DID AL-GHAZALI WRITE A MIRROR FOR PRINCES? On the authorship of Naṣīḥat al-malāk

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To Professor Kaeer on his seventieth birthday—
with apologies for having strayed from the Jakobsen

It is well-known that there is a large pseudo-Ghazalian literature, and that even authentic works by al-Ghazali have attracted interpolations and additions by other hands. 1 That the Naṣīḥat al-malāk, or 'Book of Counsel for Kings', should be classified as specimen of this literature rather than as an authentic work was suggested as far back as 1919 by Oardner, and the same opinion was fathered by Juri Zaydan by Zaki Muhtar in 1924. 2 In 1934, however, Humā‘ stated his reservations on his national heritage with a vigorous defence of the authenticity of the work in his preface to the first edition of the Persian text, 3 and since then all Western scholars have accepted its ascription to al-Ghazali as correct. 4 As will be

1 I should like to thank John Gwynne, Martin Hinds and Fritz Zimmermann for helpful comments and criticisms. To John Gwynne I am also indebted for making me think about the subject; and without Paul Schmid lal I would never have got in to it.


4 E. Mu‘tah, Al-Dhikr wa ‘l-USūl al-Dhikrīyya. Cairo 1924, p. 101. According to Mouhá‘, Zaydan expressed this opinion in Sharī‘a al-Ghazalī. But Zaydan says nothing of this kind in any (of) this work; and as noted by Humā‘, he similarly fails to do so in the notes on al-Ghazali and elsewhere (cf. the following note). He does however query the authenticity of the Sīr al-dināmīt in the additions and corrections appended to vol. 3 of T. Zaydan, Kitab al-dhikr wa ‘l-usūl al-dhikrīyya, Cairo 1911-14, vol. iv, p. 321), and this is presumably what lies behind Muhá‘s claim (Muhá‘ did not commit himself either way in the passage cited, but in practice he treated the work as authentic; cf. Aqibah, pp. 83, 86.

5 Al-Ghazalī, Naṣīḥat al-malāk, Edinburgh 1913-17 (henceforth NML), introduction, esp. p. 123.

seen, there is in fact no question of dismissing the entire work as pseudo-
epigraphic. It is nonetheless an odd idea that al-Ghazali should have written a
Fürstenspiegel, a religious scholar and egotist hardly makes an obvious
candidate for the authorship of a mirror, least of all for one which completely
ignores the existence of the caliphate. And by 1972 Humâl's himself had
been seized by doubt. The Nasihat al-muluk, as he noted in his preface to the
second edition of the Persian text, consists of two parts. The first part
is not a mirror for princes, but rather an exposition of the faith written
for a prince; this part he held to be indisputably authentic.4 But the second part
is a mirror, or more precisely a book of practical wisdom which pays
particular attention to the art of government; and this part he showed to
be so uncharacteristic of al-Ghazali in certain respects that he hesitated to
accept the ascription, though accept it he did in the last resort.5 In what
follows I shall argue that Humâl's was right to have doubts; the second part
of the Nasihat al-muluk is unquestionably the work of somebody other than
its putative author.

The Nasihat al-muluk (hereafter NM) is a Persian work composed for a
ruler identified in the Arabic tradition as Muhammad b. Malikshâh (died 1118),
and in the Persian tradition (miscalled as this tradition identifies him at
all) as Sanjar (d. 1157).6 There are two accounts of how al-Ghazali came to
write it. The first unambiguously envisages it as consisting of the first part
only (hereafter NM1), while the second account apparently envisages it as
1981, pp. 117E, H. Lauant, La politique de Gâzâlî, Paris 1970, pp. 146ff (where the authenticity of the
work is taken for granted); F.R.C. Bagley (ed.), al-Ghazâlî's Book of
Council for Kings, Oxford 1964, introduction, p. xxi (where the authenticity is
de- fended). It is also listed as an authentic work in M. Bouyges, Essai de chronologie du
corpus édité par al-Ghazâlî, ed. M. Albert, Beirut 1959, pp. 6ff; A.R. Badawi, Al-Ghazâlî al-
Ghazali, Cairo 1966, no. 47; and elsewhere. What did not devote much attention to
the question of the authenticity (p. 51) and Lázaro-Yáñez only deals with al-Ghazâlî's
Arabic works (cf. Studies, p. 45). But there is a rare reference to the possibility of
this ascription in G.P. Houbraken, "The Chronology of Ghazâlî's Writings", Journal of the


5 Ibid., pp. 7ff.

6 For a detailed discussion of the question of the authorship, see Humâl's introduction to the
second edition of NM1 (1190) ed. J. Lauant, Politique, pp. 149ff, Bagley, Book of
Council, p. viii (in their attempt to resolve the problem both Humâl and Lauant assume the
second part of NM to be genuine.)

such and al-Ghazali does not himself refer to a Fürstenspiegel among his
writings. NM must have come to include a Fürstenspiegel as early as the
second half of the twelfth century, when it was first translated into Arabic,7 as
the Arabic version (commonly known as al-Tîr al-masâbîh fi nasihat
al-muluk) contains both parts of the work;8 and numerous later sources
which refer to, or borrow from, NM must also have known it in the form in
which it exists today.9 But the two parts of NM have also been preserved as
separate works. Thus several manuscripts contain NM1 in Persian as a
work of its own, under the title of Nasihat al-muluk,10 while others contain it
in Arabic under titles such as Risâla fi ujud al-muluk11 or Risâla i'tîd al-
Malikshâh fî-nizây al-dîn12 (where Malikshâh is presumably a mistake for
Muhammad b. Malikshâh).13 Conversely, one manuscript contains the
7 According to an introduction appended to one Arabic and two Persian manuscripts of
NM, al-Ghazali wrote it at the request of Sīnâr after the two had spent the whole day
together in devotional meditation. This clearly suggests that al-Ghazali was asked to write a
mirror for Sīnâr, and in fact three manuscripts in question contain NM alone (NM1,
p. 399, 291; cf. Humâl's introduction (herein), pp. 290ff; F. Minter, review of NM1,
Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 1939, pp. 403). According to
the Fathers of the church, on the other hand, al-Ghazali wrote it for an unnamed Persian
sultan after a nocturnal encounter with some Harâl's angels. This also suggests that
what he was writing was more akin to a manual of ethics rather than a book of practical
wisdom (cf. Minter, review p. 397; Humâl's introduction, p. 128; Bagley, Book of Coun-
sel, p. viii).

