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Analyzing the Discourse of Power in the Painting «The Conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow» in Tahmasp Shahnameh

Abstract

Introduction: The ideological role and function of images in illustrated Shahnamehs, including «Tahmasap Shahnameh», is one of the most widely discussed topics in this valuable work. The hermeneutics of epic texts as a strategic situation for explaining the structure of power in the Safavid era is one of the other significant issues in this field. Some of these images have become more important due to their association with a particular mythological character, and their epic narrative is intertwined with historical events. The story of «The Conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow» is in this area. Therefore, the most critical problem of the current research is to explain how power works and is represented in the mentioned painting.

Research Method: This research is descriptive-analytical, and the data has been collected by searching library and documentary sources. The method of data analysis is qualitative, considering the narrative and visual content using a critical discourse approach.

Findings: Strategies such as polarity, positive representation of the insider group, and other negative representations have been used to show the superiority of Kay Khosrow in the painting «The Conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow». The reading of the semantic layers of the work concerning the world around the text shows the implication of this work on the historical events surrounding the painting following the attitude and performance of the Safavid kings. It seems that the reproduction of the mythical narrative of the conquest of Bahman Castle, as the essential epic part of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, in the political-cultural context of the Safavid era, was a strategic opportunity to depict royal ideals.

Conclusion: In the painting «The Conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow», a kind of trans-temporal relationship can be seen between the narrative of myths and the historical narrative. The addition of «historical context» to «mythical context» is one of the other notable cases in this area. It seems that the reproduction of the narrative of the conquest of Bahman Castle, as the most crucial epic part of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, in the political-cultural context of the Safavid era, was a strategic opportunity to depict royal ideals.

Keywords

Kay Khosrow, Painting, Bahman Castle, Tahmasp Shahnameh, Critical Discourse Analysis

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Introduction

The narrative of «The Conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow» in Ferdowsi's «Shahnameh» is one of the crucial and sensational narratives of this huge epic book, the ending of which marks the beginning of the reign of Kay Khosrow, the mythical king of Iran. This event is illustrated in «Tahmasp Shahnameh» (about 934 A.H.). " As a painting masterpiece of the Safavid era and the most important work of Tabriz style painting, in addition to being famous for its adornments and technical superiority, Tahmasp Shahnameh" is a reflection of the attitude of the Safavid kings to the Shahnameh and national epics, in which the artists responded to the national or governmental attachments by depicting national epics and Persian heroes. Accordingly, the values of the epic era were represented in the form of images and used for political purposes. Creating meaningful and organized connections between power and myth is one of the most essential functions of such works. By addressing the complex relations between ideology, power, and discourse, a wide range of contemporary critical theories try to analyze the relationships and connections between the types of power and the way they influence the production of different texts. Using critical discourse analysis, this research seeks to guide the audience to a deeper level of image analysis by discovering and revealing the hidden goals in the text. Increasing accuracy in the reading of paintings based on poetry, image, and extra-textual components, such as political and ideological issues, is another part of the objectives of this research. The current study seeks to answer these basic questions: «How is the structure of power presented in the painting of the conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow?» and «What connections and relationships can be found between the mythological narrative discussed and the approach of the Safavid kings?»

Research Method

The current research is among fundamental studies and is descriptive-analytical. The data collection has been conducted by searching library and documentary sources. This research addresses the painting of the conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow. The reason for this choice is the importance of the mentioned narrative in the mythological and epic history of Iran. The data analysis was carried out qualitatively, taking into account the narrative and visual content based on critical discourse analysis. The search for the possible connection of this painting with the policies of the Safavid rulers is a part of this study.

Research Background

The search to find independent research regarding the analysis of the conquest of Bahman castle by Kay Khosrow in «Tahmasp Shahnameh» did not yield any results up to the time this research was conducted. Other studies carried out on «Tahmasp Shahnameh» that are significant in the scope of this research include: «The function of metamorphosis in seven labors (Haft Khan) of Rostam and Esfandiyār using a trans-semiotic approach (with an emphasis on the fourth labor)» written by «Mehrangar and Dadkhah» (2022), which, by reading intertextual relationships, pays attention to the subject of honor and transformation of the hero's character through different stages. «A study of the relationship between poetry, miniature, and power: A semantic study of «Keshti-e-Shi'a» painting (Shia's Ship) of the Shah Tahmasp Shahnameh» written by «Hajihadian» (2018) is another notable research in this area. This research studies the extra-textual implications in «Tahmasp Shahnameh» and with the case study of «Keshti-e-Shi'a», it draws attention to the alignment of poetry and painting in connection with power; it concludes that the political and religious attachments

