



Article

A Textual Study of Two Manuscript Collections of Sa'di Shirazi Held in the Alisher Navoi State Museum of Literature

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Abstract: This article is dedicated to a textual-comparative study of two manuscript "kulliyats" (collections) of Sa'di Shirazi, preserved in the collection of the Alisher Navoi State Museum of Literature of the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences. The research scientifically analyzes the structural composition of these manuscripts, their genre characteristics, the commonalities and differences between the texts, and the specific features related to the formation and copying process of the codices. The manuscript copies are examined using a comparative-textual method, with special attention given to the textual variants they contain, the discrepancies between certain couplets and passages, scribal peculiarities, and the changes that occurred during the text's transmission. Furthermore, the article highlights the significance of these "kulliyats" as sources for studying Sa'di's creative heritage, the reliability of the manuscript texts, and their scholarly value from a textological perspective. The findings of this research serve to establish an important source study and textological foundation for the systematic study of Sa'di Shirazi's manuscript sources, the identification of existing textual variants, and the future preparation of a scholarly-critical text.

Keywords: Kulliyat, State Museum of Literature, Saadi Shirazi, textual-comparative study, manuscript

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1. Introduction

It is well known that the Alisher Navoi Museum houses not only kulliyats written in Turkic but also kulliyats composed in Persian. Examples include Sa'di's kulliyats, preserved under inventory numbers No. 1 and No. 28. The copies of these kulliyats, preserved at the State Museum of Literature named after Alisher Navoi of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, are of particular significance from the perspectives of textual criticism and literary source studies. They provide an opportunity to reconstruct the textual history of Sa'di's works, identify discrepancies among manuscript copies, and examine the process through which particular textual variants were formed [1].

A comparative analysis of the Persian kulliyat manuscripts preserved at the State Museum of Literature reveals a number of lexical, grammatical, structural, and editorial differences in their textual composition. On the one hand, these discrepancies can be attributed to the period in which the manuscripts were produced, the activities of individual scribes, and established editorial traditions [2]. On the other hand, they constitute important source-critical evidence for illuminating the historical formation of

the kulliyat texts. The textual comparative analysis is conducted on the basis of the following criteria [3]:

- a. Lexical differences;
- b. Differences in words and word forms;
- c. Grammatical differences;
- d. Structural differences;
- e. Cases of omitted verses or the inclusion of additional verses;
- f. Errors made by scribes.

In general, textual comparative analysis is carried out by identifying these lexical, grammatical, structural, and editorial discrepancies, determining the reasons for their occurrence, and providing a scholarly interpretation of them. This process contributes to reconstructing a reliable textual version of the Persian kulliyats, identifying the historical linguistic layers of the poet's works, and examining scribal traditions [4].

2. Materials and Methods

Lexical Differences

The following verse demonstrates a lexical discrepancy:

Table 1. lexical discrepancy

№1	№28
یا چهره هیند یا بسوزان بر روی چو آتشت سپندی	یا چهره بپوش یا بسوزان بر روی چو آتشت سپندی
چهره - face	

In Eastern poetry, the concept of the “face” (*yuz*) symbolizes the inner truth of a person, reveals the identity of the lover, and serves as a mirror of the individual's spiritual state.

بسوزان — *besūzān* means “burn” or “set fire to.” In Sufi poetry, this verb frequently carries a symbolic meaning associated with burning the *nafs* (lower self), renouncing the ego, and being consumed by divine love.

سپندی / اسپند — *esfand* refers to *isiriq* (Syrian rue), a seed traditionally burned in Eastern cultures as a means of protection against the evil eye and envy. Accordingly, the expression “to burn like *esfand*” conveys the meanings of purification, cleansing from evil, and spiritual renewal.

3. Results

The inner meaning of the verse may therefore be interpreted as follows: **“Either reveal your true face and remain faithful to your essential truth, or burn it away and purify yourself from the *nafs*. Both paths lead to purification, just as *esfand* is purified through burning [5].”**

Here, a textual discrepancy can be observed in the expressions **chehrayi hind / chehra bepūsh**, which are associated respectively with **revealing the face / concealing the face**. This contrast may be interpreted as representing different attitudes toward society: confronting the external world and speaking the truth, or concealing oneself, remaining silent, and turning inward toward the spiritual self [6].

Besūzān — “burn” — thus carries a deeper Sufi meaning: the purification of the soul, the burning of the *nafs*, and the sacrifice of the ego, corresponding to the Sufi concept of *fanā* (annihilation of the self) [7].

