



Examining the Anecdotes of Tha'labī's Book "Qatla al-Qur'an" from Propp's Morphological Perspective

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Abstract

One way of examining fiction texts in literature is to analyze the structure of anecdotes from Vladimir Propp's morphological point of view. For fairy tales, Propp has defined functions that are applicable to a variety of other tales and stories. The book "Qatla al-Qur'an" by Abu Ishāq al-Tha'labī is a collection of anecdotes, all of which have a common point and they are all about the stories of those who lost their lives after hearing a verse or verses from the divine book. Examining the narrative structure of these short stories reveals the hidden relationships between the anecdotes in their infrastructure and reveals the structure and form of the stories better. In this article, this attractive Tha'labī's work has been analyzed from a morphological point of view by descriptive-analytical method. As a result, the introductory works and the climax of the story, which usually marks the end of it, are the most important design of Tha'labī for creating a single and uniform structure in the anecdotes of this book.

Keywords: *Structural Criticism; Propp's Morphology; Short Story; Qatla al-Qur'an; Tha'labī.*

1. Introduction

Stories, anecdotes, tales, legends, narratives, etc., or any other name we give it, have an inseparable connection with the human soul and psyche, and since prehistoric times until now, it had and has a significant presence in all human societies but the story as a literary genre is less than a few centuries old. The great breadth and diversity of this type of literature has caused us to see different types and divisions of this category, which are sometimes based on appearance and structure, and sometimes based on content and subject. One type of story is a short story. There is a lot of disagreement about what

the characteristics of a short story are. But there is a consensus that "a short story should have a certain brevity. Closing it in certain dimensions is futile." (Reid, 1394: 16) Short story can include from one sentence to several pages. In general, it can be said that this type of literature should be such that it can be read at most in a two-hour session. (See: *ibid*, 1394: 14-16)

Qatla al-Qur'an by Tha'labī, as one of the works consisting of anecdotes, is part of this type of literature and can be examined from a morphological point of view.

2. Research Background

The book "Qatla al-Qur'an" has been abandoned and neglected until the last century. Even until a few years ago, this book has not been published. Nasser ibn Muhammad ibn 'Uthmān al-Mani' published this book in 1429 AH in Saudi Arabia and introduced Tha'labī and his works and the content of this book. Also in 2009, Habibullah Abbasi and Sedigheh Pour Akbar Kasma'i have translated this book "Listening to the Qur'an and its victims" into Persian; and in addition to the text and translation of the book, they have extracted and mentioned similar short and long anecdotes in Ṣūfī books and works. Nevertheless, the grace of precedence and the precedence of grace in the independent writing of this book and its subject still belong to Tha'labī. No morphological research has been done on the structure of the book "Qatla al-Qur'an" or its anecdotes, but in the category of morphological studies in Persian literary texts, many articles have been written that have often been done in this way that sometimes a literary work has been thoroughly examined and sometimes a part of a work or a sample independent of its text has been examined. Examples of the first group include these articles: "Morphology of the story of Leily and Majnun written by Jami based on Propp's theory" by: Sa'id Zohrehvand, Marzieh Mas'udi and Mansour Rahimi (1393), "Morphology of Homaynameh" by: Mahboubeh AliHouri (1394), "Morphology of the Egyptian Mahan Myth based on the theory of Vladimir Propp" by: Seyyed Morteza Mirhashemi and Zahra Sa'adatinia (1395), "Morphology of Khavarannameh by Ibn Hussam Khosfi Birjandi based on Propp's theory" by: Mohammad Majozi and Afsaneh Nouri (1396) and There are also many examples of the second group of articles, some of which are: "Study of the structure of anecdotes of Rūh al-Arwāh based on Propp's morphological theory" by: Mojtaba Damavandi and Sayyidah Zahra Mirnejad (1394), "Functions in Qur'anic Stories Based on Propp's View" by: Batool Ashrafi, Giti Taki and Mohammad Behnamfar (1394), "Structural Analysis of Lyrical Stories of Translation of Comfort After Intensity Based on Propp's Perspectives" by: Nahid Nasr Azadani and Mohsen Mohammadi Fesharaki (1395), "Morphology of mystical allegories based on the poems of Sanai, Attar and Rumi" by: Abdullah Tolouei Azar, Rahim Kooshesh and Ali Samadi (1395), "Morphology of Marzbannameh fables" by: Hossein Sadeghi, Seyyed Ahmad Parsa and Yousef Taheri (1395) and etc.

3. Morphology

Analyzing and studying the form and structure of literary works has always been one of the concerns of critics and researchers in the field of literature and art because the preference or non-preference of the word over meaning or form over content has been one of the most controversial issues in the history of world literary criticism. "From the earliest times in the history of philosophy, the question of 'form' has always been of interest to philosophers from different perspectives and in different contrasts." (Shafi'i Kadkani, 1391: 68) Form contains several elements. "Weight and rhyme, consonant and vowel and syllable, forms of imagination, techniques of novelty, angle of view and plot are all part of the form of a literary work, provided that these components play a role in its construction or texture." (Shamisa, 1381: 156) In any case, one cannot deny the great value of form in literary texts. "Knowledge of form is necessary not only for artists, and it is the first and only way to advance their work like researchers who remain numerical in mathematics." (Shafi'i Kadkani, 1391: 17) The place of form in the schools of formalism and structuralism is very special and important, especially in Russian formalism,