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of the Safavid rulers had a decisive role in the structure of the image. In «Oppositional binary of «the self» and «the other» in two illustrated versions of Shahnameh, Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp and Shahnameh of Shah Ismaeel II: An analysis of the cultural semiotic model», «Haghayegh and Shayestehfar» (2014) have dealt with the confrontation of humans and demons and their comparison with the two elements of culture and nature. The result of this research indicates the dual highlighting of self and the other by the government to reject the other and avoid integrating with it. «Examining the painting «Fereydoun testing his sons» from the perspective of layered semiotics»written by «Hasanvand, Sojoudi, and Kheyri» (2005), is one of the other studies related to this research, which studied symbolic, indexical, and iconic signs by reading intra-textual and inter-textual relationships. According to the mentioned cases, it seems that although the study of the semiotics of «Tahmasp Shahnameh» has attracted the attention of many researchers, the depiction of the conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow as one of the most critical events in the epic part of Ferdowsi's «Shahnameh» is less popular and it is necessary to carry out independent research in this regard.

Theoretical Foundations
«Critical Discourse Analysis» is a new approach in discourse analysis that explores power relations and ideology in the text. «Norman Fairclough», one of the leaders of this movement, considers discourse analysis to consist of a set of philosophical premises, theoretical methods, methodological guidelines, and specific techniques for linguistic analysis (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2014, 109). According to Fairclough, discourse is an interwoven set of three elements of social practice, discourse practice, and the text itself, and the analysis of a specific discourse requires the analysis of each of these three dimensions and the relationships between them. The assumption is that there is a meaningful connection between the specific characteristics of texts, the ways in which texts are connected and interpreted, and the nature of social practice (Fairclough, 2000, 97). In critical discourse analysis, in addition to the situational context, higher and more abstract level information, historical-cultural context, power relations and structure, and worldview are taken into consideration in reading the text (Aghagolzadeh & Dehghan, 2014). In this approach, it is believed that the texts are not ideologically neutral, and the events are reported from a certain point of view. Accordingly, by exploring the dominant ideologies among different texts, the hidden goals in the text can be achieved. In this approach, language and discourse have levels and layers. The lower levels contain ideology and power relations; the lower levels contain discourse-oriented structures and components. The work of discursive structures is the visualization of social activists, all people who are present in discourse and are represented in the discourse in different ways with the help of sociological-semantic components (Asadi, Golfam, Aghagolzadeh, & Afrashi, 2015). Paying attention to how activists are represented is one of the most important principles of text reading in critical discourse analysis. Power is a keyword in different discourse analysis approaches. «Foucault» believes that no text or conversation takes place outside of power relations. Every power system produces its own regime, and cultural/literary texts are always either influenced by this regime and strengthen it or seek to weaken it (Fasaei, Balaghi Inaloo & Doustparvar, 2023). «Johnston» considered power one of the most important elements in social relations, which is reflected in discourse. According to him, power is created from asymmetric relationships so that some participants have more control over what happens or how it happens compared to others. Discourse control usually happens

with the aim of controlling the concepts, programs, knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, and actions of recipients (Kheirabadi, Aghagolzadeh, Golfam & Kord Zaferanlu, 2021). Critical discourse analysis not only reacts against power itself but also analyzes the effects of power, its consequences, and the way it occurs. The most complex of these effects is inequality, when the power mechanisms select and distinguish between «insiders» and «non-insiders», i.e., the rejected (Jahangiri & Bandar Rigizadeh, 2013). Another concept of Fairclough's discourse theory is intertextual analysis. From his point of view, texts are related to history and society; history and society are sources that make intertextual analysis possible (Fairclough, 2000, 122). From this perspective, the formal features of the text are considered, on the one hand, as traces of the production process and, on the other hand, as clues in the interpretation process (Aghagolzadeh & Ghiasian, 2007, 42). "Fairclough" distinguishes three stages for critical discourse analysis: 1. Description, which deals with the formal features of the text. 2. Interpretation, a combination of the contents of the text itself and the mentality of the interpreter. The meaning of the interpreter's mentality is the background knowledge that is used in the interpretation of the text. 3. Explanation, the purpose of which is to describe the discourse as a part of a social process. At this level, the reason for text production is discussed in relation to sociological, historical, discourse, ideology, power, conventions, and cultural-social knowledge (Aghagolzadeh & Taromi, 2016). «Fairclough» considers the field of critical discourse analysis as a «transdisciplinary» approach. The basic importance of this approach is to create «dialogues» between disciplines, theories, and frameworks involved in the analysis. Accordingly, the transdisciplinary approach helps the evolution, expansion, and theoretical and methodological enrichment of the disciplines, theories, and frameworks present in these dialogues (Jahangiri & Bandar Rigizadeh, 2013). The diversity and numerosity that exist in the subjects of critical discourse analysis require that a set of ideas and methods be used to read texts. On this basis, an attempt is made to analyze the painting of the Conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow based on the opinions of «Fairclough» with regard to the structure of the text, the context of the production of the work, and the historical and cultural issues related to the world of the text.

