Khwadāynāmag
The Middle Persian Book of Kings

Studies in
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The Middle Persian
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By

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Preface

Among books that all know and none has seen, the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* presents a towering figure. Not only has this "official history of the Sasanids" been lost so that not one sentence in Middle Persian can safely be attributed to it, but its Arabic translation(s) have also vanished into air almost as thin.

Yet every scholar in the field seems to know the book. For some, Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* virtually equals the *Khwadāynāmag*, to others some existing Arabic work, or a combination of quotations from existing sources, can with little hesitation be used as indicative of the contents of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Most do not even stop to ask themselves what relation a certain text may actually have to the *Khwadāynāmag*, but speak summarily of "the *Khwadāynāmag* tradition" with, or usually without, defining the term.

The lack of critical discussion about the *Khwadāynāmag* is surprising, granted its importance for Late Antique and Early Islamic historiography. Not only is it important as part of the rather scanty non-religious Pahlavi literature, it is also crucial for the reconstruction of the historical events of the Sasanid period and for understanding the genesis of Arabic historical writing and the relation of Firdawsī to his sources. All are major questions in their various fields.

Let us take but two examples, one on the Arabic and the other on the Persian side. The question of the genesis of the Arabic historiographical tradition is almost without exception addressed from an Islamic viewpoint, through *ḥadīths* and *akhbār*, and it has become commonplace to claim that historical books started being written by Ibn Isḥāq and his generation on the basis of information preserved orally or in brief notes concerning the Prophet Muḥammad and the birth of Islam. Such comments ignore the fact that the *Khwadāynāmag* was translated into Arabic as a complete book some decades before the death of Ibn Isḥāq. As the text was well known to early historians who wrote in Arabic, it cannot be separated from the main tradition of Arabic historiography or implied to have been influential only within the sphere of the translation movement, but not among historians themselves. For the Persian parts of their works, Ibn Qutayba, al-Dīnawarī, and al-Ṭabarī are to a large extent ultimately dependent on Middle Persian material, and they must unavoidably have been influenced by Middle Persian ways of writing history.

On the Persian side, the question of Firdawsī's sources may be taken as an example of the range of *Khwadāynāmag* studies. In her book *The Oral Background of Persian Epics* (2003), Kumiko Yamamoto opines (p. xix) that the study of the sources of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* has come to a dead end and other

viewpoints are needed. While most certainly right when it comes to a need for fresh viewpoints, Yamamoto does not quite do justice to source studies. It is true that there have been tedious repetitions in the field of Firdawsī's source studies, but this is not due to the question itself, but to the restricted use of source material for such studies. A fuller analysis of the *Khwadāynāmag* and the Arabic and Persian literature dependent on it helps to settle this key text to its rightful place, after which we will be able to approach Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* from a fresh viewpoint.

This book, however, is neither about Arabic historiography nor Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. Its focus is on the lost Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* and its translations and reverberations in later literature. However, while trying to clear the ground by showing what there was between the eighth to tenth centuries and what the relations of individual texts were I also hope to be able to offer some freshness to both these fields.

I discuss the *Khwadāynāmag* from various viewpoints. Chapter 1 clarifies the terminology and introduces the pre-Islamic sources that are relevant for the study of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Some of the Pahlavi texts analysed in this chapter are from the Islamic period but they tap older sources. Chapter 2 describes the translation culture in the centuries when the *Khwadāynāmag* was translated into Arabic and gives an overview of what was, in general, translated from Middle Persian into Arabic.

Chapter 3 moves on to the Arabic translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*, and Chapter 4 discusses the various narratives of Persian national history (Books of Kings, *Shāhnāmes*) in Persian until Firdawsī and even slightly later. Chapter 5 consists of two case studies, where the potential content of the *Khwadāynāmag* is studied through an analysis of the works that, in one way or another, have a relation to the *Khwadāynāmag*.

Chapter 6 comes back to the questions laid out in the first chapter and sums up the discussion in this book, which is concluded by Chapter 7, where the most important passages from Arabic and Persian sources are translated for the benefit of a reader who does not readily have at hand the various editions from which they have been culled or has not enough fluency in either Arabic or Persian.

Technical Notes

This book uses materials in mainly three languages, Pahlavi, Arabic, and Classical Persian, most of them coming from a range of 700 years (500–1200 AD). In transliterating Pahlavi, I have used the system of David MacKenzie (1971):

x–xv, which seems to have become the standard in Middle Persian studies, except for using kh instead of x and sh instead of š.

The case of Arabic and Persian is slightly more complicated. As many terms, personal names, and book titles are used in both Arabic and Persian sources, it would be confusing to use transliterations separately for the two languages. The majority of the material comes from Arabic sources, and I have adopted the standard transliteration of Arabic for both languages (*EI-Three* with some slight modifications), thus writing Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī, irrespective of whether I am quoting an Arabic or a Persian source. Likewise, I use three short vowels, a, i, u, and three long ones, ā, ī, ū, thus ignoring the *majhūl* vowels ē and ō, while well aware of the fact that when the majority of the Persian texts used for this study were written, they were still pronounced separately from ī and ū. Likewise, postvocalic D is written in Persian texts usually as D, even though it was pronounced as dh. For consistency's sake, I use D for Dh even in the rare cases where the editor of a text has opted for a Dh, thus writing *būd* instead of the more correct *būdh*. In order to distinguish between Z+H and Zh (as well as T, D, K, G, S + H), I write the former combination with an apostrophe (z'h), e.g., *Nuz'hatnāme*.

However, I have made some exceptions, mainly to comply with the prevailing usages in the field. Thus, the *ezafet* is transliterated as *-e* (or *-ye*), the final vowel written in the Persian script with -H as *-e*, and the conjunction as *o-*. Likewise, I write *mōbad* and *hērbad* (even in transliterated Arabic passages), instead of *mūbad* and *hīrbad*, as they are used as technical terms in scholarly literature. Persian verses are transliterated grammatically, i.e., without taking into account the changes in vowel lengths and other metrical exigencies.

The names of characters playing a role in Persian national history have usually been given in the form in which they appear in each source. Thus, Isfandiyār and Isfandiyād refer to the same person, as do Wishtāsp, Bishtāsf, Gushtāsp, Gushtāsb, and Gushtāsf. Usually, the variants should be understandable in the context, and when not they have been explained. The reason for keeping the name forms as they are attested in the texts is that they may be helpful in understanding the relations of the texts and detecting an author's sources.

The term Classical Persian is used when there is a possibility of confusion between Middle and Classical Persian. The term Archaic Persian is not normally used. The term Pahlavi specifically refers to the so-called Book Pahlavi of Zoroastrian literature, whereas Middle Persian is a larger term, covering also other forms of contemporary language. Both are used in this book.

When referring to the Islamic period, I usually give both Hijri and AD dates, in that order. Thus, e.g., 350/961 refers to the year 350 AH = 961 AD.

In the case of certain important books which are available in two critical editions and/or a commonly used translation, I give references to both editions (and the translation) to help the reader find the passage in his copy. The editions are separated by a slash, and the translation is separated by a double slash. The following works are referenced in this way:

> Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*: ed. Tajaddud/ed. Flügel//trans. Dodge (1970).
> al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*: ed. Adhkāʾī/ed. Sachau//trans. Sachau (1923).
> al-Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*: ed. de Goeje//trans. Carra de Vaux (1896).
> *Mujmal al-tawārīkh*: ed. Najmabadi–Weber/ed. Bahār.
> al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*: ed. de Goeje et al.//trans. Rosenthal et al. (1987–2007).

Thus, quoting, e.g., the *Fihrist*, I will primarily use the Tajaddud edition, in more important cases also supplying references to Flügel's edition and Dodge's translation. Thus, e.g., *Fihrist*, p. 305/245//589 refers to ed. Tajaddud, p. 305, ed. Flügel, p. 245, and trans. Dodge (1970): 589. (The edition of Fuʾād Sayyid seriously suffers from unindicated emendations and will not be used in this study, except on rare occasions. Dodge's translation is often faulty. Both should be used with care.)

If not otherwise indicated, all translations are mine, even in the cases where I give a reference to the standard translation.

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I am grateful to the publishers for permission to reuse materials that have previously been published in the following articles:

> "al-Maqdisī and His Sources," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 207 (2012): 151–163; "al-Kisrawī and the Arabic translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*," *Studia Orientalia* 114 (2013): 65–92; "Armāyīl and Garmāyīl: the Formation of an Episode in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*," *WZKM* 104 (2014): 87–103; "Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and the Middle Persian Book of Kings," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta* 254 (2017): 171–184; "Rustam in Arabic Literature and the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag*," *WZKM* 107 (2017).

I am also grateful to Dr Ilkka Lindstedt (Helsinki), who kindly read through a draft of this book and gave many valuable suggestions that I have been able to make use of in the final version.

> *Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila*
> Edinburgh, 1 February 2018

The *Khwadāynāmag* and Its Context

1.1 Preliminary Issues

This book revolves around two questions: What was the *Khwadāynāmag* and how did it influence Arabic and Classical Persian historiography and epic literature? Before delving any deeper into these questions, a few preliminary issues have to be discussed.[1]

1.1.1 *The Title* Khwadāynāmag

The title *Khwadāynāmag* is used in scholarly literature for a lost Middle Persian historical work that was translated, among others, by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ into Arabic. Strictly speaking, the title is a reconstruction, which is not found as such anywhere in Middle Persian literature. It is based on the title *Khudāynāme* used in a few Arabic sources, often in forms corrupted by later scribes.

Our earliest source for the Arabic title is al-Masʿūdī's *Tanbīh*, p. 106//150 (*Khudāynāmāh*). Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī mentions the same book in his *Taʾrīkh*, p. 16: "Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī has said in his book: I looked into the book called the *Khudāynāme*, which is the book that, when translated from Persian into Arabic, is called *Taʾrīkh mulūk al-Furs*." The same author also uses the title on pp. 22 and 50.

Likewise, Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 132/118//260, speaks about a *Kitāb Khudāynāme fī l-siyar* and in another passage, *Fihrist*, p. 305/245//589, mentions an Isḥāq ibn Yazīd, saying that "among what he translated was *Sīrat al-Furs* known as the **Khudāynāme*". Here the title has been variously distorted (ed. Tajaddud: *ḤDʾD-nāme*; ed. Flügel: *Ikhtiyār-nāme*;[2] trans. Dodge follows Flügel), but the emendation is beyond doubt.[3]

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1   For earlier studies on the *Khwadāynāmag* and its transmission history, see, e.g., Rypka (1959): 152–164, Boyce (1968b): 57–60, Yarshater (1983): 359–480, Shahbazi (1991); Ṣafā (1374): 78–91, Cereti (2001): 191, 200, Rubin (2005), (2008a), and (2008b), Khāliqī-Muṭlaq (2007–08), Macuch (2009): 173–181, Jackson Bonner (2011) and (2015), and Daniel (2012). For Firdawsī, see also de Blois (1992–97): 112–159.

2   Ed. Fuʾād Sayyid II: 151, reads *Bakhtiyārnāme*. Such a book does exist, but here the emendation is manifestly wrong. There are actually two separate *Bakhtiyārnāmes*. The one relevant here is the epic narrative on Bakhtiyār (see van Zutphen 2014: 80), a late member of the Sistanian heroic family. The other is a totally unrelated popular narrative, see Hanaway (1998).

3   Later attestations, Zakeri (2007a) I: 133, n. 88.

These passages leave little doubt as to the Middle Persian title, and we find further support for this in early Classical Persian sources. Several versions of Persian national history in Classical Persian are titled *Shāhnāmes*. In the Islamic period, the word *khudāy* in the sense "lord; king" fell into disuse, with a few exceptions.[4] Bearing this in mind, *Shāhnāme* seems an exact translation of the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag*. This, however, does not mean that any of the *Shāhnāmes* from the tenth century or later were a translation of this book as such (Chapters 3.1 and 3.2).

All in all, it seems safe to use the Middle Persian title *Khwadāynāmag*. Whether the work also had a more elaborate title remains an open question.

1.1.2   *What was the* Khwadāynāmag?

The *Khwadāynāmag*, a central part of Persian national history, seems originally to have been put down in writing in Middle Persian during the Sasanian period towards the end of the sixth century (Chapter 6.2).

Theodor Nöldeke's (1879a: xiii–xxviii) brief comments on the *Khwadāynāmag* in the preface of his partial translation of al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* have been hugely influential in later literature, and a short exposition of his views offers us a good starting point.

Nöldeke (1879a): xiv–xv, drew attention to the similarity of the material in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* and the Arab historians and deduced that as Firdawsī did not, as it seemed to him, use Arabic sources, the similarity must derive from the use of a common source. This he took to be the old book, mentioned in the *Bāysunqurī Preface*.[5] The latter is nowadays considered to be a late and unreliable source. Further, Nöldeke identified this with the *Khwadāynāmag* ("Dies Buch, das mit dem Chodhânâme zu identificieren wohl nicht zu kühn sein dürfte …"). As we shall later see, Nöldeke was, in fact, somewhat audacious in making this identification. Despite this, Nöldeke's view has dominated to this day.

Nöldeke also compared various Arabic sources for pre-Islamic Persian history with each other and saw two basic story lines, one of which (represented by Ibn Qutayba, Eutychius, MS-Sprenger, and parts of al-Ṭabarī) he took to represent a direct line from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynamag*,

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4   Mainly petrified compounds such as *nākhudāy* "captain", *kadkhudāy* "master of a family", *khudākush* "regicide", Bukhārā-*khudāh*, Gūzgānān-*khudāh* (for the last two and a general discussion of the word, see Ṣafā 1374: 83–84). See also Shahbazi (1990): 208–209, and Shayegan (1998).

5   See Dabīr-Siyāqī (1383): 158–161 (= *Shāhnāme*, ed. Macan I: 11–13), discussed in Chapter 6.2, note 28.

thus making it possible, in broad lines, to reconstruct the content of this lost book.

Nöldeke assumed that the *Khwadāynamag* was originally composed during the reign of Khusraw Anōshagruwān (r. 531–579). This may be supported by the evidence provided by Agathias (d. 582) if we identify the *Khwadāynāmag* with Agathias' *Royal annals* (Chapter 1.3.1). This is a reasonable assumption, as the literary culture flourished under this King's long rule, but it should be emphasised that there is no direct evidence for this, and later sources were conscious of the general literary activity of Khusraw Anūshirwān and were prone to attribute any important work to his reign. The date will be discussed in Chapter 6.2.

Nöldeke also thought that the work had later been revised, and he derived the various different narratives concerning pre-Islamic Iran from this one source through its different (hypothetical) recensions. The sources themselves, referred to by Nöldeke, however, do not claim that their information derives from the *Khwadāynāmag*. As we shall see later (Chapters 1.2 and 2.2.1), there is absolutely no reason to assume that all the information on pre-Islamic Persia that came to the Arabs derived from just one source.

Although Nöldeke's theories were highly hypothetical,[6] they have become generally accepted and have provided the guidelines for later research, even though some scholars have recently, in one way or another, broken free from the sphere delineated by Nöldeke's theory. As will be shown in this book, there is ample reason to update our understanding of what the *Khwadāynamag* was.

The *Khwadāynāmag* has later disppeared, but both Mediaeval sources and modern studies are unanimous in accepting that it contained materials on Persian national history in one way or another. This book aims at giving a more detailed account of its contents, and the results will be summarized in Chapter 6.2.

In the eighth century, the *Khwadāynamag* was translated into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (Chapters 3.1 and 3.4), and other scholars either made new translations or new versions of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation (Chapters 3.2 and 3.3). In addition, a lot of historical material on Persian national history found its way into Arabic and Classical Persian texts through independent routes during the centuries after the Arab conquest of Iran, whether in oral or written form. Later, these materials kept circulating in Arabic and Persian historiographical literature, while no new translations of any Middle Persian historical texts seem to have been made in the second millennium.

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6 As Jackson Bonner (2015): 48, notes, neither Ibn Qutayba in his *Maʿārif* nor al-Ṭabarī in his *Taʾrīkh* even mentions Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ by name. (To be exact, al-Ṭabari does actually mention him, but only once, II: 1979//XXVII: 88, and not in relation to Persian matters.).

Other Middle Persian translations of historical texts into Arabic are well documented (Chapter 2.2.1), even though most texts have undergone the same fate as the translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* and have been lost. We have no clear evidence that the *Khwadāynāmag* would have been directly translated from Middle Persian into Classical Persian. While the *Khwadāynāmag* was probably never translated as such into Classical Persian, it is possible – and here I am mainly thinking of the *Prose Shāhnāme* (Chapter 4.2) – that the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* may have been used as a source for compiling longer versions of Persian national history.

There were other direct translations from Middle Persian into Classical Persian, but we tend to know very little about these. Often, as in the case of the *Prose Shāhnāme*, it has been taken for granted that if a text was translated into Classical Persian by a person carrying a Zoroastrian name, the original must have been in Middle Persian. In many cases this may well have been so, but we should not hasten to claim this without a proper study of the sources. The question will be studied in more detail in Chapter 4.2.

Learned Muslim Persian scholars from the tenth century and later were bilingual (Persian/Arabic) and accustomed to using Arabic sources, and there is no reason why these should not have been used by them. Thus, e.g., Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* was an adequate source for Persian national history and while it was available in an easy language daily used by these scholars, there was no need to run back to a text in a complicated, outmoded script and language.

Beginning with the tenth century, much material on Persian national history was translated from Arabic "back" into Classical Persian, but there is no indication that the Arabic translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ or others would have been translated into Classical Persian.

Beside this literary transmission from one language into another, and sometimes back, there runs a binary oral tradition. First of all, it is beyond doubt that the Persians, as a nation, did not suffer from amnesia after the Arab conquest: they carried on remembrances of times past and would have been able to draw on their memory either when composing works of their own or acting as informants for others. Indeed, one should not suppose that the history of the last centuries always needed to come either from a written or a fixed oral source. For some of these oral informants, see Chapter 3.2.11.

In addition, there was an oral tradition of fixed texts.[7] We know that there was an Iranian oral tradition of historical stories from at least the Parthians

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7   The Oral Formulaic Theory has been much favoured in Arabic and Persian literary studies especially in the United States. There is no need to get involved in the discussion here: with

onward (see Chapters 1.4 and 4.5) and when we come to the Islamic period, we see a series of texts first translated into Arabic (Chapters 2.2.1 and 4.7) and later compiled in Classical Persian which either derive their material from such oral compositions, epics (sung, recited, or narrated) in the case of national history, or are translations of texts that existed at the time, but have later completely disappeared. At least in some cases, the former possibility seems more probable, as we have little indication that some such texts ever existed in any written form of Middle Persian.[8]

However, both the *Khwadāynāmag* itself and its immediate descendants are irrevocably lost. The list of lost works is long: the original Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* from the sixth century; all Persian translations and versions, if there ever were such, before Firdawsī (d. 411/1019–20); Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation from the mid-eighth century; and all other Arabic translations and versions from the first millennium. It is only at the beginning of the second millennium that, fragments aside, we start having extant works to study, beginning with Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* on the Persian and al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* (written around 412/1022) on the Arabic side (Chapters 4.4 and 4.5).

The aim of this book is to delineate the transmission of the *Khwadāynāmag* and its translations and re-writings and, ultimately, to assess the contents of both the original *Khwadāynāmag* and its later main versions.

1.1.3 *The* Khwadāynāmag *and Persian National History: Clarification of Terminology*

Previous scholarship has often been seriously hampered not only by the fact that the most pertinent sources have been lost, but also by a certain confusion between two things, namely the *Khwadāynāmag* and Persian national history in general. The two are not interchangeable terms, and there is a lot of material in later Arabic and Persian literature concerning Persian national history that does not derive from the *Khwadāynāmag*.

In addition to the *Khwadāynāmag*, we know of many Middle Persian sources that contained material relevant for national history, and some of these are still extant (Chapter 1.2), while others are known to have been translated into Arabic (Chapter 2.2.1). All these sources are of interest in studying the *Khwadāynāmag*, but they should not be confused with the *Khwadāynāmag*

"fixed", I only mean a composition which has some kind of fixed form, instead of being freely transmitted oral lore.

8   Note that the mentions of Arabic stories about pre-Islamic Persian heroes need not always refer to translations but may well have been first composed in Arabic. When they were translations, the source may in some cases have been oral.

itself. What is undeniable is the fact that the Arabs had various sources of information on pre-Islamic Iran.

Another frequent mistake is to confuse the *Khwadāynāmag* with the oral repertoire of storytellers when in fact the two have nothing to do with each other. It is possible that, e.g., Firdawsī used oral lays as additional material for his epic (Chapter 4.5), and it may even be that the *Prose Shāhnāme* (Chapter 4.2) had already done so. There is, however, no reason to suggest that any of this material would derive from, or have been taken into, the *Khwadāynāmag*, and the study of the remaining fragments of the early Arabic translations of the book does not support such an idea.

A third mistake is to measure the *Khwadāynāmag* against Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* is a great book and it is obviously part of the Persian tradition of national history. But it is a late source – some 400 years later than the *Khwadāynāmag* – and cannot be used to suggest what the *Khwadāynāmag* may have contained. If, as it seems, the *Prose Shāhnāme* was Firdawsī's main source, then we have to admit that Firdawsī's epic is based on a source that is a compilation from several different sources (Chapter 4.2), of which the *Khwadāynāmag* was, at most, one among many.

Was there a single *Khwadāynāmag*, or did the book exist in variant versions? Hasty conclusions have been drawn from the Arabic material, but, again, we should study the question before answering it. It seems that the main pieces of evidence for this come from misunderstood passages in Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī's *Taʾrīkh* (Chapter 6.1.), who is speaking of a large number of *Arabic* translations of the book and a number of *manuscripts* of the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag*. The passages cannot be read as referring to widely differing Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* recensions.

The confusion between the *Khwadāynāmag*, as a book authored in Sasanian times, and the various traditions about Persian national history may be seen in several recent and influential works.

An example may be taken from Cameron (1969–70): 107–108. Cameron mentions a variant version of Ardashīr's origins and writes: "The Khwadhāynāmagh version, on the other hand, traced his descent to the Avestan saga-kings and the Achaemenid dynasty (cf. Ṭabarī, Nöldeke, 2, 3)". Checking the reference, one merely finds Nöldeke's German translation of al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* I: 813//V: 3 (Nöldeke 1879a: 2): "Nach einer andern Angabe ist aber sein Stammbaum …". No mention is made of the *Khwadāynāmag*, nor any speculation by Nöldeke in the footnotes as to the identity of this other source. There is absolutely nothing to imply that this piece of information would come from the *Khwadāynāmag*. The train of thought seems to have been that as this piece belongs to Persian

national history, it belongs to the *Khwadāynāmag* tradition and, thus, to the *Khwadāynāmag*.

Even Jackson Bonner in his otherwise well-written monograph (2011) adds to this confusion. He uses the term "*Khudāy-Nāma* tradition" "to refer to all Arabic and Persian texts dealing with Sasanian history in roughly the same way" (Jackson Bonner 2011: 20), as if these similarities all derived from the *Khwadāynāmag* and no other Middle Persian sources had been translated.[9] A good example of this confusion comes on p. 36: "Wherever Firdawsī accords with the rest of the *Khudāy-Nama* tradition, we can be fairly certain that an official Sasanian source is responsible for the agreement." In fact, we cannot be so certain. We can only be fairly sure that there is an earlier source, whether in Middle Persian or Arabic, whether official or not, that these later sources share. Nothing less and nothing more. Often we know that this source was *not* the *Khwadāynāmag* (Chapters 2.2.1 and 4.6).

In Jackson Bonner (2015): 22, the same author actually says as much: "Careful probing reveals that a great mass of documents of diverse genres and origins must lie behind the *Ḫudāynāme* tradition. It is not a unitary tradition going back to a single text (…)." As the *Khwadāynāmag*, or *Khudāynāme*, is the title of a book and the idea of a "*Khwadāynāmag* tradition" is merely a concept invented by modern scholars, the use of the term only causes confusion.[10]

An even clearer case comes from Daryaee (2010): 11, where it is said about the *Wizārishn* (see Chapters 2.2.1 and 4.6) that: "[t]he appearance of this story in the early Arabic and Persian texts suggests that it was part of the Sasanian *Xwadāy-nāmag* (*Book of Kings/Lords*) tradition which was translated by Ibn al-Muqaf[f]aʿ and transmitted for posterity." This would seem to claim that every single bit of this tradition was translated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. The text, however, has been transmitted independently in Pahlavi literature and there is no reason to assume that it found its way either into the Pahlavi *Khwadāynāmag* or its translation by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ.

The confusion created by Iranists has established incorrect notions of what the *Khwadāynāmag* was and has caused further confusion among scholars

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9   Jackson Bonner himself, though, is well aware that other works were also translated.

10   Incidentally, with only a slight change of words, I totally agree with Jackson Bonner. I would say: "Careful probing reveals that a great mass of documents of diverse genres and origins must lie behind the tradition of *Persian national history*. It is not a unitary tradition going back to a single text." Jackson Bonner's further conclusions concerning Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation and the textual history of the *Khwadāynāmag* essentially differ from mine. Later, p. 48, he admits the vagueness of the term, but still decides to use it.

of the Late Antiquity. Howard-Johnston (2010): 341–353, is very much based on the studies of Zeev Rubin, taking any piece of Persian national history in Arabic or Persian to derive from the *Khwadāynāmag* and even going as far as speaking about "[t]he bards through whom the *Khwadaynamag* was disseminated" (p. 343). This confuses a specific book, Persian history in general, and orally transmitted epics that have nothing to do with the *Khwadāynāmag* and which fully found their way into Classical Persian and Arabic historical texts and epics no earlier than the tenth century.

But is the question of any importance in writing Parthian or Sasanian history? If the legends circulating in Iran and adjacent areas in the eighth century and later are ascribed to a royal history from pre-Islamic times, they receive an aura of historicity, which they often do not deserve: e.g., the later epics do not represent professional historiography, but instead have to be seen as literary productions.[11] This is not to say that they are, by definition, worthless as historical sources. They are not. They are valuable aids for reconstructing history, but they are not part of any official historiographical tradition. Likewise, we cannot use this spurious evidence to note any tensions between royal and priestly points of view. Such there must have been, as the Zoroastrian "Church" was rich and influential in the Sasanian period, but the *Khwadāynāmag* was not, as far as we know, a tool for any such schisms there may have been (Chapter 6.1).

What is crucial is not to create confusion by speaking of "*Khwadāynāmag* tradition", or worse still, of the *Khwadāynāmag* itself, when one speaks of the received corpus of texts on pre-Islamic Iran. Translating this into a "Book of Kings tradition" is not much better. When speaking of material relevant for Persian history for which we cannot show a link to the real *Khwadāynāmag*, we should avoid the term *Khwadāynāmag* altogether and speak more generally of Persian national history and its tradition. The *Khwadāynāmag* is merely a part of this. It would be equally wrong to call, e.g., all Arabic historical information the "Ṭabarian tradition" and then confuse al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* with this vague tradition, leading to an absurd situation where passages from any Arab historian such as Ibn Khaldūn would be attributed to al-Ṭabarī. Yet this is, *mutatis mutandis*, what is routinely done in Persian studies.

Hence, the terminology used in this book makes a strict difference between the following:

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11   Following Pourshariati (2008), Gazerani (2016) has strongly argued that the Sistanian epics (Chapter 4.7) should be seen as historiographical works and that they contain reminiscences of Parthian history, but this is based on insufficient evidence.

a) "the *Khwadāynāmag*" is a Middle Persian work, written, as it would seem, in the sixth century and later lost without trace in the original language;

b) "*Kitāb al-Siyar*" (or *Siyar al-mulūk* or *Siyar mulūk al-ʿajam*; also other variant titles)[12] or "the Arabic translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*" refers to the Arabic translation(s) and versions of this Middle Persian text;

c) "*Shāhnāme*" refers to a series of works written in early Classical Persian, of which only that by Firdawsī has been preserved. Of others, we only have fragments, if even that;

d) "Persian national history" refers to the information concerning pre-Islamic Iran pre-modern authors writing in Middle Persian, Classical Persian, and Arabic provide us with;[13]

e) "the Book of Kings tradition" is a general term that I use sparingly, to avoid confusion. It refers to the Middle Persian, Arabic, and Classical Persian works belonging to a), b), and c).

f) "the *Khwadāynāmag* tradition" is a vague and confusing term to be avoided and will not be used in this book.

1.2 Middle Persian Historical Material

As already stated, there are no extant texts or fragments in Middle Persian that one would be justified in ascribing to a book called the *Khwadāynāmag* and, as far as I know, no scholar has claimed that any texts should be seen as being, or containing, vestiges of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

Still, we do possess several Middle Persian texts that contain historical material.[14] The most important complete historical texts are *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* and *Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr*. These two texts will be briefly introduced

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12 Unfortunately, in Arabic and Persian sources *siyar al-mulūk* does not always refer to the translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*, but may also be vaguely used as "stories, or even the way of life, of Persian kings", in general. To add to the confusion, a number of other books, which have nothing to do with the Book of Kings tradition, were also titled *Siyar al-mulūk*, such as Niẓām al-Mulk's *Siyāsatnāme*, where (p. 298) *Kitāb Siyar al-mulūk* is given as the original title of this book written in 485/1092 and only conventionally titled *Siyāsatnāme*.

13 The use of the word "nation(al)" is often restricted to the 19th century and later, but as the Iranians had a clear notion of themselves as something different from others (cf. *Ērān ud Anērān* "Iranians and non-Iranians"), I find it unnecessary to avoid the word.

14 There is a great deal of historical material in the *Avesta*, and the Old Persian inscriptions belong to the sphere of historical texts, but the Book of Kings tradition proper begins in Sasanian times. For the *Avesta* and Old and Middle Persian inscriptions and their historical material, see, e.g., Gershevitch (1968), Hintze (2009), and Huyse (2009).

in Chapters 1.2.1 and 1.2.2. They are nowhere indicated as being parts of the *Khwadāynāmag* and, as we shall later see, they have little in common with that book, as far as my analysis admits us to see. The relations of these and two other texts to Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar*, and al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* will be studied in Chapter 4.6.

Other works, too, contain historical material (Chapter 1.2.3), but, again, there is no indication that these would derive from the *Khwadāynāmag*.

We do know that already the first Sasanids of the third century had inscriptions written for them and on this basis many, e.g., Yarshater (1983): 392–393, assume that written historical records were kept very early, too. This is, however, speculation and we have no positive evidence for the existence of Middle Persian historical books before the sixth century and it seems that an overwhelming majority of all written Pahlavi texts were composed or written down no earlier than this.[15]

1.2.1 Ayādgār ī Zarērān

Ayādgār ī Zarērān is now generally thought to have been initially composed in Parthian, and in an oral form it probably dates back to the Parthian period.[16] It contains vestiges of having been in verse, but the original text cannot be reconstructed in a metric form, except perhaps for individual passages. It was probably originally an epic tale in Parthian and has only during its transmission been "Pahlavized", losing its metrical structure.

The metric origin of the text makes it highly probable that it was transmitted orally before being written down. Many features common to oral poetry, such as standing epithets and repetitions, still shine through and are probably reminiscences of the text's origin. Whether the codification, prosification, and Pahlavization happened all at the same time, or separately, is not known, but whatever the first codification might have looked like, later scribes, not understanding the metrical structure and largely ignorant of Parthian, have further corrupted the text.

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15 Recently, in another context, van Bladel (2009): 23–63, has strongly, but not quite convincingly, argued for the fourth-century existence of Hermetic texts in Pahlavi. The dating of Middle Persian texts is notoriously difficult as the manuscripts are extremely late, usually no earlier than the 18th century, and the copyists, many of whom not properly understanding the language, have made it difficult to date the extant texts on stylistic and linguistic bases.

16 E.g., Cereti (2001): 184–187, 200–202, and Ṣafā (1374): 62–63.

The text is relatively short (17 pages in the modern edition). It is clearly a complete text, beginning (§1) with the title of the text[17] and narrating one episode from the beginning (Wishtāsp's conversion to Zoroastrianism, §1) to its end, the final defeat of the Khyōnian army and the humiliation of Arjāsp, its King (§§113–114).

The text shows no relationship to the Sistanian cycle, none of whose heroes take part in the action.[18] Otherwise, the characters are well known from Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, showing the continuation of the tradition (Wishtāsp, Arjāsp, Bastwar = Nastūr, Wīdrafsh, Spandiyād = Isfandiyār, Isfandiyādh, etc.).

1.2.2 Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr

Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr ī Pābagān[19] is a little monograph of less than 70 pages in a modern edition.[20] It is usually called legendary, but in fact the major part of the text is written quite soberly.[21] The establishing of towns, provinces, and Fires is mentioned in several chapters (V, IX, XI), resembling the style of historical sources and, most probably, the *Khwadāynāmag*, as does the throne speech of Ardashīr (pp. 76–78), which, though, seems to be an inserted passage and may not have been part of the original text.

The text is preserved in the Pahlavi manuscript MK, copied in 1322, and in its final form does not date back before the ninth century,[22] but its material most probably goes back to the Sasanian period. In its final form, the *Kārnāmag* is, thus, younger than, e.g., Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*, but older than the *Prose Shāhnāme* (Chapter 4.2).

The text has a clear beginning, where the title of the book is given, and a clear end, and it forms a concise narrative of Ardashīr's story. The story has been tied up with Persian national history, briefly mentioning in the beginning (I: 1–2)

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17 A Classical Persian note at the end of the manuscript, *Pahlavi Texts* I: 170, refers to the tale as *Shāhnāme-ye Gushtāsp*, but this title does not go very much back in time and is a later copyist's interpretation of the text in the context of the by then overwhelming influence of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*.

18 As will be noted in Chapter 5.1, the family of Sām is later represented as enemies of the new religion.

19 References are to Grenet's edition.

20 *Pahlavi Texts* II: 65–128. Grenet's edition does not include the Pahlavi text, on which the count is based. See also Ṣafā (1374): 64–65.

21 Its fame as a book of legends may partly depend on the fact that the most legendary part, the escape of Ardashīr from Ardabān's court, is perhaps its most vivid part and may have inclined scholars to see the whole text as equally legendary. That the text is written in a sober historical way does not, however, mean that its material was strictly historical.

22 Grenet (2003): 26.

the background (Alexander and the Petty Kings) and, later, tying Ardashīr and his dynasty up with Darius (Dārāy ī Dārāyān, I: 7, III: 19).[23] It shows a very strong concern with the legitimacy of the dynasty and the continuity of the Persian royal line also after Ardashīr (chapters XI–XIV). The importance of dynastic legitimacy is very clear in VIII: 10, where it is mentioned that the gods finally destroyed the (foreign) oppressors Dahāg, Afrāsiyāb, and Alexander.

The text refers to several battles but without mentioning any heroes or giving epic descriptions, although in many passages there would be an excellent opportunity to do so (chapters V, VI, VII, IX).[24] The only heroic feature that in any way resembles, e.g., Firdawsī's descriptions, or those of *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, is the short description of Ardashīr's son's, Shāpūr's, abnormal strength when he is able to pull a large bucket of water from a well (XIII: 10). The scene reminds one of the many times Rustam singlehandedly lifts large boulders (e.g., Firdawsī, *Shāhnāme* III: 380–381).

The *Kārnāmag* is strongly Zoroastrian in tenor and the seemingly monotheistic passages probably only reflect slight inaccuracies in theological terms. Especially VIII: 11–12, shows Zoroastrian details, such as the grace (*wāz*) and *āfrīnagān* said by Ardashīr before a meal. Whereas the mention of, e.g., the establishing of Fires could well be a mere historical reminiscence, such small details of everyday life are far stronger evidence for the text being uncontaminated by Islamic influence. The Arabs are briefly mentioned in VII: 12 (*tāzīgān*) as enemies of Ardashīr, but this is the sole reference to them, which also speaks in favour of the text coming rather directly from the Sasanian period, despite the few late additions, and, thus, it is quite possible to date it well before the eighth century.

The Greek historian Agathias (Chapter 1.3.1) offers a version of the birth of Ardashīr (Artaxares) which, he says, the Persians had recorded in their royal archives (*en tais basileiois diftherais*, II.27.5). The passage is too short to make it possible to say whether it might derive from the *Kārnāmag* or whether it is an independent version of a well-known story. Its clearly anti-Sasanian tenor shows that it has been modified by Agathias or his Christian informant, Sergius. There is nothing to imply that it would come from any written anti-Sasanian or anti-Zoroastrian source.

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23 The expression Ardashīr ī Kay also ties up with the lineage of the Kayānians. The mention of the *khwarrah* in IV: 17, 24 (here *khwarrah ī Kayān*), strengthens this continuity.

24 The Sistanians are not mentioned in the text, but this is quite natural, as they are situated earlier in history. They might have been mentioned in comparisons, though, which gives some vague evidence for the text's view of national history as not having as yet been connected to the Sistanian cycle.

1.2.3   *Other Books Containing Historical Material*

Except for the *Ayādgār* and the *Kārnāmag*, no preserved Pahlavi book is focused on historical matters, but some relevant material may be found in a variety of books.[25]

The *Shahrestānīhā ī Ērānshahr*, only six and a half pages in the modern edition, is organized geographically, listing cities founded by various kings and a few other persons, together with some scattered information on other building activities, establishing of Fires, and a few historical notes. The usual structure of an item is: the city of X was built by Y, the son of Z. The text has little historical content, but what is noteworthy is that such brief accounts of building activities are very often also found in Arabic and Classical Persian historical sources and seem to stem from the conventions of Middle Persian historiography. The text's final version is dated by the editor to the eighth century.[26]

Another small, six-page text, (*Abar*) *Wizārishn ī chatrang ud nihishn ī nēw-Ardashīr*, tells the story of the invention of chess and backgammon, set at the time of Khusraw Anōshagruwān (r. 531–579). The text is preserved in the MS MK (Chapter 1.2.2), but there does not seem to be any clear idea of its original date.[27] Although not strictly speaking a historical text, its material later found its way into the Book of Kings tradition and will be discussed in Chapter 4.6.

The same goes for *Husraw ud rēdag-ē*, again a short, twelve-page text,[28] which revolves around courtly manners and is set at the time of King Khusraw Anōshagruwān, who examines a promising young man as to his knowledge of things necessary for a courtier. The book is devoid of any historical material, but is resumed in al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* and will be discussed in Chapter 4.6.

These three short books are clearly linked to Persian national history as it was later presented in a number of Arabic and Persian sources.

Some religious Pahlavi texts occasionally contain historical information. Such books include the encyclopaedic *Dēnkard*; the story of the creation, the *Bundahishn* in its two versions; and the apocalyptic books *Ayādgār ī Jāmaspīg* and *Zand ī Wahman Yasn*. While not impossible that such books were known to, e.g., the compilers of the *Prose Shāhnāme*, it is not easy to find significant

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25   This chapter will not discuss the *andarz* literature, see Chapter 2.2.2 and Cereti (2001): 171–190, which is based on maxims, often attributed to various kings. Such material is widely found in Classical Arabic and Persian literature, and in some cases it is even possible to find clear correspondences between Pahlavi and Arabic or Classical Persian versions, but the maxims themselves are not concerned with history.

26   Daryaee (2002): 1.

27   Cereti (2001): 203–205, and Panaino (1999).

28   *Pahlavi Texts* I: 27–38.

contact points between them and the Arabic and Classical Persian historical works belonging to the Book of Kings tradition.[29]

In addition to books that we can document, there are many references to Pahlavi books, either in the original languages or in translation, in Arabic and Persian sources. To pick but one example, in his *Siyāsatnāme* Niẓām al-Mulk mentions an anonymous booklet (*kurrāse*), which contained information on pre-Islamic Persian kings (p. 9), books on governance privately owned by the Barmakids (p. 219), and eighth-century books on eschatology (p. 259). Some such books may well be legendary, while others probably were really existing books. Several lost Pahlavi books that contained historical material and were translated into Arabic are discussed in Chapters 2.2 and 2.3.

1.3   Early Sources in Other Languages

Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Armenian texts, written before 651 or drawing on materials datable to before 651 and containing historical information on pre-Islamic Persia are rather numerous. Much of this material does not concern us, as many of these sources are based on contemporary information and there is no indication that they would have used written Middle Persian sources, whether the *Khwadāynāmag* or others. They do contain valuable historical material for reconstructing Parthian and Sasanian history, but as we are not concerned with history but with historiography and, more specifically, the study of one specific historical source, they are of little value to us here.

In the following chapter, I will study Agathias more closely, as the contents of his book may partly go back to the *Khwadāynāmag*. Some other sources are briefly noted in Chapter 1.3.2.

1.3.1   *Agathias*
Whereas other sources in Greek[30] also contain much important historical material, Agathias' (d. 582) *Historiarum Libri Quinque* is unique in claiming that it derives much of its Persian materials from an official source which may, or may not, have to be identified with the *Khwadāynāmag*. This source, *basilikà*

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29   For these texts, see Cereti (2001): 41–78 (the *Dēnkard*); 87–105 (the *Bundahishn*); 134–138 (*Ayādgār ī Jāmaspīg*); 127–134 (*Zand ī Wahman Yasn*).

30   Omidsalar's (2011): 35–36, speculation on the *basilikai diphtherai* mentioned by Ctesias (FGrHist, 688, F5: *tōn basilikōn diphtherōn*) is without any ground and there is no reason to postulate the existence of either an Achaemenid book on Persian history or an early Achaemenid epic, rather than royal archives. Cf. Cameron (1969–70): 162.

apomnēmoneúmata (IV.30.3) was not directly seen by Agathias, but it was used by the Christian translator Sergius, whom Agathias had commissioned to provide him with information on the Sasanians.[31]

This source will be called in this book *The Royal Annals*.[32] Agathias does mention this source on a general level, but he does not clearly specify which pieces of information derive from it, which from the other, mainly Greek sources he used,[33] as well as from potential Syriac influence, presumably through Sergius, hear-say from contemporaries, and popular stories circulating in Persia, again probably passed through Sergius' mediation. In addition, there may be sheer fiction. Agathias' (negative) opinions on many Sasanian kings, including the founder of the dynasty Ardashīr and his successor Shāpūr, are clearly his own and do not derive from any Persian source.

At the end of the Fourth Book (IV.30.2–4), Agathias gives some information on the *Royal Annals*. He tells that "[w]hen Sergius the interpreter went there he asked the officials in charge of the Royal Annals to give him access to the records (for I had often urged him to do this)." The keepers obliged, and Sergius "extracted the names, the chronology, and the most important happenings in their time, and translated all this most skilfully into Greek (…). So it was to be expected that he made a very accurate translation (…)." Later, he brought his notes to Agathias, who used them for his book. It is not explicitly stated whether there was a number of documents from which Sergius compiled his notes or whether there was a single source from which he excerpted them.

This three-fold transmission (the original source(s) in Middle Persian → Sergius' Greek notes → Agathias' version) makes it difficult to assess the relation between Agathias' text and the *Royal Annals*, especially as Agathias inserted other materials into his narrative without in any way marking them off as deriving from a different source. However, we must make an effort to describe what Persian material Agathias used for this part of his book, and then we can speculate on what the *Royal Annals* may have been like.

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31 Agathias has been edited by Rudolf Keydell, and the whole text is translated by Joseph D. Frendo; all translations of Agathias in this book derive from Cameron (1969–70), if not otherwise stated. The main study on Agathias' Sasanian sources is still Cameron (1969–70), which also contains an edition, translation, and commentary on the relevant passages. Baumstark (1894) argued for the *Royal Annals* having been written in Syriac, but this is hardly tenable.

32 The term is also used by, e.g., Cameron (1969–70).

33 Although he was not very familiar with any Greek sources on Persia, cf. Cameron (1969–70): 94 and often, he obviously had some general ideas derived from the Greek tradition.

The book shows some general knowledge of Persian religion and customs, such as a note on Ahriman (Greek Areimanēs, 1.7.5), Persian funeral habits (II.23), the *xvaetvadatha*[34] (II.24.1–4), and Zarathustra as a religious innovator (II.24.6–11).[35] Such information Agathias could have received from any of his sources and there is no reason to assume that this information derives from the *Royal Annals*, as it does not contain historical material but explains habits and beliefs in a way that would have been superfluous to the Persians themselves. These parts are clearly composed with a Greek audience in mind.

The general description of Zoroastrian religion and Zarathustra leads Agathias to speak about Chaldaeans, Assyrians, Medes, Achaemenids (not mentioning the dynastic name, though), Alexander and his followers, and, finally, the Parthians (II.25). This part is very brief, the names are given in their standard Greek forms, and there is no indication that these passages would derive from the *Royal Annals*. Instead, they follow the Greek tradition that had been established well before Agathias. The Sasanians had a strong feeling of continuity from the Achaemenids to their own dynasty, but the present passage cannot be used as proof for the Sasanians' attitude towards the past of their Empire.

After this, Agathias turns to the originator of the Sasanian dynasty, Ardashīr (II.26), and the stories start to have more historical information. In II.26.2–3, he links Ardashīr to the Magians, and a Zoroastrian dependence would fit well with a Sasanian viewpoint, but the story about Ardashīr's parents (II.27.1–5) is far from flattering to the Sasanians – in general, Agathias is rather hostile towards them and particularly towards Khusraw Anūshirwān. It seems inevitable that, even though he explicitly claims that this information derives from the royal archives, Agathias, or Sergius, has here freely modified the Sasanian version to shame the ruling dynasty in the eyes of his Greek readers.[36] It should be noted that Agathias refers to this source only indirectly ("This is the genealogy of Artaxares given by the Persians, and they say it is true since it is actually recorded in the Royal Annals" II.27.5).

In II.27.6, Agathias promises to give a list of the names of the ruling descendants of Ardashīr, together with the duration of each reign. This he does, but starting only in IV.24, even though III.1.1 would seem to imply that the

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34   On consanguineous marriage, see, e.g., Boyce (2001), Index, s.v.

35   The last idea was, of course, very common in Greek literature, see, e.g., Cameron (1969–70): 93–94, 97.

36   Cf. also Cameron (1969–70): 109. We have no reason to assume a *written* Syriac version of the story. It is much more natural to assume that either Sergius or Agathias himself made these changes.

passage was written before he continued the story in the Third Book. In II. 27.8, he indicates that he has got this information from "their own writings", tacitly surpassing Sergius.

The rest of the Second Book (II.28–32) is dedicated to denigrating Khusraw Anūshirwān, showing that instead of being a cultured patron of philosophy and something of a philosopher himself, he was, in fact, a gullible barbarian who believed in the fake Syrian philosopher Uranius.

It is only at the end of the Fourth Book that Agathias returns to material derived from the *Royal Annals* and gives the list he had promised in II.27.6. He does not (IV.23.8) hide his antipathy towards the founders of the Sasanian Empire, Ardashīr and Shāpūr, who "were both wicked and abominable men." The text, which is partly dependent on the *Royal Annals*, begins in IV.24 and continues until IV.30. The bulk, however, of even these pages derives from other sources.

The information given in the Fourth Book is mostly scanty and restricted to a few elements, with some exceptions. Agathias gives the name of the king, the detailed duration of his reign (down to months and days)[37] and, in some cases, a brief account of an episode during his reign. Thus, he dedicates a few lines on the carnage of Shāpūr I's campaigns, which could, with modifications, derive from the *Royal Annals*. It is not much differing in tone from inscriptional or epic descriptions of victorious campaigns, but the following piece of information concerning his defeat caused by Odenathos (IV.24.4–5) cannot come from any official Persian source, which would not have listed the defeats of the Sasanian kings in any detail.

Hormizd and Wahrām I are only allotted some dry chronological information giving the length of their respective reigns: "On Sapor's death, his son Hormizd took over the throne, but held it for only a very short time. He enjoyed his good fortune for a year and ten days, without doing anything that has ever been recorded. The next king, Vararanes, who reigned for three years, was the same" (IV.24.5). Agathias mentions how Wahrām III received the title of Saganshāh (IV.24.6) and goes on to explain how and why such titles were given, the latter hardly stemming from the *Royal Annals*, as the custom would have been familiar to the Persians themselves.

When coming to Shāpūr II (IV. 25.2–8), the pace of the narrative slows down and the reader is offered more detailed information, starting with the famous episode of already crowning the child in his mother's womb. The version of Agathias tells how the Magi were first able to predict the sex of an unborn foal

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37   The chronology is discussed in Cameron (1969–70): 105–106, 116–117.

and having thus shown their competence they predicted that the child would be a son, after which he was crowned still unborn by putting a diadem over his mother's womb. The only other detail we are told is that he conquered Nisibis, to which is added a passage concerning the Byzantine side of the event, obviously deriving from Byzantine sources. Whether the story about the crowning of Shāpūr II derives from the *Royal Annals* or from a popular source, cannot be known.

After this, the narrative once again becomes extremely concise (IV.26.1–2). IV.26.3–8 relates the reign of Yazdagird I, "who is much talked about by the Romans." Indeed, IV.26.3–7 derives from Byzantine sources and it is only the brief paragraph IV.26.8 that may contain Persian material. The next longer narrative concerns Kawād (IV.27.6–IV.29.5) and relates to the episode of Mazdak, whose name, though, is not mentioned and whose negatively considered innovations are ascribed to Kawād himself. The main theme is the downfall of, and subsequent return to, the throne by Kawād. Here Agathias also refers to earlier (Greek) historians, who have adequately treated the two parts of his reign, and he merely adds one point, which is not derived from Persian sources. This awkward moment in Sasanian history is again something one might not expect to have been fully documented in official sources.

Finally, he returns to Khusraw Anūshirwān (IV.29.5–10), about whom he again tells from a Byzantine viewpoint.

Thus, the passages that probably derive from Persian sources are mostly brief and dry chronological notes, with the exception of Ardashīr's story and the prenatal crowning of Shāpūr II, both probably of a popular character.[38] The indirect transmission, of course, makes it impossible to say how large and legendary the original source may have been, but there is nothing in Agathias to imply that it would have contained (m)any novelistic trends, as the more elaborate passages are far from flattering from the Sasanian point of view and, hence, do not derive from Sasanian sources. If there were longer narratives, either Sergius or Agathias decided against including them.

A second point of interest is that Agathias offers no Persian stories predating the Sasanian dynasty (except for the brief and inaccurate, un-Persian mention of Zarathustra, which may draw on Persian sources only in a general fashion). We have to bear in mind, though, that Agathias was writing on contemporary issues and even the intervention of these older Sasanids is a long deviation from the main narrative. Yet, as far as we can see, the *Royal Annals* contained information only on the Sasanids. As we shall later see (Chapters 3.1 and 6.2),

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38   Cf. Cameron (1969–70): 140.

the *Khwadāynāmag* seems to have told the story from the Creation onward, but there were other books that contained information only, or mainly, on the Sasanids.

The dry chronological structure resembles the information culled by Ḥamza from the Arabic translation(s) of the *Khwadāynāmag* (Chapter 3.1 and 3.6). It is often clear that Agathias is not content with quoting the *Royal Annals*, but adds his own speculations (especially on Pērōz, IV.27.4) and in many passages the anti-Persian opinions make it hard to claim that he was transmitting from any Persian source, not to speak of the *Royal Annals*. The *Royal Annals* seem to have been a dry catalogue, as aptly called by Cameron (1969–70): 112, cf. Agathias II.27.8.

The hostility towards the Sasanids and some differences between Agathias and later Arabic and Persian sources have led scholars to doubt whether Agathias had, in fact, used the *Royal Annals* through Sergius' translation, as he himself claims, or whether he used some intermediate Christian source. This has been put forward in an extreme form by Greenwood (2002): 331–332, who dismisses the *Royal Annals*, and claims that Agathias' source was "an incomplete, hostile summary of Sasanian dynastic history, reflecting Christian and Roman sympathies." Jackson Bonner (2011): 23–25, shares some of Greenwood's doubts, referring to a passage in the Syriac *Book of the Bee* as a type of source that could have provided Agathias with such information (see Chapter 1.3.2).

However, these doubts are exaggerated. Agathias and his informant, Sergius, were Christians and certainly had their prejudices, and Agathias also had at hand Christian sources, whether oral or written, and these certainly influenced his reading of the Persian material. Nowhere does he claim that he was giving faithful translations from one source only and even a cursory look at the text proves that we are not dealing with an exact excerpt from any Persian (or other) source. More likely, he is resuming events and using several sources to create a concise narrative. Hence, the presence of anti-Sasanian attitudes does not mean that he could not have used a Persian source as one of his sources, laying over it, as it were, a layer of his own, or Sergius', anti-Sasanian feelings.

A second problem arises from the usual confusion between the *Khwadāynāmag* and the "*Khwadāynāmag* tradition". Jackson Bonner refers (2011: 23, n. 25)[39] to the bad reputation of Yazdagird I and Balāsh "in other sources of the *Khudāy-Nāma* tradition", whereas they are portrayed in positive terms in Agathias' work, which he takes to mean that the positive attitude must come from another, Christian source. These rulers may well have been

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39   As does Cameron (1969–70): 113–114.

hated by the Zoroastrian clergy, whose attitudes may no doubt be represented by some later Arabic and Persian sources, but this is not to say that the *Royal Annals* or the *Khwadāynāmag* would have had such an antagonistic attitude towards them. Official sources tend to downplay internal disagreements and present a unified, harmonious picture. It would be hard to imagine that the *Royal Annals* contained much criticism against any of the legitimate members of the dynasty. Thus, a positive attitude is to be expected and there is no reason to speculate on sources of whose existence we have no indication at all.

Personal comments, a few popular stories, and some coloured transmissions aside, it is likely that what Sergius/Agathias did to the *Royal Annals* was mainly to abbreviate them.[40]

The question now is whether or not we can equate the *Royal Annals* with the *Khwadāynāmag*. In favour of the identification speaks the fact that the material excludes any embarrassing comments on the Sasanian kings; when there are such, they clearly derive from Agathias himself (or Sergius) or from Byzantine sources.[41]

Yet the answer is not simple: the Sasanids may well have kept historical records in their archives in addition to writing royal histories, but it does strike one that (cf. Chapter 6.2) the overall nature of what Agathias derives from the *Royal Annals* seems rather closely to coincide with what we know about the *Khwadāynāmag* from Arabic and Persian sources (once we forget the "*Khwadāynāmag* tradition" fallacy). It would seem a reasonable supposition to equate the two.[42] On the other hand, there were also other historical books

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40   Cf. Cameron (1969–70): 112–116.

41   Cameron (1969–70): 150–151, identifies the *Khwadāynāmag* with the contents of the later Arab-Islamic historical material (i.e., the "*Khwadāynāmag* tradition") and takes the lack of negative comments on the kings as cases where Agathias/Sergius has abbreviated the material (e.g., the assassinations of kings, the initial acceptance of Mani in the royal court, the sinfulness of Yazdagird I, etc.). Once we free ourselves from this misguided use of the term "*Khwadāynāmag*", the situation changes: Sergius' "abbreviations" are, in fact, additions in the later tradition.

42   There is also no reason to speculate on any intervening sources between the *Royal Annals* and the *Khwadāynāmag* as Cameron (1969–70): 112 does: "it is obvious that the Royal Annals formed the *basis* [my Italics, JHA] of the lost *Khvadhāynāmagh*". The problem in Cameron's line of thinking is that she compares the *Royal Annals* with al-Ṭabarī and Firdawsī, which leads her to see the *Royal Annals* as the dry chronological core around which narratives were later added. As we will see, there is no reason to assume that the *Khwadāynāmag* contained any longer narratives.

in Pahlavi that could come into question as possible sources for Sergius, *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar* among them (Chapter 2.2.1). The question has to remain unsolved.

1.3.2 *Other Sources*

In recent times, Jackson Bonner (2011): 24, and (2015): 55, has drawn attention to the Syriac *Book of the Bee*, attributed to Solomon of Basra and perhaps dating to the early thirteenth century, as containing a potential source of Agathias and an example of Syriac historical writing about the Sasanians. The book contains a list of Persian kings, which may itself date back to the early seventh century. The list is concise and would well agree with the similar conciseness of Agathias (and other witnesses for the *Khwadāynāmag*), but such a list could also have been compiled from other sources and it is merely the conciseness which is common to both. There are, in fact, no specific details which would give us reason to claim that the two are in any way linked with each other.