As a result of the textual comparative analysis, the principal meaning of the verse identified as the more authentic reading may be interpreted as follows: **“In the pursuit of spiritual truth, there are two paths: reveal your face and confront the truth directly, or burn away the self and attain purification, just as *esfand* burns in the fire. Both paths ultimately reveal your true essence [8].”**

Table 2. two paths

№1	№ 28
کوته نظری به خلوتم گفت غوغا مکن آخرت جنون نیست	کوته نظری به خلوتم گفت سودا مکن آخرت جنون نیست

Translation 1: “A narrow-minded person said to me in my seclusion (solitude): ‘Do not make a commotion; after all, what you are doing is not madness.’”

Translation 2: “The narrow-minded one said to me: ‘Do not indulge in fantasies (or become a dreamer); what you are doing is not madness.’”

کوته‌نظر — *kotāh-nazar* means “narrow-minded,” “limited in outlook,” or, in a more figurative sense, “base-minded.” In Persian poetry, the term is often used to describe a worldly and narrow-minded person who is incapable of comprehending the spiritual realm and perceives only the external world—in other words, a person whose “inner eye” remains closed [9].

غوغا مکن — *ghoghā makon* means “do not make a commotion” or “do not raise a tumult.” In poetic contexts, it may also refer to a state of intense spiritual agitation or inner turmoil [10].

سودا — *sawdā* denotes passionate longing, desire, obsessive thought, or madness. In poetry, it is often associated with the madness of the lover, burning in pursuit of spiritual knowledge, and the symbolic expression of “the pain of love [11].”

جنون — *jonūn* means “madness” or “ecstatic love.” In Sufi poetry, however, *jonūn* signifies a higher spiritual state—the state of being intoxicated by divine love. The verse therefore portrays a worldly-minded person admonishing an individual who is pursuing the path of spiritual perfection: “Why are you making such a commotion? Why are you troubling yourself with these matters? After all, this is not madness; do not torment yourself [12].”

Thus, the poet’s inner spiritual state is elevated beyond the capacity of a narrow-minded person to comprehend or evaluate. The narrow-minded individual says, in effect, “What you are doing is not madness.” For the Sufi, however, **madness signifies spiritual intoxication through divine love [13].**

The deeper meaning of the verse may therefore be understood as follows: “**Narrow-minded people diminish my solitude, spiritual quest, and inner burning by claiming that what I experience is ‘not madness,’ because they are incapable of perceiving the storm of love within me. In reality, the state they call ‘madness’ is a process of purification through divine love, whereas the narrow-minded person remains unaware of spiritual truth [14].**”

Textual Variant: غوغا مکن / سودا مکن

From the perspectives of poetic tone, semantic coherence, and rhythm, **غوغا مکن** (*ghoghā makon*) is more compatible with the text. **سودا مکن** (*sawdā makon*) may occur as a variant in certain manuscript copies, but it appears to be less frequently attested.

The preference for **غوغا مکن** can be justified on the following grounds [15]:

1. **Prosodic and rhythmic compatibility.** The expression **غوغا مکن** corresponds more naturally to the sound pattern and rhythmic structure of the verse. By contrast, **سودا مکن** slightly disrupts the rhythmic flow.
2. **Semantic coherence.** The central idea of the verse concerns the misunderstanding of the speaker’s spiritual state and inner experience by an outsider in his solitude. The narrow-minded person’s admonition, “**Do not make a commotion**” (**غوغا مکن**), constitutes a direct and contextually logical reprimand. Although “**Do not indulge in fantasies / do not become absorbed in dreams**” (**سودا مکن**) is also semantically possible, it is somewhat less appropriate to the specific context.

Accordingly, the textual reading *غوغا مکن* should be regarded as the **primary and preferable variant**, whereas *سودا مکن* may be considered an **additional manuscript variant** that occurs less frequently.

Table 3. additional manuscript variant

№1	№28
گفتم ز تو کی برآید این دود کت آتش عشق در اندرون نیست؟	گفتم ز تو کی برآید این دود کت آتش غم در اندرون نیست؟

Translation: “I said: When will this smoke come from you? After all, there is no fire of love within you!”

Alternative translation: “I said: When will this smoke come from you? After all, there is no fire of sorrow within you!”

The poet’s intended meaning may be interpreted as follows: “**If there is no inner fire within you—the fire of love or the fire of sorrow—how can smoke possibly emerge from you?**” Here, “smoke” represents the outward manifestation, whereas “fire” symbolizes the individual’s inner spiritual state.

آتش عشق — *ātash-i ‘ishq* (“the fire of love”) is a central metaphor in Sufi poetry, expressing the power of divine love, spiritual burning, and the inner flame of passionate devotion.