The Formation of the Safavid Reign and their Political-Religious Movement in Iran

Sheikh Safi's dynasty was one of the influential Sufi dynasties that influenced Iran and the Ottoman Empire. The movement of this hereditary family was the movement of Sarbedari and Mara'shi sheikhs, which, while Sufism, had a Shiite orientation and turned to politics. This Sheikh-Shi'a movement was founded by Sheikh Safi in the 8th century (Jafarian, 2000, 19). When Shah Ismail Safavi came to power in the year (1494 A.D./ 899 AH), the Safavid reign was formed. A reign that started based on a religious-political scheme. The Safavid propaganda system based its power on three principles during the reign of Shah Ismail I during 1501 A.D./906 A.H.: First, the divine right of the Persian kings to possess Khvarenah, royal glory or splendor, which had an ancient origin. Second, the claim of the deputy of the Hidden Imam quickly gained public validity and was accepted by scholars because the closer connection between the institution of religion and the institution of politics meant increasing their own political power. Third, the role of the king as the «perfect mentor» of the Safavid sect and those who brought them to power (Savory, 2001, 142). As mentioned in the historical sources, Shah Ismail was entitled to reign, on the one hand, because of his lineage, and on the other hand, due to his character, to the extent that the

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author of «Alam-ara-ye Abbasi» used the term «Farr-e Izadi (divine glory)» along with «perfect mentor» for him (Turkman, 1938, 25). Many historical texts of that time are full of ideas in this regard. The abundance of metaphors and similes in confirming the spiritual position of Shah Ismail, such as his divine mission to start this movement on behalf of Imam Zaman (AS), is an attempt to confirm and emphasize these ideas: «That Hazrat - Hazrat Mahdi - took his chain around his waist, lifted him from the ground three times and put him back on the ground, tied his waist with his blessed hand and put a crown on his head with his blessed hand» (Shokri, 1983, 47). To emphasize these ideas, regarding Shah Ismail's decision at the time of his departure from Lahijan and in response to the opponents of his early uprising, that religionist answered, «I am appointed by the world above, and I am excused from this movement» (Abdi Beig Shirazi, 1990, 36; Amini Heravi, 2004, 78). Belief in this divine attribution and the claim of Imam Zaman's succession has been reflected in numerous historical texts, so in most of these works, the Safavid reign is introduced as the ideal reign connected to the uprising of Hazrat Mahdi (AS). The hero of the ideal society was also the Safavid king, who had a mission to reform the existing situation (Abdi Beig Shirazi, 1990, 35-36). This issue was not only reserved for Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid reign, but all the kings of this dynasty had this political legitimacy and were the pioneers of this religious movement. Accordingly, the specific spiritual position that Shah Ismail inherited from his influential fathers was transferred to other Safavid kings, including Shah Tahmasp as the successor and perpetuator of the political-religious movement of the Safavids. Shah Tahmasp, who ruled the land of Iran as the second Safavid king from (930-984 A.H.), was known as a religious figure. According to some historians of that period, with characteristics such as enjoying sovereignty, being a promoter of the Shiite religion, and spreading divine provisions, he had the criteria of leadership in the Islamic community (Jafarian, 2000). Abdi Beig, the historian of Shah Tahmasp's era, also considered him to be «Supported by God», whose appearance was God's promise of truth (Abdi Beig Shirazi, 1990, 27). «Tahmasp Shahnameh», the painting masterpiece of the Safavid era, is one of the works that were completed during his time. This Shahnameh was originally a plan to compile a report of the newly established Safavid reign, which was implemented by Shah Ismail I (Soudavar, 2001, 164). The processing of this manuscript likely continued after the era of Shah Ismail, and at the end of the compilation of the book, a special medallion was added to it, which included: « سلطان الاعظم و الخاقان الاعدل الاکرم السلطان

ابن السلطان ابن السلطان ابوالمظفر السلطان شاه طهماسب الصفوی الحسنی بهادر خان خلد الله تعالی ملکه و سلطانه و افاض».