Jackson Bonner (2015) and Philip Wood (2016) have in general emphasized the Syriac influence on the material concerned with Persian national history that was transmitted to Islamic literature. While this history was probably partly coloured by Syriac Christian attitudes, we have to keep in mind that there are no Syriac works that would claim to be translations from Middle Persian historical texts. Wood (2016) is able to show that al-Ṭabarī's version of Sasanid history is sometimes coloured by Syriac Christian attitudes on the events. It is, however, improbable that these would have made a detour through the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* or its Arabic translation(s). Syriac texts going back to other Syriac texts written in the sixth century have nothing to do with the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag*, except that the earliest Syriac texts may have used it as one of their sources, but we have no documentation even for this. There is no reason to assume that these Syriac texts had any influence on the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* or its Arabic translations.[43]

Jackson Bonner (2015): 67–72, draws attention to several cases in Persian national history, culled especially from al-Dīnawarī's *Akhbār*, where pre-Islamic Persian characters are presented as Christians, mentioning the

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43 Behind the confusion is, again, the unfortunate use of the vague term "*Khwadāynāmag* tradition", which lumps together different historical traditions as long as they have a connection to Persian national history. This leads Wood to speak (2016: 414) about a hypothetical Syriac (!) source of al-Ṭabarī as "this version of the *Xwadāy-Nāmag*". Wood also (2016: 410) calls Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* "the major New Persian recension of the *Xwadāy-Nāmag*" – which it definitely is not, see Chapter 4.2. Terminological confusion aside, Wood's article is a valuable and solid contribution to the study of al-Ṭabarī's sources.

conversions of Ardashīr and Anūshzād as examples. While such stories certainly were not circulated by Zoroastrians, not to speak of including them into the *Khwadāynāmag*, it is not clear whether the Christian or the Islamic tradition is responsible for this. The Islamic tradition made Alexander perform a pilgrimage to Mecca (e.g., *Nihāya*, p. 128), changed the legendary kings of Iran into monotheists (Firdawsī, *Shāhnāme*, passim), and, in general, read pre-Islamic history through the lenses of the Islamic world history. Jackson Bonner himself, (2015): 68, notices the Islamization of the story of Ardashīr's conversion in al-Dīnawarī's *Akhbār*. Instead of positing an undocumented Syriac Christian text later Islamized it would be much easier to explain this as an Islamic retelling of history.[44] When al-Dīnawari wrote his book, most Iranians had been Muslims for up to two centuries and they had every reason, like Firdawsī, to present their illustrious ancestors as monotheists. As these events took place before Islam, it was only natural either to refer them to some form of Ur-Monotheismus (the religion of the *ḥanīfs*) or to Christianity, God's last but one dispensation on earth.

While it is unadvisable to speculate without evidence on non-existing Syriac sources that might have dealt extensively with Persian history it is, on the other hand, quite natural that Syriac Christians, especially those living in Iran, would have had some influence on the earliest Muslim historians, traditionists, and storytellers, as well as the other way round. Thus, there is no reason to deny that in some cases they may have influenced the way Muslims wrote on Persian history, but without tangible evidence we should not speculate on the existence of specific books that might have been dependent on the *Khwadāynāmag* or might have provided material to any recension of the *Khwadāynāmag* or its Arabic translations. Texts, such as the *Chronicle of Seert* and the *Khūzistān Chronicle*, contain information on Persian kings and some of this material may go back to written Middle Persian sources, while they may

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44   The same goes for some lexical points Jackson Bonner makes. Thus, instead of seeing in the name of Shammās, one of Nūshzād's generals, a *Syriac* word "deacon," it might be well to remember that the word is of common usage in both Arabic and Persian. Moreover, as Jackson Bonner himself, p. 70, note 371, remarks, the episode contains several Christian clerical titles in "clearly Arabic forms" and, we might add, Muslim Arabic historical literature is full of characters given one of these clerical titles; for some early examples, see Hebbo (1970): 218–219. Jackson Bonner (2015): 72, also needs to claim that the conversion story of Ardashīr must come from an *unlearned* Syriac source, as Ardashīr is here dated to the time of Christ. Unlearned it may well have been, but knowing that Islamic popular narrative flourished at the time, it is quite understandable that such anachronistic stories might have been told by Muslim Persians of some of their great ancestors.

also depend on Syriac contemporary historical writing and oral tradition. That they should in any way be dependent on, or contribute to, the *Khwadāynāmag* remains to be shown.[45]

1.4   Oral Tradition

In pre-Islamic Iran, there were two kinds of oral literature. First of all, sacred texts were memorized verbatim, and the *Avesta* was put down in writing only in the sixth century AD, after a millennium of oral tradition, and even then the memorization continued as the main form of its transmission. Such an oral transmission of fixed texts seems to have concerned only religious texts. This category hardly contained any extensive historical narratives, merely, at most, short legendary or historical passages on the earliest periods of Zoroastrianism within religious texts.

Secondly, all cultures have secular oral literature: prose stories from jokes to lengthy tales, poems from ditties to songs and sometimes even to oral epics. In her groundbreaking article on the *gōsāns*, Parthian storytellers, Mary Boyce (1957) argued for the existence of a wider oral literature in pre-Islamic Iran. Her evidence is mainly lexical (the use of the word *gōsān*) and there is little to show whether in Sasanian times, in fact, these *gōsāns* sang their tales or just narrated them, or whether they sung lyrical songs or epic lays: in *Mujmal*, p. 56/69, translating Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 43, the word *gōsān* (*g/kūsān*, for Ḥamza's Arabic *mulḥin* "entertainers", earlier referred to as *mughannūn* "singers") is explained as *khunyāgar*, saying that Bahrām Gūr imported 12,000 male and female singers (*muṭrib*) from India, who, at the author's time, were gypsies (*lūriyān*). The episode, both in Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh* and the *Mujmal*, clearly speaks of entertainers in drinking sessions, in which lyric songs are at least equally probable as epic lays. That the author of the *Mujmal* translates Ḥamza's *mulḥin* as *kūsān* only proves that the word, whatever its exact meaning in Parthian times, presumably in the sixth/twelfth century meant merely "singer; musician", not to mention the fact that the *lūriyān* from India hardly sang Persian epics, if they sang at all in the first place and were not just musicians.[46]

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45   For other Syriac and Armenian sources, see Cameron (1969–70): 118–119. Arabic historiography started to have an influence on Syriac historiography in the mid-eighth century, which further complicates the situation.

46   The story itself is probably legendary. According to ps.-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Tāj*, p. 35 (trans. Pellat 1954: 55–56; cf. also Wood 2016: 408, note 6), Bahrām Gūr made changes to the

As far as we know, in the Islamic period epic tales were first put down in prose and only later versified (Chapter 4.7). This does not, of course, prove that they could not have been sung in the oral tradition, but there is little concrete evidence that this was the case. There are occasional references in Arabic literature to Persian poems (often called *ash'ār*) or stories sung in courts. Ps.-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Maḥāsin*, p. 363, informs us that during the *nawrūz* ritual the king was sung "songs wherein there are mentioned the sons of mighty kings/heroes" (*aghānī yudhkaru fīhā abnā'u l-jabābira*), and al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj* §479, tells how "this fortress (i.e., Bāb al-Lān) was built by an Ancient Persian king of old times, called Isbandiyār ibn Bistāsf (…). The Persians mention it in their poems (*ash'ārihā*)."[47] Yet as far as the evidence goes, Firdawsī versified a prose *Shāhnāme* (Chapter 4.2) and Asadī did the same to a prose *Kitāb-e Garshāsb*.

While epic tales were obviously sung at some phase in pre-Islamic Iran, as also comparative Indo-European evidence would tend to show, the evidence for the Sasanian period and immediately after is scarce, and one should not take the widespread existence of such epics in Sasanian times for granted. Stories, whether in prose or verse, of especially the Sistanian cycle must have been told, as the cycle contains remarkably archaic features going back to Indo-Iranian times. However, how widely they penetrated the Sasanian courtly life is unknown, and one should not speak of "an era when the deeds of the magnate families were recorded by wandering minstrels"[48] as an established fact.

Another possible piece of evidence for epic songs comes from Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-e Bukhārā*, p. 15, which mentions lamentations on Siyāwush, songs (*surūd'hā*) presented by Bukharan singers (*muṭribān*), who called them *kīn-e Siyāwush* "the revenge for Siyāwush". The continuation, pp. 21–22, though, seems to imply that these should be seen as lamentations rather than epic songs, as they are here called "lamentations" (*nawḥat'hā*) and "the crying of the Magis" (*girīstan-e mughān*).[49]

Partly this oral tradition may have lived on without any contact point with the written tradition and does not concern us here. The epic tradition was mainly concerned with various characters of national history, especially the

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class system of entertainers which had been established by Ardashīr and was later re-established by Khusraw Anūshirwān.

47   See also Yamamoto (2003), Ṣafā (1378): 92–105, and the articles in Melville–van den Berg (2012). Olga Davidson's studies, e.g., Davidson (2006), should be read with some care, as the author ignores all evidence contrary to her own theories.

48   Wood (2016): 408.

49   Cf. Barthold (1944): 143.

family of Rustam (the Sistanian cycle), but possibly others, too (Chapter 4.7). These hardly supplied materials for the *Khwadāynāmag* itself (on Rustam, see Chapter 5.1), but they may have done so for Arabic and Persian authors of the Islamic period, so that not all that derives from Persian sources need go back to any written Middle Persian text. We know that major parts of this material were written down at the latest in the mid-tenth century (Chapter 4). The language of the oldest documented epic narratives, *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* apart, is Classical Persian, not Middle Persian.

Transmitting Materials over a Linguistic Border

This chapter has three aims: to introduce very briefly the Arabic translation movement (Chapter 2.1); to give an idea how extensively Middle Persian texts were in general translated (Chapters 2.2 and 2.3); and to remind the reader as to how ideas of translation in the first millennium differed from contemporary ones (Chapter 2.4).

2.1 The Translation Movement and Its Context

After the Arab-Islamic conquests, the old administrative languages remained in use in the conquered areas, and Arabic was made the language of administration only towards the end of the seventh century. At first the scientific tradition also remained in the hands of its former, mainly Christian and Jewish, practitioners, and Greek, Syriac, and Pahlavi were the languages of science until towards the mid-eighth century.

From the early 'Abbāsid period onward Persian culture, itself influenced by Greek culture,[1] influenced various fields of Arab-Islamic culture, including language, court etiquette, the organization of the Empire's administration, historical tradition, and literature that we would label belles lettres, although such a concept was more or less unknown to the Arabs themselves, who saw in, e.g., *Kalīla wa-Dimna* a book of practical philosophy or a Fürstenspiegel, rather than a book of animal fables for entertainment.[2]

A massive translation movement started in the mid-eighth century and continued until the eleventh century. In a short time, a huge amount of originally Greek scientific and philosophical literature was translated into Arabic, either directly or through intermediate Syriac or, sometimes, Middle Persian translations.[3]

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1 For Arabic translations of Greek texts through Middle Persian, see Chapter 2.2 and Ullmann (1970) and (1972), *GAS*, and more specifically Nallino (1922). See also Cereti (2001).

2 In general, see Hovannisian–Sabagh (eds.) (1998) and especially Ehsan Yarshater's article there. See also Bosworth (1983). For *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, see de Blois (1990).

3 Armenian translations of Greek texts also existed, but translating from Armenian into Arabic seems to have been very rare.

This Arabic translation movement began with the translation of some Middle Persian texts (whether of Greek origin or not) already at the end of the Umayyad period (i.e., before 750),[4] but it gained strength only with the ʿAbbāsids who, rather paradoxically, both internationalized and Arabicized their culture. The Umayyads had, at least until around 700, been content with using Greek, Syriac, Middle Persian, and Coptic as their administrative languages, but had otherwise been distinctly Arab, so much so that their dynasty has, since the Middle Ages, often been called "an Arab kingdom".[5] The ʿAbbāsids turned the policy around. Their culture was heavily international but they worked in Arabic and sponsored translations into the language of the ruling elite, though some Caliphs are even said to have known Greek.[6]

Around 1000 AD, almost the whole extant and available Greek scientific legacy had been translated into Arabic. The works of Aristotle and his main commentaries; the works of Galen; and a huge number of other works ranging from agronomy to zoology were available and in use in Arabic at the beginning of the second millennium.[7]

Many Greek books were not only translated once into Arabic (or Syriac), but were retranslated several times. A good example of this variety of translations is found in the translation history of Aristotle's *Topics*, which in the first millennium was translated five times into Syriac or Arabic, namely:[8]

1. by Athanasios of Balad (d. 686): Greek → Syriac.
2. around 782 by the Patriarch Timothy I (d. 823) and Abū Nūḥ al-Anbārī: Syriac → Arabic.
3. late ninth century by Abū ʿUthmān al-Dimashqī (d. after 914): Greek → Arabic.
4. by Isḥāq ibn Ḥunayn[9] (d. 910): Greek → Syriac.
5. by Yaḥyā ibn ʿAdī (d. 974): Syriac (of Isḥāq) → Arabic.

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4   Earlier translations are sometimes mentioned in literature or indicated in the colophons of manuscripts, but these are almost without exception pseudepigrapha, cf. Ullmann (1978a). For early Middle Persian translations into Arabic, see Chapter 2.2 and Bosworth (1983) and Latham (1990).

5   In the Western tradition, this was made current by Wellhausen's book *Das arabische Reich und sein Sturz* (1902).

6   E.g., al-Muʿtaḍid (r. 279–289/892–902), see Gutas (1998): 125.

7   For the translation movement in general, see Gutas (1998). For what was translated, see Ullmann (1970) and (1972), *GAS*, and Peters (1968a) and (1968b).

8   The example is based on Gutas (1998): 61–62.

9   The son of Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq.

As we shall see in Chapter 3, the translation history of this book may resemble that of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

2.2   Translations of Middle Persian Texts

The translations of the *Khwadāynāmag* will be studied in detail in Chapter 3, but a general overview of what was translated from Middle Persian into Arabic will give some background for understanding the specific case of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

Whereas translations from Greek and Syriac into Arabic are well documented and we can even occasionally see how the translators worked, the translations from Middle Persian are still very imperfectly known and only very rarely do we have both the original and the translation at our disposal and all too often neither, merely a reference in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* or some such source.[10]

Our main source of information for the translations from Middle Persian is the bibliographical work of Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, supported by occasional references to, or quotations from, translated books in the works of early authors such as Ibn Qutayba, al-Masʿūdī, and al-Jāḥiẓ. Middle Persian literature itself very rarely refers to any booktitles.

The chapter on Persian scripts (and languages) in the *Fihrist*, pp. 15–17/12–14//22–27, mainly derives from information attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. Although the specimens of Middle Persian writing in this chapter are no longer quite accurate in the preserved manuscripts, they clearly show that the ultimate authority of Ibn al-Nadīm really could read several of the scripts. In addition, Ibn al-Nadīm seems to have relied on an authority of his own, Amād al-Mōbad.[11]

The chapter lists seven differerent types of Persian scripts. In addition to various esoteric scripts, these include the Avestan script, called *dīn-dafīrīh* (← *dēn-dibīrīh*), Huzwārishn, and a variety of Pahlavi scripts. To point out just one example to show that the description of the scripts does go back to

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10   See in general Cereti (2001), Emmerick–Macuch (2009), as well as GAS and Ullmann (1970), (1972); Bosworth (1983); Latham (1990); de Blois (2000); and Zakeri (2007b).

11   The well-known second compiler of the *Dēnkard*, Ādurbād ī Ēmēdān, seems to have died around 900 (Tafazzoli 1983) and is thus too early to be identified with this Amād, but the *mōbad* Anmādh (read *Aymādh) mentioned by al-Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 104//149, as the (Chief) Mōbad in 345/956 might well come into question. For Persian scripts, see also al-Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, pp. 91–93//131–134.

a person well acquainted with some of these scripts, one might quote the explanation of the Book Pahlavi script (called by Ibn al-Nadīm *nāme-dabīrīh*), speaking on letter writing: "Some of them are written in Ancient Syriac (…) but read in Persian", which is an accurate description of Pahlavi, if we keep in mind that the language we call Aramaic was called *Suryānī* in Arabic. Likewise, he is able to tell correctly that the Pahlavi words for "meat" and "bread", *gōsht* and *nān*, are written BSR' and LHM' and even the original scripts he adds are still easily recognizable.

In this section, Ibn al-Nadīm also mentions several letters that he claims, based on al-Jahshiyārī, have survived from remote Antiquity (e.g., Rustam's manumission letter, see Chapter 5.1). Whether this refers to Pahlavi versions of such pseudepigraphical texts or is a mere legend cannot be decided.

In the case of quotations from Middle Persian texts in Arabic and Classical Persian books, it is unfortunately rare that the exact source is given and a lot of material that can safely be identified as deriving from Middle Persian literature is quoted in Arabic and Persian literature merely by the ultimate authority. Thus, e.g., maxims coming from *andarz* literature are often quoted solely on the authority of the king or sage to whom the saying is attributed, without reference to the Pahlavi book from which it has been translated.

Few of the translated texts are still extant and even they have usually been transmitted over centuries so that the text has undergone changes which make it impossible to reconstruct the original – such, e.g., is the case of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, where we have a great number of manuscripts, versions, and recensions, not to mention further translations, but only a very general idea of what the original translation of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ may have looked like.[12]

Most of the translations that we know by title have been lost except for occasional fragments and the same goes for the original Middle Persian texts, so that no real comparison of the original and the translation is usually possible and we have to be satisfied with an overall list of such translations. This chapter does not aim at being a full history of translation from Middle Persian into Arabic, and I have endeavoured some kind of comprehensiveness only in the case of those works that are closely related to Persian national history.

A further complication in studying the texts is that the extant originals hardly ever overlap with the extant translations. The dwindling Zoroastrian community of the Islamic times was primarily interested in keeping up the tradition of their religious literature, and secular literature was to a large

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12   In general, see de Blois (1990).

extent lost during the centuries, while the translators were less interested in Zoroastrian religious literature and mainly translated secular texts.

2.2.1   *Works Related to Persian National History*

In addition to the *Khwadāynāmag*, several works that relate, in one way or another, to Persian national history were translated into Arabic, but have later been lost, both in translation and the original, except for a few cases. This chapter will briefly review the relevant books that are said to have been translated from Middle Persian into Arabic.[13]

Several historical books translated from Middle Persian into Arabic were either primarily concerned with the Sistanians or at least gave them a strong role in the narrative, which, as will be seen, does not seem to have been the case in the *Khwadāynāmag* (Chapter 5.1). In his writings, al-Masʿūdī mentions two books that are not known from other sources. The first is *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, which al-Masʿūdī mentions in *Murūj* §§541 and 543, saying that the book was translated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and giving a short summary of its contents. The title has undergone some corruption in the manuscripts of the *Murūj*, but it most probably reflects some such title as **Sagēsarān* "Sistanian Princes" or **Sagsīgīn* "The Sistanians".[14] The Sistanian heroes did also wage war in the country of Saksārān (see, e.g., *Mujmal*, pp. 36–37/42–43, on Sām's battles there), which might provide another possibility to interpreting the title.

Al-Masʿūdī clearly knows what he is speaking of, as he is able to describe the (Arabic) books he mentions. On *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, he writes:

> Persians tell a lot about Afrāsiyāb's death and his battles, the battles and raids between Persians and Turks, the death of Siyāwush, and the story of Rustam ibn Dastān. All this is found explained in the book titled *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, which was translated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ from Ancient Persian into Arabic. The story of Isfandiyār (…) and how Rustam ibn Dastān killed him is narrated there, as well as how Bahman ibn Isfandiyār killed Rustam and other wonders and tales of the Ancient Persians. The Persians think highly of this book because it contains stories about their ancestors and

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13   Overviews of translated books may be found in de Blois (2000): 231–232, and, e.g., Latham (1990).

14   See also Ṣafā (1374): 66. Zakeri (2007a) I: 131–135, has questioned the readings *Sakīsarān* and *Paykār*.

their kings' histories. Thank God, we have been able to narrate many of
their histories in our earlier books.[15]

> MURŪJ §541

According to what is told in the *Book of al-Sakīsarān* the Persians
say that his paternal grandfather Kay Qāwūs was the king before Kay
Khusraw and that Kay Khusraw had no offspring, so he gave the kingship
to Luhrāsb.

> MURŪJ §543

This book seems to have contained both Sistanian and royal material, although
the latter may only have been given as background for the former. Thus, the
story of Rustam was already partly integrated into Persian national history in
Kitāb al-Sakīsarān, long before Firdawsī, who is often, but wrongly, credited
with having joined together the Book of Kings tradition with this Sistanian
Cycle.[16]

    Murūj §541 is problematic and one wonders why this famous book is so ob-
scure? We have little information about any Pahlavi texts on the Sistanian he-
roes in a written form of Middle Persian and the stories are often presumed to
have remained only in the form of oral lore until the tenth-century Classical
Persian *nāmes* started being written (Chapter 4.7). The solution might be that
the reference to Persians making much of it refers to al-Masʿūdī's contempo-
raries and their use of its Arabic translation – as we have seen, it is not always
particularly obvious in which language books circulated in Iran.

    As the contents of the book would seem to match rather well with the story
in, e.g., Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, it is quite possible that it was, either in the origi-
nal or in Arabic translation, among the texts that the compilers of Firdawsī's
source, the *Prose Shāhnāme* (Chapter 4.2), used.

    The second book mentioned by al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §480, is *Kitāb al-Baykār*,
from the Middle Persian *Paykār*.[17] In *Tanbīh*, p. 94//136, the same author gives
baykār as the name of the wars of the Persians against the Turkish kings and

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15   According to *Murūj* §550, too, it was Bahman who killed Rustam. For a theory about the
       meaning of Rustam's killer, see Davidson (2006): 90–91 (= first edition 1985: 72–73). See
       also Yamamoto (2003): 75, n. 64.

16   Note that this does not mean that these two strands of history would have been joined
       together in the *Khwadāynāmag* which is an altogether different book.

17   The title is given in a variety of versions. See also Ṣafā (1374): 67–68, and Zakeri (2007a) I:
       131–132.

translates the word as *al-jihād*.[18] According to the *Murūj*, the book was trans-
lated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and contained, among other things, the deeds of
Isbandiyār.

Al-Masʿūdī describes the contents of this book as follows:

> This fortress (i.e., Bāb al-Lān) was built by an Ancient Persian king of old
> times, called Isbandiyār[19] ibn Bistāsf (with variants) (…). This is one of
> the fortresses in the world that are considered impenetrable. The Persians
> mention it in their poems (*ashʿārihā*)[20] and tell how Isbandiyār ibn
> Bistāsf built it. Isbandiyār waged many wars in the East against various
> peoples. He was the one who travelled to the farthest parts of the Turkish
> lands and destroyed the City of Brass (Madīnat al-Ṣufr). The deeds of
> Isbandiyār and all the things we have told are mentioned in the book
> known as *Kitāb al-Baykār*,[21] which Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ translated into Arabic.
>
> *MURŪJ* §479–480

What the passages clearly tell is that there was a vivid tradition of other histori-
cal books and at least some of these came to be translated into Arabic, whether
by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ or others. *Kitāb al-Baykār* and *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, though,
do not seem to have had the same fame as the *Khwadāynāmag*, and though
their material was quoted by several authors, the titles themselves are not at-
tested elsewhere, not even in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*.

Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 364/305//717 mentions under the title "Names of
the books that Persians composed on biographies (*siyar*) and true (i.e., not fic-
titious) entertaining stories (*asmār*) about their kings" (*Asmāʾ al-kutub allatī
allafahā l-Furs fī l-siyar wa-l-asmār al-ṣaḥīḥa allatī li-mulūkihim*) a book titled
Kitāb Rustam wa-Isfandiyār, translated by Jabala ibn Sālim.[22] This may be the
same as the book mentioned by al-Jāḥiẓ in his *Risālat al-Ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān*
(*Rasāʾil* II: 408), where the author says that his informant, the *mōbad*, had read

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18   For the use of the word *paykār* in the *Mujmal*, see Chapter 3.6.

19   In the edition, this erroneously appears as Isbandiyārd. Note the different representation
     of P here against Isfandiyār in the passage referring to *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān* in *Murūj* §541,
     which could be taken as indicative of a different source, which makes it difficult to specu-
     late on the possibility that al-ʙʏᴋʀ (and variants) could be a corruption of al-sᴋʏsʀn.

20   It should be emphasized that al-Masʿūdī does not identify the language of these poems.
     Although they could have been in Arabic, it is more probable that they were in Persian.

21   Variants include al-ʙɴᴋsh and al-sᴋs. It would need some emendations to read this as
     al-Sakīsarān.

22   Cf. Ṣafā (1374): 65.

in *Sīrat Isfandiyār* in *al-Fārsiyya*[23] how Isfandiyār had raided the land of the Khazars in order to save his sister[24] from captivity.

The story of the rebel general Bahrām Chūbīn is well attested in Arabic literature and his story has been extensively narrated in various sources.[25] Ibn al-Nadīm mentions in *Fihrist*, p. 364/305//717, *Kitāb Bahrām Shūs* (read Shūbīn), translated by Jabala ibn Sālim. The book is also mentioned by al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §644, who further describes it as follows:

> Persians have a separate book for the stories of Bahrām Jūbīn (*wa-li'l-Furs kitāb mufrad fī akhbār Bahrām Jūbīn*) and his stratagems in the country of the Turks to which he travelled, saving the daughter of the King of the Turks from a beast called *simʿ*, which is like a great goat[26] and which had captured her from among her maidens when she had gone to a park. (The book also contained Bahrām's story) from the beginning of his matter (*ḥāl*) until his death and included his genealogy (*nasab*).

There is also another Bahrām, Bahrām Gūr, who was the hero of a separate book. Ibn al-Nadīm mentions this in his *Fihrist*, p. 364/305//717, as *Kitāb Bahrām wa-Narsī*, for some reason taking the name of Bahrām's brother into the title, and al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §§613–614 knows about poems/songs by Bahrām in

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23   Here clearly referring to Middle Persian as it would be highly improbable that such a story would have existed in Classical Persian in al-Jāḥiẓ's time. There have been attempts to reattribute the *risāla* to Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī, who is credited with a book of the same title, see Chapter 3.3. and note 91 there, but as al-Kisrawī seems to have been slightly earlier than al-Jāḥiẓ this does not affect the language question. For the language terminology in al-Jāḥiẓ's time, see, most recently, based on Lazard's studies, Perry (2009).

24   Note the singular. In the Firdawsian version, there are several sisters.

25   Cf. Ṣafā (1374): 64; Nöldeke (1879a): 474–478; Christensen (1907); Rubin (2005): 60–61; Rubin (2004); Jackson Bonner (2015): 62–67, 112–124; Czeglédy (1958). Balʿami, *Tārīkhnāme* II: 764 (missing from the *Tārīkh*, p. 748) criticizes al-Ṭabarī for not telling the whole story of Bahrām and says that he found a more complete version in *Kitāb-e Akhbār-e ʿajam* (this need not be taken as a book title but may just mean "a book on the stories of the Persians") and that he narrates his story according to that source (cf. also Jackson Bonner 2015: 62, n. 307). Some early Persian sources often seem to quote the story from Arabic sources. Thus, e.g., in Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāme*, p. 87, the Arabic expression *yā ayyuhā al-malik* suddenly appearing in an otherwise Persian context implies that the original source was in Arabic.

26   *Simʿ* is usually described as a wolf-like beast, see, e.g., al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt* I: 564–565. Cf. Eisenstein (1991).

Arabic and Persian (*wa-lahu ashʿār kathīra bi-l-ʿarabiyya wa-l-fārsiyya*).[27] Later, the story has found its way into an Arabic popular book, *Qiṣṣat Bahrām-shāh*.[28] The standard version of Bahrām Gūr's adventures prominently features Arabs and is probably either an Arabic compilation based on Middle Persian historical information in general or a revised version of a Pahlavi book, augmented by material of Arab interest.

The founder of the Sasanian dynasty, Ardashīr ī Pābag, is the hero of a separate, still extant story in Pahlavi, the *Kārnāmag* (Chapter 1.2.2). A book under the same title (*Kārnāmaj Ardashīr*), and possibly a translation of this Pahlavi text, is again mentioned by al-Masʿūdī in *Murūj* §586, although his description of the book (*wa-li-Ardashīr ibn Bābak kitāb yuʿraf bi-Kitāb al-Kārnāmaj fīhi dhikr akhbārihi wa-ḥurūbihi wa-masīrihi fī l-arḍ wa-siyarihi*) might induce one to assume that the Arabic version was enlarged with additional material, although it is possible to take al-Masʿūdī's summary as broadly descriptive of the Pahlavi book.[29]

Jackson Bonner (2015): 50–52, considers al-Dīnawarī's version of the story of Ardashīr in the *Akhbār* to go back ultimately to the *Kārnāmag*, which is quite possible, although the differences between the two texts are rather extensive.[30] It is also possible that al-Dīnawarī either used some other written sources or simply knew the story from various, perhaps partly even oral, sources. If Jackson Bonner is right, then it is most probably this lost translation that served al-Dīnawarī.

Ardashīr is also involved in the famous *Nāme-ye Tansar*, or the *Letter of Tansar*, preserved in Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-e Ṭabaristān*, pp. 12–41, in a Persian translation made from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's lost Arabic translation of the Middle Persian original.[31] Al-Masʿūdī mentions in *Murūj* §585 that there were some stories about Ardashīr and Tansar at the beginning of Ardashīr's reign (*wa-li-Ardashīr ibn Bābak akhbār fī badʾ mulkihi maʿa zāhid min zuhhādihim wa-abnāʾ mulūkihim yuqālu lahu Tansar*), but he does not discuss them, merely stating that he has given them *in extenso* in his former books (*aʿraḍnā ʿan*

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27   Two fragments of such poems in Arabic are found in al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*, pp. 556–557, and a further Persian version on p. 557 (and Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Masālik*, p. 118). For references to Bahrām's poems and his *dīwān*, see Fontana (1986): 78–79, note 99.

28   Cf. also Pantke (1974).

29   Gardīzī, *Zayn*, p. 85, describes the same book as containing "advice and political wisdom" (*pand o-siyāsat*), which would imply that it was a book belonging to *andarz*. However, there is no saying whether Gardīzī really had seen the book or whether the description is more or less based on guesswork.

30   As noticed by Bonner Jackson (2015): 53 himself.

31   Edited also by Mīnuwī (1311), translated by Boyce (1968a). See also Macuch (2009): 181.

dhikrihā hāhunā idh kunnā qad ataynā ʿalā jamīʿ dhālika fī kitābinā fī Akhbār al-zamān wa-fī l-Kitāb al-Awsaṭ maʿa dhikr siyarihi wa-futūḥihi wa-mā kāna min amrihi ...). The latter part of the sentence may well refer to material deriving from the Arabic *Kārnāmaj*.

Ardashīr is also the purported author of a collection of maxims, *ʿAhd Ardashīr*,[32] already mentioned by al-Jāḥiẓ, *Dhamm akhlāq al-kuttāb* (*Rasāʾil* II: 191, 193, together with two other little known works, *Siyāsat Ardashīr Bābakān* and *Istiqāmat al-bilād li-Āl Sāsān*) and al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §584 (*wa-lahu ʿahd fī aydī l-nās*) and it is preserved in Miskawayhi, *Tajārib* I: 97–107. The work is not historical, though, but a typical *andarz* collection.[33]

In addition to Ardashīr, Khusraw Anūshirwān was among the favourite subjects of books translated into Arabic. Thus, one finds a *Kitāb al-Tāj fī sīrat Anūshirwān*, translated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (*Fihrist*, p. 132/118//260),[34] a *Kitāb al-Kārnāmaj fī sīrat Anūshirwān* and a *Kitāb Anūshirwān* (*Fihrist*, p. 364/305//717). Further, al-Jāḥiẓ, *Dhamm akhlāq al-kuttāb* (*Rasāʾil* II: 193) mentions a *Tadbīr Anūshirwān*. Some of these may be variant titles of the same book.[35]

The existence of a Pahlavi book on Mazdak is usually taken for granted, but Tafazzoli (1984) has shown this to be a mistake. The book is mentioned in various sources. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 132/118//260, mentions among the works Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ translated from Pahlavi a *Kitāb Mazdak*, with manuscript variant *Marwak*.[36] Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 34, gives *Kitāb Marwak* on a list of popular books (*al-kutub allatī hiya fī aydī l-nās*) that originated in Parthian times, and al-Jāḥiẓ, *Dhamm akhlāq al-kuttāb* (*Rasāʾil* II: 192) reads *Kitāb Marwak*, though this has been "corrected" by the editor to *Mazdak.[37]

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32   Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 126/113//248, seems to attribute this translation to al-Balādhurī (d. 270/892). The passage implies that he versified the text (or prefaced it with a poem: *tarjamahu bi-shiʿr*), but Ibn al-Nadīm continues by saying that he was one of the translators from Persian into Arabic.

33   Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 365/306//718–719, also mentions a Babylonian book titled *Kitāb Ardashīr, malik Bābil wa-Artawayh*(?) *wazīrihi*. Dodge (1970): 719, note 52, suggests reading this as "Ardashīr the King of Babylon, Ardawān, *and* His Vizier."

34   For *Sīrat Anūshirwān*, see Jackson Bonner (2011), especially pp. 41–46.

35   For the *Kārnāme* of Anūshirwān, see Grignaschi (1966). See also al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Ḥujjāb* (*Rasāʾil* II: 39–40) for a lengthy quotation from Kisrā Anūshirwān "*fī kitābihi l-musammā Shāhīnī*" (var. *Shāhī*), which discusses the qualifications of various *ḥājibs*.

36   Cf. al-Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān* III: 350, where "*al-aḥādīth ʿan Marwak*" (in a poem) seems to refer to wisdom literature. See also Tafazzoli (1984): 507, note 2.

37   Cf. also Zakeri (2007a) I: 126–127. For the (rather improbable) hypothesis that Firdawsī used the *Mazdaknāmag* as his source, see Christensen (1925): 65–66.

Tafazzoli has pointed out difficulties that arise from reading the title as *Kitāb Mazdak*. Not only does the usually well-informed Ḥamza date the book to Parthian times, i.e., centuries before Mazdak, but it is also always mentioned among works belonging to wisdom literature or quoted as a source of wisdom,[38] a role hardly suitable to the heretic Mazdak. Al-Ṭurṭūshī, *Sirāj*, pp. 475, 480, mentions some wise sayings by Mardak[39] al-Fārisī, and the original title of the book may well have been **Kitāb Mardak*. In any case, the book seems to belong to the genre of *andarz* and hardly narrates the story of the infamous heretic, Mazdak. Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §617, does mention that there were stories about Mazdak and Qubād (*wa-lahu akhbār maʿa Qubād*) and that these are often told in detail, which shows that there was an interest in Mazdak, but it seems improbable that this information comes from the *Kitāb Mazdak/Marwak* that was translated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and later versified by Abān al-Lāḥiqī.[40]

Most of the works discussed in this chapter have been lost in both the original and in translation, and in some cases the Arabic text may, in fact, be an Arabic pseudepigraph, sometimes perhaps loosely based on Middle Persian sources. A further historical work is, however, unusually strongly attested although it, too, has been lost as such. This is *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar*.[41] In his *Tanbīh*, p. 106//150–151, al-Masʿūdī tells of a book that he had found with a noble family in Iṣṭakhr:

> In the year 303 I saw in the city of Iṣṭakhr of the land of Fārs a large book in the possession of a member of one of the noble families. It contained many kinds of their sciences (*ʿulūm*), stories of their kings and their buildings and ways of rule, things which I have not found in any other of the Persians' books, such as the *Khudāynāmāh*, *Āyīnnāmāh*, *Kahnāmāh*, or others.
>
> It contained the pictures of the Sasanian kings of Fārs, twenty-seven rulers, twenty-five of them male and two women. Each was depicted as he was the day he died, whether old or young, with his decorations and crown, the plaits of his beard and the features of his face. They ruled the world for 433 years, one month and seven days.
>
> When one of their kings died they used to draw his likeness and take it to the treasury, so that the living among them would know the features of

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38   For further references, see Tafazzoli (1984). Ḥamza's dating of the book is obviously legendary.

39   In ed. Shawqī Ḍayf, the name is given as Mazdak, but cf. Tafazzoli (1984): 510.

40   Bosworth (1983): 489–490.

41   See Ṣafā (1374): 77–78; Adhkāʾī (2001): 561; Barthold (1944): 139–140.

the dead. The pictures of those kings who had been in war were (represented) standing, and the pictures of those that had been in (peaceful) rule were (represented) seated. The way of life of each one of them (was told in this book) with its private and public details and the notable events and important occasions that had taken place during their rule.

The date of this book is that it was written on the basis of what was found in the treasury of the kings of Fārs in the middle of Jumādā II in the year 113 (731) and translated (*nuqila*) for Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān from Persian into Arabic.

The first of their kings in this book was Ardashīr, whose sign (*shiʿār*) in his picture was red-golden and he wore trousers of the colour of the sky and his crown was green on gold. He had a spear in his hand and he was standing. The last of them was Yazdajird ibn Shahriyār ibn Kisrā Abarwīz, whose sign was green with ornaments (*akhḍar muwashshā*) and he wore embroidered trousers of the colour of the sky and his crown was red. He was standing with a spear in his hand leaning against his sword. (The book and the portraits were painted) in Persian colours, the like of which are no longer found, using liquid gold and silver, and powdered copper. The paper was purple and wonderfully coloured, though I am not sure as to whether it was paper or parchment because it was so beautiful and so perfectly made.[42]

We have mentioned some (of the book's content) in the seventh part of *Murūj al-dhahab* (…).

The date given by al-Masʿūdī for the translation is surprisingly early, and if it is to be believed, the book would be the first known translation from Pahlavi into Arabic.[43]

As the description shows, the book did not claim to be titled the *Khwadāynāmag* and there is absolutely no reason to suggest it was ever called so. Al-Masʿūdī's testimony makes it abundantly clear that it and the *Khwadāynāmag* were two different books. This is also confirmed by the fact that whereas the *Khwadāynāmag* told the story from Gayōmard[44] onward (Chapter 6.2), *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar* was restricted to the Sasanians. As we shall see (Chapter 3.1), some of the Arabic books usually considered to have been

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42   This might perhaps refer to writing material made of bast (*liḥāʾ*). On writing on bast, see al-Lāhījī, *Maḥbūb* I: 128.

43   There are reports of earlier translations, but these are usually obviously apocryphal. See Ullmann (1978). Cf. also Sprengling (1939), which is, though, rather uncritical.

44   For Gayōmard in general, see Hartman (1953).

translations of the *Khwadāynāmag* are reported to have started with the Sasanians and it is quite possible that the reports confuse the translations of the *Khwadāynāmag* (usually called *Kitāb Siyar al-mulūk*, *Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-ʿajam*, or *Khudāynāma*) and the translation of this book, the Pahlavi title of which we do not know but which is cited in Arabic as *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar*.

The same book, titled *Kitāb Ṣuwar mulūk Banī Sāsān*, was used for Sasanian history by the contemporary of al-Masʿūdī, Ḥamza in his *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 38–49.[45] The descriptions of the kings' signs have slight differences between the two (e.g., *Tanbīh*, p. 106//150, *lawn al-samāʾ*; Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 38, *āsmānjūnī*)[46] and in both there are details lacking from the other, which makes it probable that both are copying, and at the same time abbreviating and modifying, an earlier source. Later on, Ḥamza often leaves off mentioning his source and merely gives the sign (*shiʿār*) of each king. All these clearly come from *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar*, which may well be the main source for Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 38–49.

The authenticity of *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar* seems to be further warranted by the fact that its descriptions do, in fact, tally with archaeological evidence.[47]

Both Ṣafā (1374): 78, and Zakeri (2007b): 1200, assume that this translation was by Jabala ibn Sālim, but this is speculation based on the mention of Hishām, whose secretary Jabala is said to have been (Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 305/245//589). Adhkāʾī (2001): 561, identifies *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar* with the translation of Isḥāq ibn Yazīd, but does not give any grounds for this identification. As will be shown in Chapter 3.2.7, Isḥāq's name should be taken off the list of the translators of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

According to al-Masʿūdī's testimony, *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar* was a large book. The same author also knew another large book, titled the *Āyīnnāmāh*.[48] On it, al-Masʿūdī writes (*Tanbīh*, p. 104//149):

> Persians have a book called *Kahnāmāh*, in which there are (listed) the ranks in the kingdom of Fārs, which were 600, according to their counting. This book forms part of the *Āyīnnāmāh*. The meaning of *Āyīnnāmāh*

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45 Through Ḥamza it is also quoted in the *Mujmal*.

46 The Persian word *āsmānjūnī* raises a series of questions. Was it al-Masʿūdī who translated this into Arabic as *lawn al-samāʾ*? Did the two use different translations of the same book? Could Ḥamza have derived his knowledge of *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar* from the Pahlavi text, resumed for him by an informant? Unfortunately, we do not have enough information to answer these questions.

47 Yarshater (1983): 392.

48 For the **Āyīnnāmag* and the **Gāhnāmag* (titles not found in Pahlavi literature and, thus, conjectural), see Ṣafā (1374): 76–77.

is "book of customs" (*kitāb al-rusūm*), and it is large, (going up to) thousands of pages. It is rarely found complete except in the hands of *mōbads* and suchlike.

In contrast to what he says about *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar*, al-Masʿūdī does not explicitly claim to have used, or even seen, these two books, and the translation he gives for the title *Āyīnnāme*, "book of customs", need not be an established title.[49]

He does not even claim that the *Kahnāmāh* was translated into Arabic in the first place. It is not mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm, but the *Āyīnnāme* is (*Fihrist*, p. 364/305//717),[50] and on p. 132/118//260, Ibn al-Nadīm credits Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ with its translation (*Kitāb Āyīnnāme fī l-āyīn*). Later, p. 376/314//737, he mentions two specific books on *āyīn*. The first is an obvious pseudepigraph: *Kitāb Āyīn al-ramy* "The Manner of Archery" by Bahrām Gūr or Bahrām Chūbīn – neither of the two being likely to have written on archery (or anything).[51] As a pseudepigraph, one need not assume it necessarily had any Pahlavi original. The second is *Kitāb Āyīn al-ḍarb biʾl-ṣawālija*, "The Manner of Polo", which Ibn al-Nadīm only attributes to "Persians".[52] There is no indication whether we should assume a Pahlavi original or take this as a later text. The *Āyīnnāme* is often cited by Ibn Qutayba in his *ʿUyūn* (see Chapter 3.6),[53] and al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*, pp. 14–15, quotes explicitly from it (*fī Kitāb al-Āyīn*).

Husraw ud rēdag-ē does not, strictly speaking, belong to historical literature, but as it is partly included in al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar*, it will be discussed in this chapter. The work tells about a dialogue between Khusraw Anōshagruwān and a page, the latter showing his courtly learning in various fields and, at the same time, defining what a courtier should know, the text thus becoming a concise manual of courtly life (cf. Chapter 1.2.3).

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49   Theophylact Simocatta (trans. Whitby–Whitby 1986: 101), mentions "a certain Babylonian, a sacred official who had gained very great experience in the composition of royal epistles." This official is referred to as an authority on the hierarchy and function of various officials and their role in government. Whether this has anything to do with the *Āyīnnāme* is unclear.

50   Ibn al-Nadīm lists the book under the general title "Names of the books that Persians composed on biographies and true entertaining stories about their kings." This does not particularly well fit the description of the *Kahnāmāh* that should form part of this book. There is no indication that Ibn al-Nadīm would, in fact, have ever seen this book.

51   Ps.-ʿUmar-e Khayyām, *Nawrūznāme*, p. 38, mentions a book on weapons attributed to a Bahrām (*Silāḥnāme-ye Bahrām*). This may be the same book.

52   In Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn* I: 217–218, there is a fragment on polo from *al-Āyīn*.

53   Cf. Ṣafā (1374): 76.

In contrast to most other texts discussed until now, this little monograph is present both in the original Pahlavi and in the Arabic translation, which forms part of al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* (pp. 705–711). The translation is either free or it has been made from a version that contains major differences with the preserved one. Thus, e.g., while *Husraw ud rēdag-ē* names the page Wāspuhr "Courtier", al-Thaʿālibī calls him Khwash-ārzū "Well-willing", which only occurs as an epithet of the page in the Pahlavi text (§§19, 125).

Interestingly enough, Firdawsī does not include the story in his *Shāhnāme*. It is difficult to assume that al-Thaʿālibī found the text separately, either in Pahlavi or Arabic, and decided to insert it into his *Ghurar*. Much more probably it was part of their common source, the *Prose Shāhnāme* (Chapter 4.2). Firdawsī may have excluded it because it does not contain any action and is extraneous to the main story line. The fact that this translation is not mentioned in any of our sources would strongly point to the conclusion that it was not translated in the eighth or ninth century – in which case it might have been expected to have left some traces in earlier Arabic literature – but that it was perhaps available only in the *Prose Shāhnāme's* Persian version. The book will be further analysed in Chapter 4.6.

Another small book that has been preserved in the original Pahlavi found its way into both Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* and al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar*. This is a short story of the invention of chess and backgammon, *Wizārishn ī chatrang ud nihishn ī nēw-Ardashīr* (Chapter 1.2.3). Al-Masʿūdī may be referring to it in *Murūj* §625, where he says: *wa-qad kāna nuqila ilayhi* (namely Anūshirwān) *min al-Hind Kitāb Kalīla wa-Dimna waʾl-shaṭranj waʾl-khiḍāb*. The most natural way to translate this sentence, though, is "The book of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and the (game of) chess and the (art of) dyeing were brought to him from India," but we could, perhaps, understand it also to refer to a *Book of Chess*, although this would make the sentence somewhat imbalanced. Thus, it remains more probable that the text was only translated in the tenth century from Pahlavi into Classical Persian in the *Prose Shāhnāme* and from there into Arabic by al-Thaʿālibī in his *Ghurar*. The book in its relation to al-Thaʿālibī and Firdawsī will be analysed in Chapter 4.6.

The geographical work *Shahrestānīhā ī Ērānshahr* is not known to have been translated into Arabic, but in *Murūj* §1404, al-Masʿūdī mentions that the Persians had written down (*dawwanat*) many stories (*akhbār* and *aqāṣīṣ*) about various districts of Fārs and their buildings (*bunyān*). The emphasis on buildings (also the building of cities?) might be taken to imply a geographical text. The original language of such a text is not defined – al-Masʿūdī himself would have been reading these stories in Arabic, whether it was an original Arabic composition or an Arabic translation.

Al-Ṭūsī, *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt*, p. 120, refers to a geographical book allegedly found in Qutayba ibn Muslim's time and quotes from it. The story may well be legendary, but if not, the original book would have been in Middle Persian, but as al-Ṭūsī clearly did not read Pahlavi it should have been translated into a language he was able to read. Finally, *Fārsnāme*, p. 13, refers to "histories and genealogical books of the Persians" (*tawārīkh o-kutub-e ansāb-e Pārsiyān*), which may refer to Arabic genealogical works by Persians (or people from the province of Fārs?) or translations of such from Middle Persian.[54]

2.2.2 *Other Works*

The largest number of translations from Pahlavi and also of those that are still extant belong to the genre of wisdom literature. Wise sayings, both religious and secular, maxims, and proverbs formed the favoured genre of *andarz* in Pahlavi literature, and several such collections have been preserved in the original language.[55] The earliest translations were already made by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, who used such collections to produce his *Kitāb al-Adab* (or *al-Ādāb*) *al-kabīr*, which is not, strictly speaking, a translation of any one text, but a collection of various sayings and advice, mostly taken from Pahlavi sources. Miskawayh's *al-Ḥikma al-khālida* (*Jāwīdān Khirad*) is another famous Arabic collection of wisdom texts, partly compiled from Pahlavi sources.

In his *Dhamm akhlāq al-kuttāb* (*Rasāʾil* II: 191–195), al-Jāḥiẓ mentions a series of such books: *Amthāl Buzurjmihr*, *ʿAhd Ardashīr* (II: 191); *Adab* of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Kitāb Marwak*, *Kalīla wa-Dimna* (II: 192); *Siyāsat Ardashīr Bābakān*, *Tadbīr Anūshirwān*, and *Istiqāmat al-bilād li-Āl Sāsān* (II: 193).[56] The passage ends with an aphorism by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (II: 195). Some of the sayings in such collections may later be found in the works concerned with Persian national history. It would seem that the original *Khwadāynāmag* may well have contained such sayings to a limited extent but often they seem to have been culled

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54 For other possible Pahlavi books that might have been translated, see Ṣafā (1374): 66 (*Pīrān-e Wīse*) and Zakeri (2004) (*Kārwand*).

55 Cereti (2001): 171–190. For *andarz* books translated into Arabic, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, pp. 377–378/315–316//739–742. Although listed among *andarz* books, the *Sīranāme* by Khudāhūd(?) ibn Farrukhzād (*Fihrist*, p. 378/316//741) may have contained historical materials, as implied both by the title and by Ibn al-Nadīm's description: "it is a book of stories and narratives (*al-akhbār waʾl-aḥādīth*)."

56 Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 134/120//263, further mentions a *Kitāb Adab Ashk ibn Ashk* by Sahl ibn Hārūn, who also wrote animal tales in the style of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, but there is no indication that he would have translated any of these from Pahlavi, although in the case of the first it cannot be excluded that the text might ultimately go back to a Pahlavi pseudepigraph.

from separate collections and later joined into historical texts in Arabic and Classical Persian.

Most of the *andarz* books and their translations consist of small textual units, wise sayings, but sometimes the sayings are secondary and it is the stories that become the focus of the book. Thus, *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, which is the most famous of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translations,[57] is a collection of fables full of wise sayings, translated from the now lost Pahlavi original into both Arabic and Syriac. The work was later further versified in Arabic and Persian and retold several times in various languages.[58] Among its best-known versifiers was Abān al-Lāḥiqī (d. around 200/815), whom Ibn al-Nadīm credits with a number of versifications, listing *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, *Kitāb Sīrat Ardashīr*, *Kitāb Sīrat Anūshirwān*, *Kitāb Bilawhar wa-Būdāsf*, *Kitāb Sindbād*, and *Kitāb Mazdak* (*Fihrist*, p. 132/118//260, p. 186/163//359), the last duplicated on the list under its correct title, *Kitāb Marwak*, see Chapter 2.2.1. There is no indication that Abān himself would have known Pahlavi.

Abū Sahl ibn Nawbakht (d. ca. 200/815) is also said to have versified the *Kalīla wa-Dimna* for Yaḥyā ibn Khālid al-Barmakī, but again it is not clear whether the original was in Arabic or Middle Persian. Abū Sahl did translate astrological texts from Pahlavi, so he might have worked on the original, though it is more probable that he only versified Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's widely circulating translation.

In his chapter on popular stories (*Fī akhbār al-musāmirīn*, *Fihrist*, pp. 363–367/304–308//712–720), Ibn al-Nadīm associates the genre with the Persians, highlighting *Hazār afsān* and *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, but enumarating several other works of this genre, some of which may have been translated from Pahlavi, while others would have been new compositions based on the models of the genuine translations.

Other works of this genre, which Ibn al-Nadīm claims to be Persian books, are: *Kitāb Hazār Dastān*;[59] *Būsfās wa-Fīlūs*(?);[60] *Kitāb Jaḥd*(?) *Khusruwā*; *Kitāb al-Marbīn*(?); *Kitāb Khurāfa wa-Nuz'ha*; *Kitāb al-Dubb wa'l-thaʿlab*; *Kitāb*

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57   E.g., al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §625. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, pp. 364–365/305//716–717, gives a brief description of the book and lists some of its versifiers. See also de Blois (1990).

58   The preserved Arabic manuscripts differ widely from each other and none can be taken as representing Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's original translation. There is still no critical edition: closest to that comes, perhaps, Cheikho's edition of 1905, not to be confused with his simplified but more easily accessible school edition (1973).

59   For Persian *Dāstān*, presumably the same as *Hazār afsān*.

60   Many of the names are garbled and my transcriptions are conjectures only.

Rūzbih[61] *al-Yatīm*; *Kitāb MSKR zanāne*(?) *wa-Shāh Zanān*; *Kitāb Namrūd malik Bābil*;[62] and *Kitāb Khalīl wa-Daʿa* (*Daʿd*?).[63]

These books seem to be classified by Ibn al-Nadīm as fictitious, as the next subchapter has a heading "Names of the books that Persians composed on biographies (*siyar*) and true (i.e., not fictitious) entertaining stories (*asmār*) about their kings" (*Fihrist*, p. 364/305//716). This list contains the following: *Kitāb Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*, translated by Jabala ibn Sālim; *Kitāb Bahrām Shūbīn* (written *Shūs*), also translated by Jabala; *Kitāb Shahrīzād maʿa Abarwīz*; *Kitāb al-Kārnamaj fī sīrat Anūshirwān*; *Kitāb al-Tāj wa-mā tafāʾalat fīhi l-mulūk*; *Kitāb Dārā waʾl-ṣanam al-dhahab*; *Kitāb Āyīnnāme*; *Kitāb Khudāynāme*; *Kitāb Bahrām wa-Narsī*; and *Kitāb Anūshirwān*. Some of these books have been discussed in Chapter 2.2.

The most famous of all story collections translated into Arabic was *Hazār afsān(e)*, which in its Arabic version received the name of *Alf layla wa-layla* "The Thousand and One Nights".[64] The original Pahlavi version was clearly much shorter than the present editions of the *Alf layla wa-layla*, as stories have been added to the core throughout the book's history. Our first literary evidence for the Middle Persian background of the book comes from al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj* §1416 ("… the books that have been transmitted to us and translated for us from Persian, "Indian" [i.e., Sanskrit or Pali] and "Roman [i.e., Byzantine Greek] … like *Kitāb Hazar afsāne*. Its interpretation (*tafsīr*) from Persian into Arabic is *Alf khurāfa*. People call this book *Alf layla wa-layla*. Likewise, *Kitāb Farza wa-Sīmās* and the stories on the Kings of India and their Viziers that are found in it. Likewise, *Kitāb al-Sindbād* and other such books").[65] Also Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 34, lists books "in the hands of people" (*fī aydī l-nās*, i.e., popular), originating, according to him, in Parthian times, including *Kitāb Marwak*, *Kitāb Sindbād*, *Kitāb Barsinās*, and *Kitāb Shīmās* "and other such books, the number of which comes close to seventy" (*wa-mā ashbahahā min al-kutub allatī yablughu ʿadaduhā qarīban min sabʿīna kitāban*).[66] These will probably

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61   I.e., Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ.

62   The title would indicate that this was not a genuine piece of Middle Persian literature and it is strongly to be doubted whether all the other books are genuine either.

63   The following chapter, on the books of the Indians, also contains Middle Persian materials.

64   See Abbott (1949).

65   *Al-kutub al-manqūla ilaynā l-mutarjama lanā min al-fārsiyya waʾl-hindiyya waʾl-rūmiyya … mithla Kitāb Hazār afsāne wa-tafsīr dhālika min al-fārsiyya ilā l-ʿarabiyya Alf khurāfa. waʾl-nās yusammūna hādhā l-kitāb Alf layla wa-layla. wa-mithla Kitāb Farza wa-Sīmās wa-mā fīhi min akhbār mulūk al-Hind waʾl-wuzarāʾ. wa-mithla Kitāb al-Sindbād wa-ghayrihā min al-kutub fī hādhā l-maʿnā.*

66   Cf. *Nihāya*, p. 158.

mostly have been Arabic pseudepigraphs. We know of such stories having been in vogue from the testimony of al-Jāḥiẓ, *Faṣl mā bayn l-ʿadāwa waʾl-ḥasad* (*Rasāʾil* I: 350–351). Al-Jāḥiẓ tells how he published valuable books under his own name to little avail, but when he published less valuable books and attributed them to a more ancient author, such as Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, al-Khalīl, Salm *ṣāḥib Bayt al-ḥikma*, Yaḥyā ibn Khālid, and al-ʿAttābī, they were better received by the very people who had undervalued them when published under his own name.[67] Likewise, Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 367/308//723–724, tells that story books were fashionable especially during the reign of the caliph al-Muqtadir (r. 295–320/908–932) and that booksellers both compiled (ṣannafū) and forged (kadhdhabū) such collections.

Longer narratives that once seem to have existed in Pahlavi and were translated into Arabic also include the story of *Būdāsf*,[68] known in a variety of languages, and *The Story of Sindbād*,[69] which circulated in two versions, a longer and a shorter one, already at the time of Ibn al-Nadīm (*Fihrist*, p. 364 twice/367//715, 717) and was versified by Abān al-Lāḥiqī, who also versified *Kalīla wa-Dimna*. Later, Abū l-Fawāris Fanārūzī was commissioned to translate this book into Classical Persian by the Samanid Nūḥ II in 339/950. The translation has been lost but it is mentioned by Ẓahīrī Samarqandī (d. ca. 558/1161) in his *Sindbādnāme*, p. 25. According to Ẓahīrī, Fanārūzī translated the book from Pahlavi.[70]

Also Fakhr al-Dīn Gurgānī's Classical Persian *Wīs o-Rāmīn*, written in 447/1055, claims to go back to a Middle Persian original (p. 37) and this may indeed be the case.[71] It would be, in addition to the *Khwadāynāmag* and, possibly, the *Sindbādnāme*, one of the very few cases where a Classical Persian version goes directly back to Middle Persian, while the majority of extant translations into Classical Persian were made through Arabic.[72]

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67   This gains in interest when we note that al-Jāḥiẓ's *Risālat al-Maʿād* and Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs *al-Adab al-kabīr* are closely related. Cf. also al-Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 76//111.

68   Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 364/305//717 (also "Būdāsf, alone", i.e., without Bilawhar). See also Lang (1986).

69   Not to be confused with the stories of Sindbād the Sailor, which are only known from the 17th century onward, though some of the stories may go back to much earlier times and also partly derive from Iran. Most recently, Marzolph (2017) has drawn attention to a case where the *Mujmal* provides an early parallel to one of Sindbād's stories.

70   See also de Blois (2000): 232, who expresses some doubt as to whether Ẓahīrī really knew that Fanārūzī had translated his version directly from Pahlavi instead of using the Arabic version.

