

Analyzing Narrative Structure of “The Tale of Afshin and Boudolaf” from Bayhaqi's "History" Based on Gérard Genette’s Theory

**تحليل الهيكل السردى لقصة “أفشين و بودولاف” في تاريخ بيهقي
استنادا إلى نظرية جيرارد جينيت**

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Abstract

Analyzing the constituent elements of a narrative and representation of its governing rules help us in better understanding of mechanisms and relationships within the narrative elements. Since narratology is one of the main branches of structuralism, analyzing narrative structure of past texts and their evolution can be lead to valuable results and open new and different perspectives to audiences. Bayhaqi’s History is one of the basic texts in Persian prose. This research analyzes narrative structure of “The Tale of Afshin and Boudlof” from Bayhaqi's "History" based on the ideas of French structuralist, Gérard Genette.

The narrative levels of this work has been studied in interaction with the components of duration, mood, and voice) to uncover its specific narrative structure and Bayhaqi’s writing power in taking advantage of the possibilities of language and literary. Unlike believers in the idea that past proses of Persian literature just stories and narrations and they lack ordered structure and strong plot, this research shows the ordered structure and strong plot of the studied case according to ideas of Gérard Genette.

Keywords: Bayhaqi's History, Tale of Afshin and Boudlof, narrative, Gérard Genette, structuralism

Introduction

Developments related to criticism, which is known as the New Criticism, began in the early years of the twentieth century. Concepts and views expressed in the New Criticism help much in both understanding totality of system and analysis of literature and literary works. Structure is one of the most important issues in modern literary theories. Structure derived from the theories of Saussure is the result of relations among components and elements forming a work and cause organization and better links among components of a literary work. Narratology is one of the most important fields and branches of structuralism. The first step of narratology was taken by Aristotle in his book *Poetics*. As a science, the Russian formalists were the first groups who conducted extensive research on the subject; then, structuralists such as Greimas, Barthes, and Genette had completed it. Narratology tries to find better understanding and uncover internal composition of a literary work to represent the ultimate structure of a narrative. In other words, narratology seeks to determine a grammar for all sorts of stories. The term ‘narratology’ was first used by Todorov in Cameron’s grammar book (okhovat, 1992: 7). Gérard Genette - French structuralist critic - along with Greimas and Barthes are the most influential people in this field. He played his role by publishing his book *Narrative Discourse*.

Literary theories are particularly helpful when applied. (Selden & Widdowson, 2005: 20). According to Wallace Martin, a theory will be effective only if it is applied on the known narratives; in this way, one may find points that had been hidden for him (Martin, 2003: 34). Therefore, applying contemporary theories can be beneficial tool to analyze and better understand the past and classical texts; it opens new Horizons and deep perspectives to the texts. Moreover, transformation and new creations in literature today compels us to pause and reassess the previous literature. Modern literature criticism can never be needless familiarity with and awareness of literature of the past because previous literature is often an experience for modern literature (Emami, 1998: 10).

Bayhaqi's History- as one of the hard and polished prose texts of the Persian language- is an enduring works of Persian history and literature

that has been written in the fifth century AD. The reason for survival of this great work is not merely mentioning historical events; Bayhaqi's employment of linguistic and literary possibilities has led to emergence of a text that can be called as a historical-literary text. Bayhaqi's History can be regarded as a historical-literary text narrating an epic history full of highs and downs filled with sumptuous and magnificent language (Yahaqi, 2010: 28). Bayhaqi is not only a senior historian but also a great writer. He has created his detailed historical book, while it is reflecting facts, in form of a compelling and hearty novel (Yusefi, 1994: 587).