which is one of the most important and effective literary schools in the world and it has a significant role and presence in the field of literary studies of the world since the second half of the twentieth century until now. "It is impossible to remove the flow of Russian formalism from the history of world literary and artistic theories. Because these thinkers, in addition to saying their important words in the fields of literature, language and poetry, literary evolution, the dominant aspect, have led to several other great epoch-making currents shaped in the corners of the world because of their sayings, including Prague and Paris." (Ibid. 1391: 25) One of these great literary currents has been formed in the field of folklore and narratology, which was founded by "Vladimir Propp" (1895-1970) called "morphology" or "formology". Propp's research falls into the category of "structuralist narrative" (Modarresi, 1390: 222), which is itself derived from the theory of structuralism by "Claude Lévi-Strauss". Strauss structuralism was formed in the middle of the twentieth century and connected several different fields of humanities and social sciences such as: literature, philosophy, history, linguistics, psychology, etc. (See: Ibid., 1390: 278-280) Propp's work is related to narratology on the one hand and is similar to structuralism on the other, but his main difference with structuralists and narratologists is that he examines and deals with the relationship between the components of a work in opposition to each other and also in relation to the totality of the same work. "Narratology is the study of grammar that governs narratives and most fiction narratives and provides a theoretical and practical framework for analyzing types of narratives." (Ibid. 1390: 222) The school of structuralism was flourished in the field of humanities and social sciences in the twentieth century. "Literary structuralism was flourished in the 1960th decade and was initially an attempt to apply the methods and perceptions of Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of modern structural linguistics in the field of literature." (Eagleton, 1392: 132) Structuralism is also a multiple and complex concept. In other words, "if we want to reduce a completely complex idea to a phrase, we can say that structuralism is the study of relationships." (Green et al., 1391: 277) Propp's method shows that he does not work exactly according to the method of narratologists nor does he fully conform to the style of structuralists; he acts like a formalist, although he is not considered a formalist, and he has never been a formalist, but rather a folklorist.

By examining "One Hundred Folk Tales and Children's Stories" (Ahmadi, 1380: 145), Propp was able to find fixed criteria and patterns for the structural study and analysis of stories among Russian fairy tales, and his method became so popular which can be applied and used in many literary fields. "He categorized folklore works according to their formal rules and therefore called his work morphological." (Ahmadi, 1380: 144) These anecdotes "were selected from a collection of anecdotes compiled by the prominent Russian folklorist Afanassiev." (Ibid. 1380: 146) Of course, he has taken this term from "botany" (Ibid. 1380: 145) and has entered it in the field of literature and literary criticism. The morphological method is very efficient, useful and fruitful in analyzing stories. In every story there are fixed, variable and auxiliary elements. The fixed elements are the same as Propp's intended functions. Variable elements like the characters and the names and the titles and ... are the ones that cause variety in the story. Auxiliary elements also play a linking role between the functions.

4. Functions

For each story, Propp defines thirty-one functions. Each anecdote is made up of a set of functions. "Functionality means the act of a character of the characters of the story, which is defined in terms of the importance it has during the operation of the story." (Propp, 1386: 53) First of all functions is the "initial state" which, although not included in their number, but its place is at the beginning of the collection of self-works. These functions are, respectively, "absenteeism, prohibition, violation of prohibition, receiving information, giving information, deceiving, complicity, evil, need, mediation or relating event, initial confrontation, departure, first benevolent function, heroic reaction, provide or receive a magical object, move between two lands (guidance), conflict, heat up or mark, win and solve a problem, return, chase or pursue, liberate, reach the unknown, baseless claims, hard work, solve the problem, recognition, scandal,

deformation, evil punishment and marriage." (See: Propp, 1386: 59-135) Although Propp has used great care and has extracted the original and comprehensive functions, but his method of dividing the functions can be even shorter. "Given the six activists of the mind and the object, the sender and the receiver, the helper and the enemy, one can deduce the various spheres of action of the propp and achieve even more beauty." (Eagleton, 1392: 144) It is obvious that these principles and elements are related to fairy tales and not all of them can be found and shown in every story. "Not all anecdotes have all thirty-one functions, but those in one anecdote always follow a permanent order." (Reid, 1394: 50) Propp himself has acknowledged this point. But the remarkable thing about this is that the results obtained from morphological studies are often useful and instructive in understanding literary texts in general and fictional texts in particular. "Although Propp's analysis is based on Russian stories, because most of the stories he analyzes are part of a treasure trove of story types at the international level, there are minor differences about almost all of the Indo-European folk tales." (Propp, 1386: Introduction: Twelve and Thirteen) In addition, Propp achieved four general principles about stories in this way: First, that there are fixed and stable elements in relation to the functions of the characters in every story.; second, the number of functions in these stories is limited; third, the sequence of functions is always the same, and fourth, the structure of all fairy tales is the same. (See: Propp, 1386: 53-58) These findings still retain their originality and value."In folk tales, he tries to show how the hundred stories he studies are in fact different forms - or in other words, different narrative schemes - a basic prototype." (Bertens, 1391: 49) In the present article, based on Propp's morphological method, we examine the structure of the anecdotes of the book "Qatla al-Qur'an" by Tha'labī.

5. *Tha'labī and His Works*

Before beginning the discussion and studying the morphology of the book "Qatla al-Qur'an", it is necessary to briefly explain Tha'labī and his works. Abu Ishāq Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim Tha'labī Nayshābūrī (born around the middle of the fourth century and died in 427 AH) is a famous commentator, writer, reciter and preacher of the fourth and fifth centuries AH. There is disagreement about Tha'labī's name because in some sources he is referred to as Tha'ālibī and in others as Tha'labī. Perhaps his name is confused with Abu Mansour Tha'ālibī (see. Safa, 1369: 641), the great and contemporary writer of Tha'labī. There is not much information about Tha'labī's personal life, and only a few general points have been mentioned about him. Tha'labī was born in Nishabur and apparently spent his whole life in the city of Nishabur. He is a follower of Shāfi'ī jurisprudence and Ash'ari theology and has created his works according to this view. Tha'labī has several works, many of which have been destroyed. outstanding works of Tha'labī are: "Al-Kashf wa al-Bayān 'an Tafsīr al-Qur'an", "Qatla al-Qur'an", "Arā'is al-Majālis fī Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'", "Nafā'is al-'Arā'is wa Yawāqit al-Tijān fī Qaṣaṣ al-Qur'an", "Arā'is al-Tijān", "Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'", "The story of the Prophet Samson (PBUH)", "The story of the Prophet Moses (PBUH)", "The story of the Prophet Joseph (PBUH)", "Al-Kāmil fī 'Ilm al-Qur'an", "Rabi' al-Mudhakkirīn" and "Faḍā'il al-Qur'an". (See: Tha'labī, 1429: 33)