آتش غم — *ātash-i gham* (“the fire of sorrow”) refers to inner suffering, the pain of separation, the agony of longing, and the spiritual burning of the soul.

دود — *dūd* (“smoke”) functions as a poetic symbol of visible consequences or external manifestations of an inner spiritual state. It represents the outward sign produced by the lover’s internal burning.

در اندرون — *dar andarūn* (“within,” “in the inner self”) refers to the *bātin*, or inner spiritual realm. In Eastern poetry, the *bātin* is regarded as the abode of truth, the source of love, and the place where the spiritual flame resides.

From the perspectives of textual compatibility, frequency of occurrence, and poetic force, the variant *آتش عشق* — *ātash-i ‘ishq* (“the fire of love”) is the most appropriate reading and should be regarded as the preferred textual variant.

The variant *آتش غم* — *ātash-i gham* (“the fire of sorrow”) may occur in other manuscript copies, but it appears to be less frequent and possesses comparatively weaker poetic force.

The central idea of the verse is that **without an inner flame, there can be no outward smoke**. This constitutes a philosophical principle: if a person has no love within, no outward manifestation of passionate devotion can emerge from them.

The poet addresses an individual who presents himself as a lover but has no inner flame. External claims are therefore meaningless. The poet ironically remarks: “**You produce smoke, but there is no fire within you.**”

The poet’s principal argument can thus be understood as follows: “**You imitate the appearance of a lover and produce smoke as though you were burning, yet within you there is neither the fire of love nor the fire of sorrow. Therefore, your apparent state is nothing more than a false display.**”

Preferred Textual Variant

The preferred reading is:

کت آتش عشق در اندرون نیست
“After all, there is no fire of love within you!”

The preference for *آتش عشق* — *ātash-i ‘ishq* is supported by the conventions of Sufi and classical Persian poetry. Within the classical Persian poetic tradition, the triadic relationship between **fire, smoke, and love** constitutes a highly established and coherent metaphorical structure.

The semantic structure of the verse may therefore be summarized as follows: “**Smoke is emerging from you, yet there is no fire of love within you.**” This represents a classical poetic form of criticism directed toward the **false lover**—one who outwardly claims the status of a lover but lacks the inner spiritual fire necessary to substantiate that claim.

This textual and semantic correspondence further supports the conclusion that **آتش** (*ātash-i ‘ishq*) represents the original or more authentic reading. If the original verse had contained **آتش غم** (*ātash-i gham*), the repeated expression at the end would be expected to preserve the same semantic and lexical correspondence.

Table 4. lexical correspondence

№1	№ 28
جز نقش تو نیست در ضمیرم جز ذکر تو نیست بر زبانی	جز نقش تو نیست در ضمیرم جز نام تو نیست بر زبانی

Translation 1: “There is no trace of anyone but you within me; nor is there any remembrance of anyone but you upon my tongue.”

Translation 2: “There is no trace of anyone but you within me; nor is there any name but yours upon my tongue.”

The Difference between ذکر (*zīkr*) and نام (*nām*)

- ذکر (*zīkr*)** — remembrance, recollection, invocation, or mentioning. It is closely associated with the Sufi tradition and carries a stronger spiritual and devotional connotation.
- نام (*nām*)** — name; the designation of a person or entity. It conveys a more general and straightforward meaning.

In **Variant A**, the verse has a distinctly Sufi and spiritual character: the lover constantly invokes and remembers only the beloved. In **Variant B**, the meaning is closer to conventional lyrical love poetry: the only name upon the lover’s tongue is that of the beloved.

The first hemistich is identical in both variants: “**There is no trace of anyone but you within me (in my heart).**” This line indicates that the lover’s heart belongs entirely to the beloved. From a Sufi perspective, the “beloved” may also be understood as **God (the Divine Beloved)**.

The difference in the second hemistich affects the logical and semantic nuance of the verse. **Zīkr** denotes an active spiritual practice—the continual remembrance and invocation of the beloved through speech—whereas **nām** refers simply to the name of a person or entity, that is, a word uttered or mentioned. Thus, Variant A conveys the idea: “**My tongue is constantly engaged in remembering you.**” Variant B, by contrast, means: “**The only word uttered by my tongue is your name.**”

Within the context of spiritual and Sufi poetry, the **zīkr** variant possesses greater aesthetic and semantic force because *zīkr* constitutes a central concept in Sufi thought and devotional practice. In the context of conventional lyrical poetry, however, the **nām** (“name”) variant may sound softer and more fluent.