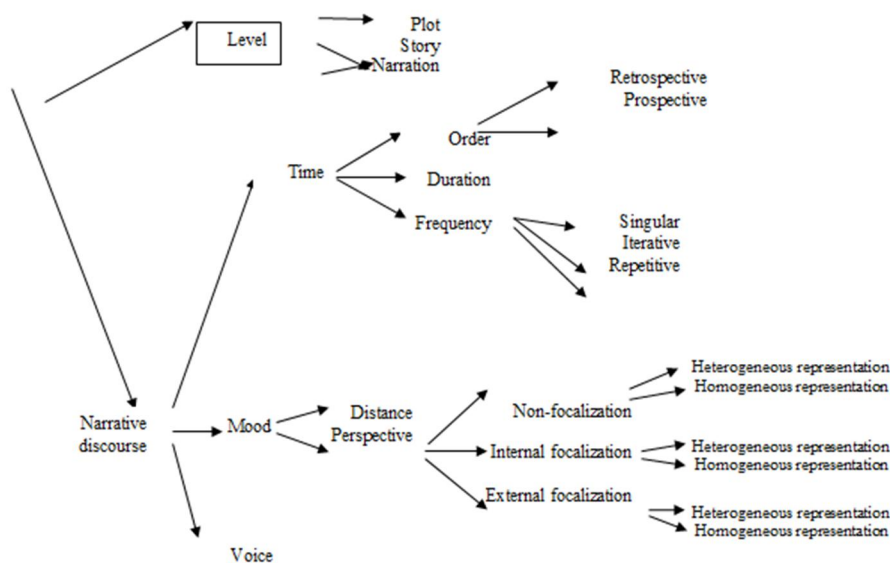
The Tale of Afshin and Boudlof¹ in Bayhaqi's History is followed by the story of Boubaker Wicker and Bayhaqi regards it as an example for history of his era. In the Book Faraj, this tale is mentioned from in Relief after the Intensity by Qazi Tanookhi. The original language is Arabic and it is translated into Persian by Hossein ibn As'ad Dehestani from 651 to 660 Hijri. Afshin is one of the Iranian commander Mutassim Abbasid's army from Osrushana in Transoxiana; he defeated Babak Khorramdin. Boudlof is an Arab commander at the time of Mutassim. Since the incident occurred in the past, author had been much free to manipulated the story and employ more linguistic and literary possibilities. Evaluation of the work through new criticism attitude from various aspects can lead to beneficial results. Unlike believers in the idea that past proses of Persian literature are stories and narrations and they lack ordered structure and strong plot, this research shows the ordered structure and strong plot of The Tale of Afshin and Boudlof from Bayhaqi's History according to ideas of Gérard Genette. Before analyzing the narrative, the ideas of Gérard Genette are presented in the following.

Gérard Genette²

Genette is one of the most influential people in the structuralist criticism. He improved the status of narratology by collecting theoretical traditions of Europe and America and establishing his discussion based on a specific text. His narratology system is continuation of discussions by Russian formalists, Todorov, Wayne Booth, and the others; he completes their theory. Russian formalists, each narrative consists of two levels of "syuzhet" and "fabula". Genette used the term "story" instead of

syuzhet; in this way, story is equal to Aristotelian definition that story is an imitation of tragedy events.

Genette's theory



For the first time, Russian formalists including Shklovsky and Boris Eikhenbaum concluded that narrative has two distinct structures: fabula and syuzhet. They distinguish between raw material of story, fabula, and their means of delivery, syuzhet,, and its means of representation, sjuzhet. By dividing narrative into three different levels, Genette highlighted the Russian formalist distinction between plot and story. He states that narrative discourse includes three distinct levels and every critical approach should observe these three dimensions. The three levels are *plot*, *story*, and *narration*. Plot is the sequence of events in the text and the text discourse. Story is the chain of events that actually happen and it has been inferred from the text; it is the way of telling the events. Narration is indeed the act of narrating. When reviewing these three aspects of stories, he also investigated three aspects of narrative discourse: time, mood, and voice.

1. Time: it includes arrangement of events in narrative in terms of time and it is in fact when narrative of an event is allocated to the text.

Genette classifies circulation of the story from chronological time to narrative time (text) based on three following major topics.

A. Order: Order refers to the relations among the sequence of events in the story and the actual representation of organization in the text. In fact, order is the relationship between assumed sequence of events and their real presence in the text. Since the sequence of narrated events is inconsistent with the sequence of events and time in many relations, Genette any regards any disturbance in the expression and arrangement of events as anachrony. Anachrony is divided in two types:

(1) **Retrospective:** it is returning to past time; it means that an event had occurred earlier in story; but it is narrated in narrative latterly.

(2) **Prospective:** premature moving to the future; therefore, an event that is due to be occurred is narrated before its happening.

B. Duration: The relation between the period in which a specific event occur in the story and the number of pages of narrative addressing this issue. Indeed, it is the time of reading the narrative. Genette uses the ratio between the text (in minutes, hours, days, months, years) and volume of text (based on the line and page) to describe and determine the pace and momentum of a story. In this manner, if the ratio between the text and the amount of time dedicated to it is fixed, the story goes ahead with continuity and constant momentum. He regards fixed ratio between length of the text and duration of the story as dynamic of norms; he also uses the terms acceleration and deceleration in this regard. Acceleration will ultimately lead to ellipsis because the author chooses events or their partial narration according to the necessity. Deceleration will ultimately lead to descriptive pause because it prolongs reading duration than the event duration. Finally, constant acceleration will lead to artistic scene; it most prominent example is dialogue.

