



## Explaining The Position of Women in the Marriage Narrations of Shahnameh Tahmaspi, Based on the Intertextual Analysis of Text and Image

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**Citation:** Doosti, Sh., Farrokhfar, F., & Yaghubpour, A. (2022). Explaining the position of women in the marriage narrations of shahnameh tahmaspi, based on the intertextual analysis of text and image. *Journal of Woman and Culture*, 13(51), 1-14.

**DOR:** 20.1001.1.20088426.1401.13.51.1.9

### ARTICLE INFO

**Received:** 22.12.2021

**Accepted:** 23.02.2022

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**Keywords:**

Women in Shahnameh  
Marriage narrations  
Shahnameh Tahmaspi  
Intertextuality analysis  
Text and image

### Abstract

The aim of this study was to explain the position of women in the marriage narrations of Shahnameh Tahmaspi based on the intertextual analysis of text and images in Iran. The present study statistical universe included all the drawings of Tahmaspi Shahnameh. The sample subsumed 29 images in all of which women have an important and key role. The research design was descriptive-analytical. The data collecting method was through library documentary, observation and reviewing the intertextual drawings and analyzing the visual elements in the selected works. Data were analyzed using interdisciplinary studies and content analysis methods. The results showed that the position of women in Shahnameh marriage narrations were rooted in the mythological beliefs of Iranians and in this regard, had a special validity. Due to the mythological structure of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, fidelity and adherence to the principles of the original texts was quite clear. However, in the depiction of the paintings of Tahmaspi Shahnameh, there were obvious differences with the text, the source of which was the culture of the Safavid society and the beliefs of the patriarchal society of that period.



## Extended abstract

**Introduction:** Marriage was one of the central themes in Shahnameh, and were depicted in Ferdowsi's book with specific rituals. Some of these marriages played larger roles in Shahnameh, and Ferdowsi portrays them exquisitely and deftly. There are miniatures of such stories in Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp as well, and the painter, paid more attention to some marriages than others, dedicating detailed miniatures to some marriages while portraying others with single miniatures. In this study, the content of marriage stories in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is compared with miniatures in Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, and it is determined which of the marriages are portrayed by painter in Tabriz School during the Safavid Empire. For each story, how many miniatures are available? And are the miniatures faithful to the content of the stories? So The aim of this study was to explain the position of women in the marriage narrations of Shahnameh Tahmaspi based on the intertextual analysis of text and images in Iran.

**Method:** The present study statistical universe included all the drawings of Tahmaspi Shahnameh. The sample subsumed 29 images in all of which women have an important and key role. The research design was descriptive-analytical. The data collecting method was through library documentary, observation and reviewing the intertextual drawings and analyzing the visual elements in the selected works. Data were analyzed using interdisciplinary studies and content analysis methods In this paper, the intertextuality technique was used. Intertextuality reflected theories and approaches developed in recent decades and have been considered by a wide range of researchers in art and literary studies. However, in Iran, this approach has received insufficient attention, and literary and art studies in this area should be conducted in Iran. In this research, the works of researchers such as Azhand (2013) and Canby (2003) have been studied and in the sources related to Shahnameh, it has been adapted from the researches of Talkhabi (2005), Khaleghi Motlagh (1993), Rouhnamini (1991), Satari and Haghighi (2015; 2016). Also the works of Namvar Motlagh (2009), Arabshahi (2016), and Azimifard (2013) have been used to study intertextuality. The miniatures are taken from the books: "Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp" (published by Farhangestan-e Honar, 2013), "Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp" by Sheila R. Canby (published by Harvard University Press (HUP) (2014) and "The Houghton Shahnameh" by Martin Bernard Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch (Harvard University Press, 1981).