5-1- Qatla al-Qur'an

Culturally, the fourth and fifth centuries have a special place in the history of Islam and Iran. "This period is the golden age of the Islamic civilization of Iran and the period of glory of the Iranian buildings and the emergence of great scholars and poets and the writing and compilation of countless books." (Safa, 1369: 197) One of the novel writings in this era is the book "Qatla al-Qur'an" by Tha'labī, which unfortunately has not been considered as it should be, and even in recent years, even scholars have not paid much attention to it. But after its publication, it attracted the attention of many audiences because it seems to be the first independent book on its subject. The original name of Tha'labī's book is: "The blessed book mentions the martyrs of the great Qur'an for those who hear the Qur'an and die by hearing it" (may God have mercy on them and upon all Muslims). This book is about the Qur'anic slain, that is, those who have died after hearing a verse or verses of the word of God. Reading and re-reading the

introduction of the book *Qatla al-Qur'an* and reflecting on the phrases adopted by Abu Ishāq al-Tha'labī, clarifies his perspective and approach in this composition: "This is a book that includes a mention of people who are the best martyrs and the most honorable scholars. They attained the highest houses and realized the highest ranks and they are the ones who were killed by the Qur'an when they read it or heard it being recited, they knew it truly and understood it correctly." (Tha'labī, 1429: 53-54) Tha'labī has stated his goal in writing this book, to achieve divine mercy and to receive the blessings of righteous people, because - according to the text of a hadith - he believes that: "When the righteous are mentioned, mercy is revealed. (Ibid. 1429: 55)

5-1-1- The Structure of *Qatla Al-Qur'an*

The book "*Qatla al-Qur'an*" consists of a collection of anecdotes, all of which have in common the Qur'anic martyrs. This work consists of an introduction and twenty-two anecdotes. Most of the anecdotes in the book *Qatla al-Qur'an* are short and sometimes only a few lines long. Therefore, it may be better to consider these anecdotes as flash fiction. "Flash fiction is a kind of short story that while preserving the main features of the short story is more concise and brief. Fictional elements such as characterization, staging, and conflicts are briefly described." (Dad, 1390: 215) In the introduction of the book, Tha'labī speaks about its authorship cause and spiritual value and establishes his word by bringing an anecdote. He further asks the readers not to be indifferent to this book and its content and to take advantage of it: "So, you who look at this book, those who follow it with kindness and those who love it with heart and tongue, be with it in Heaven, God Almighty willing." (Tha'labī, 1429: 56) In his book, the author sometimes mentions certain people who are known and sometimes he is satisfied only with a description of the characters, for example: Jawān Nayshābūrī, Sheikh Kūfī, one of the mystics and etc. In addition, Tha'labī has acted like the companions of hadith for many of his anecdotes and has brought the complete series of document of his narratives, which includes the narrator to the observer and witness of the story, and of course, sometimes he has not fully observed this matter. Because the short story is based on realism and a slice of life. It seems that his purpose in bringing a series of documents to his anecdotes is to show that his anecdotes are realistic and not fantasy and myth. "In a realistic story, including most of the novels and short stories, the authors have tried to make their characters look more like real people." (Scholes, 1393: 18) The stories of the *Qatla al-Qur'an* are short and have almost all the limitations in the structure of short stories. "Structure in the story is a very complex concept because it contains many elements." (Scholes, 1393: 37) The elements of the story are usually changed related to the form of the story. "Short stories have form like any other imaginary literary fiction." (Green et al., 1391: 100) In terms of the shape of the stories, almost all of these stories are similar, with the difference that sometimes the volume of some of them is very short in a few lines and sometimes it is a long story up to several pages. Also, some anecdotes are about well-known people and others are about unknown people, such as a young man from Nishabur and etc. The events that take place in these stories are not very varied, and the author does not intend to address the events and their margins. However, in a few anecdotes (10, 15, 18 and 19), there are several adventures that make the anecdote more like a short story in its scientific sense. In other words, the narrative structure is more evident in these few limited anecdotes.

It is noteworthy that most of the narrations are narrated linearly, and if other cases are found, they are in the minority, such as stories that have some kind of flashback and refer to the past from the present. In general, the stories of the *Qatla al-Qur'an* are divided into several categories in terms of its narration angle: Sometimes a person is worshipping. He hears the recitation of the Qur'an or reads the Qur'an himself and then dies. (Stories: 5-6-7-9-12-14); Sometimes a person accidentally goes into raptures when he hears the sound of the Qur'an and dies immediately or at a distance. (Stories: 2-8- 11-13-15-16-17-18); in some cases, a person (while worshipping or in a normal state) hears the recitation of the Qur'an, becomes unconscious, then regains consciousness and becomes anxious when he hears the recitation of the Qur'an again, and dies. River. (Stories: 1-3-4-10-19-20-21-22) Storytelling in many of these anecdotes is either not seen in general and is completely descriptive and narrative, or the story is very brief and it is concise, so that there is no room for explaining the events. The form, structure and plot of most of these narrations

are as follows: "A person enters a place. Some verses are recited and the listener dies." A pattern similar to that - though not to the point of death - is very common in early Islamic stories. "The common and dominant feature of all the stories of converting of different people to Islam is that they all have a single structure. A person who is mainly an elder and a leader who is hostile to the Prophet, hears verses and immediately believes in Islam." (Abbasi and Pour Akbar Kasmaei, 1390: 30)

5-1-2- Personology of Qatla al-Qur'an

Propp considers the first step in the morphology of the story to be the study of the actions and functions of the characters in the story. "The functions of the characters in the story are the basic structures of the story, and we must separate them all first." (Propp, 1386: 52). He attributes seven general characters to fairy tales: "Hero; A princess or a good woman; the benefactor or predictor who first is the hero examiner and then becomes his friend; Helpers and friends of the hero; the sender who sends the hero on a mission; Evil or heroic enemy; a false hero or swindler who introduces himself as a hero." (Ahmadi, 1380: 145) If we look at the anecdotes of Qatla al-Qur'an from this perspective, we see that most of the characters in the stories have little role in its events and each anecdote has no more than one or two effective characters. The main character of these anecdotes can be considered the hero of short stories, because these famous or anonymous heroes have reached the highest possible ranks in the opinion of the author of the book and have a high position in the sight of God so that even mentioning their names causes the revelation of divine mercy and the happiness of human beings. Fictional characters are closely related to the plot. "The word 'plot' basically has a multi-layered and complex meaning because it encompasses every action in every literary genre." (Dipple, 1395: 9) Some characters have a pivotal role and others do not play much role in the structure and content of the story and in a way, they form the background actors of the narration of the text. In the book of Qatla al-Qur'an, many characters have appeared on the stage only to increase their knowledge to the main character or similar cases, such as: Muhammad ibn Manakdar, 'Atabah, Hārūn al-Rashīd, son of Lughmān, Barmakids, etc. have no role in the plot of their stories. We will now examine the characters in this work according to the Propp's model.

