

The Continuity of Iranian Identity in *Andarz* Literature of the First Five Centuries AH

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Abstract: Iranian identity did not disappear with the Arab invasion in the seventh century AD; rather, it persisted in various political, social, and even traditional and customary symbols and practices. This continuity is particularly prominent in the first five centuries AH. One of the main contexts in which this continuity can be observed is the advice literature. Although the style of writing advice texts, or *andarz*, is an Iranian tradition and the continuation of this practice during the Islamic centuries signifies the persistence of Iranian traditions and ideas, a precise examination of the literature—especially the earliest *andarzes* of the Islamic period—based on their main components: 1) the themes of the *andarzes*, and 2) the exemplary characters, reveals this continuity more clearly. This article, using a thematic analysis approach, not only considers the continuity of the *andarz*-writing style in the early Islamic centuries but also analyzes two main components in seven Persian *andarzes* from that period. The findings indicate that not only are many themes of these *andarzes* repetitions of those found in Pahlavi (Middle Persian) texts, but there is also a significant focus on ancient exemplary figures, particularly political ones.

Keywords: Iran, Identity, *Andarz*, Admonition, Persian Language, Early Post-Islamic Period

Introduction

Andarzes, which are classified as oral literature and have been transmitted from generation to generation with variations, are among the most important literary texts worldwide, especially in Iran. Persian *andarzes*, in addition to providing valuable information about Iranian advice and proverbs, offer crucial insights into the way of thinking of Iranian

society—whether monarchs, courtiers, or the general populace—across various aspects of life. From this perspective, the “Persian Andarzes of the Early Islamic Centuries”, which is the main subject of this article, hold particular significance. Evidence and documents indicate that Iranian society and culture during this period still preserved ancient traditions and ideas and only altered their appearance when necessary while maintaining their content. Writing andarzes at this time not only continued the tradition from the Sassanian era but also served political and social objectives, which are understood within the framework of the continuity of Iranian identity.

The two main components of andarzes are “Model Character” and “Themes of Andarz”. These elements highlight important aspects of Iranian hopes and ideals during the aforementioned centuries. By “themes”, I refer to the subjects addressed in the corpus under consideration, which are expressed across various domains such as ethics, life affairs, occupations, and politics. The “model character”, in this context, is an invention of the author and differs from the “ideal character” proposed by Jung and Campbell. In this article, the “model character” is understood as an individual who, as the best example supporting a particular andarz (in each subject), is quoted or a story about them is presented. Essentially, the author of the andarz selects the “model character” to enhance the audience's belief and confidence in the conveyed advice. Therefore, it is clear that these “model characters” must not only be familiar to the audience of the andarz but also credible and trustworthy.

Given that during the first five centuries AH, the traditions of ancient Iran still persisted (Safa and Shaked 2018), one can find prominent signs of Iranian identity and efforts to continue it in the andarzes of these centuries. In other words, although these texts were written during periods when Iranian religion and culture had changed, symbols and signs of Iran's ancient culture, tradition, and even religion continued to be present within them. These are hidden behind the “themes of advice”, “model characters”, and other details.

This article aims to explore and analyze the elements that symbolize the continuity of Iranian identity in the andarzes of this period, based on the “continuity of andarz-writing”, “themes of advice”, and “model characters”. In this study I examine: *Āfarin-nāmeḥ* (Bu Shakur Balkhi), *Pand-nāmeḥ-e Anushirvān* or *Rāhat al-Ensān* (Badayei Balkhi), *Kherad-nāmeḥ*, *Seyar al-Muluk* (Khawja Nizam al-Mulk), *Qābus-nāmeḥ* (Onsor al-Ma'ali), *Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat* (the Alchemy of Happiness) and *Nasihāt al-Muluk* (Advice to the Kings; both works by Imam Mohammad Ghazzali).

Also, the data collection method used in this study is library-based, employing qualitative analysis with a thematic analysis approach.

It should also be noted that the author completed her doctoral dissertation, an analysis of theme and exemplary characters in Persian andarz texts of the fourth and fifth centuries AH, which was published as a book by Fravahar Publications (Aghighi 2023). In that work, all the relevant advice texts were analyzed in detail from those two main

dimensions, without emphasizing either the pre-Islamic or Islamic periods. However, in the present article, the *andarz* texts in question are examined from the perspective of the continuity of Iranian identity and ancient Iranian thought, focusing on themes, exemplary characters, and the continuity of *andarz*-composition. Therefore, this article seeks to address the following main question in order to fill the gaps in previous research in this field: Have Iranian identity and ancient Iranian thought continued in the Persian advice texts of the fourth and fifth centuries AH, and through what means and methods?¹

Theoretical Framework

Identity

Regarding the concept of identity, various theories have been proposed, both concerning its types and its relationships, functions, and even the methods of its construction over time. Although these topics are among the important issues in social sciences, other fields such as political science, psychology, literature, history, and other humanities disciplines also utilize them. Discussions about the concept of identity entered the realm of scholarly debate in the twentieth century (Ahmadi 2009, 39), but its background extends back to the vast and broad history of human existence. In fact, identity is the identification document of a person and has always accompanied them. The term “identity” is derived from the Latin *idem*, meaning “being the same” (*semene*) and “continuity” (Marshall 1998, 293–296).

Identity has various levels and types, and depending on an individual’s self-awareness and the way they present themselves to others, one can possess an identity. However, broadly speaking, one can refer to cultural, religious, ethnic, and national identities (Ahmadi 2009, 60). In other words, “identity” or “selfhood” consists of elements and components that define “who one is”. These elements include “land, history, culture,

¹ Therefore, it is necessary to recall that the principal context in which this research has been conducted is the Persian *andarz-nāme*hs of the fourth and fifth centuries AH. The subjects discussed within this context—through which the continuity of Iranian identity has been examined—include: themes, and model characters. Accordingly, any theme or exemplary figure that is emphasized in the mentioned *andarz-nāme*hs and whose background can also be traced back to the advice literature of ancient Iran has been highlighted and analyzed in this article. I am aware that in the discussion of the continuity of Iranian identity, from the pre-Islamic period through the advent of Islam, many issues—such as bureaucracy, sciences, bodies of knowledge, and various technical fields—are also subjects of debate and examination. However, since investigating all these matters are beyond the scope of this article, they have not been addressed here. For reference, many scholars have examined these topics. One of the earliest cases is Abi Abd-Allah Mohammad ibn Khwarazmi’s *Mafātih al-Olum*. He specifically refers to certain sciences under the name *‘ilm al-‘ajam*, which entered Arabic from Iran, Greece, and India, and among these he mentions sciences and branches of knowledge such as philosophy, logic, medicine, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music and alchemy (Khwarazmi, n.d., 4–5). For the continuity of various aspects of Iranian culture, see, for instance, Crone 1980; Pourshariati 2008; Savant 2013; Bonner 2020; Vaissière 2025.

government, and people” (Ahmadi 2023). When the elements of history and culture such as customs, traditions, literature, language, and even religion are prominent, the focus is on cultural identity. Conversely, when the government, ruling authority, and even the people are emphasized, the focus shifts to political or, today’s terminology, national identity. All these elements are important in their own right, and none can be prioritized over others. This is because identity encompasses various dimensions and facets, and no one dimension is inherently more important than another. However, in times of crisis or invasion by outsiders, it is the cultural and national identities that are most instrumental in maintaining unity and the continuity of identity (Ahmadi 2009, 62).

Regarding the various dimensions of identity, or, in other words, the multiple identities, Abbas Amanat considers the concept of “identity” from a contemporary historical perspective as a subject worthy of reflection. He particularly views this concept as being different when applied to “Iran”, and writes that in a land like Iran, where both its natural and political geography, as well as its long historical experience, tend more toward a multiplicity of identities rather than the unity of a single nation “collective identity” is a more appropriate term (Amanat 2022, 2).

He further argues that “nevertheless, in a land as ancient as Iran, which has experienced prolonged periods of political and social instability, where borders have been blurred, the state has weakened or fallen, or the land has endured long periods under the dominance of invaders, one can observe the persistence of elements that are labeled as “cultural identity”, an identity independent of political survival and even independent of a national geography. These elements remain alive in collective memory through myths and legends, poetic and musical imagination, social norms and behaviors, annual festivals, and calendars based on the regular cycle of seasons” (Amanat 2022, 3). Hence, the Iranian identity could be defined as “a collective feeling by Iranian peoples of belonging to the historic lands of Iran. This sense of identity, defined both historically and territorially, evolved from a common historical experience and cultural tradition among the peoples who lived in Irānzamin, and shared in Iranian mythologies and legends as well as in its history” (“Iranian Identity” 2012).

