



MO'EZZI NIŠĀBURI

MO'EZZI NIŠĀBURI, Abu 'Abd-Allāh Moḥammad b. 'Abd-al-Malek (b. Nišābur, ca. 1048-49; d. ca. 1125-27), a major poet at the court of the Saljuqs (Seljuks) in Khorasan in the 12th century, noted for the eloquence of his panegyric odes (*qaṣidas*) and his ghazals. His royal patrons included Malekšāh (1072-92), [Barkiāroq](#) (1094-1105), Moḥammad (1105-18), and Sanjar (1118-57). He also dedicated many odes to their viziers, notables, including the famous Saljuq vizier, Neẓām-al-Molk and his offspring and close relations; and to other rulers, the Ghaznavid ruler [Bahrāmšāh](#), and the K̅vārazmšāh [Atsiz](#) (de Blois, pp. 421-22).

Mo'ezzi was the son of a renowned poet, 'Abd-al-Malek Borhāni, the *Amir-al-Šō'arā'* (poet laureate) at the courts of the Saljuq kings [Alp-Arslān](#) and Malekšāh. The poet himself is the source of an anecdote cited by Neẓāmi 'Aruži in his *Čahār Maqāla* (The Four Discourses) concerning the start of his career at the Saljuq court. Neẓāmi 'Aruži describes how he met the famous poet in 1116 when Sanjar and his court were encamped on the outskirts of Ṭus, and again in 1120 at Nišābur. In the first of these encounters Mo'ezzi recounted to Neẓāmi that he had inherited the post of poet-laureate from his father, 'Abd-al-Malek Borhāni, in the early years of Malekšāh's reign but had failed to gain admittance to the king's presence or to draw his stipend, sinking into debt and despair; he had sought help from Amir 'Ali b. Farāmarz, the sultan's boon companion and son-in-law, who eventually introduced him to the sultan. Mo'ezzi had then described how his two extemporized *robā'is* (quatrains) had impressed Malekšāh, prompting him to award the poet the title of "Amir



Mo'ezzi," with reference to Malekšāh's own *laqab* (title): *Mo'ezz-al-donyā wa'l-din* (The Glorifier of this World and of Religion; Neẓāmi 'Aruzi, p. 49; tr. p. 70).

The poet remained in the service of Malekšāh until the latter's death in 1092, and when a power struggle ensued among the king's heirs leading to turmoil at court, Mo'ezzi left the court and traveled to different cities including Herat, Nišābur, and Isfahan. He composed praise poems dedicated to many patrons including Sultan Barkiāroq, Arslān Arġun, and Amir Abu Šojā' Ḥoabaši. When Sanjar, Malekšāh's son, became ruler of Khorasan in 1097, Mo'ezzi joined his entourage, remaining in his service for the rest of his life (Şafā, p. 511).

About the circumstances of Mo'ezzi's death, 'Awfi (Lobāb II, p. 70) relates that the poet was killed by a stray arrow shot by Sanjar during target practice; and an arrow is mentioned also in two *qet'as* that Sanā'i composed lamenting Mo'ezzi's death (Sanā'i, p. 1051,1057). However, there are several poems in Mo'ezzi's *divān* recounting how he had been wounded by the sultan's arrow, and had spent twelve months convalescing before returning to the court. One cannot therefore regard Sanā'i's verses as proof of Mo'ezzi's death. Mo'ezzi's long absence from the court after his injury may have given rise to rumors that he had died, and these could have misled Sanā'i. The earliest reference to this incident in Mo'ezzi's own verses is in an ode that he composed at the time when Sanjar was the ruler of Khorasan (1097-1118). In addition to this, he made several references to this occurrence in his panegyrics addressed to Qawām-al-Molk, Sanjar's minister, who held this post until the year 1117, which therefore provides the terminus ante quem. The last person Mo'ezzi panegyricized was Sanjar's minister Mo'in-al-Din Moq-taş-al-Molk Aḥmad, who was assassinated in 1127. Since Mo'ezzi panegyricized most statesmen of the Saljuq state but did not panegyricize others after this date, it can be concluded that he was not alive after the year 1127 (Şafā II, p. 512). However, it should be borne in mind that Neẓāmi 'Aruzi consistently mentions Mo'ezzi's name without any of the usual formulaic prayer tags that one would expect him to insert when a deceased contemporary is mentioned; this might indicate that the latter was still alive when Neẓāmi 'Aruzi completed his work in 1157 (de Blois, p. 523).