5-1-2-1- Hero

The characters, old and young, man and woman, who are somehow the heroes of the stories in this book, are: Ali ibn Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād (twice), the brother of Muhammad ibn Manakdar, Young Prayer, Kufi Man, Young Kufi, Young Nayshābūrī, A young man from the Companions of the Second Caliph, Najad Faq'asi, Zurarah Ibn Ūfī Ḥarshī, Abu 'Uthmān Sa'id Ibn Ismā'il l Ḥīrī, Miswar Neighbor of 'Atabah, Lughmān Hakim, Abu Jahir Zarir, Asad Ibn Sahlab, Sheikh Kufi, Old Kufi, Bedouin Arab, One of mystics, An old man from Mahalabah, Another mystic; The maid belonging to the old man from Mahalabah, who is the only female protagonist. In addition, we encounter an inhuman hero: four goblins."

Most of these characters are ascetics or Sufis or devotees, and it is not surprising that they died hearing the Qur'an, because "Sufis used the Qur'an and its recitation as a kind of "good suicide." (Abbasi and Pour-Akbar Kasma'i, 1390: 57) They have a good spiritual background to be influenced by the sound and content of the Qur'an. "We do not know anyone who, like Sufism, has a desire for the Qur'an." (Ibid. 1390: 58) Historical narrations also confirm this issue. "There are narrations about the intensity of the influence of the Companions and followers from hearing the Qur'an in the works of Sufism, some of which were dying from the intensity of the influence of hearing the Qur'an." (Ibid. 1390: 59) Also, "there are anecdotes in which the heroes are ordinary people who, after hearing the Qur'an, convert to Islam as they never return from it and constantly live with the Qur'an. They were mainly affected by the glorious dimension of the Qur'an, so that they trembled when they heard it." (Ibid. 1390: 51)

5-1-2-2- Princess or a Good Woman

There is no princess in the anecdotes of Qatla al-Qur'an, but in some cases we encounter the character of a good woman who is often the mother of the hero or one of her relatives, such as: the old women we see in anecdotes 6, 7 and 19.

5-1-2-3- Generous or Predictor

In this book, there is no sign of a generous or fortune-telling character, according to Propp's view.

5-1-2-4- Helpers and Friends of the Hero

Sometimes only the names of these friends are mentioned, such as: 'Atabah - who is the neighbor of the hero character - and Sufyān Thūrī - who is attributed to the main character - or the five characters in the story of Abu Jahir Zarir and also a woman who guides them. The helpers of these characters are also often one of relatives, such as the mothers mentioned in stories 6 and 7 or the father in story 22.

5-1-2-5- Sender

The structure of the book is such that usually no one sends the hero on any mission, but others - often the narrator - go to him or are in his presence.

5-1-2-6- Evil or the Enemy of the Hero

This character is not seen in the true sense of the word in the anecdotes, but sometimes mischief is seen by the narrator in the stories, which leads to injury or death of the hero, and in this sense, a kind of unwanted mischief and evil can be seen in the anecdotes.

5-1-2-7- False Hero or Swindler

Since this book is about pure and great men who surrender their life to the Creator out of the intensity of faith and fear of God, it is natural that no trace of a false and deceitful hero is seen in the stories. In general, the character of the narrators of the anecdotes can be considered as the secondary heroes of these stories, which in some cases this character is present in several stories, such as: Mansour Ibn 'Ammar in the anecdotes: 1, 4, 6 and 7 or Saleh Mary in Anecdotes 9, 12 and 19. All the characters in this book except the narrators of the anecdotes are: the young prayer; Baṣrī reciter, messenger; Fuḍayl, Ali ibn Fuḍayl and his mother; Anonymous reciter; Unseen Hatef and Goblins; The old man and the old woman (in several different anecdotes); Sufyān Thūrī and Najad Faq'asi; Zurarah ibn Ūfī and Saleh Mary; Arab man and Hārūn al-Rashīd; Muhammad ibn Manakdar and his brother and Young reciter, Abulhassan Poshanji, Abu 'Uthmān and members of session; Jonah and the mystic man; The people of jinn and youth of Nishabur; 'Atabah, Miswar and the man who recited from Khath'am; Lughmān and his son; The old man, his son, his maid, Barmakids, Mallah, the young reciter and the people of Bani Mahlab; Malik Dinar, Muhammad Ibn Wāsi', Thābit Banānī, Ḥabīb Abu Muhammad, Abu Jahir Zarir, a woman, neighboring men, gravedigger, Muhammad Ibn Suleiman Hashemi; Stranger man and people; Asad ibn Sahlab and reciter; Umar, a beautiful woman, a maid, a young man and his old father. Only in two stories 18 and 19 we encounter multiple characters, otherwise in the rest of the stories the main characters are very few and limited. In terms of the dynamics and statics of the characters in Qatla al-Qur'an, we can say that all the characters in the book, with the exception of the characters of heroes, are completely static characters that are not changed. We see the existence of dynamic characters only in the same Qur'anic slain who, at the end of the story, have undergone a drastic spiritual transformation and certainly do not have the same first character and have achieved a high degree of martyrdom.

6. The Morphology of Qatla Al-Qur'an

As mentioned before, not all morphological elements and functions are completely present in every story, but some of its important functions can be identified in each story. The same is true about the anecdotes of Qatla al-Qur'an. In the continuation of the discussion, we will examine the functions in Tha'labī's book in the order of Propp's model.

