



Article

# “Funun ul-Balaghah” and the Typology of Persian Arts Sciences

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**Abstract:** This study examines Shaykh Ahmad Taroziy’s *Funun ul-balog’a* and its significance in relation to the understanding of classical Turkic poetics, aruz prosody, and arts. Archaeological foundations of poetry and art, rhyme, radif and systems of artistic devices based on Arabic as well as Persian and Turkic literary traditions. Shaykh Ahmad Taroziy’s treatise is among the first theoretical manuals written in Turkic language and thus reflects the literary and cultural milieu of 15th century, but also reveals a great input into shaping Turkic poetic scholarship.

**Keywords:** Rhetoric, Poetics, Taroziy, Traditionalism, Aruz, Rhyme, Artistic Devices, Comparative Analysis, Persian Poetics, Turkic Literature

## 1. Introduction

It grew in the 9th-11th centuries a Renaissance process common to the universal literary phenomenon, crystallizing in different areas in terms of activity of East countries. Hence, this era's thinkers expressed literature, art, poetry and poetic creativity in their works. In this context, contributions of scholars like Abu Nasr al-Farabi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Abu Ali ibn Sina and Mahmud al-Kashgari should be especially mentioned [1]. Based on literary-critical perspectives, the origins of Turkic literary studies can be found in antiquity. The basic elements of literary criticism can already be found in samples of Turkic literature, but the first source that we have survived today on this science is the work “*Funun al-balagha*” by Shaykh Ahmad ibn Khudoydod Tarazi [2].

## Literature Review

The only information that has come down to us from “*Funun al-balagha*” is given by the literary scholar I. Adizova in her article “The Development of Genres in the творчество of Uvaysi.” From the point of view of literary studies, Tarazi’s treatise remains insufficiently studied. Doctor of Philological Sciences Dilnavoz Yusupova defended her doctoral dissertation “A Comparative Analysis of Treatises on Aruz in the Timurid Period” (2019), where a more detailed analysis was carried out for this section of the work “*Funun al-balagha*” related to aruz. In 2022, Doctor of Philological Sciences Orzigul Hamroyeva studied the parts of the work that dealt with rhyme and radif in her monograph “A Comparative Analysis of the Science of Rhyme in Poetic Treatises of the Timurid Period [3, 4].”

Theoretical sources including topics such as the poetics of history, rhythm, verse, language of poetry, foundational theory in the components of poetry and genres present a its unique study needs. One text that has particular significance in knowing Turkic poetic thought, is the work “*Funun al-balagha*” by Shaykh Ahmad Tarazi dated to the Timurid

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period [5]. The work, which was later replaced by the science of Arabic rhetoric and the term was lost, however in recent years some of its sections were considered in terms of a separate part within Uzbek literary real quick but this source has not yet comprehensively discussed as organized whole [6].

## 2. Materials and Methods

The article aims to provide a comprehensive study of Shaykh Ahmad Tarazi's work "Funun al-balagha," to examine it in a comparative aspect with sources related to the Persian sciences of literary arts (*sanāyi'*), to substantiate the compositional typology of the work, and to highlight the significance of the literary excerpts used by the author to support his theoretical views.

## 3. Results and Discussion

In the period prior to the early 13th–15th centuries, reflections on poetry and poetic creativity can also be observed in the Turkic-language literary monuments that have survived to the present day. It should be noted that among the works created during this period, no specialized treatises devoted specifically to *tazkira* literature, *aruz*, rhyme, or rhetorical figures have been identified. Instead, views on poetry and poets were primarily expressed within literary works themselves or in *отдельные* poetic passages [7, 8].

In this regard, the ideas presented in Ahmad Yugnaki's "Hibat al-haqayiq," Sayfi Sarayi's *masnavi*, Haydar Khorezmi's "Mahzan al-asrar," as well as in the poetry of Sakkaki, Atoi, and Gadoi, deserve particular attention. The aforementioned authors articulated their literary-critical views in a fragmentary manner within their works. However, none of them produced a comprehensive theoretical treatise comparable to that of Shaykh Ahmad Tarazi [9].

The work "Funun al-balagha" was written in 1437 and dedicated to Muhammad Taraghay Mirzo Ulughbek ibn Shahrukh (1394–1449), the grandson of Amir Temur and the ruler of Mawarannahr at that time. Examining the historical context of its creation, it becomes evident that in the first half of the 15th century, literary life in Mawarannahr was highly dynamic: literature developed in two languages, and literary gatherings flourished not only in Samarkand but also in other cities [10].

During this period, prominent poets such as Lutfiy, Haydar Khorezmi, Yusuf Amiri, Atoi, Sakkaki, Gadoi, and Yaqini were active in Khurasan and Mawarannahr. Later, figures such as Hafiz Khorezmi and Sayyid Qosimi joined their ranks. It can therefore be argued that Tarazi's work emerged in response to the intellectual and literary needs of its time [11].

At that time, numerous manuals and treatises existed in Persian for poets—particularly amateur writers—covering poetic rules such as *aruz* meter, rhyme, rhetorical devices, and genre characteristics. However, no such theoretical guides were available in the Turkic language. Meanwhile, the number of talented individuals committed to writing in Turkic and enriching its literary tradition was steadily increasing during the reign of Mirzo Ulughbek. Consequently, Tarazi's work was closely linked to the spiritual and cultural development of the Uzbek people [12, 13].

Today, the only known manuscript copy of "Funun al-balagha" is preserved in the Bodleian Library in London under the catalog number №Eliott-127 [14].

The work consists of a preface and five distinct sections, as outlined by the author:

The first section discusses the types and categories of poetry, analyzing them in terms of form and content and providing definitions of ten poetic forms.