8 NM was first translated into Arabic by Abû b. al-Mahbûb, a dignitary of Isfahân who
must have flourished in the second half of the twelfth century and whose patron, accord-
ing to some manuscripts, was an aghlabî of Mosul who died in 955/1549 (cf. Bagley,
Book of Counsel, p. xvii), the translator's name has become lost at p. 43).

9 Al-Ghazâlî, al-Tîr al-masâbîh fi nasihat al-muluk, Cairo 1317 (among numerous other
postings). For a concise analysis of the Tîr, see M. Adi Palacein, L'expérimentation de

10 Cf. Humâl's introduction to NM1, pp. 55ff, especially 170.

11 Minter, review of NM1, p. 405 (three folio-sized manuscripts), Humâl's introduction
to NM1, pp. 28ff (two of the same folio-sized manuscripts and one quire one).

12 Bouyges, Chronologie, p. 105; Badawi, Al-Ghazâlî, no. 179 (one manuscript
contains NM, review of NM, 1430 (one folio-sized manuscript, without indication of
date). It has been printed in Cairo under this title (Bouyges, Chronologie, p. 105). This
printing was hardly based on the Münch manuscript mentioned in the previous note, though
Badawi seems to suggest as much (Münch, no. 128).

13 Al-Ghazali refers to the Hikâya in that part of NM which is a näzîfār nîzāy at col. below,
no. 420, and the Hikâya was composed after Malikshâh's death in 1053 (cf. Bouyges,
Chronologie, p. 414). Bouyges notes that it was written (or at least printed) during the
time of Malikshâh's lifetime (cf. ibid., p. 105; Adi Palacein, Espiritualidad, vol. 1, p. 346).
second part of NM (hereafter NM) in Arabic as a work of its own, under the title of *al-Faq' hayma's-Salah wa-lghar al-ma'ah*. In fact, it is clear from the contents of the two parts that they cannot have originated altogether, and though both are ascribed to al-Ghazali even as separate works, the attribution to him of the second part must be rejected.

NM1: the treatise on the faith

NM1 is a treatise on the faith which opens and closes with an address to the `King of the East` (or `King of East and West`, `King of the World`, `Sultan of the World`). It is a remarkably well-written work. Faith is compared to a tree with ten roots and ten branches, and the exposition is ordered accordingly: it starts with a summary of the ten roots, i.e. the ten fundamental points of the Sunni creed, proceeds to a discussion of the ten branches, i.e. the ten major ways in which faith should show itself in action, more precisely in the action of a ruler, and concludes with a section on the two springs which water the tree of faith, i.e. insight into the nature of his creed and awareness of death. The language is simple and lucid throughout, but the style varies somewhat. Whereas the summary of the creed is concise, the discussion of the behaviour of rulers is diffuse and epistemic. Here much use is made of stories about Biblical figures and Muslim caliphs, scholars and ascetics, and numerous sayings attributed to them, and to the Prophet, are also added, though few of them canonical and none of them equipped with narrādī. Even so, the author never loses his thread; and in the section on the transitory nature of human life the apocalyptic mode of presentation is classically employed, the sources and sayings being replaced by striking parabolas. Poetry is absent throughout.

It is plain that the treatise was written by a professional theologian with a considerable gift for presenting his subject to laymen, and there is every reason to believe that the theologian in question was al-Ghazali. The style is certainly his. As has been noted before, his authentic works are all well-organized and lucidly written. The apocalyptic style of the middle section may seem more uncharacteristic at first sight; but al-Ghazali used precisely the same style in his discussion of precisely the same subject, i.e. the behaviour of rulers, in *his Mushtaqīr*, where many of the same anecdotes and sayings are cited too. His talent for striking parables is well known. And his use of uncanonical Hadith was commented on already by medieval Muslim scholars.

In terms of contents, there is likewise every reason to accept the attribution. Much of the work is based on other writings of his, the major source of NM1 being the *Kimbīya-yi su'īda*; NM1 could in fact be characterized as a selection of passages from the *Kimbīya* adapted for the use of sultans. What has it to say about sultans is precisely what one would expect. As in the *Mushtaqīr*, the stress is overwhelmingly on the heavy responsibilities of rulers and the dire fate that awaits them if they fail to live up to them. Rulers are shepherds whom God will call to account; and though the language of power can in principle be a source of unsurpassed happiness, rulers do not in practice have anything but punishment in store for them. On the Day of Judgement they will all be placed on the Sirat bridge and will all fail off, be they virtuous or wicked, because there will

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19 Ibid., p. 101.


21 You should know that in matters between you [personally] and God, your conduct is quite likely, but that anything involving relations to mankind and not in any circumstance be overlooked at the resurrection (NM1, p. 14 = 15); quotations are given in Bagley's text, with some modifications, often occasioned by the second edition. Compare al-Ghazali, *Fakhr* (i.e. the *Mushtaqīr*), p. 208f.


23 NM1, p. 141 = 14, similarly *Fakhr* in 158.
not be a single one who has not taken a bribe or given an unjust verdict.\textsuperscript{34} They will all be brought forth manacled, and only if they have acted rightfully will they be set free.\textsuperscript{35} Their chances are clearly slight: ‘Woe to princes, woe to functionaries, woe to treasurers! These are the people who on the day of resurrection will wish that they had been hanged from the sky by their own curls and that they had never held office,’ as the Prophet is supposed to have said.\textsuperscript{36} Happy are you, O man, as Umar is said to have declared at a funeral, ‘who never was a prince, overseer, scribe, bailiff or tax-collector.’\textsuperscript{37}

