

An Elusive Particle in Persian: The Use of *Magar* in *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi*

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Abstract

Morphologically, *magar* is made up of *ma+agar*, which literally means “not+if”. It fulfils several syntactic and pragmatic functions which have shifted over the course of time. This paper focuses on the use of *magar* in *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi* (11th century). The study will be conducted within the framework of a functional-structural approach with a pragmatic orientation. We argue that *magar* is an elusive particle, the precise syntactic function of which is governed by the context. We also argue that some instances of *magar* fulfil a pragmatic function that fits into the theory of indirect speech acts.

Keywords: Classical Persian, *magar*, *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi*, functional-structural approach, indirect speech acts

1. Introduction

Morphologically, the particle *magar* is made up of the prohibitive prefix *ma-* and the conditional conjunction *agar*.¹ Literally *magar* means “not+if”. As a part of speech, it has variously been labelled a preposition, an interrogative word, a conjunction, and an adverb. We have chosen to describe *magar* as a particle, in accordance with Crystal’s definition by which a particle is an invariable item that has a grammatical function, but cannot readily fit into a standard classification of parts of speech Crystal (1997: 279–280).

Our preliminary observations of the use of *magar* in Contemporary Persian indicate that *magar* is an elusive particle with several syntactic and pragmatic functions. Yet this particle has not been the subject of any detailed study. It has been briefly mentioned in some grammars, textbooks, and lexicographical works written in Persian and in other languages. From some of these writings, it also appears that the functional domain of *magar* has changed over the course of time. We believe that a detailed description of the use of *magar* in Classical Persian texts is the first step towards further diachronic and synchronic descriptions of this particle, and is a prerequisite for understanding the shift in the functional domain of *magar*.

This study aims to investigate the use of *magar* in *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi* by Abu al-Fazl Beyhaqi (995–1077). *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi*, also known as *Tāriḫ-e Mas’udi*, mainly covers the historical events and personalities of the reign of Sultan Mas’ud of Ghazna (1030–1041). We have chosen *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi* for our study as there is a general consensus among scholars that *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi* is one of the best representatives of Early Classical Persian. It is also considered the main prose work to

¹ The prefix *ma-* has developed from the Middle Persian prohibitive particle *ma* ‘not’ and *agar* ‘if’ [NP *magar*] and means “perhaps, lest” (MacKenzie 1971: 6, 53).

mark the threshold of the stylistic change of Persian prose from *mursal* ‘bald’ to *fanni* ‘artistic’. However, what has made *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi* an especially interesting object for our study is that it is a historiographical work with literary features. It is full of detailed descriptions and lively conversations with elements from the colloquial language of its time.² These conversations are especially interesting for a linguistic study with a pragmatic orientation.

For our study, we have used the latest critical edition of *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi* by Moḥammad Jafar Yahaqqi and Mehdi Sayyedi (1388). This edition is based on seventeen manuscripts and the Calcutta edition (1862) by Morley, as well as on the Adib Pishavari edition (1307), employing the eclectic method.³ The editors have also taken into consideration the Saeed Nafisi edition in three volumes (1319, 1326, 1332), the Ghani and Fayyaz edition (1324) by Qasem Ghani and Ali Akbar Fayyaz, and especially the Fayyaz edition (1350) by Ali Akbar Fayyaz.

The retrieved instances of sentences including *magar* in this edition have been cross-checked with the same sentences in the critical edition of this work by Fayyaz (1350). We have found several such sentences with two different readings in these two editions. None of these different readings have anything to do with the use of *magar*.⁴ As for the translation of the given instances, we have checked our translation against that of *The History of Beyhaqi*, by C. E. Bosworth and revised by Mohsen Ashtiany (2011), partly to find out how *magar* has been interpreted by other readers, and partly to polish our own translations.

2. Theory and method

The study employs a structural-functional approach, within which various syntactic functions of *magar* will be explored. Some instances of *magar*, are, however, interesting even from the point of view of pragmatics. We believe that a better understanding of such instances of *magar* will be possible with reference to pragmatics and the theory of indirect speech acts as presented by John R. Searle.

The term “speech act” is derived from the work of the British philosopher John L. Austin and the American philosopher John R. Searle. According to the theory of speech acts, many utterances do not convey information, but perform actions instead. This means that an act is performed as soon as the utterance has been made. Austin applies the term illocutionary acts to such acts. A promise takes place when someone says: “I promise”. Making statements, asking questions, issuing orders, promising, giving reports, greeting, and warning are some examples of speech acts. In addition to a set of necessary and sufficient non-linguistic conditions, a successful

² For more information on the style and language of *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi*, see Khatibi (1366: 130–135); Bahar (1337: 67–87); (Beyhaqi 2011 vol. I: 70–79); and (Daniel 2012: 127–129). Together with *Gulistān of Sa’di*, the prose style of *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi* is considered to have influenced generations of Persian writers even in modern times. The modern Iranian poet Ahmad Shamlu, for example, is usually described as having been inspired by *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi*, see Langarudi (1377: 151–152).