The second section explains the rules of rhyme (*qafiya*) and refrain (*radif*), identifying eight types of rhyme, including five classical forms and three additional types later introduced by Persian scholars [15].

The third section is devoted to rhetorical devices (*ilm al-badi'*), describing 97 poetic figures with examples drawn from Arabic, Persian, and Turkic poetry.

The fourth section focuses on *aruz*, examining poetic meters and rhythmic structures.

The fifth section, посвящённая the principles of poetic riddles (*muammo*), is missing from the extant manuscript.

Shaykh Ahmad Tarazi's "*Funun al-balagha*" occupies a distinctive place in the field of Turkic classical poetics. One of its most important features is that it was written in the Turkic language. In this sense, it served as a foundational source for many subsequent Turkic literary-theoretical works. Indeed, the roots of modern studies in classical poetics can be traced back to Tarazi's ideas.

An examination of the work reveals that some poetic examples are either anonymous or attributed to Tarazi himself, indicating that he was also a skilled poet. Moreover, Tarazi carefully studied earlier theoretical works, adopting their strengths while attempting to address their limitations. Unlike many earlier treatises that focused on a single literary aspect, Tarazi addressed all major components of poetics within a unified framework.

Despite being dedicated to Ulughbek, the work remained largely unknown among literary circles. Neither Alisher Navoi nor Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur mentioned Tarazi as a scholar. However, Babur cited a verse attributed to a poet named Tarazi in his "*Risola-i aruz*," which also appears—albeit with slight variations—in "*Funun al-balagha*." This suggests that Babur may have accessed either Tarazi's *divan* or another manuscript version of the treatise.

According to Devin DeWeese, nearly half of the manuscript (folios 76b–139a) is devoted to *aruz*. Tarazi provided a brief introduction to this section, followed by unnumbered chapters.

Overall, DeWeese's research highlights the historical context, language, and manuscript tradition of "*Funun al-balagha*," emphasizing its scholarly value. He also translated selected excerpts into English and included them in his study, alongside reproductions in the old Uzbek script.

Thus, "*Funun al-balagha*" can be considered one of the earliest theoretical manuals on Turkic poetics, particularly in the field of *aruz*. Despite its significance in revealing the literary and cultural environment of its time, as well as its role in the formation and development of Turkic poetic theory, its relationship with other theoretical sources has not yet been sufficiently studied.

The work can be compared with several Persian theoretical sources on literary studies. Among them is "*Tarjuman al-balagha*" by Muhammad ibn Umar Radiani (11th century), which classifies 77 rhetorical devices and draws extensively on Qur'anic, hadith, and Arabic-Persian poetic examples.

Another important source is Shamsiddin Qays Razi's "*Al-mo'jam fi ma'ayir ash'ar al-'ajam*," a major contribution to Eastern poetics, covering *aruz*, rhyme, and rhetoric within a unified framework. The work is structured into a preface, two main sections, and a conclusion, and represents one of the earliest comprehensive studies of poetic theory.

Additionally, Atoullah Husayni's "*Badoye' us-sanoye'*" (15th century) stands out as a significant Persian treatise on rhetoric. Unlike Arabic scholars, Husayni classified rhetorical beauty into three categories: lexical, semantic, and combined forms. His work provides detailed classifications of rhetorical devices and reflects a synthesis of Arabic and Persian theoretical traditions.

#### 4. Conclusion

In presenting comparisons of Shaykh Ahmad Tarazi's work alongside those of Persian-language theoretical treatises Umar Radiani's "*Tarjuman al-balagha*," Shamsiddin

Qays Razi's "Al-mo'jam fi ma'ayir ash'ar al-'ajam" and Atoullah Husayni's "Badoye' us-sanoye'" he reached the following conclusions:

Semantically and structuralistically, "Funun al-balagha," is different from the previous treatises in that it features a wider scope of subjects making it a work of more universal nature. Though "Tarjuman al-balagha" and "Badoye' us-sanoye'" are each dedicated to specific branches of classical poetics, that is, the science of rhetoric (ilm al-badi') or aruz, Tarazi's treatise is unique in addressing the triad forming the poetic sciences: aruz (prosody), rhyme (qafiya) and rhetoric (badi'). In this sense, it is possible to treat Qays Razi's "Al-mo'jam" on a par with "Funun al-balagha," given that the latter accounts for all dimensions of poetics but does not delve into specific poetic genres.

They were written in chronological order: "Funun al-balagha" followed "Tarjuman al-balagha" and "Al-mo'jam," but slightly preceded "Badoye' us-sanoye'." Umar Radiani openly acknowledges using Imam Nasr ibn Hasan Marg'inani's "Mahasin al-kalam" to inform his own, whereas "Al-mo'jam" cites prior compilations like Rashid al-Din Vatvat's "Hada'iq al-sihr" and Bahram Sarakhsi's "Ghayat al-'aruzayn." In the same way, "Badoye' us-sanoye'" makes a constant reference to "Al-mo'jam" and Nasir al-Din Tusi's "Me'yar al-ash'ar" in making its theoretical articulation. By contrast, while Tarazi exhibits extensive familiarity with Arabic and Persian literature, he does not clearly reference any one treatise nor suggests that a particular work served as the main basis for his discussion. Rather than polemicizing the works of others or offering direct critique, he adopts a synthetic attitude, marshaling and expanding upon previous theoretical perspectives.

To buttress his theoretical arguments, Tarazi follows in the footsteps of predecessors and colleagues, referencing Qur'an and Hadith, Arabic aphorisms, and Persian poetic examples to align the work with classical poetics. However, one of the features that distinguishes "Funun al-balagha" is the fact that, since it was written in Turkic language, it contains also examples from Turkic poetry thus expanding the linguistic and cultural scope of poetic theory.

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