations between imagination and the real world. Therefore, metaphor can be regarded as a means of artistic cognition that reveals hidden meanings and generates new interpretations of ordinary objects and phenomena.

METHODS AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The term *metaphor* was first recorded in Isocrates' *Evagoras*. A metaphor is a stylistic device (trope) that enhances the expressive power of speech by transferring the name or attribute of one object or phenomenon to another on the basis of perceived similarity. Metaphorical meanings may arise from associations with a person's physical appearance, bodily and psychological states, movements of body parts, stages of life, as well as clothing and its constituent elements.

Since the time of Aristotle, metaphor has been regarded as an essential component of artistic expression. Aristotle described metaphor as "an art," while the ability to employ it effectively was considered a manifestation of "talent" [1, p. 208]. Such an evaluation demonstrates that metaphor is a unique linguistic phenomenon reflecting the results of national consciousness and cognitive processes.

The concept of metaphor has remained an integral part of human language for centuries. Hermogenes was among the first scholars to recognize the role of metaphor in human cognition. Likewise, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson emphasized the cognitive nature of metaphor in their seminal work *Metaphors We Live By*, stating that "Metaphors are pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical."

Each nation employs metaphors in its own distinctive way, as every culture possesses unique national, mental, and cultural perspectives. Metaphorical expressions constitute one of the principal linguocultural units of language alongside proverbs, phraseological units, and similes (epithets) [2, p. 208]. Moreover, metaphor "reflects fundamental cultural values because it is grounded in a national cultural worldview" [2, p. 91].

Metaphor functions as a linguistic device, whereas a cultural code represents a conceptual system that embodies linguocultural meaning. These theoretical premises indicate that metaphor serves as one of the principal means of expressing cultural codes. G. D. Gachev is recognized as one of the scholars who introduced and developed the concept of the *national cultural code*.

From the perspective of linguoculturology, cultural codes are understood as a system of socially established practices, collective values, norms, and evaluative criteria characteristic of a particular culture, through which individuals perceive and interpret

the world. In other words, they constitute a set of realities that embody specific cultural meanings and values.

The structure of cultural codes may also include elements that do not initially possess cultural significance. However, once incorporated into the mental space of a particular cultural code, such elements acquire cultural meaning and function as culturally marked signs. For example, a stone lying on the road is merely a natural object (according to Aristotle, a primary entity). However, when it is placed on a grave, it acquires cultural significance and becomes a memorial. Thus, objects of the physical world perform not only their direct practical functions but also a semiotic function within culture; in other words, they preserve and convey additional information [2, p. 96].

Language serves as the primary means of preserving and transmitting cultural codes. Every linguistic unit—whether a word, phraseological unit, or metaphor—encapsulates particular cultural information. A cultural code is a system of signs that represents culturally significant meanings, concepts, and values. It is manifested through linguistic units and reflects the way individuals perceive and interpret the world [2, p. 60]. The above considerations demonstrate that cultural codes make it possible to understand words and expressions shaped by the national traditions and distinctive worldview of a particular linguistic community. Metaphors are among the most productive means of expressing cultural codes because they embody human experience and national modes of thinking in an imaginative form [2, p. 63].

Before examining metaphors from this perspective, it is essential to clarify the status of the concept of *code* in linguistics. The notion of *code* should be interpreted from the standpoint of linguoculturology. At present, the term *cultural code* is defined in various ways within linguocultural studies. For example, V. N. Teliya, M. L. Kovshova, and D. B. Gudkov interpret cultural codes as secondary semiotic systems, while culture itself is understood as the space constituted by these secondary sign systems [3, p. 61]. Following the theoretical approach proposed by V. N. Teliya, this study regards culture as a space of cultural codes.

According to cognitive linguists, space is understood not through a system of coordinates but through the relationships among the objects within it. Accordingly, a cultural code can be viewed as a profound cultural space—or a conceptual "container"—within which different linguistic units are endowed with diverse cultural meanings, thereby giving rise to the code itself [3, p. 41].

The widespread use of metaphors in human communication necessitates their systematic investigation, particularly from a linguocultural perspective. Such an approach provides an appropriate framework for revealing the interaction between language, culture, and cognition.