C. Frequency: It regards relation between numbers of repeating the event in the story and numbers of the event in the text. Frequency is divided in three types of singulative frequency, repetitive frequency, and iterative frequency. Singulative frequency is when an event can occur once and be narrated once; repetitive frequency is when an event can occur n times and be narrated once; repetitive frequency is when an event can occur once and be narrated n times; multiple frequency is when an event can occur n times and be narrated n times.

2. **Mood:** Mood is classified in two types of distance and perspective:

A. Distance: It is the space between story and narrative. What is the subject, narrative or the story? Whether the author describe the story by direct speech (the story is narrated directly by the words of main character), indirect speech (the narrator speaks indirectly what is in the mind of the characters and quotes from people), or indirect free (reader cannot understand the distinction between narrator and character)? In fact, the distance between narration and story will be higher when the narrator's interference is higher.

B. Perspective: It is to some extent equal to the classical idea of point of view. The narrator may know more or less than the characters, or he may move in the same level as them. Genette studies third person point of view in the realm of narrative focus (narrator of the story) and character focus (comprehension focus). This distinction between "who narrates?" and "who sees?" was proposed in 1943 by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren; it was developed by Genette in 1972. This distinction is very important for introducing omniscient narrative, which has been disregarded by earlier critics. The concept of "focalization" is one of the major achievements by Genette in the complex relationship between the narrator and the world that is narrated. The perspective in which objects are seen, felt, and perceived is focalized; it refers to the point of view from which objects are seen. When a character is focalized, the events are concentrated in his mind or his position and objects are represented from his viewpoint. The concept of focalization enables Genette to distinguish among different types of narrative. Narration may be non-focalized when the narrator is omniscient. He can be focalized internally when a character narrates from a constant position or variable positions. Another type of focalization is external focalization when narrator knows less than the characters. In his proposed table, Genette uses two terms of "heterogeneous representation" and "homogeneous representation". In this regard, he analyzes six modes of narrative types as following:

Zero focalization- heterogeneous representation: The narrator acts as omniscient but it is heterogeneous or inconsistent with characters in the story; it means that narrator is not a character.

Zero focalization- homogeneous representation: In this type, narrator acts as omniscient and he is homogeneous or consistent with characters; it means that narrator in a character in the story.

Internal focalization - heterogeneous representation: In this case, events are narrated from inside the story but narrator is heterogeneous or inconsistent with characters in the story; in this regard, the story is narrated from third person point of view.

Internal focalization - homogeneous representation: Events are expressed from inside the story, narrator plays a role in the story, and he is homogeneous with the characters; it means that he is a character in the story.

External focalization - heterogeneous representation: in this case, the narrator does not act as omniscient and he explains the events completely impartial and without intervention. He is not a character; thus, he is heterogeneous with characters.

External focalization - homogeneous representation: Narrator acts as a neutral observer but he is a character and he is homogeneous with characters.

3. Voice: Voice is the sound of narrator and addresses the act of narrating. Voice is concerned with who narrates, and from where. Here, there are different possible combinations between narration as well as its time and narrative action and events that are recounted. Events can be explained before, after, or simultaneous with the event. The narrator may be hetero-diegetic or homo-diegetic (as narrations explained in first person point of view); it may be homo-diegetic and first person.

In the following, *The Tale of Afshin and Boudlof* will be examined according to the theory of Genette; it will show its strong plot and narrative structure in the mentioned narrative levels.