71   For a discussion of Gurgānī's source and its language, see de Blois (1992–97): 162–164.

72   The case of *nāme* literature will be discussed in Chapter 4.7.

None of these translations seem to have influenced the tradition of Persian national history and there is absolutely no reason to assume that any such stories would have been narrated in the *Khwadāynāmag*.

There is also evidence for the one-time existence of some scientific and philosophical works in Pahlavi, fragments of which are still extant in the *Dēnkard* and *Wizīdagīhā ī Zādspram*,[73] and some of these were later translated into Arabic, such as the *Warznāme*, studied by Nallino (1922): 346–351.[74] These works have left no traces in the works belonging to Persian national history.[75]

2.3   The *Alexander Romance*

The number of preserved Pahlavi texts is rather small in comparison to the number of texts that were once written in that language. In the centuries after the Arab conquest, the number of extant Middle Persian manuscripts quickly diminished, although in the tenth century many texts still existed that we nowadays lack. The reasons for the disappearance of Middle Persian texts are various: the Pahlavi script is very complicated, the scribal tradition was weakened by the lack of institutionalized support for Zoroastrian culture, and the majority of Persians soon converted to Islam and seem initially to have lost interest in pre-Islamic culture and its texts.

With the growth of Classical Persian literature from the ninth century onward, the old script soon became obsolete and the knowledge of the script and the by then archaic language was restricted to a diminishing population of Zoroastrians. They did produce some seemingly new texts in Middle Persian, but the majority of such "new" texts, such as the *Dēnkard*, were, in fact, largely compilations from older ones.

As the preservation of Middle Persian texts was left to a religious minority, it is understandable that their efforts mainly centred on religious texts, which were of great importance for the preservation of the old religion. In

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73   Cf. Sohn (1996) and Cereti (2001): 107–118.

74   Some translators from Pahlavi are listed in the chapter on philosophy in Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 305/245//589–590. *Fihrist,* p. 333/274//651, specifically mentions Abū Sahl Faḍl ibn Nawbakht as a translator, and he seems to have worked with astronomy and astrology. The passage from his *Kitāb al-Nahmaṭān* (see also GAS VII: 114) does not create an impression of being a straightforward translation from Middle Persian.

75   Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, pp. 376–379/314–318// 739–742, lists various works in different fields (such as erotic manuals or works on military sciences and veterinary medicine), some of which may go back to Middle Persian origins, while the majority are probably later pseudepigraphs.

this situation, secular texts were no longer copied and the extant copies disappeared in time. This may have been precipitated by the translation movement from around 750 onward when the most interesting texts, the *Khwadāynāmag* among them, were translated into Arabic and these translations became more easily accessible to historians than the Pahlavi originals, which thus became, in a sense, superfluous.[76]

This has left very little for modern scholars to work upon. However, we do know that secular literature existed in Middle Persian in the Sasanian period, and this has opened the doors for speculation. Scholarly literature is full of such speculation about texts that might once have existed. Very often, as in the case of the *Khwadāynāmag*, we have ample evidence for their one-time existence; Arabic texts, such as Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, contain information on what was translated and some translations are still extant, either completely or in fragments within other texts (cf. Chapter 2.2).

We have little concrete evidence for any translations from Greek into Pahlavi, not to speak of extant texts or fragments. Admittedly, the majority of non-religious (and even religious) Pahlavi books were lost when most Persians switched over to the more practical Arabic script and the dwindling Zoroastrian community mainly cared for their religious inheritance.

This admitted, it remains a disturbing fact that Pahlavi secular literature is mostly hypothetical and the little information we have on it usually comes from much later Arabic sources.[77] There is no question that non-religious books in Pahlavi existed during the Sasanian period, and there probably were among them some translations from Greek. But one should beware of speculating on their existence in cases where the evidence is purely hypothetical.[78]

As a brief case study, let us consider the *Alexander Romance*,[79] which ties up with the Book of Kings tradition. This book is commonly thought to have existed in Middle Persian translation, although there is little tangible evidence for this. Rubin (2008b): 31, goes even as far as to speak about "the *Alexander Romance* which was popular in Sasanian Iran during the 6th century." As we shall see, it is very dubious whether the *Romance* was translated into Middle

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76   The same happened with Greek and Syriac texts: as soon as they had been translated into Arabic, the originals lost their interest for Muslim readers, and very few such manuscripts have been preserved in Islamic libraries. Without the existence of Byzantium and Christian monasteries, Greek and Syriac texts would have become as rare as Pahlavi texts.

77   For a good overall introduction to the material, see Cereti (2001).

78   In other studies, I have criticized the same attitude in dealing with certain Ancient Near Eastern motifs that are assumed to appear in Arabic literature, see Hämeen-Anttila (2014).

79   See also Jackson Bonner (2015): 59–62.

Persian in the first place and there is absolutely no evidence whatsoever for it having been popular in sixth-century Iran.

The idea of a lost Middle Persian translation of the *Alexander Romance* originally comes from Theodor Nöldeke's *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alexanderromans* (1890). None of our Pahlavi, Arabic, or Classical Persian sources mentions its existence. Nöldeke only postulated it on the basis of his analysis of one of the Syriac versions.[80]

The Syriac manuscript A, dated to 1708–09, is the oldest of five manuscripts which contain one version of the Syriac *Romance of Alexander* (Ciancaglini 1998: 55). The *History of Alexander* was edited by E.A. Wallis Budge in 1889 and in the following year Nöldeke published his study in which he claimed that the Syriac text is based not on an earlier Arabic version of the text, as had hitherto been thought, but on a lost Pahlavi version. Since then, a Pahlavi *Alexander Romance* is usually presumed to have existed in the Sasanian period.

Nöldeke (1890: 11–12) lists some cases in the Syriac text which might be taken as evidence for it having been translated from Arabic,[81] as Budge had proposed. Then he continues with a list of cases which can be interpreted as examples of Persian or Pahlavi influence (1890: 13–17). Nöldeke's evidence is hypothetical, consisting of the occurrence of Persian terms in the text and word forms more easily explicable through Pahlavi orthography. The former are inconclusive as they could equally well be explained by the Syriac translator having himself been under Persian influence (e.g., living in an area where Persian was spoken). Nöldeke's list of the latter is long and seems impressive, but it remains problematic: even though some forms would be explicable through Pahlavi, yet as the Pahlavi script is notorious for its inadequacy to represent the sounds of its own language, not to speak of unknown names in other languages, how come the names are no more corrupt than they actually are?

It remains a fact that Nöldeke assumes a corruption caused by Pahlavi script when it suits him, but silently accepts astonishing fidelity in other names or even in other parts of the same name. His case is far from conclusive.

Though generally accepted as fact, Nöldeke's theory has also been criticized. While reviewing Budge's edition Siegmund Fraenkel (1891), expressed some doubts as to Nöldeke's conclusion and Richard N. Frye declined the suggestion of the existence of a Pahlavi version in his *Two Iranian Notes* (1985), though he gave little evidence for his opinion.[82] Frye based his argument merely on

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80   There is also another Syriac translation, which need not concern us here.

81   Such translations are, in themselves, quite common.

82   Rüdiger Schmitt, a leading authority of Iranian studies, also voices his doubts in Schmitt (1998): 261, note 18.

a general improbability of a text celebrating Alexander the Great having been translated into Pahlavi during the Sasanian period, Alexander having become the archenemy of pre-Islamic Persia, as is well documented in a variety of Pahlavi texts.[83]

These voices were given little heed, just as Ciancaglini's (1998) painstaking analysis of the question has not received the attention it deserves.[84] Ciancaglini analyses several Persian calques indicated by Nöldeke and shows that the words are not attested in Middle Persian but only in Classical Persian (p. 68), having thus had almost a millennium to creep into the text before the manuscript of 1708–09 was copied and providing no real evidence for a hypothetical Pahlavi original. She also shows how few the graphemic variations explicable through Pahlavi script are (pp. 75–76), against which one can put the numerous cases where the Greek sounds are properly represented in the Syriac manuscript, which should have been equally prone to corruption had the texts gone through a Pahlavi intermediate text. This is especially clear in the many Grecisisms,[85] where especially L and R are correctly represented as against the few cases of wrong representations Nöldeke is able to point out. As Ciancaglini states (1998): 78:

> Si dovrebbe presupporre che il redattore siriaco sia stato capace in quasi tutti i casi di nomi comuni presi in prestito dal greco di risalire al modello, nonostante le ambiguità della scrittura pahlavica. Questo non sembra molto verosimile.

Nöldeke himself had noted this (1890: 16), but he underestimated the number of the correct forms, and Ciancaglini's detailed study shows that many of Nöldeke's counter examples are, in fact, untenable for various reasons.

If Ciancaglini's arguments are valid, as they seem to be, how should we explain the evident Persianisms in the text, including many marginal notes that identify nouns and names with their Persian equivalents? As Ciancaglini

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83   Examples from *Ardā Wirāz nāmag*; *Dēnkard, Shahrestānīha ī Ērānshahr*, etc., have been collected by Ciancaglini (1998): 59. For the thoroughly negative image of Alexander in Zoroastrian literature, see Kotwal–Kreyenbrouk (1982). Hanaway's article *Eskandar-nāme* (1992) in the same encyclopaedia is dedicated to the positive line of Alexander images in Iran, but the only Zoroastrian evidence for this comes from the hypothetical Pahlavi *Alexander Romance*.

84   Later, she republished her study in a shortened English version (2001). Ciancaglini (1998): 58, note 4, also expresses doubts concerning some other hypothetical Pahlavi translations of Greek texts.

85   Listed in Ciancaglini (1998): 79–80.

points out (1998: 87–90), the Syriac text was written by Nestorian Christians and the oldest preserved manuscripts come from Northern Iraq, where the culture was heavily Persianized at least from 1500 onward, thus explaining the Persianisms, which, moreover, are more often Classical than Middle Persian.

Ciancaglini's study shows forcefully that Nöldeke's speculation is based on the slightest of evidence and as the existence of a Pahlavi *Alexander Romance* is not only undocumented but also counters what we might expect from a dynasty which saw Alexander as their archenemy, it becomes rather improbable.

Ciancaglini's study has, however, been almost routinely ignored. It has also been countered by van Bladel (2007): 61–64. Van Bladel draws attention to the fact that approximately 18% of the L/R cases are transmitted wrongly in the text, which, according to him "require[s] a real explanation and cannot be merely dismissed as accident or as 'weak' evidence" (p. 62). While certainly a relatively high number, van Bladel fails to consider that, if the text were to come through Pahlavi script, it would also need a real explanation of how 82% of the words were transmitted correctly through a script that does not properly distinguish between R and L.[86] The fact that most of the cases refer to personal or geographical names that were not familiar from elsewhere calls even more strongly for an explanation. Speaking about distorted Greek names, van Bladel also notes (p. 62) that "[n]ormally, however, translations directly from Greek into Syriac do not entail such bizarre distortions." Here van Bladel is basically right, but forgets that most works that were translated from Greek into Syriac were either scholarly or religious texts, both of which were usually more carefully translated and contained fewer unknown names than the *Alexander Romance*.

Finally (pp. 62–64), van Bladel is able to point out a few words where the Syriac text seems to keep a Pahlavi orthography (Balkh/bhly; the ending -īg in Sūndīqāyē "Sogdians"; plhy' and plwhy' for "Parthian") as well as the Persian gloss Wahrām (Classical Persian Bahrām) and the mention of pagan Iranian divine names. These five cases do deserve our attention, but they hardly match Ciancaglini's much more extensive material that would point in the other direction: many of the Persian glosses are *not* Middle Persian forms and the majority of graphemic representations *are* correct. Although unable to counter

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86   In epigraphic Middle Persian the two letters were distinguished, but not in the so-called Book Pahlavi, which did have a separate sign to make the distinction, but this was very rarely used. Had it been used in the hypothetical Pahlavi manuscript of the *Alexander Romance* to indicate graphemic distinction, one should then again explain the provenance of the wrong forms.

Ciancaglini's arguments convincingly enough, it has to be admitted that van Bladel is able to keep the discussion alive.

Recently, the first real piece of evidence for the possible existence of a Middle Persian *Alexander Romance* has been brought to light. Dieter Weber (2009) has discussed a small Pahlavi fragment, which might derive from this lost *Alexander Romance*. This small piece of parchment (P.Pehl. 371), datable to around 600, measures only 18x15 cm. and has 8 partially preserved lines of writing on the recto, while the verso is blank. What is curious is that the lines both above and below the eight lines of writing do not seem to have contained any writing (see Table XIV in Weber 2009).

According to Weber's reading (2009: 310), the fragment mentions a certain Timeus(?) of Samos, speaking to Alexander the Great ('lksndlkysl "Alexander the Caesar"). Such a person is not known from the *Alexander Romance*, and the episode (of which, due to the state of the fragment, we know unfortunately little) cannot be located in any of the various *Alexander Romances* (Weber 2009: 313), although Weber still puts forth the idea that it might yet be attested in some unknown variant version.

While this is not impossible, it seems rather speculative and there are features in the fragment that make one doubt this. The little we can get out of the text could equally well be a piece of wisdom literature. That the text only contains eight lines implies a short text, such as a maxim, and the blank verso speaks for the same.[87] If the text came from the *Alexander Romance*, the copyist would have had to copy only a small fragment of it separately, and there is no obvious reason why he should have done so. What the fragment may prove, though, is that there was an undercurrent of a less hostile attitude towards Alexander already in the Sasanid period.

All evidence considered, the existence of a Pahlavi *Alexander Romance* remains a hypothesis and cannot be taken as an established fact until more evidence is produced.[88] It seems much more probable that the story found its way first into Arabic literature and only from there to the Persians, who used Arabic as their literary language down to the tenth century and even later, and finally to written Persian sources. This must have happened, at the latest, in the *Prose Shāhnāme* (Chapter 4.2) as the story of Alexander is found in both al-Thaʿālibī and Firdawsī, both drawing on this source. It may also have found

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87   But note that there is some uncertainty in this. Weber worked on a photograph by Olaf Hansen together with the late Professor's notes, and has not had a photograph of the verso at his disposal (Weber 2009: 308).

88   It might also be noted that had it existed, the Pahlavi *Alexander Romance* would probably have been the longest single text extant in Pahlavi in the Sasanian period.

a place in some earlier Persian compilations of the tenth century, as elements of the *Alexander Romance* are already found in Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 33–34. Ḥamza probably draws on earlier Persian sources here, although, of course, contamination from Arabic material is quite possible. As he knew the Arabic tradition, it is possible that Ḥamza has here fleshed out his Persian material with material derived from Arabic literature.

2.4   Translation in the First Millennium

This chapter introduces some theoretical considerations on translation in the latter half of the first millennium.

In the first millennium, exactness was sometimes the ideal in translation, but it was restricted to certain genres. Basically, one can distinguish between four major categories of texts as to how they were handled in translation, namely:

1.   religious, especially sacred texts;
2.   scientific (including philosophical) texts;
3.   historical texts;
4.   literary texts.

In religious and scientific[89] texts, one easily finds cases where great effort is put into reproducing the text as exactly as possible. In the case of scientific texts, this was mostly functional: a formula obviously has to be translated as it is, otherwise the medicine will not work or works in a wrong way: a grain should not be changed into an ounce, however much that might entice the translator. In religion, it is the sanctity of the source text that demands exactitude in translation. The Word of God is not lightly to be tampered with.

In these cases, and especially in religious texts (but there are also scientific translations made according to the same principles), pseudo-translation is common, translating each word by its equivalent in the target language, in the worst of cases in the form of an interlinear translation, such as we find in many Persian or Turkish "translations" of the Qurʾān.[90] When read in connection with the original, such translations may be used as auxiliaries for comprehending

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89   For the scientific translation movement in general, see Chapter 2.1. Aristotle and Galen also enjoyed an extraordinary, almost canonized reputation, which made their texts similar to sacred texts.

90   Most recently, cf. Zadeh (2012).

the original, but when served separately, one can hardly make any sense of them.[91] Such translations may have been "exact" in the eyes of their perpetrators, as they still sometimes are in the popular mind ("literal" translation being understood as word-for-word equivalence), but they were already criticized at the time, as the famous comments by Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq in his *Risāla* show us, as well as the fact that such translations form a clear minority.[92]

Both religious translations, especially those of the Bible and the Qurʾān, and scientific translations, especially those made during the ʿAbbāsid translation movement,[93] have been extensively studied, whereas historical and literary texts, the remaining two major categories, have received much scarcer attention. In these groups, the translation strategy hardly ever aims at reproducing the text in an exact form, whether word-for-word or dynamically. We may have occasional passages of a text translated very exactly, showing that the translator had the ability to do so when he was willing to, but this rarely extends over several pages before we find major alterations vis-à-vis the original.

As an example of the different ideas of exactness in transmitting a text, let us consider a case of monolingual transmission (Arabic → Arabic) where both texts are, moreover, available in reliable editions, so that we may accept the passage as genuinely representing the quotation technique of the author. In his *Ghurar*, pp. 26–27, al-Thaʿālibī (wrote around 412/1022)[94] claims to be quoting the historian al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) (*wa-dhakara al-Ṭabarī*), yet only a minimal part of the passage is actually a quotation. Exactly quoted words are marked in the following excerpt from al-Ṭabarī in boldface, slightly changed ones in italics, and normal type indicates passages either very freely transmitted or with no equivalence whatsoever in al-Thaʿālibī's text:[95]

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91   Obviously, such interlinear translations were not originally meant to be read as independent translations at all, but merely as aids for understanding the source text, even though they sometimes started being transmitted on their own, without the original. The tradition continued until modern times, cf., e.g., the Ottoman Turkish interlinear translation in Saʿdī, *Zubdat Gulistān*. In British India, the same text was read with an English word-for-word commentary.

92   See Ḥunayn, *Risāla*, and Bergsträsser (1925) and (1932). Such fidelity to the original sometimes causes surprising problems. As the overwhelming majority of Sogdian texts are translations from a variety of languages, Sogdian syntax still defies understanding as it varies in accordance with the syntax of the source language.

93   Kraemer (1986), Gutas (1998), Griffith (2013).

94   For the question of the authorship of this work, see Chapter 3.6.

95   I have used the same example earlier in Hämeen-Anttila (2016).

wa-zaʿamū annahū lam yusmaʿ min umūri l-Ḍaḥḥāk shayʾun yustaḥsanu
ghayru shayʾin wāḥidin wa-huwa anna *baliyyatahū lammā shtaddat* wa-
dāma *jawruhū* wa-ṭālat ayyāmuhū ʿaẓuma ʿalā l-nāsi mā laqū minhu
fa-tarāsala l-wujūhu fī amrihī fa-ajmaʿū ʿalā l-maṣīri ilā bābihī fa-wāfā
bābahū l-wujūhu waʾl-ʿuẓamāʾu min al-kuwari waʾl-nawāẓi fa-tanāẓarū
fī l-dukhūli ʿalayhi waʾl-*taẓallumi* ilayhi waʾl-taʾattī li-stiʿṭāfihī fa-ttafaqū
ʿalā an yuqaddimū liʾl-khiṭābi ʿanhum *Kābī al-Iṣbahāniyya* fa-lammā *ṣārū*
ilā bābihī uʿlima bi-makānihim fa-**adhina lahum** fa-dakhalū wa-Kābī mu-
taqaddimun lahum fa-mathula bayna yadayhi wa-amsaka ʿan-i l-salāmi
thumma qāla: **ayyuhā l-maliku ayya l-salāmi usallimu ʿalayka? a-salāma**
man yamliku hādhihī **l-aqālīma kullahā am salāma man yamliku hādhā**
l-iqlīma l-wāḥida – yaʿnī **Bābila. fa-qāla lahu l-Ḍaḥḥāku: bal salāma**
man yamliku hādhihī **l-aqālīma** kullahā **li-innī maliku l-arḍi. fa-qāla**
lahū *l-Iṣbahāniyyu:* **fa-idhā kunta tamliku l-aqālīma kullahā** wa-kānat
yaduka tanāluhā ajmaʿa **fa-mā bālunā qad khuṣiṣnā bi**-maʾūnatika wa-
taḥāmulika wa-isāʾatika **min bayni ahli l-aqālīmi wa-kayfa** lam **taqsim**
amra kadhā-wa-kadhā **baynanā wa-bayna** l-aqālīmi. wa-ʿaddada ʿalayhi
ashyāʾa kāna yumkinuhū takhfīfuhā ʿanhum.

AL-ṬABARĪ, *TAʾRĪKH* I: 208–209//II: 8–9

They assert that only one thing that could be considered good was ever
said of al-Ḍaḥḥāk. When his affliction became great, his tyranny pro-
longed, and his days lengthened, the people felt that they were suffer-
ing so badly under his rule that their notables discussed the situation
and agreed to travel to al-Ḍaḥḥāk's gate. When the notables and power-
ful men from various districts and regions reached his gate, they argued
among themselves about coming into his presence and complaining to
him and achieving reconciliation with him. They agreed that Kābī al-
Iṣbahānī would approach him to speak on their behalf. When they were
traveling toward al-Ḍaḥḥāk's gate, al-Ḍaḥḥāk was told that they were
coming and permitted them to enter, which they did, with Kābī leading
them. The latter appeared before al-Ḍaḥḥāk but refrained from greeting
him. He said, "O king! What greeting should one give you? The greeting
for one who rules all the climes or the greeting for one who rules only
this clime – meaning Babylon?" Al-Ḍaḥḥāk replied, "Nay, but the greet-
ing for one who rules all these climes, for I am king of the earth." Then
al-Iṣbahānī said to him, "If you rule all the climes and your sway extends
to all of them, why then have we in particular been assigned the burden
of you, your intolerance, and your misdeeds out of all the peoples of the
climes? Why then do you not divide such-and-such a matter between us

and the other regions?" Speaking the truth boldly, he addressed the issue
and enumerated to al-Ḍaḥḥāk the ways in which the latter would be able
to lighten their burdens.

As no translation is involved, we cannot say that al-Thaʿālibī would not have
understood the text correctly or that he would have been unable to transmit
it into another language in an exact form.[96] Had he wanted to, he could have
copied al-Ṭabarī's text, letter by letter. He simply did not want to do so, yet he
explicitly claimed to be quoting from al-Ṭabarī. "Quoting" obviously meant to
him something else than it does to us, and the same goes for translating. While
"quoting" al-Ṭabarī, al-Thaʿālibī simply aims at making the text as readable and
as relevant for the reader as possible.[97]

Translations of historical and literary texts differ from each other, but in
most cases one might from a modern point of view speak of adaptations, re-
creations, or redactions, rather than translations proper. For our purposes, a
translation may be defined as any new text in the target language that repro-
duces, partly or completely, a text in the source language, with or without en-
largements and embellishments, abbreviations and changes.

Texts may be abbreviated or expanded, and often cases of both may be found
in the same text showing that length itself was not – at least, not always – an
issue, but the primary reason for changing the text was to maintain the inter-
est of a new audience. From historical texts, information that is no longer rel-
evant to contemporary readers may be excised and replaced by new material.
This may be seen, e.g., in the insertion of pieces of Islamic sacred history into
Persian national history in texts translated from Middle Persian into Arabic or
Classical Persian and directed at an Islamic readership.[98]

Usually such changes are made without comment, but sometimes they may
be made explicit, as is done in the Preface to Narshakhī's *Tārīkh-e Bukhārā*. The

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96   There are no major problems, either, in the textual history of the two texts that would
         concern us here.

97   The question, it should be emphasized, is not of conscious changes for ideological or any
         other such reasons.

98   This was already done in Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's "translation" of the *Khwadāynāmag*. As shown
         by, e.g., Kirste (1896) and Umīdsālār (1381b), the now-lost translation contained synchro-
         nizations of Persian history with the Islamic sacred history (see Chapter 3.7). The same
         tendency is found in all Arabic and Persian versions of the Book of Kings tradition, even
         in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, despite its obvious attempt to restrict the story to the original
         national elements.

book was written in Arabic in 332/943 and translated into Persian some two centuries later, in 522/1128. The translator states in his preface (*Tārīkh*, p. 2):

> This book was written in Arabic in an elegant style during the months of the year 332/943. Since most people do not show a desire to read an Arabic book, friends of mine requested me to translate the book into Persian. (…) Whenever unimportant items were mentioned in the Arabic manuscript, by the reading of which the temper became more fatigued, an account of such things was not made.
>
> TRANSLATION BY FRYE 2007: 2

In other words, the translator abbreviated the text without scruple when he thought his audience might otherwise lose interest.

In metrical texts, freedoms taken by the translator are usually even greater. Let us take one example from the Book of Kings tradition. Even though both Arabic and Classical Persian prose use a lot of hendiadys and parallelism, the number of repetitions in Firdawsī's epic was radically diminished in its Arabic prose translation, al-Bundārī's *al-Shāhnāma*. Likewise, battle scenes are often abbreviated in the text, yet in some cases the translator adds passages, which are usually discernible by their use of rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) and strong parallelism. In the following excerpt of Ḍaḥḥāk explaining to his courtiers why he was paralyzed with fear when Kāwe spoke to him (from al-Bundārī, *Shāhnāma* I: 34), clear similarities with Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* I: 49, have been marked in boldface:

> **lammā dakhala ʿalayya hādhā l-mutaẓallim raʾaytu ka-anna jabalan min al-ḥadīd ḥāla baynī wa-baynahu. wa-qad awjastu fī nafsī minhu khīfatan** qalqalat aḥshāʾī wa-shaghalat khāṭirī. **wa-mā arā dhālika illā min ʿalāmāt zawāl mulkī wa-nqilāb ḥālī.** wa-laʿalla shams dawlatī ādhanat biʾl-ghurūb wa-wajh ḥaẓẓī ʿalaʾhu yad al-shuḥūb.[99]

Translation, however, should not be the end of the story, but a beginning. If it is the end, then the text will have had little influence on the receiving culture and its transmission is in a certain sense a dead end or a miscarriage. Successfully

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99   As there is great variation between the manuscripts of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, an exact comparison is sometimes difficult (e.g., the above comparison includes one verse that has been considered a later addition and relegated by Khaleghi-Motlagh to a note), but the overall picture is clear: rhymed prose and strong parallelism are clearly markers of the translator taking freedoms with the text.

received texts are retranslated into further languages, back-translated into the original and transmitted and modified in the target language. The Book of Kings tradition supplies good examples of the processes.

In some cases, its very prestige may, somewhat paradoxically, have been the reason why a translated text had no afterlife, being neither copied nor circulated. Such texts were sometimes buried in (usually royal) libraries, where they were limited to their owners' pleasure and became tokens of wealth and power instead of being accessible to those who could have used them.[100] Several scientific translations seem to have suffered this fate, as well as at least one version of the Book of Kings, namely the manuscript in the treasury of the Caliph al-Maʾmūn (r. 198–218/813–833), which left no identifiable traces of its existence to later literature.[101]

In order to be successful a translation has to have an influence on later literature and culture in general. This it may do in various ways:

1)   through circulation: the translation is read,[102] copied, and circulated.
2)   through dissemination of the information it contains: this mainly takes place in microunits, which are quoted in other books. The quotations are often not acknowledged. In some cases, substantial parts of the text, or even its entirety, may be given as a quotation, or several quotations, within a larger text.[103]
3)   through transmission in redactions and rewritings: the translated text is modified by a later author, who needs not know the original source language. It should be emphasized that very often the redactor may, on purpose or not, give the impression that he is giving a new translation of the source text, while in fact he is merely elaborating on an existing one. Differentiating between the two in Arabic sources is made even more difficult by the fact that the verb *naqala* refers to both translating and transmitting.

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100   The Classical example of the inaccessibility of a royal library comes from the autobiography of Avicenna, see Gohlman (1974): 34–37.

101   For this, see Chapter 3.1.

102   In Arab-Islamic culture this may be documented by so-called *ijāzas* (testimonies of having studied the book) and ownership marks on the front leaf of a manuscript.

103   In Middle Persian literature, such cases include the *ʿAhd Ardashīr*, preserved, e.g., in Miskawayhi, *Tajārib* I: 97–107, and the *Letter of Tansar*, preserved in Persian translation made from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs lost Arabic translation of the Middle Persian original in Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-e Ṭabaristān*, pp. 12–41, (edited separately by Mīnuwī, translated by Boyce 1968a). See Macuch (2009): 181.

4)   through retranslations and back-translations: a target text may become a
       source text for another translator into a new language. A special case is
       when the new target language is the original source language or its de-
       scendant (e.g., Middle Persian → Arabic → Classical Persian). Sometimes
       material of the Book of Kings tradition has made interesting roundtrips
       between the three languages. To take but two examples:

   i)   MPers. *Khwadāynāmag* (sixth c.) → Ar. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (eighth c.),
         Siyar →(?) Ar. al-Ṭabarī (tenth c.), *Taʾrīkh* → CPers. Balʿamī (eleventh
         c.), *Tārīkhnāme* → Ar. trans. of Balʿamī (eleventh c.)
   ii)   MPers. *Khwadāynāmag* → Ar. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, *Siyar* →(?) CPers.
         Prose Shāhnāme (mid-tenth c.) → CPers. Firdawsī, *Shāhnāme* (early
         eleventh c.) → Ar. al-Bundārī (thirteenth c.), *al-Shāhnāma*[104]

In order to understand the dissemination process (2) fully, one should keep
in mind that in a manuscript culture the copying of bulky works was both
time consuming and expensive and the writing materials were far from cheap.
Hence, an essential part of transmission is when a text starts circulating in frag-
ments, i.e., quotations in other works (microunits). This we can very often see
in the case of the Arabic Book of Kings tradition: individual items are mined
from the original translation(s) and set into other books, where they start a
new life and continue their circulation as parts of a new book.

    In the case of redactions (3), a text may be translated only once, but then
freely modified in new redactions; or it may be translated several times, if it is
prestigious enough and retains this prestige for a longer period, as the works
of Aristotle did.[105] A mixed case is when an existing translation is used as a
basis for a new version which is done by correcting the translation against the
original and partly translating it anew. Both cases are amply documented in,
e.g., the case of Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq.

    Thirdly, texts may be re-translated (4) into other languages – some scientific
texts were first translated from Greek into Syriac and then from Syriac into
Arabic, sometimes also from Greek through Arabic into Syriac – or even back-
translated into a later form of the original language. Much of Middle Persian
literature went this way, being first translated into Arabic and then from Arabic
back into Classical Persian. It is rare that the text is translated back into the

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104   The various phases present problems that are not indicated in the simplified transmission
       scheme.
105   On the translation history of Aristotle into Arabic, see Peters (1968a), (1968b), and Gutas
       (1998).

original language, but, e.g., the Arabic translation of Balʿamī's rather free Persian translation and adaptation of al-Ṭabarī's Arabic *Taʾrīkh* is a good case of such back-translation.[106]

To sum up, the Persian Book of Kings tradition presents a good case study for textual transmission and translation. It contains a suitable selection of languages (mainly Middle Persian, Arabic, and Classical Persian) with a sufficiently complex transmission history. It also exhibits all the four cases of what happens to a successful translation, as delineated above. In addition, there is reason to assume that it also benefited from oral transmission. Finally, the Book of Kings tradition cuts across the genre boundaries of historical and literary texts, partaking in some measure of both. This, added to the large number of texts involved and their long transmission period (roughly, 500–1200 AD and onward) makes it an excellent case study which illuminates the features discussed in this chapter.

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106   Cf. Peacock (2007): 66–75.

Arabic Translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*

The history of the *Khwadāynāmag* in Arabic and Classical Persian translations and rewritings is tangled. During the eighth to tenth centuries the *Khwadāynāmag* was more than once translated into, or retold in, Arabic while the Middle Persian tradition dwindled. In Arabic, the tradition started living on its own and the early translations were freely modified and excerpted for a variety of historical works (see Chapter 3.6). At the same time, a number of other Pahlavi historical texts were translated into Arabic (Chapter 2.2.1).

The disappearance of most of the relevant texts makes it precarious to say much about the development of this tradition between the *Khwadāynāmag* of the sixth century and the works of Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī around the year 1000. There is a gap of four centuries to be filled. This chapter aims at filling in at least parts of that gap.

Fragments of Persian national history are found everywhere in Arabic sources, derivable either from the *Khwadāynāmag* or from other sources, written or oral, but the earliest tangible evidence for the book comes from mentions of its Arabic translations or versions in mid to late tenth-century sources, especially Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 350/961 or 360/971) *Taʾrīkh sinī l-mulūk*.

3.1 The List of Ḥamza

To understand the translation history of the *Khwadāynāmag*, we have to start with the best informed of all later authors, Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 9–10:[1]

> Their (the Persians') chronologies are all confused, rather than accurate, because they have been transmitted for 150 years[2] from one language into another and from one script, in which the number signs are

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1 Ḥamza and the other main Arabic sources where we have passages on the translations or quotations from them will be introduced in more detail in Chapter 3.6. The numbering in this and the subsequent lists has been added in order to facilitate the comparison of the lists. The passages and their immediate contexts are translated in Chapters 7.3–9.

2 It is not clear what this number refers to. It does come rather close to the number of years between the presumed date of the original Middle Persian work and Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation (see Chapter 6.2).

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equivocal, into another language, in which the "knotted" number signs are also equivocal. In this chapter, I have had to take the recourse of collecting variously transmitted manuscripts (*nusakh*),[3] of which I have come across eight, namely:

> H1. *Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-Furs*, translated/transmitted (*min naql*)[4] by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ;
>
> H2. *Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-Furs*, translated/transmitted (*min naql*) by Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī;
>
> H3. *Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk al-Furs*, which was taken from the Treasury (i.e., the Caliphal library) of al-Maʾmūn;
>
> H4. *Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-Furs*, translated/transmitted (*min naql*) by Zādūye ibn Shāhūye al-Iṣbahānī;
>
> H5. *Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-Furs*, translated/transmitted (*min naql*) or compiled (*aw jamʿ*) by Muḥammad ibn Bahrām ibn Miṭyār al-Iṣbahānī;
>
> H6. *Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk Banī Sāsān*, translated/transmitted (*min naql*) or compiled (*aw jamʿ*) by Hishām ibn Qāsim al-Iṣbahānī;
>
> H7. *Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk Banī Sāsān*, corrected (*min iṣlāḥ*) by Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh,[5] the *mōbad* of Kūrat Sābūr of the province of Fārs.

When I had collected them I compared them with each other until I managed to compile what is correct in this chapter.

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3 Rubin (2008b): 43ff., translates this as "versions", which is clearly misleading and flaws his further discussion. The term is vague, but one has to keep in mind that its primary meaning is "manuscript". Cf. also Grignaschi (1973): 89 and 104. Rubin and, as far as I can see, every scholar that has previously discussed the passage, makes the mistake of assuming, without any evidence, that the "manuscripts" mentioned by Ḥamza were necessarily copies of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

4 *Naql* is a difficult term as it may equally well refer to translating or transmitting. Cf. Chapter 3.5.

5 Read so, as in ed. Gottwaldt, p. 9. Note that this author is also quoted for matters other than Sasanian (cf. Chapter 3.2.6), so that a title more general than *Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk banī Sāsān* would seem more appropriate, if we do not want to postulate that he wrote two different works, one on the Sasanids, and another on Iranian history more widely. The passage is probably corrupt and the title may originally have belonged to the missing work of Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā, cf. Chapter 3.3.

As will later be shown, the missing eighth author is Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī.

It has usually been taken for granted that all the seven books mentioned on this list were translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*, but Ḥamza himself does not claim that this is so. He is merely speaking about the chronology of pre-Islamic Persian kings and about manuscripts which contained information on them, without specifying whether he is speaking of copies of one original work or of several different works. As some of the works are implied to have only been concerned with the Sasanians and as the *Khwadāynāmag* seems to have taken up the story from Gayōmard onward, it seems extremely improbable that all books on the list were translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

Ḥamza himself was not a translator and no translations from Middle Persian are attributed to him (see also Chapter 3.6). Moreover, he clearly speaks of translations from one language into another, which shows that the listed texts were in Arabic. Thus, one has to take H7 as just what it is said to be, namely "*Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk Banī Sāsān*, corrected (*min iṣlāḥ*) by Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh, the *mōbad* of Kūrat Sābūr of the province of Fārs," i.e., an Arabic book corrected by a Zoroastrian scholar; likewise, H4, Zādūye ibn Shāhūye bears a non-Islamic name but writes in Arabic. Whether the corrections of Bahrām were based on some Middle Persian manuscript(s) (perhaps, but not necessarily, the *Khwadāynāmag*), his own general knowledge of Persian national history, or some other Arabic texts, such as variant versions/translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*, is not stated and should not without further study be claimed in one way or the other.

Ḥamza's list may be compared with that of al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, p. 114/99//107–108:

> This is according to what I have heard from Abū l-Ḥasan Ādharkhwar the Architect (*al-Muhandis*). Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Balkhī al-Shāʿir[6] has told in *al-Shāhnāme* the story of the origin of mankind differently from what we have narrated. He claims that he revised his report on the basis of:
>
> B1. the *Kitāb Siyar al-mulūk* which is by ʿAbdallāh Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ [H1];
> B2. and the one by Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī [H2];
> B3. and the one by Hishām ibn al-Qāsim [H6];
> B4. and the one by Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh, the *mōbad* of the city of Sābūr [H7];
> B5. and the one by Bahrām ibn Mihrān al-Iṣbahānī [= H5?].

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6 Cf. Chapter 4.1.2.

These he collated with what

B6. Bahrām al-Harawī al-Majūsī brought him.[7]

Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Balkhī (as quoted by al-Bīrūnī), thus, omits the anonymous al-Maʾmūn manuscript and the Zādūye version and, like the preserved manuscript of Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*, does not mention Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī.

Both lists may further be compared with Ibn al-Nadīm's list of Persian translators in the *Fihrist*, p. 305/245//589. Ibn al-Nadīm's list is somewhat confused and has never been properly discussed. The subchapter is entitled "The Names of the Translators (*al-naqala*)[8] from Persian into Arabic" and it begins with the mention of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and others who have just been discussed by Ibn al-Nadīm and who do not seem to have been specifically or solely working with the *Khwadāynāmag*. The list ends with Isḥāq ibn Yazīd (see Chapter 3.2.7).

After this the text continues: *wa-min naqalat al-Furs*, followed by a list with mostly the same names that are on Ḥamza's list – the absence of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ is explicable by his having been mentioned a couple of lines earlier. The names listed are:

N1. Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī [H2];
N2. Hishām ibn al-Qāsim [H6];
N3. Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-*Kisrawī;[9]
N4. Zādūye ibn Shāhūye al-Iṣbahānī [H4];
N5. Muḥammad ibn Bahrām ibn Miṭyār al-Iṣbahānī [H5];
N6. Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh, the *mōbad* of the city of Sābūr [H7];
N7. ʿUmar ibn al-Farrukhān.[10]

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7   Whether this refers to a book by this Bahrām or merely to his oral knowledge is not clear. We should beware of automatically assuming that this was a book, especially as this Bahrām is not mentioned on the other lists.

8   Here the term is unequivocal because of the mention of the languages, but one has to remember that Ibn al-Nadīm probably did not see these works and he may well have been, and probably was, mistaken in some cases. E.g., he also lists (*Fihrist*, pp. 126/113//248, and 305/244//589) al-Balādhurī among the translators from Persian into Arabic, which is not confirmed by other sources.

9   Ed. Tajaddud has al-ᴋʀᴡʏ and ed. Flügel al-Kurdī, but both are obvious corruptions from al-Kisrawī. Ed. Fuʾād Sayyid ɪɪ: 151, has correctly al-Kisrawī, but it seems that the edition has been corrected without consulting the manuscripts or marking the emendations as such, which considerably lessens the scholarly value of this edition.

10   ʿUmar ibn al-Farrukhān is the only one about whom there is a comment (*wa-naḥnu nastaqṣī dhikrahu fī l-muṣannifīn*). Cf. Chapter 3.2.8.

There can be little doubt that Ibn al-Nadīm is here dependent on some source or sources that belong to the same tradition as that used by Ḥamza, or on Ḥamza himself, even though he does not mention Ḥamza by name.[11] The only additional names are Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā, erroneously dropped from Ḥamza's list (cf. below), and ʿUmar ibn al-Farrukhān (on whom, see Chapter 3.2.8).

There are still three further sources to be considered. The anonymous Persian *Mujmal al-tawārīkh* mentions (p. 2/2) among its sources the collection of Ḥamza (*majmūʿe-ye Ḥamza ibn al-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahānī*), who transmitted from the works of:

M1. Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī [H2];
M2. Zādūye ibn Shāhūye al-Iṣfahānī [H4];
M3. Muḥammad ibn Bahrām ibn Mityān/r [H5];
M4. Hishām ibn al-Qāsim [H6];
M5. Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī;[12]
M6. *o-kitāb-e tārīkh-e pādishāhān iṣlāḥ-e* Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh *mōbad-e* Shāpūr *az shahr-e Pārs bīrūn āwurde-ast.* [H7]

The list admittedly depends on Ḥamza. The lack of H1, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, is again explicable by his having been mentioned immediately before Ḥamza, the repetition being avoided by dropping the name from Ḥamza's list. Further, the al-Maʾmūn manuscript (H3) is dropped, which may be a simple mistake. The last words of M6 come curiously close to Ḥamza's description of the manuscript taken (*al-mustakhraj*) from al-Maʾmūn's Treasury (H3). Note that in the *Older Preface* (cf. below) al-Maʾmūn's manuscript and Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh follow each other (OP9–OP10), which makes it possible that the list of the *Mujmal* is corrupt and the al-Maʾmūn manuscript has been dropped by mistake, which would make the last words an attempt to make sense of the corrupt passage. Hence, M6 may hide behind itself two different books, the manuscript of the *History of the Kings of Persia* (**Taʾrīkh mulūk al-Furs*) taken from (cf. *bīrūn āwurde ast*) al-Maʾmūn's Treasury and Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh's book on Sasanian kings. The addition of Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā will be discussed below.

The fifth list is found in Balʿamī's *Tārīkhnāme* 1: 5.[13] The list is partly confused. Balʿamī quotes the following as his authorities:

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11   On p. 154/139//305, Ibn al-Nadīm does mention Ḥamza and several of his books, but the *Taʾrīkh* is not among these.

12   Not mentioned by Ḥamza on the list of his sources, but quoted later.

13   = *Tārīkh*, p. 4. Despite the different title, this is the same book, but as there are major differences in the manuscripts and, following them, the editions, both editions will be cited when necessary. For the problematic history of the text, see Peacock (2007).

BL1. *Shāhnāme-ye buzurg-e* Ḥamza-ye Iṣfahānī;[14]

BL2. *pisar-e* Muqaffaʿ *yaʿnī* ʿAbdallāh [H1];

BL3. Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī [H2];

BL4. Zādūye ibn Shāhūye [H4];

BL5. *nāme-ye* Bahrām ibn Bahrām [= H5?];

BL6. *nāme-ye Sāsāniyān*;

BL7. Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Khusrawī;[15]

BL8. Hāshim *o*-Qāsim-e [sic] Iṣfahānī[16] [H6];

BL9. *pādishāhān-e Pārs*;

BL10. (Zādūy-e)[17] Farrukhān *mōbad-e mōbadān.*[18]

The sixth and final list is that given in the Older Preface to the *Prose Shāhnāme*. The text of this list is slightly confused. My readings are explained in Chapter 7.4:[19]

OP1. *nāme-ye pisar-e* Muqaffaʿ [H1];

OP2. (*nāme-ye*) Ḥamza-ye Iṣfahānī;

OP3. Muḥammad-e Jahm-e Barmakī [H2];

OP4. Zādūy ibn Shāhūy [H4];

OP5. *nāme-ye* Bahrām-e [Mihrān-e] Iṣfahānī [= H5?];

OP6. *nāme-ye Sāsāniyān-e* Mūsā-ye ʿĪsā-ye Khusrawī;

OP7. Hishām-e Qāsim-e Iṣfahānī [H6];

OP8. *nāme-ye shāhān-e Pārs*;

OP9. *az ganj-khāne-ye* Maʾmūn[20] [H3];

OP10. Bahrāmshāh-e Mardānshāh-e Kirmānī [H7];

OP11. Farrukhān, *mōbadhān mōbadh-e* Yazdagird-e Shahriyār;

OP12. Rāmīn *ke bande-ye* Yazdagird-e Shahriyār *būd.*

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14   The title does not match the brevity of Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*, and in the other version of Balʿamī's book, *Tārīkh*, p. 4, Ḥamza's name is missing, see Chapter 3.7.

15   *Tārīkh*, p. 4, reads *nāme-ye Sāsāniyān-e* Mūsā-ye ʿĪsā-ye Khusrawī, thus making BL6 and BL7 one item.

16   *Tārīkh*, pp. 4–5, reads Hāshim ibn Qāsim. Note the form of the first name (instead of Hishām) in both editions.

17   Some of the manuscripts add this name, which may well be an error, copied from BL4.

18   *Tārīkh*, p. 5, reads: Farrukhān *mōbad-e mōbadān-e* Yazdagird. Cf. N7 and OP12.

19   Qazwīnī (1332) II: 52–56; Monchi-Zadeh (1975): 9; Minorsky (1956): 173. Cf. Chapter 4.2.

20   By deleating the conjunction *o* this could also be read together with the previous item, OP8.

We may now compare the six lists with each other:

	Ḥamza	Balkhī	Fihrist	Mujmal	Balʿamī	Older preface
Ḥamza	*	–	–	*	BL1	OP2
Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ	H1	B1	*	*	BL2	OP1
Ibn al-Jahm	H2	B2	N1	M1	BL3	OP3
anon./Maʾmūn	H3	–	–	–	–	OP9
Zādūye	H4	–	N4	M2	BL4	OP4
Muḥ. b. Bahrām	H5	B5(?)	N5	M3	BL5(?)	OP5(?)
Hishām	H6	B3	N2	M4	BL8	OP7
b. Mardānshāh	H7	B4	N6	M6	–	OP10
Bahrām al-Harawī	–	B6	–	–	–	–
Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā	–	–	N3	M5	BL7	OP6
al-Farrukhān	–	–	N7	–	BL10	OP11
shāhān-e Pārs	–	–	–	–	BL9	OP8
Rāmīn	–	–	–	–	–	OP12

The table is rather clear. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's absence from Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* and the *Mujmal* is easily explicable, as he has been mentioned a few lines earlier in both sources and his absence from this list merely avoids repetition. The anonymous manuscript "from the Treasury of al-Maʾmūn" seems to have fallen victim of scribal errors in several sources, cf. above.

If we equate Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī's Bahrām ibn Mihrān with Ḥamza's Muḥammad ibn Bahrām ibn Miṭyār, or consider him Muḥammad's father, then Zādūye's absence from al-Balkhī's list is probably accidental as it would seem that al-Balkhī has otherwise merely copied the list from Ḥamza, possibly from a manuscript from which Mūsā's name had already been dropped. On the other hand, the resemblance of the two lists might itself be accidental, in which case Zādūye's absence from the list merely means that he was not used by Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī, who really used, or at least had seen, the other sources he mentioned. However, I am ready to opt for the first explanation. In that case al-Balkhī's seemingly impressive list turns out to have been copied from Ḥamza.

As Ḥamza wrote around the mid-tenth century and Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī's date is not known (cf. Chapter 4.1.2), it might also be possible to turn the tables and

claim that it was Ḥamza who lifted the list from al-Balkhī.[21] In this case we should also assume that al-Bīrūnī, or his informant, for some reason dropped the titles of several books on the list, which is not very probable and tips the balance in Ḥamza's favour. In both cases, however, it should be noted that al-Balkhī was using Arabic sources, either Ḥamza (from whom he lifted the whole list) or a series of Arabic authors (certain for B1 and B2, probable because of the Islamic name and patronym in the case of B3, and possible or probable in the remaining two cases).

For ʿUmar ibn al-Farrukhān and Rāmīn, see Chapters 3.2.8 and 3.2.10.

Ḥamza lacks Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā, from whom he quotes soon after *in extenso* (pp. 16–21). Al-Kisrawī's book can hardly be equated with the anonymous manuscript from al-Maʾmūn's Treasury, as the *Older Preface* gives on its list both and as most sources would indicate that Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā lived somewhat later (Chapter 3.3).

Ḥamza claims to be listing eight sources while actually naming only seven.[22] The above table shows clearly that Mūsā's book has been accidentally dropped from Ḥamza's list. Comparing the order of the items listed in the various sources, we may surmise that Mūsā was either listed before Hishām (Balʿamī, the *Older Preface*) or after him (the *Mujmal*, Ibn al-Nadīm).

The analysis of these lists has an important consequence for the question of the Arabic translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*.[23] There is no specific reason to doubt Ḥamza's, or the other authors', reliability, yet one cannot refrain from noting that the list of eight names (H1–7 + Mūsā) is repeated from one source to

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21   In both cases, the later authors copied the list from Ḥamza, as shown by the presence of H4 on most of these lists and H3 in OP.

22   Rather surprisingly, few scholars, except for Rozen (1895) and Mittwoch (1909): 122, note 4, have commented on this. Gottwaldt himself ignores this in both his edition, pp. 8–9, and his translation (1848): 6–7, and neither does the new edition of the *Taʾrīkh* comment on this. Rosenthal (1968): 93, calls al-Kisrawī "one of the translators" of the *Khwadāynāmag* and quotes *Taʾrīkh*, p. 16 (erroneously p. 17 in Rosenthal, n. 1), but without reference to the *Fihrist*, from where this information actually comes. Likewise, Gutas (1998): 40, takes al-Kisrawī as a translator of the *Khwadāynāmag*, but only quotes Ḥamza where he is not mentioned as such. Zakeri (2008): 32–33, lists him as a translator mentioned by Ḥamza, which he is not, and wrongly introduces the al-Maʾmūn manuscript (H3) as the missing eighth version. Rypka (1959): 152, mentions Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* aside that by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ as the two most important of these translations, but without explaining where this information comes from.

23   Also more generally for early Persian historiography. E.g., Daniel (2012): 110, enumerates the names on this standard list as found in Balʿamī's *Tārīkhnāme* and, taking Balʿamī's words at face value, writes: "Balʿami consulted a broader range of sources about ancient Iran, written and oral, in order to emend Tabari's text." In the light of my study this would not seem a felicitous formulation.

the other, mainly in the same order and with few changes or additions, which makes one doubt whether the authors who listed them really had used, or even seen, them, or whether they just lifted the list from an earlier source to include it in their own book to show off their meticulous scholarship, much like a modern scholar would lift an impressive list of scholarly references from an earlier study without actually having read them.[24] It seems that we only have Ḥamza's word for the existence of some of these translations or reworkings.

3.2 Translators and Their Translations

This chapter briefly studies the authors mentioned in Chapter 3.1 and adds two further informants in Chapter 3.2.11. Logically, this chapter should begin with the first known translator, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, but as he is a special case because of the relatively large amount of information we have both on him and his translation, he will be discussed in a separate chapter (3.4). Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī, or Khusrawī, will also be dedicated a separate chapter (3.3) for similar reasons.

3.2.1 *Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī*
After Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, the first book Ḥamza mentions on his list, is *Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-Furs*, translated/transmitted (*min naql*) by Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī.[25] Considering the title, the book may have been a translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 284, quoting Abū Maʿshar al-Balkhī (d. 272/886 or later), mentions an astrological work written by him for the Caliph al-Maʾmūn, which may refer to this book. If so, Ibn al-Jahm's *Siyar al-mulūk* probably was an astrological history mainly concerned with chronology.

Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm was intimate with al-Maʾmūn (d. 218/833), whom he survived. He acted as the Governor of Fārs and al-Jibāl under this Caliph and was interested in science and philosophy. Al-Jāḥiẓ knew him personally and often quotes him.[26]

Zakeri (2008): 31, takes a verse by Ibn al-Jahm (*al-Fursu waʾl-Rūmu lahā ayyāmū / yamnaʿu min tafkhīmihā l-Islāmū*) possibly to be "a vague resonance of Ibn al-Jahm's interest in the *Siyar al-mulūk*." The verse, however, is not by Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm, but by ʿAlī ibn al-Jahm (d. 249/863),[27] who wrote a

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24   Actually, we will see that something like this did happen in the case of al-Kisrawī's purported translation of the *Sindbādnāme*, see below, note 247.
25   Lecomte (1993); Lecomte (1958); Zakeri (2008): 30–31; *GAS* III: 362.
26   Zakeri (2008): 31, note 13.
27   See Ullmann (1966): 55; ʿAlī ibn al-Jahm, *Dīwān*, p. 242, v. 206. This poem was also used by al-Masʿūdī, cf. *Murūj* §49.

short versified history of the world in a mere 330 verses. The poem pays little attention to pre-Islamic Iran (vv. 195–196, 202, 206) and has no connection with the Book of Kings tradition.

Curiously, the mention of Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm in Ḥamza (both on the list and later) and the list's later reverbarations in sources dependent on it, seem to be the only cases where he is linked to Persian national history. He is also not otherwise known to have translated from Middle Persian, although his governorship in Fārs and al-Jibāl means that he probably had in his entourage people who were able to read Pahlavi.

Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm's close connections with al-Ma'mūn raise the question whether the manuscript taken out of the palace library of al-Ma'mūn (Chapter 3.2.2) might have been the same as Ibn al-Jahm's translation. However, there is not much evidence on which to build any theories either way.

3.2.2   Ta'rīkh mulūk al-Furs, *Taken from the Treasury of al-Ma'mūn*

Kitāb Ta'rīkh mulūk al-Furs, taken from the Treasury (i.e., the Caliphal library) of al-Ma'mūn is a book about which we seem to know nothing, except what there is on Ḥamza's list. According to the title, this book, too, may have been a translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*. As such, finding a manuscript in an old treasury is a topos in Arabic literature, but in this case we should not hasten to judge it as such.[28] We know that the Caliph al-Ma'mūn was interested in pre-Islamic Iran and its history and had contacts with Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm, who is also listed as a translator from Persian (Chapter 3.2.1). Whether the translation of Ibn al-Jahm and the manuscript taken from the Caliphal Treasury might even be identified with each other, is an open question, as it seems clear that the many authors who mention both as separate works had, in fact, not seen the books themselves, so that confusion between the two cannot be excluded. On the other hand, it is more than probable that al-Ma'mūn had several works related to pre-Islamic Iran in his Treasury.

3.2.3   *Zādūye ibn Shāhūye al-Iṣbahānī*

Ḥamza's list mentions a *Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-Furs*, translated/transmitted (*min naql*) by Zādūye[29] ibn Shāhūye al-Iṣbahānī. According to the title, this book, too, may have been a translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*. The author is little

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28   Cf. the story of *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar* found in 113/732 in the treasuries (*khazā'in*) of Persian kings and translated for the Caliph Hishām (al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 106//151), see Chapter 7.2. Cf. also Grignaschi (1969): 15.

29   The name Zādūye is also known as the title of the kings of Sarakhs, see al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, p. 116/101//109.

known,[30] but his name shows that he was Persian. About his date we know nothing, and the one suggested by Adhkāʾī (2001): 559, mid-third century AH, seems merely to be a guess, but a quite plausible one. Adhkāʾī (2001): 504, takes the first name to reflect an original *Dādūye (Dādawayh).[31]

Al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, p. 53/44//53, quotes the names of the five leap days of the Zoroastrians from another of Zādūye's books, *Kitāb ʿIllat aʿyād al-Furs*. In *Āthār*, p. 263,[32] he mentions a book by Muḥammad ibn Bahrām ibn Miṭyār, without a title, about the months of the Persians, as well as Zādūye's book, and a book by Khurshīdh ibn Ziyār. These three he amalgamated together in his chapter IX on the Persian months (pp. 263–289). As Zādūye's book is mentioned first it is possible that it was the main source for this chapter.

Within this chapter, Zādūye is twice quoted by name. On pp. 267–268/217–218//202, there is a quotation from this book (*wa-dhakara Zādūye fī kitābihi*) narrating in a concise form the life of Jamshīd, material that might also have been found in the translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*. The passage, though, is linked to the *nawrūz*, giving an explanation about the origin of the *nawrūz* and merely spilling over to tell the story of Jamshīd more extensively, which makes it more probable that this refers to the *Kitāb ʿIllat aʿyād al-Furs* (cf. also Chapter 3.2.4).

The other quotation comes on p. 272/221–222//207, where the fourth of Shahrīwar-māh, *rūz-shahrīwar*, is given as the date of the *shahrīwarakān* feast. Zādūye is quoted as an authority for calling this day the Ādhurjashn; whether the description on the following lines comes from Zādūye is not clear.

Zādūye's *Siyar al-mulūk* does not seem to be quoted in any of our sources.

3.2.4 *Bahrām ibn Mihrān ibn Miṭyār al-Iṣbahānī; Muḥammad ibn Bahrām ibn Miṭyār al-Iṣbahānī; Muḥammad ibn Miṭyār*[33]

Ḥamza's list mentions a *Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-Furs*, translated/transmitted (*min naql*) or compiled (*aw jamʿ*) by Muḥammad ibn Bahrām ibn Miṭyār al-Iṣbahānī. According to the title, this book, too, may have been a translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*. The *Mujmal* and Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, repeat the name from Ḥamza, but other works that seem to copy the list have slightly different forms for the name: al-Bīrūnī (← Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī) has Bahrām ibn Mihrān al-Iṣbahānī, Balʿamī has Bahrām ibn Bahrām, and the *Older Preface* has Bahrām-e Iṣfahānī. It is significant that two of these sources, Balʿamī and the

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30   See *GAL* S I: 237, and Zakeri (2008): 31.

