

ON THE ROLE AND STATUS OF MUIZZI'S POETRY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CRITICS

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Annotation. The article uses an analysis of literary thought that has shown that from the beginning to the present day, the views of writers on poetry and poetic experience of Muizzi are different in time and the influence of legitimate ideology, and the recognition of his poetry was not always objective. Based on the documents, the author identified and specified adequate and inadequate ways of recognizing the role and place of Muizzi in the field of Tajik-Persian literature, depending on the time.

Keywords. Muizzi, sofa, evaluation criteria, scale, realistic perception of the world, acceptable, smooth, artificial, praising, praised, style of speech, sweetness of language, beauty of expression, logic of thought, attraction, signs of the times, etc.

The understanding of Mu'izzi's poetry must be grounded in guiding principles that also align with the perspective of his own era. In this regard, it is necessary to take into account not only his own views but also those of his contemporaries and successors. As Abbas Iqbal aptly stated:

“Mu'izzi is a poet whose role and occupation were tied to the functions of a court poet, and due to his association with the Emirate of Poets, his position required him to be a panegyrist tasked with fulfilling his official duties in this regard. Therefore, it would be unfair to expect from such a poet anything beyond the execution of the duties he was assigned. One must ask whether, in this path, he managed to fulfill his mission as expected and in accordance with the requirements of his time. We must never judge individuals who lived centuries before us—under circumstances and in a world different from ours—by the standards of our present time.”

For this reason, in this article we aim to identify and define the temporal perspective and scale of Mu'izzi's poetry, drawing on the poet's own reflections, the views of later poets, authors of literary and historical works, and modern researchers.

Mu'izzi himself repeatedly spoke about the significance of his poetry. The following qit'a (short poem), in particular, reflects his perception of the role and status of his poetry in the eyes of Sultan Sanjar and Malikshah:

Ba bazmi xesh maro peshi xosagon binshond,
Ba dasti xesh ba mani banda do'stoni dod.
Ba zindagony Xizram, ki shahriyori jahon
Zi jomi xesh maro obi zindagony dod (10, mim).

Mu'izzi's words in this qit'a (short poem), first of all, indicate the high regard he held in the eyes of the «sovereign of the world», and secondly, they make an explicit reference to the role and status of his poetry, which reflects the strength and stability of his poetic voice and

position. To use Rudaki's expression, this piece is not only an example of "praise worthy of Mu'izzi's power," but also a sign of his firm skill in composing smooth, flowing verses—testifying to his artistic mastery.

In his qasida dedicated to the conquest of Ghaznin, Mu'izzi describes his poetic talent as a form of "sorcery," emphasizing and affirming the elevated status of his craftsmanship in poetry (10, mim).

Mu'izzi believed that in poetry—especially in madh (panegyric)—the language should be simple, fluent, elegant, and delicate so that its effect is felt more easily. He places particular emphasis on simplicity of diction, insisting that "easy language brings greater sweetness to hearts," and firmly asserts: "dar dilhā fuzūn bāshad ḥalāvat lafzi āsān-rā" («The sweetness of simple words touches hearts more deeply.»)

Dar ofarini buzurgon chunin nekitar she'r,
Ki xub boshadu azbu latifu ma'nidor.
Latoifash na garonu latofatash na sabuk,
Chunon ki she'ri man andar miyonai ash'or.
Ravo buvad, ki man asrori she'r binmoyam,
Ki royi ravshani tu voqif ast bar asror (13, 214)

Mu'izzi, in general, regarded the "simplicity of wording and elegance of expression" as essential in poetry, and in composing panegyrics, he emphasized the necessity of proportionality and harmony in meaning. The following couplet clearly expresses his explicit viewpoint in this regard:

Dar ofarinu madehat chunin nakitar she'r,
Ma'onii mutanosib ba lafzi mustahsan (13, 216).

Contemporary poets and those who came after Mu'izzi also praised him for his "refined taste and mastery." For instance, Sayyid Hasan Ghaznavi considered his poetic talent to be the "measure of eloquence" and, in comparison, placed Mu'izzi above himself, stating:

Dar she'r hame ziyodati jo'yad
Bar tab'i Muizzii Xurosoni (11.11).

The oldest sources that mention Mu'izzi are "Chahār Maqāla" by Nizami Aruzi of Samarkand and "Lubāb al-Albāb" by Muhammad Aufi. In "Chahār Maqāla", Nizami Aruzi recounts a story of his meeting with Mu'izzi and the presentation of a panegyric poem to him. Through this anecdote, he pays tribute to Mu'izzi's role and status in the realm of poetry, which implicitly affirms his poetic mastery (2, pp. 145–148).