The ideal to which rulers should seek to conform is entirely Islamic in conceptions and illustrated with reference to Muslim and Biblical figures alone, no Sassanid kings (let alone Greek sages) being invoked in this part. The just ruler is someone who does not abuse his position and who makes sure that his soldiers, officials and other staff likewise refrain from doing so; for he will be held responsible for their conduct too.\textsuperscript{38} He gives verdicts in strict accordance with the Shari’a, not more strictly and not more leniently,\textsuperscript{39} attaches great importance to the redress of grievances\textsuperscript{40} and supervises everyone in person, all responsibility being ultimately his.\textsuperscript{41} To do this he must have justice inside him, that is self-control.\textsuperscript{42} He should live modestly, avoiding sumptuous food and clothing,\textsuperscript{43} and beware of all the flattery that will inevitably be heaped upon him.\textsuperscript{44} And he should surround himself with

\textsuperscript{34} NM, p. 23 = 17, also told in Faddîl, p. 211.
\textsuperscript{36} NM, loc. cit. Faddîl, loc. cit.; compare also Fudâlî b. ‘Iyâd’s greeting to Harān ‘ala’ for so soft a hand unless it gets inflation from God’ (NM, p. 30 = 20, Faddîl, p. 214).
\textsuperscript{37} NM, p. 20 = 16, Umar himself was questioned for no less than twelve years after his death (ibid., pp. 246 = 18, Faddîl, pp. 2110. And David wrote on being reminded by Gabriel that he was living off the treasury: that is why God taught him the trade of money-lending (NM, pp. 238 = 17, Faddîl, pp. 2115).
\textsuperscript{38} NM, p. 36 = 23.
\textsuperscript{39} ‘Abd, pp. 23, 500 = 165, 31. The story at p. 22 is also cited in Faddîl, p. 211, where the implications are spelled out: ‘so this Faddîl is a made clear that we should not seek refuge in anything but the law, and that nothing is more important to rulers than knowledge of the rules of the law.’
\textsuperscript{40} NM, pp. 479 = 29, Faddîl, p. 205.
\textsuperscript{41} Cf. the story about Umar and the mangy sheep, NM, p. 24 = 17, Faddîl, p. 211.
\textsuperscript{42} NM, p. 37 = 24; cf. pp. 300 = 208.
\textsuperscript{43} ‘Abd, pp. 486 = 299; Faddîl, p. 253 where the story cited in illustration involves Umar and Salzman, not, as in NM, ‘Umar and a moneylender.’
\textsuperscript{44} NM, p. 30 = 30 (where the Prophetic saying should read harâm darü’sur, not dirmât, cf. Faddîl, p. 206).
mode of reference is the third person singular: 'the author of this book declares...' (khudand van i khat gavat), as he says on numerous occasions, usually to state his own opinion."

The addressee is no longer a specific ruler. There is no mention of the 'Kings of the East'. One would have expected some expression of good wishes for his success at the end of the treatise, on a par with those which come at the end of NM1; but NM2 simply repeats out with a poem. It often advice to a 'king', 'kings' and 'the kings of the present age', and as in NM1, the king is sometimes addressed as 'you'.44 But whereas NM1 sometimes adds 'O King',45 or 'O Sultan of the world', NM2 never does, though once it has 'O Sultan of Islam',46 and it addresses the king as 'you' precisely where NM1 avoids doing so,47 What is more, it also addresses ourselves as 'you'.48 In fact, the author of NM2 frequently makes clear that 'you could be anyone: in case no person should find difficulty in un-

dering this... (agar kaisa mukhla sharah),' the above story has been quoted in order that the wise may understand...' (ta khirdamandan bidaman).49 We have mentioned this in order that whoever reads it may know...' (da mar keh ber khudan... bidaman) at one point the author even explains 'understand therefore, O brother:'50 Arabic version of NM is appropriately entitled Kāññ nutaññ al-mulūk wa-kulli ghanii wa-

'ulūk, 'The Book of Counsel for Kings and Every Rich Man and Beg-

NM2 is wisdom for everyone.

It is thus clear that NM1 and NM2 cannot have been conceived as parts of the same work. In principle, of course, both could still be authentic works by al-Ghazālī, but this possibility can be ruled out on other grounds.

First, the stylistic contrast between the two parts of NM is glaring. Where NM1 is a well organized treatise, NM2 is a rambling compilation of anecdotes, aphorisms and poetry loosely strung together in no particular order and adding up to no particular point.51 It is true that al-Ghazālī himself adopts an aphoristic style in the middle section of NM1. But for one thing, he cites no poetry there and, as Humā'ī noted with some concern, he nowhere cites Persian poetry on the scale of NM2.52 For another thing, its anecdotes and aphorisms of NM1 are adduced in illustration of ten fundamental points, i.e. the ten rules of royal behaviour: there is an overall argument behind the selection of the material. But the stories and sayings of NM2 are simply such pieces of wisdom as the author happened to know and like on the subject, with the result that they are often contradictory; even when they are not contradictory, they do not add up to a coherent argument. It is for this reason that the author has to indicate his own opinion by interjecting his 'the author of this book declares... As Humā'ī pointed out, this is not a formula which al-Ghazālī uses elsewhere,53

40 NM1, p. 114, Menging in NM and probably also an interpolation.

41 You should also caution your fiscal governors... (informiert), such is the situation and you should know it... (as distinente facto factum in NM1, p. 81). NM2, p. 121ff - 119.

The author of NM1 invariably uses the third person singular for this type of advice, cf. above, note 49.

42 When you have written the letter, read through what you have included in it before you fold it up... (schreibe nach Absicht, NM1, pp. 197ff - 118).

43 NM1, p. 81 - 47.

44 NM1, p. 106. NM2 uses the singular (p. 58 - 38).

45 NM1, p. 114 - 114; similarly NM2, p. 59 - 58 (reappearing in the second edition).

46 NM1, p. 125 - 139. This was noted by Bagley as a possible interpolation (Book of Counsel, p. 44, cf. 440).

47 Bagley, Book of Counsel, p. 300, 'The book is arranged in a logical and orderly fashion' (Bagley, Book of Counsel, p. 300), and cette composée et manifestement écrite avec une certaine habileté (Laurain, Politique, p. 151). Both are verdicts on NM, formed on the basis of NM1 and NM2 respectively.