31   The variant Zādūy ibn Shāhūy is found in the *Older Preface*.

32   This passage falls into the lacuna in Sachau's edition, after p. 214.

33   See also Zakeri (2008): 33.

Older Preface, insert the respective names in exactly the same position where Muḥammad ibn Bahrām appears on Ḥamza's list, which gives strong grounds to suspect that all the three persons are, in fact, identical, especially as the ductuses of the names Muḥammad, Bahrām, and Mihrān are not too far from each other.[34]

Al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, p. 263, mentions the book of Muḥammad ibn Bahrām ibn Miṭyār, without giving its title, about the months of the Persians, together with Zādūye's book, and a book by Khurshīdh, or Khwarshīd, ibn Ziyār al-Mōbadh (p. 272). These three he amalgamated together in his chapter IX on the Persian months (pp. 263–289). On p. 331/266//258, al-Bīrūnī then quotes more Persian calendar/astronomical matters on the authority of Muḥammad ibn Miṭyār. The same person is also quoted on p. 323/259//250, this time without clear connection to matters Persian (astronomical matter in a chapter on Byzantine months).

It is noteworthy that both Zādūye and Muḥammad ibn Bahrām should thus have composed two separate works – one a translation of a Pahlavi historical book, possibly the *Khwadāynāmag*, the other a book on month names and other calendar matters. It is possible that in both cases there may only be one book which contained both historical/chronological and calendar material, which would be a natural combination and which also al-Bīrūnī combined in his *Āthār*.[35] Moreover, as we have already seen and as will be discussed later, the *Khwadāynāmag* itself seems to have been interested in calendar matters which, as we well know, were also of great interest to the Sasanids, and Ḥamza's *Ta'rīkh* contains, in addition to the historical part on pre-Islamic Iran (pp. 9–51), a chapter on the Persian *nawrūz*, synchronized with the Hijrī calendar (pp. 128–144).

3.2.5 *Hishām ibn Qāsim al-Iṣbahānī*

Kitāb Ta'rīkh mulūk Banī Sāsān, translated/transmitted (*min naql*) or compiled (*aw jamʿ*) by Hishām ibn Qāsim al-Iṣbahānī is not known from any other source than Ḥamza's list and the works dependent on it. The title of the book would seem to restrict it to the history of the Sasanian kings only. As such, it reminds one more of *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar* (Chapter 2.2.1) than of the *Khwadāynāmag*, and it is quite possible that it had nothing to do with the *Khwadāynāmag*. It should again be emphasized that Ḥamza does *not* claim that all the books on his list were translations of the same work.

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34   For Bahrām and Mihrān this should be obvious. Muḥammad, written quickly, has a certain similarity with the first three letters of Bahrām/Mihrān.

35   Also al-Kisrawī (Chapter 3.3) is credited with similar materials.

3.2.6 *Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh*

Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh,[36] the *mōbad* of *kūrat* (or *madīnat*) Sābūr in the province of Fārs,[37] is found on Ḥamza's list as the author of *Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk Banī Sāsān*, which he is said to have corrected (*min iṣlāḥ*). The Older Preface to the *Prose Shāhnāme* gives his name as Bahrāmshāh-e Mardānshāh-e Kirmānī.

He is also mentioned later in Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*, p. 22, at the beginning of chapter I: 3:[38]

> (What follows) repeats what was mentioned in the first chapter of this History, with a commentary, which was brought by Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh, the *mōbad* of the district of Shābūr from the country (*balad*) of Fārs.
>
> Bahrām al-Mōbadhānī said: I collected more than twenty manuscripts of the book titled *Khudāynāme* and corrected (*aṣlaḥtu*) from them (i.e., on their basis) the chronologies (*tawārīkh*) of the kings of Persia from Kayūmarth, the Father of Mankind until the end of their days and the transfer of kingship from them to the Arabs.

The passage given on the authority of Bahrām continues until the end of p. 25, containing an extremely dry chronological account of the regnal years of each king from Gayōmard to Yazdagird III, divided into four categories (*ṭabaqa*), as usual.

The quotation proves that Bahrām did discuss more than merely the Sasanids and it seems obvious that *Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk Banī Sāsān* is an erroneous title. The two passages would seem to refer to the same text, which is further supported by the fact that there is some confusion in Ḥamza's list, from which one author, al-Kisrawī (Chapters 3.1 and 3.3), has been dropped and there is reason to believe that the latter's book was concerned with the Sasanians only, so his name may have been dropped from between the title and Bahrām's name. Hence, it seems probable that the title does not belong to

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36 Read so, as in ed. Gottwaldt, p. 9.

37 See also Zakeri (2008): 31–32. Whether this Bahrām was the father of Māhūy-e Khwarshīd, son of Bahrām, from [Bi]shābūr, of the *Older Preface* (§6, see 7.4), as Taqizadeh has suggested (see Shahbazi 1991: 36, note 96), is not clear to me. I do not find it to be necessarily the case, but if he was, the *Prose Shāhnāme* of Abū Manṣūr may have been influenced by his version/translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

38 Ḥamza is also the source for al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, pp. 123–124/108–109//114 (*fī nuskhat al-mōbad*, i.e., ibn Mardānshāh ← Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 22–23), 130–131/114–115//117–118, 141–142/125–126//125, and 144/129//127. The "*mōbad* in Shiraz", mentioned in *Āthār*, p. 53/44//53, is most probably another person.

Bahrām's book and, based on Ḥamza, *Ta'rīkh*, pp. 22–25, we should probably take Bahrām's book to have contained the whole national history of Persia, in which case it may well be a version or translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*. In the *Mujmal*, p. 2/2, the book is referred to as *kitāb tārīkh-e pādishāhān* [*ke*] Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh *mōbad-e* Shāpūr *az shahr-e Pārs bīrūn āwurde-ast*. The passage seems to confuse the anonymous manuscript from al-Ma'mūn's Treasury with the book of Bahrām (cf. Chapter 3.1).[39]

As Bahrām is found on Ḥamza's list, his work must have been in Arabic, and it is quite possible that what follows in Ḥamza, *Ta'rīkh*, pp. 22–25, is the whole contents of the book of Bahrām, although it may, of course, be merely an excerpt from it. There is no indication that Bahrām would have written in Middle Persian.[40]

3.2.7   *Isḥāq ibn Yazīd*

Ibn al-Nadīm's list of Persian translators in the *Fihrist*, p. 305/245//589, also mentions an Isḥāq ibn Yazīd in a chapter which is entitled "The Names of the Translators from Persian into Arabic".[41] The chapter begins with the mention of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and others who have just been discussed by Ibn al-Nadīm and who do not seem to have been specifically or solely working with the *Khwadāynāmag*. The list ends with Isḥāq ibn Yazīd, after which there follows a sentence which can be understood in two different ways, according to how we choose to vocalize the verb NQL: "among what he translated (*fa-mimmā naqala*) – or: among what was translated (*nuqila*) – was the *Sīrat al-Furs* known as the **Khudāynāme*" – the title has been variously distorted (ed. Tajaddud: *ḤD'D-nāme*; ed. Flügel: *Ikhtiyār-nāme*; ed. Fuʾād Sayyid II: 151: *Bakhtiyār-nāme*; trans. Dodge follows Flügel), but the emendation is obvious. Isḥāq's name is not found on the other lists and nothing is known about him.

After this the text continues: *wa-min naqalat*[42] *al-Furs*, followed by the list of names discussed in Chapter 3.1. The formulation "and from among translators of the Persians" is odd and superfluous, coming under a heading *asmāʾ al-naqala min al-fārsī ilā l-ʿarabī*. The list that follows seems to give names known from other sources as transmitters and translators of the *Khwadāynāmag* and

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39   See also Rubin (2008b): 38.

40   Rubin (2008b): 56–57, speculates on the possibility that the book might have been in the original Pahlavi, but his argumentation is based on not realizing that Ḥamza's list is confused. The same goes for his speculation on whether it contained only the Sasanian history.

41   Zakeri (2008): 33, mentions him briefly.

42   With *tāʾ marbūṭa*.

other historical works. The passage should, perhaps, be emended to *wa-min naqalat* [*Siyar mulūk*] *al-Furs*.

Another possible emendation would read (emendations in boldface): *Isḥāq ibn Yazīd, naqala min al-fārsī ilā l-ʿarabī. fa-mimmā nuqila: Kitāb Sīrat al-Furs al-maʿrūf bi-*Khudāynāme. wa-**mim**man naqala**hu** [[**al-Furs**]]: Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm*, etc. By adding a preposition, changing one *tāʾ marbūṭa* into H, and striking out one word (or, alternatively, emending it to *min al-fārsī*), one arrives at a coherent reading ("Isḥāq ibn Yazīd: he translated from Persian into Arabic. [New paragraph:] Among what was translated was the *Kitāb Sīrat al-Furs*, known as the *Khwadāynāmag*.[43] Among those who translated it were Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm, etc."). In both cases, the unknown Isḥāq ibn Yazīd should be taken off the list of translators of the *Khwadāynāmag*.[44]

3.2.8 *Farrukhān and ʿUmar ibn al-Farrukhān*

Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, p. 305/245//589, lists ʿUmar ibn al-Farrukhān as one of the translators of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Ibn al-Nadīm says (*Fihrist*, p. 305) that he will discuss this author later. He does, in fact, discuss the astronomer ʿUmar ibn al-Farrukhān al-Ṭabarī on p. 332/273//649–650.[45] This ʿUmar was a well-known astronomer who died around 200/816 and worked with astronomical texts. Nowhere is he credited with any interest in history, although, of course, chronology and astronomy are linked fields of interest.

As it seems that Ibn al-Nadīm has more or less lifted the list of N1–N6 from an earlier source (cf. Chapter 3.1), we may doubt whether he had any manuscript evidence for his seventh author either. In his stead, we find in Balʿamī's *Tārīkhnāme* and the *Older Preface* another Farrukhān, labelled *mōbad-e mōbadān* (BL10) or *mōbadān mōbad* of Yazdagird-e Shahriyār (OP11).[46]

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Ibn al-Nadīm, Balʿamī, and the Preface to the *Prose Shāhnāme* are speaking about the same person, especially as on two lists he is mentioned in the same place, after Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh (N6, OP10). A *mōbad* would be a much more probable person to work on Persian history than an astronomer, who, it must be admitted, could have been interested in chronology, but the odds seem very much against the

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43 As we know that Ibn al-Nadīm lifted the list from an earlier source, probably Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*, and did not compile it himself, his identification of the following titles as translations of the *Khwadāynāmag* is obviously only an educated–but clearly mistaken–guess.

44 For Isḥāq, see also Adhkāʾī (2001): 561.

45 With a short note on him on pp. 327–328/267–268//640–641. For his biography, see Ullmann (1972): 306–307. See also *GAS* VII: 324–325.

46 Also some of Balʿamī's manuscripts add the name of Yazdagird here.

astronomer ʿUmar ibn al-Farrukhān, even though we know that he did translate Greek astronomical texts from Middle Persian.[47] If the *mōbad* is the translator, Ibn al-Nadīm's ʿUmar ibn al-Farrukhān would turn out to be a wild guess and an unsuccessful attempt by Ibn al-Nadīm or his source to identify an otherwise unknown Farrukhān by equating him with a famous astronomer. The idea that he could have been the *mōbadān mōbad* of Yazdagird-e Shahriyār is naturally impossible, as otherwise we have no information on seventh-century translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*, except for the clearly legendary tale in the *Bāysunqurī Preface*, see Chapter 6.2.

3.2.9 *Bahrām al-Harawī al-Majūsī*
Bahrām al-Harawī al-Majūsī is only mentioned by al-Bīrūnī, quoting Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī. Al-Bīrūnī does not, strictly speaking, attribute any book to him, merely saying that al-Balkhī collated the other five books with what this Bahrām brought him. This may have been a book but it may also have been a collection of notes or even information given orally to al-Balkhī.

3.2.10 *Rāmīn*
The Preface of the *Prose Shāhnāme* also mentions a "Rāmīn who was the servant of Yazdagird-e Shahriyār" among the translators. As in the case of Farrukhān (Chapter 3.2.8), the text seems corrupt and makes no sense as such.

3.2.11 *ʿUmar Kisrā and al-mōbad al-Mutawakkilī*
Chapters 3.1, and 3.2.1–10 study the authors on Ḥamza's list and Chapter 2.2.1 discusses the translations of historical works from Pahlavi into Arabic, some of them attributed to their translators, some anonymous. In addition, there are several early persons who transmitted historical information from the Middle Persian tradition to later authors, whether written or oral, and if written, whether the *Khwadāynāmag* or some other source. Two persons in this category will be briefly discussed in this chapter as examples of what must have been a much more numerous class of people.

In his *Murūj*, al-Masʿūdī quotes five times (§§536, 538, 560, 600, 660)[48] a certain ʿUmar Kisrā always through a lost book by Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar ibn

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47 Adhkāʾī (2001): 557, tries to identify ʿUmar ibn Farrukhān with ʿUmar Kisrā, for whom see Chapter 3.2.11, but ignores the biographical material on the latter.

48 §986 is wrongly indexed s.v. Kisrawī. The word is there used as an adjective (*kisrawī*) in a verse by Abū Dulaf. On this verse, see von Grunebaum (1969): 130. The paragraphs on ʿUmar Kisrā are based on a little study written together with Dr. Ilkka Lindstedt (Helsinki),

al-Muthannā.[49] In *Murūj* §536, al-Masʿūdī defines this ʿUmar as "famous in the knowledge of/about Persians and the stories of their kings so that he was given the *laqab* ʿUmar Kisrā" (cf. §538).

This ʿUmar Kisrā seems to be little attested elsewhere.[50] In al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh Baghdād* X: 280–281, he is mentioned in the middle of an *isnād* and briefly characterized: "his *kunya* was Abū Ḥafṣ and he had knowledge of the stories of the Persians and the Kisrā kings (*mulūk al-akāsira*). This is where he got his *laqab* "Kisrā" from. Al-Haytham ibn ʿAdī transmitted from him."[51]

The *Dhayl* to this work by Ibn al-Najjār (XX: 134–135) contains a separate article (no. 1307) on him. There he is (originally) said to have been from al-Madāʾin.[52] He lived in Kufa, but came from Basra, and he was a *mawlā* to Banū Sulaym. He is connected with Persian lore and there is a story about how he received his cognomen Kisrā while he was in al-Ahwāz in the court of its Governor, Saʿīd ibn ʿAbdallāh al-Kūfī: having spoken of the wives of Kisrā he was found to be unable to answer the question how many of his wives survived the Prophet. He was imprisoned until he had memorized this piece of Islamic lore.[53] The relation of ʿUmar Kisrā and Abū ʿUbayda is further discussed in Chapter 3.6.

Another such informant was the *mōbadān mōbad* Abū Jaʿfar Zar(ā)dusht (Muḥammad) ibn Ādhurkhwar, who got his nickname *al-mōbad al-Mutawakkilī* from his closeness to the Caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 232–247/847–861) and had already served the Caliph al-Muʿtaṣim (r. 218–227/833–842).[54] Al-Kisrawī (Chapter 3.3) knew him (*samiʿtu al-mōbad al-Mutawakkilī yaqūl*; al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, p. 273/223//208) and quoted him on the *mihrajān*, and Ḥamza al-Iṣbahānī narrated an anecdote involving him and the Caliph al-Mutawakkil

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which originally appeared as an Appendix to Hämeen-Anttila (2013). For the present context, the text has been modified from the original.

49   On whom, see *GAL* I: 103–104; *GAL* S I: 162; Weipert (2007): 24–25. Zakeri (2008): 36, also briefly discusses ʿUmar Kisrā and Abū ʿUbayda, but ignores the biographical material.

50   In the Index to al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* VII: 524, Pellat says that he has not found this ʿUmar Kisrā in any other source than in Ibn Badrūn's *Sharḥ qaṣīdat Ibn ʿAbdūn*, p. 31, where he is quoted from the *Murūj*.

51   He is not mentioned in Leder (1991).

52   Ibn al-Najjār takes this from Ibn al-Faraḍī's *Alqāb*, p. 178, which should be corrected accordingly.

53   The same story is told in Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh Madīnat Dimashq* XLIII: 278, in an article on ʿAlī ibn Yazīd ibn al-Walīd. In addition, ʿUmar Kisrā is briefly mentioned in Ibn Ḥajar's *Nuzʾha* II: 122 (as ʿAmr Kisrā).

54   See also Zakeri (2008): 33–34.

in his *Risāla fī l-ashʿār fī l-nayrūz wa'l-mihrajān*.[55] He is also rather often quoted in other works as an authority on Persian matters[56] and he worked on the calendar reform of al-Mutawakkil. He is also cited as an authority on Persian alphabets. He transmitted historical material, being cited in MS-Sprenger as the chief authority on the last battle of Mihr-Narsē against the Romans.[57]

Neither of these two is said to have written or translated anything relevant to the *Khwadāynāmag*. Their wide knowledge of pre-Islamic Iran probably derived from various sources, among which the *Khwadāynāmag* may well have been one. What is important, though, is that they are represented as oral informants, people telling others about pre-Islamic Iran. This mode of transmission of knowledge through learned oral/aural channels will not have been restricted to a few persons only, but learned Persians will have both informally told and formally taught bits and pieces of Persian history to an interested audience, and such learned lore will have found its way into Arabic historical texts, as we know for certain in the case of Abū ʿUbayda.

3.3   Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī

In tenth-century sources, a Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī, or Khusrawī, is sometimes referred to, but we know little about his life and activities.[58] The aim of this

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55   Quoted in al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, p. 38/31//36. Here the *mōbad* is not identified, but it seems safe to assume that he was Abū Jaʿfar Zardusht. This identification is also made by Zakeri (2008): 33–34, and Adhkāʾī (2001): 483–484. Cf. also Ḥamza, *Tanbīh*, pp. 21–24. For a discussion of the passage transmitted on al-Mutawakkilī's authority in Ḥamza, *Tanbīh*, see also Lazard (1971): 361–362. He is possibly also the same as Ibn al-Nadīm's "*al-murīd al-aswad*", whom al-Mutawakkil invited from Fārs and who elaborated *Kalīla wa-Dimna* (*Fihrist*, p. 364/305//717): the first part is clearly a mistake for *al-mōbad* and the whole might be a corruption from *al-Mōbadān-mōbad*.

56   He is quoted four times in MS-Sprenger (see Rubin 2005: 56–57) and there also once as an authority on the Nabaṭ in a passage related to Ḍaḥḥāk. He is also quoted in Balʿamī, *Tārīkh*, p. 433.

57   Nöldeke (1920): xxiii, note 1.

58   Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā does not seem to have attracted much attention from modern scholars. Baron von Rozen's Russian article from 1895, summarized by Kirste (1896) and, later, Christensen (1917–34) I: 64–68, and II: 81–82, as well as (1936): 54–55, and further quoted through these by Ṣafā (1374): 88–89, Humāyūnfarrukh (1377): 746–747, and many others, is still our main source on him. Grignaschi's notes on him in (1969) and (1973) seem to be the most recent substantial contributions to al-Kisrawī studies, although Grignaschi's main aim was to study the *Nihāya*. Adhkāʾī (2001): 555–563, especially pp. 559–560, is also of value. Zakeri (2008): 32–33, conveniently summarizes in English what is found in several

chapter is to discuss the scant evidence at our disposal and to shed at least some light on this shadowy character, even though in the end we still have to admit that we know little about who he was and what he did.

Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā was on the original list of Ḥamza (Chapter 3.1), though his name was rather early dropped from it. If we take *nāme-ye Sāsāniyān* to be the title of Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī's book in the Preface of the *Prose Shāhnāme* and in *Tārīkh-e Balʿamī* – it would fit the supposed contents of the book, cf. below – the missing of Mūsā's name from Ḥamza's list could be explained as a copyist's error. For the original "**Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk Banī Sāsān (nāme-ye Sāsāniyān* in the Persian translation) by al-Kisrawī and xxx by Hishām" the copyist inadvertently dropped al-Kisrawī's name and the following title, thus reducing the number of authors from eight to seven. In the *Mujmal* and the *Fihrist*, though, it should be emphasized, Hishām comes *before* Mūsā, not *after* him, which makes this explanation problematic. Thus, we cannot be sure whether **Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk Banī Sāsān* was the title of his book.

Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī is firmly established on the list in several sources, though accidentally dropped from the original. But what was his book like?[59] The term *naql*, used in Ḥamza's list, is ambivalent and Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā hardly "translated" anything, at least for this work, but more probably wrote a Persian history based on some original historical source(s) translated from Pahlavi. Mūsā may have synchronized Persian history with the sacred history or he may also have written a rather dry chronology, as far as we can deduce from Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh* (for other sources, see below). Whether Mūsā was able to use Middle Persian texts in the original language is questionable. At least

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Persian studies, but contributes little new. *GAL* I: 158, mainly uses Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* and Rozen (1895). Brockelmann's claim that al-Kisrawī is quoted by al-Jāḥiẓ is erroneous: al-Kisrawī is only quoted by ps.-al-Jāḥiẓ in his *Maḥāsin*, whereas in the real works of al-Jāḥiẓ, Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī is not, as far as I have been able to verify, even mentioned once. The other al-Kisrawī to be discussed in this article, ʿAlī ibn Mahdī, is occasionally said to have transmitted from al-Jāḥiẓ, see, e.g., al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī* XXII: 244.

59   Rozen attempted to answer this in his article (1895), classifying al-Kisrawī's work as an embellished version of the *Khwadāynāmag*, with additions from, e.g., Indian sources. This has been accepted by many scholars, but it has two basic flaws that render it unacceptable. Rozen ignored the fact that not all al-Kisrawī quotations necessarily come from Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā (cf. below) and he made much of the terminological difference between *naql, jamʿ,* and *iṣlāḥ* without basing his argument on facts or established usage. For the latter point, see Chapter 3.5. Cf. also Zakeri (2008): 28–29.

in the long quotation in Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh* he is speaking of Arabic translations
(cf. below).[60]

The possible contents of this lost book may now be discussed in the light of
the admittedly rather sparse evidence.

In Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 16–21, there is a long quotation from, or perhaps
partly a paraphrase of, al-Kisrawī's book. This is our most reliable and the only
unproblematic piece of evidence as to the contents and date of this lost book.
However, one has to remember that Ḥamza himself was mainly interested in
chronology and his selection may, thus, give a distorted picture of what his
sources really contained. But at least we know that, perhaps among other ma-
terials, Mūsā's work contained chronological information. The beginning of
this passage deserves to be translated *in toto*:

> Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī has said in his book: I looked into the book called
> the *Khudāynāme*, which is the book that, when translated from Persian
> into Arabic, is called *Taʾrīkh*[61] *mulūk al-Furs*. I repeatedly looked into
> manuscripts (*nusakh*) of this book and perused them minutely, finding
> that they differ from each other. I was unable to find two identical copies.
> This is because the matter had been confused by the translators of this
> book when they translated it from one language into another. When I was
> together with al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Hamadānī al-Raqqām in Marāgha at
> (the court) of its ruler (*raʾīs*) al-ʿAlāʾ ibn Aḥmad … (the text continues to
> tell how they collated the overall lengths of the third and fourth dynasties
> with the Alexandrian era as found in astronomical tables).[62]

The sentence "This is because the matter had been confused by the translators
of this book when they translated it from one language into another" is crucial

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60   Grignaschi (1969): 38, rightly rejects Rozen's theory that Mūsā had translated the story of
      Balāsh from Middle Persian. Grignaschi's suggestion that the translator of this story may
      have been Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ is merely a conjecture.

61   I do not wish to overdo the case and exaggerate the importance and exactness of Mūsā's
      use of terminology, but one might ask whether there is in Mūsā's usage a conscious dif-
      ferentiation between *taʾrīkh* and *siyar*, the former referring to chronology, the latter to
      narrated history.

62   Rosenthal (1968): 93, claims that Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā's telling us that he attempted to synchro-
      nize Persian and Seleucid chronologies may be taken as indirect evidence to the effect
      that this synchronization had not been done in the *Khwadāynāmag* or, to be more exact,
      in the earliest Arabic translations of the book. However, it is more probable that only the
      systematic correlation of the two chronologies was new in Mūsā's book. Occasional syn-
      chronizations there may well have been.

as it shows that Mūsā worked with translations, not versions of the original Middle Persian text.[63] Whether he knew Middle Persian or not cannot be deduced from this or any other passage.

At the end of the passage quoted from Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā (pp. 20–21), there is an important note on the chronology of the pre-Sasanian Kings. Whereas al-Kisrawī seems very proud of his accuracy when it comes to Sasanian history,[64] he admits that he did not study the earlier period in such detail, claiming that Alexander's misdemeanour in Iran had disrupted the tradition so that no accuracy in earlier chronology is possible:[65]

> I have not concerned myself with the chronologies of the Ashghānian kings before the Sasanians because of the misfortunes that occurred at the time of those kings. Namely, when he had conquered the land of Babel, Alexander envied the sciences that they (i.e., the Persians) had acquired, such as no nation had been able to acquire before. He burned all their books he was able to find and then turned to killing their *mōbads* and *hērbads* and learned and wise men and those who, among their other sciences, preserved their chronologies, until he had killed them all. This he did after he had translated (*naqala*) what he needed of their sciences into Greek.[66] After this, during all the days of the Ashghānians, also known as the Petty Kings, the Persians remained obscure (*ghāba*), having no one to bring back knowledge or to be concerned with any kind of wisdom until their rule (*dawla*) returned to them with the appearance of Ardashīr.
>
> When Ardashīr confirmed the kingship for himself, he started counting time from his own accession. After him, the Sasanian kings followed his way and each of them counted time by his own regnal years, which has caused confusion in their chronologies. What an excellent idea it was that the Arab kings decided to count their years continuously, from the beginning of the *hijra* onward.

The passage implies that al-Kisrawī may not, except in broad outlines, have discussed this period at all, at least not in chronological terms. It would be

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63   This was noted by Nöldeke (1879a): xix, but has later been often ignored.

64   Ḥamza, though, (*Taʾrīkh*, p. 21) undermines our confidence in al-Kisrawī and accuses him, too, of chronological mistakes. Nöldeke (1879a): 401, does not much appreciate al-Kisrawī's efforts in creating a Sasanian chronology and criticizes him heavily.

65   See Gnoli (2000) for questions of early Zoroastrian chronology.

66   For this topos, see van Bladel (2009): 30–39.

somewhat strange to see an author first undermine his own authority and then delve into this period. Possibly, the book of al-Kisrawī was restricted to the Sasanian period only, which would speak for taking *Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk Banī Sāsān* as its title.[67] This would also mean that he did *not* translate the *Khwadāynāmag*, but merely used its Sasanian part as an authoritative source for his own book.

In the rest of his work, Ḥamza is unfortunately vague in identifying his sources, usually using expressions such as *kutub al-siyar, baʿḍ al-ruwāt, zaʿamat al-Furs, wa-fī akhbārihim*, etc.[68] Thus, we cannot know whether he used any other parts of al-Kisrawī's book or, in fact, whether al-Kisrawī's book was merely a chronological list. In the quotation from al-Kisrawī, Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 20, mentions Būrāndukht bint Kisrā Abarwīz, saying that it was she who returned the True Cross (*wa-hiya allatī raddat khashabat al-Masīḥ*). The interest in Christian history makes it improbable that this could be a direct quotation from any Middle Persian, pre-Islamic source, such as the *Khwadāynāmag*, so that we may assume that al-Kisrawī added notes and comments to the text he was working with or that these additions were already made in the text(s) he used.[69]

Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh* provides us with our only unproblematic and reliable source of information on Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā's book and its contents. An "al-Kisrawī" is also mentioned or quoted in a number of other sources, but rarely identified more exactly, and his identity remains uncertain, as there is also another al-Kisrawī, ʿAlī ibn Mahdī, who at least in some cases may be the person referred to.

Ps.-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Maḥāsin*, quotes al-Kisrawī – always without a first name – three times (pp. 53, 242, 359). The first passage (p. 53, from al-Bayhaqī, *Maḥāsin*, p. 534) concerns Sasanian history, being a brief saying by Kisrā ibn Hurmuz, and the second (pp. 242–251) is a long romantic story about the Indian marriage of the Parthian Balāsh ibn Fīrūz, containing two framed animal stories, material that had little place in the *Khwadāynāmag* of the Sasanians.

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67   The story of Balāsh, discussed below, need not come from this al-Kisrawī, but may derive from his namesake.

68   Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 49, briefly resumes the contents of "*kutub al-tawārīkh wa'l-siyar*", but it is unclear whether al-Kisrawī's book contained some or any elements mentioned by Ḥamza, who writes: "These short stories about the kings with which I fleshed this chapter out are not found in chronological and historical books, except in small measure. The rest of them are in (i.e., come from) their other books. I have, however, omitted from this book their letters and testaments and such material which is found in chronological books."

69   Jackson Bonner (Chapter 1.3.2) takes al-Dīnawarī's similar interest in Christian history as a sign of Syriac Christian influence, but this need not be so, as Christian sacred history was absorbed into the Islamic sacred history, and such details were of interest to Muslims, too.

Balāsh usually receives scant interest in historical sources.[70] An important exception is the anonymous *Nihāyat al-arab*,[71] which seems to be where al-Kisrawī took this story from (pp. 277/280–294), and then either he or the anonymous author of the *Maḥāsin* abbreviated it.[72] The story is also referred to in *Mujmal*, p. 58/72,[73] where the anonymous author mentions that he had read it in *Siyar al-mulūk* (*dar Siyar al-mulūk khwāndam*). As the al-Kisrawī quotations in the *Maḥāsin* and the *Nihāya* are the only preserved versions of this story, the passage should be given due attention. Usually, the quotations from *Siyar al-mulūk* in the *Mujmal* and in other sources are all too hastily taken as quotations from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's work. This, however, is ungrounded and each quotation should be studied separately. It is, of course, possible that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's influential text contained this story, but in that case one might wonder why it was taken up by so few later sources. A less-known al-Kisrawī would understandably be quoted by only a few. On the other hand, it should be emphasized that when al-Kisrawī is quoted by name (and translated into Persian) in the *Mujmal*, this is always done through Ḥamza (pp. 2/2, 67/85,[74] 68/87, 70/88). Hence, there is no evidence to show that the author of the *Mujmal* would have had al-Kisrawī's book to hand.

It is difficult to contextualize the Balāsh story. Though set in a historical context, it differs from the tone of the other early sources that derive material from the *Khwadāynāmag*, whether in Persian or Arabic, which contain no framed stories, animal or otherwise, and give more emphasis to the epic-heroic than to the romantic material, and we have to come up to Firdawsī before finding

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70   Ḥamza gives him just three lines (*Taʾrīkh*, p. 44), al-Ṭabarī a page (*Taʾrīkh* I: 882–883// V: 126–127), al-Masʿūdī in his *Murūj* less than one line (§619), and Agathias a few lines (IV.27.5). See also al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*, pp. 584–586; Firdawsī, *Shāhnāme* VII: 31–47 (the rather long passage concentrates on the duel between Sūfrāy and Khwashnawāz); al-Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 101//145; Gardīzī, *Zayn*, p. 94. The story is not found in the *Sindbādnāme* (cf. below). There is also a story about Bahrām Gūr and the daughter of the King of India in, e.g., Firdawsī, *Shāhnāme* VI: 581–595, but only the topic of Indian marriage links these two stories together. See also Kirste (1896): 322–325. The story is translated (from MS-Sprenger) in Weisweiler (1954): 12–20.

71   See Grignaschi (1969): 65–66 (beginning of the text) and 34–39 (discussion of the relations between the *Nihāya* and al-Kisrawī's book). The story is also found in the Persian translation of the *Nihāya* (Grignaschi 1973: 84, n. 2), which proves its existence in the early version(s) of the *Nihāya*. For the *Mujmal*, see below. For the *Nihāya*, see also Chapter 3.4.

72   However, as the date of the *Nihāya* is controversial, it is not impossible that the borrowing was the other way round.

73   Cf. Rozen (1895): 172.

74   Here erroneously ʿĪsā ibn Mūsā.

similar material, and even there framed narratives are rare.[75] Hence, it remains doubtful whether the passage could stem from any translation/rewriting of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Al-Kisrawī's book may, of course, have been far from the main stream of the tradition and contained more novelistic and romantic material than many other representatives of the tradition, as suggested by Rozen (1895), but it should be emphasized that his hypothesis rests solely on the identification of al-Kisrawī in this passage with Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā, which is far from evident.[76] If the passage comes from Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā's book, it would still say nothing about the *Khwadāynāmag* and its Arabic translations, as there is no reason to assume that Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā could not have used other sources, too, and the overwhelming majority of evidence points to the rather dry character of the *Khwadāynāmag* and its translations.

The final passage transmitted from al-Kisrawī in ps.-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Maḥāsin*, comes in the Chapter entitled *Maḥāsin al-nayrūz waʾl-mihrajān* (p. 359ff.) and probably continues until p. 365.[77] It is concerned with the *nawrūz* (= *nayrūz*). The passage contains an important description of the ceremonies of the *nawrūz* and the *mihrajān*, mentioning also songs, some of them obviously epic, which were sung in the presence of the King.[78]

This passage might well come from the Book of Festivals, *Kitāb al-aʿyād waʾl-nawārīz*, attributed to ʿAlī ibn Mahdī al-Kisrawī (cf. below). As it is somewhat uneconomic to suggest that the anonymous author of the *Maḥāsin* derived material from two different al-Kisrawīs,[79] one should consider the possibility that all quotations come from the same al-Kisrawī. The first quotation could well be from Mūsā's book and the second, too, is not inconceivable as part of his book, even though the part preserved by Ḥamza consists of a rather dry chronology and the early fragments attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ do not include very much romance.

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75   An example of a framed animal story is found in the *Bānū-Gushaspnāme*, pp. 136–139.

76   In the *Maḥāsin*, this story is followed by two other Persian stories, which may have been derived from the same source. For a discussion of these, see Grignaschi (1969): 35–39, and (1973): 103–104, who comes to the reasonable conclusion that these stories were not taken from the *Nihāya*, which makes it improbable that they would come from al-Kisrawī's book.

77   The next chapter, *Maḥāsin al-hadāyā* (pp. 365–383), begins with an anonymous *qāla* and contains Persian material, mainly discussing presents to be given during these originally Persian festivals. It may, partly, be derived from al-Kisrawī, too. On the *nawrūz* literature in Arabic, see Borroni–Cristoforetti (2016).

78   On the oral transmission of Persian epic poetry, cf., e.g., the articles in Melville–van den Berg (2012) and Yamamoto (2003). See also Chapter 4.5.

79   Grignaschi (1973): 103, does not exclude this possibility, though.

The third passage is the most difficult to fit into Mūsā's work. The establishment of *nawrūz* and of *mihrajān* quite centrally belong to Persian national history, but later rituals do not. ʿAlī ibn Mahdī's book, on the other hand, would be an excellent place for this third fragment and the second would fit another book of his, *Kitāb al-Khiṣāl* (see below), as would the first. Attributing all three passages to ʿAlī ibn Mahdī may be easier than attributing all of them to Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā,[80] although the problem remains that we should posit two separate books as the sources for the three quotations. There is also a further problem. Ibn Isfandiyār's *Tārīkh Ṭabaristān*, for which see below, again confuses the picture by giving us some ground for asking whether the *Book of Festivals* was, after all, by ʿAlī ibn Mahdī or whether it could have been authored by Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā.

Much of the material in this third quotation is unique, even though, in general terms, e.g., al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, pp. 263–289/215–233//199–219, and Gardīzī, *Zayn*, pp. 345–355, resemble it in their descriptions of these festivals, but the resemblance may well be merely due to the common object of description and not evidence of any textual dependence. The verse by Abū Tammām, quoted in the *Maḥāsin*, p. 360, is commonly found in the historical tradition that is dependent on al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh*, but in the *Maḥāsin* there is an interesting variant in the first hemistich (*wa-kaʾannahū l-Ḍaḥḥāku fī fatakātihī*), whereas all other sources have the standard version (*bal kāna kaʾl-Ḍaḥḥāki fī saṭawātihī*), which is also the *Dīwān* recension.[81] This seems to point to an independent line of transmission, even though one cannot exclude the possibility of later manuscript corruption.

Al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, contains three quotations from al-Kisrawī (pp. 135, 144–146, 273/119, 129–131, 223//122, 127–128, 208). The first two are explicitly taken from Ḥamza (*Āthār*, p. 135: *wa-ammā Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī fa-innahu ḥakā ʿan Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā*) and paraphrase, condense, and criticize *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 16–21.

However, the third passage (p. 273/223//208)[82] mentions a new character (on whom, see Chapter 3.2.11): *wa-qāla l-Kisrawī: samiʿtu al-mōbad al-Mutawakkilī yaqūlu*. This passage is not found in Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*, which shows that this

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80   To this one might add that the al-Kisrawī quoted in al-Bayhaqī's *Maḥāsin*, pp. 349, 399, 534, 567, a book sharing large elements with ps.-al-Jāḥiẓ, as shown by van Vloten in the preface of his edition of ps.-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Maḥāsin*, pp. ix–xi, is without doubt ʿAlī ibn Mahdī.

81   See Abū Tammām, *Dīwān*, pp. 309–310; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* I: 201//II: 2 (→ al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*, p. 35; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam* I: 135); al-Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 88//127; Ibn al-Faqīh, *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 279); etc.

82   It is not quite clear where the quoted passage ends.

book was not the sole source for al-Bīrūnī's al-Kisrawī material.[83] The passage concerns the *mihrajān* and, likewise, is unattested elsewhere. This passage might equally well come from ʿAlī ibn Mahdī al-Kisrawī's *Book of Festivals*, as the personal name of al-Kisrawī is not indicated. In any case, the third quotation comes from another source than Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*, which is the source for the first two quotations.

Finally, there is an interesting passage in Ibn Isfandiyār's *Tārīkh Ṭabaristān* (written in 616/1216), p. 83, which gives us reason to reconsider the authorship of the *Book of Festivals*:

> In order not to be attacked by the readers claiming that I have lied I have left out the stories about Bīwarasb and what happened to him, which the Caliph Maʾmūn ʿAbdallāh ordered to be enquired into,[84] and (what happened) during the reigns of Hurmizd-shāh and Khusraw Parwīz and the story of Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-SRWY (read: al-Kisrawī),[85] which is related in the book *Nayrūz wa-mihrajān*, and the story of the Slavegirl and Ḥurra al-Yasaʿiyya because they are far from reason and are not among the stories of the people of the Sharīʿa.

The otherwise unknown "story of Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī" should probably be understood as a story (related) *by* Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā, not a story *about* him. This would still be our only source attributing this text to Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā, whereas all other sources attribute it to ʿAlī ibn Mahdī.

On this basis, we may now sketch the contents of al-Kisrawī's book. Two things highlight themselves. The material that we can certainly attribute to Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī is the dry chronological data on the Sasanids in Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*, which tallies well with the speculation concerning the book's title.

In addition, a certain al-Kisrawī, either Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā or ʿAlī ibn Mahdī, is credited with long narratives, some of which make use of framed stories, a feature we can find nowhere else in the sources that should contain material

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83   I find it improbable that this passage would simply have been omitted from the preserved text of Ḥamza.

84   A reference to the famous order of al-Maʾmūn to send people to enquire whether Bīwarasb was enchained on the Demavend, as tradition had it. This is not a reference to the stories about him as found in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. The translation of this passage in Browne (1905): 36, is based on a corrupt manuscript.

85   All manuscripts read al-SRWY, but the emendation, also done by the editor of the text, is rather obvious. So emended also by Humāyūnfarrukh (1377): 747.

derived from the *Khwadāynāmag*. If they derive from a work by ʿAlī ibn Mahdī they have nothing to do with the *Khwadāynāmag*, as ʿAlī ibn Mahdī is nowhere attached to the *Khwadāynāmag* or its Arabic translations.

If the stories come from Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā's book, then, as Rozen has already pointed out,[86] it is dubious whether we can properly call this book a translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Al-Kisrawī would have made substantial additions to his text and, if the *Khwadāynāmag* started from the Creation, as seems probable, may even have deleted a major portion of the original. In short, it may be more to the point to take his work as a new book, partly based on the materials in the *Khwadāynāmag* (in Arabic translation).

Finally, we come to the question of Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā's identity. The long quotation from him in Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 16–21, provides us with the basic facts of his life. He collaborated with al-Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Hamadhānī al-Raqqām in Marāgha, when the town was under al-ʿAlāʾ ibn Aḥmad. They collated various chronologies, using *Zīj al-raṣad*, to create a more reliable chronology of Persian history. Mūsā also quotes (*Kitāb*) *al-Siyar al-kabīr* and (*Kitāb*) *al-Siyar al-ṣaghīr* (*Taʾrīkh*, p. 20), which shows that he depended on at least two different redactions of Persian national history in Arabic translation.[87]

Al-ʿAlāʾ ibn Aḥmad al-Azdī's governorship of Marāgha gives us some firm ground for dating Mūsā. Al-ʿAlāʾ died in 260/874 when Governor of Ādharbayjān.[88] This would date Mūsā's activity with Sasanian chronology probably in the 860s or early 870s. If he is the al-Kisrawī who transmitted from *al-mōbad al-Mutawakkilī*, this would, for its part, confirm Mūsā's date around 870.

The *Fihrist's* list of translators/transmitters of Persian books has already been discussed (Chapters 3.1 and 3.2.7), but Ibn al-Nadīm also knew two other books by Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā (*Fihrist*, p. 142/128//280), neither of which presumably contained specifically Persian material, namely:

– *Kitāb Ḥubb al-awṭān*
– *Kitāb Munāqaḍāt man zaʿama annahu lā yanbaghī an yaqtaḍiya l-quḍāt fī maṭāʿimihim biʾl-aʾimma waʾl-khulafāʾ*[89]

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86   See also Ṣafā (1374): 89.

87   See also Rubin (2008b): 59–60.

88   Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* III: 1886//XXXVI: 161–162. According to al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* III: 1668// XXXV: 130, he was Governor of Armenia in 252/866.

89   For this book, see Crone–Hinds (1986): 87, where Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā is taken as a contemporary of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and much is made of this title. The authors, however, give no evidence for such an early date for Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā. See also Tillier (2009): 585.

He is also credited with these two books in Ismāʿīl Pāshā's *Hadiyyat al-ʿārifīn*, p. 477, where we have some additional pieces of information. First, he is called Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Baghdādī[90] *al-adīb al-shahīr bi'l-*Kisrawī and, secondly, he is said to have died in 186, which is too early a date in comparison with all the other evidence. We might consider an emendation to *286, though it remains unclear where Ismāʿīl Pāshā got the date from.

Besides knowing his *al-Ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān* (*sic*, GAL S 1: 945, *sub* 237)[91] Brockelmann credits Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā with a translation, or version, of *Sindbādnāme* (GAL S 1: 237), but this seems to be a wild guess with little real foundation.[92]

Yāqūt, cf. below, at one point refers to Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā as al-Kisrawī *al-Kātib*. This is the only indication that he was a *kātib*, but as many of the translators from Persian as well as transmitters of Persian lore worked as government officials, this would not, *a priori*, be surprising. However, there is a possibility of confusion here, as al-Kisrawī *al-Kātib* would usually seem to refer to ʿAlī ibn Mahdī.

This, nevertheless, gives us some room for speculation. In his *Wuzarāʾ*, p. 407, al-Jahshiyārī mentions an otherwise unknown Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā ibn YazdānYRWDh, who was a scribe working for al-Faḍl ibn al-Rabīʿ (*kāna yaktubu li'l-Faḍl ibn al-Rabīʿ*) during the Caliphate of al-Amīn.[93] It is not impossible that this scribe should be identified with our al-Kisrawī. His name proves that

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90   In *Rijāl* literature one occasionally finds rather unknown Mūsā ibn ʿĪsās, who are said to come from Baghdad, but none of these persons is likely to be identical with al-Kisrawī. Still, it is possible that this has led Ismāʿīl Pāshā to consider also al-Kisrawī a Baghdadian.

91   Zakeri (2007a) 1: 53–54 claims that *al-Ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān*, usually attributed to al-Jāḥiẓ, is, in fact, by Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā. Zakeri does not explain his claim, which seems to be based on Meier (1937): 20, note 1, who refers to MS Aya Sofya 2052, fols. 77b–84b. For the attribution of this text, see also Pellat (1984): 138.

92   Brockelmann does not give any basis for his claim that "von Mūsā rührt wahrscheinlich auch der Text des ins Griechische übersetzten Sindbadromanes her". This seems to be based on a careless reading of Nöldeke (1879a): 521. Nöldeke suggested out of thin air two possible identifications of the Greek text's "Persian Mousos" (not Moses Persus, as in all later sources), one of them Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā, but concluded: "Aber keine dieser Vermuthungen ist sehr wahrscheinlich: Mûsâ ist ein ganz gewöhnlicher Name, und Beide sind wohl etwas zu spät." One cannot but agree with this conclusion, but Nöldeke's tentative identification, which he himself discards a few sentences after proposing it, has later been repeated, evidently without checking the original source. Hence, in addition to Brockelmann, e.g., Tafazzoli–Khromov (1999): 81, and Zakeri (2007a) 1: 113, repeat this claim. Grignaschi (1969): 35, n. 6, is more critical and his confusion between Nöldeke and Rozen seems to be a mere slip.

93   His brother ʿAlī is mentioned in the same book on pp. 285, 300, 363, and 366.

he was of Persian extraction, as we would suppose al-Kisrawī to have been, and like most translators from Middle Persian and transmitters of Persian lore were. Further, he worked as a scribe and we have every reason to believe, whether al-Kisrawī *al-Kātib* refers to him or not, that Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā came from the same circles, as did most of the others who worked within the Book of Kings tradition. Dating him to the period of al-Amīn (and supposing him to have lived on several decades after al-Amīn's death) tallies well with the known interest in Persian national history during the early to mid-ninth century (and later). This identification would also count for the gentilicium al-Baghdādī given to him in Ismāʿīl Pāshā's *Hadiyya*, though one should not put too much weight on this rather suspect piece of information. Hence, the least we can say is that there is nothing to preclude this identification. On the other hand, of course, there is no positive evidence that Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī was the grandson of a certain YazdānYRWDh, and there is a slight temporal gap between the two. Hence, the identification remains highly speculative.[94]

This more or less sums up what we know about Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawi. The other al-Kisrawī, ʿAlī ibn Mahdī, is also credited with one of the books attributed to his namesake, Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā, namely *Kitāb Munāqaḍāt*, even in the very same source (*Fihrist*, p. 167/150//328). This shows how confused tenth-century authors were about the identity of al-Kisrawī.

ʿAlī ibn Mahdī is also credited in the same passage of the *Fihrist* with a *Kitāb al-aʿyād waʾl-nawārīz*, which is not extant, but the title would imply that it contained material about the *Nawrūz* and, most probably, the *Mihrajān*, i.e., the very kind of material which we have often seen transmitted on the authority of al-Kisrawī. As we have seen, though, Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh Ṭabaristān*, may attribute this book to Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā, but it is the only source to do so. Interestingly enough, al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, 38/31//36, mentions a tractate by Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī on poems on the *Nawrūz* and the *Mihrajān*.

ʿAlī ibn Mahdī ibn ʿAlī ibn Mahdī al-Kisrawī Abū l-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahānī is mentioned in several biographical dictionaries. Yāqūt, *Irshād* IV: 334–338, has an article on him, saying, among other things, that he was the teacher of the son of Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā ibn al-Munajjim and *aḥad al-ruwāt al-ʿulamāʾ al-naḥwiyyīn al-shuʿarāʾ* at the time when Badr al-Muʿtaḍidī was the ruler of Isfahan (i.e., 283–289/896–902). Yāqūt seems to have (directly or indirectly) quoted from a work by Ḥamza (presumably his *Taʾrīkh Iṣfahān*, which he also quotes by referring to the book title but without mentioning the author's name

94   A certain Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā *al-Kātib*, secretary to the uncle of Ibrāhīm ibn Jaysh, is quoted in al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* IX: 252 (Cairo edition = trans. XXXIV: 220) as an authority on a story about the accession of the Caliph al-Muntaṣir.

in *Irshād* IV: 338) and explicitly says that al-Marzubānī mentioned him, quoting also Ibn Abī Ṭāhir. He also mentions his close association with *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*.[95]

Yāqūt, *Irshād* IV: 336, specifically qualifies ʿAlī ibn Mahdī as *aḥad al-ruwāt li'l-akhbār*, but unfortunately does not, in the whole article, quote anything that would link him with any pre-Islamic Iranian material. ʿAlī ibn Mahdī's date, however, is not too late for him to be the al-Kisrawī quoted in any of the sources discussed above. Yāqūt also mentions the following works by ʿAlī ibn Mahdī:

1.   *Kitāb al-Khiṣāl*, a collection of stories (*akhbār*), wise sayings, proverbs, and poems.[96]
2.   *Kitāb Munāqaḍāt man zaʿama annahu lā yanbaghī an yaqtaḍiya l-quḍāt fī maṭāʿimihim bi'l-aʾimma al-khulafāʾ*, mentioning that this work is also attributed to al-Kisrawī *al-Kātib*, i.e., Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā.
3.   *Kitāb al-Aʿyād waʾl-nawārīz*, the only work that would hint at an Iranian connection, although it probably contained Arabic poems on these feasts, lists of presents suitable at them in the Islamic period, etc.
4.   *Kitāb Murāsalāt al-ikhwān wa-muḥāwarāt al-khillān*

In Yāqūt's *Muʿjam al-buldān*, the only relevant[97] passage comes in the article on Tigris (II: 440–442) (also mentioned in the article on Sātīdamā, III:

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95   See also al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, pp. 338–39; al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī* XXII: 244–246; Toorawa (2005): 119. There is a brief unsigned article on him in the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. For ʿAlī ibn Mahdī as a transmitter of *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, see Wild (1965): 20, n. 65, and Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 48/43//95. Note that Ismāʿīl Pāshāʾs date (186) could easily be explained as an error for 286, which could be ʿAlī ibn Mahdī's year of death, although I have not been able to find this latter date in any source. In *Irshād* IV: 3, Yāqūt quotes a passage ← ʿAbdallāh ibn Jaʿfar ← ʿAlī ibn Mahdī al-Kisrawī ← Ibn Qādim *ṣāḥib* al-Kisāʾī. Al-Kisrawī is also mentioned in passing in *Irshād* IV: 332, and a certain Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā (without a gentilicium) in V: 405. Neither of these passages contains any Iranian material. There are, of course, also other al-Kisrawīs, such as al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Qāsim or the brothers Sahlūn and Yazdajird ibn Mihmandār (for the last, see also Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 142/128//280), quoted in al-Tanūkhī's *Nishwār* VII: 207–208, 216 (from the lost parts of the book, but reconstructable through *Faraj al-mahmūm fī taʾrīkh ʿulamāʾ al-nujūm*), but they seem irrelevant to this study.

96   For other books with the same or a similar title, see Zakeri (2007a) I: 234–236. See also *GAS* II: 82. Ibn Shahrashūb (see Zakeri 2007a I: 235, no. 8) mentions a certain *Khiṣāl al-mulūk* by one Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā, which seems to imply yet another confusion between the two al-Kisrawīs.

97   Yāqūt also mentions an al-Kisrawī in *Muʿjam* III: 169.

169), where there is a lengthy (and seemingly freely paraphrased) quotation (*via* al-Marzubānī) from ʿAlī ibn Mahdī al-Kisrawī on the origin and course of Tigris, introduced by: "Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn ʿImrān ibn Mūsā al-Marzubānī: Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn Hārūn gave me a sheet (*waraqa*) which he mentioned to be in the handwriting of ʿAlī ibn Mahdī al-Kisrawī." The passage contains geographical information, but nothing specifically Iranian.

This summarizes the main relevant information on ʿAlī ibn Mahdī, who is much better known in the sources than his namesake.

As the bibliographical material shows, the works of these two al-Kisrawīs have been confused early on. At first sight, one would be tempted to attribute all the quotations related to Persian history to Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā, but the profusion of material on the *nawrūz* and the novelistic tendencies in the story of Balāsh may tip the balance in favour of ʿAlī ibn Mahdī, after all.

3.4   Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and *Nihāyat al-arab*

Abū ʿAmr ʿAbdallāh (Rūzbih) Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ is the central character in the early process of translation from Middle Persian into Arabic and is one of the creators of Arabic literary prose.[98] Possibly[99] a convert from Zoroastrianism to Islam, he started his career in Nīshāpūr, serving the Governor Masīḥ ibn al-Ḥawārī (from 126/744), and continued it in Kirmān in the service Dāʾūd ibn Yazīd ibn Hubayra (130–131/748–749). Later, he lived mainly in Basra and Kufa.

Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ worked for the Umayyads and survived, for a short time, the takeover of the ʿAbbāsids before he was murdered in ca. 139/756.[100] Traditionally, he is said to have been no more than thirty-six at the time, but van Ess (1991–97) II: 25, with good reason, sheds doubt on this. In addition to translations, he produced several works of his own, partly based on Persian materials, the best known among which is his *Risāla fī l-ṣaḥāba*.

Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ knew Middle Persian and had access to a variety of texts in that language. Some of his works are, in modified forms, extant, including the famous *Kalīla wa-Dimna*,[101] although the transmission history of the text is

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98   For Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ in general, see Gabrieli (1932); Kraus (1933); Lecomte (1965): 179–189; van Ess (1991–97) II: 22–36; Gabrieli (1986). See also Cassarino (2000) and Kristó-Nagy (2013), though these sources are less relevant for his life than for his thought.

99   See van Ess (1991–97) II: 28.

100   See, e.g., Ibn Aʿtham, *Futūḥ* VIII: 218–219; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* III: 221–223.

101   Cf. de Blois (1990).

extremely complicated and none of the preserved manuscripts can be taken as more than remotely reflecting the original.

The variety of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translations from, or works inspired by, Middle Persian materials, is impressive. Ibn al-Nadīm lists several of them in the passage dedicated to him in the *Fihrist*, p. 132/118//259–260:

1) *Kitāb Khudāynāme fī l-siyar;*
2) *Kitāb Āyīn-nāme fī l-āyīn* (Chapter 2.2.1);
3) *Kitāb Kalīla wa-Dimna* (Chapter 2.2.2);
4) *Kitāb Mazdak* (read: Marwak, see Chapter 2.2.1);
5) *Kitāb al-Tāj fī sīrat Anūshirwān;*
6) *Kitāb al-Ādāb al-kabīr*, known as **Mihr-jushnas*(*b*) (*M'QR'JSNS*);[102]
7) *Kitāb al-Adab al-ṣaghīr;*
8) *Kitāb al-Yatīma fī l-rasāʾil*, cf. also p. 364, *sub Asmār al-Furs*: *Kitāb Rūzbih al-Yatīm;*
9) *Kitāb rasāʾilihi;*
10) *Kitāb Jawāmiʿ Kalīla wa-Dimna;*
11) *Kitāb risālatihi fī l-ṣaḥāba.*

Of these, there are several that are of interest for the present theme, the translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* itself obviously leading the list. Several of the other listed works deal with wisdom literature, *andarz*, and are largely built on Middle Persian materials, though they are not translations of any particular work.

Al-Masʿūdī gives some titles of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's other translations related to Persian national history, especially *Kitāb al-Baykār* and *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān* (cf. Chapter 2.2.1). Also the Arabic translation of the famous *Nāme-ye Tansar*, preserved only in a Persian retranslation, is attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (Chapter 3.4). His activity as a translator and transmitter of Persian historical lore thus extended beyond the *Siyar*. This means that not even all the historical material explicitly circulating under his name needs to come from the *Siyar* and, through it, the *Khwadāynāmag*.

In some cases, the attributions are doubtlessly erroneous. Thus, e.g., Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translations of Aristotle from Middle Persian seem to be doubly legendary: the translator in question was Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdallāh (ibn) al-Muqaffaʿ, i.e., the son of our Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and, moreover, there is no

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102 The correction is strengthened by Dodge (1970): 260, note 28, mentioning a variant *Māhir Jamshāsb*. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 377/315//739, mentions a *Kitāb Mihrād RJShNS* (i.e., Mihr-Ādhurjushnasb) *al-firmadār ilā Buzurjmihr ibn al-MTKān* (i.e., al-Bukhtakān). See also Zakeri (2007a) I: 143.

indication that the material with which the latter worked would have been in Middle Persian.[103]

The main point of interest for us is Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*. This translation is always mentioned first on the lists of *Khwadāynāmag* translations (cf. Chapter 3.1) and it is well documented in biographical and bibliographical sources.