Mo'ezzi is one of the greatest masters of lyrical poetry that Persia has ever produced, and was much admired during his own lifetime as well as by succeeding generations. Such contemporary poets as Sanā'i and Ḥasan Ġaznavi have praised his mastery of the craft of poetry and a later poet like Mojir Bilqāni has expressed his admiration for Mo'ezzi's poetic stature by



regarding himself as his rightful successor (Şafā, p. 513). 'Awfi is most rhetorical in his praise, and points out that the high regard which Mo'ezzi was held in, and the favors lavished upon him during the reign of Malekšāh were only equaled by those enjoyed by Rudaki at the time of the Samanids, and by 'Onşori during the reign of the early Ghaznavids ('Awfi, II, p. 69).

The principal merit of Mo'ezzi's verse is its clarity. He was capable of invoking rich imagery in plain words, free from tortuous diction or excessive ornamentation; and his ability to compose verses without a trace of ambiguity or artifice has always been admired by critics. Mo'ezzi was, more than any poet of the 12th century, impressed by the everyday language of his own time; and although he did not rise up to the level of his contemporary, [Anvari](#), in this respect, he certainly paved the way for the later generation of poets who were interested in taking the same course (Şafā, II, p. 514).

Mo'ezzi also composed a large number of lyric poems. Although his ghazals do not reach the same sublime heights as those of Farroḳ-i, his endeavor to compose mellifluous ghazals have greatly helped the development of the techniques of composing lyric poetry (Şafā, II, p. 514). Some of Mo'ezzi's qaşidas propounded entirely new thoughts, exhibiting the poet's innovativeness and his concern for developing new ideas. Mo'ezzi did not confine himself to writing panegyrics and lyric verses; there is a strain of didacticism in many of his poems as well.

Another significant merit of Mo'ezzi's poetry was his skillful utilization of ingenious metaphors. A large number of metaphors now regarded as commonplace in Persian lyric poetry—comparing the countenance of a beloved with the moon, her height with a cypress tree, or her lips with rubies, for instance—were perhaps used by Mo'ezzi to a much greater extent than by previous poets (Browne, II, p. 328-29).

The number of Mo'ezzi's surviving verses totals some 19,000 to 20,000. The edition by ['Abbas Eqbāl Āştīyāni](#) (Tehran, 1939) contains 18623 verses. A later edition, edited by Nāşer Hayyeri (Tehran, 1983) lacks a critical apparatus. Neither of the two editions uses the London manuscript I.O. 913 of 1314-5 now in the British Library, or the scattered quotations from his oeuvre in early anthologies (de Blois, p. 423).

A few of Mo'ezzi's poems have been translated into English—two pieces by E. G. Browne (Browne, pp. 528-29, and two qaşidas by R. A. Nicholson, one of



which is quoted by Arberry who himself translated the beginning of the poet's famous elegy (*martiya*) on the death of Malekšāh and Nezām-al-Molk (Arberry, pp. 113-15).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. J. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature*, London, 1958, pp. 110-15.

Moḥammad 'Awfi, *Lobāb-al-albāb* II, London and Leiden, 1903, pp. 69-86.

François de Blois, *Persian Literature: A Bio-bibliographical Survey* V, London, pp. 421-25.

E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia* II, Cambridge, 1928, pp. 327-30.

Rezā-Qoli Khan Hedāyat, *Majma'-al-foṣaḥā* I, Tehran, 1957, p. 571.

'A. Kayyāmpur, *Farhang-e soḡ-anvarān* II, Tehran, 1994, p. 859.

'Ali-Rezā Khosrovāni Ṭorfa, "Šarḥ-e ḥāl-e Amir-Mo'ezzi," *Armaḡān* 4, pp. 529-48; 5, pp. 15-30.

J. Marek, "Amir Mu'izzī. (Einige Verse im Vergleich zweier Traditioner)," *Archiv Orientální* 24, 1956, pp. 252-71.

Nezāmi 'Aruzi, *Čahār Maqāla*, ed. Moḥammad Qazwini, London, 1927, pp. 46-49; tr. E. G. Browne, as *Chahār Maqāla*, London, 1921, pp. 66-71.

Dabiḥ-Allāh Šafā, *Tāriḡ-e adabiyāt dar Irān* II, Tehran, 1984, pp. 508-15.

Sanā'i, *Divān*, ed. Modarres Rażawi, Tehran, repr., 1983, pp. 1051, 1057.