48 Humā'ī, Introduction to NM, p. 72.

49 ibid., p. 79.
evidently because his manner of presentation makes it quite superfluous. There is accordingly no question of explaining the disorderly nature of NM2 with reference to the assumption that it was composed in a hurry. NM1 and NM2 exemplify two quite different methods of work. In fact, such evidence as we have suggests that it was the first part of NM which was composed in a hurry, and this might explain why so much of it is lifted from the Kinsa'ah. preserved for use, in other words, al-Ghazali would reply by recycling earlier arguments, formulations and illustrations, not by throwing everything together in a messy compilation. The method of work exemplified by NM2 simply is not his. Where, as Montgomery Watt notes, "we find works that are a cenci of varied materials, yet together without any clear principle...we can say at once 'these were not put together by al-Ghazali.'"

Secondly, NM2 in no way reflects the preoccupations and convictions of al-Ghazali, still less his intellectual stature. Thus it completely omits discussion of the issue, an oddity which has been noted before, but never satisfactorily explained. Mirrors did of course usually ignore the question, but the genre did not preclude discussion of it; and at all events, as Bagley notes, "even though a "Mirror for Princes" cannot be expected to contain legal discussion, it nevertheless seems remarkable that Nizâdir al-Din should not give to the Sultan a single word of advice to respect and honour the Caliph." Lambros infers that al-Ghazali saw himself as a practical man and defender of the Sultan in NM, whereas he was a theoretician and defender of the caliph in the Mustazhir and other works in which he dealt with the imamate at length. But if al-Ghazali had wished to defend the sultan, he would have done so by sorting out his legal position vis-à-vis the caliph, not by ignoring the problem altogether; and if he had wished to be a practical man, he would have done so by writing a lucid summary of the Muslim laws of taxation, war, treatment of slaves and so forth, not by dilating on subjects such as the art of cutting the pen, the aphorisms of the sages, or the good and bad points of women. NM2 evidently is not a particularly practical work at all. It does not even have a chapter on the army.

The imamate is absent from NM2 for the simpler reason that one author had no interest in it: he displays no interest in Islamic law at all, be it constitutional or other, as he would inevitably have done if he had been al-Ghazali. There is a brief reference to the Shari'a in the discussion of the ruler's religion, but nothing in the definition of perfect justice, and the assertions to observe the law characteristic of the Mustazhir and NM1 are completely absent from NM2. Indeed, where NM1 warns the ruler not to drink wine, NM2 takes it for granted that rulers drink and merely exhorts them not to get drunk, citing a poem on the question. There is no reference to the ruler's duty to conduct jihad, nor are there any warnings against the collection of uncanonical taxes, a subject on which al-Ghazali had written in uncompromising terms in the Fihrist. Much advice as NM2 has to offer on the subject of taxation is given in a completely non-legal vein, unlawful behaviour being discouraged on the ground that it is musicaeptus. The claim that 'Umar killed his own son

67 NM, ch. 3, 5, 7.
68 NM, p. 106; missing in NM (pp. 51f. - 51g).
69 NM, p. 121 - 126.
70 Cf. Goldscheider, Jodhpur, pp. 936, above, note 33. Lambros also noted that the Shari'a plays a major role in NM ("Theory of Kingship", p. 50).
71 NM, p. 116 - 13; or p. 51 - 51.
72 NM, p. 112 - 64 (Kusaid wine-drinking). 12p. 79 (constant wine-drinking,chemically and so forth are not recommended); 12p. 85 (governor abstaining against getting drunk; there is another such exhortation in NM, p. 69f., but NM1, p. 57, has zulaal for zulaal). 228 = 123 (pure wine is good for the soul; 226 = 120f. (wine-drinking at the court of the Mu'tasim). That the last is unlike al-Ghazali was noted by Goldscheider, introduction to NM, p. 77f., 79; also Bagley, Book of Counsel, p. 14f.
73 Also noted by Lambros, "Theory of Kingship", p. 49f, who suggests that the topic is obscure because there was no longer controlled by the great sultan.
75 NM, p. 135f. = 112; a-collation may not raise thirst when heat is present, but causes thirst when it is moderate.
in the course of inflicting 'add punishment on him is made by way of illustration of the excellent discipline that 'Umar maintained, not with a view to stressing the importance of observance of the law;65 and the story of the law and Yaḥyā al-Barmaki is told from 'Sayyids rather than a Shā'i point of view: whoever the author of NMZ may have been, he had neither personal knowledge of the Shā'i nor a strong commitment to it.66

A fact, it is clear that the author of NMZ was not an 'ālim at all, still less a thinker. No religious scholar worth the name would have been able unselfconsciously to refer to a Bāṣīr ruler by the blasphemous title of Shahānshāh,67 nor would he have been so ignorant as to claim that 'Umar killed a son of his own.68 No thinker, least of all al-Ghazālī, would have been capable of dealing with the subject of intelligence by citing a string of entertaining stories and platitudinous sayings ascribed to Sasanid and other sages,69 or of compiling a whole chapter of such platitudes ascribed, inter alia, to the Greek philosophers whose real views al-Ghazālī knew and rejected as infidel.70 Still less would he have been able to tell a story in which God sends down a letter from heaven saying, This is a warrant from God, al-ʿazīz, to 'Umar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. We have exempted 'Umar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz from hell-fire.71 Al-Ghazālī was a

65 NMZ, p. 114 – 65.
66 Ibid., pp. 170 – 104. A Magian brought a claim against Yaḥyā al-Barmaki, but the witnesses Abu Yaṣaf made Yaḥyā swear on oath of falsehood, having that he had heard Yaḥyā and the Magian on an equal footing in accordance with the Shā'ī law. Bugay describes this as a story with a highly authentically Shā'ī view of sinners in which Abu Yaṣaf gives reasons to the Magian solely on the strength of the later’s worse declaration, though strictly speaking this was contrary to the law (Book of CounSEL, p. 1, 1046). But apart from the fact that the story is about a Shī’i procedure at Shī’i courts could not be authentically Ghazālīan, it is Yaḥyā who swears the oath. (This is similar to NMZ, p. 92, but Bugay, however, identifies him as the oath-taker in his translation. Also the fact that non-Muslims cannot act as witnesses against Muslims does not mean that they cannot bring claims against them. The point of the story is that Abu Yaṣaf admits Yaḥyā is the indicant of swearing an oath of falsehood (in perfect accordance with Islamic law) instead of dismissing the claim (as he could have done); good Muslims are denied to Zoroastrians. It is the author’s failure to address a specific Shī’i narrative on the treatment of Zoroastrians which shows that he is not a lawyer.
68 Cfr., above, note 76.
69 NMZ, ch. 6. It did cross Bugay’s mind that this chapter might not be authentic (Book of Counsel, p. 16).
70 NMZ, ch. 5. This was another problem for Bugay (Book of Counsel, p. 144).
71 NMZ, p. 120 – 68. The translation given here reflects the wording of NMZ, p. 68.