Muhammad Aufi, emphasizing that "three poets found favor in three dynasties," continues: "One was Rudaki during the Samanid era, Unsuri under the Ghaznavids, and Mu'izzi under the reign of Sultan Malikshah." Aufi describes Mu'izzi as "the sultan of the world of eloquence, the commander of the literary emirs, and the knight of the field of rhetoric," and refers to his poetry as "naturally sweet and artistically smooth." He emphasizes that "under his expression, the child of eloquence reached maturity, and the black-inked pen of the scribes, which hovered over the elite of learning, once again nourished the children of the age" (1, p. 11).

Another author who offered a critical view of Mu'izzi's poetry was Shams-i Qays Razi, as expressed in his work "al-Mu'jam..." Shams-i Qays praises Mu'izzi's skill in using "rounded rhymes," such as "tu'ī" (you are), "da'wī" (claim), and "ma'nī" (meaning) (12, p. 203), and considers his art in "the technique of antithesis" to be exceptional (12, p. 211). However, he criticizes Mu'izzi for exaggeration (ghuluw) in his descriptions when explaining

the third type of meaning—“*udūl*,” or exceeding the bounds of correctness—and for, in some cases, reaching the level of “*rational impossibility*” or “*departing from proper religious decorum*.”

Shams-i Qays quotes the following couplet from Mu’izzi and then expresses his critical opinion as follows:

Chun havo sardi bidarrad, joi mo koshona beh,
Mushafi mo sog’aru mehrobi mo mayxona beh.

In the section titled “*On the Merits of Poetry and Certain Elegant Literary Devices Used in Verse and Prose*”, the author of *al-Mu’jam* also discusses Mu’izzi’s artistic use of rhetorical figures. He expresses a positive view of the poet’s skillful application of *tajnis* (paronomasia), particularly *tajnis-i muzdawaj* (paired paronomasia), in his poetic practice. He regards Mu’izzi’s refined use of this rhetorical device as “pleasing and commendable,” considering it a “sign of eloquence” and “evidence of the poet’s mastery,” and he cites several examples from Mu’izzi’s poetry to illustrate this (12, pp. 271–274).

In his discussion of explicit simile (*tashbīh-i sarīh*), Shams-i Qays also cites Mu’izzi’s famous couplet:

Biyor on may, ki pindori ravon yoquti nob asti
Va yo chun barkashida teg’ peshi oftob asti.-

He considers this verse an example of the poet’s artistic skill in combining multiple meanings and crafting a simile that encompasses them all. Shams-i Qays describes this as one of the distinctive artistic features of Mu’izzi’s poetry (12, pp. 278–279).

Shams-i Qays Razi, in the section “*On Hyperbole in Praising Kings*,” critiques some of Mu’izzi’s poems. His comments reflect a realistic and historically grounded perspective that remains relevant even today despite the temporal distance. In this context, he advises poets as follows:

“Since the allocation of wealth is a necessity of kingship, and a person upon whom thousands of men and women depend for sustenance must provide support across different social classes through rewards from the treasury—how can one justifiably attribute generosity and benevolence to such a person as though it were voluntary virtue? Moreover, military defense and the protection of a kingdom’s provinces are the duty of state servants and military commanders, while caliphs and great sultans are the sovereign rulers of the world and rely on brave warriors. If one exaggerates in praising the servants and liegemen of such rulers, that exaggeration should reflect the magnitude of their worth. And if someone still wishes to praise them by necessity, it should be done in such a manner that no one else would be deemed worthy of that praise.” (12, p. 287)

As observed, the evaluation of Mu’izzi’s poetry has always been influenced by the prevailing worldview of the time, a trend that continued into later periods. This is especially evident in Tajik literary scholarship, where ideologically driven approaches to literary criticism were dominant. Due to Mu’izzi’s panegyric poetry, his works—particularly his *qasidas*—were once considered ideologically “flawed.” For example, the literary critic Kh. Mirzozada interpreted the poet’s “feudal mindset” as a sign of his “anti-patriotic stance” and stated:

“To place such a poet—who glorifies foreign, invading monarchs—among the ‘best poets of his time’ based solely on the artistic quality of his poetry, despite its anti-popular ideology, and to consider his work highly, is an injustice. This reflects a misunderstanding of the historical essence of literature and of the fact that literature often serves specific social classes and states. If poets like Nasir Khusraw, Sana’i, Khayyam, Nizami, and others are

regarded as the best of that era, placing Mu'izzi among them would be an error stemming from a flawed understanding of the broader literary current.” (9, p. 58)

