



# The Compositional Architecture and Structural Poetics of “Navādir al-Amthāl”

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**Abstract:** This study analyzes the structural architecture and stylistic features of *Navādir al-Amthāl*, authored by 17th-century scholar Mīrak Muḥammad Naqshbandī Tāshkandī. The research focuses on the work’s overall composition – introduction, body, and conclusion – and the microstructure of individual entries formed by the triad: proverb, commentary, and witness verse. It highlights enriching elements such as historical narratives, regional expressions, and Turkic equivalents of Persian proverbs. Special attention is given to the poetic citations (“witness verses”), which serve to legitimize proverbs, expand metaphorical meaning, and build cultural continuity between oral and written traditions. The paper argues that the composition of *Navādir al-Amthāl* reflects not only a methodical structure but also embodies the author’s encyclopedic and didactic intent. From a modern textological perspective, the work emerges as a unique scholarly contribution that bridges lexicography, literature, and cultural memory.

**Keywords:** *Navādir al-Amthāl*, Mīrak Muḥammad Tāshkandī, structural poetics, compositional analysis, microstructure, witness verse, comparative lexicography, textology, Mawarannahr, 17th century.

**Introduction:** In recent years, the re-examination of classical Uzbek literary texts on a scholarly basis and the analysis of texts relying on historical sources have become an integral part of restoring cultural memory and national identity. In this process, alongside famous authors, there is a growing need to rediscover the works of writers who illuminated the artistic and intellectual environment of their time but have not been sufficiently

studied in academic discourse. The 17th-century work *Navādir al-Amthāl* by Mīrak Muḥammad Tāshkandī is distinguished by its well-crafted and sophisticated compositional structure for the lexicography of its era. Its compositional framework is not merely an external organizational tool but a holistic system that embodies the author's clear didactic purposes, scholarly concepts, and artistic-aesthetic views. The structure of the work can be analyzed by deeply studying aspects such as its general compositional architecture, the internal artistic-logical construction of each entry, and the functional poetics of the citations within the text.

### The General Compositional Architecture of the Work

*Navādir al-Amthāl* is structured in strict accordance with the traditional compositional models developed over centuries in classical literature. This indicates that the author intended his work not merely as a collection but as a serious scholarly piece. The work, like a complete architectural monument, consists of three main parts: the Introduction, the Main Body, and the Conclusion.

**I. The Introduction:** The Ideological-Conceptual Foundation of the Work. The introduction serves as the work's conceptual "passport," revealing its entire essence, defining its scholarly-methodological direction, and acting as a "permission" to enter. While the traditional *ḥamd* (praise to God) and *na't* (praise to the Prophet) present the work as a sacred undertaking under divine patronage, the *sabab-i ta'lif* (reason for writing) section clearly outlines the author's intentions to leave a "memorial for friends" and to create something that "may be of use to someone." This defines the work's dual function as both cultural heritage and a practical manual. The most crucial structural element of the introduction is the author's clear articulation of his methodology. His classification of proverbs based on an alphabetical-phonetic principle (alphabetical order, further grouped by vowels: *maftūḥa*, *maksūra*, *maẓmūma*) demonstrates his intention to bring scholarship, order, and user-friendliness to his work. Furthermore, listing 43 poets, including *Firdawsī*, *Niẓāmī*, and *Ḥāfiẓ*, serves as a "scholarly apparatus" that shows the great literary tradition upon which the work is based.

**II. The Main Body:** The Ordered Ocean of Knowledge. The main body of the work is a vast ocean of knowledge, organized according to a strict alphabetical-phonetic principle. This complex classification – dividing chapters by letters and then grouping them by vowels – expresses the author's worldview that knowledge is not a random phenomenon but a system that can be ordered by the human intellect. This method lends an encyclopedic

quality to the work and allows the reader to quickly find the necessary information within the vast material.

**III. The Conclusion:** The Historical Seal and the Author's Will. If the introduction defines the work's purpose, the conclusion gives it the status of a historical document and expresses the author's final will. The explicit mention in the conclusion that the work was completed in the month of Muharram, 1020 AH (March-April 1611 CE) in the city of Sarajevo precisely defines its historical-geographical frame. With this, the timeless wisdom of the proverbs is connected to a specific historical moment and place. The author's final prayer and the concluding poetic verse in Turkic serve as an expression of his hope that his work will reach future generations, acting as the dome that completes the work's architectural structure.