The Narrative of Bahman Castle in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh

The story of the conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow is one of the crucial and sensational narrations of the Shahnameh: «After Giv brought Kay Khosrow's son, Siyâvash, to Iran, there was a quarrel between Goudarz and Tous over the succession of Kawus. Goudarz and Goudarzian wanted the kingdom of Kay Khosrow, and Tous and Nowzarian, who sided with Fariburz, wanted the Kawus' son. Finally, Kay Khosrow made the conquering of the «Bahman Castle» a condition to reach the kingdom. This castle was an enclosure with no doors and openings and an impenetrable base of court. First, Fariburz marched, and when he got near the castle, the ground became so hot that the warriors were burned with their armor and could not find and open the castle door. After a week of vain efforts, Fariburz and his companions returned, and it was Kay Khosrow's turn. He wrote a

letter from the «God's servant» to the «God who gives goodness and guides», that «if this castle belongs to the demon and is the house of witchery goblins, by order of God, he will unoccupied it, that this is his promise to God». He tied the letter on a spear and gave it to Giv to put on the wall of the castle. Giv threw the spear at the castle wall, and the wall collapsed with a thunderous sound. When the darkness disappeared, Kay Khosrow entered the castle and saw a decorous and ornate city. In this way, Kay Khosrow won over Bahman Castle's demons with divine recourse and the help of his warriors, and he removed the spell of magic. After the conquest of Bahman Castle, Kay Khosrow succeeded Kawus with everyone's assent» (Ferdowsi, 2009, 132-134). In fact, it can be said that the story of Bahman Castle is a narration of doing something significant to achieve a great end, in which truth and rightness prevail over lie and perversity. In epic stories, to reach such an end, the legendary champion must pass complex tests in such a way that he is freed from stupidity and ignorance and be born wise and knowledgeable himself (Meskoub, 2010, 31); however, Kay Khosrow's test is not to get rid of ignorance, but to achieve the glory of the kingdom and ascend to the dignity of king. Bahman Castle, which Kawus Shah proposed as a test for Kay Khosrow to reach the kingdom of Iran, is one of the most important arenas of the battle between good and evil, which ends with Kay Khosrow's victory. Kay Khosrow's character throughout his life, including in this story, is prophetically mixed with miracles (Sarami, 1994, 85), and as it appears from the collection of narrations, Kay Khosrow is not only a perfect king but also a perfect human being (Yahaghi, 2007, 682).

Analyzing the story of «Bahman Castle» in «Tahmasap Shahnameh»

The painting of Bahman Castle is a narrative of the conquest of this castle in «Tahmasp Shahnameh» (Fig 1). This painting is attributed to «Ghadimi», one of the court artists of Shah Tahmasp, but it has no date and title.
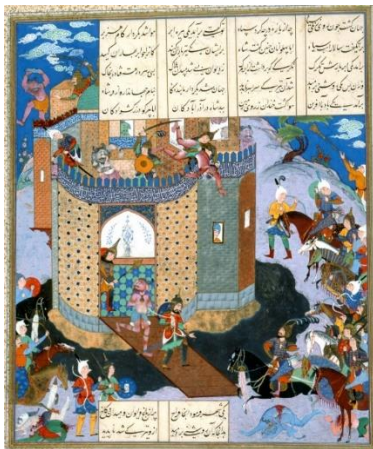

Fig 1. Painting of the story of Bahman Castle in Tahmasap Shahnameh, attributed to Ghadimi Source: Canby, 2011, 197.

1. Description: The painting in question is designed in a rectangular frame, in the upper part of which is written the poetic text of the conquest of Bahman Castle. The visual elements in this painting are Illustrated verse, place (Bahman Castle), and activists: Humans and Demons. The verses in the upper frame of the picture are part of this narrative in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh: جهان گشت چون روی سنگی سیاه / چه از بارهٔ دژ چه گرد سپاه/ ز دیوان بسی شد به

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پیکان هلاک/ بسی زهره رفته فتاده به خاک/ از آن پس یکی روشنی بردمید/ شد آن تیرگی سربهسر ناپدید/ جهان شد به کرداد تابنده ماه/ به نام جهاندار پیروزشاه (Ferdowsi, 2009, 133).

1-1. Illustrated Verse: Placing the text at the top of the page probably indicates the precedence of the written text over the visual one. The verbal narrative in this painting begins with the opening of the Bahman Castle and the destruction of the demons residing in it, and in the lower part of the painting, in a separate frame, the result of the battle and the opening of the castle are emphasized.