In fact, “identity” can be understood as the shared and distinctive characteristics—whether historical, cultural, linguistic, political, religious, or otherwise—of a large group of people or a nation.² One of the defining characteristics of a nation is its continuous will and deliberate choice regarding its destiny (Renan 1994). This mental element plays a crucial role in the persistence of a nation (Ahmadi 2009, 85). Such will and choice can be observed during the transitional period from the fall of the Sassanian Kingdom to the Islamic era in Iran. According to researchers, ancient Iranian history and even its myths have played a significant role in shaping Iranian identity and constructing its cultural

² “The word ‘nation’ refers to a group of people who share a specific land, a common culture and language, and their own history” (Ahmadi 2009, 80).

profile (Saqebfar 2004, 244). A correct understanding of identity is a prerequisite for the survival and development of any nation or people, especially under the special conditions of the early centuries AH. In fact, even today, the “ancient national culture of Iran” remains one of the key components of Iranian identity (Saqebfar 2004, 244, 252).

It should be noted that this article is concerned with cultural, political, national and historical identity.

A Review of Andarz Texts Discussed in This Article

Āfarin-nāmeḥ

This work was composed by Abu Shakur Balkhi, one of the prominent figures of 4th-century AH literature.³ He completed its composition in the year 333 AH. Safa is certain that the period of Abu Shakur Balkhi’s life coincided with the late era of Rudaki and the early era of Ferdowsi (Safa 1984, I:403). *Āfarin-nāmeḥ* is written in the *bahr-e motaqareb* (a prosodic meter used in classical Persian poetry). It has been reported in various sources that it originally was about two-thirds of Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*. Dabirsiyaghi considers this mathnawī (a long poem consisting of rhyming couplets) and its themes as evidence of the poet’s advanced thought and literary ability, which led all subsequent poets, including Manuchehri, to highly praise him and place him alongside Rudaki and Shahid Balkhi (Dabirsiyaghi 1976, 39).

Kherad-nāmeḥ

This is a collection consisting of various pieces, whose author – or authors – is unknown. The beginning of this book is lost, and based on stylistic characteristics, its original date cannot be assigned to a specific period. However, Minovi, who first introduced this work, attributed most of its parts to the 4th or 5th century AH based on all the available indicators. He also estimated the date of copying the manuscript to be 574 AH. Conversely, Servat considered 504 AH and 510 AH to be more accurate dates for the copying of the manuscript (see *Kherad-nāmeḥ* 1999, 16–17).

Scholars have divided *Kherad-nāmeḥ* into two parts: the main section and a second part, which Minovi has called the “Guide to Governance and Administration”. The initial advices in *Kherad-nāmeḥ* are disconnected and lack coherence, clearly indicating that this text was not written by a single person, nor was it authored in one go. It is likely copied by one individual, as at the end of the first part it is written: “Completed happily and successfully. *Kherad-nāmeḥ* from the sayings of wise men in the month of Rabi‘ al-Awwal, in the year 504, may blessing be upon its owner, Ali ibn Mohammad [al-Salam]” (*Kherad-nāmeḥ* 1999, 104).

In this work, the advices are from figures such as Bozorgmehr, Anushirvan, Aristotle, Plato, Hippocrates, and Luqman, Prophet Mohammad and Imam Ali, as well as

³ For this text see Dabirsiyaqi 1965.

Jāvidān Kherad (Immortal Wisdom). It also includes discussions on ethics and human relationships, politics, and religion, involving figures such as Alexander, Aristotle, Bozorgmehr, and Anushirvan. At the end of the historical section of *Kherad-nāmeḥ*, or the “Guide to Governance and Administration”, the will of Khwaja Nasir al-Mulk and subsequently the condolence of King Malik-Shah Seljuk to him are presented. This *andarz* shares many similarities in terms of subject matter and content with ancient Iranian advice writings, which will be discussed in other sections. Some researchers believe that there are numerous similarities between the advice in the *Kherad-nāmeḥ* and the *Qābus-nāmeḥ* (Mazdapour 2007, 80–82).

Rāhat al-Ensan or Pand-nāmeḥ-e Anushirvān

The *Pand-nāmeḥ of Anushirvān* was composed in Bahr-e Motaqāreb by Mohammad ibn Mahmoud Badayeri Balkhi. There is limited information available about the author, and there is no consensus among scholars regarding his name. Dabirsiyaghi (1972, 171) and Forouzanfar (1979, 43) have recorded his name as “Badi’ Balkhi”, while Hedayat (2003, 620), Mahjoub (1963, 205), Safa (1984, 422, albeit with reservation), and Mazdapour (2007, 69) have referred to him as “Badayeri Balkhi”.

Qazvini (1980, xx), in his introduction to *Jāvidān Kherad*, considered his name to be a combination of these two and recorded it as Abu Mohammad Badi’ ibn Mahmoud Badayeri Balkhi. The *Pand-nāmeḥ of Anushirvān* undoubtedly belongs to the 5th century AH for at least two reasons: the mention of the poet Onori (Nafisi 1934a, 181), and its poetic style (see Safa 1984, I:423). Some researchers believe that the original verses of this *Pand-nāmeḥ*, which are “artful and innovative”, were originally in Pahlavi language, and that even the *Zafar-nāmeḥ* attributed to Avicenna is a translation of this work (Nafisi 1965, 35–36; Hedayat 2003, 620). Charles Schaffer included the entire poem under the title *Rahat al-Ensan* in his selected Persian works (Nafisi 1934a, 181). De Fouchécour considers *Rahat al-Ensan* to be an anthology that presents practical moral advice aimed at teaching, without a specific line of thought or method. He opines that this text was used in the education and upbringing of literate youth in the 5th century, reflecting the moral ideals of a specific environment. Ultimately, although he does not see it as having particular originality compared to contemporary texts, he finds its study useful for better understanding the cultural and moral atmosphere of the 5th century AH (de Fouchécour 1998, 55).

Seyar al-Muluk

The author of this work, Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk, was born on a Friday, the 15th or 21st of Dhu al-Qi’dah in 408 or 410 AH, in Nohqan, a village in Radakan, Tus. His grandfather, Ishaq, was a landowner from the Beyhaq region. Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk Tusi shortly after the writing of the *Qābus-nāmeḥ* by Onsor al-Ma’ali, composed *Seyar al-Muluk*, also known as *Siyāsāt-nāmeḥ*, and dedicated it to Sultan Malik-Shah Saljuq (465–485 AH).

When he presented the book to the court, he had organized it into thirty-nine chapters. When the king approved of it, because it was concise, he added some notes to it. This book contains advice on politics and governance and valuable information about the political and administrative structures of Iran before the Mongol invasion, especially during the era of the Great Seljuks (Safa 1984, II:906–907).

De Fouchécour believes that Nizam al-Mulk did not have a general plan for composing his book. He selected a collection of tales and adages that were suitable for instructing the king. Moreover, he incorporated accounts of his own experience in managing some affairs and combined these two elements into an advice manual. This book examines the duties of the king, and does not consider the ministry as a complementary part of kingship. De Fouchécour considers the authenticity of this work to be due to the fact that the author was able to extract from the traditions of his time everything necessary to demonstrate the path of justice to the king (de Fouchécour 1998, 523-524).

De Fouchécour also believes that *Seyar al-Muluk* is both a literary work and a technical text, which possesses four characteristics of Nizam al-Mulk's personality, namely ministry, teaching, Sunni beliefs, and Iranian identity (de Fouchécour 1998, 519). He defines *Seyar al-Muluk* as a written manual of a political experience at the highest level of the hierarchical government and, at the same time, considers it as a mirrors-for-princes work (de Fouchécour 1998, 519). He distinguishes this work from other books on royal etiquette by noting that, unlike them, *Seyar al-Muluk* provides important and deserving information about its origin and reasons for its creation (de Fouchécour 1998, 520).

Qābus-nāmeḥ

Composed by Onsor al-Ma'ali a knowledgeable noble from the Ziyarid family, the *Qābus-nāmeḥ* is one of the most important Persian works of the late 5th century AH.