It should be noted that Kh. Mirzozada considered placing Mu'izzi among the «best poets of his time» as contrary to the political ideology of his era. He alludes to the article by A. Mirzoev, in which the scholar ranked Mu'izzi alongside Daqiqi and Sana'i, referring to him as “another prominent poet of that century” (8, pp. 34–35). In fact, A. Mirzoev rightly recognized Mu'izzi's elevated poetic rank and, in comparison with a ghazal by Daqiqi, cited the following ghazal by Mu'izzi as definitive proof of his poetic artistry:

Ey ro'i tu raxshandatar az qiblai Zardusht,
Be ro'i tu chun zulfi tu kuj ast maro pusht.
Ishqi tu maro kushtu havo'i tu maro so'xt,
Javri tu maro xastu jafoi tu maro kusht.
Harchand hama javru jafoi tu kashidam,
Hargiz nakunam mehru vafoi tu faromusht.
Barxezu biyo, to zi ruxu zulfi tu imshab

Purlola kunam domanu purmushk kunam musht (8, 35).

In Iranian literary criticism as well, from the earliest periods to the present day, the temporal perspective and contextual lens have influenced the reception of Mu'izzi's poetry. The culmination of such critiques is found in the view of Shafii Kadkani, who summarizes this approach by stating that “*Mu'izzi should be considered a complete representative of the decline of Persian poetry.*” This opinion by Kadkani echoes the stance of Badi'uzzaman Foruzanfar, but the late Abbas Iqbal Ashtiyani regarded such a conclusion as “*an act of injustice and intellectual tyranny*” in evaluating a poet who was, in his words, “*fresh in diction and innovative in expression.*” (3, mim)

In his book «*Speech and Speakers*» (*Sukhan va Sukhanvaran*), Badi'uzzaman Foruzanfar interprets Anvari's couplet—

*Kas donam az akobiri gardankashoni nazm,
K-o'ro sareh xuni du devon ba gardan ast.-ro*

—without presenting any evidence, and explains it in another way. He assumes that the «two dīvāns» refer to those of Farrukhi and Unsuri, and accuses Mu'izzi of having plagiarized the words of these two great poets.

In the introduction to Mu'izzi's *Dīvān*—which he himself compiled and published with commentary and footnotes—Abbas Iqbal refutes this interpretation, as well as the view found in the historical work *Tārikh-i Wassāf*, which also claims that Mu'izzi bears the guilt of having «murdered» the dīvāns of Abulfaraj and Mas'ud. Iqbal concludes:

“In terms of stylistic eloquence, sweetness of language, clarity of expression, and depth of meaning—considered within the context of his time—Mu'izzi is one of the true masters of Persian literary artistry. Perhaps, in fluency of diction and strength of poetic composition, there is no collection in our poetic literature, apart from the *Dīvān* of Zahir al-Din Babur and the *Kulliyāt* of Shaykh Sa'di, that can match his *Dīvān*. Across this vast collection, one might find scarcely a hundred obscure words or difficult expressions.

Beyond his refined and seemingly effortless style and the freshness of his lyrical poetry, Mu'izzi is one of the most chaste and morally upright poets we have. In his entire *Dīvān*, not only is there no trace of satire or invective against anyone, but not even a single coarse or vulgar word ever appears on his tongue.” (3, letters *nūn* and *sīn*)

In addition to supporting Foruzanfar's position and rejecting the views of Abbas Iqbal, Shafii Kadkani himself further concludes that "*Mu'izzi offers nothing new.*" In his article "*Imagery in the Dīvān of Mu'izzi,*" he categorically asserts that Mu'izzi "*learned the method of combining images from Unsuri and derived most of his imagery from the dīvān of Farrukhi*" (11, p. 628).

However, setting aside these comparative and unproven analyses—as well as his claim that Mu'izzi was responsible for the "*decline of Persian poetry*"—it must be noted that Kadkani, in this arguably biased evaluation, uses phrases like "*mostly*" and "*to some extent*" in an attempt to soften what is, in fact, a significant misjudgment of Mu'izzi's poetry.

