



The Manuscript Copies Of Siyari Sharifi Turkiy: A Codicological Study And Analysis Of Distribution Patterns

OPEN ACCESS

SUBMITTED 25 April 2025

ACCEPTED 21 May 2025

PUBLISHED 30 June 2025

VOLUME Vol.05 Issue 06 2025

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Abstract: This article explores the codicological and paleographic dimensions of *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy*, an autonomous Turkic work composed by Muhammad Rahim Miskin in the 18th–19th centuries. Although the narrative originates from the Persian *Mi'raj al-Nubuwwa*, the Turkic version contains major structural transformations, original interpolations, and cultural adaptations that qualify it as an independent work rather than a mere translation. This study examines 24 verified manuscripts from repositories in Uzbekistan, Turkey, Germany, Russia, and Sweden. Each manuscript is analyzed in terms of textual structure, scribe attribution, copying date, and physical characteristics such as number of folios and lines per page. Through this codicological comparison, the article seeks to reassess the neglected position of *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy* in modern scholarship and to contribute toward a more inclusive understanding of Turkic Islamic textual production.

Keywords: Siyar literature, Muhammad Rahim Miskin, Turkic Islamic literature, manuscript studies, codicology, paleography, copyist, *Mi'raj al-Nubuwwa*, *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy*, historical sources.

Introduction:

1.1 *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy* as an Independent Work in the Turkic Siyar Tradition

The genre of prophetic biography (*siyar*) occupies a prominent position in Islamic historiography, emerging in the 8th century through the foundational works of Ibn Ishaq and Ibn Hisham. In the broader Islamic world, *siyar*

texts have served both didactic and devotional purposes. Among Turkic-speaking communities, this genre gained widespread circulation from the 15th century onwards, evolving into a localized tradition enriched by oral narrative, poetic forms, and accessible language.

The *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy*, composed by Muhammad Rahim Miskin, is a paradigmatic example of such localized innovation. While it is structurally inspired by the Persian *Mi'raj al-Nubuwwa*, the Turkic work incorporates substantial modifications—ranging from interpolated episodes and folk motifs to poetic digressions and exegetical comments. These features transform the text into a culturally embedded, independently structured work reflective of Central Asian religious consciousness.

Muhammad Rahim's adaptation cannot be classified merely as a translation. The composition is deeply inflected by the Turkic literary idiom, and includes linguistic, stylistic, and conceptual expansions. The presence of Turkic oral traditions, didactic anecdotes, and poetic invocations demonstrates a creative process of textual appropriation and rearticulation. Thus, *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy* must be studied as an original composition rooted in Turkic Islamic literary traditions.

1.2 State of Research and Existing Gaps

Despite the evident historical and literary value of *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy*, scholarly attention to the work remains limited. A.A. Semyonov was among the first to document two manuscript copies housed at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Tashkent, offering preliminary codicological observations regarding date, script, and scribe attribution¹. However, his study, while pioneering, lacked a systematic codicological framework and did not examine the textual structure or literary uniqueness of the work.

Broader studies on Turkic Islamic manuscripts—by scholars such as Y. Bregel, A.K. Savitsky, D.Yu. Yusupova, Carl W. Ernst, and Ahmed Yaşar Ocak—have contributed significantly to our understanding of the Islamic manuscript tradition in Central Asia. Nevertheless, these works tend to offer generalized typologies or focus on canonical Arabic-Persian texts, often bypassing Turkic compositions like *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy* altogether.

This research seeks to address that gap by conducting a comprehensive codicological analysis of all known manuscript witnesses of the work.

II. MANUSCRIPT COPIES OF SIYARI SHARIFI TURKIY: DISTRIBUTION, STRUCTURE, AND CODICOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

2.1 Geographical Spread of the Manuscripts and Their

Scholarly Value

The work *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy*, created by Muhammad Rahim Miskin in the 18th–19th centuries, survives today in 24 identified manuscript copies, preserved in Uzbekistan, Turkey, Germany, Russia, and Sweden. These manuscripts not only attest to the historical significance of the text within Uzbek and broader Turkic literary traditions but also reveal the extent of its dissemination.

Some of the copies have been preserved in full, while others are fragmentary. Moreover, the manuscripts bear diverse titles such as *Mi'rāj al-Nubuwwa*, *Ma'ārij al-Nubuwwa*, *Siyar-i Sharif*, and *Tarjimai Ma'ārij*, which reflect variations in regional naming practices, recording conventions, and audience orientation.

The most abundant collection is found at Lund University Library in Sweden (15 copies), while the earliest dated manuscript—from 1170 AH / 1756–57 CE—is preserved at the Institute of Oriental Studies, Tashkent. This diversity of copies and locations suggests an active transmission network throughout Central and South Asia.

2.2 Codicological Features of the Manuscripts

The manuscript copies of *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy* differ in script style, number of folios, line density per page, type of handwriting, information about the scribe, and presence of seals. Each manuscript thus requires individual codicological analysis.

a) Script and Writing Style

The majority of the copies are written in Taliq script, a style commonly associated with madrasa culture. Some employ Naskh, Shikasta, or mixed scripts. For instance, the Suleymaniye Library copy (1301 AH / 1883–84) is written in Taliq and reflects classical Islamic manuscript aesthetics.

b) Number of Lines and Folios

Each manuscript presents different specifications in terms of layout:

- Jarring Prov. 348: 15 lines, 482 folios
- Berlin No. 35: 21 lines, 950 folios
- Ankara 06 Hk 1673: 17 lines, 321 folios

These numbers illustrate not only differences in copying practice but also the broader book-making standards of the era.

c) Scribes and Seals

Some manuscripts contain detailed colophons mentioning the name of the scribe and the date of transcription. Examples include Ibn Ismail Beg of Kashgar (Jarring Prov. 428), Mulla Abdulmajid Kashghari (Prov. 348), and Musa ibn Mulla Adil (Prov. 86).

