



Cognitive Functions of Narratives about Hasanak Vazir in *Tarikh-e Beyhaqi*: A Rhetorical Narratology Approach

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1. Introduction

This essay emphasizes the necessity of reading historical narratives through an eclectic approach. The case at hand is *Tarikh-e Beyhaqi*. In studying this book, the following are considered: use of parallel narratives in enhancing reader's engagement; narrative variety; repetition and specificity of events; narrative agents. It is argued that these narrative elements bring to the fore the status of Hasanak, and excites both the author's and reader's sympathy for his character.

With the emergence of narratology as part of a comprehensive "intellectual movement" (Scholes, 2000: 22), the focus on textual structure enabled multiple and dynamic readings of the text. Among its branches, "rhetorical narratology", building on the ideas of thinkers like Bakhtin, Wayne C. Booth, and James Phelan, considers narrative a purposeful communicative act designed to persuade the audience and express the author's viewpoint (Booth, 1961:8).

In Persian didactic literature and traditional historiography, the narrative technique of "embedded narrative" or "parallel narratives"—referred to as *Tamsil* (analogy) in traditional rhetoric – has been employed for purposes such as facilitating the reader's understanding and demonstrating the similarity of events. Despite their apparent differences, these narratives are meaningfully connected to the main narrative. *Tarikh-e Beyhaqi*, by utilizing this complex structure, demonstrates that historical narrative can go beyond merely reporting events to actively produce meaning and represent historical subjectivity. This article, by combining the frameworks of rhetorical narratology (Bakhtin, Booth and Phelan) and the theory of the *association of ideas* (Hume, Hobbes, Locke), seeks to analyze the function of the "parallel narrative" and the rhetoric based on association in the story of Hasanak Vazier in *Tarikh-e Beyhaqi*.

2. Theoretical Framework

The foundation of the "embedded narrative" structure is the association of ideas. Hume divides association into two types: natural (based on resemblance, contiguity, and cause/effect) and unnatural (based on chance) (Kallich, 1945: 290). For him, association is a psychological necessity arising from habit and

experience, not a logical one (Jackson, 1973: 64). Hobbes describes association as a "mental discourse," dividing it into "unguided" (as in dreams) and "guided" types, which involve design and motive and form the basis of cognition and invention (Hobbes, 2002: 84-86). Both he and Locke emphasize the role of "judgment" in distinguishing between ideas, as opposed to "imagination," which merely seeks resemblances (Brett, 2010: 17). Addison was the first to introduce the theory of association into literary criticism, emphasizing its role in creating emotional effects, the text's interpretability, and actively engaging the audience (Tavakoli, 2010: 229).

On a deep-structure level, the connection between parallel narratives is based on the rhetoric of simile. Even association based on judgment (the search for difference) depends on recognizing the absence of resemblance. Therefore, association has a cohesive and meaning-making function (Richards, 1965: 36).

In the domain of historiography, the technique of narrative based on association is usually used "consciously" to play an epistemological or critical role. Mark Turner considers this technique (parable) a "fundamental cognitive principle" in which projecting one story onto another serves as a tool for interpreting human experience (Turner, 1996). These subordinate narratives, by creating semantic links through conscious association, have a dual function: on one hand, through parallel narratives, they stabilize meaning, and on the other, through contrasting narratives, they open a space for critique and rethinking. This process engages the audience in the construction of meaning, transforming the historical narrative from a linear statement into a dynamic, multi-layered, and interactive text.

3. Literature Review

The research background on *Tarikh-e Beyhaqi* includes works by scholars such as Marilyn Waldman (using a "speech act" approach); Hura Yavari (extending Waldman's approach); and Hamidreza Tavakoli (examining the association of ideas in Rumi's *Masnavi*). However, none of these studies have utilized the combined approach of rhetorical narratology and the theory of the association of ideas, as presented in this article, to analyze Bayhaqi's narrative techniques. The main distinction of the present article lies in its focus on "conscious and critical association" in *Tarikh-e Beyhaqi*, as opposed to the "free and didactic association" found in texts like *Masnavi*.

4. Methodology

This article has been conducted using a descriptive-analytical method with a combination of theories related to rhetorical narratology and association of ideas. It has explained the similarity and difference between the main narrative and the sub-narratives in a meaningful structure

5. Results and Discussion

This section, accepting the viewpoints of theorists like Hayden White (who attributes "literariness" to history) and Waldman (who analyzed "speech acts" in *Tarikh-e Beyhaqi*), analyzes the central core of the book: the story of Hasanak Vazier. By employing the technique of parallel narratives (9 parabolic narratives alongside the main narrative), Beyhaqi creates a complex, multi-layered structure.

Functions of the parallel Narratives: These narratives, operating based on a simile-based deep structure and conscious association, have diverse functions:

Narrative Patterns: Patterns of repetition, similarity, contrast, and contradiction are used to reinforce or critique the main narrative.

Creating a Dialectical Simile: The goal is not merely to show similarity; by placing narratives of "salvation" (like that of Bu Bakr Hasiri) against narratives of "death" (like Hasanak's), the contrasts are highlighted, and a third concept—the critique of power and injustice—is conveyed to the reader. This method is an indirect expression of the historian's viewpoint and the implantation of his "thought and mindset."

Indirect Characterization: These narratives help create a multidimensional and dialectical character for Sultan Mas'ud. He sometimes appears in the role of a savior (in the story of Bu Bakr Hasiri) and other times as a ruthless judge (in the stories of Hasanak and others). This contradiction reveals the complexity of his character.

Plot Expansion and Meaning-Making: Each added narrative adds a new dimension to Hasanak's character. Some (like Ja'far Barmaki) emphasize his wisdom and popularity, while others (like the martyrs of Karbala) stress his resistance and faithful steadfastness. Religious allusions (such as references to Husayn ibn Ali) create empathy and psychological consolation for the audience, while bestowing a transcendent and meta-historical dimension upon Hasanak and the narrative.

Critique of Power: The prime example of this critique is the story of Anushirvan and Bozorgmehr, which is narrated with temporal distance from Hasanak's story but with profound similarity. By explicitly concluding that "Bozorgmehr went to heaven, and Khosrow to hell" (Beyhaqi, 1356: 428), Beyhaqi indirectly issues the same verdict for Hasanak and Mas'ud, summoning the reader to judgment.

6. Conclusion

This article demonstrates that rhetorical narratology, combined with the theory of the association of ideas, provides an effective tool for understanding the depth of narrative technique in *Tarikh e Beyhaqi*. By employing parallel narratives, Bayhaqi created a dynamic, multi-layered text that transcends the mere reporting of events to engage in the production of meaning and the critique of power. This structure draws the reader out of a passive state and involves them in the process of co-creation of meaning and the reinterpretation of history. The integrated approach of this article not only offers a fresh understanding of *Tarikh-e Beyhaqi*, but also constitutes a methodology for analyzing other historical and literary texts.

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