thinker who popularized by making things lucid and simple, not by being facile, naive or commonplace, and he was a religious scholar in everything he wrote. The author of NMZ, by contrast, was a compiler who delighted in elegant, witty and otherwise memorable formulations of commonplace Shī’ī tales rather than a Shī’ī point of view: whoever the author of NMZ may have been, he had neither personal knowledge of the Shī’ī nor a strong commitment to it.72

The same point can be made by a comparison of what al-Ghazālī and the author of NMZ have to say about women. Al-Ghazālī wrote extensively on the subject in the Ḥiyā and, is abbreviated form, the Kınāj, setting out his views in his typically systematic and lucid fashion in both works.73 The author of NMZ by contrast offers a jumble of anecdotes, poetry and bon mots.74 The author of NMZ does not refer to the fact that he had dealt with the subject at greater length elsewhere, as he would have been able to do if he had al-Ghazālī and he does not draw his material from al-Ghazālī either. He shares with him sentiments such as that one should feel compassion for women because of their feminine intelligence,75 and that one should act contrary to their advice (though on this point he also says the opposite),76 but these are commonplace views, and there is nothing to indicate dependence. Two sayings do occur in both al-Ghazālī’s works and NMZ; but they occur in different forms, and one of them is ascribed to different authorities as well.77 The classifications of women adopted in the Ḥiyā and NMZ are different.78 The author of NMZ counsels against
marrying for nobility, a possibility that did not preoccupy al-Ghazzali, and he blames all evils of this world on women (saying nicer things about them too), which al-Ghazzali does not. Conversely, al-Ghazzali evaluates marriage in terms of its capacity to promote or impede a religious life, a line of thought which is alien to the author of NM2. In short, al-Ghazzali and the author of NM2 have little in common, and here as elsewhere it is clear that the latter was not a religious scholar.

Thirdly, the author of NM2 voices a wide variety of opinions which are completely at odds with those of al-Ghazzali. He does it, is true, share some views with him. Thus he has one reference to the concept of rulers as shepherds accountable to God for their rocks, and one saying stressing the temporary nature of human life (but put into the mouth of Alexander), two sayings enjoining avoidance of rulers, and a fairly lengthy section on ‘Umar I, ‘Umar II and other Muslim figures who here as elsewhere exemplify virtues such as modesty and humility, scrupulous respect for public money and insistence on personal supervision.’ But for the rest NM2 is expressive of an altogether different ethos. It fails to reflect the preoccupations of al-Ghazzali because his author has preoccupations of his own, and these preoccupations are as thoroughly Iranian as those of al-Ghazzali are Islamic.

Thus NM2 opens with the statement that ‘God on High chose two classes of men and endowed them with superiority over the rest, one of them being prophets... and the other kings... and proceeds to inform us that since kingship and divine effulgence (farv-ı ızadi) have been granted to them by God, they must be loved and obeyed by ‘everyone to whom God has given religion.’ Where al-Ghazzali refuses to flatter rulers, the author of NM2 happily elevates them to a status of parity with prophets; and where al-Ghazzali reminds them of their future punishment, the sa-

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Did al-Ghazzali write a Mirror for Princes?

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of NM2 by contrast singles them out as God’s favourites, stressing that as such they are entitled not just to obedience, but also to positive love from their subjects. The moral position of the Muslim king is here as unproblematic as that of his Sasanid predecessor; and whereas Sasanid kings are absent from both the Muhadhdhah and NM2, they are invoked twice and again in NM2.

A high appreciation of kingship goes with a high appreciation of royal service. It is thus somewhat inconsistent of the author of NM2 to cite sayings such as ‘we unto him who is afflicted with association with kings, for he will have no friends, no kinsmen, no sons, no servants and no sympathy.’ But as might be expected, he also has a view of government service as a privilege rather than a calamity, and this privilege, we are told, should be reserved for those of noble birth: ‘the king should never entrust his business to unworthy persons, but to men of noble origin.’ Indeed, as a qualification for government service, nobility is more important than poetry and unworldliness. The author thus finds himself in agreement with ibn al-Muqaffa’, who had voiced similar ideas to al-Ma’mur. He does not find himself in agreement with al-Ghazzali or other Muslim ‘ulama’.

Nobility is a concept which looms large in the author’s mind. One aspect of it, we are told, is magnanimity, a behavioural pattern found ‘in kings and high-ranking persons (mehrban).’ Where NM1 enjoins abstemiousness and non-attachment to this world, NM2 thus recommends lavish generosity and expenditure. No king thinks in terms of less than a

108 Compare the passages from the Darâsi cited by M. Meir, Histoire et cosmologie dans l’Iran ancien, Paris 1963, pp. 38, 44: the best of people are the good, sovereign and wise king and the religious leader of the age... the origins of great kingship is the grant of kingship by Omrâsân.

109 This was one of the points that worried Humâni (introduction to NM2, p. 74). Lambton also found the prominence of the Sasanid traditions surprising in a work by al-Ghazzali (‘The History of Khusây’, in J. G. Frazer, p. 55). NM2, p. 147 = 107. (In accordance with the first edition, Bagkâ has ’service of the nation’ for ‘association with kings’ and ‘respect’ for ‘servants’).