As noted by scholars, "All metaphors are anthropocentric: they are created by humans and reflect the speaker's perception of reality. Every individual represents a unique reality, and every writer expresses an individual style (idiolect), which is manifested through figurative language and metaphorical expression. Therefore, it is important to determine which human characteristic serves as the basis for the formation of a metaphor. This can be explained through the classification of the basic type of metaphor—anthropomorphic metaphor—in which human characteristics, particularly those associated with the somatic code, are transferred to objects" [4, p. 255].

RESEARCH RESULTS

From a linguocultural perspective, the metaphorical units employed in Alisher Navoi's *Mahbub ul-Qulub* should be classified not according to their biological or physiological associations with human beings, but rather on the basis of the system of cultural codes shaped by cultural experience and symbolic cognition.

Accordingly, the metaphorical meanings identified in the work may be classified into the following categories:

1. Metaphorical meanings based on the Natural Code

(metaphors expressed through elements of nature, such as plants, fire, water, and air)

2. Metaphorical meanings based on the Spatial (Locative) Code

(images associated with houses, fortresses, roads, doors, places, and territorial space)

3. Metaphorical meanings based on the Anthropomorphic Code

(metaphors represented through the human body, body parts, and physical appearance)

4. Metaphorical meanings based on the Military (War) Code

(metaphors constructed through images of swords, arrows, combat, strikes, and other representations of conflict)

5. Metaphorical meanings based on the Axiological Code

(metaphors expressed through concepts of value, such as jewels, precious essence, wealth, and worth)

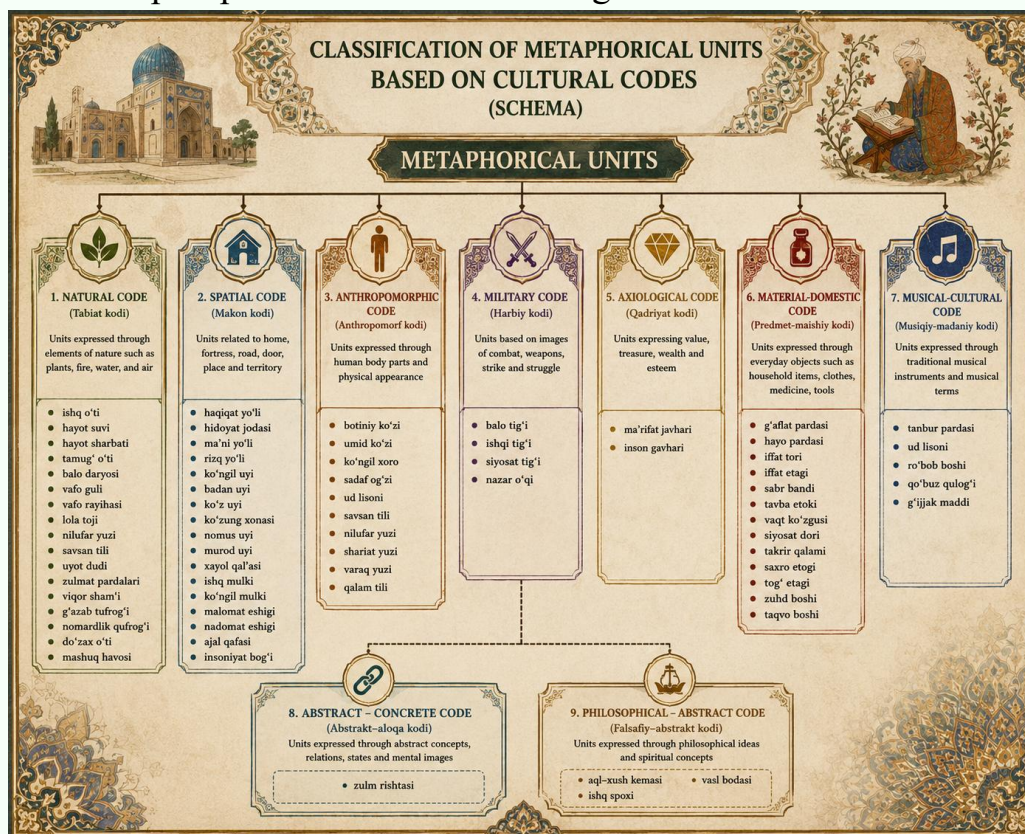
6. Metaphorical meanings based on the Material and Domestic Code