³ For detailed information on the extant manuscripts of *Tāriḫ-e Beyhaqi*, the quality of the manuscripts used in this edition, and the method employed, see Beyhaqi (1388: 111–134).

⁴ A number of these different readings have been mentioned in footnotes and in relation to instances given in this paper.

speech act requires a set of devices indicating linguistic function like word order, stress, intonation, punctuation, the mood of the verb, and a set of so-called performative verbs. Performing the speech act of promising, for example, demands the performative verb of “promise” in first person present indicative and usually at the beginning of the sentence (Austin 1961: 106–109; Searle 1965: 115–118). In a direct speech act:

The speaker utters a sentence and means exactly and literally what he says. In such cases the speaker intends to produce a certain illocutionary effect in the hearer, and he intends to produce this effect by getting the hearer to recognize this intention to produce it, and he intends to get the hearer to recognize this intention in virtue of the hearer’s knowledge of the rules that govern the utterance of the sentence (Searle 1975: 161).

There is, however, another category of speech acts, which are described as indirect speech acts by Searle. In indirect speech acts, the speaker may utter a sentence and mean what he says, but also mean something more. A request, for example, may be made with a statement, as in “I want you to shut the door”, or by using an imperative construction, as in “Shut the door!”, but these can be interpreted as impolite and inappropriate in many situations. The same request can be made with a question, as in “Could you shut the door?” or “Would you mind shutting the door?”, or simply by using a statement, as in “The door is open”. In such utterances the speaker intends to produce a certain perlocutionary effect in the hearer and cause the hearer to feel persuaded, ashamed, respected, warned, etc. A successful indirect speech act, also called a perlocutionary act, requires a set of devices indicating linguistic function and a sufficient non-linguistic condition to make it possible for the hearer to understand the indirect speech act when the sentence he hears and understands means something more than what is said. Searle maintains:

In indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer (Searle 1975: 162).

Our preliminary observations of the use of *magar* in *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi* indicate that in some instances *magar* has been used in order to produce a perlocutionary effect in the hearer. A correct interpretation of such instances of *magar* requires an analysis of the shared background information of the language users, the inferences they make, and the assumptions they hold.

To conduct our study, we have extracted all instances of *magar* in *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi*, using the digital version of the Yahqī and Sayyedi edition. These instances are first classified into different patterns in accordance with their syntactic functions. Those instances of *magar* that allow for a pragmatic analysis have been followed by an analysis using the theory of indirect speech acts. This classification will be preceded by a presentation of previous writings on *magar* in Persian and in other languages, and followed by some concluding remarks.

3. *Magar* as presented in lexicographical works, grammars, and textbooks in Persian and other languages

In Persian grammatical and lexicographical writings, *magar* is usually described in semantic terms using examples from Classical Persian texts. One typical example is Dehkhoda's dictionary *Loghatnāme* (1325–1354). In Dehkhoda's account, different uses of *magar* have been described and organized in eleven categories based on instances retrieved from different types of Classical Persian texts from the 10th to the 16th centuries.⁵ As a part of speech, *magar* has been labelled as either a preposition or an adverb:

(1) as a preposition equivalent to the Arabic *illā* 'except' to express exception (1.1), and as conditional conjunction 'unless' (1.2):

(1.1)

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|-------------------|
| <i>va</i> | <i>az ān</i> | <i>haftād</i> | <i>hezār</i> | <i>zangi</i> | <i>kas</i> | <i>jān</i> | <i>na-bord</i> |
| and | of that | seventy | thousand | slave | person | life | NEG-take.PAST.3SG |

magar *andak=i*
except few=IND

'Of those seventy thousands slaves⁶ no one survived, except for a few.'

(1.2)

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|----------------|---------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| <i>va</i> | <i>ḥajjāj</i> | <i>sowgand</i> | <i>khvord</i> | <i>ke</i> | <i>u</i> | <i>rā</i> | <i>az</i> |
| and | Hajjaj | oath | eat.PAST.3SG | CLM | PN.3SG | OM | from |

| | | | |
|------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| <i>dār</i> | <i>foru-na-gir-ad</i> | <i>magar</i> | <i>mādar=ash</i> |
| gallows | PREV-NEG-take.PRES-3SG | unless | mother=PC.3SG |

shafā'at *kon-ad*
intercession do.PRES-3SG

'And Hajjaj took an oath (swore) that he would not take him down from the gallows unless his mother interceded for him.'