6-1- Starting Position

The starting position is how the author enters the story and begins the story. "Every story usually starts with an opening scene, for example, family members are named or the future hero (who is a soldier, for example) is introduced by mentioning his name and position. This scene, while not considered a function, is nevertheless a very important morphological element." (Propp, 1386: 60) Tha'labī introduces the main character (Zurarah) in only one case at the beginning of the story and first of all, and mentions his name, lineage, nickname, birth place and burial place. (Tha'labī, 1429: 69) Tha'labī usually describes the opening scene by explaining the space of the stories. The general atmosphere of most of the stories takes place in the city, and Basra, Kufa, and Nishabur are the places where many of these events take place, which is something to consider. Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that these cities were considered as the main centers of Qur'an recitation in the early centuries of Islam. "The main place of these events is mostly the three cities of Basra, Kufa and Nishabur, which were the main centers of asceticism and Sufism at that time." (Abbasi and Pour Akbar Kasmaei, 1390: 72) Baghdad, Mecca, Medina and Sawad in Iraq are other areas that are the bedrock of events of anecdotes. Another space that exists is related to the mosque, sometimes its location and name are known (Jama masjid, Bani Qashir masjid, etc.) and sometimes it is unknown, which in any case does not change the essence of the story because Mosques have been and continue to be one of the main centers of Qur'anic meetings in the Islamic world. The reference to the meeting space in the assembly of sermons and lessons is also considered in this regard. Other spaces considered in these stories are the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, and as we know, Baghdad and Kufa are located along these rivers, so the reason for naming them is quite clear to the audience. The atmosphere of the story with reference to the desert can be seen in several anecdotes, including the anecdote of young Nishaburi, the story of Jonah, the anecdote of Asma'i, and so on. Being on the path of Hajj and getting lost in the desert is also part of the same atmosphere related to spirituality and religious affairs, which is closely related to the Qur'an and its recitation, reading and listening. In the first story of the book, there is talk of ruins, which is reminiscent of asceticism, isolation and renunciation of the world, and the atmosphere of the anecdote is well related to the atmosphere of the story. Therefore, we see that in general, there is a deep and precise correspondence between the space of the stories and its initial position with the aims and purposes of the anecdotes, because the same proportion and harmony in the interactions of the main character of the story plays an important role against hearing or reading the Qur'an. Another important issue at the beginning of any story is the point of view that shows itself from the very beginning.

6-2- Angle of View

One of the important elements of any story is the angle of view, which has many types and varieties (Mirsadeghi, 1390: 385-429) and can often be examined under three general headings: first-person, second-person and third-person angle of view. Most of the stories in this book are from a first-person angle of view (stories: 1-2-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-12-14-15-19-20 and 21) which may can be an emphasis on creating a sense of credibility and intimacy between the narrator and the audience. (Mirsadeghi, 1390: 388) In addition, there is a third person angle of view in some stories. (Stories: 3-11-13-16-17-18 and 22) By choosing a first-person angle of view, Tha'labī has been able to tell the extraordinary anecdotes of his book in a way that readers believe them better and easier. Of course, the documentary and narrative method of the book has not been ineffective in choosing this perspective.

6-3- Examining the Functions in Qatla Al-Qur'an

The functions of the characters in the story, as mentioned before, are thirty-one cases that Propp has dealt with in the third chapter of his book (Propp, 1386: 59-135) and here we will deal with all of them in order.

1- Absence

Absence means that the protagonist or main character goes from one place to another for a purpose or goal. This function has examples in the book and the main purposes of the characters are religious and doctrinal matters. The narrator in the story of Sheikh Kufi (4) has gone out for a night walk in the streets of Kufa. (Tha'labī, 1429: 62) In story 6 (p. 63), story 7 (p. 66) and story 14 (p. 78) the narrator is on the path of Ḥajj. In story 12, the narrator's goal is to go to the mosque to pray. Crossing the desert (p. 79) is the main character's goal in story 15. In the story 18, an old man from Mahalabah has traveled to Baghdad for some of his needs (according to his needs) and then to Basra. (P. 83) in the anecdote 19, seeking prayer from Abu Jahir Zarir has been mentioned as the ultimate goal of the main characters of the story. (P. 87) the character of story 20 also takes a step in one of the ways of Basra. (P. 98)

2 and 3- Prohibition and Violation of Prohibition

The function of prohibition is to prevent the hero from doing something. Prohibition can take on a milder form, such as request, advice, and counsel. "In the story, there is usually an absence first and then a ban. But of course the sequence of events in the real world is the opposite." (Propp, 1386: 61) It is also necessary to mention that "different forms of violation correspond to the forms of prohibition ... doing orders and decrees as a violation verdict is prohibition." (Propp, 1386: 63) The evil character enters the story in this episode that can be anyone who causes misery, sabotage, discomfort, and so on. The examples of these two functions in *Qatla al-Qur'an* are as follows: Fuḍayl forbids the reciter from reciting the Qur'an to his son, but before the message of the prohibition is conveyed, the prohibition is violated, and by reciting the Qur'an by the reciter, Fuḍayl's son dies. (Tha'labī, 1429: 60) Therefore, the character of the reader is inadvertently placed in an evil position. In another narration, Fuḍayl's wife argues with him, calling him his son's killer, and they have a quarrel. (P. 60) in story 5, Hatuf indirectly forbids Khalid 'Asri from reciting the Qur'an, and the violation of the prohibition comes to mind because the story has ended here. (P. 63); in anecdote 6, the old woman forbids the narrator from asking the question, but the narrator's insistence violates the prohibition and she answers the narrator. (P. 64) In Story 7, the same function is repeated. (P. 67) In story 9, Zurarah turns away from Saleh Mary in his dream, but then answers his question and violates the prohibition. (P. 71) Asma'i's obedience to the Arab man (pp. 73-74) and Abu al-Hassan Pushanji to Abu 'Uthmān for reciting the Qur'an (p. 77) is also considered a violation of the prohibition. It is interesting that in the story of young Nishaburi, the goblins' informing is suddenly stopped and we somehow face their practical prohibition because they do not say anything in response to him: "They started dancing." (Ibid: 80) So we see the function of prohibition in this story. There is no mention of prohibition in the story of Miswar (Anecdote 16), but the content of the text indicates that he forbids hearing and reading the Qur'an, and when an uninformed reciter enters him and reads the Qur'an, in fact, the prohibition has been violated. (Pp. 81-82) In story 18, Sheikh Mahlabi's invitation to a young man to eat food and his refusal to accept the invitation and then joining the sheikh is a kind of prohibition and violation of the prohibition (p. 84), reciting the Qur'an by Saleh Mary for Sheikh Abu Jahir Zarir is also a violation of prohibition because he later realizes that he should not recite the Qur'an to him because he could not bear to hear it and it causes his death. (P. 91) In story 22, the young man's father asks him to explain the story, but he refuses and then, at his father's insistence, he is forced to describe the situation and when the young man says it he dies. (P. 99)