(metaphors expressed through everyday objects and household items, such as curtains, strings, bonds, and medicine)

7. Metaphorical meanings based on the Musical-Cultural Code

(metaphors expressed through traditional musical instruments and musical terminology)

Based on this classification, the semantic structure of the metaphorical units, their cultural foundations, and their role in reflecting the national worldview are analyzed through the examples presented in the following tables.



The metaphors employed in Alisher Navoi's *Mahbub ul-Qulub* are represented in the form of individual words, phrases, and complete sentences. In analyzing these metaphors through the framework of cultural codes, they were classified according to the transfer of characteristic features from one object (source domain) to another (target domain).

The first group comprises metaphors based on the **Natural Code**. In this category, metaphorical meanings are created through the transfer of semantic features

associated with natural phenomena, plants, water, fire, and air to other concepts, or vice versa. One representative example is:

Va nazimlarida har she'r bila ishq o'tin olamg'a urubturlar, she'rlarida har bayt bila dard ahli jonu ko'ngul olamin ko'ydurubdurlar.

In this passage, the emotional experience of **love** is conceptualized through the image of **fire**, giving rise to a metaphor in which the intensity of love is expressed by the burning power of flames. Throughout *Mahbub ul-Qulub*, Navoi repeatedly employs the image of **fire** to construct metaphorical meanings. The following examples illustrate this tendency:

Omiy qoziki may ichkay — o'lturgulukdur va do'zax o'tiga yetmasdin burun kuydurgulukdur.

Chun o'z rizosin bikkull fano o'tig'a otti va haq subhonahu taolo rizosi bila o'zin tuzatti.

So'z terguvchining agar ulug'i, agar kichigi — balki erurlar tamug' o'tining tutrug'i. Bu g'olib dushmandin bir dam g'ofil qolma, o'churolmas isyon o'tin o'z xirmaningga solma.

These examples demonstrate that Navoi employs the concept of **fire** metaphorically to express different spiritual, moral, and emotional meanings. The metaphorical use of *fire* enriches the semantic and aesthetic value of the text while reflecting the author's distinctive artistic worldview.

Some of the metaphors formed with the image of **fire** have remained productive in Modern Uzbek. For example, the metaphor **ishq o'ti** ("the fire of love") continues to denote the burning emotional state associated with love and longing. The *Explanatory Dictionary of the Uzbek Language* defines this expression as the burning passion or emotional intensity experienced in one's heart [6, p. 453].

A similar metaphor appears in Erkin Vohidov's poem *Sevgi otashi* ("The Fire of Love"):

Qon emasdur jism aro ul,

Shulasidur ishq o'tin.

Mo'y emasdur tan uza bo'l,

So'xta jonimdan tutun [7, p. 11].

The continuity of such metaphorical expressions demonstrates that the metaphors created by Alisher Navoi have preserved their semantic vitality and artistic

significance across centuries, becoming an enduring component of the Uzbek linguistic and cultural tradition.

Spatial (Locative) Code

The second cultural-code category identified in the work is the **Spatial (Locative) Code**, which comprises metaphorical units based on images of **houses, places, roads, doors, fortresses**, and other spatial concepts. Among these, metaphors built around the image of the **house** are particularly frequent and primarily convey Sufi concepts. For example, **ko'ngil uyi** ("the house of the heart") symbolizes a person's inner spiritual world; **badan uyi** ("the house of the body") represents the body as the dwelling place of the soul; **ko'z uyi** ("the house of the eye") denotes the seat of perception and cognition; **nomus uyi** ("the house of honor") metaphorically refers to the domain of moral integrity; while **murod uyi** ("the house of aspiration") symbolizes the space where human hopes, aspirations, and ultimate goals reside.