(2) either optatively to express a wish or hope (2.1), or as the adverbial of possibility (2.2):⁷

(2.1)

| | | | | | | |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|------------------|--------------|
| <i>goft</i> | <i>magar</i> | <i>khodāy</i> | <i>ta'ālā</i> | <i>in</i> | <i>doshman=e</i> | <i>shomā</i> |
| say.PAST.3SG | may | God | high.exalted | this | enemy=EZ | PN.2PL |

halāk *kon-ad*
destroyed do.PRES-SG

'He said: may God, high exalted, destroy this enemy of yours.'

⁵ A number of these examples are retrieved from other Persian lexicographical works such as *Borhān-e qāte'*, *Farhang-e nafīsi (Nāẓem al-aṭebbā)*, *Farhang-e ānendrāj*.

⁶ Black slaves from Zanzibar.

⁷ There is a vague and shifting boundary between these two uses of *magar*. It is not always easy to determine if *magar* is being used in an optative sense or to express modality. To determine the exact sense of a particular instance of *magar*, one must rely heavily on the context.

(2.2)

andishid ke magar hanuz gabr bāsh-ad
 think.PAST.3SG CLM **might** still Zoroastrian be.PRES-3SG
 ‘He thought that he might still be a Zoroastrian.’

(3) in the sense of the disjunctive *yā* ‘or’

majles ast in magar behesht=e barin
 gathering be.PRES.3SG this **or** paradise=EZ high
 ‘Is this a gathering or the high paradise?’

(4) interrogatively with an affirmative verb when a negative answer is expected (4.1), or with a negative verb when an affirmative answer is expected (4.2):

(4.1)

magar āsudegi bar mā ḥarām ast
IP tranquility on PN.1PL forbidden be.PRES.3SG
 ‘Tranquility is not forbidden for us, is it?’

(4.2)

chun gerd āmadan=e khalq mowjeb=e pādshāhi
 as round come.INF=EZ people prerequisite=EZ kingdom

ast to khalq rā cherā parishān mi-kon-i
 be.PRES.3SG PN.2SG people OM why split IPFV-do.PRES-2SG

magar sar=e pādshāhi na-dār-i
IP head=EZ kingdom NEG-have.PRES-SG
 ‘As the union of a people is the prerequisite for a kingdom, why do you split them? Don’t you have the intention of becoming a king?’

(5) in the sense of the intensifier *hamānā* ‘certainly, surely’⁸

solṭān rā khāṭer oftād ke magar ḥilat=i
 Sultan OM mind fall.PAST.3SG CLM **INTS** trick=IND

ast tā chiz=i be-st-ān-ad
 be.PRES.3SG so.that thing=IND SBJN-get-CAUS.PRES-3SG
 ‘It fell into the mind of the Sultan that there must [certainly] be a trick to getting something from him.’

(6) in the sense of *guyā/guyi, pendāri* ‘as if’, *zāheran* ‘apparently’

magar modām dar in faṣl khāk mast bov-ad
apparently constantly in this season soil drunk be.PRES-3SG

as bas ke bar vei riz-and jor’e-hā=ye modām
 so much CLM on it pour.PRES-3PL gulp-PL=EZ wine
 ‘Apparently the soil is constantly drunk in this season, because of all the wine poured on it’

⁸ This type of *magar* is usually preceded by the clause linkage marker *ke* or the subordinate conjunction *tā*. In both cases either *magar* or *ketā* can be omitted without any problem.

(7) in the sense of ‘it happened/by chance/once’⁹

be herāt pādeshāh=i bud nām=e u shemirān...
 in Herat king=IND be.PAST.3SG name=EZ PN.3SG Shemiran...

magar *ruz=i shāh shemirān bar manzare neshaste*
by.chance day=IND king Shemiran on veranda sit.PSTP

bud va bozorg-ān pish=e u
 be.AUX.PAST.3SG and noble-PL before=EZ PN.3SG

‘There was a king in Herat, called Shemiran... Once, King Shemiran sat on the veranda; with the nobles before him.’

(8) In the sense of the noun ‘doubt’

pir=e ʔariqat goft niāzmand rā radd
 sheikh=EZ order say.PAST.3SG needy OM rejection

nist va dar pas=e divār=e niāz magar
 NEG.be.PRES.3SG and in behind=e wall=EZ need **doubt**

nist

NEG.be.PRES.3SG

‘The Sheikh of the order said: there is no rejection from the needy and there is no doubt behind the wall of need.’

(9) in the sense of ‘only’

chehel sāl sar bar bālin na-nehād va andar ferāsh
 forty year head on pillow NEG-put.PAST.3SG and in bed

na-khoft magar be ta'abbod=e izad=e ta'ālā
 NEG-sleep.PAST.3SG **only** to praying=e God=EZ high.exalted

mashghul bud

occupied be.PAST.3SG

‘For forty years he didn’t put his head on a pillow and didn’t sleep in a bed and was only occupied with praying to God high exalted.’