A. Plot: Genette regards plot as sequence of narrated events as they have happened in fact. The sequence of events in the story of *“Tale of Afshin and Boudlof”* is as follows:

One night, Ahmad ibn Abi Doad- a judge at the court of Mutassim Abbasi and Mu'tazila leaders- suddenly wakes up and feels that something tragic is happening. He runs on his horse and goes to the palace of Mu'tassim (Khalifa). He sees Mu'tassim thinking and alone. He tells Ahmad that he has been waiting for him. Ahmad is surprised by him. Mu'tassim says that Afshin asked him to let Afshin kill Boudlof in exchange for his serving to Mu'tassim by defeating Babak Khorramdin because Afshin is an enemy of Boudlof. Ahmad states that Boudlof's death will lead to chaos and rebellion. Mu'tassim states that he has taken firm swear to let him be free in this regard. He asks Ahmad to go to Afshin and prevent the death of Boudlof. Ahmad

along with some of his relatives hurried to the house Afshin. He sees Afshin who has closed Boudlof's eyes and he is ready to kill him. Seeing Ahmad, Afshin becomes angry. Ahmad tries much to dissuade Afshin but he is not successful; then, he takes resort to a lie and expresses that the khalifa will order to kill Afshin if he kills Boudlof. Ahmad affrights the speech of Ahmad. Ahmad calls the relatives and asks them to be a witness that Afshin has received the message of king. Thus, Afshin releases Boudlof. Fearing that Afshin understands the reality, Ahmad goes rapidly to the court to say the story. While telling the story, Afshin arrives. Ahmad has not enough opportunity to retell the events fully and he affrighted to be exposed, finally, his efforts are useless and Boudlof is killed. Mu'tassim supports Ahmad and he blames Afshin and insists on a speech by Ahmad. Afshin returns depressed and disillusioned.

B. Story: It is the order to events in the text and the discourse, in Tale of Afshin and Boudlof, narrative discourse is indeed Bayhaqi's History.

C. Narration: It is the act of narrating and the way of narrating that lead to a specific kind of narration. It means the specific method of Bayhaghi in narrating the events. At first, there is a story and its main line as following. Ahmad wakes up a night, he goes to Mu'tassim (the caliph), and he is asked by Mu'tassim to go to Afshin and prevents him to kill Boudlof. Since his efforts are useless, he tells a lie, Afshin affrights and gives up to kill Boudlof. Ahmad returns to caliph, the caliph supports him, and the story ends. By employing some elements, Bayhaghi imposes some changes in main and overall lines of the story that leads to his specific narration of the story. For instance he state, "I woke up midnight, every technique I used to sleep was inconclusive. A great pain dominated me; I could not find a reason for it ... I orders to saddle my horse It was not comfort and I knew that a bad event was happening... I claaed my servant to bring me a light and I went to sudatory. The saddle a donkey up, I ride on it but I did not know where to go ... Oh Abdollah why are you late? I have been waiting for you a long time. He said: "We all are from God and we will return to him. I was confused as I heard it from the caliph ... I ran my horse ao that I could not recognize I am on earth or on sky. Afshin and Boudlof were waiting in the court, they were discussing, and Afshin was ready to cut his head. A kind of anger and nostalgia was dominated over me so that I was accustomed to it... I returned with anger amd ride very

fast on my horse; as I saw my servant, sweating was dropping from me and fatigue overcame me (Bayhaghi, 2009: 161-166).

Since the incident occurred in the days before Bayhaqi and narration is mentioned entirely in "Relief after the Intensity", the mentioned lines represent the way of Bayhaqi's employment of linguistic and literary features in his narration. In addition, he was free in writing the book and he has been able to attract readers and create a good historical, fictional, and attracting story. It is a sign that signifies his skill in using language. Genette studies the narrative discourse in relation to three categories of "time, mood, and voice".

1. Time: It includes chronicle arrangement of events in the narration; it is indeed time narrative of an event allocated to the text. It consists of three concepts:

A. Order: It addresses the relations among the sequence of events in the story and the actual representation of organization in the text. In fact, order is the relationship between assumed sequence of events and their real presence in the text. In a story, actual and temporal sequence of events is important but it is not a case in narration and it is disregarded in some cases; there are some elements such as flash back, perolepsis, and anachrony that disturb the real order of events in narration. In *The Tale of Afshin and Boudlof*, the linear sequence of events in the narration is consistent with the linear sequence of events in the story. The story begins by Ahmad's sudden waking up; then, he goes to Mu'tassim, the caliph of his age. Afterwards, he goes to Afshin by commend of the caliph as intermediary to prevent the death of Boudlof. He tells lie because his efforts are ineffective; Afshin affraids and does not kill Boudlof. Ahmad returns to caliph, he is supported by him, and the story ends. Hence, the temporal arrangement of the events has not been disturbed and the narration has not anachrony. The direct and linear sequence of events has been kept and the story has direct narrative trend; it has no flash back or foresee.