Moreover, within the same text, he inadvertently acknowledges "*the verbal power of Unsuri and Mu'izzi*" (11, p. 629), thereby conceding the artistic capability and poetic independence of Mu'izzi. In another section, Kadkani concludes that:

"Mu'izzi has a generally weak imagination, to the point that he is incapable of even the smallest degree of originality when it comes to presenting the imagery of others. Thus, if we rarely come across images in his dīvān for which we cannot identify a clear source today, we must interpret them cautiously. It is likely that such imagery was taken from poets whose dīvāns existed during Mu'izzi's lifetime but have since disappeared—such as Kisa'i and other prominent poets of the 4th century. In any case, those few examples of imagery are primarily found in his descriptions of nature..." (11, p. 634)

In this context, the scholar quotes the following verse by Mu'izzi:

*Gardun chu marg'zoru dar o' mohi nav chu dos,
Gufti, ki marg'zor hama bidrud giyoro*

He then compares it to the famous verse by Hafez:

*Mazra'i sabzi falak didamu dosi mahi nav,
Yodam az kishtai xesh omadu hangomi darav.-*

and draws attention to the shared imagery of the "*sickle.*" In reality, as Fathollah Mojtaba'i notes, Hafez "*in composing some of the verses of his ghazals, clearly had lines or imagery from Mu'izzi's poetry in mind and adopted Mu'izzi's expressions and themes in his own verse.*" (10, p. 334)

Shafii Kadkani's judgment of Mu'izzi is harsh and yet unsubstantiated. If this were not the case, why would he, without any clear evidence, claim that "*no influence of the sciences is seen in his imagery*"? Meanwhile, numerous researchers—among them Forough Elahi—have emphasized Mu'izzi's engagement with scientific and historical knowledge. Elahi notes, "*His Dīvān is filled with historical and linguistic benefits, to such an extent that one could say he holds a great debt over the heads of historians. Many events from the Seljuk era—from the year 465 AH (the accession of Malikshah) to around 520 AH (Mu'izzi's death)—can be gleaned from his qasidas.*" (7, p. 17)

Furthermore, Kadkani also assesses Mu'izzi's descriptive talent—especially in his nature imagery—as weak, concluding that "*even in lyrical imagery, Mu'izzi has brought forth nothing new.*" However, he admits, without reference to the quality or artistic value of the imagery, that "*some of his ghazals are not without a certain charm.*" Ultimately, he concedes that "*it is mostly the beauty of technique and poetic craftsmanship that gives Mu'izzi's poetry a certain distinctiveness.*" (11, pp. 639–640) As it appears, this final conclusion undermines many of his earlier assertions.

Another scholar whose views on Mu'izzi's poetry are more balanced and independent is Abdolhossein Zarrinkoub. While he regards Mu'izzi's poetic praise (madā'ih) as "limited to

formalities and appearances” and considers this a shortcoming of his art, Zarrinkoub also acknowledges that “*in many places, his verses contain a kind of natural delight that arises from innate talent,*” and that “*some of his ghazals even reflect a delicate and genuine emotional sensitivity.*” He finds Mu’izzi’s poetic forms to be “*simpler, more transparent, and more natural than their predecessors.*” Unlike Foruzanfar and Kadkani, Zarrinkoub emphasizes the noticeable presence of “*philosophical and ethical thought*” in Mu’izzi’s work. He presents Mu’izzi’s verses about Omar Khayyam as evidence of his literary capacity to express such themes (6, p. 112).

Zarrinkoub recognizes Mu’izzi’s “*power and genius*” in composing qasidas and describes his use of simile as “*original and artistically meaningful*” (6, p. 114). Through comparative analysis, he identifies Mu’izzi’s “*success in depicting the beauties of nature and human form*” as one of the poet’s distinctive artistic strengths (6, p. 117), revealing the critic’s realistic and objective approach to Mu’izzi’s poetic identity.

From the comparative study conducted in this article, it can be concluded that the recognition and evaluation of Mu’izzi’s poetry have shifted across historical periods, depending on the criteria, temporal perspectives, and ideological positions of the time. Poets, literary authors, and critics have assessed Mu’izzi’s poetic legacy within these frameworks, which has often resulted in evaluations that do not accurately reflect his poetic stature.

The conducted analysis confirms that from the past to the present, there has been no single unified opinion about Mu’izzi’s artistic role and position in Persian-Tajik literature. While some have praised his poetic skill and supported their views with evidence, others have highlighted what they perceive as weaknesses in his sensory imagery and repetition of earlier poets’ themes, casting doubt—without sufficient justification—on his literary status. Such claims appear far from the truth and remain unproven.

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