The *Qābus-nāmeḥ* has 44 chapters covering topics such as knowing God, the rights of parents, the rights of children, the importance of wisdom and knowledge, aging and youth, self-control, manners of marriage and sexual relations, hospitality, hunting, principles of chess, backgammon, polo, the importance of knowing different types of slaves, and manners of various professions including ministry, secretarial work, military leadership, poetry, etc. The diversity of subjects in this work is notable, and the author especially emphasizes the skills necessary for success in personal and social life. According to some scholars, Onsor al-Ma'ali was not only kind and committed to his son but also to his subjects. During a period in Iranian history when peasants organized their relationship with the world—both society and nature—based on what their masters taught them, he was among the masters who, despite his advice being directed primarily at the elite, spoke of broader moral ideas that could also benefit peasants and encourage them to engage with the world through wisdom (Qareh Daghi 2001, X:81). The style of the prose in this work belongs to the 4th and 5th centuries (Safa 1984, II:898–900).

Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat

Written by Imam Mohammad Ghazzali, a theologian of the 5th century AH, is considered by some a translation of *Ihya' al-'Uloom al-Din* (The Revival of the Religious Sciences; Ghazzali's other work in Arabic), while others, like de Fouchécour (1998, 288-290), do not see it as a translation but regard it as very close to *Ihya' al-'Uloom*. De Fouchécour describes this work as “a selected and reputable work on religious ethics in Persian” (de Fouchécour 1998, 284). One of Ghazzali's methods in writing his works (*Ihya' al-'olum al-Din* and *Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat*) is that at the beginning of each, he states his intentions and provides divisions, which can be a sign of his thorough mastery over the subject.

The first part of *Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat* is divided into the following titles: “to Know One's Self, to Know the Almighty, the Knowledge of the World, and the Knowledge of the Hereafter”. The second part of the book's contents is devoted to Islam and its essential elements. The author considers the four pillars—“worship, transactions, destructive acts, and salvation” (*'ebādāt, mo'āmelāt, mohlekāt, monjiyāt*)—as the “Pillars of Islam”, and under each pillar, he presents ten principles. He views all topics from a religious perspective, but this does not prevent him from examining details and nuances.

Nasihāt al-Muluk

This book, also written in Persian by Imam Mohammad Ghazzali is believed—according to sources—to have been composed in honor of Ghiyath al-Din Abu Shuja' Sultan Mohammad bin Malik-Shah, the Seljuk ruler (498–511 AH). According to the treatise *Fada'il al-Anam*, which compiles Ghazzali's letters, this work was written in 499 AH. The text has been translated into Arabic and Turkish, with the most famous and best Arabic translation being *Al-Tabar al-Masbuk fi Nasihat al-Muluk*, which was completed about a century after the original Persian version. According to Homaei, this translation also served later as a guide for editing the original Persian text. Homaei pointed out numerous errors in the Persian version, which led him to rely on the Arabic translation (Ghazzali 1936-1938, d-k). According to evidence, this work was composed after *Seyar al-Muluk*. *Nasihāt al-Muluk* is a work in the domain of practical wisdom, focusing more on political science than other fields, and also contains valuable literary and historical content. In the first part of this work, Ghazzali provides a summary of his sayings in *Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat*, which essentially encapsulates the chapters on self-awareness and knowledge of the soul, as well as the insignificance of worldly matters. The second part is a summary of the ten principles of kingship and rulership. In this section, Ghazzali's penmanship is fully evident, but in the second part, which continues to focus on kingship and political governance, remarkable differences can be observed. Of course, there are also similarities, such as the fact that this work, like *Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat*, contains many anecdotes within its teachings. However, the differences are quite significant.

Firstly, there is a strong reliance on the names of ancient Iranian kings and an admiration for them and their traditions, whereas in *Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat*, Ghazzali clearly criticizes the Persians. Another difference in *Nasihāt al-Muluk* is that Ghazzali includes verses that convey a certain tone, which are not seen in *Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat*. Additionally, in some instances, he begins sentences with phrases similar to those found in the *Qābus-nāmeḥ* under the title of wisdom.

Another point is that he mentions chess and backgammon as entertainments for kings, which they could play daily, whereas in *Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat* he criticizes chess. The author has written about women in a much more pessimistic and vulgar manner than in *Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat*. In that work, he considered the ability to give birth a virtue, but here, he regards it as a punishment.

Zarinkub states that not only do the older versions of this work lack the second part, but also the text in those versions ends in a way that clearly gives the reader the impression that the author has finished his argument. He provides evidence indicating that this “addendum” was likely added to the work not long after Ghazzali’s death (Zarrinkoub 1977, 175–176). For this inconsistency, de Fouchécour (1998, 534) proposed three hypotheses:

- First, that Ghazzali, in his late life—coinciding with the composition of this book—suddenly experienced intellectual transformations and, following the tradition of composing rulership and Persian customs, which had been prevalent before him, either wrote it himself or entrusted this task to others who, under his supervision, wrote these chapters.
- Second, that there may have been confusion between Ghazzali’s name and his brother, Ahmad, that is, the second part of the book may have been written by Ahmad, added to the first part written by Mohammad.
- Third, that a second person may have, at some point, when seeing the first chapter—written by Ghazzali on traditional concepts of kingship—written his own interpretations of the subject to complete the section, and then added those to the second chapter.

Analysis

Iranian Society during the First Islamic Centuries

The works classified as advice literature and discussed in this article were written in the 4th and 5th centuries AH, making them among the first Persian andarzes from Iran during the Islamic period. The time period in question (the 4th and 5th centuries AH) is actually indebted to the culture and conditions of the three centuries prior to that. The social context in this era, can be described as dynamic and hopeful, yet simultaneously turbulent. This period was, in many ways, very unique.

At the beginning of this period, the Arabs conquered Iran and attempted to replace Zoroastrianism with Islam and to spread it throughout the country. However, this task was

not easily accomplished; even in some regions of Iran, Islam did not become fully widespread or was met with obstacles (Safa 1989, 396). Furthermore, from a cultural perspective, the Iranians resisted the Arabs significantly. The culture of ancient Iran remained widespread within Iran during the first five Islamic centuries (Shaked and Safa 2012). Various political, social, and human factors contributed to this, the most important of which can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The persistence of the Persian language among the common people.
- 2) The oral culture and literature, including mythological and heroic tales and narrations, especially among villagers and mountainous communities, who made up the majority of the population. Even if they accepted the new religion, they adapted some Zoroastrian customs that were no longer practicable into Islamic practices. Other customs, traditions, and rituals were not compatible with Islamic traditions, particularly since the “desires of Islam” after accepting its principles were quite simple. Therefore, many ancient Iranian traditions persisted and continued.
- 3) The need of the new Islamic government for Iranians in governance and bureaucracy, considering the Iranian background and expertise in these fields (Mohammadi Malayeri 1976, 12–20).

In the early centuries of the Islamic calendar, the landowners of the Sassanian period, due to their popularity among the people, served as representatives of the government. They collected the land tax from farmers and delivered it to the *Bayt al-Mal*, i.e. public treasury (Mohammadi Malayeri 1976, 104).

During this period, Iranians did not only strive in the cultural realm but also made significant efforts in political and religious domains, as evidenced in advice literature. The political conditions of this era were particularly unique. After the Arab conquests, initially the Umayyad and then the Abbasid caliphs held religious authority, while politically, various governments—sometimes concurrently—ruled over different parts of Iran. These included the Tahirids, Saffarids, Samanids, Ghaznavids, small local dynasties in northern Iran (such as the Alavids, Ziyarids, Bavandids, Ruyanids, Rastakids, Jastanids, and Salarians, Sajids, and Rawadids), the Buyids, and ultimately the Seljuks.

The Continuity of Iranian Identity within the Persian Advice Literature

The analysis of the topic “Continuity of Iranian Identity” in advice literature is approached through three points: 1) continuation of the tradition of advice writing after the advent of Islam; 2) continuation of the themes of advice in ancient advice literature; 3) the emphasis on archetypal historical figures from antiquity.

The Continuity of the Tradition of Writing Andarz Texts

Andarz literature constitutes a significant part of ancient Iranian literature, with its origins dating back to the Avesta. During the Sasanian period, the importance of andarz literature

was highly evident, and a considerable portion of the writings from this era consists of andarz treatises. In addition to writing advice texts, the tradition of passing down knowledge and advice on stone, metal, and gemstones, as well as the discovery of wise sayings on Sasanian seals, further confirms this practice (Tafazzoli 1997, 212–213).