A notable instance is the Tashkent 5344 manuscript, which bears a seal indicating the date 1170 AH (1756–57 CE), possibly confirming its association with a specific madrasa or waqf library.

2.3 Structural Differences among the Manuscripts

The contents of the manuscripts vary by section:

- Only Sections 1–2: e.g., Ankara 06 Hk 1673,

Jarring Prov. 243

- Only Section 3: e.g., Jarring Prov. 252, Prov. 418
- Sections 3–4 (in full): e.g., Berlin No. 35

Such variation may be attributed to practical, economic, or ideological factors during reproduction. In many cases, only the portions relevant to local communities were copied.

2.4 Manuscript Locations and Distribution Trends

A summary of the manuscripts by region and characteristic features:

Country	No. of Copies	Distinctive Features
Sweden	15	Jarring Collection; multiple scribes; wide variation
Uzbekistan	2	Oldest known copy with seal and verified date
Germany	4	Large volumes; relatively complete sections
Turkey	2	Preserved in Suleymaniye and Ankara public libraries
Russia	1	Located in St. Petersburg with partial content

CONCLUSION

The data presented above clearly indicate that *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy* was not merely a translation but evolved into an autonomous literary work with regional modifications. Its transmission across multiple cultural and religious centers of the Turkic-Islamic world in the 18th and 19th centuries demonstrates its deep impact on Islamic devotional literature. The variations in handwriting, structure, and terminology emphasize the dynamic manuscript culture of the period.

III. SIYARI SHARIFI TURKIY AS AN INDEPENDENT WORK: STRUCTURE, CONTENT, AND AUTHORIAL ADAPTATIONS

3.1 The Authorial Position of Muhammad Rahim

The work *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy*, composed by Muhammad Rahim Miskin in the 18th–19th centuries, was originally inspired by the Persian treatise *Mi'rāj al-Nubuwwa* by Husayn Vā'iz Kāshifī. However, it would be misleading to classify this text as a mere translation. Muhammad Rahim not only transposed the content into Eastern Turkic but also extensively revised, supplemented, and culturally localized the material for a Turkic-speaking readership.

The author incorporates distinct Sunni theological elements, liturgical expressions, and folk narrative techniques that significantly deviate from the Persian original. He frequently uses direct address and pedagogical expressions that reflect his self-conception not as a translator but as an educator and

spiritual guide:

“We prepared this treatise in a simple and accessible Turkic manner for our fellow believers...”

(paraphrased from authorial prologue)

Such statements reinforce the idea that *Siyari Sharifi Turkiy* is a recomposed and independently authored religious-literary work, tailored for a specific cultural and linguistic context.

3.2 Structural Composition and Narrative Dynamics

The structure of the text is consistently segmented into thematic sections, although the number and scope vary slightly across manuscripts. The most common divisions include:

- Introduction: Praise of God, blessings upon the Prophet, and explanation of the text's purpose
- Part I: Childhood and early youth of the Prophet Muhammad
- Part II: The beginning of revelation and prophetic mission
- Part III: The *Mi'rāj* event, miracles, and military campaigns
- Part IV: The Prophet's final days, advice to the ummah, supplications, and conclusion

Muhammad Rahim rewrote and rearranged these parts to emphasize certain themes. For example, the *Mi'rāj* episode—one of the narrative's focal points—is enriched with Sufi interpretations and metaphysical reflections.

Some versions of the manuscript include proverbs, anecdotes, and elements from Chagatai and Punjabi oral traditions, indicating a deliberate attempt to contextualize the message for different regional audiences.

3.3 Intertextual Links with Turkic-Islamic Traditions

The author's voice emerges not only through stylistic choices but also through deliberate intertextual layering. The text frequently alludes to:

- Qur'anic verses and Prophetic sayings (ḥadīth)
- Jurisprudential positions of Imām Abū Ḥanīfa
- Traditions attributed to al-Bukhārī and Muslim
- Classical didactic works such as *Haft Awrang*, *Rasa'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, and Turkic oral wisdom

These references place Siyari Sharifi Turkiy within the broader fabric of Central Asian Sunni educational and mystical literature. The influence of thinkers such as Rabbānī, al-Ghazālī, and 'Aṭṭār is evident in the author's choice of moral themes, narrative tone, and didactic structure.

Thus, the work functions not only as a *sīra* (biographical) narrative but also as a manual for ethical instruction and spiritual edification.

CONCLUSION

The evidence presented confirms that Siyari Sharifi Turkiy cannot be considered a literal translation of Kāshifī's *Mi'rāj al-Nubuwwa*. Rather, it is a textually and ideologically independent adaptation, bearing Muhammad Rahim's intellectual imprint and pedagogical intent. The structural modifications, insertion of local idioms, and integration of Sufi concepts substantiate its position as an original literary creation within the Turkic-Islamic tradition.

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