**Results:** Marriage stories in Shahnameh were mostly exogamies. In such marriages, someone marries another outside their own tribe. Some other marriages in Shahnameh are endogamies. In such a tradition, kings are required to select their wives from among the nobles. There were 40 marriage stories in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, 12 of which were illustrated in Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp. Most marriages in Shahnameh, especially those during the mythical period, had specific structures and were mostly exogamy. In many marriages in Shahnameh's heroic and mythical parts, girls took the first steps. Men in heroic parts of Shahnameh usually end up in another land, which was mostly Turan, and were visited by beautiful girls with marriage proposals. Such figures as Rostam, Siyavosh, Forud, Kay Khosrow, and so on, were born into such marriages. In mythology, Iran is the land of Ahura Mazda, the source of virtues and benevolence, while Turan was the land of the demon, the source of vices and wickedness. Marriages between Iranian women and non-Iranian men were the union of Ahura and the demon. Given the specific mythical structure in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh, the marriage proposal made by non-Iranian girls to Iranian men in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh could be compared to the invasion of demons to the creation of Ahura (intercourse) in the cycle of existence. The number of illustrated marriages in the first section of



Shahnameh was greater than in the middle and end sections. The majority of the miniatures depict Zal and Rudabeh's marriage. There are 21 miniatures depicting Zal and Rudabeh's marriage, 12 of which were examined in this study, with the majority depicting men and women in conflict. Since there are more miniatures in the heroic parts of the Shahnameh than in the historical parts, marriages in mythical periods could be investigated thoroughly. The comparison of marriage stories in Shahnameh and their respective miniatures revealed that there were differences between the miniatures and the original stories, with some miniatures being more faithful to the original stories than others. Most important characters in Shahnameh marriages, which were described with thrones and necklaces, were depicted in miniatures with Qizilbash hats. The majority of the miniatures depict women as observers of the events taking place. In a scene depicting Arnavaz and Shahrnaz next to Fereydun, women were seated lower than men in the royal palace of Fereydun, contrary to the original text. In the story of Kawus and Sudabeh, when pleading for justice, Kawus was depicted as a judge in his seat and never appears in shabistan; rather, it is Sudabeh who went to Kawus. In the story of Azadeh and Bahram, Azadeh was a servant of Bahram and not a noblewoman, is described by Ferdowsi as wine-colored, but the painter depicted her as pale and frail. Furthermore, the painter depicted Sudabeh alone in the war camp, despite the fact that she was accompanied by 40 attendants as described in the text.

**Conclusions:** The mythical structure of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh clearly adhered to primary source texts. Myths in Ancient Iran feature patriarchy as a dominant force, and Shahnameh's poetry reflected this as well. Iranian men and non-Iranian women were involved in such marriages. Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp, which was illustrated during the reigns of Shah Ismail I and Tahmasp I, and while the poems were belong to a patriarchal society, they also featured the culture and beliefs of the time. Therefore, the texts of the miniatures could be linked with the culture of the time, myths, and Ferdowsi's poems, and then examined as a whole. There were clear differences between the miniatures illustrated in Shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp and the poems, which stemmed from the dominant culture in Safavid society and patriarchal beliefs. Differences between the illustrations and the original text included portraying women in a lower position than men, even when they were described equally in the text, as well as depicting women in the margins or behind windows and representing them as weak. All of these instances reflected the impact of society's culture and the spirit of poems on the illustrated miniatures, in which the patriarchy was dominant.

**Author Contributions:** Shohreh Doosti: designing the general framework, scripting the text, Dr. Farzaneh Farrokhfar: directing the theoretical approaches of the research, cooperating in designing the general framework, the approaches selection, final review and corresponding author. Dr. Arman Yaghubpour: directing the practical course of the research, explanation and execution of the approaches. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the article. This article was extracted from the M. A dissertation of Shohreh Doosti supervised by Dr. Dr. Farzaneh Farrokhfar and practical direction of Dr. Arman Yaghubpour.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors would like to thank all those who contributed to the present study.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

**Funding:** This article has not been sponsored.