2-1. Place (Bahman Castle): The location of a high and large castle in the middle of the picture shows the importance of this place in the narrative. This emphasis is increased by concentrating on the presence of horse riders around the castle and the extension of their gaze, which has made this place the focus of attention for the attendees. According to the narrative, this bewitched castle was an enclosure with no doors and openings, whose head was hidden in the clouds, whose air was the den of the devil, and whose ground was on fire (Ferdowsi, 2009, 132). In the painting in question, the height of the castle compared to human proportions emphasizes the greatness of the building. The placement of verses from the Shahnameh in the upper part of the image, which prevents the measurement of the actual dimensions of this enormous castle, further shows the difficulty of this conquest and victory.

3-1. Activists: In addition to humans, colorful demons (blue, white, green, and brown) with a strange appearance are present in the painting. The presence of these activists and their position in the image play an essential role in conveying meaning. Left, right, top, bottom, center, and margin have different visual values. The collection of visual elements and the way they are placed in a meaningful whole presents a conceptual construction. Size, position, color, movements, and faces are essential in this area. The presence of activists and the way they are depicted in the painting, according to Table 1, is significant.

Table 1. The style of drawing the activists in the painting «The Conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow». Source: Authors.

Activists	Place	Visual Structure	
Humans: Men equipped with all kinds of war weapons with a decent appearance and distinguished clothes.	A consistent group in the foreground and middle part of the image.	**Size**	They have the same physique and are smaller compared to the demons.
		Gestures	Riding on a horse with war equipment (helmet, armor, shield, sword, bow, and arrow), fighting and capturing demons, playing the victory trumpet, watching the battle scene.
		Faces	Content
Demons: Half-naked creatures with a strange and unfamiliar appearance.	Individuals are scattered and enclosed in the castle.	**Size**	They have the same physique and are larger compared to humans.
		Gestures	Killed, subjugated, captured
		Faces	Fear, despair, and sadness

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Activists	Place	Visual Structure

2. Analysis and Interpretation of the Painting: There is a set of signs in this image that includes several conceptual layers, which together have the duty of expressing the artwork. This issue can be investigated in two parts: Intra-textual and extra-textual components.

1-2. Analysis and Interpretation of Painting Based on Intra-Textual Components: A number of semantic strategies in discourse analysis are based on how activists are represented. The ultimate function of representation is sometimes in line with emphasizing a specific concept, which can be considered in the painting of Bahman Castle as follows:

1-1-2. The positive representation of the insider group and the negative of the other: The dominant concept is the superiority of humans over demons. The number of people in the scene and the way they are placed in the painting indicate the superior position of humans compared to demons. According to the way of representation of the activists, as shown in Table 1, in terms of position, facial expressions, gestures, and movements, the general strategy has focused on underestimating the demons. A number of demons falling from the edge of the castle and their subjugation by humans evoke two situations of fear and courage. Also, the aggressive posture of the warrior standing on the top of the castle with his drawn sword pointed at the frightened demon and the sad face of another demon in front of the castle, which a brave warrior has captured, emphasize this concept (Fig 2).

Fig 2. The concept of the superiority of humans over demons and dual confrontations in illustrating activists, part of the painting of Bahman Castle in Tahmasap Shahnameh. Source: Canby, 2011, 197.

2-1-2. Polarization: The division of activists into two opposing groups focuses on highlighting opposing and mutual characteristics. The contrast between nature and culture is the most significant component in this area. The semiotic system in this image, which was chosen to differentiate between the two groups present in the scene, i.e., humans and demons, is the semiotic system of clothing. In this painting, the demons are depicted as strange and unfamiliar humans, which is significantly different from the appearance of the

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humans present in the scene. The image of half-naked demons in front of fully clothed people indicates a kind of differentiation and cultural polarization between these two groups. This is despite the fact that in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, demons are mentioned many times, and like humans, they have their own names and characteristics. Ferdowsi, in a part of the story «The Demon Akvān», considers the demons as humans and introduces them as «bad and ungrateful people» (Ferdowsi, 2009, 185). Some researchers have considered the similarities between the behavior of humans and demons in «Shahnameh» as a metaphor for non-Iranian nations who had a different religion and culture in opposition to Iranians (Haghayegh & Shayestehfar, 2014). In the text of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, the residents of Bahman Castle are introduced as irreligious, which is another contrast in the narrative. Other dual contrasts can be recognized in the actions of the people in the painting. The confrontations that have taken place in the direction of polarizing the activists have considered highlighting the positive attributes of the insider group in order to humiliate the other, that is, the demons; contrasts such as fear/courage, aggression/defense, and calmness/anxiety. The representation of the helpless and confused state of the residents of «Bahman Castle» in front of Kay Khosrow and his companions is the most crucial conceptual structure of this section, which shows the superiority of the insider's discourse over the other's discourse.