4 and 5- Getting News and Giving News

The function of getting news and giving news in these anecdotes is in most cases in the form of questions and answers. In the first anecdote, the narrator sees a young man and asks himself a question, and then waits for the young man to finish his prayer to get the answer, and then tries to get the news. (Tha'labī, 1429: 54) It is interesting that the beginning of story 2 is with the question and answer of two people about the manner of death of Ali ibn Fuḍayl. (P. 59) In stories 6 and 7, the question and answer of the narrator and the old woman is precisely to get information about the protagonist. (P. 64 and p. 67) In

anecdote 8, a conversation takes place between two people about the fate of Najad Faq'asi, and at the end of the anecdote, the narrator sees the hero in a dream and obtains news by asking him (p. 68); Asma'i and the Arab man's talk is in the same direction. (Pp. 73-74) In the story of Jonah and the young mystic, a conversation has taken place between them that determines the young man's mood. (Pp. 78-79) The question and answers of Ibrahim Khawas and the goblins (story 15), clarify the truth of the story about the young man of Nishabur (p. 80). The narrator of the story seeks to get news from the very beginning. "So I asked them about their condition and the location" (Tha'labī, 1429: 80) His questions for obtaining information about them are various and numerous: about the distance and length of the path from the city to the place of the goblins, about the people who have reached that position, about the cause of death of the young man and about the issue asked of the young man and etc. In the story of Abu Jahir, the question and answer element plays an important role in obtaining news. We see this method from the beginning to the end of the story. The conversation of the five great personalities of Basra with each other, their conversations with the sheikh and after his death with the woman in his house are other examples. (Ibid. 1429: 86-94) In this book, we also encounter the inverted form of getting news, that is, the future victim (hero) asks the evil (here: the narrator's character) somethings that lead to getting information from him and inadvertently he causes the hero's death. The most obvious example of this happens in the story of Abu Jahir Zarir.

6 and 7- Deception and Seduction / Delusion and Complicity

Qatla al-Qur'an is an educational and moral book, and therefore, deception and seduction have no place in it, and even the characters of the jinn in the story are believers and Muslims, and benevolent to human beings. "Function of prohibition, getting news and deceiving are among the tasks of the introductory part of the stories. In other words, Propp believes that the story is unfold in one of three directions, and that the occurrence of their corresponding functions sets the stage for the entry of evil." (Mirhashemi and Saadatinia, 1395: 83) However, we see some examples of complicity in most of the anecdotes of the book, which means that usually the narrator or a reader of the Qur'an is unknowingly placed in an evil position and by reading the verses, he causes the death of the hero. Sometimes the situation is reversed and the victim unknowingly helps the villain to achieve his goal, that is, he collaborates with him. The set of previous functions serves as a prelude to the next events of the story. "The first seven functions can be called the introductory part of the story. The catastrophe or knot of the story begins with the act of evil. The forms of evil are extremely diverse and varied." (Propp, 1386: 69) One of the most common methods of evil in this book is the existence of a person who hears a voice and with a kind of mischief from behind a door or wall or window causes damage to the protagonist and even he causes his death. In other words, the narrator sits in an evil position and usually returns to the scene the next night for getting news. The sixth and seventh anecdotes are the most obvious examples of this function.

8- Necessity or Deficiency

This function can be in two forms, i.e. it depends on an external factor or it depends on an internal factor. Sometimes need means not having one thing, which in most of the anecdotes of this book, loss of life and lack of capital for the hereafter is the most important concern of the hero, which is quite evident in the stories of the hero's prayers to God. Stories 6, 7 and 14 contain such shortcomings. The regret that the heroes of the anecdotes have and make them become passive under the influence of certain spiritual conditions of the content of the Qur'an, indicates a feeling of a spiritual deficiency that puts severe psychological pressure on them and causes their death. In this respect, all the anecdotes in the book have a kind of lack on the part of the hero. For example, after hearing the verses of the Qur'an, Miswar says: "I am one of the criminals and I am not from the pious" and then he dies. (Tha'labī, 1429: 82) The young Nishaburi man dies from the separation of God, which he believes is the main torment for him. (P. 80) In the Asma'i story, the Arab man feels the lack of trust and disdain, and for this reason he becomes disgusted with worldly belongings and becomes ascetic and devout. (P. 73) In addition, sometimes the desire to have something is the external and objective manifestation of a need and lack like the urgent and

intense need of Abu Jahir to hear the voice of Saleh Mary in story 19: "He said to me: O Salih, read, for I am not satiated with your reading." (Tha'labī, 1429: 92) In the story of the young Kufi, we also see that the young man says: "I desire to hear ten verses from the recitation of Salih al-Marri." (Ibid. 1429: 75)

9- Mediation, the Connector Event

This function causes the protagonist to enter the story. There are two types of heroes in general here: "the seeker hero who seeks to save the main character and the victim hero who is the main character himself." (Propp, 1386: 80) In the stories of Qatla al-Qur'an, we encounter the victim hero and we rarely find a case where the hero is a seeker. Bringing the hero to his senses to save him from death can be considered as a kind of mediation, but in this book, this action is always unsuccessful and takes place with failure. Examples are clearly seen in anecdotes 3, 13, 19, 20 and 22.

10- Initial and Elementary Confrontation

Because "in the stories where the hero has no desire for freedom, this element does not exist." (Propp, 1386: 84) And the heroes of this book do not want to continue living, therefore, the mentioned function is not true.

11- Movement and Departure

This movement means moving and traveling to the final destination, which is different from the initial absence because the hero leaves the house. The most obvious examples can be seen in the two stories of Abu Jahir and the old man from Mahalabah, because movement and travel play an important role in it, and it is a predetermined journey, not an accidental and sudden journey. The main characters in the story of Abu Jahir intend to travel to the farthest point of the city of Basra and endure hardships along the way. In the story of an old man from Mahalabah, we are faced with a voyage on the Tigris River.