The advice texts from the Sasanian period vary in length, but most of them do not exceed a few pages, with the longest being *Denkard III*. The most important advice texts from the Sasanian era include: *Denkard VI*, *Andarz-i Azarbad Mahrspandan*, *Yādegār-i Bozorgmehr*, *Andarz-i Oshnar-i Dānā*, *Andarz-i Dānāyān be Mazyasnān*, *Andarz-i Khosrow Qobādād*, *Andarz-i Poryotkeshan*, *Andarz-i Dasturān be Behdinān*, *Andarz-i Behzad Farrokh Piruz*, *Khim wa Kherad-i Farrokh Mard*, *Panj Khim-i Rohāniān*, *Dāru-ye Khorsandi*, *Khishkāri-e Ridagān*, *Risale-ye Ruz-hā*, *Andarz-i Khubi Konam be Shoma Kudakān*, *Ārā'-i Din be Mazdyasnān*, *Minu-ye Kherad*, and little andarz texts.

Another category of writings related to the Sasanian period, transmitted in early Islamic Arabic texts, although under titles such as letters, wills, sermons, decrees, and covenants, are considered part of political andarzes and governance etiquette. These include: *'ohud va Vasāyā-ye Ardeshir* (Covenants and Wills of Ardeshir), *'ahd-e Ardeshir* (Covenant of Ardeshir), *'ahd-e Ardeshir be Pesarash Shapur* (the Covenant of Ardashir to His Son, Shapur), *Resāle-ye Ardeshir da Aeen-e Keshvar-dāri* (Ardashir's Treatise on Governance), *'ahd-e Shapur va Pesarash Hormiz* (Covenant of Shapur and His Son Hormiz), *'ahd-e Qobad* (Covenant of Qobad), *'ahd-e Anushirvan*, *Kārnāme Anushirvan* (Book of the Deeds of Anushirvan), *Nāme-hāye Ardeshir* (Letters of Ardashir), *Nāme-i Tansar be Goshnasb* (Letter of Tansar to Goshnasb), *Nāme-hāye Anushirvan*, the letter attributed to Khosrow Parviz in response to Shiruyeh, *Toqi'āt-e Ardeshir* (Decrees of Ardashir), *Toqi'e Narse*, *Toqi'e Bahram Gur*, *Toqi'e Hormoz Pesar-e Anushirvan*, *Toqi'āt-e Khosrow Parviz*; *Toqi'e Qobad*, *Toqi'āt-e Anushirvan*, and *al-Taj*.

In line with the Arabs' reliance on the Iranian bureaucratic system, attention to Iranian secretaries and ministers within the government bureaucracy was another factor in the continuity of ancient Iranian culture. This group played a crucial role in transmitting Iranian culture to the Islamic period, because the responsibilities of the court and ministry required acquiring knowledge and information, which Iranian secretaries and ministers possessed. Part of this knowledge related to the history and conditions of past kings and the customs of kingship and their social interactions, which were documented in texts like the Sasanian andarzes. On the other hand, since these individuals were constantly in the company of caliphs and officials, they benefited from their knowledge as well (Mohammadi Malayeri 1976, 12–20). As a result, due to the favor of the ruling class towards these texts, not only was part of the information from ancient texts translated, but advice writing was also revived. Therefore, the main reason for the tendency of the authors discussed in this article to write andarzes can be primarily seen as following the Iranian tradition, a desire to revive it, and a pursuit of the continuity of Iranian identity.

De Fouchécour believes that the transmission of didactic literature has not been significantly affected by the fact that this type of literature is rooted in a “firm traditional” nature, nor by the transfer across geographical and cultural boundaries, nor by the differences between “written and oral narratives”. In this transfer, it has not undergone much change; only the superficial formats have been transformed (de Fouchécour 1998, 19). In any case, Islam also provided the necessary foundation for accepting advice, as de Fouchécour states that “Islam is a religion of delivery, not declaration”, and in Islamic advice and ethics, “there is no need to seek the meaning of goodness” (de Fouchécour 1998, 8). In texts such as *Kherad-nāmeḥ* and *Qābus-nāmeḥ*, which are prominent and exemplary Persian andarzes, the fusion of the ancient Persian andarz tradition with Islamic wisdom is very evident (Mazdapour 2007, 57).

In the transmission of advice from ancient Iran to the Islamic period, elements related to Zoroastrian jurisprudence were removed and replaced by Islamic customs (Sabzianpour and Ahmadi 2018, 28). However, ethical, moral, and political guidance was fully transmitted. Among these, with the acceptance of an Islamic tone in the advice to endorse its legitimacy—by quoting the Quran, sayings of Mohammad, and the Imams—these elements found their way into andarzes. Even Arabic wisdom also had an influence, and individuals like Loqman joined this circle (Sabzianpour 2018, 58). De Fouchécour considers the influence of hadiths in creating a synthesis between ancient advice and Islamic advice, as well as in giving andarzes an Islamic appearance, to be very fundamental and principled. He also mentions the life and practices of Prophet Mohammad and the Imams as influential sources in this domain (de Fouchécour 1998, 142-145). De Fouchécour has identified three directions of progress in the transfer of ancient advice to the Islamic period. The first direction was the necessity of devising ways of life from an administrative and political perspective, which was heavily tinged with ethical considerations. The second direction was utilized in historiography, and the third was employed by writers for educational purposes. He emphasizes that, among these, there was also a process of adaptation between different cultures, so much so that, as he states, “it is difficult to distinguish between an advice attributed to Plato and one attributed to Anushirvan or Ali” (de Fouchécour 1998, 20).

In addition to these points, the continuity of advice literature is also related to other reasons. Since “advice writing is one of the most important methods of expressing and teaching the principles of political governance and the language of political discourse in a society where direct communication with rulers is not possible”, it can be said that after the advent of Islam, Iranians chose advice writing as a means to teach the correct way of governance, aligned with the ancient period, to the Arabs without facing particular dangers. Especially since a significant part of ancient Iranian advice literature is attributed to kings, ministers, religious figures, and influential and powerful historical and mythological personalities, and for this reason, “they are noteworthy in the fields of wisdom and political culture”. In this way, this significant trend can be understood as a reflection of the continuation of pre-Islamic culture and the content of texts from that

period during the Islamic era. It is worth noting that the 5th century AH is unique in terms of the number of political works, with Maordy's work being a notable Arabic example and *Siyar al-Muluk* as a prominent Persian example (Azarnoush, 1996, 314).

Moreover, the continuation of writing advice texts is also linked to other factors. Since "andarz writing is one of the most important methods of expressing and teaching the principles of political governance and the language of political discourse in a society where direct communication with rulers is not possible" (Tarafdari 2016, 23), it can be argued that after the advent of Islam, Iranians adopted andarz writing to teach the correct methods of governance—based on ancient traditions—to the Arabs, without facing any particular risks. Especially considering that a significant part of ancient Iranian andarz texts are attributed to kings, ministers, religious scholars, and influential and powerful historical and mythological figures. For this reason, "they are noteworthy in the fields of wisdom and political culture" (Allahyari 2002, 131). In this way, this significant phenomenon can be seen as a reflection of the continuation of pre-Islamic culture and the content of texts from that period during the Islamic era. It is noteworthy that the 5th century AH is unique in terms of the number of political works; Mawardi's work is a notable example in Arabic, and *Seyar al-Muluk* is an example in Persian (Azarnoush 1996, 314).

The Topics in Advice Literature

In the advice literature of this period, it can be observed that all topics related to human society—such as moral virtues, life management strategies, career choices, and political affairs—have been addressed. In fact, advice writers considered everything necessary for life. Naturally, although the selection of topics ultimately depended on the personal thoughts and concerns of the author, given that each individual's thinking is influenced by their lived experiences, two factors played a significant role: 1) The societal context in its various dimensions, and; 2) The social position and circumstances of the author.

These factors affected the choice of subjects and even the archetypal figures discussed. Accordingly, each writer emphasized certain topics more than others and engaged with some subjects to a greater extent while addressing others less.

Overall, based on the societal context, three major social currents can be observed in the works of scholars and thinkers of the first five centuries AH, particularly in advice literature: 1) Iranianism and aligning Iranian teachings with Islamic culture; 2) Hellenism; and 3) Islamic religious thought. Although these currents include numerous sects and schools, many of them claimed to be entirely free from Iranian and Greek influences, or at least have consciously tried to avoid their impact (Qaderi 1991, 77).