In trying to grasp the contents of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*, a major problem arises from the way sources quote his and other Arabic versions of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation is usually said to have been titled *Kitāb Siyar al-mulūk*, or *Siyar mulūk al-ʿajam*, and we may accept this as the original title.[104] It is rare to find direct quotations in extant sources, and even rarer that the microunits are explicitly quoted as coming from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs *Siyar*. Most of the potential quotations (i.e., pieces of information that might derive from this book) are given with no indication of source: thus, al-Ṭabarī never explicitly quotes Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ in his *Taʾrīkh*. His connection to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation is entirely speculative. Sometimes the quotations are given without the translator's/author's name as coming from *Kitāb al-Siyar*, or *Siyar al-mulūk* – a title also borne by various other works and not necessarily referring to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ – or, on the contrary, only quoted by the author's name (and Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ wrote several works that might come into question). In very rare cases only, this is done with full indication of both the author and the title.

Under such circumstances, it is not easy to analyse the contents of the lost work. What does become clear from the unfortunately few explicit quotations from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs *Siyar* is that, like most Arabic historical texts, it synchronized the Persian material with the sacred history of Islam.[105] Such elements certainly did not belong to the original *Khwadāynāmag*, as the Sasanians had no interest in discussing whether, e.g., Ḍaḥḥāk lived at the time of Noah or not.

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103 Cf. Kraus (1933), who concludes, p. 13, that no Aristotelian texts were translated from Middle Persian into Arabic. Peters (1968a): 45, refers to "Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, who has a known connection with the Aristotelian translation movement", although on p. 59, he calls this again "the dubious case of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ". Cf. also van Ess (1991–97) II: 27. For a probably erroneous attribution of Manichaean translations to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, see al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §3447.

104 Cf., e.g., *Tārīkh-e Sīstān*, p. 56 (ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and (his) *Kitāb Siyar-e mulūk-e ʿajam*). Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 132/118//260, is a rare exception, titling the book *Kitāb Khudāynāme fī l-siyar*, cf. Chapter 1.1.1.

105 Note that he was equally free with *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, expanding and modifying it at will, cf. de Blois (1990).

The synchronization must have been done by authors writing in Arabic for a Muslim readership.[106]

There is one book that has been claimed to represent Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's *Kitāb Siyar al-mulūk*, at least to a certain extent.[107] This is *Kitāb Nihāyat al-arab*, an anonymous historical work, full of legends and concentrating on South Arabian history on the one hand, and on Persian national history on the other.[108] In the opening scene (*Nihāya*, p. 1), the Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, speaking with al-Aṣmaʿī, orders a *Siyar al-mulūk* to be brought forth from the *Bayt al-ḥikma* and al-Aṣmaʿī reads six parts (*ajzāʾ*) of it to the Caliph that very night. The book began with Sām ibn Nūḥ.[109]

The Caliph asks al-Aṣmaʿī to collaborate with Abū l-Bakhtarī to produce a complete history of the world from Adam onward. The next morning the two scholars bring forth a *Kitāb al-Mubtadaʾ* and proceed to compile from it and the *Siyar* a more complete work, the *Nihāya* itself. The Adamic prelude continues in the edition until p. 16, where the *Siyar* begins. This *Siyar*, it should be emphasized, is not primarily concerned with Persian history, which only comes into focus when the story has proceeded to Alexander and, especially, to the Sasanids. Its beginning is more concerned with South Arabian history (almost completely legendary and with little historical matter, except for the names of the rulers). Throughout the book, the two are synchronized, with the South Arabs at first as the focal point, only later conceding precedence to the Persians. Towards the end, the Islamic prehistory ousts the South Arabians from the focus and Mecca and the Quraysh take their place.

The preface of the *Siyar* (*Nihāya*, p. 17) tells us how two scholars, ʿĀmir al-Shaʿbī (d. 103/721) and Ayyūb ibn al-Qirriyya (d. 84/703), aided by a third, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (d. ca. 139/756), compiled the work by the order of the Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān in 85/704.

This double preface, with its blatant anachronisms,[110] does not lend credibility to the work, which could easily be passed by, were it not that in many

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106   Or Christians. The beginning of synchronization may well have begun earlier among Christians and, on a popular level, this may have occasionally been adopted by Zoroastrians. Thus, e.g., Sebeos mentions how the same mummy had been identified as Daniel by Christians and as Kay Khusraw by Persians (Sebeos, *History* I: 30; Barthold 1944: 138). Yet any systematic synchronization in a Sasanian chronicle is hard to imagine.

107   Browne (1900): 195, was at first ready to equate this work with the lost translation of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, though soon realizing this was not the case. Later, Grignaschi (1973): 125 claimed to be able to reconstruct the translation through the *Nihāya*.

108   See especially Grignaschi (1969) and (1973).

109   The preface has been translated in Browne (1900).

110   Cf. Grignaschi (1969): 15.

cases it represents a text older than those of al-Ṭabarī and al-Dīnawarī, and the two can be shown to abbreviate the text of the *Nihāya* or its source.[111] This means that its core has to go back to a ninth- or perhaps even eighth-century original, even though the extant version clearly has undergone major modifications later.

The mention of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ in the legendary preface is far from compelling evidence to accept the attribution.[112] Even if we did so, there would still remain the question as to whether the Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ quotations come from his translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* or some other book of his. In order to assess this, we have to take a close look at the material either explicitly or implicitly attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ in the book.

The first striking feature is that the Persian material, with few exceptions, only begins with Alexander the Great and strongly centres on the Sasanids. The legendary past of the Persian nation from the Creation onwards is lacking, except for a few minor notes and some synchronizations. Before Alexander, we only have brief mentions of Ḍaḥḥāk,[113] Rustam (cf. Chapter 5.1) and Bahman/Dārā.[114]

A second striking feature concerns the contents of the stories purportedly taken from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. We find among them mainly things we would not expect to find in the *Khwadāynāmag*. To begin with, Alexander the Great is extensively discussed in a positive light. In later Persian (or Arabic) literature, this is not surprising as he became, thanks to the *Alexander Romance*, a legendary character and his mention in Surah 18 as Dhū l-Qarnayn cemented his fame.[115] There are also strong Islamic features in this story (e.g., *Nihāya*, p. 128, Alexander's pilgrimage to Mecca), but these, of course, could well have been added by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, who was catering to an Islamic audience.

In the native, Middle Persian tradition, however, Alexander is an accursed figure "that cursed Alexander the Roman" (*ān gizistag Aleksandar ī Hrōmāyīg*, see Chapter 2.3).[116] The story in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* is based on Islamic sources and should not be used as evidence for pre-Islamic Persian attitudes half a

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111   Grignaschi (1969).

112   Cf. Rubin (2008b): 53.

113   Cf. *Murūj* §1116: *wa-li'l-Furs fī khabar al-Ḍaḥḥāk maʿa Iblīs akhbār ʿajība wa-hiya mawjūda fī kutubihim*.

114   For Ḍaḥḥāk, see *Nihāya*, pp. 26, 28, 35–41, 68–69 (brief notes); for Rustam, see pp. 26, 82–84; and for Bahman, see pp. 85, 87–89. Jam(shīd) is briefly mentioned on pp. 17, 18, 21.

115   Many Mediaeval scholars argued against the identification, though. Cf., e.g., the discussion in al-Maqrīzī, *Khabar* §§212–232.

116   *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag*, pp. 76–77.

millennium earlier. As the Alexander story is explicitly quoted on the authority of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (*Nihāya*, p. 110), we either have to assume that the attribution is – and following this, the attributions in general are – purely fictitious or that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ translated the Alexander story separately (of this we have no information whatsoever) or, finally, that if it really came from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*, the author must have added extraneous materials to his translation: not only details, but substantial passages as well and these need not always come from Middle Persian sources.[117]

Thirdly, there are several long and elaborate stories among the material attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and these, in fact, form the bulk of the Persian material in the book. Although we cannot completely exclude the possibility that the *Khwadāynāmag* did contain some long narratives,[118] it seems that we should consider the *Khwadāynāmag* as a rather brief and dry work (see Chapter 6.1).

That the longer stories do not derive from the *Khwadāynāmag* is further supported by the fact that remarkably many of the more extensive stories in the *Nihāya* are known to have circulated as independent books. The following passages contain extended narratives related to Persian history:

1) pp. 82–85, Rustam, Isfandiyār, and Bahman: cf. *Kitāb Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*, translated by Jabala ibn Sālim (Chapter 2.2.1). Note that this quotation is introduced by the words "ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ has said: I found in the books of the Persians the (story of the) war between Rustam and Isfandiyār." In *Nihāya*, p. 85, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ is quoted as saying: "I found in *Siyar mulūk al-ʿajam* in the story of Bahman ibn Isfandiyār (*wa-aṣabtu fī Siyar mulūk al-ʿajam fī qiṣṣat Bahman ibn Isfandiyār*)." This would seem to locate the story of Isfandiyār within an Arabic *Siyar*. The story continues by telling how Bahman married Ūmīdh-dukht, the great-granddaughter of Solomon, together with a story about the rebuilding of Jerusalem, again material hardly deriving from the *Khwadāynāmag*.

2) pp. 110–158, Alexander: cf. Chapter 2.3.

3) pp. 161–171, Būdāsf: cf. Chapter 2.2.2 and Lang (1986).

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117 Directly after the Alexander story the *Nihāya*, p. 158, continues with the story of the *mulūk al-ṭawāʾif*, and lists some Middle Persian books written during the time of Balīnās *ṣāḥib al-ṭilasmāt* (read so for the edition's *al-ẓulumāt*), viz. *Kitāb Luhrāsb*; *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, *Kitāb Marwak*, *Sindbād*, *Kitāb Shīmās*, *Kitāb Būdāsf wa-Bilawhar* (the edition reads *Kitāb Yūsufā ʾsf wa-Kitāb Bilawhar*) – cf. also *Mujmal*, p. 74/94 (*Kitāb Yūsīfās*). Cf. Chapter 2.2.2.

118 The Middle Persian *Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr* does exhibit such novelistic features, showing that some Middle Persian historians were able to write long narratives.

4)   pp. 177–200, Ardashīr and his ʿahd (pp. 197–200):[119] cf. Chapter 2.2.1.
5)   pp. 253–266, Bahrām Gūr: cf. Chapter 2.2.1.
6)   pp. 277, 280–294, Balāsh and the daughter of the King of India: cf. Chapter 3.3.
7)   pp. 294–346,[120] Qubād, continued by Kisrā Anūshīrwān, including the episodes of Mazdak, Anūshzād, and Buzurjmihr: cf. Chapter 2.2.1.
8)   pp. 350–473, Bahrām Chūbīn, Kisrā Abarwīz, and the end of the Sasanid Empire (with intervening materials): cf. Chapter 2.2.1.

Excluding these, the Persian material is scanty and dull. This tallies well with our idea of the *Khwadāynāmag* as a rather concise chronicle. Most of the Sasanian biographies, excluding the ones above, are built of only three or four elements. To take a typical example, the short biography of Bahrām ibn Sābūr ibn Sābūr Dhī l-Aktāf (*Nihāya*, pp. 247–248) consists of four elements:

1)   words spoken by him on ascending the throne;
2)   a throne speech;
3)   the sending of an encyclica (this element is missing from many short biographies);
4)   a short report of his death and the number of his regnal years. In some biographical notes the towns founded by the king are added.[121]

Such concise entries perhaps best represent what the *Khwadāynāmag* might have looked like and they are fully in line with what Ḥamza, our best authority on the *Khwadāynāmag*, writes, as well as with the biographies of Agathias (Chapter 1.3.1). If that is the case, the novelistic materials would have to stem from sources other than the *Khwadāynāmag* and either Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ or some later author would have added them to the *Siyar* if the *Siyar* really is one of the sources of the *Nihāya*.

Here we have to consider the whole Arabic material. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* was very influential, yet, e.g., Balāsh is virtually unknown in most sources that are supposed to have received material from the *Khwadāynāmag* translations (cf. Chapter 3.3). Likewise, Rustam, mentioned

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119   Ardashīr is also made a secret convert to Christianity, again definitely a non-Sasanian feature.
120   With inserted "Arab" materials. The various trains of narration are partly interwoven and hard to separate from each other.
121   For the last, cf. the brief entries, arranged according to geographical order, in *Shahrestānīhā ī Ērānshahr*.

though not elaborated upon, in the *Nihāya*, is little known in Arabic books before al-Thaʿālibī (cf. Chapter 5.1). Had their stories been incorporated into the translation(s) of the *Khwadāynāmag*, they might be expected to have left more traces in the Arabic historical literature believed to have tapped the Book of Kings tradition. If, on the other hand, their stories only circulated in separate works less influential than Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*, their absence from historical works becomes unproblematic.

In the *Nihāya* itself, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ once uses the formula "I found in the books of the Persians" (*wajadtu fī kutub al-ʿajam*, p. 82) and once "I read in the books concerning the lives of the Persian kings" (*qaraʾtu fī kutub siyar al-mulūk min al-ʿajam*, p. 159), instead of identifying any one specific book.[122] Hence, one might argue that if these passages really come from him, they show the heterogeneous origins of his book. In both cases, the text continues with a long narrative (p. 82, Rustam; p. 159, the *waṣiyya* of Ādharwān, directly leading to the story of Būdāsf).

In addition to p. 85, cf. above, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ twice uses the singular, namely *Nihāya*, p. 216 (*wajadtu fī Kitāb Siyar al-mulūk*) and p. 324 (*innī wajadtu fī Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-ʿajam*). In both cases this is followed by a short and concise passage. On pp. 216–217, there is a brief (six lines) biography of Narsī ibn Bahrām, and on p. 324, one sentence follows ("when he had ruled for thirty years, Kisrā Anūshīrwān took his troops and armies to Syria and conquered it"), which could well derive from the *Khwadāynāmag*. After it, there follows a long narrative concerning the cause of the war, in which Jabala ibn Ayham al-Ghassānī and al-Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundhir are involved. Again one doubts whether petty Arab kings were so important or interesting that they would have deserved a prominent place in the *Khwadāynāmag*. If we are to take this at face value, the war between Persia and Byzantium was caused by some camels having been abducted by one Arab tribal leader from another, which, clearly, is an Arab point of view. It is as if an Arabic author had fleshed out the dry framework of the original with related Arab lore which would be interesting only to his Arab patrons, not the rulers of the Sasanian Empire. The evidence is too meagre to be conclusive (and *kitāb* and *kutub* are easily confused in orthography), yet it may indicate a difference between the use of the singular, referring to the *Khwadāynāmag*, whether in translation or in the original, and the plural, referring to various Middle Persian sources, whether in translation or in the original, or it might even refer to Arabic compositions on Persian history. In

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122   *Qaraʾtu fī kutub siyar al-mulūk min al-ʿajam* could also be translated as "I read in the *Siyar al-mulūk min al-ʿajam* books," but it is perhaps less natural to do so.

any case, this shows that the *Siyar* is merely *one* among the putative Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's (numerous) sources.

There are indications that many of the long stories do not come from the *Khwadāynāmag*. The story of Bahrām Gūr is narrated on the authority of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (p. 256), yet it exhibits a strikingly Arab point of view – it could as well be called the story of al-Nuʿmān – which, again, one hardly expects to find in a Sasanian royal chronicle.[123] Slightly exaggerating, one could say that all longer narratives (the great, almost saintly Alexander; Bahrām Gūr and his Arab allies; the rebel heroes Bahrām Chūbīn and Anūshzād) transmitted on the authority of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ in the *Nihāya* would have embarrassed the Sasanids and are, hence, out of place in their royal chronicle.[124]

Fourthly and finally, there are some conspicuous similarities between the text of the *Nihāya* and certain passages, especially the story of Balāsh, that are elsewhere ascribed to al-Kisrawī, who may be the author of one Arabic version of Sasanian history, but could also be his namesake (Chapter 3.3). While it is quite possible that al-Kisrawī worked on the basis of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation – there is no clear evidence either for or against such an assumption – it is significant that later sources quote al-Kisrawī and not Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. As Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's *Siyar* must have been circulating more widely than the version of the obscure al-Kisrawī, we may conclude that it is not probable that an extended version of the story of Balāsh was already found in Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's work, from which it might be expected to have been quoted more widely than it actually is. If the al-Kisrawī referred to here was not the author of one of the Arabic versions of Persian national history, then there is no reason to ascribe these tales to the *Khwadāynāmag* in the first place.

This shows that parts at least of the Persian material in the *Nihāya* derive from a source later than Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, so that even in the best of cases Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* is only one source of Persian national history for the author of the *Nihāya*, and the latter cannot be used for

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123   Even clearer is the case of Kisrā's dream of the coming of a new prophet (*Nihāya*, pp. 313–315, cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* I: 981–983//V: 285–288).

124   For similar conclusions, see Jackson Bonner (2011): 36, 59–70. Jackson Bonner surmises a Syriac source to be behind this episode. He resumes his opinions on p. 33: "It will be clear that this source was not the sort of chronicle for which *The Book of the Bee* provides evidence, but it was rather a romance or perhaps a martyriology." While not agreeing with his Syriac hypothesis, I come to the same conclusion vis-à-vis the *Khwadāynāmag*: the episode of Anūshzād in all probability cannot come from any version of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Jackson Bonner (2015): 26, also notes that rebels (Anūshzād, Bahrām Chūbīn, Bisṭām, and Bābak) receive much attention in al-Dīnawarī's *Akhbār*, which often closely resembles the *Nihāya*.

reconstructing either Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's *Siyar* or the *Khwadāynāmag* without first analysing its constituent parts.

The anonymous author of the *Mujmal* (p. 58/72) mentions having read the story of Balāsh and the daughter of the King of India from one *Siyar al-mulūk*, though he only summarizes the story in a few words. It is only found in the work of al-Kisrawī (quoted in ps.-al-Jāḥiẓ, *Maḥāsin*, pp. 242–251) and in the *Nihāya*, pp. 277, 280–294. Here we can be rather sure that the source for the *Mujmal* was either one of the two works or a common source of theirs. On the other hand, the *Mujmal* elsewhere explicitly identifies Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ as the author of the *Siyar* it uses (p. 2/2: *Siyar al-mulūk az guftār o-rivāyat-e Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*). Two possible explanations arise: either the author is using a work which belongs to the tradition of the *Nihāya* (e.g., the *Nihāya* itself), where the attribution to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ had already been made, or he is using a version of the *Siyar* elaborated by someone, e.g., al-Kisrawī, citing Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ as his authority. In the *Nihāya*, the story is narrated on Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's authority (p. 277), but it is extremely common to quote the ultimate, instead of the immediate, source.

All in all, it seems that the *Nihāya*, or its source, bases its narrative of Persian national history on a number of independent Arabic works, including novelistic stories of several semi-legendary heroes, known to have existed in Arabic as separate books. Whether or not these were translated by him, in the *Nihāya* they have summarily been attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, as, e.g., in the case of *Sīrat Isfandiyār* (or *Kitāb Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*), which other sources attribute to Jabala ibn Sālim.[125] In addition, it probably uses the Arabic translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ or someone else. The Sasanian historical material is accurate enough to exclude any possibility of free fiction, which may well be behind much of the South Arabian material in the same book.[126]

In assessing the position of the *Nihāya* in the Book of Kings tradition, we have to address two different questions, namely 1) does it represent, on any level, the *Siyar* by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ?; and 2) does it represent, on any level, the *Khwadāynāmag*? The latter is easy to answer: the long stories probably do not derive from the *Khwadāynāmag*, whereas the concise royal biographies may well do so.

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125   The Bahrām Chūbīn tale, also reportedly translated by Jabala, is introduced by a simple *qāla* (p. 350), which implicitly refers to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, the only named authority for the Persian material.

126   The South Arabian parts often legitimize South Arabian history by inventing literary sources and other testimonies, modelled after the Persian situation.

The first is a more difficult question. The *Nihāya's* version of its own origin is legendary and anachronistic. On the other hand, it does have unique and accurate material which must go back to one or several reliable sources. Some of these may well be Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's "translations", i.e., texts partly based on Middle Persian originals.[127] One of these sources, further, may well have been Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's *Siyar*, either as such or, perhaps more probably, in a version developed by some later author, such as al-Kisrawī.

3.5   Sources and Nature of These Translations

The large number of purported Arabic translations or versions makes it difficult for us to claim that the *Khwadāynāmag* was a large book, anything of the size of, e.g., al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*. It would be a unique case in Arabic translation history that so large a book would have been translated several times between the eighth and the tenth centuries. The large number of translations makes it probable that the original was a rather brief text (see Chapter 6.2).

As far as we can see, there is no reason to assume that the translations were literal. That would go against the normal strategy of translating historical texts (Chapter 2.4) and there are clear traces of synchronization with the sacred history of Islam in the translations, which can hardly have been there in their Pahlavi original(s).

Baron Rozen (1895)[128] saw the various words used for versions or translations on Ḥamza's list as technical terms. On this basis he divided the translations into three different groups, namely:

1)   independent translations [*naql*] by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm, and Zādūye ibn Shāhūye;
2)   translations/compilations [*naql aw jamʿ*] by Muḥammad ibn Miṭyār and Hishām ibn Qāsim; and
3)   redactions [*iṣlāḥ*] by al-Kisrawī[129] and Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh.

Rozen, and following him, all later scholars assumed these eight texts to have been translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*, which is highly improbable, see Chapters 3.1 and 3.2.1–6.

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127   It should be emphasized that in the first millennium "translation" meant, when we step outside religion and science, something radically different from what it means today. See Chapter 2.4.

128   See also Chapter 3.3, note 214.

129   Rozen's addition to Ḥamza's list.

Rozen's attempt to read a detailed difference between *naql*, *jamʿ*, and *iṣlāḥ* is, however, entirely hypothetical. Rubin (2008b): 44–45, and following him, Jackson Bonner (2011): 23, and n. 24, adopt Rozen's theory assuming that the terms express clear differences and that they can be read as exact terminology distinguishing between three groups, the first term referring to translation proper, the second to compilation, and the third to "an edited reworking of material from various sources". Rubin (2008b): 56–57, draws attention to the fact that Ḥamza himself uses the word (*Taʾrīkh*, p. 22, quoting Bahrām al-Mōbadhānī) *aṣlaḥtu* in the sense "I established". I would suggest that at least there the term means something like "I established a correct version either on the basis of several sources or by correcting the errors on the basis of knowledge derived from some source."[130] Al-Kisrawī's book (Chapter 3.3), on the other hand, seems either to have been a radical reworking of the original or, perhaps more probably, a completely new text, merely using the *Khwadāynāmag* as one of its sources. It seems hard to accept Rozen's claim that the terms have been used in any exact and unvariable sense.

The translation history of both philosophical and scientific texts,[131] on the one hand, and the Bible,[132] on the other, shows many cases of translations which have later been edited by another scholar with or without comparison with the original. The same may be expected to have been the case of the *Khwadāynāmag* and there is no reason to assume that all authors on, e.g., Ḥamza's list necessarily used any Pahlavi originals, though some may have done so.

3.6   Pre-Islamic Iran in Early Arabic and Persian Historical Texts

Very early on, pre-Islamic Iran found a firm place in the Arab world view.[133] Whereas Greece was more or less seen as a country of timeless philosophers and its history was neglected,[134] Iran and its history became an essential part

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130   See also Zakeri (2008): 28–29, who is sceptical about Rozen's three groups.

131   See Chapter 2.1.

132   Griffith (2013): 118, 120, draws attention to the fact that Arabic Bible translations were usually modifications of earlier translations rather than texts directly translated from the Hebrew, Syriac, or Greek Bible.

133   For world history, see Radtke (1992) and Rosenthal (1968): 133–150.

134   Counting here Alexander as a Persian king, as he is in Islamic sources, rather than a Greek/Macedonian monarch.

of universal history for the Arabs. All historians writing in Arabic or Persian on general history included pre-Islamic Iran prominently in their books.

A problem of modern Arab-Islamic historiography is that the Iranian tradition is almost completely ignored. Thus, the legendary Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, who is credited with transmitting Jewish traditions into Arabic, receives an article in the *GAS* (I: 304–305), while Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ is ignored, despite his translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* and other historical books that are better attested than the vague contributions of Kaʿb. The difference seems to arise from the material they were working with. Persian-based historiography is, perhaps, considered merely as translations and ignored, while the Biblical history – based on translations, too – is felt to be part and parcel of Arab-*Islamic* historiography.

Likewise, Schoeler (2002 and 2006) almost ignores Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and the Persian tradition. In fact, however, the Persian-based Arabic world history seems to have developed early on, with the synchronization of Persian and sacred history. Early world historians either used the framework of Persian history, telling the story in the traditional Persian way, structuring their works on the Persian king lists, with the newcomers – the prophets and the sacred history – brought in through synchronization, or they adopted the Biblical model, probably inspired more than anything by Christian historical works. In these latter histories, the Persian kings were sometimes allotted a separate chapter, often ignoring the discrepancies ensuing from telling the world history twice, based on two different traditions, or the two traditions were synchronized but under the headings of the sacred history. Roughly speaking, one either puts the prophets under the respective headings derived from Persian national history (X was the prophet at the time of King Y) or the other way round (Y was the King at the time of the prophet X).

The Arab tradition of world histories was primarily based on Persian historiography and sacred history. In addition, a somewhat legendary South Arabian history was added to the repertory in some works, such as the anonymous *Nihāyat al-arab*. Graeco-Latin historical literature was largely ignored, except for what little trickled down through Christian Arabic historians.

The Persian material received by the Arabs mainly concerned Persian national history. There is no reason to assume that any Middle Persian historical text was interested in world history in the way we understand the term: as far as we know, Middle Persian historians only discussed the history of Iran, with its main adversaries, demons, Tūrānians, and Byzantines, merely finding their way into historical books for their battles against the Iranians. The element of world history was added by the Arabs, who synchronized the Persian material with other historical traditions available to them, namely the sacred history of

Islam and the native Arab tradition, the *Sīra* of the Arab Prophet Muḥammad falling in between the two categories.

The mixture of these trends remained standard in later Arabic historiography. In Muslim Persian sources, obviously, the organization according to Persian kings remained more common than in Arabic sources. Even later, when some knowledge of Greek and Roman history gained entry into world histories, it remained in a marginal role and was mainly discussed as an extension of Persian history. Thus, e.g., passages on the Greeks in Orosius' history were inserted into Persian history by the late Mamlūk historian al-Maqrīzī in his *Kitāb al-Khabar ʿan al-bashar*.[135]

One of the first authors to write on world history outside of this frame was Rashīd al-Dīn Faḍlallāh (d. 1318), who added rather extensive[136] chapters on India, China, and Europe, listing both Popes and Emperors and synchronizing the two with each other in his *Jawāmiʿ al-tawārīkh*, thus creating a complete history of civilized nations as known to the Arab-Islamic culture. The various trends are, of course, rather imbalanced, as the last-mentioned three chapters, as well as the other "intruding" chapters, are rather uninformative lists of rulers, with occasional notes on them, whereas the traditional major trends (the sacred history, Arabic and Persian history) are fully developed.

The Arabs would, undoubtedly, have in any way created some framework for world history after they became acquainted with several historical narratives. However, Persian historiography was the first they encountered after having created their Empire and for this reason it was the Persians who had the greatest historiographical effect on them. Later, they would have had plenty of sources at hand for, e.g., Byzantine history, but they lacked the interest to take it fully into account. Only with the *Nahḍa*, the nineteenth-century renaissance, were other historical traditions fully absorbed into the Arab-Islamic worldview, but even then the basic structure of traditional Arabic historiography remained what it had been for more than a millennium, a combination of Arabic, Persian, and sacred history.

When it comes to pre-Islamic Persian history, it was the native Middle Persian tradition, the *Khwadāynāmag* among several other texts, that was the

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135   Al-Maqrīzī did, though, write another chapter on purely Greek and Roman history followed by some pages on the Franks and Goths (see MS-Fātiḥ-4340, fols. 233–264 = ed. VI: 282–326).

136   Shorter chapters on a variety of other nations are already to be found in, e.g., Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*. In addition to sheer length, Rashīd al-Dīn differs from the majority of earlier historians by taking the story up to contemporary times. Al-Maqdisī is aware of his lack of information on other nations that have their own historical tradition (*Badʾ* III: 208–209).

main source of information, which was supplemented by the few mentions of Persians in the Biblical history, mainly received from Christian sources, and the late Achaemenid history, which tied up with the *Alexander Romance*. Otherwise, there were few sources, such as Orosius, that gave the Arabs information on pre-Islamic Iran.[137]

It is beyond the scope of the present work to compile a comprehensive list of all early authors whose works contain relevant materials, but this chapter introduces some of our main sources on pre-Islamic Persian history in Arabic and Classical Persian, works both lost and extant, in chronological order with some comments on each. Authors studied in more detail in Chapters 3.1–3.4 are not included here.

Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī (d. ca. 206/821)

Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī[138] is a major source for al-Ṭabarī, not only concerning pre-Islamic Iran but also more generally. He does not seem to have written much on pre-Islamic Iran, so that later sources which quote him on these matters probably received the information through oral channels.[139] Among the works attributed to him in Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, pp. 109/96//208, one only finds a *Kitāb Khabar al-Ḍaḥḥāk* and a *Kitāb Akhdh Kisrā rahn al-ʿArab*, both of which – if they are genuine – were probably very short texts, taken down by his students, rather than fully developed monographs.[140] As a learned oral source for later historians Hishām is, though, invaluable.

Hishām's sources, too, seem to have been mainly oral, rather than written. Thus in, e.g., *Murūj* §558, al-Masʿūdī refers to his sources by saying that he "narrated from his father and from other learned Arabs (…)". It seems unwarranted to claim that any of his sources, or his sources' sources, were necessarily written books: the early authors worked to a large extent orally and may well have received their knowledge from Persian Muslims (or non-Muslims) orally.

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137   In some sources, such as al-Maqrīzī's *Khabar*, the Achaemenid history is harmonized with Persian history as received from pre-Islamic Middle Persian historiography, but the main line of Arab-Islamic world history more or less ignored the Achaemenids, the last Darius excluded, as he was linked to the *Alexander Romance*. For the book of Orosius, translated into Arabic in Islamic Spain and highly influential in later centuries, see Hämeen-Anttila (2018): 11–26.

138   Cf. *GAS* I: 269–271; Zakeri (2008): 35.

139   In earlier studies, the translator Jabala ibn Sālim is often seen as his scribe, but this is based on a misunderstanding, see Chapter 5.1.

140   For the early system of aural transmission, see Schoeler (2002) and (2006).

Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar ibn al-Muthannā (*d. 209/824*)

Abū ʿUbayda had an interesting informant, ʿUmar Kisrā (Chapter 3.2.11). In *Murūj* §560, al-Masʿūdī mentions Abū ʿUbayda's[141] book on "*akhbār al-Furs*"[142] – a term we might almost expect to describe a *Siyar mulūk al-Furs*. In this passage he describes the contents of the book:

> Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar ibn al-Muthannā has reported (*dhakara*) (information) from ʿUmar Kisrā in a book of his on the stories of the Persians (*akhbār al-Furs*) in which he describes the classes of their kings,[143] early and late, and the stories about them, their speeches, the divisions of their genealogies, the description of the cities they built and the districts they defined, the canals they dug and the noble families among them (*ahl al-buyūtāt minhum*) and how each group (*farīq*) of them marked themselves from among the Shahārija and others ...

Al-Masʿūdī goes on to comment on the regnal years of the Petty Kings, which shows that ʿUmar Kisrā was also interested in chronology.

In §660, the relation between Abū ʿUbayda and ʿUmar Kisrā is made explicit:

> Abū ʿUbayda Maʿmar ibn al-Muthannā has mentioned in his book on the stories of the Persians, a book he transmitted (*rawāhu*) from ʿUmar Kisrā ...

The book which he transmitted from this ʿUmar is not preserved. Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* does mention two books titled *Akhbār al-Furs*, one by Abū l-Ḥasan al-Nassāba Muḥammad ibn al-Qāsim al-Tamīmī[144] (p. 127/114//251: *Kitāb Akhbār al-Furs wa-ansābihim*), the other (p. 112/100//218) by al-Haytham ibn ʿAdī. But on the list of Abū ʿUbayda's works (pp. 58–60/53–54//116–118), there is no book of this title. There is a *Kitāb Khurāsān* and another titled *Kitāb Rawshanqubād* (p. 60/54//117),[145] but neither of these would seem to be a

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141   Cf. Zakeri (2008): 36.

142   Abū ʿUbayda is not credited with a book by such a title in either *GAS* or *GAL* (cf. *GAL* I: 102; *GAL* S I: 162; *GAS* I, Index, s.v.). "*Fī kitāb lahu fī akhbār al-Furs*" seems to be a description of the contents of this book, not its title. Abū ʿUbayda's *Faḍāʾil al-Furs* may well be the book in question, cf. below.

143   These four classes, or dynasties, are defined in §660.

144   This Abū l-Ḥasan was known to Ḥamza, cf. Mittwoch (1909).

145   Flügel reads Rūstuqbād and refers in his notes, *Fihrist* II: 33, to geographical works that mention such a place. The place name is also mentioned by Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 38, who gives Rustam-Kawādh as the ancient name and Rustuqābād (written RSYQ-ābād, so also

general work on Persian history. There is, however, a third title, namely *Kitāb Faḍāʾil al-Furs*,[146] which will have to be considered.

In al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* IV: 92,[147] there is a quotation from a book by this title, attributed to Abū ʿUbayd. This seems to be a mistake for Abū ʿUbayda, which is a common occurrence in Arabic texts. The contents of the quotation concern the building of Damascus by Bīwarasp and nicely fit the material transmitted by al-Masʿūdī. Even though the evidence is slight, it seems probable that the book in which Abū ʿUbayda transmitted material from ʿUmar Kisrā was his *Kitāb Faḍāʾil al-Furs* and this book should be considered a compilation of pieces of information on the early history of pre-Islamic Persia.

Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī (d. c. 232/847)

The mathematician and geographer Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī[148] is also credited with a *Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh*, which is mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 333/274//652.[149] Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §8, mentions al-Khwārizmī among his sources, which probably refers to this book. Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 145, quotes his own *Kitāb Iṣfahān* wherein he had quoted al-Khwārizmī's *Taʾrīkh* on earthquakes in 94 AH and 98 AH. The anonymous *Tārīkh-e Sīstān*, p. 95, quotes the book on the chronology of the birth of Prophet Muḥammad. This book probably concentrated on chronological material. How much information it contained on pre-Islamic Iran is not clear.

Abū Maʿshar al-Munajjim (d. 272/886 or later)

The astrologer Abū Maʿshar[150] was an authority on chronology and he used Persian, i.e., Pahlavi astrological works. He also dabbled with Hermetica[151] and seems to have aimed at synchronizing various strands of history. His lost *Kitāb*

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in ed. Gottwaldt, p. 47, cf. trans. Gottwaldt 1848: 34 Ressicobad) as its contemporary name. This title does not appear in Dodge's translation and seems to have been accidentally omitted, and Dodge's note 114 refers to this missing title. Flügel's "corrected" reading has been adopted in Fuʾād Sayyid's edition (I: 152).

146 Dodge (1970): 117, translates this as "Excellencies of Persia (Excellencies of the Horse)". The latter rendering is improbable, as in book titles one mostly finds *al-khayl* instead of *al-faras*. See also Zakeri (2007a) I: 265–266.

147 Cf. *GAL* S I: 167; Zakeri (2007a) I: 265.

148 See Vernet (1978). On astrological histories in general, see Borrut (2014): 465–467.

149 Ibn al-Qifṭī, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 286, repeats this from Ibn al-Nadīm. See also Mittwoch (1909): 123, note 3.

150 See Burnett (2007) and Lippert (1895).

151 See van Bladel (2009), Index.

al-Ulūf "Book of Thousands" probably included material on pre-Islamic Iranian chronology.

Ibn Qutayba (*d. 276/889*)

Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh ibn Muslim al-Dīnawarī, better known as Ibn Qutayba, is one of the great scholars of the third/ninth century. Although his family was of Iranian origin, Ibn Qutayba was born in Iraq, but was later appointed the *qāḍī* of Dīnawar. From 257/871 until his death, Ibn Qutayba lived in Baghdad.[152] Ibn Qutayba's many works had a huge influence in various fields, but for the present purpose, two of them arise as the most important.

Kitāb ʿUyūn al-akhbār is a collection of anecdotes from various sources. Some of these concern pre-Islamic Iran, and Ibn Qutayba must have received some of the information orally, some from translations of Middle Persian texts – there is no indication that Ibn Qutayba himself would have been able to read Pahlavi. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ seems to be the origin of much of this information, and he is at times cited summarily (*qaraʾtu fī kitāb li-Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*, *ʿUyūn* I: 54). Ibn Qutayba explicitly quotes from his *Kalīla wa-Dimna*,[153] *al-Adab al-kabīr*,[154] *al-Tāj*,[155] *al-Yatīma*,[156] *Kitāb al-Āyīn*,[157] and *Kitāb Abarwīz ilā ibnihi Shīrūya*.[158] He also quotes from *Siyar al-mulūk*, though the last is only clearly used four times as a book title[159] and could usually be translated as "lives of the kings,"[160] nor does it necessarily refer to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's work, as Ibn Qutayba does not explicitly attribute it to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. In fact, there is nothing in the *ʿUyūn* that we would have reason to attribute to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of

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152   In general, see Lecomte (1971).

153   *Kitāb min kutub al-Hind*, or similar expressions, is used, e.g., in *ʿUyūn* I: 55, 72. Explicitly as *Kalīla wa-Dimna* in *ʿUyūn* I: 261. Cf. Lecomte (1965): 184–186.

154   E.g., *ʿUyūn* I: 74, 76, 85, etc. (*qaraʾtu fī Ādāb Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ*). Cf. Lecomte (1965): 181–183.

155   *ʿUyūn* I: 57, 64, 68, etc. Cf. Lecomte (1965): 188–189.

156   E.g., *ʿUyūn* I: 56.

157   *ʿUyūn* I: 61, 128–129, 191–195, 217 (twice), 239–242, etc. Cf. Lecomte (1965): 183.

158   *ʿUyūn* I: 70, 85, 124.

159   In *ʿUyūn* I: 197–201, there is a long story, mainly based on speeches, of Fīrūz and Akhshanwār, the King of the Hayāṭila (cf. the brief version of al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*, pp. 578–579; al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, pp. 61–62). *ʿUyūn* I: 171 (*qaraʾtu fī Siyar al-ʿajam*, on Ardashīr's throne speech) and *ʿUyūn* IV: 116 (*qaraʾtu fī Siyar al-ʿajam*, on Ardashīr's marriage to the daughter of the King of Hatra with the Princess and the Pea motif). Both could well come from *Sīrat Ardashīr* and the last is definitely not from the Pahlavi *Khwadāynāmag*. *ʿUyūn* I: 273 (on Bahrām Gūr). Cf. also Lecomte (1965): 186–188.

160   This is especially clear in Ibn Qutayba's preface, *ʿUyūn* I: 43. It should also be noted that *siyar* may refer to wise sayings that exemplify one's way of life.

the *Khwadāynāmag*. Usually, Ibn Qutayba cites his Persian sources very vaguely as "*fī kitāb min kutub al-ʿajam*", or "*fī kutub al-ʿajam*".[161] Mostly he quotes sayings and other pieces of wisdom literature, with very little historical material. The information is usually not duplicated in his *Maʿārif*.[162]

The other relevant work is his genealogical *Maʿārif*, which Ibn Qutayba ends with a chapter (pp. 652–667) on the Kings of Iran, giving as his source *kutub*[163] *siyar al-ʿajam* and adding a piece on the authority of Abū Ḥātim ← al-Aṣmaʿī (p. 652). The pre-Sasanian kings are mentioned only briefly and only a few kings are mentioned by name (Jam, Ṭahmūrath, Bīwarasf, Bahman ibn Isfandiyār, Dārā ibn Dārā, Alexander,[164] and the Petty Kings as a group). Several of them are synchronized with Biblical characters. Even the Sasanids are described only briefly. Several awkward events in the Sasanian history are discreetly passed by (Mani is not mentioned at all, Mazdak briefly on p. 663 as Mardaq; Bahrām Chūbīn, p. 664, is also mentioned only in passing, as Bahrām Shūbīna), although there are individual negative comments on some kings: e.g., Hurmiz ibn Narsī (p. 655) is said to have been gross and crude before his rule, and Yazdajird ibn Bahrām (pp. 659–660) is described in fully negative terms.

The biography of Sābūr ibn Ardashīr (*Maʿārif*, p. 654) may be taken as an example of Ibn Qutayba's brevity, although it is far from being the shortest example:

> Sābūr ibn Ardashīr. After him [Ardashīr] ruled his son Sābūr ibn Ardashīr, who adopted the ways of his father and his manners as to rigour and determination. He marched to Nisibis, where there were numerous troops of the Caesar. He besieged the city until he conquered it. After this he penetrated the Byzantine territory and conquered several towns before returning to his kingdom. He divided the prisoners-of-war between three towns, Gundīshāpūr, Sābūr in Fārs, and Tustar in al-Ahwāz. When he was about to die, he called his son Hurmiz and left the kingship to him, writing a contract (*ʿahd*) to him. He ruled in all 30 years and one month.

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161 E.g., *ʿUyūn* I: 60, 64, 67.

162 Cf. also Rubin (2005): 67–69.

163 Again, we have to be wary of trusting the orthography: the long ā was not always consistently written and with a slight change we might read this as a book title: The Book (*Kitāb*) *Siyar al-ʿajam*. The form *kutub siyar al-ʿajam* is, though, also found on p. 57.

164 Alexander the Great is mentioned as a wholly negative character, as the destroyer of Iran, and he is called al-Rūmī, the title he also bears in preserved Pahlavi texts (Hrōmāyīg).

One of the main exceptions to the brevity of articles is Sābūr ibn Hurmiz Dhū l-Aktāf, discussed on pp. 656–659. The article contains the story of how before his birth his mother (not the *mōbads*, as in most versions) felt that the child would be a boy; Sābūr's invention of one-way trafic as a child; how he got the title of Dhū l-Aktāf (Arab interest mentioned); his going disguised to Byzantium and getting caught and later escaping; and an extensive report of his building activities. Bahrām Gūr is also given a lengthy article (pp. 660–661), focusing on his deeds in India, told in an epic fashion,[165] while the Arabs are not even mentioned in the article.

The negative comments on some kings and the final narrative of the demise of the Sasanian kingdom (pp. 666–667) can hardly come from a Sasanian royal chronicle and Ibn Qutayba must have had other sources at his disposal (or these pieces had already been inserted by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ). Otherwise, the general character of the chapter would fit the concise style of the *Khwadāynāmag* well.

Theodor Nöldeke (1879a): xxii, distinguished between two lines of transmission of Persian national history in Arabic and Classical Persian literature and took one of these to represent Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*, without actually having other basis for this than the references to *Kitāb* (easily confusable with *kutub*, also used by Ibn Qutayba in such contexts) *Siyar al-ʿajam* in Ibn Qutayba's *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*.[166] While Ibn Qutayba does not explicitly attribute this work to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and while we know that a variety of Pahlavi historical books existed and an even larger variety of Arabic texts claimed to be, and sometimes were, translations of them, the identification is based on the simple misunderstanding that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation is necessarily always the source for such information.

al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 284/897)[167]

Al-Yaʿqūbī does not identify his sources for Persian history in the preserved part of his book – the lost beginning probably contained some information on them. The late position of Persian history in the book (*Taʾrīkh* I: 158–177) seems significant: Persian kings are given only a minor role in his concept of world history, in contrast to most other world histories, where they either form the

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165   They resemble the deeds of Garshāsb and Farāmarz in India, known from the *nāme* literature.

166   This is critically discussed in Rubin (2005): 65–70.

167   The year of al-Yaʿqūbī's death is uncertain and it seems probable that he only died after 295/908. See Anthony (2016): 19.

framework for the history (*Nihāyat al-arab*; al-Dīnawarī) or come second in importance, inserted into the framework of sacred history.

Al-Yaʿqūbī disparagingly glosses over the earliest Persian history (*Taʾrīkh* I: 158: "The Persians claim for their kings many such things that cannot be accepted", followed by some notes on Persian mythological and legendary figures, not identified by name) and then continues with a significant passage: "we have learned that they start counting the Kings of Persia from Ardashīr Bābakān onwards" (*wa-wajadnāhum innamā yaḥsubūna mulk Fārs min ladun Ardashīr Bābakān*). Before going on to these Sasanian kings, al-Yaʿqūbī prefaces them with a short list of 17 kings from Shayūmarth (sic) to Dārā with their regnal years and a mention (with no names) of the Petty Kings. All this is covered in less than a page.

Then al-Yaʿqūbī gives a rather dry chronological list of the Sasanian kings from Ardashīr to the last Yazdagird (I: 159–174), with some notes (I: 174–177) on their religion and geography. He only grows somewhat more verbous when he comes to Mani (I: 159–161), giving an unusual version of his career and death with a longish exposé of his doctrine and including the information that Sābūr first converted to Manichaeism. Bahrām Gūr's story (I: 162–163) is closely linked to the Arabs. Khusraw Anūshirwān is also discussed somewhat more extensively (I: 164–165), and Bahrām Chūbīn is given a disproportionately long discussion (I: 166–172), almost as much as all the earlier kings put together. The last days of the Empire are briefly told (I: 172–174) and the chapter ends with various notes on Zoroastrianism, Iranian culture, Sasanian geography and administration, etc., clearly aimed at a non-Persian audience and, hence, not directly taken from any Pahlavi source, even though the information may ultimately come from there.

Grignaschi (1973): 125, has argued that al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh* constitutes a summary of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*. This is speculative, as the book's sources are not indicated, but it is by no means impossible, although one must keep in mind that the *Khwadāynāmag*, and hence presumably its Arabic translation, dealt with Persian history from the Creation onwards, while another Pahlavi book, translated into Arabic as *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar*, is known to have begun the story with the Sasanians. If this, or some other book on the Sasanians, was al-Yaʿqūbī's main source, the scanty references to earlier kings might well derive from another source.

The only synchronization al-Yaʿqūbī gives, concerns Jamshād (sic; I: 20) and is given outside the chapter on the Persian kings. Likewise, some other pieces relevant for Persian history are given outside the chapter dedicated to it, and thus probably derive from other sources. Darius, Kisr Ḥūsh, and Artaxerxes are briefly mentioned as Babylonian kings (I: 82, 83). The table of contents

of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* is given within Indian history, I: 88–89, and the story of chess and backgammon is related in the same chapter, I: 89–92, again in an unusual version, and *Kitāb Makr al-nisāʾ* (*Sindbādnāme*) is discussed in I: 93–94. Alexander is discussed both under Indian (I: 87–88, Porus) and Greek history (I: 143–145).

Although he does not indicate his sources in the preserved part of the *Taʾrīkh*, in another work of his, the *Buldān*, p. 232 (preface), al-Yaʿqūbī mentions having collected oral historical material. The same may well hold true for his *Taʾrīkh*, too.

al-Dīnawarī (*d. not later than 290/902–3*)

Abū Ḥanīfa Aḥmad ibn Dāʾūd al-Dīnawarī's[168] *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*[169] is a work which clearly differs in style from most other Arabic historical works of the time, except for the *Nihāya*, which it closely resembles in many parts. Its material sometimes shows similarities to that of al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh*, but its viewpoint is strongly Iranian, leading, e.g., to diminishing the role of the prophet Muḥammad, who is only mentioned in passing.

Al-Dīnawarī begins his book, p. 2, by saying that he will narrate the history of the kings of the world from Adam until the end of the rule of Yazdajird (and then listing the other nations and their rulers). As Adam is usually equated with Gayōmard, this closely follows the tradition of Persian history. Later, al-Dīnawarī synchronizes Persian, Biblical, and Arab histories to an extent few others have done, equating most of the central characters of the Persian tradition with those of the other two traditions.

Al-Dīnawarī mentions Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ on p. 9, but only as an ultimate authority whose information is transmitted orally (*wa-yurwā anna Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ kāna yaqūlu*), thus not directly referring to any source written by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. In general, al-Dīnawarī contains a good selection of Persian historical lore, which may partly go back to some translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* or some other historical work, but this material has undergone a profound modification, which makes it difficult to point to any specific sources.

Ibn al-Faqīh (*wrote in 290/903 or soon after*)

Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Hamadhānī, better known as Ibn al-Faqīh, wrote a geographical work titled *Kitāb al-buldān*, which was long considered lost, but an abbreviation of the book (*Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān*) was

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168   Bauer (1988): 6–16.

169   Grignaschi (1969) and (1973); Pourshariati (2010); Jackson Bonner (2015). The contents of the *Akhbār* are conveniently summarized in Pourshariati (2010): 253–260.

printed early on.[170] It contains a great deal of material on pre-Islamic Persian history, but without reference to Persian books (in Arabic translation) which he may have used. At one point, p. 284, Ibn al-Faqīh quotes Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ on the genealogy of Ādhurbādh ibn Īrān ibn al-Aswad ibn Sām ibn Nūḥ (*wa-yuqālu: Ādhurbādh ibn Bīwarasf* – it is not clear whether this belongs to the quotation or not). This might come from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿʾs translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*, which might imply that other materials on pre-Islamic Iran may also come from the same source. The genealogy derived from Noah, though, also shows that the latter part of the genealogy cannot come from Pahlavi sources.

Abū Muḥammad Dāʾūd Ibn al-Jarrāḥ (d. 291/903)

Dāʾūd Ibn al-Jarrāḥ,[171] the grandfather of the Vizier ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā, was of Persian extraction and al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §10, used his book, which contained "many stories about the Persians and other nations" (*kitāb Dāʾūd ibn al-Jarrāḥ fī l-taʾrīkh al-jāmiʿ li-kathīr min akhbār al-Furs wa-ghayrihim min al-umam*).[172] The title of this book may have been *Kitāb al-umam al-sālifa*.[173]

Eutychius (Saʿīd ibn Baṭrīq) (d. 304/916)

In his *Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh*,[174] which is organized according to Christian sacred history, Eutychius is well informed about Alexander (pp. 77–85) and the later Persian history, especially the Sasanians, which he interweaves with Christian history, but has little, if anything, to tell of earlier times that would derive from Persian sources. Mostly, the earlier Persians are mentioned through Biblical or Greek sources.[175] The only early Persian character that does not derive from Greek or Biblical historiography is Ṭaḥmūrat (p. 20), during whose times,

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170 The whole text has been edited by Yūsuf al-Hādī in 2009, but his edition has not been available to me.

171 See also Zakeri (2008): 36–37.

172 Also mentioned, as *Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh*, in Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 142/128//280.

173 Cf. al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī* XIII: 465.

174 The book exists in two widely different versions. The more complete version of ed. Cheikho is used here. The more fragmentary one, ed. Breydy, does not contain remarkable differences in the material concerning the Persians.

175 There is a mention of the worship of fire and criticism of the *xvaetvadatha* (p. 20), already firmly rooted in the Greek tradition (cf., e.g., Agathias II.24.1–4), of Cyrus (pp. 22, 75: Kūrush), Darius (pp. 74, 75: Dāriyūsh), Cambyses (p. 76: Qamīsūs), etc., all deriving from Greek sources. Some of this material is later also found in Islamic sources, but its origin is clearly Greek historiography, not Middle Persian texts, and most of the books that are considered to derive their material from the *Khwadāynāmag* lack it.

Eutychius says, Zarathustra appeared, a detail which is rarely found in sources belonging to the Persian tradition, Zarathustra being usually dated to the reign of Gushtāsb (e.g., al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* I: 648//IV: 46). The confusion arises from the identification of Zarathustra with Būdāsf, who is often dated to Ṭahmūrath's reign (e.g., Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 27).

The Askānians, identified as the Petty Kings, are briefly mentioned on p. 85. It is only with the founder of the Sasanid dynasty, Ardashīr[176] (pp. 106–108), that Eutychius starts presenting Persian material ultimately derived from Persian sources, and this continues until Kisrā Abarwīz (pp. 213–218).[177] Some major events are discussed more extensively, but the majority of kings are passed by with rather short notes. As the author himself mentions that he has abbreviated his sources (*wa-jaʿaltuhu mukhtaṣaran*, p. 3), this does not necessarily mean that the sources he used were equally concise. The major exceptions to this brevity are the stories about Bahrām Gūr (pp. 176–179), Kisrā Anūshirwān (pp. 207–210), and Kisrā Abarwīz and Bahrām Chūbīn (pp. 213–218), all of which we know to have circulated as separate books (Chapter 2.2.1). At the end of the last story, Kisrā is said to have converted to Christianity, which is a strong indication that this story does not come, at least not directly, from Middle Persian sources. There is no mention in the book of the Sistanian heroes.

Eutychius does not tell us anything about his Persian sources. Nöldeke put forward the idea that Eutychius' source would have been Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* and used Eutychius to reconstruct the contents of that book. This is possible, and there are similarities between Eutychius and what we know about the *Khwadāynāmag*. As shown in Chapter 6.2, the articles of the *Khwadāynāmag* on the various kings were most probably short, and the Sistanian heroes may not even have been mentioned there (Chapter 5.1), just like they are absent in Eutychius.

There is, however, one major difference. The evidence strongly points to the *Khwadāynāmag* as having begun from Gayōmard and gone through the mythic and legendary kings of Iran before Alexander the Great. Quotations from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, too, seem to indicate that they were present in his translation (Chapter 3.7) and that he synchronized this history with the sacred history. We cannot readily see why Eutychius would have opted not to quote these passages. He presents ancient Persian history through Greek historiography, mentioning the Achaemenids, but this cannot be the reason for omitting the

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176   Throughout the book Ardashīr is written Azdashīr, but this is also common in other Arabic sources.

177   Nöldeke used this as an argument for dating the *Khwadāynāmag* to his times, cf. Chapter 6.2.

legendary Persian kings, because they are usually synchronized with Biblical prophets with whom the Achaemenids had little to do, and thus could have found a niche of their own in Eutychius' history. The emphasis on Sasanian history makes it possible that his source was another book that only discussed the Sasanians, such as *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar* (Chapter 2.2.1).

Be this as it may, Eutychius does derive his information on the Sasanids rather directly from (translated) Middle Persian sources, i.e., in a form that adds little Arabic material or material that would be problematic for Sasanian sources. Thus, Mani is mentioned as a mere rebel (p. 111), without the embarrassing stories about how the kings first favoured him;[178] the name of Sābūr Dhū l-Aktāf is explained without reference to the Arabs particularly (p. 115: "He was called Dhū l-Aktāf [the One of the Shoulders] because when he vanquished some king he dislocated his shoulder").[179] Likewise, al-Nuʿmān is not mentioned in the main story of Bahrām Gūr (pp. 176–178), only in a brief (mere three lines) end note, where it is said that "some Persians[180] mention that Bahrām Jūr was in the care of al-Nuʿmān ibn al-Mundhir al-Lakhmī, the King of the Arabs in the desert (…)." That the Arabs are not mentioned is precisely what one would expect from a Middle Persian source: for the Sasanids, the Arabs were not the centre of interest.

Eutychius has much common material with al-Ṭabarī (e.g., pp. 190–191 on Qubād, cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh*, I: 883//V: 128ff.), which shows that they used a common source (or common sources), but as al-Ṭabarī is much better informed, this common source is probably just one of al-Ṭabarī's sources.

Eutychius mentions that Khusraw Anūshirwān "took out" (probably meaning that he put them in circulation) the "books" of Ardashīr wherein there was his *sīra* "way of life" (*wa-akhraja kutub Azdashīr allatī fīhā sīratuhu allatī sāra bihā*), made people follow this *sīra*, and wrote about this to the four corners of the world. This seems to come from Eutychius' source and there is no reason to assume that Eutychius himself would have been familiar with the book. This

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178 The story of Mazdak, though, is told in more detail on pp. 206–208.

179 Usually in Arabic sources, he is said particularly to have done so to his Arab captives, a detail which shows an Arab viewpoint and is missing here. The name is sometimes given in the Persian form Hūbe-sunbā(n) (Gardīzī, *Zayn*, p. 89 ꜱᴡᴍʜ ꜱɴʾɴ; *Mujmal*, p. 30/34, Hūye-sunbā; Mīrkhwānd, *Rawḍa* II: 891; *Tawārīkh-e Shaykh Uways*, pp. 84, 87), which may imply a (Middle?) Persian origin for the nickname, although it may, of course, merely be a back translation from Arabic.

180 At the time Eutychius was writing, this probably refers to the Islamicized (and partly Arabicized) Persians.

seems to refer to an *andarz* book, presumably containing wise sayings attributed to Ardashīr (cf. Chapter 2.2.1).

Ibn Khur(ra)dādhbih (d. c. 300/912)

Better known for his *Kitāb al-Masālik wa'l-mamālik*, the geographer Abū l-Qāsim ʿUbaydallāh ibn ʿAbdallāh (or Aḥmad) Ibn Khur(ra)dādhbih (d. c. 300/912), of Iranian origin and a convert from Zoroastrianism, is also credited with a *Taʾrīkh* and a *Kitāb Jamharat (Jumhūr) ansāb al-Furs wa'l-nawāqil*.[181] The *Taʾrīkh* is quoted by al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*, pp. 130–131, and Ibn Khurradādhbih, without mention of the title al-Thaʿālibī is referring to, is further mentioned as an authority or quoted on pp. 257, 263, 378, 415–416, 486, 556–557,[182] and 604–605.[183] *Kitāb Jamharat ansāb al-Furs wa'l-nawāqil* was also used by al-Masʿūdī in his *Murūj* §503, who informs us that it was concerned with pre-Islamic nations (*dhikr al-umam al-māḍiya qabla majīʾ al-Islām*).[184]

al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923)

Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī[185] is arguably the most important historian who wrote in Arabic. Born in 224 or 225/839, he died in Baghdad in 310/923. He lived his early life in Iran, before moving to Iraq when he was already in his teens. After this, he travelled in various Arab countries before settling in Baghdad. Al-Ṭabarī clearly understood Persian, but there is no indication that he could have read Pahlavi. A large Qurʾānic commentary, *Tafsīr*, is his main religious work and is hugely influential for all later *tafsīr* until the present day. His (*Mukhtaṣar*) *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa'l-mulūk* is a gigantic world history, ranging from the Creation to the early fouth/tenth century.