3-1-2. Arrays: «Derrida» considers arrays and decorations as «thresholds» that belong both inside and outside of the work. Arrays and decorations are all elements that are linked to a text or artwork but are not part of the nature or meaning of the work (Nojoomian, 2015, 55). The presence of arrays in a text can affect the meaning perception process. One of the most important painting arrays of the Bahman Castle are separate written frames that are among the decorations of the castle (Fig 3).
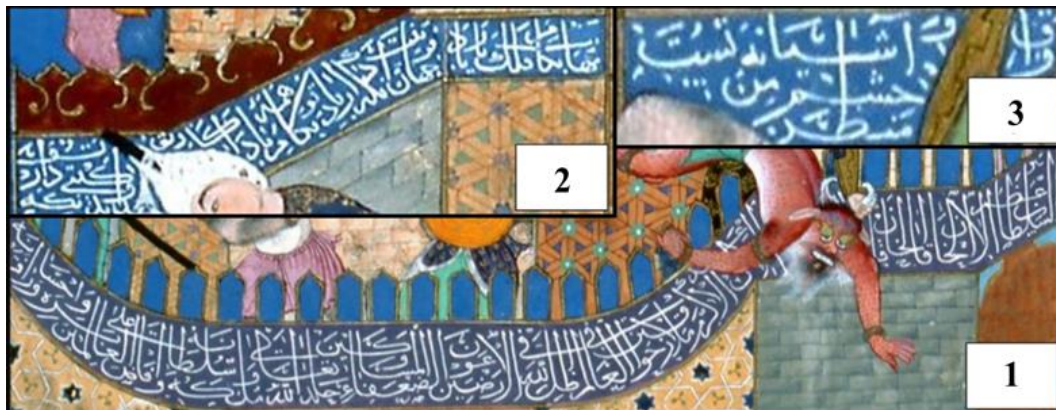

Fig 3. Decorative-written frames, part of the illustration of the story of Bahman Castle in Tahmasp Shahnameh. Source: Canby, 2011, 197.

The largest inscription placed in the front part of the mansion (Fig 3, Frame 1) begins with the phrase «السلطان الخاقان الخاقان ...», which is overshadowed by the image of demon and the name of the king is placed in wane. This text is very similar to the initial text of «Tahmasp Shahnameh», which was mentioned earlier. This repetition, which is done with a slight difference in the painting, mixes the historical, pictorial, and literary background. The content of Frame 2, which begins with the word «تهماسب», is a wish for success for Shah Safavi. «تهماسب (Tahmasp)» is the only name used in this painting. Attaching this name to

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the painting has challenged the integrity of the mythological text and added a historical connection to it, as if the text is unfinished and the artist wants to complete the text with such an addition. Frame 3 complements the statements of this section with the phrase « رواق منظر چشم من آشیانۀ توست», and by inviting the audience to the painting space, it connects the world inside and outside the text.

2-2. Analysis and Interpretation of the Painting Based on Extra-Textual Components: The event of the conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow is a mythological narrative. The meanings used in myths are also often ambiguous due to their complexity and peculiarity, which makes their understanding and interpretation difficult. From the discourse analysis perspective, such works are always linked with texts before and beyond themselves, and in this way, common signs in them are always mixed with historical and cultural concepts and carry their burden (Sojudi & Kake Khani, 2008). Such signs can be considered text consisting of beliefs, history, and cultural values, which increase their depth and breadth in macro-communications with other signs. The semantic layers of the Bahman Castle painting can be presented as follows:

1-2-2. Visual Layer: A painting with the theme of the confrontation of humans and demons at the threshold of a high building in technical analysis and from the point of view of the viewer familiar with Iranian painting, the drawing style, coloring, simultaneous display of primary and secondary events, and drawing various human states and behaviors (Ashrafi, 2005, 52), is reminiscent of the second school of Tabriz. This topic is the same as the syntagmatic axis, and the relationship between its elements in interaction with each other shows that this work belongs to the Tabriz school.

2-2-2. Written Layer: The writing in this painting contains an exciting narrative of an epic battle. Statements such as «بر ایشان یکی تیرباران کنید/ کمان را چو ابر بهاران کنید» and « ز دیوان بسی شد» «به میدان هلاک/ بسی زهره رفته فتاده به خاک», are descriptions of this narration that is meaningful for the readers familiar with the epic-literary themes of Iran and remind of the attachment of this text to Ferdowsi's Shahnameh.