B. Duration: Genette regards duration as ratio between text time and the text size; it means asks what size of text is expressed in a specific time; this ratio is used to describe and determine rhythm and acceleration of a story. A story may occur in a long time but it will be explained in limited pages and vice versa. For example, in *Ulysses* by James Joyce, the events of a day and night are explained in about thousand pages. In *The Tale of Afshin and Boudlof*, the story begins by Ahmad's wake up at night and it continues to the last morning. The

number of pages devoted to this story is about six pages. Therefore, the chronological time of the story is few (less than one day and night) and the size or content of the actions in the narration are also few (about six pages); the story occurs in a short time. Bayhaqi does not go into detail and characterization of the characters. The narration continues mostly with conversation among characters rather than characterization. For instance, at the beginning of the narration, the narration contains Ahmad's dialogue with his servant, Salam, going to the court of Mu'tassim and talking to him, going to Afshin's house and conversation with him, Ahmad and Afshin's return to the court and another conversation among them. However, Bayhaqi uses internal dialogue in one case when the first character (Ahmad) expresses his thoughts and feelings to close the reader to him and understand his situation; "All the way, I think that I have reinforced his killing and the Commander may say that I have not sent the message, he may return and kill Qasem (ibid, 164). The story uses more dialogues and its acceleration is fixed. As noted, the most obvious sign of fixed acceleration in a story is dialogue. The story is identical in terms of duration and acceleration; it signifies stability of dynamics and norm. The story is based on dialogues and the three stages of beginning (beginning, middle, and the end) are narrated with a constant rhythm and acceleration. The proportion between actions and size of the text has led to creation of a short but attractive and elastic narration.

C. Frequency: it regards relation between numbers of repeating the event in the story and numbers of the event in the text. All events of The Tale of Afshin and Boudlof have been narrated once at the time of their happening. According to Genette, it is singulative frequency. Bayhaqi seeks more to articulate the main message of the story, rather than extending the story and paying the details of actions that are not very effective in the course of the main narration. However, there are some distress actions in the narration as follows:

"Ahmad said: I woke up midnight, every technique I used to sleep was inconclusive. A great pain dominated me; I could not find a reason for it ..." (ibid, 161). I saw Mu'tassim thinking and alone ..." (ibid, 162). "Afshin became angry as he saw me ..." (ibid, 164). In this way, Bayhaqi tries to create suspension by repeating distress action although he seeks to explain the main message of narration; the suspension and crisis continues to the end of the story. In this regard,

dramatic aspect of story is preserved. This is another proof for the fact that Bayhaqi is not only a historian but also he is a skillful writer.

2. Mood: It includes two categories of distance and perspective:

A. Distance: As stated, it is the space between story and the narration.

The shortest distance is created by maximum information and least presence of the narrator; the opposite case is created when narrator is a character in the story. Genette is searching for the missed time in narratology. Marcel Proust showed how the least distance between narration and the story is created by combination of narrator's maximum presence and maximum information.

In *The Tale of Afshin and Boudlof*, the first person narrator is Ahmad ibn Abi Doad who is a main character and involved in the events; his maximum presence continues to end of the narration. The events of story are narrated implicitly and directly from the window of his mind and language. It seems that that distance between the first level of tale (story) and the second level (narration) is much but Bayhaqi chooses first person narrator instead of omniscient or the third person in order to decrease the distance unlike the usual trend. Another feature determining the distance between story and the narrative is expression of details. More expression of detail will lead to decrease in the distance story and the narrative, and vice versa. In this narration, Bayhaqi represents maximum details of events to minimum the distance between story and narrative. For example, mentioning details about how Ahmad wakes up, description of his moods, going to caliph, his long conversation with caliph, and detailed description of Afshin and Boudlof in the house of Afshin are examples representing maximum details.

B. Perspective: In traditional expression, it is viewpoint from which each part of the narration is observed. Perspective may be for another person rather than narrator; they story may be expressed from their viewpoint. In this story, narrator is first person (Ahmad). E is the focal point of narration because he expresses some of his feelings, thoughts, and reactions. Narrator (Ahmad) is also a character in the narration and he is involved in the events. Therefore, in Genette's words, the position of narrator is homogeneous representation (Internal focalization - homogeneous representation). The author uses this method when he decides to express inside the character and his emotional reactions. The very employment of first person narrator and hero is one reason for Bayhaqi's success in realization of emotions in language. Moreover, the author of such narrations must observe

limitations of the viewpoint because the narrator is first person and he is not dominated over events like omniscient. This limitation is observed in the narration, as well.