(10) in the sense of ‘only if’

magar *to ruy be-push-i o fetne*
only.if PN.2SG face SBJN-cover.PRES-2SG and temptation

bāz-nesh-ān-i ke man qarār
 PREV-quench-CAUS.PRES-2SG CLM PN.1SG intention

na-dār-am ke dide az to be-push-am

NEG-have.PRES-1SG CLM eye from you SBJN-cover.PRES.1SG

‘It is only up to you to cover your face and quench the temptation, as I have no intention of turning my eyes away from you.’

⁹ According to Natel Khanlari, for opening a narrative, see below.

(11) in the sense of ‘it will be good if...’

loqmān=e *hakim* *andar* *ān* *qāfele* *bud* *yek=i* *az*
Loqman=EZ wise in that caravan be.PAST.3SG one=IND of

kārvāni-ān *goft* *magar* *in-ān* *rā*
traveller-PL say.PAST.3SG **it.will.be.good.if** this-PL OM

naṣiḥat *kon-i* *goft* *darigh* *bāsh-ad* *kalame=i*
advice do.PRES-2SG say.PAST.3SG waste be.PRES-3SG word=IND

ḥekmat *bā* *ishān* *goftan*
wisdom with PN.3PL say.INF

‘Loqman, the wise, was with the caravan. One of the travellers said: it will be good if you could give them some pieces of advice. He said: it would be a waste to give them any word of wisdom.’

Having studied more than 150 works that cover Early Classical Persian writings up to the early 13th century, Natel Khanlari recognizes only four uses of *magar*, and these are already covered by Dehkhoda: to express exception, to express possibility, as an interrogative word with a negative verb when an affirmative answer is expected, and for opening a narrative to emphasize evidentiality (Natel Khanlari 1366: 418–20; 1373: 256–257). According to Dehkhoda and Natel Khanlari, *magar* is primarily used in Classical Persian to express exception.¹⁰

In most writings on New Persian in other languages, *magar* is presented very briefly, and mainly with examples from Modern Persian (Jensen 1931: 254; Lazard 1992: 212; Thackston 1993: 174–175; and Roberts 2009: 225–226). There are some exceptions, such as *La langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane* by Gilbert Lazard (1963), which is based on Early Classical Persian texts up to the 12th century, including *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi*. In this work, for example, Lazard (1963: 487) mentions *magar* only once and in connection with combined conjunctions; as *magar ki* ‘unless’. Another work in this category is *Persische Grammatik mit Litteratur, Chrestomathie und Glossar* by Carl Salemann and Valentin Shukovski (1889). In this work, several functions of *magar*, as interrogative particle, preposition of exception, conditional conjunction, and modal particle of probability, have been mentioned (Salemann and Shukovski 1889: 85, 127).

As seen above, Dehkhoda’s dictionary presents a wide variety of uses of *magar* in Classical Persian texts belonging to the 10th–16th centuries. The problem with Dehkhoda’s description is that some different uses of *magar* have been combined within one and the same category, while some other instances can easily be moved from one category to another. But despite sometimes being eclectic, it provides us with a rough frame of reference. No other description of *magar* includes so many different uses of this particle.

¹⁰ *magar* is mentioned in several other writings in Persian. None of these works presents any new semantic field for *magar* than what is presented by Dehkhoda and Natel Khanlari. See for instance, Moin (1347: 4324–4325); Nafisi (2535: 3482); Mashkur (2535: 57, 157, 172); Bahar (1337: 304); and Farshidvard (1375: 36).

In our study, we have tried to avoid classifying different uses of *magar* within one and the same pattern as far as possible. Each pattern is followed by a pragmatic analysis using the theory of indirect speech acts (perlocutionary acts), whenever such an analysis has been possible.

However, we must admit that it has not been an easy task to determine the exact semantic scope of all the extracted instances of *magar* that function as modal particles. There are instances that can be interpreted in several senses. This ambiguity is partly due to the fact that we are dealing with a written context where some devices indicating linguistic function, like intonation, are absent, and partly due to the elusive nature of *magar*, which functions differently in different contexts. In such cases, we have chosen to mention alternative possible interpretations in footnotes.

4. Results of the investigation

As mentioned above, all instances of *magar* have been extracted. This has resulted in 82 instances, four of which occur in verses. These latter instances are not included in our analysis as the verses in question were not composed by Beyhaqi. Moreover, Classical Persian verses are not especially reliable objects of linguistic analysis because of metrical considerations. The remaining 78 instances have been classified into different patterns in accordance with the structural-functional approach as follows:

Pattern 1: as a preposition to express exception with affirmative and negative verbs (21 sentences):

(12) P. 141

man *hame=ye* *shoghl-hā* *bedu* *khvāh-am* *sepord*
 PN.1SG all=EZ affair-PL to.PN.3SG shall.PRES-1SG entrust.SHIF

magar *neshāt* *o* *sharāb* *o* *chugān* *o* *jang*
except convivial.session and wine and polo and contest
 ‘I shall entrust all affairs to him except for arranging convivial sessions of wine drinking, polo-playing, and equestrian contests.’

