



## ITALY X. LIRICA PERSICA

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The name of a project set up in 1989 by the School of Persian Literary Studies at Venice University. The aim of the project was to create a database for Persian lyric verse by following a computer-assisted and linguistic-statistical approach in a semiotic-structuralist perspective. The work preparing the ground for the project included a methodological essay on the modes of versification and interpretation of Persian poetry (Zipoli, 1988), and the first computer-generated concordances of the *divān* of Ḥāfeẓ (Meneghini Correale, 1989).

The project is being developed along three major lines. Firstly, the continuous increase in the database mainly made up of texts and lexical material of 1,000-line samples taken from the *ḡazal* collections of Persian poets (the only exception is the sample taken from Farroḡi Sistāni's *nasibs* "lyrical introduction to the *qaṣidas*"). The decision to work on quantitatively uniform samples ensures that statistical comparisons can be made of the lexical material. In addition to the samples (for the list, see below), the database is made up of all the *ḡazals* of Ḥāfeẓ (Meneghini Correale, 1989), and Aṭir-al-Din Aḡsikati (q.v.), in addition to 104 *ḡazals* by Sanā'i Ḡaznavi according to the seven oldest manuscripts (Zanolla, 2003).

The second main line of activity involves the construction of a software



package dedicated to analyzing the texts. The main tools offer the possibility to search for contexts, morphological elements, and lexical solidarities; to identify rhyme structures and figures of speech; to calculate lexicon exhaustion; and to compare processed data (vocabularies, frequencies, etc.) besides other functions.

The third line of activity consists of analysis and research into the texts in the database at various levels (statistical-lexical, rhetorical, semantic, philological, etc.), using the dedicated software. These kinds of assays are not part of a systematic program, but are meant to demonstrate how the experience of the *Lirica Persica* project may be put to good use in different contexts.

The work carried out in the *Lirica Persica* project has led to the publication of a number of books and CD Roms (*Lirica Persica* Series) and articles in various journals (see Bibliography). The first volume in the Series is the project handbook, to be referred to for information not only on the structure, problems, and aims of the Series, but also the underlying principles, whose methodological criteria have subsequently been partly revised (Meneghini, Zanolla, and Zipoli, 1997). The Series includes eleven volumes containing the computer-processed texts by individual *ghazal* authors (Farid-al-Din 'Aṭṭār, Bābā Feḡāni, Bidel, Faḡr-al-Din 'Erāqi, Ḥāfez, Kamāl Ḳojāndi, Naḡiri Nišāburi, Sa'di, Salmān Sāvaji, Sanā'i, and Ṭāleb Āmoli), one volume with a sample of Farroḡi's *nasibs*, two volumes in which the data are analyzed (Zipoli, 1992; Meneghini Correale, 1993), and a presentation of comparative data of the first ten *ghazal* samples (Meneghini and Zipoli, 1998). The database was later extended by adding the computer-processed texts of another nine samples of *ghazals* (Ahli Širāzi, Amir Ḳosrow Dehlavi, Anwari Abivardi, 'Abd-al-Raḡmān Jāmi, Ḳvāju Kermāni, Ḳāqāni Šarvāni, Rumi, Šā'eb Tabrizi, Waḡši Bāfqi) bringing the number of *ghazal* samples up to twenty for a corpus of 20,000 lines (2,437 *ghazals*, 370,053 tokens, 16,312 types, and 9,866 lemmas). The material processed from this database (texts in both Persian characters and transliteration, complete with lexical, prosodic, and statistical material; a collection of more than 500 files, with internal and external links) was stored on a CD Rom (Meneghini, 2000) and given with a hypertext system of navigation and search (to retrieve contexts, morphological elements, and lexical solidarities). This database has two different levels, Authors and Corpus. The Authors level enables the user to browse and search the 20 separate samples of 1,000 lines; the Corpus level enables the user to browse and search the 20,000 lines as a whole, thus as a sample of the Persian *ghazal*



lexical system.

Another research area of the *Lirica Persica* project deals with developing a system for the computer-assisted collation and analysis of manuscripts. The outcome of this work is the publication of the second CD Rom in the Series (Zanolla, 2003), containing the electronic edition of a corpus of 104 *gāzals* by Sanā'i, organized in a hypertext (links added to the poems lead to the transcription of each witness, to the digitized images of the folios, to the single-witness and all-witness spelling databases, and to the word-by-word collation of the texts).

The *Lirica Persica* project has a website [www.liricapersica.it](http://www.liricapersica.it), presenting its activities and publications.

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