The work begins with the Creation and the earliest prophets, but soon interweaves pre-Islamic Persian history into the grid arranged according to prophets – as the title of the book intimates, the prophets come first in order

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181   Hadj-Sadok (1986); *GAS* I: 225–226; *GAL* S I: 404. See also Zakeri (2008): 37–38.

182   Part of the quotation is also found in Ibn Khurradādhbih's *Masālik*, p. 118.

183   There are also quotations from this book in al-Maqdisī, *Bad'* II: 151, VI: 51, 89 (the latter two passages read Khurrazādh), but these do not concern pre-Islamic Iran. Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāme*, pp. 161–162, probably also comes from this book of Khurradādhbih's. See also Rosenthal (1968): 486, n. 4. Radtke (1992): 94, no. 37, is to be corrected accordingly.

184   Also quoted in Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlāq*, p. 25.

185   See Rosenthal (1989), Gilliot (1989), Bosworth (2000), Daniel (2013), *GAS* I: 323–328. There is a vast scholarly literature on al-Ṭabari, some of the more recent works including Kennedy (2008) and Mårtensson (2009). The short summary here aims only at giving some basic information on the famous author which is relevant for his Persian section.

and kings are arranged according to them until the birth of Islam. From the institution of the Islamic (Hijrī) calendar onward, the book changes into an annalistic form.

While much of the Islamic history is transmitted in the * Taʾrīkh* in the *khabar* form as short narratives and with authorities quoted for each passage, Persian history is amalgamated into a continuous narrative, which is then narrated in sections interspersed with other events elsewhere, which al-Ṭabarī considered contemporaneous (especially sacred history and South Arabian history). Al-Ṭabarī does not usually indicate his sources for this part, mainly referring to Ibn al-Kalbī as an authority when he does so. He is also known to have used the text preserved in MS-Sprenger. No Persian books or their translations are mentioned in the *Taʾrīkh*.

As discussed in Chapter 1.1.2, Theodor Nöldeke suggested that the *Khwadāynāmag* was one of the major sources for this part of al-Ṭabarī's book. While this theory cannot be substantiated, it is clear that al-Ṭabarī used several Pahlavi texts in Arabic translation either directly or through earlier Arabic compilations, though we cannot identify them with any certainty. Though there is no unequivocal evidence for it, the *Khwadāynāmag* may well have been one of them, but there is also reason to believe that other texts known to have existed in Arabic translation, such as *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar*, *Kārnāmaj Ardashīr*, some version of the story of Bahrām Chūbīn, and perhaps a translation of *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* (Chapters 2.2.1 and 4.6), were familiar to him. As al-Ṭabarī was fully able to use several sources in other parts of his *Taʾrīkh*, it would be absurd to claim that all his material on pre-Islamic Iran would need to come from one single source.

al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956)

Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī wrote two books that are well informed in Persian matters and are still extant, *Murūj al-dhahab* and *Tanbīh waʾl-ishrāf*.[186]

In the *Murūj*, the main section on Persian history comes in §§530–663, but elsewhere, especially in the first two volumes, there are many scattered pieces of relevant information. In §§ 8–14, al-Masʿūdī lists a total of 83 earlier authors or authorities he has used. Among them one finds Sahl ibn Hārūn, ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, and Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī (§8), Ibn Khurradādhbih and al-Dīnawarī (§9), Dāʾūd ibn al-Jarrāḥ and *Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh al-jāmiʿ li-funūn al-akhbār waʾl-kawāʾin fī l-aʿṣār qabla l-islām wa-baʿdahu*, written by Abū ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Sawwār, known as Ibn

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186   For the lost books of his and his other works, see Khalidi (1975) and Shboul (1979).

Ukht Abī ʿĪsā ibn Farrukhān-shāh, which continued until the year 320 (§10), as well as Ibn Qutayba's *Maʿārif* and al-Ṭabarī (§11).

Al-Masʿūdī also knew ʿAlī ibn al-Jahm's *qaṣīda "fī badʾ al-khalq"*, written in *rajaz muzdawija* of 12 syllables (§49),[187] as well as an anonymous (*qāla dhū ʿināya bi-akhbār al-ʿālam wa-mulūkihi*)[188] poem (in monorhyme *basīṭ* in *-ānū*) discussing, or perhaps only listing, the titles of the kings of the world, their kingdoms, and their names (*jumalan min marātib mulūk al-ʿālam wa-mamālikihim wa-asmāʾihim*), of which he quotes six verses. In §503 he further mentions Ibn Khurradādhbih's geographical *al-Masālik waʾl-mamālik* and his book on *Taʾrīkh*, as well as a world history attributed to Aḥmad ibn al-Ṭayyib ṣāḥib al-Muʿtaḍid [al-Sarakhsī].

In addition to a large selection of prose works, al-Masʿūdī had some historical poems at his disposal or was at least aware of them. As far as al-Masʿūdī is concerned, he seems to have only used Arabic sources, either original compositions or translations, and when he quotes verses from such poems they are in Arabic. Others, however, may have been in some form of Persian, either in a written form of Middle Persian, or if oral, in some form of very early Persian, a language form which is sparsely documented. Al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §538, quotes 4 *ramal* verses, rhyming in -aCam and mentioning how "we" divided the world between Sal(a)m, Ṭūḥ (or Ṭūj), and Īrān, the three sons of Afrīdūn.[189] The verses are attributed to a Persian poet who had lived in the Islamic period (*baʿḍ al-shuʿarāʾ mimman salafa min abnāʾ al-Furs baʿda l-islām yadhkuru wuld Afrīdūn al-thalātha*). The verses may well be a self boast (*iftikhār*) from a *qaṣīda*, but they could also be a fragment of an epic, a genre that is not completely lacking in Classical Arabic literature.[190] Likewise, there are in *Murūj* §608 seven *basīṭ* lines of narrative poetry, rhyming in -ārī and attributed to "an early Persian poet" (*baʿḍ al-mutaqaddimīn min al-shuʿarāʾ min abnāʾ al-Fārs*). It is noteworthy that these Persian poets wrote in Arabic. Hence, references to epic poetry should not without further study be taken as indicative of Persian poetry.

Although not listing them at the beginning of his book, al-Masʿūdī also had access to several translations of Middle Persian literature by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ

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187   See Chapter 3.6.

188   Unfortunately, al-Masʿūdī often uses such flowery descriptions which veil the real author, either because he did not know his name (or had not made a note of it) or because the text was originally anonymous.

189   The verses are also found in al-Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 37//58–59; al-Maqdisī, *Badʾ* III: 145–146; Ibn Khurradādhbih, *Masālik*, p. 16; Ibn Badrūn, *Sharḥ*, p. 11; and al-Maqrīzī, *Khabar* §88. One of them is also found in *Murūj* §565.

190   The verses quoted in §§563, 567–569, 1020, are more conventional *iftikhār*.

and others. For a discussion of these sources mentioned in *Murūj* §§479–480, 541, 543, and 644, as well as *Tanbīh*, p. 106//150–151, see Chapter 2.2.1. He is also our only source for quotations from ʿUmar Kisrā (Chapter 3.2.11).

In all, al-Masʿūdī is well aware of Persian history from the Creation onwards and presents a wide selection of the material that later found its way into Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, and in some cases he seems to have discussed these more extensively in his lost books.[191]

Tanbīh, pp. 85–111//122–158, partly covers the same material with a somewhat heavier emphasis on chronology. It also contains references to a variety of Pahlavi books translated into Arabic, including the *Khudāynāmāh*, *Āyīnnāmāh*, and *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar*, the last only being described without a mention of the book's original title (see Chapter 2.2.1).

Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (*d. 350/961 or 360/971*)

Ḥamza ibn al-Ḥasan (or al-Ḥusayn) Abū ʿAbdallāh al-Iṣfahānī was a learned philologist, living in Isfahan and known to have visited Baghdad.[192] In his various works, he quotes, or refers to, several Arabic historians, including Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Khwārizmī, *Taʾrīkh*; Ibn Qutayba, *Maʿārif*; and Abū Maʿshar al-Balkhī, *Ikhtilāf al-ziyaja* and *Kitāb al-ulūf*.[193] For the sources he quotes in his *Taʾrīkh sinī l-mulūk*, see below.

Ḥamza wrote two historical works.[194] One of them, *Taʾrīkh Iṣbahān*, also referred to as *Kitāb (al)-Iṣfahān*, has been lost except for fragments,[195] but

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191   In *Murūj* §539, al-Masʿūdī says that he has mentioned the wars between Manūshihr and Ṭūḥ in some of his earlier books (*fīmā salafa min kutubinā*), cf. §540 with reference to *Kitāb Akhbār al-zamān*. It should be noted, though, that sometimes when al-Masʿūdī claims to have discussed an event more extensively somewhere, he actually exaggerates.

192   Mittwoch (1909): 113. He is also said to have studied under al-Ṭabarī and to have had connections with the important Persian family of the Nawbakhts, see Mittwoch (1909): 115, 118–119.

193   For references, see Mittwoch (1909): 123–124.

194   For Ḥamza's works, see Mittwoch (1909). He is also credited with a *Kitāb Kibār al-bashar*, see Mittwoch (1909): 130.

195   See Mittwoch (1909): 130–131; *GAL* I: 336–337. Ḥamza quotes this book of his on pp. 149–153, and further quotations (in Persian translation) may be found in, e.g., Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī Qummī, *Tārīkh-e Qum*, pp. 23, 24 etc., a work originally written in Arabic in 378/988 and translated into Persian in 805–806/1402–1403. The work is mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 154/139//305, as *Kitāb Iṣfahān wa-akhbārihā*, and probably also by Niẓām al-Mulk, *Siyāsatnāme*, p. 287 (without the name of the author). Yāqūt, *Irshād* IV: 338, also quotes from it.

the other, *Taʾrīkh sinī l-mulūk*, has been preserved[196] and is a most important source for the study of the *Khwadāynāmag*, but there is no indication that the author himself would have known Pahlavi (cf. below).[197] In addition, his lost *Risāla fī l-ashʿār al-sāʾira fī l-nayrūz waʾl-mihrajān* is quoted by al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, p. 38/31//36.

An important quotation from *Kitāb al-Iṣfahān* is found in *Mujmal*, p. 40/47 (about *Kursī-ye Sulaymān*, claimed to have been built by demons on the order of Sulaymān at the request of Kay Kāwūs):

> Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī rejects this concerning the *Kursī* and in his *Kitāb al-Iṣfahān* explains that on these stones there are many pictures of hogs, which are more inimical (*dushmantar*) in the eyes of the Israelites than any other animals. In the site, there are inscriptions in Pahlavi, and he goes on to tell that once a *mōbad* was brought to read them. Among them was the following: "He built this house of Jam in such-and-such a day of so-and-so a month."[198] This, as well as much more, is written in Pahlavi. I have not copied (this) because I do not know their letters, so that no rancour (against me) would arise from their form. They call this The Thousand Pillars (*hazār-sutūn*).

It seems probable that the comment on not knowing the Pahlavi script comes from Ḥamza, although theoretically it could also be by the anonymous author of the *Mujmal*. If, as it would seem, this comes from Ḥamza, it makes it abundantly clear that he did not know any Pahlavi.[199] The passage also shows the acumen of Ḥamza, rejecting a claim on the basis of personal inspection of the site.

Taʾrīkh sinī l-mulūk, written in 350/961 or a year after,[200] consists of ten chapters,[201] the first of which concerns pre-Islamic Iran. Ḥamza had access to several translations of the *Khwadāynāmag* and other historical books, which makes him an important witness for them (see Chapter 3.1).

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196   For the manuscripts, see *GAL* S I: 221, *GAS* I: 336. See also Rubin (2008b): 37, note 49.

197   Cf. also Rubin (2008b): 56 and note 108; Mittwoch (1909): 138, note 2.

198   The edition of Najmabadi and Weber reads "*gardish-e īn mān-e Jam*" while Bahār reads "*kard-ash īn zamān Jam*". My translation is based on the reading "*kard-ash īn mān-e Jam*". The syntax is probably to be explained as an attempt to archaisize the language.

199   Obviously, inscriptional Middle Persian differs from Book Pahlavi, but the passage itself does not make any difference between the two.

200   See *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 144, 179, 183. Later, this work is also quoted under the title *Kitāb al-umam*, see Mittwoch (1909): 129.

201   The overall structure of the work is well described by Rubin (2008b): 27–35.

The chapter on pre-Islamic Persia has the following structure:

1. a general introduction, seemingly based on a variety of sources, of which only Abū Maʿshar is quoted by name. He seems to be the main source for this subchapter. The List of Ḥamza is given in this part (pp. 9–15);
2. a long, mainly chronological quotation from Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī (pp. 16–21);
3. a long chronological quotation from Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh (pp. 22–25);
4. narratives about Persian kings from Ūshahanj to Yazdajird ibn Shahriyār. The sources for these stories (*akhbār*)[202] are given in general terms, such as (*baʿḍ*) *kutub al-Siyar* (pp. 26, 27, 30), *baʿḍ al-nusakh* (p. 26), *kutub*[203] *al-ʿarabiyya* (p. 28), *baʿḍ al-ruwāt* (p. 30), *wa-fī mā walladahu*[204] *l-quṣṣāṣ min al-akhbār* (p. 33), *Kitāb Ṣuwar mulūk Banī Sāsān* (several excerpts on pp. 38–49). Much of this material is taken from books other than *kutub al-tawārīkh waʾl-siyar* (p. 49, see translation in Chapter 7.3) (pp. 26–49);[205]
5. a story claimed to derive from the *Avesta*[206] and another version of the same story without attribution to any source, the latter (or both) possibly from Abū Maʿshar (see Chapter 3.6) (pp. 50–51).

In the last chapter heading (p. 50), Ḥamza seems to imply that his main sources for the *Khwadāynāmag* were Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and Ibn al-Jahm: "Chapter Five of the first Book narrating things which are in the *Khudāynāme* but which Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and Ibn al-Jahm did not relate."[207] Then he gives the passage which he had "read in a book translated from a book of theirs entitled *al-Ābistā* (the *Avesta*)." It should be noted that he does not say anything about his other

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202 Rubin (2008b): 40, translates the word freely as "information", which misses the point: the earlier chapters discussed chronology, with no narrative elements in them, but this chapter turns into relating (short) stories, *akhbār*, about the same kings.

203 Sic, not *al-kutub*.

204 The edition reads WJDH, but the obviously better reading is confirmed by al-Maqrīzī, *Khabar* §172.

205 Rubin (2008b): 42, speculates that this chapter was derived from the works by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm, but cannot produce any evidence for this (which is slightly in contrast with the references to various sources in the text itself), basing himself solely on the fact that these two authors are mentioned at the beginning of the next chapter.

206 Rubin (2008b): 41, describes the first passage as "a highly compressed and inaccurate summary of a few chapters of the Iranian *Bundahishn*."

207 For a probable emendation of the passage, see Chapter 6.1.

sources, of which only Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā and Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh are quoted in the book and were thus certainly used by Ḥamza. It may well be questioned whether Ḥamza had, in fact, had at his disposal all, or even any, of the remaining books he lists or whether he, too, is merely copying some older source or name-dropping titles that he knew.

Ḥamza also quotes from Abū Maʿshar al-Munajjim, *Kitāb al-Ulūf*, and refers to Ibn Qutayba's *Kitāb al-Maʿārif* (pp. 77, 82).[208] Hishām ibn al-Kalbī is also often mentioned (e.g., p. 83), although not in the chapters on Persia. The same goes for Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (p. 117: *fī kitābihi l-musammā al-Kitāb al-Mudhayyal*).[209]

The note on Bahrām Gūr (Jūr) (p. 43) ignores any Arab aspects of the story and instead concentrates on telling how he introduced Indian music into Iran. The Persian section is narrated without synchronizations with the sacred history, although later in the book, Ḥamza quotes stories narrated by (*waqaraʾtu fī akhbār rawāhā*) ʿĪsā ibn Dāb[210] synchronizing Jam(shīd) and Hūd (pp. 97–98),[211] as well as other characters of Persian and sacred history, though being himself rather critical towards ʿĪsā. The only note on Rustam, synchronized with South Arabian history, comes from the chapter on South Arabian kings, and on pp. 103, 104, there are two further synchronizations taken from *kitāb min kutub akhbār al-Yaman*. The same synchronization continues in the chapter concerned with the birth of Islam, based on al-Ṭabarī's *al-Kitāb al-Mudhayyal*.

This gives more credence to his Persian part being directly derived from Middle Persian sources in translation, lacking elements that are often present in Arab-Islamic historiography but are highly unlikely to derive from Pahlavi sources.

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208 Ḥamza does not specify the author's name, but the reference in *Taʾrīkh*, p. 82, corresponds with Ibn Qutayba, *Maʿārif*, pp. 642, 648, and the other reference, on p. 77, with *Maʿārif*, p. 646. Rubin (2008b): 33, claims that Ḥamza is not using Ibn Qutayba's *Maʿārif*, but an unknown book with the same title, but his argumentation is not correct: Ḥamza does use Ibn Qutayba's *Maʿārif* in these two passages on pre-Islamic Arabs, although he does *not* use Ibn Qutayba's short chapter on the pre-Islamic Persians, obviously because he had better sources at his disposal.

209 For this book, to be identified with the *Taʾrīkh*, see Landau-Tasseron (1998): xx–xxiv.

210 Identified as ʿĪsā ibn Yazīd ibn Bakr ibn Daʾb *al-Nassāba al-Akhbārī* in note 2 in al-Jāḥiẓ, *Bighāl* (*Rasāʾil* II: 226). See also Mittwoch (1909): 124.

211 The same synchronization is made in Asadī's *Garshāsbnāme*, p. 58 (v. 283), as one of the very few synchronizations there.

The anonymous *Mujmal* quotes Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh* extensively, sometimes without indication of the source. In some cases, the text of *Mujmal* is superior to the edited text of the *Taʾrīkh*, and a detailed comparison of the two might help us improve on Ḥamza's edited text.

al-Maqdisī (d. after 355/966)

Muṭahhar ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī's[212] (alive in 355/966) *Kitāb al-Badʾ waʾl-Taʾrīkh* is a universal history which uses a wide selection of written sources,[213] pre-serves quotations from lost works, and includes unique information derived from oral sources. The author's life is little known and our main source on him is the *Badʾ* itself. Al-Maqdisī was writing in Bust under the commission of a Sāmānid vizier.[214] The *Badʾ* probably dates from 355/966, the year which is oc-casionally referred to in the book as the present (*Badʾ* I: 6; II: 152).[215]

The *Badʾ* is his only preserved work, but in it al-Maqdisī refers to another work of his, a *Kitāb Maʿānī l-Qurʾān* (e.g., *Badʾ* II: 95). Al-Maqdisī used Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* (Chapter 3.7),[216] Ibn Qutayba's *Maʿārif* (*Badʾ* II: 150), and Ibn Khurradādhbih's *Taʾrīkh* (*Badʾ* II: 151, VI: 51, 89) and *Masālik* (*Badʾ* IV: 19, 61). He also refers to something that he had read "in some of the Persians' *siyar*": the information he gives primarily concerns the synchronization of Persian and sacred history and cannot, thus, come directly from a Pahlavi book.

Al-Maqdisī tells how he visited an ancient fire temple (*bayt nār*) in Khūz, a district of Fārs. He did this in order to ask the local Zoroastrians a question. Subsequently, some leaves (*ṣuḥuf*) of a book called the *Avesta* (*al-Abisṭā*) were brought forth to provide him with an answer (*Badʾ* I: 62–63). In *Badʾ* II: 59–60, he may be referring to the same informant whom he here identifies as *hirbadh*

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212 See *GAL* S I: 222; *GAS* I: 337; Khalidi (1975) and (1976); Radtke (1992); Adang (1996); and Hämeen-Anttila (2012).

213 Cf. Radtke (1992): 89–94. This list is not completely reliable in all its details.

214 Huart (1901): 17; *GAL* S I: 222; anon. (1993).

215 An addition, dated to 390/1000 (*Badʾ* IV: 78), is by a later, unidentified hand.

216 Radtke (1992): 94, no. 36, seems to think that he used an Arabic translation, although his formulation ("Maqdisī gibt nicht an, welche Übersetzung des iranischen Nationalepos er benutzte") is not unambiguous, as he might be referring to a Classical Persian translation of the Pahlavi original.

al-Majūs, "the Zoroastrian *hērbad*".[217] He also discussed some points with a man belonging to the Zoroastrian sect of Bihāfarīdiyya (*Badʾ* I: 176).[218]

Al-Maqdisī is able to quote Persian at first hand. For the older forms of the language he most probably depends on Zoroastrian scholars, but for Classical Persian he does well on his own. He is able to quote a few verses from the Persian historical poem (*qaṣīda*) by al-Masʿūdī al-Marwazī (*Badʾ* III: 138, 173 – Chapter 4.1.1), which not only shows that he was acquainted with the language but that he considered his readers, too, to be able to understand it. Al-Maqdisī is also able to explain the meaning of Persian words (e.g., *Badʾ* I: 63). Another indication of his familiarity with Persian is the story related in *Badʾ* III: 188–195. The same story is also told by Ibn Hishām (*Sīra* I: 69–73),[219] Ibn Qutayba (*ʿUyūn* I: 236–237, abbreviated, and introduced by: *qaraʾtu fī kutubi l-ʿajam*),[220] and al-Ṭabarī (*Taʾrīkh* I: 946–950//V: 236–242). All versions differ from each other in wording and details but agree in the general story line, if we ignore the radical abbreviation of the story by Ibn Qutayba, but only al-Maqdisī's version contains Persian expressions missing from the others (e.g., *Badʾ* III: 192 *fa-qāla biʾl-fārsiyyati: īn kūdhak khar-ast, yaʿnī: ibnu l-ḥimār*; cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* I: 949//V: 240, *qāla: ibnatu l-ḥimār*; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* I: 71 *qāla Wahriz: bintu l-ḥimār*; missing from Ibn Qutayba).

Miskawayh (d. 421/1030)

Abū ʿAlī Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) was a philosopher and historian who served several Viziers in Iran.[221] His main historical work is the world history *Tajārib al-umam*, which continues until 369/980. His anthology of wisdom texts, *al-Ḥikma al-khālida*, contains a wealth of Persian materials.

The *Tajārib* begins, after a two-page Introduction (I: 59–60), with Persian history as the organizing principle until the history of the Prophet Muḥammad

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217 For other references to Zoroastrian informants, see *Badʾ* II: 149, 155. The term *majūs* usually refers in *Badʾ*, as well as in other Arabic works, to Zoroastrians, but occasionally it is used imprecisely for all sorts of pagans (e.g., *Badʾ* III: 128: the emperor Duqyānūs called people to *al-majūsiyya*). The same happened in Islamic literature with the term *Ṣābiʾa* (*Badʾ* III: 139: Būdhāsf, the Buddha, is said to have taught Sabianism to the people of India), which often simply refers to paganism in general. See Hāmeen-Anttila (2006): 46–51.

218 Cf. also *Badʾ* III: 7. For this sect, see Yūsofī (1990); Crone (2012): 144–151.

219 Translated in Guillaume (1955): 30–33.

220 According to Lecomte (1965): 186–187, in Dīnawar Ibn Qutayba acquired no more than "une pratique limitée du persan usuel". Al-Maqdisī's knowledge of that language was by far superior to Ibn Qutayba's elementary knowledge.

221 Arkoun (1993).

takes over in 1: 169. Most of the intervening 110 pages are concerned with Persian history. *ʿAhd Ardashīr* is reproduced in its entirety (1: 97–107) and *Sīrat Anūshirwān*, allegedly written by Anūshirwān himself, is presented in large extracts (1: 132–142). The same interest in wisdom literature is seen throughout the section on Persian history. Unfortunately, Miskawayh does not usually indicate his sources.

al-Bīrūnī (d. about 442/1050)

The famous polymath Abū Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī,[222] who served the Samanids and the Ghaznavids, is one of our best sources for Persian history and he had many otherwise unknown sources both in Arabic and Persian at his disposal. Al-Bīrūnī himself wrote exclusively in Arabic. A prolific writer, al-Bīrūnī's main work for information on Persian national history is his history of ancient nations *al-Āthār al-bāqiya ʿan al-qurūn al-khāliya*, written about 390/1000. His book on India, *Kitāb fī taḥqīq mā li'l-Hind*, written about 420/1030, also occasionally provides information on Iran. The *Āthār* is particularly valuable, as al-Bīrūnī used several sources in early Classical Persian. These will be discussed in Chapter 4.1.

Gardīzī (wrote in early 440s/1050s)

Little is known about the life of Abū Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Ḥayy ibn Ḍaḥḥāk ibn Maḥmūd Gardīzī. He seems to have been in close contact with the Ghaznavid court and he dedicated his main work, *Zayn al-akhbār*, to the Sultan ʿAbd al-Rashīd ibn Maḥmūd, who ruled in 440–443/1049–1052.[223] The work has only been partially preserved.

Among the books Gardīzī quotes are Ibn Khurradādhbih's *Akhbār* (*Zayn*, p. 370, presumably the same as *Taʾrīkh*) and a work titled *Kitāb Rubʿ al-dunyā* or *Tawḍīḥ al-dunyā*, attributed by him to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (*Zayn*, pp. 370, 402, on Turks). The part on Persian history (*Zayn*, pp. 65–105) is concise and lacks any indications of sources.

Tārīkh-e Sīstān (main part written soon after 448/1062?)

Tārīkh-e Sīstān is a modern conventional title, and the real title of this anonymous work may have been *Faḍāyil-e Sīstān*.[224] The book consists of several layers, the main part going back to around 448/1062.[225] This oldest layer uses only

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222   Yano (2013) and art. "Bīrūnī" by multiple authors in *EIr* (1989).

223   Bosworth (2000b).

224   See the Preface to the edition by Bahār, p. 17.

225   Preface, pp. 20, 22.

old sources and is valuable for source critical studies. The old sources[226] related to Persian national history that the author either mentions or quotes include a *Kitāb-e Faḍāyil-e Sīstān* (p. 49) written by an unknown Hilāl-e Yūsuf-e Awqī(?). He also refers to an older book on Sistan, *Akhbār-e Sīstān* (p. 56), as well as to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's *Kitāb-e Siyar-e mulūk-e ʿajam* (p. 56), both on the building of Arak in Sistan by Alexander the Great.

Further, *Tārīkh-e Sīstān* mentions that "Bū'l-Mu'ayyad-e Balkhī and Bishr-e MQSM say in *Kitāb-e ʿAjāyib-e barr o-baḥr*" (p. 58),[227] continuing with a quotation on the wonders of Sistan. Abū l-Mu'ayyad (Chapter 4.1.3) is also given as the authority for a quote from the *Bundahishn* (*Kitāb-e Ibn Dahshatī*)[228] on the other wonders of Sistan (pp. 60, 61) and he is quoted as presenting yet another wonder on his own authority (p. 61). The quote probably comes from the same book on wonders. On p. 75, there is a quotation from Abū l-Mu'ayyad's *Kitāb Garshāsb*,[229] relating the story of Kay Khusraw's travel to Azerbayjan (Ādharbādgān) with Rustam, where Adhurgush[n]asb came to bring a light to the darkness.

There is also a reference to a *Shāhnāme*, which tells the stories of Narīmān, Sām, and Dastān (p. 53). The anonymous author does not identify the author of this *Shāhnāme*, but it is not Firdawsī, as the passage continues: "the story of Rustam is among those which Bū l-Qāsim Firdawsī versified in the *Shāhnāme*", clearly speaking of two different works. It is possible that the *Shāhnāme* here refers to Abū l-Mu'ayyad's *Shāhnāme*.

The author also mentions *Akhbār-e Farāmarz* in twelve volumes (p. 53), probably referring to the prose original of the later versified epics, see Chapter 4.7. From among the *nāme* literature, he also mentions a *Bakhtiyārnāme*, containing the story of Bakhtiyār "from among the children of Rustam" (p. 54), again probably the prose original for the later versified epics.

Ibn al-Balkhī (*wrote before 510/1116*)

The author of the *Fārsnāme* is, strictly speaking, anonymous and the name Ibn al-Balkhī is conventional. The book was written for the Saljuqs and it contains

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226   Preface, pp. 20–21. On archaic linguistic features, see pp. 23, 28–35.

227   For the translation, see Chapter 4.1.3.

228   The scribe of the manuscript is neither familiar with Persian nor Arabic names, which means that any curious name forms are possibly mere scribal errors and cannot be securely used as a means of identifying the source without further study. E.g., pp. 50 (Mūsā, for Mīshā, cf. note); 51 (Bahrām, obviously an error for Mihrāj); 106 (ʿĪsā, for ʿAnsī) (cf. also p. 114, note 6).

229   The book is also mentioned on pp. 49, 51, but without the name of Abū l-Mu'ayyad. See also Chapter 4.7 for *nāme* literature.

much material on pre-Islamic Iran. Its sources include the books of Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī and al-Ṭabarī (p. 8), but there is also a lot of material which is not known from other sources. However, Ibn al-Balkhī does not identify his sources when quoting from them. On p. 13, he mentions "histories and books about the genealogies of the Persians," which probably refers to Arabic works. He also knows Ardashīr's *ʿuhūd o-waṣāyā* (*nuskhat'hā-ye ān mawjūd ast*).

Mujmal al-tawārīkh (*written in 520/1126*)

The *Mujmal* is an anonymous work written in 520/1126 at the time of the Caliph al-Mustarshid, during the reign of Sanjar, son of Malikshāh, when Maḥmūd ibn Malikshāh was the crown prince.[230] The author started his work earlier, on the instigation of a gentleman from Asadābād, but finished it only in 520 (*Mujmal*, p. 7/8–9).

The author lists an impressive number of sources (p. 2/2), starting with the prestigious al-Ṭabarī, whom, however, he only quotes occasionally. At the second place he mentions Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, which he calls the original text (*aṣlī*), while other Persian texts are but branches (*shuʿbahā*). These branches he divides into verse and prose texts. Among the former are *Garshāsbnāme* (of Asadī Ṭūsī, cf. p. 2/3), *Farāmarznāme*, *Akhbār-e Bahman*, and *Qiṣṣe-ye Kūsh-e Pīldandān*; among the latter Abū l-Muʾayyad's prose, such as the stories of Narīmān, Sām, and Kay Qubād, the stories of Luhrāsf, *Āghush-e Wahādān*[231] and Kay Shikan,[232] al-Ṭabarī (again), the *Siyar al-mulūk* by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, and Ḥamza's "collection" (*majmūʿe*). Finally, he gives the list of Ḥamza, lifted from Ḥamza.

Al-Ṭabarī, Firdawsī, and Ḥamza are quoted throughout the pre-Islamic part of the book, Ḥamza particularly often without indication of source or only with reference to the ultimate source.[233] A *Sikandarnāme* is referred to on p. 27/31, *Siyar al-mulūk* on pp. 28, 29, 52, 58, 65, 74, 75/32, 33, 63, 72, 81, 95, 96, *Bīrūznāme/Fīrūznāme/Pīrūznāme* on pp. 32 (twice), 54, 57, 64 (twice)/37 (twice), 66, 70, 79,[234] 80, *ʿAhd-e Ardashīr* on p. 51/61, *Kitāb* (*al*)-*Hamadān* on pp. 46, 57/56, 70, and "the *Bahmannāme*, in the copy (*nuskha*) which Ḥakīm

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230   *Mujmal*, pp. 7–8/9.

231   Cf. also Shahmardān, *Nuz'hatnāme*, pp. 334–335.

232   The last three titles still seem to be continuing the list of Abū l-Muʾayyad's texts. Whether we should see the various stories as separate texts or episodes within one larger book is not clear, but the latter seems more probable.

233   E.g., p. 28/32: *az riwāyat-e Bahrām mōbad-e Shāpūr*, coming from Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 24.

234   In the old edition *Surūrnāme*, with a variant *Parwīznāme*. There is no indication that this would be the title of the book composed by Pīrūzān, cf. Chapter 4.7, although such a possibility cannot be excluded.

Īrānshān ibn Abī l-Khayr put into verse"[235] on p. 73/92. The author refers in general to "an old book" (*kitābī kuhan*) on p. 55/67.[236]

The author also mentions, p. 74/94, several books which he (obviously wrongly) dates to the Parthian period (*Kitāb Marwak*,[237] *Kitāb Sindbād*, *Kitāb Yūsīfās*,[238] *Kitāb Sīmās*). From the period of Ardashīr-e Bābakān he mentions, p. 74/94, wisdom texts by Hurmizd-Āfarīd, Bihrūz, Burzmihr,[239] and Īzad-dād that were translated into Arabic. He also mentions Mani's *Kitāb-e Ṣuwar*,[240] p. 74/94, and *Kalīla o-Dimna* (p. 75/96).

All the numerous quotations from the Sasanian historical text *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar* (quoted as *Kitāb-e Ṣūrat-e pādishāhān-e Banī Sāsān*, *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar*, *Kitāb Ṣūrat*, *Ṣūrat-e Sāsā[niyā]n*, *Kitāb-e Ṣuwar*, *Kitāb-e Ṣūrat-e Āl-e Sāsān*, pp. 29 (twice), 30, 32/33 (twice), 35, 37) seem to come through Ḥamza, as do the references to *Taʾrīkh mulūk al-Furs* and *Khudānāme* on pp. 67–68/85. The author also quotes Ibn Qutayba's *Maʿārif* (p. 58/71).[241] The quotations from *Siyar al-mulūk* need not come from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*; at least the story of Balāsh and the daughter of the King of India (pp. 58–59/72) was hardly in Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs work (see Chapter 3.3).

It is also worth noting that when he comes to the last Yazdagird, the anonymous author suddenly takes al-Ṭabarī as his main source (p. 66/83). While al-Ṭabarī is occasionally used in earlier passages, it is possible that here his other sources had little to communicate, as the original *Khwadāynāmag* may not have taken the story to the end of the Sasanian Empire (see Chapter 6.2).

Mujmal, pp. 60–62/75–77, mentions several longer stories without narrating them: *Qiṣṣe-ye Nūshzād* (p. 61/75), the Testaments (*waṣiyyat'hā*) of Nūshirwān (p. 61/76), and the story of Bahrām Chūbīn(e) (pp. 62/76–77). Likewise, he mentions on pp. 73–74/92–95, several long stories, for which he gives various dates: *Qiṣṣe-ye Shādbahr o-ʿAyn al-ḥayāt* (p. 73/92), *Qiṣṣe-ye Wāmiq o-ʿAdhrāʾ* (p. 73/93), *Qiṣṣe-ye Shamʿūn* (p. 73/93), *Qiṣṣe-ye Ṣadūq o-Ṣādiq o-Salūm* (p. 73/93), *Qiṣṣe-ye*

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235 For this work, see van Zutphen (2014): 134–138.

236 This list only includes sources used for pre-Islamic Persian history.

237 See Chapter 2.2.1 on the title of this book. In the *Mujmal*, the reading Marwak, not *Mazdak, is further ascertained by the fact that this book is dated to the Parthian period, whereas Mazdak is dated on the next page to the times of the Sasanian Qubād.

238 Read *Būdāsf*.

239 Not to be confused with Buzurjmihr-e Bukhtakān, whom the author dates to a later period, that of Kisrā Nūshirwān, p. 75/96.

240 Not to be confused with the "royal" *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar*, see Chapter 2.2.1.

241 The name of the author is not mentioned, but this coincides with Ibn Qutayba, *Maʿārif*, p. 661.

Jirjīs (p. 74/93 – the last three on Christian history),[242] *Qiṣṣe-ye Wīs o-Rāmīn* (p. 74/94), and *Qiṣṣe-ye Sharwīn o-Khwarrīn* (p. 74/95). As can be seen from the list, some of these texts are known to have existed, or still exist, as independent books, while others are only found within larger compilations.

Many of these sources we know to have been in Arabic, and the syntax of the *Mujmal* in some cases implies that the Persian text goes back to an Arabic original.[243] On the other hand, the Persian names of Kay Khusraw's battles (pp. 41–42/48–49: *razm-e Pashan, razm-e Kāmūs, razm-e duwāzdah rukh, razm-e buzurg*) might imply a Persian source.[244] *Mujmal*, p. 7/8, mentions that the author has translated some of his sources from Arabic into Persian "because that is the habit of speaking today."

Mujmal, p. 10/11, also quotes the *Avesta* (*Ābistā*), claiming that the time between Gayōmard and the last Sasanian ruler, Yazdagird, was 4,182 years, a piece of information that obviously cannot come from the *Avesta*, but must derive from some later Pahlavi work. This, however, is only given as a piece of oral information based on the *Avesta* (*pārsiyān az kitāb-e Ābistā* (…) *chunīn gūyand ke* …). Later, p. 72/92, he again mentions the *Avesta*, giving several variant forms for the title.

Muḥammad Ṭūsī (wrote after 562/1166–7)

The last mentioned date in the text of *ʿAjāʾib al-makhlūqāt* is 562/1167 (p. 300).[245] The book uses a lot of material familiar from the later *nāmes* (e.g., p. 441: Garshāsf in India), but little from Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. However, the author highly respects Ḥasan-e (sic) Firdawsī of Ṭūs (p. 246).[246] The book contains dozens (if not hundreds) of references to Alexander, largely familiar from the various versions of the *Alexander Romance*,[247] and to Anūshirwān's miraculous

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242 These three stories, in the order Ṣadūq–Shamʿūn–Jirjīs, are also found in Balʿamī, *Tārīkhnāme*, pp. 589–598, set in the time of the Petty Kings. They derive from al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I: 789–811/IV: 167–186. It seems improbable that they circulated as independent books, and the author of the *Mujmal* presumably found them either in al-Ṭabarī or in al-Balʿamī. This also casts doubt on the other titles that are not found elsewhere as independent books.

243 E.g., p. 40/47: *dīgar jāyhā īshān karde-and Kay Kāwūs rā*, which seems to translate a sentence such as **wa-abniya ukhrā banawhā li-Kay Kāwūs*.

244 Note that al-Masʿūdī, *Tanbīh*, p. 94//136, uses a similar expression (*tusammā tilka l-ḥurūb Baykār*), showing that in Persian (and probably Pahlavi) the famous wars were referred to with specific names (cf. the Great War, the Boer War, etc.).

245 Preface, p. xvi. Other early dates: 555 (p. 276); 561 ("in our times", p. 299).

246 Cf. also p. 493. For the name, cf. Shahbazi (1991): 20 and note 3.

247 E.g., pp. 5–9. For the *Alexander Romance* in general, see Doufikar-Aerts (2010).

deeds and journeys. Afrīdūn, Ḍaḥḥāk, Bahrām Chūbīn, and Balīnās also appear rather often and there are many similarities to the *Arabian Nights*, but very few sources are specifically identified. The stories about Persian national history often exhibit unique features not known from elsewhere.

3.7 The Contents of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs Translation

All our sources agree that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ translated the *Khwadāynāmag* into Arabic, but unfortunately few quote explicitly from this work. We do have a large number of quotations attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, but, as we have seen in Chapter 3.4, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ wrote a great number of works, many of which contained material relevant for Persian national history, so we are rarely in a position to ascertain whether a piece of information comes from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* or some other work of his.

Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation is usually said to have been titled *Siyar mulūk al-ʿajam* or *Siyar al-mulūk*, sometimes also *Khudhāynāme*. We do find *siyar al-mulūk* often referred to, but usually without further identification. Here, there are two separate problems. First, it is often unclear whether the reference is to a book title or just to "the lives of Persian kings" in general. Second, even when it is clear that this has to be taken as a book title, there are a number of works that are referred to under this title. Several of the works on Ḥamza's list (Chapter 3.1) bore this title,[248] in addition to which there are individual Persian kings (such as Ardashīr and Khusraw Anūshirwān) to whom separate *sīra* works were dedicated.

In order to understand what Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs book might have contained, we have to be wary of falling into a vicious circle, first attributing various pieces of information to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ without sufficient evidence and then proving their provenance from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs work by showing that they fit our reconstruction. Instead, one should only include material that is explicitly attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*, either referred to as his *Siyar al-mulūk* or his *Khudhāynāme*.

Whereas there seems to be good reason to assume that the Pahlavi *Khwadāynāmag* was written in the sixth century and did not cover the end of the Sasanian Empire (cf. Chapter 6.2), there is an important passage in al-Maqdisī's *Badʾ* V: 197, which is attributed to the *Khudhāynāme* (*wa-fī Kitāb Khudhāynāme*), and narrates the death scene of the last Yazdagird (651), itself inserted within a chapter on the Caliphate of ʿUthmān (*Badʾ* V: 194ff.). The

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248 There the title is always *Siyar mulūk al-Furs*, and also Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs book is referred to under that title.

passage is also connected with the Arab conquest. As there is no evidence whatsoever that al-Maqdisī would have been able to read Pahlavi, it is rather obvious that this comes from some Arabic translation, which also explains the interest in the conquest.

In the beginning of the story about Yazdagird, al-Maqdisī quotes Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ as his authority for the amount of gold Yazdagird had in his tea-suries (*Bad*ʾ V: 195), though the *Khudhāynāme* is not mentioned there. Taken together, *Bad*ʾ V: 195 (Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ as authority) and the continuation of the story in V: 197 (the *Khudhāynāme* as authority) make it rather certain that the whole passage comes from Ibn al-Muqaffaʿʾs translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*. This shows that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ continued the story until the demise of the Sasanian Empire.

Another reference in *Tārīkh-e Sīstān*, p. 56, to ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and (his)[249] *Kitāb-e Siyar-e mulūk-e ʿajam*, shows that the book contained the story of Alexander and Roxanne and the building of the town of Arak in Sistan. Such a detail finds its *Sitz im Leben* only if the contents of the *Alexandre Romance* were used for the book, which implies that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ added a substantial story into the original Pahlavi text as it is improbable that the Sasanian chronicle contained any materials from the *Alexander Romance* (see Chapter 2.3).

In a highly problematic passage, Balʿamī, *Tārīkh*, pp. 4–5, refers to *Shāhnāme-ye buzurg* wherein *pisar-e* Muqaffaʿ counts the time from the expulsion of Adam from Paradise until "our Prophet" as 6,013 years. The passage continues with the identification of Gayōmard with Adam, but it is not clear whether this comes from the same source or not. The quotation is problematic because in another version of the book, the *Tārīkhnāme* I: 5, the Great *Shāhnāme* is attributed to Ḥamza and Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ is only quoted through it. Whatever the original form was, it is apparent that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ was interested in synchronizations – as were all later authors[250] – and his translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* most probably contained a number of such synchronizations added by him to the original text. The passage is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.3.[251]

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249   Note that there is just the slightest uncertainty here: the author refers to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ "in the *Siyar*", which does leave open the possibility that it was someone else's *Siyar* in which Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ was merely quoted.

250   The anonymous author of the *Mujmal* perhaps goes furthest, having a separate chapter where he systematically synchronizes Persian kings, prophets, heroes (*jahān pahlawān*), and others (pp. 71–76/89–97).

251   Balʿamī, *Tārīkh*, p. 105, also contains some rather general notes on the Sasanian kings attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿʾs translation (*dar akhbār-e mulūk-e ʿajam khwāndam, tarjame-ye Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ ke buzurgtar o-fāḍiltar-e pādishāhān-e īshān ʿādat dāshtand ke*

Al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 9, quotes Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's critical attitude towards the synchronization of Jam with Solomon.[252] Whether the quotation ultimately comes from his translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* or not, it does yet again show that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ was interested in synchronizing the various strands of history – he may in this case disagree with others, but his own system, too, is built on synchronization. It is obvious that all such synchronizations go back to the Islamic period, as a Sasanian chronicle was hardly interested in aligning Persian with Biblical history.[253] This was of interest only for Christian and Muslim readership.

Muḥammad Ṭūsī, *ʿAjāʾib*, p. 240 (s.v. *madīne-ye Shūsh*) contains a note attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ (text: al-MQNʿ) which relates to the building of ancient walls. Although no book title is mentioned, such information on building activities is common in books that probably draw on the *Khwadāynāmag* and could well have been included in his translation.

Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's other major translation, that of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, gives us some idea of how Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ worked as a translator. As de Blois (1990) has shown, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ freely added new chapters to the book, so that only a part of the present Arabic *Kalīla wa-Dimna* goes back to the (lost) original Pahlavi text and there is no reason to assume that even those chapters which probably went back to the Pahlavi text are exact translations of the original text. As shown in Chapter 2.4, in the eighth century (and later) "translation" did not mean what it means in the 21st century.[254]

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    paywaste be-rūz o-shab tā ānke be-khuftandī bā īshān khiradmandān būdandī nishaste az khiradmandtarān-e rūzgār …).

252 Cf. Jackson Bonner (2015): 45.

253 Cf. also Jackson Bonner (2015): 46.

254 One should, however, note that Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 364/305//716, rather untypically uses the word *fassarahu* "he explained it" when speaking about Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, which may mean that his role in translating the work may have been larger than even near contemporaries had been used to. The passage may even highlight this: Ibn al-Nadīm writes: *fassarahu ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ wa-GhYRH*, which is open to two interpretations. The first and perhaps more natural translation is "'Abdallāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and others (*wa-ghayruhu*) explained it", but nothing prevents us from reading "'Abdallāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ explained and changed it (*wa-ghayyaruhu*)." The latter reading, though, is perhaps the less probable, as we do know that others did, in fact, make versions of the book. The verb *ghayyara* would also in this context be rather harsh, as it often refers to falsifying and forgeries, and Ibn al-Nadīm shows no signs of hostility towards Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. For the use of *tafsīr* for "(interpretative) translation", see also al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §1416 (on the *tafsīr* of *Kitāb Hazār afsāne* from Persian into Arabic).

Classical Persian *Shāhnāmes*

The Arab conquest ended the rather short flourishing period of Sasanian literary culture: after their Empire had collapsed, there was no central authority to keep up the teaching of the complicated Pahlavi script, which had hereafter little importance in everyday life and soon became restricted to the Zoroastrian minority and their mainly religious literature.

But the *Khwadāynāmag* did not disappear. Copies of it survived until at least the tenth century, though hardly much later, and its contents interested the Arabs in the eighth century when they were creating their own version of history, and Iran was an important part of this narrative. This resulted in an intensive period of translation from Pahlavi into Arabic since the mid-eighth century, and, as we have seen (Chapter 3.1), the *Khwadāynāmag*, together with other historical texts, was translated several times into Arabic, or an existing translation was modified several times.

When Classical Persian literature started developing in the late ninth century, translations were made from Arabic into the new literary language. As many Arabic books contained materials ultimately deriving from the *Khwadāynāmag*, these passages were, in a sense, translated "back" into Classical Persian. At the same time, original compositions in Arabic came to be translated into Persian, and some of these contained material relevant for Persian national history.

Something also trickled down directly from Middle Persian sources, by now obscure to most Muslim Persians, but still read by a diminishing number of Zoroastrian scholars. At the same time, the oral tradition preserved stories belonging to Persian national history and partly of greater antiquity than the *Khwadāynāmag*. These started being written down in Classical Persian, perhaps in the tenth century (Chapter 4.7). Thus, tenth-century Persian scholars had a variety of sources at their hands when they recreated the past of their nation: Arabic sources; Pahlavi sources in (modified) Arabic translations; original Pahlavi sources; and a reservoir of oral narratives, either in prose or verse, some of which were written down in the tenth century.

In Iran, the *Khwadāynāmag* had left few traces of its existence during the intervening three centuries, only to resurface in the tenth century, when manuscripts of the Middle Persian original and its Arabic translations suddenly seem to be numerous (Chapter 6.1).

The knowledge of Persian national history had not, evidently, disappeared at a stroke. Even though the *Khwadāynāmag* may have become difficult to

access, a general knowledge of the past – which may partly have been pre-served through oral channels – certainly lingered on. Later sources, however, show detailed knowledge of some parts of Persian history, which shows that literary sources, too, were involved in recreating the Persian past.

We should not, however, jump to conclusions. When an early Classical Persian source, dated to the tenth century, narrates something about Persian national history, its source was most probably in Arabic: the majority of the population had been Muslims for several centuries and had been accustomed to using Arabic as their literary language. As the translation of al-Ṭabarī's large historical work into Persian by Balʿamī shows, Arabic historical works were well known in Iran, not to mention the fact that al-Ṭabarī, and many of his Arabic co-historians, were themselves of Iranian origin.

Balʿamī is a good example of how Middle Persian material became retrans-lated into Classical Persian through Arabic: as al-Ṭabarī had used materials ul-timately derived from Middle Persian, Balʿamī's translation brings the same material back to Iran in a newer form of the language, supplementing it with other, local sources (see Chapter 4.3).

4.1   The Other *Shāhnāmes*

Whereas in modern discourse, the *Shāhnāme* usually refers to Firdawsī's work, well into the twelfth century and even later, *Shāhnāme* was merely a common title for many works concerning Persian national history.[1] Firdawsī's was not the first among these in any sense: chronologically, there were several others that had been written before him and even in terms of prestige we can see in many works of the eleventh and twelfth centuries that other *Shāhnāme* nar-ratives were preferred to Firdawsī's.[2] We should not let Firdawsī's later fame lead us to believe that he was above his peers from the very beginning, except, perhaps, in literary value.

The term *Shāhnāme* invites comparison to the *Khwadāynāmag*, as it is how a user of early Classical Persian would have translated the latter title. This, however, does not prove that the *Shāhnāmes* would have been translations of

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1   Omidsalar (2011): 36, takes *Shāhnāme* to have been the name of the genre of epics in early Classical Persian. While close to the truth, he is exaggerating when he calls this a "genre" – many books were called by this name, but others were not and to take it as the name of a genre is unwarranted. Secondly, while some of the early *Shāhnāmes* may have been close to epics, it is abundantly clear that, e.g., the *Prose Shāhnāme* was not an epic by any standard.

2   Cf. Omidsalar (1998): 341–342.

the *Khwadāynāmag*, as the term is also rather natural for any version of the national history.

4.1.1   *Masʿūdī-ye Marwazī*

We know very little about Masʿūdī-ye Marwazī (al-Masʿūdī al-Marwazī).[3] Al-Muṭahhar ibn Ṭāhir al-Maqdisī, who wrote in or around 355/966, quotes in his *Badʾ* III: 138, two verses by Masʿūdī and a further one in III: 173.[4] How much earlier the author of these verses may have lived is uncertain, but this gives us a *terminus ante quem* and we may tentatively set him at the end of the first half of the tenth century, which would tally well with the documentable growth of interest in Persian national history at the time.[5]

The verses read:

> First, Kayyūmarth attained to kingship / and took (to himself) its primacy in the world.
>
> Some thirty years he was the King of the world / and his orders were obeyed everywhere.
>
> ....
>
> The signs of kings became annihilated / after they had had their wish in the (whole) world.

The last verse is explicitly said to come from the end of the poem, *qaṣīda* (*Badʾ* III: 173). Al-Maqdisī, *Badʾ* III: 138, may give the title of this poem when he says: "Al-Masʿūdi said in his poem *al-Muḥabbara*", although the word *al-muḥabbara* can also be taken as an adjective referring to the poem: "his embellished poem". In favour of taking this as a title is the fact that ʿAlī ibn al-Jahm's historical *muzdawija* poem also bore this title.[6]

Al-Maqdisī also says, *Badʾ* III: 138, that the Persians think highly of the two verses on Gayōmard and the whole *qaṣīda* and that they consider it their history. As the two excerpts frame al-Maqdisī's chapter on the Persian kings, it is tempting to think that the poem also influenced the contents of the whole chapter and, thus, could be deduced from this chapter.

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3 Lazard (1964) I: 22; de Blois (1992–97): 191–192; Omidsalar (2011): 47–48.

4 The verses are also edited by Lazard (1964) II: 47, and translated into French in Lazard (1964) I: 73. Cf. Omidsalar (2011): 196, note 2. See also de Blois (1992–97): 191–192, who discusses the metrical problems in the verses.

5 Lazard (1964) I: 22, suggests dating him to the end of the third/ninth century and de Blois (1992–97): 192, follows him in this.

6 See *GAS* II: 581.

In addition, this Masʿūdī was also known to al-Thaʿālibī, who mentions him twice. *Ghurar*, p. 10, tells that "al-Masʿūdī claims in his Persian *muzdawija* that Ṭahmūrath built the Quhandiz of Marw," and *Ghurar*, p. 388, informs us that "al-Masʿūdī al-Marwazī mentions in his Persian *muzdawija* that he (Bahman) killed him (Zāl) and spared none of his family."

This, more or less, is the primary evidence we have for this once-famous poem. The preserved verses give us firm ground to claim that, just like the *Prose Shāhnāme* and al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar*, this work began with the story of Gayōmard (possibly preceded by dedications and eulogies) and ended with the downfall of the Sasanian dynasty. *Ghurar*, p. 388, further shows that the Sistanians were integrated into the narrative. Even though the evidence is weak, we might surmise that the scope of the text was more or less the same as that of the later *Shāhnāmes* and, as far as our evidence goes, Masʿūdī may well have been the first to create in Classical Persian a complete story from the first Persian king to the end of the Sasanids, including, at least, some stories of the Sistanians.

The three verses are in *hazaj*, a metre that is relatively close to the *mutaqārib* used by Firdawsī and most epic poets. After Firdawsī, *mutaqārib* dominated the heroic epic, which is often seen to have been the result of his influence, but as earlier examples show, *mutaqārib* was firmly rooted as a *mathnawī* metre long before him. Lazard's collection of early Persian verse (Lazard 1964 II) contains long fragments of Abū Shakūr's *Āfrīnnāme* in *mutaqārib*,[7] and other pre-Firdawsian poets who used *mutaqārib* for their *mathnawīs* are Farālāwī (II: 45) and Abūʾl-ʿAbbās Rabinjanī (II: 76). *Hazaj* was used by Abū Shakūr himself (II: 88–89), Maʿrūfī (II: 137, two separate fragments), and Maysarī in his *Dānishnāme* (II: 178–197) – for Daqīqī, see Chapter 4.1.4. It seems that in the beginning these two metres competed for the role of *the* epic metre.[8]

4.1.2 *Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad al-Balkhī*

Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Balkhī is called by al-Bīrūnī and others *al-Shāʿir* "the poet", which could be interpreted to imply that his work was in

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7 For the poet, see de Blois (1992–97): 74. He probably finished his moralizing work in 336/947–8. In one verse (Lazard 1964 II: 104, v. 186) he clearly says that he is writing in the year 333.

8 Other metres found in the *mathnawīs* of Lazard's collection (1964) are *khafīf* (Shahīd-e Balkhī, II: 38; Farālāwī, II: 45; Abūʾl-ʿAbbās Rabinjanī, II: 76; Abū Shakūr, II: 89–90; and Maʿrūfī, II: 137), *ramal*, also used by Abū Shakūr (II: 89) and Abū Shuʿayb (II: 131), and *sarīʿ* by Abū Shakūr (II: 90), whose variety of metres is conspicuous, as is that of Abū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī (1967: 100–101), whose eight distichs fall under five different metres: *hazaj*, *ramal* (2x), *sarīʿ*, *khafīf*, and *mutaqārib* (3x).

verse, but the tenor of what little we know about it favours considering it to have been in prose. We have no conclusive evidence either way because we lack quotations from the work.[9]

Our information on Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī comes from al-Bīrūnī, *Āthār*, p. 114/99//107–108:

> This is according to what I have heard from Abū l-Ḥasan Ādharkhwar the Architect (*al-Muhandis*). Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Balkhī al-Shāʿir has told in *al-Shāhnāme* the story of the origin of mankind differently from what we have narrated. He claims to have revised his reports on the basis of *Kitāb Siyar al-mulūk* which is by ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, and the one by Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī, and the one by Hishām ibn al-Qāsim, and the one by Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh, the *mōbad* of the city of Sābūr, and the one by Bahrām ibn Mihrān al-Iṣbahānī. These he collated with what Bahrām al-Harawī al-Majūsī brought him.[10]

The passage implies that Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī's work contained a version of the story of Gayōmard and that it was a compilation from many sources. However, as we have seen in Chapter 3.1, the list of authorities keeps repeating itself in various sources and may have been lifted as such from the original source, most probably Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*, so that we cannot be confident as to the real sources of Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī. It cannot, nevertheless, be excluded that it was Ḥamza who copied the list from Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī. In both cases, though, it is clear that Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī was using Arabic sources: either Ḥamza, if he copied the list from Ḥamza, or Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and the other translations, if the list was copied by Ḥamza from Abū ʿAlī. There is no evidence that Abū ʿAlī would have had any Middle Persian sources at his disposal.