3-2-2. Framing: It is another conceptual layer that can be seen in narrative paintings. Suppose we accept that the painter, like any other author, is able to choose his visual frames and elements. In that case, the presence of the painter is considered one of the most important factors in the production of the work. The choice of the victory scene after a horrific battle is another semiotic frame, and it seems that the artist has marked the beginning of a new start by distancing from the concept of the fearless warrior and reducing the passionate epic narrative to an image of its achievement.

4-2-2. The Context of Work Creation: The painting of Bahman Castle is an illustrated narrative of «Ferdowsi's Shahnameh», which physically belongs to a larger collection called «Tahmasp Shahnameh». This issue involves the painting in a kind of intertextuality and affects the process of its comprehension. Tahmasp Shahnameh, which is a court art, is considered a cultural text that was formed in the center of the reign due to its dependence on governmental bodies, and therefore, traces of the intellectual and political tendencies of the Safavid rulers, as those who ordered this work, can be found in it. On the other hand, Kay Khosrow is a religious warrior whose kingship is the result of his religious beliefs. Kay Khosrow's victory over the Bahman Castle demons can be considered not the victory of man over the mighty forces of nature but the victory of a young government over the illegitimate governments of the past, which is closely consistent with the characteristics of the Safavid government that sat on the throne of power after the dark days of Ilkhanids and

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Timurids. This raises the issue of the Hermeneutics of epic texts. Hermeneutics, which is a kind of begging the question of prominent historical events, verses of the Quran, and hadiths, has been used many times by historians in the Safavid era to explain certain events and incidents. The results of hermeneutic interpretation, which were used in line with political and religious goals, sometimes extend to extremes, like sanctifying the position of the Safavid king (Feyzi Sakha, 2015).

3. Review and Explanation of the Conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow: Since signs carry a heavy burden of beliefs, thoughts, myths, and, in a general sense, culture, sometimes, to analyze a sign, one must go to the pre-text or meta-texts (Sojudi & Kake Khani, 2008). As the hero of the Shahnameh, Kay Khosrow has a historical, mythological, and literary character. He is a part of the past and cultural context internalized in the text of the Iranian society, and dealing with his character and performance can help the reader in decoding the signs. The general features of this narrative are significant in terms of the historical context in several basic topics of mythological infrastructure, historical context, place orientation (proximity of origin), the importance of religion and lineage:

1-3. Mythological Infrastructure: As it was said before, in terms of status, Kay Khosrow was the foremost intellectual among all the Iranian kings and warriors (Coyajee, 1992, 51), so the power, friendliness, and glory that was bestowed on him astonishes everyone (Yahaghi, 2007, 682). In Avesta, Kay Khosrow is a great and powerful character who united all the Aryan nations in one monarchy (Aban Yasht-19) and led them until the destruction of Afrasiab, their hereditary and hard-hearted enemy(Coyajee, 1992, 114 & 115). He was one of the great fighters against demonolatry. Conquering Bahman Castle was Kay Khosrow's first step in proving his inherent competence to attain the position of king. Based on the previous analyses and including the inclusion of the Safavid king's name on the inscription of the castle, the fundamental point of this subject is to create a cross-temporal relationship between the mythological narrative and the historical narrative. Accordingly, the literary subject has become a paradigm, and the literary character has become a prototype of the historical character.

2-3. Historical Context: Shah Ismail, the founder of the Safavid reign, started his campaign by conquering Ardabil (905 A.H.) with the demand to expand Shiism throughout Iran, a battle that continued until the conquest of all of Iran under a single government. It seems that in addition to creating religious unity among the people, the Safavids made Shiism «partially, if not fundamentally» the state religion because they distinguished their territory from the Ottoman Empire and created a desire for unity among the peasantry (Savory, 2001, 148). Shah Ismail's government was founded on the integration of religion and politics, and the Shah, while he was the head of the political and government unions, was also considered a perfect mentor and leader of the religious bodies. Religion and government were together (Aghajari, 2010, 62). Therefore, his campaign was considered a religious-national action. The combination of the historical context of the Safavid era and the mythological context of the narrative of Bahman Castle indicates the existence of shared values, such as the preservation of Iranian culture and identity, which was possible by removing foreign elements from the land in addition to creating a new order in the reign that relied on the element of religion. Attaching these goals and ideals to the mythological infrastructure was the strategy that the Safavid kings followed in the grand plan of compiling «Tahmasp Shahnameh».