110 NM2, p. 143 = 81f.


112 Also cited by Bagkâ, Book of Counsel, pp. 1f., 6ff.

113 NM2, p. 107 = 11f.; cf. NM1, p. 197, where the high-ranking persons have been omitted.

114 This contract was also cited by Bagkâ, Book of Council, p. xi.
thousand.609 No gift should be worth less than the income from a town. Al-Ma'mún excluded his son al-'Abbās from succession on hearing him talk of 'half a dirham.'610 Kings should not extract from their good name by worrying about dirhams and drams after the fashion of merchants, just as noblemen should not jeopardize their rank and dignity for the sake of a mere estate.611 Even 'Umar, elsewhere invoked for his scrupulous attitude to public money, is here made to say that nothing is more degrading than mean-mindedness.612

110 Gunther: The author of the Ni'ma requires the king to be not only magnanimous, but also just, and as mentioned already, this is a subject on which he has something in common with al-Ghazālī. But in addition to adorning 'Umar I, 'Umar II and other Muslim rulers as embodiments of justice, he also refers a great deal to Sūsānād kings, and the concept of justice which they personify is a quite different one. Their justice was something intimately linked with prosperity. Thus it was through justice that the Magians developed the universe,111 and through justice that Asnāshī in remarks on prosperity112 ... even expected to arrange... to ascertain whether there were any ruined places in his kingdom which he needed to repair and repopulate.113 The kings before Asnāshī all showed concern for prosperity and justice: They founded villages, excavated irrigation tunnels and brought out all the hidden waters.114 It was because of their justice that the Magians endured for 4000 years, for though sovereignty will endure with unbelief, it will not endure without justice.115 "Where injustice and oppression are present, the people have no foothold; the cities and localities go to ruin, the inhabitants flee and move to other territories, the cultivated lands are abandoned, the kingdom falls into decay."

For this type of justice, we are told, the king needs orthodoxy, for

609 Ni'ma, p. 198 = 119.
610 Ibid., pp. 198ff = 120.
611 Ibid., pp. 199ff = 121.
612 Ibid., p. 200 = 121.
613 Ibid., p. 197 = 119.
614 Ibid., p. 82 = 46.
615 Ibid., p. 99 = 55.
616 Ibid., pp. 99ff = 55f.
617 Ibid., p. 99 = 55. (Following the first edition, Baguy has 'all the waters that were being brought in on the land'.)
618 Ibid., p. 82 = 46.
619 Ibid., p. 100 = 59.
Ma'ashit and the importance of digging irrigation channels; and the idea that the pious, morality and happiness of a Muslim population depends on the character of its ruler-run counter to everything that an 'ulama believes. Here, as in so many places, the author of NMA depicts himself committed to Iranian ideas which had not been absorbed into ma'ashit Islam.

Thus the author of NMA also subscribes to un-Islamic ideas in respect of fate. While al-Ghazali is concerned with the ruler's prospect of gaining salvation in the next world, the author of NMA is much more interested in the same which he will leave behind in this; the righteous ruler will gain eternal rest. The kings of pre-Islamic Iran, we are told, have all passed away, "but their names endure - for deeds such as we have enumerated. You should know for certain that men leave behind a memory in which gets said about them; if a man is virtuous, he will be remembered for his virtue; if wicked, for his wickedness. People still talk about Anishah ibn Abi Nazzah because of his justice. You can still see the remains of the buildings of his predecessors. There is a saying that the memory which rests in men (adi'ah) leave behind them is their second life in this world. Not only kings, but everyone should therefore shun vices so as not to leave behind a bad name; after you, only talk of you will last - take good care that such talk be of the best. But kings in particular should cultivate virtue so as not to be remembered for their wickedness."

The memorial left behind by the righteous ruler constitutes an example which should be studied and followed. The king must follow the precepts and methods of these kings who preceded him, and govern rightly like them. He must also read the books of good counsel. - just as Anishah... used to read the books of former kings, ask for stories about them and follow their ways." Divine effugiance, we are told, expresses itself among other things in frequent reading of the reports (of the pious ancestors), constant attention to the biographies of kings and envi-ry into the kings of old, because the present world is a continuation of the empire of the forefathers, who reigned and departed, each leaving a memorial to his name..."

This idea of living on in one's name, setting a memorial to oneself and at the same time an example to future generations by one's good behaviour, is well attested for pre-Islamic Iran. Thus Kharita, a famous brahman priest, boasts in an inscription with the modesty typical of cultures appreciating fame that 'the good goodness' of his own name has often been written in a variety of official documents; that future persons of these documents will know that he was the Kharita who held such and such high office under such and such kings, and he has established a word such that by it I have made known to heaven and hell,' and that his name should be followed: 'Whoever may see and examine this inscription, let him be pious and upright for the gods and lords, and for his own soul.' In much the same spirit Xerxes had set an example for future generations in the inscription recording his eradication of dastur cult: "Where the dasturs have previously been worshipped there did I worship Ahura Mazda in accordance with Truth and using the proper rites... 0 thou who shalt come after me. If thou wouldst be happy when alive and blessed when dead, have respect for the law which Ahura Mazda established and worship Ahura Mazda in accordance with Truth and using the proper rites." Now just as we serve and adore the gods with... so also he who comes after us... should serve and adore the gods.

122 NMA, p. 96 - 53. The first edition has hara 'ez mandan for mardan (mandan, NMA, p. 44); whereas Bayer's different translation.
123 NMA, p. 90 - 53. Compare p. 113 - 68 the kings of old state to make their realms prosperous, with the result that they good reputation (wajah-ni khooni) endurance.
125 Ibid., pp. 96 - 53.
126 Ibid., p. 112 - 63.
lose significance, and remorse then becomes useless; and he illustrates this point with a story about Marwan ibn, who knew that when time is up (when mudhak biyastis), this equipment will be useless, and when doom (qaddi) comes, that army, huge though it is, will look small. In much the same way a Zoroastrian book asks, 'Is it possible to strive against fate with wisdom and knowledge or not?' the answer being that it is not: 'Through (one be armed) with the valour and strength of wisdom and knowledge, yet it is not possible to strive against fate. For once a thing is fixed and comes true, whether for good or for the worse, the wise man goes away in his work, and the man of wrong knowledge becomes clever in his work; the coward becomes brave, and the brave man cowardly; the energetic man becomes a slugard, and the slogger energetic. For, for everything that has been fitted, a fit occasion arises which sweeps away all other things.' And the Zoroastrian literature also reassures us that remorse is useless: 'Anxiety is not to be suffered for this reason.' It is because the author thinks in such completely Persian terms that he takes wine-drinking, chess-playing, ball-games and the like for granted; finds the title of Shahnameh unobjectionable; and gives a glowing account of the Nauruz celebrations of the Sasanid kings, for all that al-Ghazali had condemned these celebrations as pagan rites deserving of extermination. There is clearly no question of explaining these and other features with reference to the possibility that al-Ghazali may not have been a wholly consistent thinker, or that the mirror genre imposed certain restraints on him; in NM2 we find ourselves in a completely different world of thought. What then can we say about the author? He was certainly an Iranian, more precisely an Iranian nationalist. Thus he takes pride in the fact that the Magian held power for 4000 years and readily explains that this was because their religious system, i.e. Zoroastrianism, did not permit injus-