Although traces of all these phenomena can perhaps be found in each of the andarzes from this period, each author has paid special attention to one of these currents. The special focus of Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk on the first current; the writer of the *Kherad-nāme* on the second; and Ghazzali on the third are particularly evident. In the *Qābus-nāme*, all these

tendencies can be observed, although it is closer in political thought to the first current. Bu Shakur Balkhi and the author of the *Send of Anushirwan* are also influenced by the first and, to some extent, the second currents. The influence of these currents can be seen in the topics chosen by the authors in their works. For example, Khwaja Nizam al-Mulk, following the idea of Iranshahr (Iranian national identity) and striving to revive it, dedicated all his efforts to politics and related measures, speaking on any subject he deemed necessary within this field. The second part of *Nasihāt al-Muluk* can also be regarded as influenced by this idea.

In *Qābus-nāmeḥ*, all these tendencies can be observed, although it is closer to the first stream in political thought. Bu Skahur Balkhi and the author of *Nasihāt-nāmeḥ* of Anushirvan were also influenced by the first stream and, to some extent, the second. The impact of these currents is evident in the topics chosen by writers in their works. For example, Khwaja Nasir al-Mulk, following the idea of Iranian nationalism and striving to revive it, exerted all his efforts in the realm of politics and related measures, speaking on any subject within this domain that he considered necessary. The second part of *Nasihāt al-Muluk* can also be considered under the influence of this thought. It is noteworthy that all andarzes of this period addressed the issue of politics in some manner. Some, like *Seyar al-Muluk*, and to some extent *Nasihāt al-Muluk* and *Āfarin-nāmeḥ*, were written for a specific ruler, especially a king; some, like *Kherad-nāmeḥ*, *Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat*, and *Nasihāt-nāmeḥ* of *Anushirvan*, were written for the general audience, addressing political issues within their texts and including criticisms in this regard, whereas there are other works, like *Qābus-nāmeḥ*, written for a specific individual or class, also addressing political matters. In summary, it can be said that attention to certain virtues, especially justice, is a characteristic of all texts that provide advice on political thought. Iranian thought is also evident in *Āfarin-nāmeḥ* and *Nasihāt-nāmeḥ Anushirvan*. The authors of these two works, given their limited scope, have discussed many topics, reflecting the prominence of Iranian traditions. Even the influence of this thought can be traced in *Kherad-nāmeḥ*.

It is noteworthy that rationalism is one of the most frequently used concepts in *Āfarin-nāmeḥ*. The work is considered to have been inspired by the ideas of ancient Iran, and some scholars have attributed it to Ferdowsi's sources in the poetic composition of the *Shahnameh* (Modabberi 2008, 77–81). An important point to consider is that, in addition to the andarz topics, many elements in *Kherad-nāmeḥ* also bear traces of ancient Iranian thought and show similarities with Sasanian andarzes. *Kherad-nāmeḥ* has similarities with the style of Pahlavi texts. For instance, the way in which advice is presented in numbered form is close to the style of some texts from the Middle Period. For example, in *Kherad-nāmeḥ* it is said: “seven things cannot be satisfied by seven people” (*Kherad-nāmeḥ* 1999, 47), or “four things laugh at four things” (*Kherad-nāmeḥ* 1999, 49), or “four things increase sight, and four things diminish sight” (*Kherad-nāmeḥ* 1999, 50) and so on.

This pattern is quite evident in *Denkard III*: “among the things that are essential for acquiring clear knowledge, ten factors are the most important” (Fazilat 2002, 67), or “the account enumerates eight kinds of religion” (Fazilat 2002, 133), or “indeed, six things are

the most beneficial for people and the world” (Fazilat 2002, 260), and so on. Another example of these similarities is the question-and-answer format that appears in many instances in *Kherad-nāmeḥ*, involving figures such as Alexander and Aristotle, or Bozorgmehr and Anushirvan, or a wise man and an individual. This format has its roots in Pahlavi literature. For instance, the text of *Khosrow Qobādān va Ridag* is entirely in a question-and-answer format, with responses that are worth pondering (Jamasb Asana 1992, 72–82). In the Pahlavi texts, one of the phrases used as part of colophones is: “May it always bring you grace and victory” (Jamasb Asana 1992, 171). At the end of the first part of *Kherad-nāmeḥ*, a similar phrase appears that could be translated as “all grace and victory” (*Kherad-nāmeḥ* 1999, 104). Further comparable matters are found in the definitions of certain topics. *Kherad-nāmeḥ* frequently provides definitions of various subjects, and similar instances can also be observed in the *Denkard III*. Regarding the themes of advice, topics such as truthfulness, justice, safeguarding and ruling over the subjects, the integration of religion and politics, emphasis on goodness in speech, thought, and action, a strong focus on wisdom, and the portrayal of the ideal king—all of these could indicate the significant influence of ancient Iranian thought or the idea of Iranshahr in the composition of this work (see Zahiri Nav and Khorramabadi 2014, 131–139).

Ghazzali adopted the religious aspect as his main approach. However, he addressed topics in the realm of advice that have a historical precedence in ancient advice literature. The poet of the *Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan* lived during a period when the continuity of Iranian culture and thought was ongoing in various forms during the Islamic era. His work, aside from analyzing the themes and exemplary figures, initially reflects an appreciation for such continuity. By attributing his advice book to Anushirvan, the author demonstrated his regard for Iranian culture.

In addition to the influence of the three main currents and the broader societal conditions on the writing of advice literature during this period—and naturally on the selection of advice topics—the second factor is the social status and circumstances of the authors themselves. This significantly affected not only the choice and prioritization of advice topics but also the manner of expression and elaboration. Understanding this requires sufficient information about the authors, which, in the case of the *Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan* and the *Kherad-nāmeḥ*, is not entirely available.

The author of the *Āfarin-nāmeḥ*, or Bu Shakur Balkhi, was from Balkh and had close connections with the Samanid court. He composed this work in the name of Nuh Samani. The Samanids themselves were lovers of Iran, and according to some researchers, the *Masnavi of Afarinnameh* also reflects an important current of ancient Iranian thought, philosophical ideas, and Islamic thinking, with the influence of ancient Iranian ideas being more prominent (Moshref 2010, 52, 55).

Khwaja Nasir al-Mulk, the great Seljuk vizier and the first Atabek in history, had a *dehqan* (landowning) lineage and was from the Khorasan region. Through advancing in his career based on merit and wisdom, he reached the viziership under Sultan Alp Arslan and,

after him, Sultan Malik-Shah Seljuk, serving in this position for thirty years. He is considered one of the most powerful viziers in Iranian history. His important work, *Seyar al-Muluk*, is a significant text in the field of political thought that clearly reflects the author's stance as a concerned and anxious vizier aiming to organize the government. Khwaja was not the first to write a policy manual; he continued a tradition that was common in Iran even before Islam. There are different opinions regarding the main source that influenced Khwaja's political thought. Some, like Feirahi, believe Khwaja's ideas are close to jurisprudence and Ash'arism (Feirahi 2006, 36–37), while others, like Tabatabai (2015, 27–28), see his policy writing as a continuation of the political thought of Iranshahr. It seems that the opinion of the second group is closer to reality because Khwaja's policy writing, like the tradition of Iranian *andarzes*, is entirely pragmatic, whereas the outcome of the political stream of the first group is isolationist and idealized in political thought (Eslami 2013, 5). Additionally, Khwaja has a particular view of the most important feature of Iranian civilization—that is, the “ideal kingship based on divine glory” (*farreh*; Mojtabaei 1973, 95). Khwaja's ideas are directly connected to the traditions of monarchy and political thought of ancient Iran, especially the Sasanian period.