### Results: The Internal Structure and Enriching Elements

Each entry (proverb) in *Navādir al-Amthāl* possesses a remarkably distinctive, stable, and well-thought-out internal structure—a microstructure—that serves as the foundational framework of the entire work. This framework is consistently based on the template: [Proverb → Commentary → Witness]. However, the author's true mastery lies in his skill of consistently expanding this stable template with additional, multi-layered enriching elements.

This is most evident in his use of historical narratives, which serve to explain the origins of certain proverbs. For instance, the commentary on the phrase "*shēr-gīr ast*" (is a lion-seizer) (Entry 186) includes an entire, vivid tale from the time of *Bahrām Gōr*. It narrates the prohibition of wine, the story of a young man who vanquishes a lion while intoxicated, and the king's subsequent decree to "drink enough to seize a lion." This narrative technique does more than just explain; it provides the proverb with vitality, cultural context, and historical depth, making it unforgettable for the reader.

Furthermore, the author meticulously documents the work's geographical and linguistic scope through regional emphases. The frequent use of phrases like "in the language of the Samarkandians," "among the Khorasanians," and "in the land of Bukhara" illustrates the regional specificity of the proverbs. This practice transforms the work from a generic dictionary into a rare and valuable source that records living linguistic and cultural phenomena across the vast Persianate world.

Finally, the author employs a sophisticated comparative method by providing Turkic equivalents for Persian proverbs. For example, he equates the Persian proverb "*zīra ba Kirmān mēbarad*" (taking cumin to Kerman) (Entry 160) with the Turkic expression "*bostancıya tarhun ilet-di*" (taking tarragon to the greengrocer). This

is not merely a translation but a brilliant example of cross-cultural analysis, showcasing both the commonality of thought and the diversity of imagery between the two great languages and cultures.

### Discussion: The Functional Poetics of Citations

In Navādir al-Amthāl, citations, particularly the shāhid (witness) verses, are not mere embellishments; they are a multi-faceted poetic device that performs several crucial functions within the work's structure, elevating the entire text to a higher scholarly and literary plane.

The primary function is Legitimization and Canon-Formation. By substantiating a common folk proverb with a verse from a great literary figure like Firdawsī, Nizāmī, or Ḥāfiẓ, the author bestows upon the proverb a high literary status and "legal" authority. The witness verse acts as a "seal of quality," confirming the proverb's adherence to the norms of high literature. For instance, citing a verse from Shaykh Sa'dī for the phrase "sipar andākht" (to throw down the shield) (Entry 175) confirms that it is not just a simple phrase but a philosophical maxim worthy of a great master.

Secondly, the witness verses serve to Expand and Aestheticize Meaning. They often reveal the hidden, metaphorical, or mystical meanings of a proverb that a simple commentary cannot fully capture. A poetic image endows a worldly piece of wisdom with an artistic-aesthetic spirit and philosophical depth. For example, citing a verse from Nizāmī's Laylī va Majnūn for the proverb "mār-gēzīda az rismān metarsad" (one bitten by a snake fears even a rope) (Entry 243) infuses a simple statement about fear with the profound emotional color of romantic anguish and trauma.

Finally, this method serves as a Cultural Bridge and a means of Ensuring Tradition. The witness verses create an organic link between oral folk tradition (proverbs) and written classical literature (poetry), ensuring the

synthesis of two great cultural layers within the work's structure. By citing his own teacher, Muḥliṣī Badakhshānī, alongside the great masters of the past, the author also presents himself as a successor to this great, unbroken literary tradition, thereby ensuring its continuity.

### FINAL CONCLUSION

The structural composition of the work reveals the high scholarly competence, meticulous methodology, and clear purpose of its author, Mīrak Muḥammad Tāshkandī. Viewed from the perspective of modern textology, it is no exaggeration to say that the work's strict hierarchical composition, the standardized yet enriched internal structure of each entry, and the functional significance of its citations transformed it into a unique, encyclopedic, and scholarly-didactic monument for its time.

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### Graphical Abstract

Figure 1. A schematic model illustrating the macro- and micro-structural architecture of Navādir al-Amthāl and its key compositional elements.