(13) P. 560

va *chonin*¹¹ *aḥvāl* *kas* *az* *dabir-ān* *vāqef*
 and such event.PL person of secretary-PL aware

na-bud-i ***magar*** *ostād=am* *bu naṣr*
 NEG-be.PAST.3SG-IPFV **except** master=PC.1SG Bu Nasr
 ‘And none of the secretaries knew about such events, except my master Bu Nasr.’

(14) P. 351

aknun *hame* *bar* *jāy* *and* ***magar*** *ḥasanak*
 now all on place be.PRES.3.PL **except** Hasanak
 ‘Now, all of these persons are still alive, except Hasanak.’

¹¹ Fayyaz, p. 734: *bar chonin*.

Pattern 2: as a conditional conjunction to express a prerequisite for the fulfilment of another action expressed in the main clause either with a negative verb (15) or with an affirmative verb (16) (2 sentences):

(15) P. 130

be hich hāl in rāst na-yā-yad magar u
to no circumstance this right NEG-come.PRES-3SG unless PN.3SG

rā bedān daraje bar-i ke az
OM to.PN.3SG level take.PRES-2SG CLM from

avval bud
first be.PAST.3SG

‘Under no circumstance can this ever come about, unless you take him down to the level he was at before.’

(16) P. 47

magar ān pādshāh rā sharm ā-yad vagarna shomā
unless that king OM remorse come.PRES-3SG otherwise you

bar shorof=e halāk id
on edge=EZ perdition be.PRES.2PL

‘Unless that king experiences some feelings of remorse, you will be on the edge of perdition.’

Pattern 3: As a modal particle to express a hope/wish (7 sentences):

(17) P. 187

kh^vānande-gān¹² magar ma ‘zur dār-and va ‘ozr=e
reader-PL may forgiven hold.PRES-3PL and excuse=EZ

man be-pazir-and
PN.1SG SBJN-accept.PRES-3PL

‘And may the readers forgive me and accept my excuses’¹³

(18) P. 55

va man in foşul az ān jahat rānd-am ke
and PN.1SG this chapter.PL of that reason write.PAST-1SG CLM

magar kas=i rā be kār ā-yad¹⁴
hoping person=IND OM to use come.PRES-3SG

‘And I wrote these chapters hoping that someone might find it useful’

¹² Fayyaz, p. 246: *va kh^vānandegān*

¹³ In Beyhaqi (2011 vol. I: 290), this instance of *magar* has been translated with a combination of ‘hope’, ‘may’, and ‘perhaps’ as follows: “I hope that readers may perhaps forgive this and accept my excuses”. This is a good example of the elusive nature of *magar*.

¹⁴ *magar* here can even be interpreted as ‘perhaps, probably’.

Pattern 4a: As a modal particle to express a probability/possibility (34 sentences):¹⁵
(19) P. 151

ruz=e *ādine* *bude* *ast* *va* *dāneste* *bude*
day=EZ Friday be.PSTP be.AUX.PRES.3SG and know.PSTP be.PSTP

ast *ke* *khodāvand* *rāy=e* *shekār* *karde*
be.AUX.PRES.3SG CLM lord intention=EZ hunting make.PSTP

ast ***magar*** *bedān* *sabab* *na-yāmade*
be.AUX.PRES.3SG **probably** to.that reason NEG-come.PSTP

ast
be.AUX.PRES.3SG¹⁶

‘It was Friday and he might have known that the lord intended to go hunting; he had probably not come for that reason.’

(20) P. 142

javāb *dād* *ke* *kh’āje* *to* *rā* *dar-kh’āst*
reply give.PAST.3SG CLM kh’āje PN.2SG OM PREV-ask.PAST.3SG

ke ***magar*** *bar* *man* *e’temād* *na-dāst*
CLM **perhaps** on PN.1SG faith NEG-have.PAST.3SG

‘He replied: Kh’āje asked for you, as he perhaps had no faith in me.’

Pattern 4b: As a modal particle literally meaning ‘perhaps/may be’ with a pragmatic function (8 sentences):

(21) P. 701

bu sahl *goft* ***magar*** *şavāb* *bāsh-ad* *rekābdār*
Bu Sahl say.PAST.3SG **perhaps** right be.PRES-3SG courier

nazdik=e *vazir* *rav-ad*
near=EZ vizier go.PRES.3SG

‘Bu Sahl said: the best course perhaps might be for the courier to go to the Vizier.’

¹⁵ In Contemporary Persian, the most common adverb of possibility is *shāyad*, which is derived from the modal verb of *shāyestan* ‘to be proper/to be worthy’. The instances of *shāyad* in *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi* hardly amount to five in total (according to the word-index of the Yahaqqi and Sayyedi edition). All of these instances are also used in the sense of ‘it is proper/it is worthy’, not as an adverb of possibility/probability.