Before Khwaja, Ibn Muqaffa' attempted to revive this thought, and through his writings, he made it possible for the caliphate to preserve the Islamic outward appearance while internally being governed by Iranian methods (Tabatabaei 2015, 45–46). Khwaja Nasir al-Mulk is also among the elites who are concerned in this regard. He held the position of vizier in a dynasty whose governance differed significantly from those of Iranians. Among them, kingship was based on brotherhood among the members, and sovereignty was divided, whereas Khwaja inherited the Iranian tradition of kingship, emphasizing hierarchy and ranks (Forouzesh 2012, 186). For this reason, he not only makes his utmost efforts in the operational and administrative methods of governance but also in the cultural realm of writing *andarz* texts, creating a lasting and “realistic” work (Ekvani 2018, 21) in the field of Iranian political thought. Some researchers have attributed the “prestige” of this work to the fact that Khwaja Nasir al-Mulk “defined political power in its independence and, by defining its concepts, demonstrated the relationships and connections among those concepts” (Tabatabaei 2015, 18). He believes in the theory of an ideal kingship from the ancient period and recounts many stories of ancient Iranian kings. However, his aim is not to emphasize nationalism but to demonstrate that *sharia*, caliphate, and monarchy based on it can be aligned and compatible with the political organization and social system of Iran before Islam (Tabatabaei 2015, 76). In this regard, he raises certain specific topics as main issues, which bear many similarities to the themes of ancient Iranian political thought. Based on intertextual analyses, it has been suggested that *Seyar al-Muluk* and *'ahd-e Ardeshir* are similar in terms of addressing issues such as the position of the vizierate, the continuity of religion and politics, the role of security and intelligence institutions, politics like military power, the position of the people, and also government reform (Jazaei and Eslami 2019, 6–7).

The main goal of Khwaja in *Seyar al-Muluk* is to preserve the power of the king and the government. For this reason, he discusses disorders and dangers to highlight weaknesses that need to be addressed to achieve this goal. Khwaja is always concerned. He first outlines the essential principles of proper and worthy governance. He enumerates the important qualities required for various positions, from the king to servants and courtiers, and considers matters outside the administrative system, such as relations with other kings and their ambassadors, foreign incursions, and so on. He believes that for order to be established, everything must be in its proper place. The first condition is that the king should be worthy, and justice should be the main principle of his rule. Khwaja emphasizes justice strongly; however, this emphasis on justice does not mean distributing power equally or creating equal opportunities, but it involves a different concept. It is worth noting that justice is one of the fundamental concepts and basic principles of ancient political philosophy and even modern political thought. However, these two domains differ from each other.

From Farabi's perspective and that of his like-minded thinkers, in the realm of ancient political philosophy, justice refers to a harmony or order based on which creation has been stabilized. Its outcome is moderation and equitable distribution within society. In contrast, in political andarzes, justice is associated with the dominance of political power and authority (Tabatabaei 2015, 77–78).

Therefore, in Khwaja's view, justice is also something that helps maintain the balance of the political system, pushing the equilibrium of power in a direction that keeps the king at the center of authority, with others orbiting around his power (Ekvani 2018, 24). For this reason, in some sections, Khwaja puts emphasis on the return of many matters to the previous and traditional order, considering the current problems as resulting from the loss of that order.

He considers the king to have absolute power, and subjects should not be beyond the grasp of his obedience. However, this does not mean that subjects cannot voice their grievances to the king; rather, they have the right to express their complaints while respecting the dignity and high status of the king.

For this reason, Khwaja suggests the ancient practice of seeking justice and considers it the best method for communication between the king and the people. He also emphasizes that the king should sometimes be present among the people incognito, so that he remains aware of their conditions and can assess the performance of his officials. Additionally, he stresses the importance of having intelligent and trusted security forces to support this. The officials and workers of the king serve as intermediaries between him and the people. The performance of each of them can have a significant impact on maintaining the legitimacy of the king, as well as ensuring the continued obedience of the people and the proper functioning of affairs. For this reason, Khwaja provides detailed explanations about each individual and the proper conditions for fulfilling each position correctly.

He also emphasizes his concern for the proper execution of each role and considers it a key principle for organizing affairs. Therefore, he warns against multitasking or the lack

of independence in a single position. Khwaja places importance on ceremonies and hosting, believing that they are essential for preserving the dignity and grandeur of the king.

According to Khwaja, religion and government are like brothers. He draws inspiration from Ardeshir Babakan in this regard. He considers piety not only as a characteristic and virtue for the king but more as the foundation of monarchy (Tabatabaei 2015, 74). While recognizing a divine backing for the king to maintain legitimacy, he also advises the king on religious matters. He believes the presence of genuinely religious scholars around the king is essential to keep him constantly alert. Khwaja is aware of the importance of religion not only for the king but also for society; therefore, he emphasizes establishing religious schools.

He is concerned about non-believers because they have focused on religious matters to cause irreparable political damage. Consequently, Khwaja feels obliged to protect society on a religious level and provide the necessary guidance. He sees this as a long-term issue, not limited to his own time; he believes non-believers have been present since the first governments and will continue to be, in different forms and names, until the last government. Therefore, attention to religion is essential in every era.

Khwaja is a man of reform and development. He is a descendant of landowners and understands that the foundation of society is based on agriculture. Therefore, he pays special attention to its principles and revival. Furthermore, regarding the issue of land grants, in addition to concerns about the increasing power of the military, he worries about the destruction of agriculture along with farmers and peasants. For this reason, he approaches the topic of land grants very seriously and with great detail. Although Khwaja is a man of the pen, he is aware of the power of the sword and the principles appropriate to his position, constantly emphasizing the methods by which the king maintains control over them. He is never without concerns on any subject. Therefore, some have viewed *Seyar al-Muluk* from a political perspective as a conflict between good and evil; in such a view, society is full of contradictions, and people distrust each other. For this reason, political affairs must be accompanied by prudence and reasoning (Ekvani 2018, 28). Of course, this level of concern and breadth of advice is certainly not without reason but results from the depth of mismanagement and the widespread disorder and corruption of the government, especially the king. In any case, Khwaja, not only as a devoted vizier but also as a father figure to the king and the state, remains loyal to his oath and spares no effort in both practice and writing.

Onsor al-Ma'ali was among the Zurayids, who, after Manuchihr ibn Qabus and especially following the Turkman Seljuk dominance over Iran, did not have an independent rule. He only held the position of a local emir-descendant in parts of Tabaristan. He calls his father, Iskandar, who ruled over a small region of Gorgan and Tabaristan, "Amir Māzi". His wife was the daughter of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi, which led him to spend eight years in the service of Sultan Mas'ud. He also participated in wars in India and along the borders of Rome. Although Onsor al-Ma'ali possessed some power,

due to the strength of the Seljuks on one side and the expansion and influence of the Alavids on the other, he did not have much room for maneuver. He wrote the *Qābus-nāmeḥ* with the aim that if his son inherited the emirate after him, he would be able to act correctly. This book is considered one of the valuable works related to Iranian culture, customs, and traditions of its time, due to both the variety of topics it covers and the breadth of information it contains (Safa 1983, II:898–900). In his work, Onsor al-Maʿali presents himself as a ruler who has distanced himself from absolute power, is highly experienced, and has gained knowledge in various fields. He now intends to pass these experiences—covering all areas and domains—to his son, essentially offering everything necessary and essential for a good life. As he states at the beginning of the book, this is his own commitment to his son. Therefore, his primary audience is his son, not the general society. However, some believe that he discusses broader ethical ideas that could be beneficial for the public as well, ultimately encouraging everyone to approach all matters from a perspective of rationality and wisdom in their dealings with the world (Qareh Daghi 2001, X:81). Regarding politics, his views are close to the Iranian nationalist idea of Khwaja Nasir al-Mulk, which is directly related to his social and political class. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that Onsor al-Maʿali's birthplace and homeland are in northern Iran, which, as mentioned, has a history of anti-Arab struggles dating back to the early days of Islam. Moreover, his ancestors were also renowned in this regard (Zarrinkoub 1996, 129–136). Therefore, in terms of personal thought, he is also close to the ideas of ancient Iran. Like Khwaja, he believes in the absolute power of the Sultan. He emphasizes justice and truthfulness of the king, as well as obedience from the subordinate class. In a way, he has a mechanical view of society and politics, seeing society as in a state of constant conflict. For this reason, he places great importance on wisdom and prudence to create unity in favor of the ruling power (Ekvani 2018, 28). Like Khwaja, he also recommends measures such as not having a uniform army. Overall, his main goal, like that of Khwaja, is to establish an obedient society under a just monarchy.

