

An Analysis of the Function of Bourdieu's Habitus in the Reign of Kay Kavus in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*

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Article Info (۲۱۰-۱۸۵)	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article	In addition to being a literary source, Shahnameh also presents human temperament from various angles and gives advice in the most subtle way. Moral anomalies in individual behavior bring social damage and take the society out of the state of security and tranquility. The purpose of this article is to present actions that are not consistent with the ideal good and that challenge the individual and the society. Since K-Kavus's ideas are not integrated and do not correspond much with reality, it cannot act as a strategy. This research tries to show the habits of Kavos' personality and find out which habits had a great impact on his governance process? According to the findings, the negative habit of grudge has a very high frequency in Kavos Kingdom. In fact, it is considered the main factor in creating actions, and this is despite the fact that trickery has had the lowest effect; But by highlighting Siavash's story in Mehr's positive habits, it gets the most exposure, and the accusation that appears based on the sense of hostility and competition in Kavos has the lowest frequency. On the other hand, there is little prayer. Every mirror of Ferdowsi explains to Yazdan that the secret of moral balance is the improvement of piety and belief.
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Introduction

In the ethical and cultural framework of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, morality serves as the cornerstone of individual and social stability. The epic not only functions as a literary masterpiece but also critically reflects human dispositions, moral deviations, and their broader sociopolitical ramifications. When ethical irregularities manifest in rulers and social agents, they disrupt social cohesion and drive the polity toward instability and perpetual conflict. In the *Shahnameh*, King Kay Kavus possesses the Divine Grace (*Farr-e Izadi*), yet his governance is characterized by imprudence, emotional volatility, and fragmented thinking detached from reality.

To systematically examine these behavioral patterns, this study utilizes the sociological framework of the prominent French post-structuralist sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, specifically his foundational concept of *habitus* (the durable, transposable dispositions and internal structures that shape human action within social fields). The study aims to identify the dominant habitus governing the character of Kay Kavus and other key agents during his reign, assessing how these dispositions drive political actions and state crises.

Method

This research applies a descriptive-analytical methodology combined with a causal approach and textual content analysis. The study systematically extracts and categorizes the behavioral and moral dispositions of key agents (including Kay Kavus, Rostam, Siyavash, Afrasiyab, Garsivaz, and Sudabeh) across the episodes of Kay Kavus's reign in the *Shahnameh*. The theoretical foundation is constructed upon Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of action, focusing on *habitus*, *fields of power*, and *symbolic violence*. Dispositions are divided into two main categories:

١. **Negative Habitus (Inhibitory/Destructive):** Greed (*Az*), Envy (*Rashk*), Wrath (*Khashm*), Malice/Spite (*Kineh*), Deceit (*Neyrang*), and Accusation (*Etteham*).
٢. **Positive Habitus (Affirmative/Virtuous):** Truthfulness (*Rasti*), Justice (*Dad*), Love/Affection (*Mehr*), Forgiveness/Clemency (*Bakhshesh*), and Supplication/Prayer (*Niayesh*).

The frequency and structural impact of these habitus categories are examined in relation to political decision-making, interpersonal conflicts, and dynastic decline.

Results

The findings reveal that the behavioral patterns during Kay Kavus's reign are largely driven by a sharp polarization between negative and positive habitus:

١. Predominance of Negative Habitus:

- **Malice and Vengeance (*Kineh*):** Demonstrates the highest frequency among negative dispositions. It operates as the principal catalyst for state actions, protracted wars between Iran and Turan, and the tragic cycle of retribution (exemplified in the refusal of the panacea/healing potion [*Nooshdaru*] to Sohrab and the subsequent avenging of Siyavash).
- **Wrath (*Khashm*) and Symbolic Violence:** Serves as an unreflective habitus through which rulers (both Kavus and Afrasiyab) impose symbolic dominance over subjects, heroes, and political counterparts.
- **Envy (*Rashk*) and Deceit (*Neyrang*):** Prominently illustrated in Garsivaz's jealousy of Siyavash's glory, which triggers a chain of slander, conspiracy, and fatal conflict. While deceit is structurally pervasive, it exhibits a comparatively lower direct frequency compared to malice.
- **Greed (*Az*) and Accusation (*Etteham*):** Kavus's hubristic ambition to conquer Mazandaran and ascend to the heavens reflects excessive greed, while his unfounded accusation against Rostam stems from deep-seated hostility and rivalry.

٢. Dynamics of Positive Habitus:

- **Love and Affection (*Mehr*):** Achieves the highest frequency among positive habitus, particularly concentrated in the narrative of Siyavash. However, it often operates in a conflicting, cyclical relationship with wrath

and deceit (e.g., Sudabeh's destructive, pseudo-affectionate passion versus genuine paternal and fraternal devotion).

- **Truthfulness (*Rasti*) and Justice (*Dad*):** Embodied by Siyavash, whose commitment to righteousness enables him to pass the trial of fire (*Var-e Garm*) unscathed and establishes a stark contrast to Kavus's erratic governance.
- **Supplication (*Niayesh*):** Shows a noticeably low frequency, emerging primarily as a situational resort in moments of extreme crisis rather than an enduring spiritual habitus of the monarch.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the governance of Kay Kavus exemplifies a sociopolitical crisis born from unstable, contradictory habitus. The lack of intellectual coherence and the dominance of negative dispositions—chiefly malice, wrath, and unchecked greed—consistently undermine the legitimate exercise of power and nullify the stabilizing effects of symbolic capital. Ferdowsi illustrates that when a ruler's habitus deviates from the ideal virtues of wisdom, justice (*Dad*), and genuine piety (*Niayesh*), political authority degenerates into tyranny and social disaster. By bridging Bourdieu's sociological concepts with Ferdowsi's epic narrative, the study demonstrates that moral balance and political resilience require the institutionalization of positive habitus grounded in truthfulness, justice, and devotion to God.