It is unclear whether the passage refers to the one story concerning the origin of mankind to have been revised in the light of the listed sources or whether this refers to the whole *al-Shāhnāme*. The latter seems more probable, as some of the listed sources only discussed the Sasanians, if we rely on their titles (see Chapter 3.1).

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9   Omidsalar (2011): 48, takes his work to have been in prose, but without producing any evidence.

10   Whether this refers to a book by this Bahrām, or merely to his oral knowledge, is not clear. We should beware of automatically assuming that this was a book, especially as this Bahrām is not mentioned on the other lists.

There is nothing to imply that the work would have contained any stories from the Sistanian Cycle, and as al-Bīrūnī is one of the rare Arabic authors who had Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī's *al-Shāhnāma* at his disposal, one might suppose that some of the Sistanian matter would have trickled down to al-Bīrūnī's works had it been included in al-Balkhī's *al-Shāhnāme*, but there is next to nothing on the Sistanians in al-Bīrūnī's works (see Chapter 5.1). Hence, one may surmise that Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī's work did not contain much, if anything, on the Sistanians.

There remains one important point to be made. It has been taken for granted that al-Balkhī's work was in Classical Persian, but this is only an educated guess. Al-Bīrūnī speaks about *al-Shāhnāme*, with the Arabic article, and the same title was later used by al-Bundārī for his translation of Firdawsī's work. Some sources also say that the *Khwadāynāmag* was translated into Arabic, retaining its original Persian title as *Khudāynāme* (Chapter 1.1.1). In addition, we know scores of other books in Arabic bearing a Persian title. So it is not impossible that despite its title the work was written in Arabic, although I have provisionally grouped it among Persian texts. The lack of quotations in Arabic sources, though, makes it more probable that the work was in Persian, a language which al-Bīrūnī well knew.

The vacillation between choosing Arabic or Persian was common in the tenth-century Iran. In his medical poem *Dānishnāme*, written in *hazaj* in 367–370/978–980,[11] Maysarī, e.g., tells how he hesitated whether to write his work in Arabic or Persian, finally deciding in favour of Persian because he was in Iran and most people could read Persian but not necessarily Arabic.[12] Even though this is a topos and the genre is different, this shows that we should not hastily decide on the language of a work only by its title.

Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Balkhī is otherwise unknown and another al-Balkhī, Abū l-Muʾayyad, is credited with a similar work (Chapter 4.1.3). It is not impossible that the two names refer to the same person, as Abū l-Muʾayyad's personal name (*ism*) is not known, nor that of his father.[13] It should also be noted that among the possible names of Daqīqī one finds Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad and, according to some, he was born in Balkh (Chapter 4.1.4).

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11   De Blois (1992–97): 184–185.

12   Lazard (1964) II: 178–197, verses 80–85. The last three lines read: Then I said (to myself): "Our country is Iran / and most of its people know Persian (*pārsī*). // It would not be nice, if I composed it in Arabic (*tāzī*): / not everyone could (read) it. // I will compose it in *darī*, so that everyone may know (it) / and everyone can have it on his tongue."

13   Cf. also Adhkāʾī (2001): 497. Cf. de Blois (1992–97): 67–68, with further literature, and van Zutphen (2014): 23–24. The fragments have been edited by Lazard (1967).

Barthold (1944): 152–153, claimed that Daqīqī and Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī were, in fact, the same person, but his main argument – that there could not have been two versified *Shāhnāmes* available to al-Bīrūnī – is hardly valid. As neither of the two identifications goes further than speculation, I find it advisable to keep the three authors separate until the identifications have found more support.

4.1.3   *Abū al-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī*

Abū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī[14] is mentioned by ʿAwfī in his *Lubāb* II: 26, as a Samanid poet, but otherwise little is known about him and it is not impossible he should be equated with Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Balkhī *al-Shāʿir* (see Chapter 4.1.2). For his works in general, see Lazard (1967) and de Blois (1992–97): 67–68. Some verses of his are quoted in lexicographical sources, but there is no indication that any of these would come from his *Shāhnāme*.[15]

Abū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī's *Shāhnāme* is quoted or referred to in a variety of sources. Balʿamī, *Tārīkhnāme* I: 93 (*Tārīkh*, p. 90) refers to it as *Shāhnāme-ye buzurg*,[16] which either refers to its length or its fame.[17] Qābūs ibn Wushmgīr mentions it in his *Qābūsnāme*, p. 4, and Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-e Ṭabaristān*, p. 60, seems to refer to this book as a prose text (*dar Shāhnāmehā-ye naẓm o-nathr-e Firdawsī o-Muʾayyadī*).

Mujmal, p. 2/2, 3, twice clearly states that Abū l-Muʾayyad wrote in prose (*nathr-e Abū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī*), but does not provide us with the title of this book. Instead, the author merely refers to various (separate?) stories about Narīmān, Sām, and Kay Qubād; Luhrāsf, Āghush-e Wahādān, and Kay Shikan – the text is slightly ambivalent and the last three titles do not necessarily form part of Abū l-Muʾayyad's work.[18] This, however, shows that his work contained stories of the Sistanian Cycle. *Mujmal*, p. 2/3, defines Abū l-Muʾayyad's prose as inimitable.

His references to this book are confused, but it is possible that Balʿamī derived major parts of his additional information on pre-Islamic Iran from it. This will be discussed more extensively in Chapter 4.3.

As we know little of the contents of this book, it remains open whether and to what extent Abū l-Muʾayyad may have used the *Khwadāynāmag* either

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14   Lazard (1983).

15   One in Asadī Ṭūsī, *Lughat-e Furs*, p. 125.

16   Cf. also Omidsalar (2011): 49, and notes 12 and 15.

17   Lazard (1967): 95–96, notes that this passage is lacking from some of the manuscripts and takes it to be a somewhat later addition. This also makes the dating of Abu al-Muʾayyad more problematic.

18   Cf. de Blois (1992–97): 68.

directly or through intermediate sources, such as Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. It has to
be remembered that the ability to read Middle Persian had dwindled among
Muslims, and when no evidence is at hand we have to start with the supposi-
tion that a person was unable to read Middle Persian, even though he might be
interested in history.

Abū l-Muʾayyad Balkhī is also credited with a *Book of Garshāsb* in *Tārīkh-e
Sīstān*, pp. 49 (*Kitāb-e Garshāsb*), 51, 75 (*Bū l-Muʾayyad andar Kitāb-e Garshāsb*),
which probably was in prose and may well have been the book that inspired
Asadī Ṭūsī to versify the epic (cf. Asadī Ṭūsī, *Garshāsbnāme*, p. 44). The latter
is seemingly the first epic to be produced in Firdawsī's wake.[19] It is an open
question whether Abū l-Muʾayyad Balkhī's *Kitāb-e Garshāsb* goes back to a
written Middle Persian source or not, but it does show how wide the interest
in national history, besides the *Khwadāynāmag*, was in the tenth century. As
will be shown in Chapter 5.1, Rustam and the Sistanians did not belong to the
Khwadāynāmag.

Shahmardān Ibn Abī l-Khayr, *Nuz'hatnāme* (written between 1084/1673 and
1119/1707), p. 342, also mentions that Abū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī "had collected
much material," presumably referring to the Sistanian stories Shahmardān
himself was interested in (Chapter 4.7), but neither describing this historical
material nor mentioning the title of the book he is referring to.[20] It is probable
that this refers to *Kitāb-e Garshāsb*.[21]

It is also probably this *Kitāb-e Garshāsb* that the author of *Tārīkh-e Sīstān*
means when quoting Bū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī as an authority on various won-
ders of Sistan (pp. 60, 61 twice). It is interesting to note that in two of these
cases the *Bundahishn* is quoted in tandem with Abū l-Muʾayyad (p. 60: *o-dīgar
Bū l-Muʾayyad-e Balkhī gūyad o-andar Kitāb-e Ibn Dahshatī gabrakān nīz bāz
gūyand*; p. 61: *Bū l-Muʾayyad gūyad o-andar Kitāb-e Ibn Dahshatī gabrakān nīz
be-gūya[n]d*).[22] It is probable that the author of *Tārīkh-e Sīstān* is here quoting

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19   Asadī refers to an earlier book on Garshāsb which he was using as the basis of his book,
      presumably versifying its prose (*Garshāsbnāme*, p. 44, vv. 1–5), though without indicating
      its author. This is not surprising, as he is writing verse, and exact source notes were rarely
      used in verse. Knowing that Abū l-Muʾayyad wrote a *Kitāb-e Garshāsb* and that his poetry
      was known to Asadī – cf. above note 15 – it would be but natural to equate the two.

20   Omidsalar (2011): 49, claims that these were stories about Rustam's family and came from
      Abū l-Muʾayyad's *Shāhnāme*, but neither is what the text itself actually says.

21   Lazard (1967): 95, brings up the possibility that the *Garshāsbnāme* was a part of the
      Shāhnāme, but I find this unlikely.

22   Note that the author seems to be aware that *Ibn Dahshatī* is not a personal name, but a
      book title. It may be that the form is due to later scribal corruption.

the *Bundahishn* through Abū l-Muʾayyad: it is possible to translate the passages either as referring to two separate sources or taking the latter source to have been quoted through the former, i.e., either as: "Abū l-Muʾayyad says, and in the Book of the *Bundahishn* the Zoroastrians (also) say, that …"; or as: "Abū l-Muʾayyad says: 'And in the Book of the *Bundahishn* the Zoroastrians say that …'." The latter seems more probable as it would be a rare coincidence that the author of *Tārīkh-e Sīstān* would have found the very same information in two separate sources, both of which he only quotes here.

This would mean that some of Abū l-Muʾayyad's information would have been derived from the *Bundahishn*, either orally or through a written source, whether in Arabic translation or in the original.

Abū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī is also credited with a *Kitāb-e ʿAjāʾib-e barr o-baḥr* (*Tārīkh-e Sīstān*, p. 58). There is a late copy of a *ʿAjāʾib al-dunyā*, written for the Samanid Nūḥ ibn Manṣūr (r. 365–387/975–997), which is attributed to Abū l-Muʾayyad Abū Muṭīʿ al-Balkhī.[23] It is possible that this manuscript, which is still unpublished as far as I know, contains Abū l-Muʾayyad's otherwise lost book under a slightly different title. Situating Abū l-Muʾayyad in this court, which also sponsored Balʿamī's translation of al-Ṭabarī, would be quite feasible. Unfortunately, there is not enough evidence to make any definite conclusions about the possible identity of the author with his namesakes or the books with each other.

Although not directly related to the *Khwadāynāmag*, *Kitāb-e ʿAjāʾib-e barr o-baḥr* may have a connection to Abū l-Muʾayyad's *Kitāb-e Garshāsb*, as Asadī's version contains many wonders (*ʿajāʾib*) and the same could be expected from its predecessor.

Lastly, Abūʾl-Muʾayyad is also credited with a version of *Yūsuf o-Zulaykhā*, which would make him the first poet to have taken this subject up in an epic form.[24]

4.1.4 *Daqīqī*

Daqīqī is very little known outside of the famous passage in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* where the author tells how he had a dream vision of the poet, who asked him to incorporate into his work the thousand verses which he had composed on Gushtāsp and Arjāsf. According to ʿAwfī, his name was Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, whereas in some sources the name is given as

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23 De Blois (1992–97): 67. See also Lazard (1967): 95.
24 Cf. Lazard (1967): 95.

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad, and his birthplace is variously given as Ṭūs, Balkh, Samarqand, or Bukhārā.[25]

The year of his death is given in various contradictory ways, but de Blois (1992–97): 105, rightly draws attention to the fact that some verses of his come from a *qaṣīda* for the Samanids Manṣūr ibn Nūḥ (r. 350–365/961–975) and Nūḥ ibn Manṣūr (r. 365–387/975–997), which gives us a rough dating. Thus, he probably wrote slightly after the compilation of the *Prose Shāhnāme*, compiled in Ṭūs for the Samanid Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq in 346/957 (Chapter 4.2) and slightly before Firdawsī. We will not err much if we assume him to have died soon after 365/975.

In assessing the work of Daqīqī we should keep in mind that it is only the testimony of Firdawsī that tells us about the thousand couplets on Gushtāsp and Arjāsf. While there is probably no reason to doubt that this tale was indeed versified by Daqīqī, we cannot actually know how much more Daqīqī had versified. Seventy-six *mutaqārib* couplets of his have been preserved in *Tārīkhnāme-ye Harāt* (Lazard 1964 II: 169–174 vv. 234–303, 307–312, cf. de Blois 1992–97:106) as well as a few others in other sources (Lazard, vv. 304–306, 313–315). Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī, *Tārīkh-e guzīde*, p. 730, says that he composed 1,000 (variants 1,800 or 3,000) verses of the *Shāhnāme*, and ʿAwfī, who can neither be trusted nor discarded offhand, claims that he composed 20,000 verses of his *Shāhnāme*.[26]

It is possible that Daqīqī only aimed at versifying a few stories, but his postmortem testimony in Firdawsī's dream is hardly enough to claim that he composed no more. He may have aimed at versifying the whole national history, in which case his labours were probably cut short by his death, as is commonly accepted to have been the case, but this cannot be taken as certain. Vv. 234–236 in Lazard's collection would seem to come from a Preface, but whether the text thus prefaced contained only one or a few episodes or the whole national history cannot be known, and of the verses preserved outside of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* very few contain identifiable episodes or characters,[27] being mainly descriptions of battles (with no names mentioned) and mornings in a style very similar to Firdawsī's.

Daqīqī is often deemed to have been Zoroastrian on the basis of some verses of his where he mentions that he has chosen Zoroastrianism as his religion

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25   In general, see de Blois (1992–97): 105–108, with further bibliography. The verses are found in *Shāhnāme* V: 75ff.

26   Cf. Barthold (1944): 153, and note 1. See also de Blois (1992–97): 106.

27   In Lazard's collection only one verse, v. 302, can be put in its place in the whole picture: *chu Gushtāsb-rā dād Luhrāsb takht / furūd āmad az takht o-bar bast rakht.*

(Lazard 1964 II: 165, vv. 205–206).[28] However, as de Blois (1992–97): 106–107, correctly points out, this can hardly be the case, as his family bears Muslim names and an open conversion to Zoroastrianism would be somewhat out of place in the late tenth century. In addition, vv. 267–269[29] (Lazard 1964 II: 171) present him as a Muslim. It is much more probable that the verses are typical Islamic wine poetry where the aim is not to document one's life but to celebrate the pleasures of wine using Zoroastrian imagery.

A comparison (Chapter 4.6) between the Pahlavi *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* and the respective episode in al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* and Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, attributed to Daqīqī, shows that there are strong reasons to believe that Daqīqī, too, versified the *Prose Shāhnāme*.

4.2   The *Prose Shāhnāme*

With Daqīqī we have for the first time reached a situation where we have extensive parts of the text at our disposal. Now we must go a bit backwards in time and take a look at yet another book that has been lost.

The *Prose Shāhnāme* has been lost, but there is a scholarly consensus that one of the prefaces of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* has actually been lifted from this book and attached, with some modifications, to Firdawsī's epic. This Older Preface[30] tells how the Samanid Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq, the one-time governor of Ṭūs, commissioned his minister Abū Manṣūr al-Maʿmarī to gather together owners of books. He found several such owners and gave them orders to compile a book that would perpetuate his memory. Four such men are mentioned in the text, all bearing Zoroastrian names. It is often, but possibly erroneously, believed that the whole compilation work was done by these four men, as a kind of committee.

The title of the book itself is unclear. The Preface exists in many manuscripts and there are several variants, often confused. Although I have adopted

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28   A further single verse, v. 304 (*be-yazdān ke hargiz na-bīnad Bihisht / kasī kū na-dārad rah-e Zardahisht*), would seem to be a quotation placed in a character's mouth.

29   *Be-yazdān-e dāwar khudāwand-e jān / ke charkh āfrīd o-zamīn o-zamān // be-ʿarsh o-Surūsh o-be-jān-e nabī / be-ṭāʿāt-e ʿUthmān o-ʿilm-e ʿAlī // be-Riḍwān o-ḥūr o-be-khurram Bihisht / be-dhāt-e rasūlān-e nīkū sirisht.*

30   Edited by Qazwīnī (1332) and Monchi-Zadeh (1975); translated into English by Minorsky (1956). The text is partially translated in Chapter 7.4.

the conventional title, the *Prose Shāhnāme*, the work's original title may well have been *Kārnāme-ye Shāhān* (see Chapter 7.4, §2).[31]

The Preface falls into seven separate parts:[32]

1. pious introductory formulae (§1);
2. the story of how the work came to be compiled (§§2–7a);
3. general description of the book; what a book should be like (§§7b–9);
4. the beginning of the book proper[33] with an exposition of the Sasanian *kishwar* system (§10);
5. chronological questions (§§11–14);[34]
6. genealogy of Abū Manṣūr and some deeds of his forefathers (§§15, 17–20);
7. inserted within the previous there is a short mention of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, which clearly is a later addition (§16).

The work was completed in 346/957. It has been lost, but we can deduce something of its contents from the Preface. In general, the text looks rather similar to Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* and, as will be shown in Chapters 4.4–6, it was most probably Firdawsī's main source. There are, though, occasional differences, and, as de Blois has pointed out (1992–97: 120–124), it is slightly disturbing that the few pieces of information we can glean from the Preface show several differences as compared to Firdawsī's text. If these few pieces contain such differences, are we entitled to claim that Firdawsī used this work as his main source? For reasons that will become clear in Chapters 4.4–6, I think we are.

Some significant details of the Preface have been ignored in earlier research and need to be highlighted here. The first is that the *Khwadāynāmag* is not specifically mentioned among the sources of the *Prose Shāhnāme*. This does not mean that it could not have been one of them, though, as the sources are only mentioned in a very general way and no titles are given. Probably it was, but this cannot be proven, and there is no saying whether the Middle Persian original

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31 A similar title is used in, e.g., *Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr*, which shows that it was a familiar form of title before the *Prose Shāhnāme*.

32 I have retained Minorsky's division into paragraphs for easy reference.

33 The text is found as the Preface to Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, but contains itself not only the preface of the *Prose Shāhnāme* but also parts of the text itself.

34 These include Biblical questions and also refer to authors on Ḥamza's list. This list was presumably lifted as a whole from Ḥamza and grafted here, which shows the compilatory character of the text as we have it. §16 cannot come from the *Prose Shāhnāme*, and Ḥamza's list in §11 has also most probably been later added here. The last two names in §11 are dubious.

text was used or its Arabic translation. Even the Zoroastrian names, supposing they are real names in the first place,[35] are not proof that their sources were written in Middle Persian: e.g., Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh (Chapter 3.2.6) obviously wrote in Arabic, despite his name. It is probable that many of their sources were, in fact, in Pahlavi, but there is no compelling reason to assume that *all* were necessarily so.[36]

The second is that the Preface makes it abundantly clear that the work was composed on the basis of several different texts, quite obviously belonging to different genres.[37] On the basis of comparative evidence, it seems clear that the Sistanian Cycle was used for this *Prose Shāhnāme* through sources other than the *Khwadāynāmag* and other more "official" historical texts (Chapter 5.1). Other texts, possibly in a variety of languages, were also used as sources. As we will see later (Chapter 4.6), the Middle Persian *Wizārishn ī chatrang*, *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, *Husraw ud rēdag-ē*, and *Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr* were among the sources, as were perhaps *andarz* collections and lost works which we do not always even know by name. There is no reason to assume that such texts would have been parts of any Pahlavi text titled *Khwadāynāmag*.[38] The whole confusion derives from the firm belief of early scholars that all information on pre-Islamic Iran must come from various recensions of the *Khwadāynāmag*, a notion for which we have little evidence (see Chapter 6.2).

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35 Three of them, Shādān, Mākh, and Māhūy, are also found in Firdawsī's epic, which would seem to give them some credibility. The awkward point is that these names, given as examples in the Preface to the *Prose Shāhnāme*, may well have been culled from Firdawsī's epic to bring in names that sounded authoritative. Cf. also Shahbazi (1991): 133 and note 87.

36 Jackson Bonner (2015): 49, writes about the *Prose Shāhnāme* that it: "is said to be a compilation of many *Pahlavi* [my Italics, JHA] books." A few lines later he repeats this: "but the significant point (…) is that Firdawsī's work was based on many Middle Persian sources." The definition of language comes from Jackson Bonner, not the original source.

37 This is also emphasized by Rubin (2008b): 46–47. He also rightly draws attention, p. 48, to the fact that the Preface does not speak about translating, but about compiling a book. Some material must have been translated from Pahlavi, but the question is not of translating one specific book but of compiling a book from a variety of sources, some (perhaps even most) of which had to be translated into Classical Persian.

38 Rubin (2008b): 49, writes about the various materials presumably used by the committee: "It consisted of general histories (books of kings and their exploits) and of books dedicated to the lives of individual kings." However, he obstinately calls these *Khwadāynāmags*, even though the title is not used in Pahlavi literature and none of the identifiable, extant Pahlavi texts is titled *Khwadāynāmag* or is called this in any source. It is not easy to see how, e.g., the *Wizārishn* could have been titled a *Khwadāynāmag*.

The existence of early Classical Persian books, discussed above (Chapter 4.1), makes it possible that some of the sources might have been in Classical Persian, and there is no reason to exclude the possibility of Arabic sources, including previous translations from Pahlavi.[39] Some support for the latter may be found in the Arabic name forms used by Firdawsī and probably derived from the *Prose Shāhnāme*, such as Ḍaḥḥāk and Būzurjmihr (instead of Pahlavi Wuzurgmihr → Classical Persian Buzurgmihr).[40] The reference to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and Ḥamza in §11 of the Preface also shows that the compilers at least used Arabic sources for mining information and there is nothing to exclude the idea that they translated parts of them.

As the story of Alexander seems to have been included (see below), and as there seem to be strong reasons to doubt the existence of a Pahlavi *Alexander Romance* (Chapter 2.3), this would imply that at least this major piece of text was introduced into the *Prose Shāhnāme* from Arabic sources.

One might speculate on the possibility that the four Zoroastrian names, given as examples (all are preceded by *chūn* "such as"), have been selected to sound authoritative in regaining the national past[41] and there might have been others, bearing Islamic names, involved in the process.

Unfortunately, the Preface has confusing variants (see Chapter 7.4). The main variant tells that Abū Manṣūr "collected (men from) every town" ([*az*] *har shāristān*), but in one reading we have *har chahār-e shān* "all four of them", which would seem to restrict the number of the "Committee" to four.[42] This would be slightly incongruous with the preceding use (four times!) of *chūn* "such as". If the four are given as examples, there should surely have been more people than just them. However, the variant *har chahār-e shān* cannot be excluded, in which case there, indeed, was a committee of four.

It has also been ignored that the Preface actually includes the beginning of the *Prose Shāhnāme* (§11), and we can see that, unlike Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, the book began with a geographical exposé of the Sasanian *kishwar* system and a definition of Ērānshahr.

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39   Rubin has argued against this in Rubin (1995): 235–236, and (2005a): 64, and reconfirmed his position in Rubin (2008b): 48–49, but his arguments are inconclusive. Cf. also Omidsalar (2011): 61.

40   The length of the first vowel is due to metrical exigencies.

41   The authority invested in landed gentry is further confirmed by the Preface, §12, which refers to the *dihqāns* as the ultimate authority.

42   Rubin (2008b): 48, mentions this possibility but ignores the continuation and the text-critical problems connected with it.

As the *Prose Shāhnāme* is usually, and with good reason, considered the main source for Firdawsī, it should be evident that Firdawsī is rather far removed from the *Khwadāynāmag* that was, at most, just one among the many sources of the *Prose Shāhnāme*, which in itself was only one (though probably the most important) among Firdawsī's sources. Equating Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* with the *Khwadāynāmag* is unwarranted, and deducing the latter's contents from the former is absurd.

Finally, there remains the question about the mutual relations of the *Prose Shāhnāme* and the other books studied in Chapter 4. The dates of the authors discussed in 4.1 are far from clear, but it seems possible that all of them wrote after 346/957. Perhaps the earliest, Masʿūdī-ye Marwazī, wrote sometime before 355/966, as al-Maqdisī was able to quote him, and Balʿami, the translator of al-Ṭabarī, wrote in 352/963–4 (Chapter 4.3). Balʿamī is able to quote Abū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī and Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh, which would seem to date them securely before 352/963–4, too, but here we have to be very careful, as the manuscript tradition of Balʿamī is unusually complicated and we know that there are many interpolations in the manuscripts, this particular passage seemingly being one of them.[43] Daqīqī seems to be somewhat later (d. around 365/975–6) and Firdawsī (d. 411/1020) and al-Thaʿālibī (who wrote around 412/1022) are clearly later, writing up to half a century after the *Prose Shāhnāme*.

What is abundantly clear is that there was a huge surge of interest in national history in a very short period in mid- to late tenth-century Iran. This has been interpreted as a growth of national feeling, which may be an exaggeration,[44] but it is clear that the Iranian past became a particular object of interest in the tenth century.

In addition to the *Shāhnāmes*, there was an equal surge of interest in texts that found no place in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. We have already mentioned Asadī's *Garshāsbnāme* and its predecessor (Chapter 4.1.3) and, as will be seen in Chapter 4.7, this was not the only early version of Sistanian epics. The case of *Wāmiq o-ʿAdhrāʾ*[45] shows that the interest went even further than that, the epic probably ultimately going back to Greek sources.

It is not necessary that the *Prose Shāhnāme* should have been the first literary work in the process – it may well have been preceded by some of the texts studied in Chapter 4.1, or others of which we are not aware – and it is also clear

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43 See Chapter 4.1.3, note 4.2.6.

44 Shahbazi (1991) sees nationalism as a central force in Firdawsī, while Omidsalar (2012) writes polemically against the idea.

45 Hägg–Utas (2003).

that some almost contemporary works may have been written independently of it, but it seems obvious that such a royal project would have been noted and the compilation may well have become a central source already for the authors in the final years of the 950s and the 960s. Thus, the *Prose Shāhnāme* was presumably the main source for several, if not all, of the texts discussed in Chapter 4.1.

It also seems to have been the main source for both Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* and al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar*, the two extant works that we have at our disposal. The *Prose Shāhnāme* is, to a certain extent, reconstructable through a comparison of the similarities between these two books (see Chapters 4.4–6).

A few features that we could highlight on the basis of such a comparison are that the *Prose Shāhnāme* evidently told the national history from the Creation to the last Sasanid, Yazdagird III, as also indicated in the Preface (§6). In contrast to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* it included stories from the Sistanian Cycle, as well as material that was of interest to the Arabs (Bahrām Gūr's early history). It also included a version of the *Alexander Romance* and many good narratives, but probably lacked Firdawsī's orphan stories.

Firdawsī clearly added to the material when versifying the book, but al-Thaʿālibī may well have abbreviated it, although he did make additions by bringing in quotations from Arabic historians and some Persian texts. In general, the *Prose Shāhnāme* may well have been about the same size as al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar*, which in Zotenberg's edition has 748 pages, containing both the text and the translation, so the text itself covers some 374 pages in a rather large font. As we will later speculate on the size of the *Khwadāynāmag*, this number should be kept in mind. If a conglomerate of various sources covers no more than this number of pages, the *Khwadāynāmag* must have been considerably shorter than this, as there is no reason why passages from the *Khwadāynāmag* (if it was among the *Prose Shāhnāme's* sources in the first place) should have been considerably abbreviated or dropped away.

The *Prose Shāhnāme* is referred to by few authors. An important testimony is given by al-Bīrūnī, who mentions it in his *Āthār*, p. 133/116//119: "We have found the chronologies (*tawārīkh*) of this second part (of the Ashkānians) in *Kitāb Shāhnāme*, made (*al-maʿmūl*) for Abū Manṣūr ibn ʿAbd al-Razzāq."[46]

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46   At the end of the passage, *Āthār*, p. 134/118//121, the same work is referred to as *Kitāb al-Shāhnāme*.

4.3 Balʿamī

Abū ʿAlī Balʿamī[47] came from an influential family of state officials. His father, Abū l-Faḍl al-Balʿamī (d. 329/940), may have been involved in translating, or having translated, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's Arabic version of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* into Classical Persian, to be further versified by the poet Rūdakī.[48] Both father and son were interested in Arabic literature and were patrons to many poets mentioned in al-Thaʿālibī's *Yatīmat al-dahr*.

The younger Balʿamī was still alive in 382/992.[49] His main contribution to Persian letters is his translation, or Persian redaction, of al-Ṭabarī's historical work, the *Taʾrīkh*, which is not a separate *Shāhnāme*, but deserves some discussion here. Far from being a simple translation, Balʿamī's *Tārīkhnāme* modified the original and, what is important in the present context, added information on pre-Islamic Iran from other sources, which the author sometimes quotes explicitly. Balʿamī himself openly says (*Tārīkh*, p. 2) that when something was missing from the original, he added useful pieces of information.

The work was commissioned in 352/963 by Abū l-Ḥasan Fāʾiq, and at about the same time, the great Qurʾānic commentary of the same author, al-Ṭabarī, was also translated into Persian in the same court. The transmission history of Balʿamī's *Tārīkhnāme* is extremely tangled, as Peacock (2007) has shown, and the various manuscripts have major differences between each other.[50]

Among the additional sources of Balʿamī, the most important for our purposes is a certain great *Shāhnāme* that he quotes in *Tārīkh*, p. 3 (*Tārīkhnāme* I: 5). Unfortunately, manuscripts give here various readings. In the *Tārīkh*, the "great *Shāhnāme*" would seem to refer to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's work (*andar Shāhnāme-ye buzurg īdūn gūyad pisar-e Muqaffaʿ ke*). However, *Tārīkhnāme* adds here the name of Ḥamza as the author of the great *Shāhnāme* (*dar Shāhnāme-ye buzurg Ḥamza-ye Iṣfahānī īdūn gūyad ke pisar-e Muqaffaʿ*) and the comment of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ thus becomes a quotation through Ḥamza's book.

Both readings are extremely problematic. No source implies that Ḥamza would have written a great book of kings – his *Taʾrīkh* is a rather slim volume. Moreover, the following piece of information (from the expulsion of Adam from Paradise until the "time of our Prophet" there are 6,013 years) is not

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47 Zadeh (2016).

48 For the various stories, see Zadeh (2016).

49 According to Gardīzī, he died in 363/974, but on other evidence his death should be set in the 380s/990s. See also Peacock (2007): 34.

50 For the present work, I am using the two main editions, that by Muḥammad Taqī Bahār, quoted as *Tārīkh*, and that by Muḥammad Rawshan, quoted as *Tārīkhnāme*.

to be found in Ḥamza's book, where the period from the Creation until the end of the Persian kings' rule is given as 4,071 (p. 15) or 4,409 years (p. 25). Immediately after this passage, though, Balʿamī gives Ḥamza's list (*Tārīkh*, pp. 4–5; *Tārīkhnāme* I: 5).

The attribution of this great *Shāhnāme* to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ is equally problematic, and his book is nowhere else referred to as "the Great *Shāhnāme*" nor, as far as I can see, is it ever referred to with the Persian title *Shāhnāme*. Moreover, the sentence is garbled in the *Tārīkhnāme*, where the verb that would have *pisar-e* Muqaffaʿ as its subject never appears.

It seems probable that the great *Shāhnāme* actually refers to the work of Abū l-Muʾayyad Balkhī, whose *Shāhnāme* is referred to in Balʿamī, *Tārīkhnāme* I: 93 (*Tārīkh*, p. 90) with the very same title *Shāhnāme-ye buzurg*. As Ḥamza's list comes immediately after the problematic quotation it would seem probable that the original form is preserved in the *Tārīkh*, and in *Tārīkhnāme's* version the name of Ḥamza has slipped in erroneously. The text should probably be understood so that the great *Shāhnāme* is here given anonymously and Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ quoted through it ("In the Great *Shāhnāme* Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ says," i.e., is quoted as saying).

Unfortunately, Balʿamī rarely gives explicit references to his sources. He does elaborate on al-Ṭabarī's history in the part concerned with pre-Islamic Iran, and it is quite possible that much of this additional information comes from this great *Shāhnāme*. The illusion that Balʿamī excerpted a variety of sources seems to be based only on a misunderstanding of the passage *Tārīkh*, pp. 4–5, where Balʿamī refers to an impressive number of authorities, although he is, in fact, merely lifting this list of names from Ḥamza or some intermediate source.

In *Tārīkh*, p. 85, Balʿamī quotes "*Khudāynāme-ye Bahrām al-Muʾayyad*" (*Tārīkhnāme* I: 87, only has *nāme-ye Bahrām al-Muʾayyad*), but this is probably a mere corruption of Bahrām *al-Mōbad*, which probably refers to Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh (see Chapter 3.2.6), rather than to Abū l-Muʾayyad, whose first name we do not know.

4.4   Al-Thaʿālibī

Although slightly later than Firdawsī, it may be advantageous to discuss al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* first.

The author has tentatively been identified with the famous Abū Manṣūr al-Thaʿālibī (d. 429/1038), author of, e.g., *Yatīmat al-dahr*, but the identification

is not certain.[51] The question is, however, not of pivotal importance for the present discussion, as we know that the book was written in 412/1022 or a few years earlier in the circles of Ghazna, and the identity of its author is of secondary importance for us.[52]

The first part of a history of the world written in Arabic by al-Thaʿālibī is usually known by the title *Ghurar akhbār mulūk al-Furs wa-siyarihim*, but the whole work consisted of four volumes, of which only the first bears this title and is concerned with Persian history. The second covers the life of the Prophet Muḥammad and early Islamic history and has also been preserved, though it still remains unpublished, while the last two volumes have been lost.[53]

The *Ghurar* uses two kinds of sources. The main source is a Persian national history, in all probability the *Prose Shāhnāme*, but the author also had at his disposal some other Persian sources, such as al-Masʿūdī al-Marwazī's[54] *muzdawija* in Persian (p. 10) and a *Kitāb Shāhnāme* (pp. 263, 457, cf. p. xxiii). The second group of sources are the Arabic historians, who are occasionally used and quoted: al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Khurradādhbih,[55] Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (see p. xix), and al-Maqdisī (p. xxi) are among the Arabic authors mentioned by name.

Omidsalar (2011): 53, takes *Kitāb Shāhnāme* to refer to the *Prose Shāhnāme*. This is possible, but it is also possible that the main source is translated without any indication of source and the twice-quoted *Shāhnāme* is another, secondary source, possibly that of Abū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī.[56] The references to Masʿūdī-ye Marwazī prove beyond doubt that the author did use other works on Persian national history as his sources.

The contents of the book bear close resemblance to Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, but there are also differences between the two sources (see Chapter 4.6 for some comparisons), not deriving from al-Ṭabarī or other identified historians.[57] In the preface to his edition of the *Ghurar*, Zotenberg has convincingly argued

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51 For a recent discussion of his identity, see Savant (2013): 133–134 and note 9. Orfali (2016): 67–69, after discussing earlier opinions, also accepts the attribution as probable.

52 Cf. Omidsalar (2011): 52.

53 Most recently, see Peacock (2012): 66 and note 52.

54 See Chapter 4.1.1.

55 This may refer to Ibn Khurradādhbih's *Kitāb Jamharat ansāb al-Furs wa'l-nawāqil* or to his *Kitāb al-Taʾrīkh*, see Chapter 3.6 and van Zutphen (2014): 234–235, n. 33.

56 Firdawsī can here be used as a parallel. As shown by Yamamoto (2003): 74–76, it seems that Firdawsī explicitly refers to authoritative sources mainly when he is adding something to his main source, the *Prose Shāhnāme*. See Chapter 4.2.

57 See Zotenberg's *Préface*, pp. xxv–xlii.

that al-Thaʿālibī cannot be dependent on Firdawsī.[58] These significant differences prove that Firdawsī was not the main source for al-Thaʿālibī. Firdawsī had also completed his work only a few years before the *Ghurar* was written.[59]

It is also noteworthy that al-Thaʿālibī lacks Firdawsī's orphan stories, and it is not easy to see why al-Thaʿālibī should have taken just these parts away and would have accidentally returned to an earlier form of Persian national history. A reverse process – al-Thaʿālibī and Firdawsī following the same model and the latter adding originally unrelated stories – presents no problems.

Still, al-Thaʿālibī may well have known Firdawsī's epic and may occasionally have used it as a secondary source (cf. Chapter 5.2). The later fame of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* should not lead us to suppose that it must have been an instant success. The voluminous, and hence expensive and hard-to-get work left little mark in the literature of the early eleventh century, so al-Thaʿālibī would be a unique example of a work strongly dependent on Firdawsī merely a few years after its completion.[60]

Firdawsī says that he used "an old book" as his source (see Chapter 4.5). Although his own testimony can by no means be used as binding evidence, it does match the strong evidence provided by the comparison of al-Thaʿālabī's and Firdawsī's works with some preserved Pahlavi texts (Chapter 4.6). It seems an obvious solution that both authors used the same book as their main source. The *Prose Shāhnāme* is usually considered to have been this source, which is

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58   Omidsalar (1998) has more recently, but less coherently, argued for the same.

59   Cf. also Omidsalar (2011): 52–53 and note 534. Omidsalar (2011): 61, refers to manuscript variants to explain the differences between al-Thaʿālibī and Firdawsī in his attempt to show that Firdawsī faithfully followed his main source. He also refers to the possibility that al-Thaʿālibī may have changed his story while arguing vehemently, but with little credibility, that Firdawsī was extremely faithful to his one and only source and used no auxiliary sources. Despite his strong stance (Firdawsī could not have *lied* about his source), Omidsalar's arguments are conclusive, once they are stripped of the rhetoric that confuses a lie and a topos. Omidsalar's argument that Firdawsī should have been mentioned in *Yatīmat al-dahr*, should al-Thaʿālibī have known him, is invalid, though. The identity of the author of the *Ghurar* is not certain and, more importantly, the *Yatīma* heavily concentrates on Arabic and lyric poetry, so the exclusion of Firdawsī does not prove that he was unknown to al-Thaʿālibī.

60   Shahbazi (1991) dates the first edition in 384/994 (pp. 71–75), the second in 395/1004 (p. 85), and the final edition in 400/1009–10 (p. 94). The earlier editions are hypothetical and would only have contained part of the material (and could, hence, not have given al-Thaʿālibī all the material he has), so that al-Thaʿālibī would have had to use the edition of 400 less than 12 years after its completion. For a remark on Firdawsī's lack of fame directly after his death, see Omidsalar (2011): 53.

supported by the fact that we know in Firdawsī's case that his main source was in prose.[61]

With reference to the *Khwadāynāmag*, this means that al-Thaʿālibī is in the same situation as Firdawsī: the *Ghurar* is largely based on a lost book, one of whose many sources was probably the *Khwadāynāmag*, either in the Middle Persian original or in Arabic translation.

As we have already seen (Chapter 2.4), al-Thaʿālibī takes liberties in quoting from al-Ṭabarī and the same may be supposed to have happened when he translated from his Persian original, the *Prose Shāhnāme*. See also Chapter 4.6.

With this in mind, we may now proceed to a comparison of the Arabic with the lost original, of which we may take Firdawsī as a representative. As a sample, I will select the episode of Ḍaḥḥāk, which is found in many early Arabic and Persian sources, ranging from a passing quotation to an elaborated narrative. If we consider Firdawsī as representing the original, the most conspicuous change is the abbreviation of the text, but here we have to be very careful as Firdawsī has clearly elaborated his version and invented details which were not in the original source[62] and has, perhaps, also used other sources, whether oral or written.

The two most conspicuous and clear changes in the text are the use of rhymed prose, not in common use in tenth-century Persian prose, and the slight Islamization of the story. Neither goes deep into the text, but they remain superficial elements. Interestingly, both seem to feature at the beginning and the end of the episode, as if the translator had given more thought to these crucial parts of the story and then translated the rest more quickly. The similar use of rhymed prose may be seen in al-Bundārī's translation of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* some two centuries later (Chapter 2.4).

In the episode of Ḍaḥḥāk, Qurʾānic echoes are found at the beginning (p. 16) where the megalomaniac Jamshīd is made to use the words of the Pharaoh in Q 79: 24 (*ana rabbukumu l-aʿlā*)[63] and at the end (pp. 33–34), where the realization of the dream of Ḍaḥḥāk provides an opportunity to allude to the Surah of

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61 Obviously, some of the other early *Shāhnāmes* were also in prose, such as Abū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī's *Shāhnāme*, but the *Prose Shāhnāme* was probably the one with the highest profile and seems an obvious candidate for being the common source between al-Thaʿālibī and Firdawsī. But it goes without saying that if the common source were to turn out to be some other book, the main argument presented here would not be changed.

62 This we know from the fact that no other earlier or independent source contains some episodes of Firdawsī and in many episodes Firdawsī has additional elaborations that are found nowhere else. For some detailed comparisons, see Chapters 4.6 and 5.2.

63 Note in addition that the preceding text follows the syntactic structure of Q 79: 21–23.

Joseph (Q 12: 100 twice; also Q 56:1 and Q 18: 64 are alluded to on these pages). These almost exhaust the Qurʾānic allusions in the story, and the middle section (pp. 17–32) contains very little Qurʾānic or religious vocabulary.

The same holds for the use of rhymed prose. The episode begins with a cluster of rhymed prose and a play on the sequence *amm(a)* (p. 16):

> **lammā tamma amru Jam wa-jammat** ʿindahū **amwālu l-dunyā** wa-ʿaẓuma **shānuh** wa-ʿalā mulkuhū wa-**sulṭānuh** wa-mtadda **zamānuh** (...)
> lam yalbath an **khabā qabasuh** wa-**kabā farasuh** (...)

After the first page of the episode, rhymed prose more or less disappears, only to return in a few passages towards the end.

Al-Thaʿālibī freely inserted passages from al-Ṭabarī, which he usually marks as such, presumably because of the prestige al-Ṭabarī already enjoyed at his time, although sometimes he quotes him without acknowledgement (e.g., pp. 17–18, and Abū Tammām's verses on p. 35 derive from al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* I: 201//II: 2). Al-Ṭabarī, however, is only a secondary source for al-Thaʿālibī, as can be seen from the order of the material: al-Thaʿālibī uses al-Ṭabarī without any order, even inserting (p. 24) a quotation from al-Ṭabarī I: 174//I: 344 into this episode, which otherwise relies on al-Ṭabarī I: 201–210//II: 1–9. The structure of the *Ghurar* comes from the *Prose Shāhnāme*.

Minor embellishments aside, the similarity of al-Thaʿālibī's text with Firdawsī's epic shows that both sources were in their main lines following their common source.

4.5   Firdawsī

The similarities between al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* and Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* show beyond the slightest doubt that the two works are interrelated. As has been shown in the previous chapter, there are strong reasons to assume that al-Thaʿālibī is not translating Firdawsī (nor, of course, the other way round), but the two must go back to a common source. The close resemblance of material and its near identical order exclude the possibility that both were compiling their works from the same selection of texts.[64]

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64   De Blois (1992–97): 122–124, has drawn attention to some problems in assuming that Firdawsī used the *Prose Shāhnāme* as his source, but all these are problematic only if we claimed that Firdawsī was seeking for fidelity in his versification (which he did not) or that the *Prose Shāhnāme* was his only source (which it was not, cf. below).

This is supported by Firdawsī's own testimony. Both in the Preface and later, he refers to an old book as his source.[65] Although on its own such testimony would be far from conclusive, it gains credence from the fact that all other evidence points in the same direction. Given the dearth of evidence, it is impossible to prove that this old book, the common source of al-Thaʿālibī and Firdawsī, is the *Prose Shāhnāme* and not, e.g., the *Shāhnāme* of Abū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī (Chapter 4.1.3). However, the royal prestige of the *Prose Shāhnāme* makes it a good candidate, and the insertion of the *Prose Shāhnāme's* preface into some manuscripts of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* might also be induced in favour of this. If the common source would turn out to be, e.g., Abū l-Muʾayyad's *Shāhnāme*, this would not change the picture in any significant way.

The comparison between some preserved Pahlavi texts and their reproductions in the works of Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī gives us a possibility to see how these two authors handled their original source (see Chapter 4.6). As the comparisons show that in different cases one or the other author comes closer to the original, it is not possible to assume that the author(s) of the *Prose Shāhnāme*, their common source, would be the one(s) who had modified the original texts: in that case, neither Firdawsī nor al-Thaʿālibī could come closer to the Pahlavi originals.

As already mentioned, Firdawsī does have stories that are not found in al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar*. In some cases, it is possible that al-Thaʿālibī has abbreviated the work by dropping stories that are not relevant to the main story line, but as Firdawsī's orphan stories tend to be missing also in other early narratives of Persian national history (al-Ṭabarī, al-Masʿūdī, etc.) it is rather clear that it is Firdawsī who added these stories to his epic from other sources.

It is not evident whether Firdawsī's additional sources were oral or written. As we have seen, there was an extensive literature in Arabic and Persian on Persian national history (Chapters 2.2.1, 3.6, and 4.1) and some of these texts may well have been available to Firdawsī. On the other hand, it is also possible that he had heard some of the epic tales in oral performances, whether

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65   Chapter 7.7. See also Omidsalar (2011): 56–61. Firdawsī's claim that the book was six thousand years old (Omidsalar 2011: 58) is obviously an exaggeration, but it does raise a problem: how are we to understand that a book, the *Prose Shāhnāme*, composed merely some decades before Firdawsī already had this venerable patina of age? The probable answer is that Firdawsī is here referring not to the book but to its contents. It is the story that is six thousand years old–which it obviously is not, but counting from the traditional dating of the Creation and Gayōmard, the figure becomes understandable.

narrated in prose or sung in verse, as there is no reason to suggest that the oral tradition had died out.[66]

The continued existence of an oral tradition is made probable by the extensive *nāme* literature (Chapter 4.7). The contents of *nāmes* are sparsely documented in Arabic sources and we have little evidence to claim that they would ever have been translated into Arabic. It is tenuous to claim that each and every *nāme* is based on a lost Middle Persian text, even though some of them may, in fact, be.[67]

On the other hand, we have occasional information on historical books having been compiled from oral sources. Such, e.g., is the case of the *Bāwandnāme*, which, according to the testimony of *Tārīkh-e Ṭabaristān*, p. 4, was "collected (at the end of the eleventh century) in verse (…) from the lies of the country folks and the mouths of the common people."[68] Here, and presumably in other similar cases, we have a literary composition based on oral narratives rather than a transcript of oral poetry as such.

Some scholars (especially Dick Davis 1996 and Olga Davidson 1998 and 2006) have maintained that not only did Firdawsī gather his material from oral sources but Firdawsī's own work at first lived on in oral tradition, which would explain the wide variation of the preserved manuscripts.

This theory remains supported by some scholars, even though it is improbable for various reasons which have been pointed out, among others, by de Blois (1992–97): 53–58, and Omidsalar (1998) and (2011): 11–31. The proponents of the oral theory have mainly by-passed the very valid arguments of their critics. As the theory cannot be supported by any evidence, it will only be discussed briefly here. Besides the strong evidence for a literary source, discussed above, there are also other arguments against the theory of the centrality of oral sources. Practically all contemporary and slightly later sources show that there were written texts that *could* have been used by Firdawsī. Had his sources been oral, we should assume that al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* is a translation of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, which is a problematic claim, as already discussed. Otherwise, we should claim that, by a curious coincidence, al-Thaʿālibī happened to come across the very same oral performances as Firdawsī and, by an even more curious coincidence, happened to organize them in an identical order. There is

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66   Note that, on the other hand, Boyce's article (1957) has been received rather uncritically and the existence of sung epic poetry in the Sasanian and Islamic periods has been considered proven, which it is not. It is possible, perhaps even probable, but there are very few shreds of evidence to prove it. See Chapter 1.4.

67   Cf. Pīrūzān's literary activities, discussed in Chapter 4.7.

68   Cf. Omidsalar (2011): 28.

also negative evidence: no source claims that either Firdawsī's sources or his work itself were solely or mostly oral. Finally, the comparison of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar*, and some Pahlavi texts (Chapter 4.6) proves beyond the slightest doubt that the existing texts of both al-Thaʿālibī and Firdawsī go back to literary sources, at least in these cases.

In addition to being extremely improbable, the oral source theory is also irrelevant from the point of view of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Whether and to what extent Firdawsī may have used oral sources, it is certain that the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* was not transmitted orally, or at least we do not have any evidence for such an improbable theory.

On the other hand, some scholars have recently claimed that Firdawsī faithfully used only one source, the *Prose Shāhnāme*. The most prominent among these is Mahmoud Omidsalar, who claims in a recent book (2011: 26) that "[t]he notion that Ferdowsi could fake a whole book (…) is at best unrealistic" and "Ferdowsi could not have gotten away with fabricating his source because his contemporaries knew their sources, and he would have been unable to fool them". He puts this even more clearly on p. 33: "I will argue that (…) it is not possible to believe that Ferdowsi incorporated any stories from other sources – oral or written – into his narrative, and [I will argue] that the prose *Shāhnāmeh* served as the exclusive source material for his epic."

This presupposes that Firdawsī and his contemporaries shared our ideas of textual fidelity to the original sources, which is hardly true. It also ignores the fact that later sources (even slightly later ones) seem to be quite content with making similar formulaic claims of using an old book as their source, and these claims are so close to those of Firdawsī that they cannot be taken as anything but topoi. Even though it is not possible to retroject the attitudes of the authors of the late eleventh century and later back to Firdawsī, this at least shows that they had no ideal of absolute fidelity. Firdawsī was not faking or lying, but using a familiar and acceptable literary topos of finding (implicitly all) his stories in an old book, while in fact he used a variety of auxiliary sources as well. In addition, of course, it should be remembered that Firdawsī also refers to old *dihqāns* from whom he had heard stories: if these are accepted as poetic liberties, why should Firdawsī suddenly be taken literally when he implies (not even says explicitly!) that one old book was the source of all his stories?

Besides references to Firdawsī's moral character, Omidsalar's argumentation is to a large extent based on the claim that Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* makes coherent reading and, hence, the stories must stem from one and only one source. In some cases, Omidsalar's argument for an absolute coherence of the text is forced: proving that a narrative is not completely out of place in its context hardly proves that the elements of the narrative must derive from only

one source. It is, moreover, generally admitted that Firdawsī was a good author, and a good author will undoubtedly be able to use several sources without becoming incoherent. In fact, Omidsalar's attitude would push back the credit of composing such a magnificent epic merely to Firdawsī's predecessors.[69]

Omidasalar also claims (2011: 27) that Firdawsī "worked in a highly refined literary environment, which considered oral tradition vulgar and uncouth" and goes on to cite Bayhaqī's negative comment on "impossible lies" (*Tārīkh*, p. 905).[70] This, however, does not refer to the orality of such stories, and there are many passages where the *khurāfāt* are condemned, irrespective of their mode of transmission.[71] The main target of such criticism was the fabulous and supernatural content of the stories, not their mode of transmission, and there is no reason why Firdawsī could not have used historical materials from oral sources besides his main source, the *Prose Shāhnāme*.

There still remains the question of the possible Arabic sources of Firdawsī. Since Theodor Nöldeke's groundbreaking study (1879: xxiii), the more or less universal opinion has been that Firdawsī did not use Arabic sources.[72] Jackson Bonner (2011): 65, has recently argued against this, but his evidence is inconclusive: the fact that Firdawsī uses Arabicized forms of Syriac words does not prove that he was using Arabic sources, as he was using Persian sources which themselves were (at least partly) based on Arabic sources. One should make a clear distinction between two separate things:

1) Firdawsī may, or may not, have used sources in Arabic;
2) Firdawsī certainly used earlier Classical Persian sources, which partly went back to Arabic ones.

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69 I will not go into details to refute Omidsalar's theory, as it is based on obviously forced readings and a wrong conception of the cultural context of Firdawsī's time, with its bipolar division of authors into faithful copyists and fake liars. Omidsalar's book (2011) contains one of the best exhibitions of the tradition in Classical Persian before Firdawsī, but suffers from a polemical attitude (as if most modern *Shāhnāme* scholars would follow Davis' and Davidson's oral theories) and a strong will to prove the absolute coherence of the *Shāhnāme*.

70 For the reference, see Omidsalar (2011): 27. I have been unable to locate the passage in my copy of the text.

71 To take but one roughly contemporary example: In his *Tajārib* I: 72, Miskawayh harshly rebukes Persian *khurāfāt* about Rustam which are useless (*lā fāʾidata fīhā*). For him, it is not the mode of transmission of these stories–most of which are found in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*–but their legendary content that he finds objectionable.

72 Cf. also Barthold (1944): 150–151.

There does not seem to be any clear evidence that Firdawsī knew Arabic, and as his Persian source (the *Prose Shāhnāme*) covers most of his stories and the remaining orphan stories are not well documented in Arabic, it seems advisable to consider his sources as having been predominantly, if not exclusively, in Persian. He may, of course, have known Arabic and could also have received some relevant information from Arabic books, but there is no concrete evidence that he did so. There is also no evidence that Firdawsī would have known Pahlavi, and it seems rather improbable that, as a Muslim of the late tenth century, he would have known the old language and script. At least, again, there is no sign that he did.

As to his possible relation to the *Khwadāynāmag*, Firdawsī is separated from this Pahlavi book by many steps. There is no evidence that he would have been using the *Khwadāynāmag* in the original language or in Arabic translation, so the only way the *Khwadāynāmag* could have influenced Firdawsī's epic is through the following chain: Firdawsī used as his main, though not sole, source the *Prose Shāhnāme*, which in its turn used a variety of sources in a variety of languages. Some of these sources were in Pahlavi and one of them may have been, and probably was, the *Khwadāynāmag*.

In practice, this means that Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* is a poor representative of the *Khwadāynāmag* and there is no reason to assume that the contents of the *Shāhnāme* could give us any clear idea of the contents of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Thus, e.g., we can see that it was the Pahlavi *Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr* through its Classical Persian translation in the *Prose Shāhnāme*, not the *Khwadāynāmag* in any language, that provided Firdawsī with the story of the founding of the Sasanian dynasty (cf. Chapter 4.6).

Although undoubtedly one of the most valuable jewels of Persian literature, for *Khwadāynāmag* studies Firdawsī's epic has been a cause of much confusion. In a sense, there may well be a line from the *Khwadāynāmag* to Firdawsī, but this is buried under several influxes of other materials and there is no direct contact between Firdawsī and the Middle Persian text written almost half a millennium before him.

Although overwhelmingly important in later Persian literature, especially from the twelfth century onwards, Firdawsī's epic did not take the other *Shāhnāmes*, or material deriving from them, out of the market. In fact, even late historians, such as Mīrkhwand, still base their narrative on sources which often tell the story in a way contradictory to Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* and quote other authors, including the earlier *Shāhnāmes*, as authoritative and sometimes implicitly more authoritative than Firdawsī.

Firdawsī added to his main storyline new episodes, which cannot be located in any earlier version of Persian national history. These episodes were probably

not invented by Firdawsī but were only integrated by him into an existing sto-ryline. Later epics, such as the *Garshāsbnāme* and the *Farāmarznāmes*, contin-ued the process of incorporating more material into national history.

In addition, Firdawsī versified the stories he received from the *Prose Shāhnāme* and other sources. The versification of earlier prose texts was a common practice in the tenth and eleventh centuries (and later). *Kalīla wa-Dimna* was first translated into Persian prose and then versified by Rūdakī (cf. Chapter 4.3).[73] Azraqī boasted of his ability to improve on the prose *Sindbādnāme*.[74] Daqīqī and Masʿūdī-ye Marwazī preceded Firdawsī in this ver-sification, and Asadī Ṭūsī came soon after and versified a prose *Garshāsbnāme* (see Chapter 4.1.3), to select but a few examples both before and after Firdawsī.

All these show how several epics and other books were versified based on earlier prose texts, most of which have later disappeared, just like the *Prose Shāhnāme*. It seems that it is even typical that once there were more modern versified versions, the older ones were reduced in a few centuries to insignifi-cance and later disappeared, at the latest in the Mongol disturbances.[75]

4.6   Firdawsī, al-Thaʿālibī, and Pahlavi Texts

There are some Pahlavi texts that have been preserved and are duplicated in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* and al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar*, thus providing us with a possi-bility to study how each of the authors has changed the story which they took from the *Prose Shāhnāme*. One of these is the story of chess and backgammon, *Wizārishn ī chatrang ud nihishn ī nēw-Ardashīr*.[76]

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73   It is probably this versification which Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 364/305//717, has in mind (*wa-qad nuqila hādhā l-kitāb ilā l-shiʿr*).

74   See Omidsalar (2011): 54. Cf. also the 14th-century ʿAḍud-e Yazdī, *Sindbādnāme-ye manẓūm*.

75   Later, there was also a reverse trend, the most impressive example of which may be the *Ṭūmār*, which combines several versified texts into a prosaic version, see Chapter 4.7. However, we must also keep in mind that the versification of a prose original soon be-came a topos, and not all stories about how a friend or patron asked the poet to versify an old book need be literally true and each case should be studied on its own merit.

76   Edited several times, most recently by Panaino (1999). References are to Daryaee's edi-tion (2010), which depends on Panaino's, but is perhaps more easily available. It is highly improbable that both Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī could independently have found the same text and inserted it into the same place in the story. They must have found it already in-serted within a larger compilation, the *Prose Shāhnāme*, through which they then found this and the other Pahlavi stories discussed below.