Ghazzali was one of the main representatives of the Islamic and religious currents of the period discussed in this article. Some researchers believe that Ghazzali not only played a significant role in shaping the educational and ethical literature of Sufism in the subsequent centuries (Moshref 2010, 163), but also had an important role in bringing *sharia* and *tariqa* closer together and integrating them. He succeeded in this due to three reasons: his scientific mastery of both *sharia* and *tariqa*; his sincerity and devotion; and his very capable writing. The result of his efforts, after him, led many Sufis to return to *sharia*, and also gained respect and a more positive view of Sufism among many scholars (Khatami and Shakeri 2010, 76). Of course, Ghazzali experienced many spiritual transformations. Initially, he condemned scholars (*takfir*), but after returning from his ten-year journey and expressing new ideas that were close to mysticism, he became the target of attacks by fanatics (Safa 1984, II:922). De Fouchécour believes that Ghazzali's transformations resulted from his acquaintance with Sufism, and that the culture of his homeland, Khorasan, which was the source of Sufism, had

a significant influence in this regard (de Fouchécour 1998, 285). It seems that political conditions also played a very influential role in Ghazzali's transformations. Although Ghazzali, due to his thoughts and the religious current he was associated with, apparently does not have a strong attachment to ancient Iran, some of the topics he discussed are reminiscent of the *andarz* texts of ancient Iran, which may be due to his origins.

Ultimately, all the topics discussed in the advice literature of this period can be seen as components of Iranian cultural identity. Iranian scholars not only endeavored to convey this identity to the elite and, at times, to the general populace, but also, given the parallels between the concerns of these figures and ancient Iranian sages, reflected in certain advice topics—made a deliberate effort to revive and restore Iranian identity.

Continuity of Advice Themes from the Ancient Periods to the Islamic Era

The topics of advice literature examined in this article are categorized into virtues and moral qualities, behavior towards family and others, and politics and careers. In this classification, the advice subjects related to virtues and moral qualities show the greatest similarity to those in ancient Iranian advice literature. To avoid making the discussion too lengthy, only the similar advice topics are presented, along with the sources from the Islamic and ancient periods that mention these topics.

TABLE 1. Characters and the Frequency of References to Them

Topics	Islamic <i>Andarz</i> Texts	Ancient Source(s)
praise of wisdom and rationality	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat, Nasihat al-Muluk	Yashts, Minu-ye Kherad, Andarz-i Behzad Farrokh Piruz(Motun-e Pahlavi) . Motun-e Pahlavi
praise of acquiring knowledge and wisdom, and condemnation of ignorance	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Motun-e Pahlavi
praise of clemency and generosity	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Andarz-i Oshnar-i Dānā, Denkard III, Denkard V, Rivāyāt-i Pahlavi
significant of hospitality	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Ardā Wirāz-nāmag . Motun-e Pahlavi

praise of consultation	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ	Andarz-i Poryotkeshan (Motun-e Pahlavi)
praise of contentment and condemnation of greed	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Denkard VI, Tarjome-ye Chand Matn-e Pahlavi
praise of friendship and condemnation of hostility	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Andarz-i Oshnar-i Dānā, Denkard VI, Andarz-i Azarbad Mahrspandan (Motun-e Pahlavi), Motun-e Pahlavi
importance of renovation and prosperity	Kherad-nāmeḥ	Motun-e Pahlavi
praise of truthfulness and condemnation of lying	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Achaemenid inscriptions of Darius I, Yashts, Ardā Wirāz-nāmag, Minu-ye Kherad, Andarz-nāme-ye Bozormehr-i Hakim
importance of speech	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Motun-e Pahlavi .Rivāyāt-i Pahlavi
praise of good deed and condemnation of evil deed	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Motun-e Pahlavi .Andarz-i Oshnar-i Dānā
praise of willpower and action	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ	Motun-e Pahlavi
praise of trustworthiness	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Andarz-i Oshnar-i Dānā, Minu-ye Kherad, Ardā Wirāz-nāmag
condemnation of mockery	Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Motun-e Pahlavi
condemnation of breaking promises	Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat, Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ	Yashts, Ardā Wirāz-nāmag, Andarz-i Dānāyān be Mazdyasnān, Andarz-i Khosrow Qobādān, Rivāyāt-i Pahlavi

denunciation of idleness and laziness	Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ	Minu-ye Kherad, Motun-e Pahlavi
praising tolerance and adaptability	Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ	Rivāyāt-i Pahlavi, Minu-ye Kherad, Motun-e Pahlavi
virtue of moderation and temperance	Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Denkard III
respect for parents and seeking their approval	Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Ardā Wirāz-nāmag, Motun-e Pahlaviv
praise of bravery and valor	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ	Achaemenid inscriptions of Darius I, Yashts, Nāme-i Tansar be Goshnasb
Praise of life and its blessings	Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Denkard III
virtue of reflection	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Andarz-i Poryotkeshan (Motun-e Pahlavi)
women and their position	Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Denkard V, Denkard VI, Yashts, Gathas, Ardā Wirāz-nāmag, Andarz-i Azarbad Mahrspandan (Motun-e Pahlavi)
significance of having children and their rights	Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Andarz-i Khosrow Qobādān va Ridag (Motun-e Pahlavi), Motun-e Pahlavi
principles and etiquette of eating	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Motun-e Pahlavi
principles and customs of bathing	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Ardā Wirāz-nāmag
playing backgammon and chess etiquette	Qābus-nāmeḥ	Andarz-i Khosrow Qobādān va Ridag (Motun-e Pahlavi), Guzarish-i Shatranj, Motun-e Pahlavi

borrowing and lending etiquette	Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ	Motun-e Pahlavi
principles of buying a house	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ	Motun-e Pahlavi
significance of kingship from a divine perspective and divine grace (<i>farreh</i>)	Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Kherad-nāmeḥ, Seyar al-Muluk, Nasihat al-Muluk	Denkard III
characteristics of a good king	Āfarin-nāmeḥ, Kherad-nāmeḥ, Seyar al-Muluk, Nasihat al-Muluk, Qābus-nāmeḥ, Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat	Denkard III, Denkard VI, Andarz-nāmeḥ-ye Bozormehr-i Hakim
Praise order in kingdom's affairs	Kherad-nāmeḥ, Nasihat al-Muluk, Qābus-nāmeḥ	Motun-e Pahlavi
characteristics of a competent secretary (<i>dabir</i>)	Nasihat al-Muluk, Qābus-nāmeḥ	Motun-e Pahlavi
importance of servants	Seyar al-Muluk, Qābus-nāmeḥ	Andarz-nāmeḥ-ye Bozormehr-i Hakim
praising the king's forgiveness and moderation	Seyar al-Muluk, Nasihat al-Muluk	Denkard III
importance of farming	Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan, Kherad-nāmeḥ, Qābus-nāmeḥ	Iranians' background
regulation of soldiers' conduct toward the civilians	Seyar al-Muluk	Minu-ye Kherad

The Continuity of Archetypal Ancient Figures

As mentioned above, another aspect discussed in the continuity of Iranian identity from the ancient period to Islam in andarz texts is the mention of archetypal ancient figures, including political, religious, and other figures.

Archetypal figures are one of the elements that demonstrate the influence of Sasanian-era andarz texts on Islamic andarz writings. Most Pahlavi andarzes are attributed to great figures or wise men, such as the *Andarz-i Dānāyān be Mazdyasnān*. Some andarzes are also attributed to kings and religious scholars, including figures such as Azar Narseh, Azar Mehr, Behdad Azar Ormazd, Azar Buzid, and Ormazd Sagzi, who are considered archetypal figures in Dinkard VI (Tafazzoli 1997, 181–201).

After the Islamic conquest, not only did the attribution and endorsement of andarzes to a specific and well-known figure (regardless of ethnicity) continue in andarz texts, but certain archetypal figures from Sasanian andarzes, such as Anushirvan, Bahram Gur, Khosrow Parviz, as well as titles like Mobed (priest), Dehqān (landowner), Khosrow, and

others, also appeared in Islamic-era andarzes. Therefore, at first glance, the use of archetypal figures in the andarz texts of the Islamic period was influenced by ancient andarz literature, regardless of whether these figures belonged to the Islamic or ancient periods.

In the first few Islamic centuries, the interest of rulers and leaders in aligning themselves with Iranian culture extended to the point that many of them claimed descent from ancient and mythological heroes to gain legitimacy and power. This phenomenon can be observed among the Tahirids, Saffarids, Samanids, Ziyarids, Buyids, Ghaznavids, and Seljuks, who attributed their lineage to figures such as Jamshid, Kayumars, Rostam, Manuchehr, Ardeshir, Shapur, Anushirvan, Khosrow Parviz, Yazdgerd, and Bahram Gur. In the advice literature of this period, references to mythological and ancient personalities are quite prominent, indicating not only the popularity of these figures among the general populace and their enduring cultural significance but also reflecting the political-military aspect. These figures symbolize a reflection of Iran's historical need for independence, security, and the grandeur of its ancient past (Shabani and Zarei 2012, 22–30).