115 NM2, p. 112f. = 64.
116 ibid., p. 162: 225 = 98, 117.
117 Cf. M. Cook, Early Muslim Dynaoms, Cambridge 1981, p. 100f. Zoroastrian influence, through certainly no aspect of the determinism oil the (unwittingly) treated Middle East on the eve of Islam, is not usually presented in this context.
118 NM2, p. 224f. = 156f. Compare S. Shaikd (ed. and tr.), "The Wisdom of the Sasanid Shahs", Deripuk 1 , Berlin 1979, p. 174 = 175, where it is ascribed to Anab. Anab's wording is also quoted, together with an anonymous version from Janet-Austen's Pahlavi Texts and that from NM2, in R.C. Zaehner, Zurvan, a Zoroastrian Dilemma, Oxford 1951, p. 407f. A similar statement is found in the Daghistan died (ed. by R. Ringgert, Falsafa in Persian Epics, Upadna and Wizadana 1932, p. 9) and in the commentary to the Yaldanu died (ed. by H.W. Bailey, Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth Century B.C., Oxford 1971, p. 347f. Zaehner, Zurvan, p. 402f). According to Flottes, the author of NM2 knew the saying from the Zoroastrian tradition to NM1, p. 89; cf. B. Mukawphy, al-Hima al-Falikha (Strasbourg 1950), ed. A.R. Badawi, Cairo 1952, p. 67. But it is ascribed here to Artashata, who does not figure in NM at all, and it is practically identical with the version given in the Zerdasti, whereas NM's version is closer to that of Pahlavi texts (cf. Shaikd, Deripuk 1, p. 297f.).

119 NM2, pp. 161f. = 107f.
120 Minkshi, cited by Zaehner, Zurvan, p. 407f. (also cited by Ringgert, Falsafa, p. 91).
121 Shapeshah, cited by Ringgert, Falsafa, p. 91.
122 Above, note 72.
123 Above, note 73.
124 NM2, p. 32 = 40f. Al-Mumta, introduction to NM, p. 75, and the references given there.
125 Of Sajad, Book of Counsel, p. 11.
tice or oppression. 144 It is with a view to persuading skeptics that no op- pression was committed for 400 years that he gives his long account of the kings of Iran from Kayvan tora the Muslim conquest (in which, naturally, he contradicts himself by classifying several kings as pagans). 145 Zoroastrians are warmly praised throughout; 146 and as for the Iranian kings, their virtues were such that God Himself instructed David not to let his people speak ill of the 'qaim.' 147

He does not betray any knowledge of Mirdas Persian, and none of his material seems to come directly from Zoroastrian books, though Zoro- strian literature was, certainly the ultimate source of most of what he had to say. 148 But he writes in the same remorselessly antibellicose style as the authors of these books (the best is ... the worst in) 149 and has the same

144 NMS, p. 82 - 46. The author's Shalti tendencies were noted by Humâni (introduction to NMS, p. 1).

145 NMS, p. 82 - 46. That this account is unpalatable of Gâjudâd was noted by Humâni (introduction to NMS, p. 74).

146 See the discussion between the Maghât and YâsÎ-islâmî, see above, note 77. A chief accused told Dâ'mûn that the kings of Persia had three virtues which he lacked; it was for this reason that al-Ma'ârîq opened A#:âdârâ's tomb (NMS, p. 137 - 81) and some of these, as noted by Humâni, pp. 740; and the chief accused is an exponent of justice in the account of the pro-Islamic narative celebrations (NMS, pp. 1678 - 1702).

147 NMS, p. 82 - 46.

148 The direct sources are discussed by Humâni, introduction to NMS, p. 859; Bagley, Aspects of Cordwiani, p. 7. Of the Saracen origin of the divinity of this world's activity into twenty-five loaves: see above, note 137; and of the following note on A#:âdârâ's international syncretism. Similarly, when Musârâzî says A#:âdârâ that 'musing which has been developed in excess than developing that which has been raised, broken, cut, and read' (NMS, p. 225 - 133), it is echoes the Donaâlî's descent of a version of the ancient Persian word for musing, and easier to repair than to build (from the term of (E.W. West [ed.]). The Dâdâlaî or Dâdâl in Edible Text, part ii (Sacred Books of the East, vol viii), Oxford 1886, p. 95. The story of the Saracen woman is repeated also in Humâni's account: As Mâdâ marqâmdah saw a pretty woman pass by and charged her; the 'editor whom the child would be told not to cut, and one on receiving an affterment: reply, well, but not to damage': 'Ah! what are you going to do about it' (NMS, p. 275 - 175) Compare J.M. Uskâl (ed., tr.).) Der Pechel der Test, "Der Khâr Hûtarun und sein Krâle", Vienna 1917, p. 112 it: a public demand an independent woman: if she asked him whether he would let her have all the good deeds in return for her son (the good deed of the nobleman equaling the deeds of 'wild devils'). Like the 'Alid, he was asked, and thought better of it.

149 'The best king is he who ... the worst king is he who ...' (NMS, p. 159 - 92): 'But things you must always keep with you: ... four things you must never have - fire, water, ... (NMS, p. 139 - 83): 'What are the bitterest things in the world and what are the sweetest?' (NMS, p. 139 - 83): 'What are the bitterest things in the world and what are the sweetest?' (NMS, p. 139 - 83).