12- The First Function of the Giver or Provider

The giver is the person who helps the hero, who may provide him with information or usually magical means. There is no such function in this book, but greeting and polite questioning is a mild type of hero test at this stage, which will result in a gift, answer, or so on. Greeting and polite questioning in most stories is to get news and establish a relationship with the protagonist (anecdotes: 1, 10, 12, 14, 15, 18 and 19) To testate also falls into this category, which in the story of Abu Jahir we see that he even has previously prepared the necessary equipment for his burial ceremony and made a will to his companions. The request for recitation of the Qur'an by the hero is also most evident in some anecdotes. (10, 12, 18, 19, etc.)

13- The Reaction of the Hero Against the Giver

These reactions are either positive or negative. Usually, the reaction of the heroes towards the giver is positive, that is, it leads to all the conversation and the answer and fulfillment of the giver's request, which is the same person as the narrator. We see an example of this in the story of Jonah and the young mystic (Story 14).

14- Receiving the Magic Agent

Only in the anecdote of young Nishaburi we come across a magical element that is a symbol, that is, the narcissus flower that is in the hands of the narrator and was seen on the young man's tomb. This symbol indicates that these events were not dreams but something that has happened in the real world. Because the text is a religious text, we can consider prayers instead of functions as a magical factor, that is, communication with the higher world. (Stories 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 12, 19 and 22)

15- Spatial Transfer between Two Lands

The most common method in this function is to fly, and a very interesting example of this, which is also a kind of teleport, can be seen in story 15, where the narrator is suddenly moved from a desert about three years far away the city and reaches a mosque in the city in the blink of an eye, although the narrator himself does not realize this because he has fallen asleep from exhaustion. Land voyages such as story 19 and sea voyages such as story 18 can also be seen in the text.

16- Struggle

There is a struggle in all the anecdotes of the book in such a way that the inner struggle has been created in the soul of the hero, but there is no news of a fight between the hero and the villain. This internal struggle takes place both in open space such as roads, plains, deserts, etc., and in closed spaces such as houses, mosques, etc. Almost all the anecdotes in the book are examples of this kind of inner struggle between good and evil and the preference of the Hereafter over the world.

17- Marking and Searing

Placing a stone on the hero's house to identify him is the most prominent sign in these anecdotes, which is evident in stories 6 and 7. Hot means making a mark and a sign on the hero's body, which is seen only in the first anecdote, in which some verses about the hero being in heaven are engraved on his chest and clothes after his death, which is a sign of his great character.

18- Victory

Evil defeat has no place in these anecdotes, but the victory of all the heroes is determined by their death, because their martyrdom is nothing but an absolute victory.

19- Solving the Problem or Calamity or Lack of Beginning of the Story

Tha'labī has made no attempt to make his stories interesting or complex because his goal is not storytelling and he has full faith in the impact of the content of his stories on the audiences. The culmination of the anecdotes of Qatla al-Qur'an is at this stage, because the solution to the problem or tragedy or lack at beginning of the story takes place here. "This function and the evil function form a pair together. The story culminates in this function." (Propp, 1386: 112) The hero achieves his dream by achieving his desire, which is to hear or read the Qur'an, and the story ends. Also, all the problems of other characters are solved. This means knowing the happiness and well-being of the hero, as well as solving the problems of the other characters in the story, which is done in several ways; by asking the others mentioned in the news section; out of personal curiosity and trying to discover the truth that was previously examined, or to see the hero in a dream or to his coming in the dreams of others, the examples of which we have already mentioned.

20- Return

Most anecdotes end with the death of the hero and there is no going back. The secondary protagonists of the story, who are often the same final narrators of the event, sometimes return home after the protagonist's death. For example, in the story of Abu Jahir, we see the function of return from the main characters who return to the same destination. "Return generally takes place in the same way that the protagonist arrives at the scene." (Propp, 1386: 117) In story 13, Abolhassan Pushanji returns to his homeland, Iraq.

21- Pursuing and Following

This function is not a notable example in this book, unless we consider the constant efforts of each narrator to obtain information about the hero's condition as a kind of pursuit mentioned earlier.

22- *Salvation and Liberation*

This function is sometimes considered the last function of the story. "A lot of stories end with the hero being liberated from the chase." (Propp, 1386: 122) The stories of *Qatla al-Qur'an* are the same and the death of the protagonist is actually his point of liberation. The climax of the story is the killing of the hero character. To express this situation, Tha'labī has used different expressions, all of which have the same functions, that is, the main character of the story becomes unconscious by reading or hearing the Qur'an and dies: "Hearing / reading and reciting; Screaming / anxiety; Anesthesia and falling to the ground; Death." The protagonist of all anecdotes is one person except in a few limited cases. In story 5, the number of those killed is 4 Jinns and in story 18, those killed are two of human beings. The death of these characters is in fact their victory over difficulties and the attainment of salvation and deliverance. Undoubtedly, the spiritual and psychological backgrounds of the slain characters have been the most important and the main factor in their being extraordinary influenced by hearing or reading the divine word. If we look at the content of the verses mentioned in the anecdotes, we will find that they are generally related to the description of Hell and divine punishment and the Day of Judgment and the reckoning of the servants and things like that. The description of paradise, the necessity of piety and jihad against the carnal desire, divine knowledge and the condemnation of the hard-hearted by God have been mentioned only in limited cases. It should be noted that sometimes in a story, several different verses have been mentioned in several stages, which has caused the gradual death of the listener. (Stories 16 and 18) In anecdotes 8 and 13 the text of the verse has not been mentioned and only the sound of the Qur'an has caused the death of the hero. "The cause of death is not a heart attack due to the intensity of listening, but a panic and impatience for fear of the Day of Judgment." (Abbasi and Pour Akbar Kasmaei, 1390: 75)

23 and 24- *Entering the House or Land Anonymously; Baseless Claims*

These two functions are not used in the anecdotes of the book *Qatla al-Qur'an*.