Each of the andarz texts discussed in this article, based on the intellectual framework and the thoughts of their authors—who, as mentioned earlier, also reflect the culture of society at that time—utilizes model figures from one or more social classes, considering their position and status. In *Āfarin-nāmeḥ*, more often than not, anonymous model figures are used, and only in limited cases are prominent political figures from the Islamic period mentioned as exemplary characters. Regarding the anonymous model figures, there is significant attention paid to terms related to ancient Iran. The approach of the author of *Nasihāt al-Muluk* is also more focused on mythological, heroic, and ancient political figures. In *Kherad-nāmeḥ*, there is greater use of social figures, especially Greek, as well as political and religious figures from the Islamic period. In *Seyar al-Muluk*, Nizam al-Mulk mainly emphasizes political model figures, both from ancient times and the Islamic era. Onsor al-Ma'ali also utilizes political, religious, and social figures from both ancient and Islamic periods as model characters. In *Kimiyā-ye Sa'ādat*, due to the author's concerns, most of the exemplary figures are religious, especially hadith scholars, mystics, and Sufis, as well as political figures from the Islamic era. However, Ghazzali, in *Nasihāt al-Muluk*, prioritized the use of political model figures, particularly from ancient Iran.

In table 2, archetypal ancient figures, including mythological, political, social, and religious figures mentioned in the andarz texts, are listed. Additionally, the number of times each figure appears in each andarz text and the total number of appearances across all andarz texts are also indicated.

TABLE 2. Archetypal Characters and the Frequency of References to Them

Status/Period	Character	A.N.	P.A.	Kh.N.	S.M.	Q.N.	K.S.	N.M.	Sum/Number of Texts
mythical									4/35
	Simurgh		1						1
	Mihr		1						1
	Kayumars							3	3
	Fereydoon				1			2	3
	Esfandiar		1						1
	Houshang							1	1
	Tahmuras							1	1
	Kai Khosrow				2			1	3
	Gudarz				1				1
	Sam				1				1
	Jamshid							1	1
	Manuchihr				1			1	1
	Rostam				1				1
	Kai Qobad							1	1
	Zavareh				1				1

	Goshtasb				1	1		2	4
	Garshasb							1	1
	Jamasb				1				1
	Afrasiab				1			1	2
	Lohrasb							1	1
	Tahmasb							1	1
	Kai Kavus							1	1
	Bahman		1					1	2
	Piran Viseh				1				1
	Shemiran (Homay)							1	1
Political/Ancient									6/125
	Anushirvan		3 ⁴	4 ⁵	5	1 ⁶		25	38
	Dastur Shah Pashang		1						1
	Ardeshir		1		2			10	13
	Qobad		2		2				4

⁴ The entire andarz-nāmeḥ is attributed to him.

⁵ In one instance, seven sayings of Anushirvan are cited, and in another, sixty sayings on various topics are mentioned (*Kherad-nāmeḥ* 1993, 73–77).

⁶ It has one chapter dedicated to Anushirvan, including numerous andarzes attributed to him (Onsor al-Ma'ali 1999, 51–55).

	Bahram Gur				2			3	5
	Bozorgmehr			8 ⁷	4	3	1	15	31
	Khosrow Parvis				4			3	7
	Khoreh Ruz				1				1
	Yazdgerd III							1	1
	Shapur			1				1	2
	Dara							3	3
	Dara Jaras son of Khosrow							1	1
	Hormoz							1	1
	Shahrbanou					1			1
	Sasanians				5				5
	Iranian Kings				1			3	4
	Zolqarnain							2	2
	Mobedan (a proper noun)							1	1
	Ashk ibn Hormoz							1	1
	Shapur's Brother							1	1

⁷ In one instance, ninety-nine and in another, forty-nine *andarzes* on various topics are mentioned (*Kherad-nāme* 1993, 50–59, 62–65).

	Bahram Gur's Son							1	1
	Shahrbaraz							1	1
Religious/Ancient									3/3
	Zardosht	1	1			1			3
Social/Ancient									2/2
	Sinbad		1						1
	Barbad				1				1

Among ancient political and heroic figures, Sasanian Anushirvan occupies a special place, as reflected in the *andarz* texts of this period. Although he is a historical figure, he has also entered the realm of legends and myths associated with the Iranian nation, which are conveyed with moral significance (Mazdapour 2007, 79).

Another figure that has been highly regarded is Ardashir the Sasanian. The name Ardashir is significant as a source of political ethics and is commonly referenced in Arab and Greek contexts (de Fouchécour 1998, 22). Al-Ma'mun, the Abbasid caliph, in response to the teacher al-Wathiq bi'Llah, who asked what he should teach him, said: "teach him the Book of God, reading Ardeshir's Bill, and memorizing Kalila and Dimna" (Akub 1995, 103). Mas'udi (1986, I:239–243) refers to Ardeshir as a king who loved wisdom and quotes some of his advice regarding the harmony of religion and state, as well as justice.

In addition to the ancient political and heroic figures, the mention of Zoroaster in three of the seven *andarz* texts under consideration is also very noteworthy. Since the official religion during the period was Islam, mentioning the name of the previous prophet was likely a sign of respect for the past culture rather than an endorsement of the previous religion.

Conclusions

Āfarin-nāmeḥ, *Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan*, *Kherad-nāmeḥ*, *Seyar al-Muluk*, *Qābus-nāmeḥ*, *Nasihāt al-Muluk*, and *Kimiyā-ye Sa'adat* were all written in centuries that are often considered particular periods. While some have called this time the era of stagnation of Iranian culture, evidence suggests that Iranian ancient culture remained widespread in Iran during the first five Islamic centuries. The signs of this continuity are observable in many instances and aspects—whether in political struggles against Arabs and caliphs, in the use of Iranian bureaucracy, culture, and traditions, or other areas. One of the areas that provide a suitable context for examining the continuity of Iranian culture during the Islamic period is *andarz* texts because this body of literature was not only written by Iranian elites, and their primary aim was undoubtedly to express their concerns regarding various aspects of society, but also because the tradition of *andarz* writing in the Islamic period fundamentally continued from the ancient era. Therefore, the very fact that individuals chose *andarz* composition to express their thoughts indicates an interest in Iranian traditions.

In addition, *andarz* texts contain two main components: 1) topics of advice and 2) archetypal figures. Each *andarz* writer, depending on their perspective as well as the societal context and influences they were under, addressed these two components. One significant current in Iranian society during the first five Islamic centuries was Iranism, which greatly influenced *andarz* writers such as Khwaja Nasir al-Mulk, Bu Shakur Balkhi, and the writer of the *Pand-nāmeḥ-i Anushirvan*, and Onsor al-Ma'ali.

Of course, the influence of other thoughts (Islamic and Greek) can also be seen to some extent in these individuals. However, the Iranism movement is remains particularly strong. While figures such as the author of *Kherad-nāmeḥ* and Ghazzali have occasionally referenced signs of this movement, the influence of the other two currents (respectively: Greek and Islamic), in their cases, is more prominent, in that order.

Many of the topics addressed in the andarz texts discussed in this article are the same themes emphasized in Pahlavi andarzes, which indicates shared concerns between the authors of these texts in this article and those of the Pahlavi period, in the domains of morality, politics, society, and more. In other words, we see a continuity of Iranian values and ideas. The second pillar, which is the “model figures”, also reflects this continuity. Although the frequency of using ancient model figures may not be very high quantitatively, the key question is: why, after 500 years of the Islamic conquest of Iran, do figures from the ancient period continue to be named?

Another point to consider is why the frequency of referencing ancient political model figures is higher than that of other figures. Why has the name of Anushirvan been repeated so often? Is it not because, due to political chaos and the absence of centralized governments in a society that once had great kingdoms (Achaemenid, Parthian, Sasanian), Iranian elites longed for those centralized, strong monarchies and their kings and ministers? And, in fact, they deeply believed in their competence.

Furthermore, when the author of the andarz mentions figures such as Anushirvan, Bozorgmehr, Ardeshir, and others from the ancient period, he assumes that his Iranian audience not only knows these figures but also respects them. On the other hand, referencing the name of the Zoroaster in these andarz texts—despite the fact that another religion has been prevalent in Iran for 500 years—indicates nothing more than respect for him, with no other implied meaning.

Therefore, it can be definitively confirmed that Iranians made evident efforts over the first five Islamic centuries to preserve and continue Iranian thought and traditions.

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