¹⁶ *magar* here can also be interpreted as ‘certainly, surely’. This indicates that *magar*, as a modal particle, can express both alethic and epistemic modality. Crystal (1997: 109) describes these two types of modality by referring to the use of modals in sentences such as *The car must be ready*. The alethic modality would, according to him, interpret this sentence as ‘It follows that the car is ready’ and the epistemic modality would interpret it as ‘It is surely the case that the car is ready’.

(22) P. 126

goftam *şavāb* *bāsh-ad* *ke* ***magar*** *chiz=i*
 say.PAST.1SG right be.PRES-3SG CLM **perhaps** ting=INDF

nebeshte *ā-yad* *ke* *bar* *khodāvand* *hojjat*
 write.PSTP come.PRES-3SG CLM on lord evidence

na-kon-ad

NEG-do.PRES-3SG

‘I said: the best course perhaps would be to write something which cannot be used as evidence against the lord.’

(23) P. 565

vazir *solţān* *rā* *goft* ***magar*** *şavāb* *bāsh-ad*
 vizier Sultan OM say.PAST.3SG **perhaps** right be.PRES-3SG

ke *khodāvand* *in* *tākhtan* *na-kon-ad* *va* *injā* *be*
 CLM lord this attack.INF NEG-kon.PRES-3SG and here to

*rāvan*¹⁷ *moqām* *kon-ad*

Rāvan staying do.PRES.3SG

‘The Vizier said to the Sultan: Perhaps it would be wiser for the lord not to embark upon this attack but to remain here at Rāvan.’

(24) P. 97

ishān *goft-and* ***magar*** *şavāb* *ān* *ast* *ke*
 they say.PAST-3PL **perhaps** right that be.PRES.3SG CLM

khodāvand *nadim-ān=e* *kheradmand-tar*
 lord boon.companion-PL=EZ wise-CMPR

*istād-ān-ad*¹⁸ *pish=e* *kh'ish*

station-CAUS.PRES-3SG before=EZ self

‘They replied: Perhaps it may be the right course for the lord to station before himself the wisest of his boon-companions.’

As can be seen, this type of *magar* is always accompanied by the phrase *şavāb bāshad/şavāb ast* ‘It would be best/it may be the right course’. Examining these instances of *magar* in their specific contexts, we have found that these instances fulfil a pragmatic function. None of these sentences convey uncertainty about the best course of action. The speaker is sure about the best thing to do and tries to persuade the listener to perform that action. By using *magar*, the speaker is just trying to produce a perlocutionary effect, to make the hearer feel respected and avoid sounding

¹⁷ Fayyaz, p. 739: *parvān*.

¹⁸ Fayyaz, p. 127: *istānad*.

like a know-it-all. He relies on his own and the hearer's mutually shared background information and, as Searle puts it, on "the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer." This use of *magar* is especially important in hierarchic structures. It is governed by who is talking to whom in the hierarchy. In all these instances, people lower in the hierarchy, the subordinates, are talking to someone higher in the hierarchy, the superordinate. This is clearly indicated in three of the four above instances. We believe that all these sentences could have been uttered without *magar* and even in imperative form if they were not addressed to a person of higher status in the hierarchy.¹⁹ We have not been able to find any such sentences uttered by the Sultan directed to his Vizier or to others in his service or by someone higher in position addressed to someone lower in position. There are, on the other hand, similar sentences uttered by someone in almost the same or higher position than the hearer. In such sentences *magar* is absent. In one scene we read, for example, about kh'āje Ahmad b. Hasan (later Grand Vizier) trying to get General Eryāruq to follow him to the Royal court:

u [kh'āja aḥmad] eryāruq-e ḥājeb, sālār-e hendustān, rā gofte bud ke: nāmi zeshtgune bar to neshaste ast, šavāb ān ast ke bā man beravi va ān khodāvand rā bebini (Beyhaqi 1388: 138).

Kh'āja Aḥmad had then said to the General Eryāruq, the Commander of the Indian Troops [...]: you have been placed in a bad light, and it would be therefore advisable for you to accompany me to the court and have an audience with the Amir (Beyhaqi 2011 vol. I: 236–237).

Examples from this category can be compared to using "It'd be good to have the door shut" instead of "Shut the door!" in terms of the theory of indirect speech acts. The speaker persuades the listener to perform what he considers to be the right action by using an adverb of uncertainty.

Pattern 5: as a substitute for the subordinate conjunction *tā* 'so that' in final subordinate clauses (2 sentences):

(25) P. 704

omid=e hame-gān be kh'āje=ye bozorg ast... tā
 hope=EZ everybody-PL to vizier=EZ grand be.PRES.3SG... so.that

in tadbir=e khaṭā rā bezudi dar-yāb-ad ...
 this plan=EZ wrong OM soon PREV-encounter.PRES-3SG...