These metaphors demonstrate that spatial imagery in *Mahbub ul-Qulub* functions not merely as a descriptive device but as a conceptual framework through which abstract spiritual and ethical values are expressed. The house, in particular, is transformed from a physical structure into a symbolic representation of the human soul, morality, and inner consciousness, reflecting the close relationship between metaphor and the cultural code embedded in the work.

Spatial Code (continued)

The word **yo'l** ("road" or "path") is conventionally used to denote a route or passage, that is, a long strip of land formed by the movement of people, animals, or vehicles [6, p. 303]. However, when employed metaphorically, it acquires diverse figurative meanings. In *Mahbub ul-Qulub*, several metaphors are constructed around the concept of **yo'l**, including **haqiqat yo'li** ("the path of truth"), **ma'ni yo'li** ("the path of meaning"), **rizq yo'li** ("the path of sustenance"), and **hidoyat jodasi** ("the road of divine guidance").

One example is found in the following passage:

Dehqonki, dona sochar, yerni yormoq bila rizq yo'lin ochar [5, p. 35].

In this context, the metaphor **rizq yo'li** ("the path of sustenance") conveys the idea that a farmer, through diligent labor, opens the divinely ordained way to material provision and livelihood.

Another example illustrates the metaphor **haqiqat yo'li** ("the path of truth"):

Chun ogah bo'ldi hayotidin toriqqay va uyot dudi dimog'idin chiqqay va e'tizol bila qiladurg'onidin ibo qilg'ay va istig'for bila qiladurg'on jurmidin iste'fo qilg'ay va nohamvor af'olig'a andom bergay va birovning berohlig'idin chiqib, haqiqat yo'lig'a kirgay [5, p. 46].

Here, the metaphor signifies an individual's transition from wrongful and morally unacceptable actions to the righteous path. Within the Sufi tradition, **haqiqat yo'li** represents the spiritual path leading to the realization of Divine Truth (*al-Haqq*) and ultimate spiritual perfection.

This metaphor has remained productive in contemporary Uzbek literary language. For instance, it appears in Komil Yashin's drama *Hamza*:

Hamza haqiqat yo'lidan, ma'rifat yo'lidan, Furqat vasiyat qilgan yo'ldan boradi [10, p. 66].

Similarly, the work contains the following metaphor:

Shakovat tariqining nihoyatidur, hidoyat jodasining bidoyatidur [5, p. 45].

Another example reads:

Agar ahyonon yuzdin bir solik zohir yuzidin murshid piri nobud ekandur, ammo ma'ni yo'lidin mavjud ekandur yo g'oyib murshid taqviyati birla yo mutavaffoyi komil ruhoniyyati tarbiyati bila azm etibdurlar va matlubig'a yetibdurlar.

These examples indicate that expressions such as **haqiqat yo'li** ("the path of truth"), **ma'ni yo'li** ("the path of meaning"), **hidoyat jodasi** ("the road of divine guidance"), and **rizq yo'li** ("the path of sustenance") function as conceptual metaphors within Sufi thought. They symbolize humanity's spiritual journey toward perfection while reflecting the relationship between human beings and God, the process of inner purification, and attitudes toward divine destiny.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the metaphorical units employed in Alisher Navoi's *Mahbub ul-Qulub* constitute one of the principal linguopoetic devices that vividly reveal the author's individual artistic worldview and stylistic mastery. Since the work is composed in the *saj'* (rhymed prose) style, metaphors perform not only an imagistic function but also contribute to the text's rhythm, euphony, and structural harmony. By integrating semantic depth with aesthetic form, they significantly enhance the artistic value of the work.

Examining these metaphors through the framework of cultural codes makes it possible to identify the national, cultural, spiritual, and material sources upon which Navoi relied in constructing his imagery. The analysis demonstrates that concepts associated with nature, space, the human body, warfare, values, everyday objects, and music serve as the principal conceptual domains from which metaphorical meanings are derived. Consequently, metaphors should be regarded not merely as stylistic devices but also as linguocultural units that preserve and transmit the cultural memory, worldview, and value system of the Uzbek people.

Thus, the metaphorical system of *Mahbub ul-Qulub*, interpreted through cultural codes, provides deeper insight into Navoi's artistic cognition, his unique conceptualization of the world, and the close interrelationship between language, culture, and national identity.

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