Therefore, considering the manuscript reading, the **A variant containing ذکر (*zīkr*) should be regarded as the preferable and more appropriate reading**, particularly in view of its stronger Sufi, spiritual, and semantic connotations.

Table 5. variant containing

№1 239-b	№ 28
عیش مکنید درد مندان گر سوخته خرمنی، بزارد	عیش مکنید هوشمندان گر سوخته خرمنی، بزارد

Translation 1: “O you who have suffered, do not blame him; if he has burned a single sheaf, let it be—pardon him.”

Translation 2: “O you who are wise and discerning, do not blame him; if he has burned a single sheaf, let it be—pardon him.”

سوخته خرمنی — *sūkhta khirmanī* is a figurative expression meaning “having burned a sheaf,” “having burned a heap,” or, metaphorically, “having caused a significant loss or great damage.”

بزارد — *bigzārad* means “let him be,” “do not interfere with him,” or “forgive him.”

In both variants, the second hemistich is identical. The principal difference lies in the group addressed in the first hemistich:

- a. **Variant A:** دردمندان (*dardmandān*) — those who have suffered, people afflicted by pain and distress.
- b. **Variant B:** هوشمندان (*hūshmandān*) — intelligent, wise, and discerning people.

Lexical and Semantic Differences

In **Variant A**, دردمندان (*dardmandān*) refers to people who have experienced considerable suffering, whose hearts have been wounded, and who possess heightened emotional sensitivity. They are portrayed as individuals capable of understanding human mistakes through empathy and therefore willing to forgive.

In **Variant B**, هوشمندان (*hūshmandān*) refers to intelligent and wise people who evaluate circumstances through reason and wisdom. In this version, forgiveness is presented as a consequence of rational judgment and discernment.

The address “O you who have suffered!” in Variant A places greater emphasis on emotional experience: “A person who has experienced suffering and understands pain can also understand the mistakes of others.”

Variant B, by contrast, has a more didactic and ethical tone. The address “O you who are wise!” appeals to reason and prudence: “A wise person should not condemn the mistakes of others.”

The figurative layer is common to both variants and may be summarized as follows: “Even if he has caused a great loss, do not blame him; everyone is capable of making mistakes.” Nevertheless, Variant A establishes **understanding of suffering** as the basis of forgiveness, whereas Variant B establishes **reason and wisdom** as its foundation.

Poetic and Aesthetic Considerations

From an aesthetic perspective, دردمندان (*dardmandān*) is more characteristic of Sufi and lyrical poetry, whereas هوشمندان (*hūshmandān*) is more closely associated with didactic, ethical, *masnavi*, and wisdom-oriented poetry.

From the perspective of poetic rhythm, both variants are compatible with the *aruz* meter. However, دردمندان (*dardmandān*), owing to its phonetic and melodic qualities, integrates more smoothly into the overall poetic flow.

4. Discussion

Comparative Textual Analysis of the Persian *Kulliyats*

The comparative analysis of the Persian *kulliyat* manuscripts of Sa’di preserved in the Alisher Navoi Museum, particularly the copies catalogued under inventory numbers **No. 1** and **No. 28**, demonstrates that a complex and multifaceted process of textual transmission took place throughout their textual history. The lexical, grammatical, structural, and editorial differences identified among the manuscripts confirm that each copy was shaped by the period in which it was produced, prevailing scribal traditions, and both oral and written modes of textual transmission.

Structural discrepancies are particularly evident in numerous verses where the order of words has been altered. This can be clearly observed in the example جام بر سنگ / سنگ بر جام. Although such structural changes do not necessarily produce a substantial alteration in the general meaning of the text, they may significantly affect its poetic dynamics, rhetorical emphasis, and logical progression. Thus, textual structure emerges as an important factor determining the rhythmic and semantic center of a verse.

Omission and Addition of Verses

Cases involving the omission or addition of verses were also identified in the manuscripts catalogued under inventory numbers **No. 1 and No. 28**. In several *ghazals*, instances were observed in which one or two verses had been omitted, while in some cases additional verses had been incorporated. There were also instances in which the order of verses had been rearranged. Such phenomena represent characteristic features of the textual transmission process and may be associated with errors or interventions made by scribes during the copying of manuscripts.

5. Conclusion

The Persian *kulliyat* copies preserved in the Alisher Navoi Museum collection therefore constitute valuable textual sources that reflect different stages in the transmission and formation of the texts of Sa'di's works. Their comparative study makes it possible not only to identify textual variants but also to reconstruct aspects of the history of the manuscripts, understand scribal practices, and determine the textual forms through which Sa'di's literary heritage has been transmitted.

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