*magar*²⁰ *in tadbir=e nāšavāb be-gard-ad*
 so.that this plan=EZ incorrect SBJN-renounce.PRES-3SG

'All their hopes are concentrated on the Grand Vizier ... encountering this wrong plan soon... so that this misguided plan will be renounced.'

¹⁹ In all the above sentences in this group, the entire combination of *magar* and *šavāb bāšhad/šavāb ast* could also have been replaced by the short infinitives *bāyad* 'must' or *šāyad* 'it is appropriate', if they were not addressed to a person higher in the hierarchy.

²⁰ In this example, *magar* can also be interpreted as modal particle expressing either possibility or hope.

(26) P. 680

lashkar=i²¹ *bāyad* *ferestād* **magar** *balkh* *be* *dast=e* *mā*
 army=IND must.be send.SHIF **so.that** Balkh in hand=EZ PN.1PL

be-mān-ad

SBJN-stay.PRES-3SG

‘And an army must be sent so that Balkh remains in our hands.’

In those instances where *magar* functions as a substitute for the conjunction *tā*, one can insert *tā* before *magar* without causing any syntactic problem. The semantic effect will be a slightly higher degree of uncertainty, as *magar* falls into its ordinary slot as an adverb of possibility/probability. There are examples (28) in which *magar* is preceded by the subordinate conjunction *tā* and functions either as an adverb of possibility/probability or as an intensifier.

Pattern 6: as the intensifier *hamānā* ‘certainly, surely’ (2 sentences):

(27) P. 78

va *javāb* *yāft* *ke* *chun* *be-raft* **magar**
 and reply receive.PAST.3SG CLM when PFTV-go.PAST.3SG **INTS**

zesht *bash-ad* *bāz-gashtan*
 rude be.PRES-3SG PREV-turn.INF

‘He received the reply that, since he had set off, it would be rude of him to return.’

(28) P. 183

hīlat *bāyad* *kard* *tā* **magar**²² *vei* *rā* *bar*
 stratagem must do.SHIF so.that **INTS** PN.3SG OM on

pesar=ash *be-tavān-id* *gozar-ān-id*
 son=PC.3SG SBJN-can.PRES-2PL pass-CAUS.PRES-2PL

‘You must devise a stratagem to get her to pass by her son.’

As seen, no equivalent is considered for *magar* in the translations. The sentences could have been written without *magar* as well. In (28), one can easily remove either *magar* or *tā*.

²¹ Fayyaz, p. 780: *va lashkar*.²² In Beyhaqi (2011 vol. I: 286), *magar* has been translated as ‘perhaps’.

Pattern 7: as an interrogative particle (1 sentence):

(29) P. 310

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| <i>goft</i> | magar | <i>gusht</i> | <i>na-yāfte</i> | <i>bud-i</i> | <i>va</i> |
| say.PAST.3SG | IP | meat | NEG-find.PSTP | be.AUX.PAST-2SG | and |

| | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|---------------------|-----------|
| <i>noql</i> | <i>ke</i> | <i>marā</i> | <i>va</i> | <i>kadkhodā-yam</i> | <i>rā</i> |
| delicacy | CLM | PN.1SG.OM | and | counsellor=PC.1SG | OM |

be-kh'ord-i?

PFTV-eat.PAST-2SG

‘He said: Couldn’t you find any meat or delicacies, that you had to eat me and my counsellor?’²³

The speaker is criticizing the hearer for having spoken ill of him and his chamberlain. It has nothing to do with meat and delicacies. The speaker neither expects any direct answer to that question nor has any doubt about the hearer’s access to meat and snacks. This is another example that fits well with the theory of indirect speech acts. A question is used to express a criticism that normally is expressed in the form of a statement. The speaker could have expressed his intention by saying: “I am very disappointed about your having spoken ill of me and my counsellor.” Using the question form and the verb *kh'ordan* ‘to eat’ metaphorically, the speaker tries to produce a perlocutionary effect in the hearer and cause him to feel ashamed.

Pattern 8: in the sense of ‘it happened/once’ for opening a narrative (1 sentence):

(30) P. 403

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|--------------|--------------------|
| <i>chonān</i> | <i>oftād</i> | <i>az</i> | <i>qazā</i> | <i>ke</i> | <i>nadim</i> | <i>bu no'aim=e</i> |
| so | happen.PAST.3SG | of | chance | that | counsellor | Bu No'aim=EZ |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| magar | <i>be</i> | <i>hadith=e</i> | <i>in</i> | <i>tork</i> | <i>del</i> | <i>be</i> | <i>bād</i> | <i>dāde</i> |
| NOF | to | thought=EZ | this | Turk | heart | to | wind | give.PSTP |

bud

be.AUX.PAST.3SG

‘It happened (by chance) that Bu No’aim, the counsellor, had become besotted by the beauty of this Turk.’²⁴

As is seen, *magar* here completes what has already been expressed by *az qazā* ‘by accident’. It contributes to opening a narrative, even if it is placed in the middle of the sentence. It could have been placed at the beginning of the narrative as well.