25 and 26- *Hard Work and Doing Hard Work*

In the anecdotes of *Qatla al-Qur'an*, no one forces the hero to do a mission or a hard work, but sometimes the hero himself does difficult things. The maid of the story of Sheikh Mahalabah (Anecdote 18) carries out a difficult mission or voluntary test and after repenting from singing and drinking, she becomes isolated and pious and then dies one night by reciting verses from the Qur'an. In this story, the repentance of the sheikh is considered a function of a difficult task. In story 10, the things that an Arab man does and leaves the world are kind of difficult works to do. In fact, the hero plays a role in shaping his apparent misery by turning his well-being into poverty and misery, although in reality, this misery is his happiness, namely the same poverty that God has bestowed upon him. Sometimes the difficult situation is created by the wicked (for example, extreme poverty). This element can be called "preliminary misery" (Propp, 1386: 68).

27- *Being Recognized*

In this book, the heroes are usually identified by another character, such as a mother or a maid, etc., or that the hero falls into someone's dream and reveals his main character. Most of these recognitions occur when the protagonist is no longer alive and dead. We have mentioned several examples of this in previous discussions, and there is no need to repeat it here.

28- *Scandal of a Villain or a False Hero*

This function also has no example in the anecdotes of this book because there is basically no false hero in it.

29- Transformation

The deformation in the narratives of *Qatla al-Qur'an* is usually in such a way that the hero is released from the shackles of life and its belongings and is considered a martyr. Therefore, according to the author of the book, the initial situation of the hero has finally turned out to be better than before.

Sometimes the hero has stated this publicly, which is usually a dream of the narrator and indicates the good and better condition of the hero. In the first anecdote, both the verses of Paradise are engraved on the chest and clothes of the dead hero and the narrator sees him in a dream, who says in response to the narrator's question: "Give me the reward of the people of Badr and add to me." (Tha'labī, 1429: 55) In the ninth story, Saleh also sees Zurarah in a dream that he has become a man from paradise. "He said: I have been treated with goodness, grace and generosity." (Ibid: 71) In story 22, the young protagonist announces that he has become a man from paradise: "So he called me from his grave: My Lord has given them to me. (Ibid: 99)

30- Punishment of Evil

We have said before that in this book we do not have a wicked character, but sometimes the narrator regrets why he is not a believer like the protagonist, which we can consider as a kind of punishment for him. In the Arab story, for example, Asma'i regrets why, like the Arab man, he is not influenced by the verses of the Qur'an and somehow blames and punishes himself for it. (Ibid: 73)

31- Wedding

The end of all fairy tales is wedding, joy and celebration namely the hero wins and achieves his goal. It is clear that in this book, marriage has no subject, but the remarkable point is that we Muslims believe that the highest degree of those martyrs and the real good ending is to reach the high position of martyrdom. So the death of heroes should make us happy, not sad. If we look at the results of the anecdotes from this point of view, without a doubt, the stories of *Qatla al-Qur'an* have a beautiful ending, because the heroes of the book have all reached their final destination, and we are the survivors who must regret their high position. Although these functions are found in the structure of many anecdotes, Propp himself acknowledges that there are other elements besides these functions, which he calls "unknown elements" and can be very numerous and varied. (Propp, 1386: 133) However, among the thirty-one functions, there are some cases that do not have obvious examples in the *Qatla al-Qur'an*.

Conclusion

We present the morphological result of the book *Qatla al-Qur'an* by Tha'labī according to Propp's four general principles about stories. Fixed and stable elements are seen in relation to the functions of the characters in the story. The heroes of these anecdotes are the same martyrs who lost their lives when they heard the sound of the Qur'an. These characters are often in worship (prayers) or in the place of worship (mosque or house) and hearing or reading the Qur'an overwhelms and fascinates them and eventually kills them. This speed of influence is due to their spiritual state and the presence of their hearts in the context of verses that they read intentionally or hear it intentionally or unintentionally. The functions in these stories are also limited. The number of functions that have multiple instances in the stories is less than ten, which have more cases such as: prohibition and violation of prohibition, getting news and giving news, need and rescue and transformation; and absence, spatial transfer, and doing hard work are less visible. Other functions are rarely seen or have little occurrence. Functions such as: initial confrontation, victory over a rival, pursuit, anonymous entry, baseless claims, scandal, evil punishment, and marriage are functions that have no precedent in the book's anecdotes. Regarding the sequence of functions, which is always the same, we must say that the structure of all the stories in the book is almost the same, and there are very few and insignificant differences in the plot and structure of the stories. First and foremost,

news and getting news are important for the narrator, and then during the narrator's curiosity, the story of the hero's spiritual transformation and death is revealed, and his death is the end of many anecdotes in the book. Some margins given throughout the text have little effect on the sequence of anecdotes. The outline of all the anecdotes is similar and begins with the arrival of a person on the protagonist and continues with the recitation of one or more verses and leads to anesthesia and death of the protagonist. In other words, the form, structure and plot of most of these narrations are as follows: "A person enters a place. A verse is recited and the listener who is addressed to it dies."

Postscript:

1-The anecdotes of this book are as follows: 1- The anecdote of a young worshiper in a ruin (this story is mentioned in the introduction of the book); 2- The story of Ali ibn Fuḍayl ibn 'Ayyaḍ; 3- The story of Ali ibn Fuḍayl ibn 'Ayyaḍ (second narration); 4- The story of Sheikh Kufi; 5- The story of a group of jinn; 6- The story of the Kufi old man; 7- The story of a Kufi man; 8- The story of Najad Faq'asi; 9- The story of Zurarah ibn Ūfi Ḥarshī; 10- The story of Bedouin Arab; 11- The story of Muhammad ibn Manakdar's brother; 12- The story of the young Kufi; 13- The story of Abu 'Uthmān Sa'id ibn Ismā'il Hiri Zahid; 14- The story of one of the mystics; 15- The story of the young Nishaburi ; 16- The story of Miswar, the neighbor of 'Atabah; 17- The story of Lughmān Hakim; 18- The story of an old man from Mahalabah and his maid; 19- The story of Abu Jahir Zarir; 20- The story of another mystic; 21- The story of Asad Ibn Sahlab; 22- A young man from the companions of the second caliph.

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