3-3. Place Orientation (Proximity of Origin): The origin of these two religious government movements is another point in common. The geographical area of Bahman

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Castle (i.e., Ardabil), as the starting point of two critical history-making movements (i.e., the beginning of the kingdom of the fresh government of Kay Khosrow), in contrast to the previous governments and the beginning of the Safavid government from this same geographical area as the first centralized Iranian Shiite government, reminds us of the importance of the place in mythology, because from the perspective of mythology, it is impossible to establish and build the world without finding a central and holy place. Finding such a spot makes it possible to construct the universe in place because nothing can be started and done in an ordinary place (Sarafi, 2001). The place-oriented strategy, in adding «historical-documentary context» to «mythical context», provides the possibility of adapting two-time events to each other. As mentioned earlier, the way of illustration indicates the importance of place in the painting.

4-3. Centralizing Religion to Make a Distinction: As mentioned in the previous analyses, the religious-political classification is another characteristic that is focused on differentiating oneself from the other, and it is clearly emphasized in the narrative of the Shahnameh about the conquest of Bahman Castle. In contrast to the «irreligiousness» of the residents of Bahman Castle, Kay Khosrow considers himself a religious person who fought against the devil by order of Yazdan (Ferdowsi, 2009, 245). The essential value of religion in differentiating oneself from others has been one of the issues of concern to the Safavid government. The creation of a single nation with a specific religion known for it, which has endured great difficulties against foreign invasions for the defense of the same religion, is an issue that will return Iranians to their former position in terms of independence and historical identity (Safa, 1999, 29 & 70) and revived the old roots in them.

5-3. Background and Lineage: The lineage of the emperor is one of the other issues that Kay Khosrow emphasizes: همان من نه از دست اهرمنم/ که از فرّ و برز است جان و تنم/ به فرمان یزدان کند

این تهی/ که این است پیمان شاهنشهی (Ferdowsi, 2009, 245). In this statement, he also mentions obedience to the king because the king has divine glory and is the representative of Ahura Mazda on earth. On the other hand, and as it was mentioned before, possession of glory, which has an ancient origin, was one of the most important foundations of the Safavid reign. Linking a mythical character with power and politics in the historical dimension is a kind of identification on the part of the Safavid kings with the ideal king. One of the most important elements of text reading in critical discourse analysis is identifying the main core of the discourse or the central signifier in such a way that in order to collect the meaning of the signs within a discourse, one meaning from multiple meanings is highlighted in that discourse and fixed in connection with the existing elements. This point has semantic certainty with which other signs are coordinated (Soltani, 2012, 74 & 75). Based on the conducted studies, «King and royal behavior» can be considered as the central signifier of the discourse in the examined text, around which other epic and mythological actions such as courage, religious belief, and dignity have circulated. The transformation of the indefinite space of the poem, which contains an expanded mechanism of magic and miracles, into a space that is full of objectivity and history, creates conversions in the implication and shows a new aspect of power rituals; an aspect that focuses on the conversion of mythical power and turning it into a display of historical power. The entanglement of the mythological narrative with the historical context and the core of power, depending on the degree of similarity and function, can affect the intensity of conversion. Therefore, it can be claimed that mythological narratives undergo conversion and transformation in every restatement, representation, and composition to record an incident anew in history.

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Conclusion

«Power» is one of the main elements of critical discourse analysis. Knowing how to influence power and the strategies of its application in different areas of society is one of the matters of interest in this area. If we consider the control of the text structure as one of the methods of applying and manifesting power in the text, we can consider the method of processing texts such as «The Conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow» as an indirect but fundamental method for reproducing dominance and superiority. In this painting, the effects and signs of the dominant power can be seen in a set of representation strategies, such as polarization, highlighting the self, and undermining the other. Among other notable strategies in this field, the Hermeneutics and begging the question of the narrative of the conquest of Bahman Castle by Kay Khosrow from the dominant power is revealed by the interpretation and analysis of different layers of meaning. Creating a cross-temporal relationship between the mythological and the historical narratives is one of them. Accordingly, the literary theme has become a paradigm, and the literary character has become a prototype of the historical character. Incorporating «historical-documentary context» with «mythical context» is one of the other issues that has been done by connecting the actions, goals, and ideals of Kay Khosrow as an ideal king with the historical context of the Safavid era. It seems that the reproduction of the mythical narrative of the conquest of Bahman Castle, as the most crucial epic part of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, in the political-cultural atmosphere of the Safavid era, was a strategic opportunity for drawing royal ideals.

Author Contributions

In preparing this article; The study, research and data collection of the article was the responsibility of author 1. Writing, data analysis has been done with the participation of authors 1 and 2. Author 2 has been responsible for the thorough revision of the article. This manuscript was written with the participation of all authors. All authors discussed the results, reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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