150 Of course, the author's knowledge of the minds of the people is based on a few sources, but what can he do? He has the best and the worst. He has the best and the worst. (NMS, p. 169 - 133). Compare: 'the best of men are the gods, the good, the wise, and the best.' and the worst: 'the gods of the men, the theological sacrifices; to others leading a better existence are ... those who held to a word enasive ...'; 'the foundation of good kingship are ... the foundation of evil sovereignty are ...'; 'the source of the good religion is the following proclamations ... the foundation of the evil religion is ...' (Malâf, Câhîr, j. 38E, 46, 54, 54, citing the Dâdäweh). He is very diligent with regard to these things, but with keenly from these three things:' (Dâdâweh, Dâdâle, p. 88, 19, 89, 19, 89, 19, 89, 19, 89, 19, 89, 19). The other three relations which are best in the world with the kings of Persia, Zoroastrians and India. (See the Khârâ, according to the first edition), and P.J. Amano, "Some Barmênskârta View on Christianity" in dâdâweh review international sur le persian of medias, "Società Nazionale de Lincei", Rome 1971, p 275c, where a Byzantine and Indian story similarly discusses with Anothe which is best, which is worst.

151 NMS, pp. 2521, 226, 2529 = 134, 134, 139, Most of the apocryphal cited in ch. 3 are of the god or the architectural kind. Compare "people are four kinds ... the four types: these two things are most salient (in each other)." These four faults are present in the history of peoples. There are four kinds of heroes; the material world is governed by these, of these things are found in men." (Shâbîy, Dâdâweh, p. 75); galûs is easier than maddirî (NMS, p. 225 - 133); 'I wish he would receive the simple wisdom ... to receive ... to build (from the term of (E.W. West [ed.]). The Dâdâlaî or Dâdâl in Edible Text, part ii (Sacred Books of the East, vol viii), Oxford 1886, p. 95. The story of the Saracen woman is repeated also in Humâni's account: As Mâdâ marqâmdah saw a pretty woman pass by and charged her; the 'editor whom the child would be told not to cut, and one on receiving an affterment: reply, well, but not to damage': 'Ah! what are you going to do about it' (NMS, p. 275 - 175) Compare J.M. Uskâl (ed., tr.).) Der Pechel der Test, "Der Khâr Hûtarun und sein Krâle", Vienna 1917, p. 112 it: a public demand an independent woman: if she asked him whether he would let her have all the good deeds in return for her son (the good deed of the nobleman equaling the deeds of 'wild devils'). Like the 'Alid, he was asked, and thought better of it.

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used for the writing of a particular language, the way in which they should be cut, and so forth, and it is in addressing secretaries that he lapses into the use of 'you', otherwise reserved for kings and the general reader. He must have flourished after Nizam al-Mulk (d. 1092), possibly in the time of the latter's sons, inasmuch as he mentions the vizierate of Nizam al-Mulk's family in glowing terms, and he must have written before 1199, the latest date for the Arabic translation. He would thus seem to have been a younger contemporary of al-Ghazzali, and in linguistic terms there is little to tell the two apart. His work must have come to be attributed to al-Ghazzali within a short period of the latter's death, as is true of other pseudo-Ghazalian literature, but there is nothing to suggest that he himself was a forger. Admittedly, NM2 lacks a formal incipit, which could be taken to mean that it was written with NM1 in mind; but it also lacks a formal explicit, and the author makes no attempt to impersonate al-Ghazzali by writing in his style, quoting him or referring to his works. Whoever put the two works together presumably felt that

134 NM2, p. 192 = 113.
135 Above, note 52.
136 NM, pp. 116f. of Husaini, introduction to NM, p. 122f. NM only mentions the vizierate of Nizam al-Mulk (p. 100 = 111); but inasmuch as the Arabic translation sets the Sufis back to the level of the visiers of old and that everybody benefited from their bounty, the family (as) was presumably in the original (cf. 106f. p. 89; Bagley, Book of Consolation, p. 111f.).
137 CT, above, note 10.
138 CT, Husaini, introduction to NM, p. 72, 145f. Most of the arguments are from NM, but then it is the longer work. The Arabic language of NM as a whole has been somewhat exaggerated by Bagley. Thus he claims that it is the phonetic of the expressions 'ba‘dajal and as babol (Bagley of Consolation, p. 15f.), but neither NM nor NM does anything of the kind (cf. NM, pp. 37f. = 38f. = 467f., 471f., 479f.; NM, p. 117 (ba‘dajal); NM, pp. 26f., 475f., 504f. 121f. = 248f., 263f., 272f.) and frequently填报 (as babol), much preferred to 'babsajal' in NM, Husaini merely claimed that it used the 'ba‘dajal after babol', adding one example which, as he later admitted, was a false one (Husaini, introduction to NM, p. 76, with reference to NM, p. 71; id., introduction to NM, p. 148; with reference to NM, p. 136; Meier also misunderstood him, cf. note of NM, p. 396). It is likewise an exaggeration to say that NM frequently places cardinal numbers after their nouns (Bagley, Book of Consolation, p. 126); NM never does. NM only once in the old edition (NM, p. 111; not in NM, p. 137; not in NM), but given the proclivity of cardinal numbers in NM, this is a false impression.

139 Lucas-Yafé, Studies, p. 256 (already Ibn Tufayl, d. 1185), was familiar with some of it.

And God championed that servant that Turanji (d. 1128 or 1131) wrote his Man al-mar'ah with the idea of evoking al-Ghazzali most clearly be dropped (cf. Arnebrant, p. 100).


The creed for a prince needed a practical complement: from the point of view of salamanship he was certainly right. But whoever put the two together must certainly also have contributed his fair share to al-Ghazzali's torments in the grave: the imam cannot have taken well to his posthumous fame as the author of two uncontroversial books. NM2 is in fact yet another testimony to the survival of post-Islamic values in Seljuk Iran. It is also a good illustration of Gibb's dictum that the Sasanid tradition constituted a kernel of derangement in Islam, being 'never wholly assimilated yet never wholly rejected'. For Sasanian and Islamic notions are presented side by side in this book with only the superficial attempts at the hopeless task of harmonisation. But from the point of NM2 itself Gibb's dictum should be reversed: it is the Sasanian tradition which is coherent here and Islam which causes the derangement, having failed to be assimilated, let alone rejected.