²³ In Beyhaqi (2011 vol. I: 432), an expressive explanation is given within the parentheses as follows: (i.e. slander us behind our backs?).

²⁴ In Beyhaqi (2011 vol. II: 61), *magar* has here been translated as ‘perhaps’.

| | + | – | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------|
| | Pragmatic function | Pragmatic function | TOTAL |
| Preposition of exception | | 21 | 21 |
| Conditional conjunction | | 2 | 2 |
| Modal particle: probability | 8 | 34 | 41 |
| Modal particle: wish/hope | | 7 | 7 |
| Intensifier | | 2 | 3 |
| Interrogative particle | 1 | | 1 |
| Substitute for <i>tā</i> | | 2 | 2 |
| Narrative opener | | 1 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 9 | 69 | 78 |

Table 1. Frequencies of different uses of *magar* in *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi*

5. Concluding Remarks

As Table 1 shows, *magar* is most frequently used as the modal particle of possibility, followed by being used as the preposition of exception.²⁵ The function and meaning of *magar* are much clearer when it is used as a preposition, ‘except’; as a conditional conjunction, ‘unless’/‘only if’; and as an interrogative particle. As a preposition and as an interrogative particle it is used in sentences referring to the present, past, or future. However, the number of sentences with reference to the past is much higher, probably due to the historiographical nature of the text. We have not been able to find any instances of *magar* as a combined conjunction as mentioned by Lazard.

There is no sharp line between *magar* as a subordinate conjunction *tā*, *magar* as ‘perhaps’, the optative *magar* as ‘hoping’, and *magar* as an intensifier. It is only in relation to the context that one can determine in what sense a certain *magar* has been used. This being the case, there is room for slightly different interpretations of these instances of *magar*. As a modal particle to express probability/possibility or hope/wish, and as a conditional and subordinate conjunction, *magar*, as expected, is usually used in sentences referring either to the future or to the present. As a modal particle of probability, it has also been used in sentences referring to the past. As an intensifier it is used with verbs referring to the present or future.

Some uses of *magar* mentioned by Dehkhoda, such as its use as the disjunctive ‘or’, as the noun ‘doubt’, as ‘only’, and as ‘as if’, do not occur in *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi*. There are two different uses of *magar* (patterns 5 and 8) in *Tārikh-e Beyhaqi* that fit well with the theory of indirect speech acts.

²⁵ In a study of the frequency of the words in Sa‘di’s *ghazals*, Sadiqian (1378: 1682–1688) recognizes 194 occurrences of *magar*: a) 72 times as a preposition/conjunction meaning except/unless; b) 49 times either optatively or as the adverb of possibility; c) 41 times as sentence modifier like *guyā/guyi* ‘as if’, *pendāri* ‘as if’; e) 20 times as an interrogative particle with a negative verb when an affirmative answer is expected; and f) 12 times in the meaning ‘it will be possible only if’. The results of the present paper are somewhat different from the results obtained in Sadiqian’s study. However, as Sadiqian’s study is based on poetry, one should be cautious about drawing any conclusions, given the limitations that the defined metres of Classical Persian poetry impose on the use of language.

A preliminary, not yet published, study of Persian classical texts carried out by us indicates that both the frequency and semantic variation of this particle began decreasing in the 14th century, but then began increasing again in the 18th century. Some uses of *magar* mentioned by Dehkhoda do not occur in Contemporary Persian either. There are, however, several other uses of this particle in Contemporary Persian, which are particularly interesting from the point of view of pragmatics and the theory of indirect speech acts. We hope to be able to follow up this paper in the near future with a synchronic study of the uses of *magar* in Contemporary Persian.

Other interesting topics for further research are a diachronic study of this particle, a comparative study of its use in other Iranian languages, and a study of the use of a similar particle in some other Indo-European language, like Italian.

Abbreviations

| | | | |
|------|-----------------------|------|------------------------|
| 1 | first person | NEG | negation |
| 2 | second person | NOP | narrative opener |
| 3 | third person | OM | object marker |
| - | affix boundary | PAST | past tense |
| = | clitic boundary | PC | pronominal clitic |
| AUX | auxiliary verb | PFTV | perfective aspect |
| CAUS | causative | PL | plural |
| CLM | clause linkage marker | PN | pronoun |
| CMPR | comparative degree | PRES | present tense |
| CONJ | conjunction | PREV | preverbal particle |
| DISJ | disjunctive | PSPT | past participle |
| EZ | ezafe | IP | interrogative particle |
| IND | indefinite | SG | singular |
| INTS | intensifier | SBJN | subjunctive |
| IPFV | imperfective aspect | SHIF | short infinitive |

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