3. **Voice:** the third type of mood is voice of the narrator that addresses the act of narrating about the type of narrator and audience as well as the number of possible cases. The narrator may be hetero-diegetic, homo-diegetic, or homo-diegetic and first person. The narrator may give his voice to other characters and the story is expressed from the window of their ideas. All voices will finally return to the voice of the main narrator.

In The Tale of Afshin and Boudlof, the first person narrator is a main character and he is involved in the events to end of the narration. According to Genette's idea, he is homo-diegetic and first person; it is a third case proposed for narrator. In a higher level, Bayhaqi is the narrator and we are dealing with his writing. Since the story is represented in the words of Ahmad, he is regarded as the narrator in the story. As the main narrator, Bayhaqi has given his voice to Ahmad, the first character, and he narrates the events from his mind and his language. Events and actions of the story have a past tense and they are expressed after their occurrence.

Conclusion

As argued in the article, Bayhaqi has been successful to enhance the level of his narration from the first level (story) to the second level (narration) by employment of narrative possibilities. This is the very method proposed by Genette. In order to narrate the work with a strong and consistent plot, Bayhaqi uses the flowing techniques that are consistent with Genette's theory:

- Sequence of narrated events is consistent with the linear sequence of events and time; the direct and linear sequence of narration has been kept to end.
- The story is narrated with a constant rhythm and acceleration; its most obvious sign is dialogue. Creating dialogues among characters, Bayhaqi has made an interesting and relive story. Moreover, the story has best timing for plot because of selecting appropriate actions and expressing them in an appropriate size of text. Bayhaqi tries to create suspension by repeating distress action although he seeks to explain the main message of narration; the suspension and crisis continues to end of the story. In this regard, dramatic aspect of story is preserved.

- The distance between story and narrative is minimized by Bayhaqi by selecting the first person narrator and his maximum presence as well as mentioning most details in some scenes. The story is narrated from an internal focal. Using this focalization in employment and analysis of method to form narrations has many advantages to Bayhaqi because change in narrative focus has created differentiation and changes in the flow of the story or subject. Since narrator (Ahmad) is one of the main characters and he is involved in the events to end of the story, Bayhaqi uses it in realization of emotions in language.

- selecting the first person narrator and internal focalization for the narration have been very effective in making the intended concept very believable. With his specific narration, the author has uses an event in past to represent new and somewhat different view for audience.

- All these lines reflect Bayhaqi's skill in writing and exploitation of linguistic and literary possibilities. In this way, this article, confirms the idea of individuals believing that his work is a historical-literary work.

المخلص

تحليل العناصر المكونة للسرد وتمثيل القواعد التي تحكمه يساعدنا على فهم أفضل للآلية والعلاقات الداخلية للعناصر السردية. وبما أن أحد الفروع الرئيسية للهيكليّة هو معرفة السرد، فإن تحليل بنية الروايات السابقة للنصوص وتطورها يمكن أن يؤدي إلى نتائج قيمة ويفتح آفاقاً جديدة ومختلفة للجمهور. تاريخ بيهقي هو واحد من أهم النصوص الثرية الفارسية. في هذه المقالة، تم تحليل الهيكل السردى لقصة "أفشين و بودولف" من تاريخ بيهقي على أساس نظرية جيرارد جينيت، الناقد الإنشائي الفرنسي، وقد تم فحص مستويات صلاحية هذا العمل بالتفاعل مع المكونات (الوقت، الجانب، النغمة) إلى بنية محددة من سردها وكذلك قوة الكاتب بيهقي للاستفادة من الميزات اللغوية والأدبية.

على عكس بعض الناس الذين يعتقدون أن النصوص الثرية الماضىه للأدب الفارسي هي قصص و حكايات وليس لديها بنية صلبة والنموذج المثالى، لكننا نلاحظ نظم الهيكل السردى والنموذج المثالى لهذه القصة.

الكلمات الرئيسية: التاريخ البيهقي - أفشين و بودولف - السرد - جيرارد جينيت - الهيكلية .

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¹ For more information on these characters, refer to Tabari, 1990; Frye, 2000; Zarrinkoub, 2001; Pirnia, 2010.

² For analysis of Genette's ideas, the following sources are used: Eagleton, 2001; Bertens, 2008; Taysn, 2008; Selden, 2005; Webster, 2003;