The story is told in the *Shāhnāme* VII: 314–319 in a much expanded version – as the manuscript tradition of the *Wizārishn* is unusually good for a Pahlavi text, there is no reason to speculate on the existence of a lost longer version in Pahlavi. The text of the *Wizārishn* is also very coherent and shows no signs of omissions.

The two texts have next to no identical passages, and several significant details, including the name of the Indian King, Dēbshalm, and his Vizier, Takhtarītos (Tātarītos),[77] are missing from Firdawsī's text. Likewise, there are significant changes, such as the time taken by King Khusraw's Vizier, Buzurgmihr, to solve the riddle sent by the Indian King. In the Pahlavi version, Buzurgmihr (Wuzurgmihr) waits for the expiration of the three-day deadline to show that no one else is able to solve the riddle (§§4–6). After that he seems to withdraw for one night, as the text continues by telling how the next day he returned to solve it (§9). In Firdawsī, *Shāhnāme* VII: 307, v. 2699, the deadline falls in seven days, after which Buzurgmihr (Būzurjmihr) takes a day and a night to solve the riddle (VII: 308, vv. 2712–2714).

The story is rarely found in Arabic and Persian literature. *Mujmal*, p. 60/75, seems to be the only place where the name of the Indian King, here Dābshalīm, is given, though his emissary remains anonymous.[78] Otherwise, the story is told there with minimal details, covering only a few lines. The paucity of references makes it improbable that the story would have been told in Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*, and there is no reason to assume that this text, which we know in an independent version, would at any stage have been made part of the *Khwadāynāmag* or its translation.

The story is also briefly told in al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*, pp. 622–624,[79] again with no Indian names. In this version, Khusraw immediately understands that only Buzurgmihr will be able to solve the riddle, which he does, with no deadline indicated, as if this happened straight away. Al-Thaʿālibī may have abbreviated the story, whereas Firdawsī certainly expanded it. Their basic agreement implies that the text was found in their source, the *Prose Shāhnāme*.

The second case where we are able to compare Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* with Pahlavi texts is *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* (Chapter 1.2.1), which falls within the section taken from Daqīqī.

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77   Both names have several variant readings, cf. Panaino (1999): 93–96, 101–105.

78   This raises an important question. If the name Dābshalīm was used in the *Prose Shāhnāme*, why was it dropped by both Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī? If it was not used there, how did the author of the *Mujmal* come to find it? Unfortunately, there is no ready answer to either of these questions.

79   Actually, only 14 lines of text, as the French translation takes half of the space.

The story of Zarēr is found in al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*, pp. 262–276, prefaced by an account (taken from al-Ṭabarī and other Arabic sources, pp. 256–262) which explains the origin of Zarathustra and his religion and gives a brief summary of the Zoroastrian religion. It is also found in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* v: 85–149 (written by Daqīqī; again prefaced by a narration of how Zarathustra's religion began, v: 76–85), yet again a sign that both authors are using the same source, where this addition had already been made. Firdawsī's version is substantially longer and more detailed and even al-Thaʿālibī's version is slightly longer than the Pahlavi original, which covers only 17 pages in the modern edition. The story is also briefly told in al-Ṭabari, *Taʾrīkh* I: 676–677//IV: 71–73.

Al-Thaʿālibī also explicitly refers in this passage to ṣāḥib Kitāb Shāhnāme (p. 263), which does not refer to Firdawsī's work but either to the *Prose Shāhnāme* or one of the other early *Shāhnāmes* (see Chapter 4.1). There are significant differences between al-Thaʿālibī and the *Ayādgār*. E.g., in the latter the events start with Arjāsp having heard about the conversion of Wishtāsp (§2 *ud pas Arjāsp ī Khyōnān-khwadāy azd mad kū*), whereas in al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*, p. 263, they start with Bishtāsf writing a letter to Arjāsf and calling him to Zoroastrianism. One has to note, though, that this first letter is only referred to and not quoted, which may have to be interpreted as only al-Thaʿālibī's elaboration of what the *Ayādgār* says. In *Shāhnāme* v: 85, it is a demon who informs Arjāsp about what is happening, suggesting that the latter should refuse to pay tribute to the Iranians now that they have converted.

The gist of the first letter that is quoted (*Ayādgār* §§10–12; *Ghurar*, pp. 263–264) is similar in all three sources, although there are few identical passages. One of these, though, is highly significant: in the original, Arjāsp threatens Wishtāsp that: "we will come upon you, eating (i.e., having our horses eat) the fresh (grass) and burning the dry and taking as captives from your land (all) four-legged and two-legged (beings) and put you in heavy chains and misfortune."

In the *Ghurar*, p. 264, the same passage reads: "They (my armies) will eat up the fresh and burn the dry and kill (your) men and take the women as prisoners." This, more or less, reads like a direct translation of the original. The *Shāhnāme* has no clear parallel to this, although the letter ends with threats to burn the palace and the land of Gushtāsp and to kill the old men not suitable for slavery while enslaving women and children (vv. 165–169), which reads like a free poetic version of the original.

The *Ghurar* and the *Shāhnāme* share some details which the original lacks. Hence, *Ghurar*, p. 263, lets Arjāsf call Zarathustra "a liar who claims that he came from Heaven" in his letter, which coincides with Firdawsī's (Daqīqī's) "he

claims to have come from Heaven" (V: 86, v. 104). This, though, is not given in this letter, but occurs in Arjāsp's words to his army before the conflict commences at the beginning of the story. Thus, it would seem that the *Prose Shāhnāme* had already added this detail, and the two sources dependent on it reflect the addition.

Whereas in the *Ghurar*, p. 264, the letter is delivered by one anonymous messenger, the *Shāhnāme* names two messengers (Bīdrafsh and Nāmkhwāst, V: 88, vv. 124–125), as does the *Ayādgār* (Wīdrafsh and Nāmkhwāst, §6). Likewise, the letter in the *Ghurar* is full of insults, whereas both the *Ayādgār* (§§10–11) and the *Shāhnāme* start in extremely polite terms (V: 88–89). As to the length of the letter, it takes only a few lines in the *Ayādgār* and the *Ghurar*, whereas the *Shāhnāme's* version is very long (V: 88–92, vv. 133–171).[80]

Similar results arise from other parts of the texts. It seems hard to avoid the following conclusions:

Both the *Ghurar* and the *Shāhnāme* go back to a source (the *Prose Shāhnāme*) which resembles the *Ayādgār* and contained a translation of the *Ayādgār* set in the frame of Persian national history. Al-Thaʿālibī has abbreviated this source by, e.g., dropping the names of the messengers, whereas Firdawsī/Daqīqī has freely rewritten the story, elaborating it with details. In passages where al-Thaʿālibī rather closely follows the *Ayādgār*, we may with good reason assume that his source, the *Prose Shāhnāme*, was also close to the original. This, furthermore, means that it is Firdawsī/Daqīqī who elaborated the text – had the *Prose Shāhnāme* contained a long and elaborate narrative, it is hard to see how al-Thaʿālibī could have come by a version which is so close to the Pahlavi original.

The battle scenes with all their details in the *Ayādgār* resemble those of the *Shāhnāme* in general, which implies that the *Shāhnāme's* ways of describing a battle are basically taken from the earlier tradition, where they already had consolidated in a rather fixed form: kings following the battle from the side, single combats, the promise of a daughter of the king and a high position to the hero who takes it upon himself to become involved in these combats, and the heroic exaggeration of the scene, where single heroes kill myriads of enemies (§§55–61, 70, etc.). There are significant details that are echoed in the

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80   In the *Shāhnāme*, elaborated letters are a common narrative feature. For letters in the
         Shāhnāme, see Ehlers (2000).

Shāhnāme's narrative, such as arrows that are specifically blessed in order to kill an enemy (§§74, 101; 92, 106).[81]

As in the case of the *Wizārishn*, it seems hard to find exact parallels between the *Ayādgār* and the *Shāhnāme*, which would make it very tenuous to claim that Daqīqī, or Firdawsī, used the original Pahlavi text. This would also leave unexplained those cases where al-Thaʿālibī and Firdawsī agree with each other but differ from the Pahlavi text.

It also seems that the *Ghurar* is not an abbreviation of the *Prose Shāhnāme* to any great extent, and the differences between the *Ghurar* and the *Shāhnāme* should, prima facie, be taken as elaborations by Firdawsī (or Daqīqī in this case).

Finally, al-Ṭabarī's version contains differences vis-à-vis all the other three texts, which implies that the source he had at his disposal may have slightly differed from the *Ayādgār* as we now have it. Some of the differences may be mere errors or radical abbreviations. Thus, e.g., Nastūr's (Bastwar's) part in the battle is glossed over[82] and it is Isfandiyār who kills Bīdrafsh,[83] while in the *Ayādgār* §§99–106 and the *Ghurar*, pp. 274–275, it is the young son of Zarēr, Bastwar, who does this deed.

Interestingly enough, the *Shāhnāme* in a way combines the two. First, Bastūr is sent by Gushtāsb to combat Bīdrafsh, and he joins the battle (V: 141, vv. 702–712). Soon after, Arjāsp notices the new hero and sends Bīdrafsh to fight him, and they meet in single combat (V: 141–142, vv. 714–723). Thus far, the *Shāhnāme* seems to be following the version of the *Ayādgār*, but al-Ṭabarī's version is also there. Inserted between vv. 702–712, 714–723, which highlight Bastūr, there is a single verse, v. 713, which reintroduces Isfandiyār ("on the other side, the hero Isfandiyār was killing countless enemies") and he suddenly returns on the scene in v. 724, where he is told about the on-going battle between Bastūr and Bīdrafsh. Isfandiyār intrudes in the combat and kills Bīdrafsh, dispossessing him not only of his head but also of the loot he had taken from Zarēr (V: 142–143, vv. 725–733). Bastūr is suddenly dropped from the narration and the reader does not hear of him until after the battle, v. 740.

The first impression would be that Firdawsī/Daqīqī has slightly rewritten the original story in order to make Isfandiyār its main hero. This may well be so: al-Thaʿālibī's evidence would seem to show that in the *Prose Shāhnāme*, it was Bastūr who killed Bīdrafsh, as in the original *Ayādgār*. However, al-Ṭabarī's

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81   Cf. especially the arrow(s) that Rustam receives that is (are) designed to kill Isfandiyār. A similar magic arrow is mentioned in the *Kārnāmag* VIII: 4.

82   Nastūr is only once generally mentioned as attending Bishtāsb.

83   As in Balʿamī, *Tārīkh*, p. 464.

extremely concise narrative causes a problem, as it, too, seems to imply that it was Isfandiyār who killed Bīdrafsh. The passage, however, is ambiguous and deserves to be quoted in full in Arabic (*Taʾrīkh* I: 677):

> *wa-shtadda dhālika ʿalā Bishtāsb fa-aḥsana l-ghināʾ ʿanhu ibnuhu Isfandiyār wa-QTL Bīdrafsh mubārazatan.*

The most unforced translation of this would be:

> This grieved Bishtāsb. His son Isfandiyār lamented him (Zarēr) in a beautiful song and (then he) killed (*qatala*) Bīdrafsh in single combat.

Changing the verb into the passive voice (*qutila*) would make the end congruous with the *Ayādgār* and the *Ghurar*, "and Bīdrafsh was killed in single combat (by someone)". Though not perhaps the most obvious choice, there is nothing to prevent this reading, as the text of al-Ṭabarī is very cursory, and he only lists the main events of the battle, telling the whole story of the *Ayādgār* in a mere 16 lines.

Leaving al-Ṭabarī aside for a while, the slaying of Bīdrafsh would clearly seem to indicate that Firdawsī/Daqīqī added Isfandiyār as the main hero of the battle, as he also otherwise has a remarkably important role in the events at Gushtāsp's time. The original narrative, where Bastwar and Spandiyād are both represented as heroes,[84] is first interrupted by a single verse, v. 713, to reintroduce Isfandiyār and then the end of the narrative is cut just before Bastūr would slay Bīdrafsh and the deed is left for Isfandiyār to accomplish. The *Ghurar* would seem to confirm that the *Prose Shāhnāme* did not as yet have this crucial change, which shows how Firdawsī/Daqīqī worked with this episode, making a major change in the story to tie this episode up with the general story line, where Isfandiyār is the central figure until he meets Rustam.

Coming back to al-Ṭabarī, it seems that instead of selecting the more natural reading (Isfandiyār killed Bīdrafsh) we should opt for the other, equally possible one (Bīdrafsh was killed [by someone]). It is slightly difficult to see how al-Ṭabarī and Firdawsī/Daqīqī could have separately made the same change – al-Ṭabarī does not make Isfandiyār a central hero in his narrative – and speculating on an early version which differed from the present *Ayādgār* is perhaps too complicated.

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84 Already in the *Ayādgār*, Spandiyād takes a somewhat more important role, as is shown by §61, where he promises to root out the Khyōn, and it is only after his words that Wishtāsp decides to take action.

Al-Ṭabarī mentions Isfandiyār's dirge for Zarēr (Zarīn), though he does not quote it. Although al-Ṭabarī is extremely concise here, the dirge is mentioned just before the passage where Bīdhrafsh is killed in single combat, so the lamentation seems to take place in the middle of the battle.

This probably echoes *Ayādgār* §§84–86, where, also in the middle of the battle, Bastwar laments the loss of his father. In al-Ṭabarī, the crucial sentence (*wa-shtadda dhālika ʿalā Bishtāsb fa-aḥsana l-ghināʾ ʿanhu ibnuhu Isfandiyār*) is open to two readings: "This grieved Bishtāsb. His [Bishtāsb's or Zarēr's] son Isfandiyār lamented him (Zarēr) in a beautiful song". In his translation, Perlmann has opted for the latter, but as Isfandiyār was Bishtāsb's son, not Zarēr's, this is clearly wrong.

In Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, when he finds the body of his father, Bastūr bursts into a short speech, where there are elements of lamentation (V: 139, vv. 681–687). One does, however, find a passage where it is Isfandiyār who, after the battle, finds the body of Zarēr and laments his death (V: 148–149, lament in vv. 782–784).[85] The lament of Isfandiyār, with its numerous vocatives in -ā, is, in fact, closer in tenor to the original.

In the *Ghurar*, no dirge is mentioned, although the description of the finding of the body of Zarēr and other nobles after the battle, p. 276, would perfectly serve as the locus where it could have been inserted. Al-Thaʿālibī often abbreviates the scenes, so this may be explained as his abbreviation. This might again indicate a certain duplication, by which Firdawsī/Daqīqī has attributed to Isfandiyār things Bastūr had done, in order to put Isfandiyār more into the focus.

Like the *Ayādgār*, *Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr* finds parallels in both Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* (VI: 138–214) and al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* (pp. 473–480). After setting the scene in general, all three works begin with dreams. In the *Kārnāmag*, Pābag has three dreams over three nights. First, he dreams of brilliant Sun shining from the head of Sāsān (I: 8). Second, he sees Sāsān on a white elephant (I: 9), and on the third night he dreams how three Fires shine out of his house (I: 10). Firdawsi, *Shāhnāme* VI: 140, gives the last two dreams, whereas al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*, p. 474, mentions the first dream and then attributes another dream to Sāsān, who has seen a ray of light (*shuʿāʿ*) coming out of him and filling the horizons with light, which either is a duplicate of the first dream or a version of the third. Whichever it is, the dream scene implies that the common source of Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī had all the three dreams, and both authors excerpted the passage in slightly different ways and also modified it freely. The dreams

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85   The laments have few verbal coincidences but their general tenor is the same.

are very concise in al-Thaʿālibī's version, but slightly longer in Firdawsī than in the *Kārnāmag*.

Al-Thaʿālibī also drops the scene of dream interpretation (*Kārnāmag* I:12–13, *Shāhnāme* VI: 141). Throughout the story, Firdawsī adds verses that are descriptive or show the emotions of the characters: thus, he, e.g., describes the coming of the chief shepherd Sāsān to Bābak's court in v. 117 (VI: 141): "The shepherd came to him with a *gilīm*, his woollen garment full of snow, his heart full of fear." This has no parallel in al-Thaʿālibī and only a very general one in the *Kārnāmag*, where, I: 18, Sāsān is given a princely garment to wear, but nothing is said about his earlier garments.

Occasionally, al-Thaʿālibī, too, adds details that are not found in the other two sources. Thus, *Ghurar*, p. 474, relates that Sāsān died soon after the birth of Ardashīr, who was (obviously for this reason) linked in genealogy to Bābak. The following letter from Ardawān to Bābak is only mentioned by al-Thaʿālibī (*Ghurar*, p. 475) whereas the version in the *Kārnāmag* II: 6–7, and the *Shāhnāme*, vv. 146–150 (VI: 143) are reasonably similar to each other, showing that it was most probably al-Thaʿālibī who decided to summarize the letter's contents in a few words.

Al-Thaʿālibī abbreviates the story considerably by cutting off episodes that are not relevant to the main story line. Thus, he narrates the escape of Ardashīr from Ardawān in a very concise form (*Ghurar*, pp. 476–478; cf. *Kārnāmag* III–IV) and ends the story with the death of Ardawān and Ardashīr's ascent to the throne (*Ghurar*, pp. 480–481; *Kārnāmag* V), before giving some scattered sayings by Ardashīr (*Ghurar*, pp. 482–484), which have no counterpart in the *Kārnāmag*. Ardashīr's other deeds and battles, told in the *Kārnāmag*, are not brought into the *Ghurar*.

Firdawsī tells all this more extensively and continues following the story where al-Thaʿālibī cuts off. Thus, he tells of Ardashīr's battles against the Kurds (*Shāhnāme* VI: 166–169; *Kārnāmag* VI) and Kirm-e Haftuwād and Mihrak-e Nūshzād (*Shāhnāme* VI: 170–189; *Kārnāmag* VII–IX). The incident with the daughter of Ardawān and the birth of Shāpūr comes in *Shāhnāme* VI: 194–204 (*Kārnamag* X–XI), followed by the enquiry of the Indian sages (*Shāhnāme* VI: 204–207; *Kārnāmag* XII), and ending in the story of Shāpūr and the daughter of Mihrak and the birth of Hormizd (*Shāhnāme* VI: 207–214; *Kārnāmag* XIII–XIV).

Throughout the text, Firdawsī freely embellishes the narrative and invents details, but the main story line clearly follows the *Kārnāmag*, which is, without doubt, the ultimate source for much of the story of Ardashīr, through the *Prose Shāhnāme*.

Although Firdawsī did not include the short *Husraw ud rēdag-ē* in his *Shāhnāme*, al-Thaʿālibī did take it into his *Ghurar*, which strongly suggests that the story was found in the *Prose Shāhnāme* and was excluded by Firdawsī, presumably because it does not tie up with any action and he may have considered it superfluous. Although the text is not found in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, a comparison of the Pahlavi original with the *Ghurar* may throw more light on the way in which Pahlavi originals changed in the hands of the authors of the *Prose Shāhnāme* and/or al-Thaʿālibī, which further helps us to understand what Firdawsī may have done with the same material.

Al-Thaʿālibī has situated the story in the reign of Khusraw Abarwīz, not Khusraw Anōshagruwān, but the mistake is understandable as the king is better identified in the Pahlavi text only at the end, §125 (*Husraw ī shāhān shāh ī Kawādān* "the Great King Khusraw, son of Kawād"), which al-Thaʿālibī or his source did not include in his version.

The Pahlavi text begins with identifying the page as the main character (§1 "There was a page named Wāspuhr from Ērān-winnārd-Kawād ..."). Al-Thaʿālibī presents the text as part of the wonders of King Khusraw Abarwīz, switching the focus from the page to the King and, thus, tying it up with the general flow of Persian history, making an independent text part of a greater, unified narrative. The Pahlavi text begins, after the shortest of introductions (§§1–2), with a lengthy speech by the page (§§3–18), in which he tells of his highly educated background and the subsequent death and destruction of his family. Al-Thaʿālibī resumes the contents of this speech in a mere two lines of third-person narrative introducing the page in very general terms only (*Ghurar*, pp. 705–706) and then lets the King start the action by asking the page about which dishes are the best, as well as most suitable and enjoyable.

The two texts go on with the King asking which of various luxurious things is the best and the page answering each question to the King's satisfaction. The general similarity of the texts is obvious but in details they have a lot of variation. This may primarily be due to the problems involved in the translation of this difficult Pahlavi text, full of names of luxury items and rare vocabulary which may not have been too well understood in the tenth century (and which still defy the attempts of contemporary scholars). In addition, al-Thaʿālabī or his source has also abbreviated the text by, e.g., dropping the standard polite formula *anōshag bawēd* "may you be immortal" used by the page in his answers. This may well be a stylistic solution, as the repetitive style of the Pahlavi story may have been felt to be too archaic for contemporary taste.

Al-Thaʿālibī ends the story with the page answering the King's question about the most beautiful and desirable woman, after which the King rewards him with 12,000 *mithqāls* of silver, the exact amount that is given to him in

the Pahlavi text, too (§105). The Pahlavi texts continues with another episode (§§105–124) where the advice given by the page to the King is tested and the page is ordered to catch and later kill two lions, which he promptly does, although tempted by a woman along the road. At the end, the page is created a *marzbān* of a great province. Like the beginning, the end focuses on the page, not the King, which may again explain why al-Thaʿālibī or his source has dropped it.

All four Pahlavi texts that we have discussed, *Wizārishn ī chatrang*, *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, *Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr*, and *Husraw ud rēdag-ē*, have been variously modified before they found their way into Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* and al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar*. The latter two differ from the Pahlavi texts in various ways, each being sometimes closer to the original than the other, which strongly implies that whatever changes the *Prose Shāhnāme* had made to the texts, both Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī took further liberties with it. This is by no means surprising but in fact tallies well with what we know about contemporary strategies of translation and transmission (Chapter 2.4). In other cases, Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī agree with each other, but differ from the preserved Pahlavi original. It is always possible that the Pahlavi texts we have may have undergone changes after they were used for the *Prose Shāhnāme*, but it seems more probable that the compilers of the *Prose Shāhnāme* also worked in a similar fashion as Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī, changing the text to their liking to create a coherent narrative covering the whole of Persian history, which explains why al-Thaʿālibī and Firdawsī sometimes agree with each other but disagree with the Pahlavi originals.

4.7   *Nāme* Literature

Nāme literature is extensive and the Sistanian part of it has been well described by van Zutphen in a recent book (2014).[86] Usually the later epics, *nāmes*, are seen as epigonal literature composed after, and inspired by, Firdawsī's magisterial epic.[87] The first to have done so seems to be the anonymous author of the *Mujmal*, who calls, p. 2/2, Firdawsī's work *aṣlī* "root; origin" and the other *nāmes shuʿbahā* "branches".

There is little doubt that Firdawsī did impress many of the authors of these epics; Asadī Ṭūsī (de Blois 1992–97: 83–90) mentions him in his *Garshāsbnāme*

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86   See also Gazerani (2013) and (2016), especially pp. 197–208.

87   I exclude from the genre the literary epics of well-known authors written on the basis of established written originals, such as Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāme*.

(written 458/1068) with admiration, and was, in fact, one of the first to do so. Likewise, it seems clear that Firdawsī was known even to those later authors who did not mention him by name. Thus, one finds echoes of his famous verse, quoted already by Niẓāmī-ye ʿArūḍī in his celebrated *Chahār maqāle*, p. 82, *man o-gurz-o maydān-o Afrāsiyāb*, in many *nāmes*, including Asadī's *Garshāsbnāme*, p. 72 (v. 57): *man o-azhdahā o-kuh o-gurz o-tīr*.[88]

Likewise, Firdawsī must have consolidated the use of *mutaqārib* for epics, although he was not the first to use the metre which may well have dominated the scene before him (cf. Chapters 4.1.1 and 4.1.4).

However, Firdawsī did not single-handedly create the genre of epic narratives. We have already seen that *Shāhnāmes*, both in verse and prose, were in vogue since the mid-tenth century, and we also know that some epics, such as Asadī's *Garshāsbnāme*, versified after Firdawsī, go back to prose versions before him. Others, though, may well have been based on minor characters of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* and be without predecessors, i.e., being the fiction of the author with perhaps some (folk?) narratives to inspire them. Thus, the late epic known by the name of *Bānū-Gushaspnāme* is clearly a mix of Firdawsian elements, made popular also by the other *nāmes*, and there need not be any independent story behind this epic.[89]

The early existence of prose epic tales of the Sistanians should also make us wary of seeing all the other epics as epigones of Firdawsī. In time, Firdawsī's influence became enormous, but the fact remains that many prose tales either preceded him or were written at about the same time as he wrote his *Shāhnāme*, much before it had its enormous influence on Persian literature. Without underestimating Firdawsī's influence, it seems safe to say that his overwhelming influence on the early Sistanian epics has been exaggerated and we should see many of these epics, not as epigones of Firdawsī, but as deriving from the same interest in Persian national history that led to the surge of various *Shāhnāmes* before Firdawsī.

Asadī's *Garshāsbnāme* shows that the Sistanian and royal histories had by Asadī's time been linked together, but unfortunately we cannot know whether this was the case already in the book of *Garshāsb* he worked on, or whether this was an element added by Asadī, possibly under Firdawsī's influence. The

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88   Cf. also p. 110, v. 80: *man o-dasht-e nāward o-īn Zāwulī*. Cf. also, e.g., *ʿAlīnāme*, p. 9: *man o-to kunūn o-Kitāb-e Khudāy*.

89   The *Bānū-Gushaspnāme* actually consists of two separate parts. The first, vv. 1–801 is a mix of topoi from *nāme* literature, while the latter part, vv. 802–1032, is a more creative and enjoyable piece of literature.

kings of this epic, Ḍaḥḥāk and Ferīdūn, have a minor role to play and they may well have been added by Asadī as a framework for independent episodes and as a way to tie the whole story up with Persian national history in general.

Asadī's *Garshāsbnāme* also shows that the author had other sources of inspiration besides Firdawsī and the epic tradition of Iran. The frequent narratives of wonders in India, China, Maghrib, and elsewhere find their closest parallels in the *Alexander Romance*, travellers' stories, and the stories that later found their way into the *Arabian Nights*.[90]

Most of the later epics centre on the Sistanians. As we have seen and will see in Chapter 5.1, the *Khwadāynāmag* clearly included little, if any, material on them, which shows that the *nāmes* do not derive from the *Khwadāynāmag*, but from a separate, epic tradition. It is also conspicuous that we do not have information on any Arabic translations of these texts, other than those related to Rustam. The reason is not that they contained supernatural elements, although many serious historians may have avoided *khurāfāt*. The case of many other translated texts, such as *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and *Hazār afsāne*, clearly show that such stories could be and were translated into Arabic. This might imply that they did not yet exist, at least not in a written form, at the heyday of the translation movement from the mid-eighth century onward. One has to remember, though, that the huge majority of what was translated into Arabic between 750 and 1000 were scientific or philosophical texts. Historiography and entertainment literature formed a tiny minority.

We have little information of their existence as Pahlavi texts and one is well advised not to speculate on non-existant Pahlavi texts, as the case of the *Alexander Romance* shows (Chapter 2.3). It is also curious that none of those Sistanian stories that we know to have been translated into Arabic (Chapter 2.2.1) survives in a *nāme* form outside Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. This may imply that the written tradition of the *nāmes* does not go back very far, but that the genre developed only later and the early texts, such as *Sīrat Isfandiyār*, were not *nāmes* and did not live on within the tradition. In fact, we have evidence of the existence of *nāmes* only from the late tenth century onward.

We also know that some (prose) epics existed in the tenth/early eleventh century in written form and, obviously, in Classical Persian, and these formed the immediate source for the writers of the *nāmes*, at least in some cases. In

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90   Marzolph (2017) has studied one such story found in *Mujmal*, pp. 386–391/501–507, which shows that wondrous travel stories were circulating in Persian at least from the eleventh century onward and there is no reason to assume that they were a newcomer, seeing that *Hazār afsāne* had already contained wonderful stories (although we cannot say with certainty whether they included travel stories).

others, too, one might speculate that most of the *nāmes* were versifications of existing Classical Persian prose stories, while some, such as the *Bānū-Gushaspnāme*, may have been completely fictional, with no source other than some hints in Firdawsī's epics or the other *nāmes*.

In some cases, the Islamic origin of the *nāmes* is clear. Thus, in the *Rustamnāme*, it is ʿAlī who, in fact, is the main character of the story and Rustam is only a dummy to show ʿAlī's superiority in comparison to the Sistanian hero.[91] The *Mujmal* also shows that at least the *Pīrūznāme* contained already before 520/1126, the year of the composition of the *Mujmal*, materials that must be of Islamic origin and must have either been composed or at least substantially modified in Islamic times (p. 54/67: Shāpūr had heard a prophecy about a new prophet who would end Zoroastrianism and marched against Mecca). Likewise, we find elements of synchronization in, e.g., Asadī, *Garshāsbnāme*, p. 58, v. 283 (*chunān dān ke Hūd andar ān rūzgār / payambar bud az Dāvar-e kirdigār*), a feature which we know quite well from the historical tradition since, at least, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ.

There is no evidence that the earliest epic stories would have been sung by storytellers. As far as we know, prose narratives in a written form, in circulation at the latest in the eleventh century, preceded the versified epics. The prose narratives most probably go further back in time but there is no evidence to show that the earlier texts would have been in verse or would have been sung.[92] An informed guess would be that they, or at least parts of them, had lived as orally narrated prose stories.

In a few cases, we know the name of the author of a *nāme*, but mostly the *nāmes* are anonymous pieces, and some, especially the shorter ones, may first have been inserted into a manuscript of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* before starting a life of their own.[93] In the *Mujmal*, p. 45/54, there is a report that it was Zāl himself who, when taken prisoner by Bahman, wrote a series of books on the members of his family, i.e., the Sistanian *nāmes*. This might be taken as an indication that the genre was already mainly anonymous at the time.

Some information on the early history of the *nāmes* comes from a rather surprising source. Shahmardān ibn abī l-Khayr wrote an encyclopaedia of popular

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91   Several Shiite sources see Rustam as a competitor of ʿAlī, promoted by Sunnites in order to undermine ʿAlī's position (see Shahbazi 1991: 64).

92   The only exception is *Ayādgār ī Zarērān*, which shows traces of Parthian verse form, but this text had been Pahlavized and had lost its original verse structure long before the later *nāmes* were composed and its subject matter was not taken up by any *nāme* author.

93   Van Zutphen (2014): 62–144.

science, *Nuz'hatnāme*, around 1100.[94] In this book, the author inserts a rather incongruous chapter (pp. 319–344) on historical matters, discussed under the title *Zamān*, "Time". The chapter concentrates on the Sistanian heroes Rustam and Farāmarz, whereas Persian kings have next to no role and the story is not taken to historical times. Two legendary kings (Manūchihr, Gushtāsb) are synchronized with prophets.

The chapter contains five different episodes in the life of Rustam (killing a mad elephant as a child; taking revenge for the death of Narīmān; bringing Kay Qubād from the Alburz to Iṣṭakhr and setting him on the throne; the first attempt to capture Afrāsiyāb; bringing Kay Khusraw from Turkistān and taking revenge for Siyāwush, pp. 319–329). The chapter then goes on to narrate some of the adventures of Rustam and his son Farāmarz, leading to the capture and execution of Afrāsiyāb and including the episode of Āghush-e Wahādān (pp. 329–340). Finally, some partly negative evaluations are given of Rustam's manners, including a corrective to the well-known story of how Isfandiyār was killed. Isfandiyār was not killed by Rustam but either by a mortar dropping on him or a snake biting him,[95] after which there is an additional story, a very brief version of Rustam and Suhrāb (pp. 341–342). Later, the author also mentions the episode of the White Demon (p. 343), which either shows that he knew Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* or that these orphan stories do go back to earlier written sources.

Shahmardān, *Nuz'hatnāme*, p. 342, mentions three authors who may well have been (among) his sources, although he does not explicitly say so. Abū l-Mu'ayyad al-Balkhī (Chapter 4.1.3) is just briefly mentioned, but the other two authors receive more attention. Shahmardān tells us that Rustam-e Lārijānī had composed a book which was to stretch from Gayōmard until the reign of the Būyid Shams al-Dawla Abū Ṭāhir (r. 387–412/997–1021). Shahmardān had seen some volumes of this book and, based on them, supposed the whole to be around 500 *kurrāses*. Otherwise, this book is not described in more detail.

The third author, Pīrūzān, was the teacher of the Kākūyid Shams al-Malik Farāmarz ibn ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla (r. 433–443/1041–1051) and is said to have known both Pahlavi and Persian. Farāmarz had ordered him to translate text(s) (not further identified) from Pahlavi into Persian. The resulting volumes Shahmardān managed to get, and they made a total of between 1,500 and 2,000 pages (*waraq*). These Shahmardān abbreviated, excluding stories that were fantastic but including those that could be given an allegorical or symbolical

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94 Cf. van Zutphen (2014): 252–258. Despite its title, the book does not belong to the genre of *nāmes*.

95 Cf. *Tawārīkh-e Shaykh Uways*, p. 61.

meaning, such as the story of Ḍaḥḥāk and the snakes. Shahmardān goes on to list some such legendary stories (*Nuz'hatnāme*, pp. 342–344) and mentions a *Shāhnāme* in passing, possibly meaning Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. There is no indication that Pīrūzān's work would have continued to cover the historical periods of Persian national history, although this cannot be excluded.

Shahmardān claims that he used this source, but if so, he either distilled a mere 25 pages out of this huge collection or wrote another, unknown, and later lost book, where this material was more extensively used. In either case, it is noteworthy that Shahmardān has a lot to tell about the Sistanians but nothing about the kings, except where they tangentially meet the Sistanians. Rustam-e Lārijānī's book should have continued the history up to contemporary times, but we know nothing about his sources and the book may well have been a mere continuation of some earlier historical book, such as the *Prose Shāhnāme*. Pīrūzān's patrons, as van Zutphen points out (2014: 257–258), bore names such as Rustam, Garshāsb, and Farāmarz, which implies that they were particularly interested in the Sistanian heroes. Based on both this and the contents of Shahmardān's book, it seems very probable that Pīrūzān's work heavily centred on the Sistanian heroes and may have completely ignored the kings and their history. If so, his work may have been a central piece in the development of *nāme* literature.

An intriguing question is whether Pīrūzān really derived all of the 2,000 or so pages of texts from Pahlavi sources or whether, in fact, he compiled his book largely from oral sources and/or the early *nāme* literature, and merely pretended that he found all this in prestigious Pahlavi books. Likewise, Firdawsī's references to an ancient "Pahlavi" (i.e., heroic; of hoary antiquity) book could easily be misunderstood as referring to books written in Pahlavi. Such Pahlavi sources on the Sistanians are otherwise completely unknown and, as has been pointed out in Chapter 2.2, all the existing evidence points to the secular Pahlavi texts having been of a rather limited size. Sources that would total up to 2,000 pages in translation would be anomalous. The evidence we have does not allow us to resolve this question. It seems somewhat hasty to hypothesize on the existence of a veritable library of Pahlavi Sistanian texts, against other, admittedly circumstantial evidence, merely on the basis of a short mention in Shahmardān's book, describing a lost book of Pīrūzān, completely unknown from any other sources. On the other hand, this piece of evidence cannot be brushed aside, either, so the question must remain open. What is noteworthy in this context, though, is that there is no indication that Pīrūzān's book would have contained anything on the Persian kings and Persian national history, so this lost book has little bearing on the question of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

The *ṭūmār* texts, covering the story of the *Shāhnāme* and some other *nāmes*, are usually seen as popular storytellers' aide-mémoires. This may in many cases be so, but the collection and harmonization of a huge repertoire of *nāmes* into a single, continuous narrative is also a tour-de-force which should not be looked down on. Although the question cannot be studied in the present context, I would yet like to raise the question whether at least some of the *ṭūmārs* could actually go back to a rather early period and might even retain vestiges of early versions of the stories, whether by Pīrūzān or by others. At least the text edited as *Ṭūmār-e naqqālī-ye Shāhnāme* by Āydinlū is a valuable summary of a number of epics and would merit a close study of its own, of both its narrative structure and its use of sources, besides Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* and Asadī's *Garshāsbnāme*, both openly referred to at the beginning of the story as its sources (p. 155).

Two Case Studies

Until now we have mainly been studying sources that tell us about the *Khwadāynāmag* and its translations. This chapter will focus on the material that we find, or that we do not find, in those of our sources that should be dependent on the *Khwadāynāmag* among other sources (Chapter 5.1). At the other end of the tradition, it will try to evaluate, based on one case study, how stories developed during the transmission process (Chapter 5.2).

5.1   Rustam in Arabic and Persian Literature

The greatest hero of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, Rustam, is sparsely documented from pre-and early Islamic times,[1] but there can be little serious doubt as to his importance in at least the East Iranian world. From the tenth century onwards he became in a short time a national hero, as not only shown by Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, and its tenth-century sources, but also by the proliferating genre of later epics, largely centred on Rustam and the other Sistanian heroes, much of the material going back to times before Firdawsī (see Chapter 4.7).[2] The scarcity of extant Middle Persian references to Rustam[3] is clearly due to the

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1   See Sims-Williams (1976): 54–61, for a Sogdian epic fragment on a fight of demons against Rustam and Rakhsh (Rwstmy, Rghshy). For the murals in the so-called Rustam Room, see Marshak (2002): 25–108, who dates (pp. 30–31) the Pendjikent murals to 700–740 AD. Rustam is only mentioned once in Moses Khorenatsi, *History*, p. 141, and even there only in a passing comparison to a similar figure in Armenian tradition, Angl. This does *not* speak for his fame in the West. Despite this being only one, passing mention, Yamamoto (2003): 57, sees it as a mark of the spreading of his tales to the West, Shahbazi (1991): 66, refers to the tales' popularity in Armenia and the West, and Barthold (1944): 137 and n. 4, even speaks of stories that are not known from the later epic of Firdawsī. All this stretches to breaking point the evidence of a single comparison of Angl to Rustam, who "had the strength of 120 elephants". Also in early Georgian literature, Rustam seems to have been little known, although many characters from the *Khwadāynāmag* did find their way into early Georgian historical texts, cf. Rapp (2014): 169–260.

2   See van Zutphen (2014): 2–3. There is little relevant material in Gazerani (2016).

3   According to Christensen (1931): 131–132 (see also van Zutphen 2014: 32, n. 55), the appearance of Rustam and Dastān (Zāl) in the Iranian *Bundahishn* (Anklesaria 1956: 275, 301) is due to later additions that took place under the influence of the national epic.

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lack of preserved sources in Pahlavi and/or the fact that Rustam stories continued to circulate in oral transmission as part of the repertoire of storytellers (cf. Chapter 1.4).

Most of the stories of Rustam are linked to Persian national history and are, at least tangentially, related to the material in the *Khwadāynāmag*. As Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation has been lost, its contents have to be deduced from later quotations and references and Arabic and Classical Persian sources. One of the open questions is whether and to what extent Rustam and the other Sistanians had a place in the *Khwadāynāmag*. Another question is when have the two traditions been joined together to form one continuous narrative. These two questions will be discussed in this chapter.

Although Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation has later disappeared, it was influential in its own time and several centuries thereafter. In order to discuss whether it contained material on Rustam, we have to go through early Arabic sources, or sources that contain early material. Firdawsī became influential in Iran especially in the twelfth century, and also Arabic works written later than that are always open to doubt as to whether or not they have been influenced by material derived directly or indirectly from Firdawsī's work. Sources earlier than this, in both Arabic and Classical Persian, mainly derive their material from the now lost earlier sources and often differ in details from Firdawsī. Arabic and Persian historical works remained largely untouched by the epic tradition even later, though, and, especially on the Arabic side, Firdawsī's influence was limited, despite his overwhelming influence on Persian belles lettres from the twelfth century onward. Arabic sources usually circulate material derived from earlier historical works and show only limited marks of borrowings from Firdawsī's epic, presumably through Classical Persian historical works. On the Persian side, Firdawsī's influence is stronger, but here, too, many sources prefer the "historical" tradition to Firdawsī's "epic" tradition.[4]

When going through first-millennium Arabic texts, the first thing that strikes one is how rarely Rustam is mentioned and how little the Arabs seem to have known about him. The list of Arabic sources that completely ignore Rustam is long. To take but a few examples, al-Jāḥiẓ, who is usually well informed about everything, does not even mention him in his main works (*Bayān*; *Ḥayawān*; *Rasāʾil*), and we search in vain for him in al-Iṣfahānī's *Kitāb al-Aghānī*. Likewise, Ibn Qutayba, mentions him neither in his *Maʿārif*, which contains a chapter on Persian kings (pp. 652–667), deriving its material from *kutub siyar mulūk*

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4   It should be pointed out, though, that there is no clear borderline between the two traditions, "historical" and "epic". The clear division between history and belles-lettres is modern, not Mediaeval.

al-ʿajam, nor in the *ʿUyūn*, and al-Thaʿālibī is equally ignorant of him in his *Thimār* and has little to say about him in his other works. In his *Iʿjāz*, pp. 32–33, there are some maxims attributed to Rustam (and others to Zāl), but one can hardly recognize Firdawsī's Rustam from these rather stereotyped sayings that have nothing heroic in them.[5] Ibn Ḥamdūn, *Tadhkira* I: 278 (no. 733), only gives a brief saying by an unidentified Rustam ("when you want to be obeyed, ask what can be done" *idhā aradta an tuṭāʿ fa-sal mā yustaṭāʿ*). Al-Zamakhsharī, *Rabīʿ* II: 792, gives the same saying, but attributes it to Isfandiyār.[6] Al-Thaʿālibī's *Iʿjāz*, p. 33, gives us a clue as to how this confusion was generated: there the saying is implicitly attributed to Rustam, who has been identified as the speaker of the previous saying and who gives this piece of advice to Isfandiyār (*wa-qāla* [i.e., Rustam] *li-Isfandiyār*).

When one does encounter the name Rustam, it is usually the general of al-Qādisiyya who is being referred to. Zāl, Sām, and the other members of the Sistanian family are equally unknown in these sources. On the Christian Arabic side, the situation is similar: e.g., Eutychius does not even mention the name Rustam.

It is often, but erroneously, stated that Rustam and his deeds were already known on the Arabian Peninsula in the early seventh century and that stories about him were brought there by al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith, who had learned them in al-Ḥīra.[7] In modern studies, Theodor Nöldeke (1920): 11, n. 5, seems to be the first to mention this, twice referring to Ibn Hishām's (d. 218/833) *Sīrat rasūl Allāh*. In *Sīra* I: 246, Ibn Hishām tells that al-Naḍr ibn al-Ḥārith learned in al-Ḥīra tales of Persian kings and "*aḥādīth Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*". In *Sīra* I: 294, he says that al-Naḍr related stories about the mighty Rustam and Isfandiyār (*wa-ḥaddathahum ʿan Rustam al-Sindīd* – read: *al-shadīd – wa-ʿan Isfandiyār*) and the kings of Persia.[8]

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5   It should be remembered that he is not necessarily the same person as the author of the *Ghurar*. In this chapter, the *Ghurar* will be studied after the other Arabic sources, for reasons that will become clear later on. For the *Ghurar* in general, see Chapter 4.4.

6   In addition, he mentions an unidentified Rustam in *Rabīʿ* II: 525.

7   Cf., e.g., Barthold (1944): 137, n. 4; Yamamoto (2003): 56, 74; Omidsalar (2011): 40–44. Omidsalar collects an impressive number of attestations for this story, but as they are all interdependent they only show that the story circulated widely in *sīra* and *tafsīr* literature. For al-Ḥīra, see Toral-Niehoff (2014). For the later use of al-Naḍr and the story of him narrating stories of Rustam, see also Savant (2013): 173–177.

8   See also Toorawa (2005): 80 (and n. 80 on p. 161). The idea (of F. Bedrehi, cf. Toorawa, n. 80) that al-Naḍr would refer to the stories of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* is mere speculation and based on no evidence whatsoever.

In Nöldeke's time, Ibn Hishām's *Sīra* was mainly taken at face value, miracles excluded. Over the last few decades, it has become increasingly clear that historians' reports on early Islam and the life of the Prophet should not be taken as faithfully reflecting the conditions of the early seventh century, but should be considered products of their authors' time or, at most, of the eighth century.[9] Hence, the passages only prove the obvious, namely that Arab scholars of the late eighth, early ninth century knew about Rustam.

How vaguely even later authors probably did this is shown by al-Suhaylī's (d. 581/1185) commentary on Ibn Hishām's *Sīra*, *al-Rawḍ al-unuf*. The main passage on Rustam comes in *Rawḍ* III: 157–160, commenting on Ibn Hishām's mention of al-Naḍr. In III: 158, al-Suhaylī writes: "Rustam, who is called the Lord of Banū *Dastān,[10] was a Turkish (sic) king". Some lines later he adds: "There is also another Rustam who has earlier been mentioned in the stories about Kay Qubād. He lived before the time of Solomon. After Kay Qubād, Rustam was Vizier to his son Kay Qāwūs". A page later he has this to say (III: 159–160): "and I do not know whether the Rustam whom (sic) Isfandiyādh killed was the same as the Rustam who accompanied Kay Qāwūs, or someone else (… *wa-lā adrī hal Rustam alladhī qatalahu Isfandiyādh*[11] *huwa Rustam ṣāḥib Kay Qāwūs am ghayruhu*), but it would seem that he was not, because the period between Kay Qāwūs and Kay Yastāsb[12] is very long. We have already mentioned that he was a Turk". If anything, these passages show how *ignorant* the writer was about Rustam.

In Qurʾānic commentaries, Q 31: 6 is understood to refer to this al-Naḍr, and more or less the same scanty information is given in almost all *tafsīrs*. In some, such as that of al-Bayḍāwī (late seventh/thirteenth century) (*Anwār* IV: 150), it is further stated that al-Naḍr found the story of Rustam and Isfandiyār and *bought* it. While seemingly an interesting reference to the story existing in a buyable, and hence written, form, the verb is unfortunately derived from the formulation of the Qurʾān, which is here taken in a literal sense: *wa-min al-nāsi man yashtarī lahwa l-ḥadīth* (literally: "among people there are some

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9   Passages from Ibn Isḥāq represent the late eighth century, the additions of Ibn Hishām the early ninth century.

10   The edition reads Raysān. The error may have been made by the copyist or even the editor.

11   Sic. This could, though, easily be emended to *qatala*[[*hu*]] *Isfandiyādh*. A similar sentence, also emendable, occurs on p. 158.

12   A form (for Bishtāsb) commonly used by Arab historians, and not to be taken as a mere scribal error.

who *buy* diverting stories").[13] The verb is merely copied from the Qurʾān into al-Bayḍāwī's narrative and the exegetical tradition in general.

It should be emphasized that the fact that Ibn Hishām and the authors of the commentaries knew Rustam and that they connected him to al-Naḍr and the *asāṭīr al-awwalīn* only shows that they were aware that there were *some* stories about Rustam circulating in Persian lore. It does not follow that they would have known these stories in any detail.[14] That Rustam was the hero of long stories of the Persians was common knowledge by the end of the eighth century, cf. Chapter 2.2.1 and below.

When we come to historical sources, we find some information about Rustam, but it is still meagre and sometimes disquietingly different from what we might expect on the basis of Firdawsī.

In his *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, al-Dīnawarī (d. not later than 290/902–3) first, p. 6, mentions that the Indian King Porus (familiar from the *Alexander Romance* and other Alexander narratives)[15] and, according to some, Rustam were descended from Ghānim ibn ʿAlwān. On pp. 27–28, he tells that Rustam was the governor of Sistan and Khurasan for Bishtāsb. He was in the service of Kay Qubād and grew furious because Bishtāsb had converted to Zarathustra's (new) religion and for this reason rebelled. Bishtāsb sent his son Isfandiyādh against him. Isfandiyādh challenged Rustam but was killed by him, and "Persians tell a lot about this" (*fa-yaqūlu l-ʿajam fī dhālika qawlan kathīran*). The author adds that Rustam died soon after, but gives no details concerning his death. On p. 29, he tells that later Bahman killed those he could of his offspring and family, but again gives no names. Much later, p. 82 (in the story of Bahrām Chūbīn), he lets Bahrām briefly refer to Rustam having saved Qābūs when the latter was imprisoned, but does not mention his role in extracting revenge on Siyāwush's account. This is all this historian from Dīnawar, in Western Iran, has to tell about Rustam.

Except for a few stray notes on Rustam, al-Dīnawarī concentrates on the battle between Rustam and Isfandiyār, which is typical of most early Arabic historians, as will be seen. Another theme that should be pointed out is the conversion of Bishtāsb to Zoroastrianism, contrasted with Rustam's refusal to leave his ancestral religion, an event used to explain the falling out of Bishtāsb and Rustam. Later Arabic and Classical Persian sources often elaborate on

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13   *Ishtarā* is mostly used in the Qurʾān in a figurative sense (e.g., *alladhīna shtaraw-u l-ḍalālata bi'l-hudā* "those who *prefer* erring to guidance" Q 2:16).

14   The same goes for the rare mentions of Rustam in Umayyad poetry, cf. Nöldeke (1920): 11 (al-Akhṭal).

15   For Porus, see Aerts-Doulfikar (2010), Index.

this and, either implicitly or explicitly, identify this ancestral religion with monotheism.[16]

The anonymous *Nihāyat al-arab* seems to share the same sources with al-Dīnawarī's *Akhbār*, but the mutual relations of the two are still unclear.[17] It is evident, however, that they represent traditions that circulated in Arabic before al-Ṭabarī, who, in general, derives much material from the same tradition.

The *Nihāya* shows that its author was intimately familiar with the battle between Rustam and Isfandiyār. On p. 26, he briefly mentions that Rustam the Mighty (text: *RQTM al-Shadīd*) fought against Isfandiyār, but on pp. 82–85, he elaborates on this under the heading *Ḥadīth Rustam wa-Isfandiyār* "The Story of Rustam and Isfandiyār", given on the purported authority of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ.[18] The story starts with a clear indication of source, put in the mouth of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ: "I found in/among the books of the Persians (the story of) the war between Rustam and Isfandiyār" (*wajadtu fī kutub al-ʿajam ḥarb Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*), as if this were a separate story, as it probably was, cf. Chapter 2.2.1. It should be noted that "the books of the Persians" is an often-used formulation and does not imply that the source was in Classical or Middle Persian. More probably, the expression here refers to books in Arabic by Persian authors. There is no indication that the author would have known Persian.

The story is related in a more extensive form than in al-Dīnawarī's version, but in a similar fashion. According to this version, some learned Persians claim that Rustam lived in Sistan and was descended from Ṭasm ibn Nūḥ, while others (still Persians?) say that his mother was a Ṭasmī, but his father descended from Nimrod. Bishtāsf converted to Zarathustra's religion. Earlier he had been imprisoned by a king descended from Ḥām and had been freed by Rustam. Bishtāsf had given Rustam Khurasan and Sistan to rule and had crowned him. But when Rustam heard about the conversion, he became furious and rebelled. Bishtāsf sent his son Isfandiyār against Rustam. Rustam told

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16   For others, though, Zarathustra was a prophet (e.g., al-Maqdisī, *Badʾ* III: 149, cf. Hāmeen-Anttila 2012: 154–155). Both attitudes put Iranian national ideology within an Islamic framework, the former by identifying the first Persians as monotheists, the latter by identifying Zoroastrians as such. The third option for Persians fell outside the framework of Islam, viz. denying Islam as God's religion. This was not only the way Zoroastrians often put it, but also what many sectarian rebels opted for. According to many historians, including al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1441), *Khabar* §8, it was Noah who brought monotheism to the Persians, whereas Bīwarāsf (in other sources Būdāsf, i.e., Buddha) brought Ḥanīfism, or Ṣābianism, to them.

17   See Grignaschi (1969), (1973).

18   Also Jackson Bonner (2015): 41, doubts the attribution of this story to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ.

him that he would fight until Bishtāsf left Zoroastrianism.[19] They fought for 40 days. Rustam made a trick and led his army, against the agreement, into battle against Isfandiyār's army, but to no avail. Again they fought a duel, in which Isfandiyār shot a thousand arrows at Rustam and all hit their mark. Isfandiyār called to him and suggested they stop for that day.

His horse Rakhsh could not take him over a deep river, so Rustam dismounted. Back home, he attended to his wounds and called for a *kāhin*. The *kāhin* predicted that Rustam would kill Isfandiyār, but would himself die soon thereafter. He further told that he would be able to kill Isfandiyār with arrows made of the tamarisk which grew on the island of Kāzarūn. Rustam sent a message to Isfandiyār and asked for a longer respite. Isfandiyār consented to this, and Rustam sailed to an island near Ṭabaristān and got the wood for his arrows. (There is no mention of Sīmurgh, usually called al-ʿAnqāʾ in Arabic sources,[20] in the story, nor in the whole book). On the following day Rustam shot three arrows and killed Isfandiyār, whose army returned to report to Bishtāsf. The king died of sorrow, and Bahman ascended the throne. Soon after Rustam had a hunting accident and died in a pit, but it is also said that he died of the wounds caused by Isfandiyār. The killing of his family is not mentioned.

These two sources lead us to the greatest historian of the first millennium, al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923). The information we receive about Rustam is marginal and strictly centred on the episode of Rustam and Siyāwukhsh.[21] *Taʾrīkh* I: 598–604//IV: 2–7, is the longest passage on Rustam and it only narrates the episode of Siyāwukhsh (also giving Rustam's full name with four forefathers between Dastān, i.e., Zāl, and Sahm, i.e., Sām), with reference to "a long story" told about him. Then the text continues with the attempt of Kay Kāwūs to fly and relates how he was imprisoned in Yemen and saved by Rustam. This is partly narrated on the authority of Hishām (ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī, d. 204/819).[22]

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19   Zoroastrianism is also intimately related to Isfandiyār in al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*, p. 315, which mentions a magic-proof chain (*silsila*) given by Zardusht to Isfandiyār. There may well be a connection between this and the chains Rustam was supposed to be put in.

20   For an explicit identification of the two, see, e.g., Ṭūsī, *ʿAjāʾib*, p. 512.

21   In al-Ṭabarī's case, one could argue that his book is focused on prophets and kings, as its full title indicates (*Kitāb Taʾrīkh al-rusul waʾl-mulūk*), and for this reason he leaves Rustam aside. However, considering the scarcity of material on Rustam unrelated to Siyāwush or Isfandiyār in earlier Arabic sources it seems improbable that al-Ṭabarī had much more material on Rustam and had excluded it on purpose.

22   The famous MS-Sprenger (accessed through the digital images in http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN782026311&PHYSID=PHYS_0001) is similar to al-Ṭabarī's version.

The other mentions of Rustam are marginal. *Taʾrīkh* I: 681//IV: 76, tells, on the authority of Ibn al-Kalbī, that Isfandiyār was killed by Rustam, and *Taʾrīkh* I: 687//IV: 81–82, that Bahman slayed Rustam, Dastān, Azwāra, and Farāmarz. The only remaining reference to Rustam in the whole *Taʾrīkh* comes in II: 1154//XXIII: 98, where a mighty warrior is first compared to Satan and then to Rustam.

The Persian translation/reworking of al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* by Balʿamī (d. towards the end of the tenth century) is hardly more informative, even though its author had at his disposal Persian works belonging to the Book of Kings tradition (Chapter 3.6). His unwillingness to provide more material on Rustam hardly depends on his wish to follow al-Ṭabarī here more closely – elsewhere, he freely adds material from Persian and other sources – but on the fact that he had little additional material at hand. Whatever the reason, it proves that in Bukhārā, where Balʿamī wrote (or partly commissioned) his work, Rustam was not the central character of national history: Balʿamī's Sāmānid patron Manṣūr ibn Nūḥ obviously did not expect him to deal any more extensively with Rustam.

Balʿamī concisely narrates the following episodes related to Rustam's life: Siyāwukhsh (pp. 419–421); Kay Kāwūs in Yemen (pp. 422–423); Rustam kills Isfandiyār (pp. 468–469); and finally, with explicit reference to al-Ṭabarī (p. 482), Bahman's killing of Rustam's father and brother. A couple of lines earlier, based on *Kitāb-e Akhbār-e ʿajam*, Balʿamī had told that Rustam had already been killed by a brother of his, which, unsurprisingly, shows that Firdawsī did not invent this motif but that it was already in circulation in the tenth century.

Other early Arabic historians also indicate that Rustam was strongly present only in the episodes concerning Siyāwush and Isfandiyār. Al-Maqdisī (d. after 355/966), a very well-informed historian, who used native sources (Chapter 3.6),[23] is only slightly more informative. In his *Badʾ* III: 147–148, under the title "The story of how Rustam saved Kay Kāwūs", he tells how the latter was imprisoned by the Ḥimyar. Rustam came from Sistan with a great army and asked al-ʿAnqāʾ (i.e., Sīmurgh) for help. The bird gave him one of his own feathers and promised to come if Rustam were to burn it. The Ḥimyarī king had, by magic, suspended his town between heaven and earth. Rustam called al-ʿAnqāʾ to help him and the bird took his horse in his claws and let Rustam ride on his back. Thus, he took Rustam to the town, where Rustam rescued Kay Kāwūs from the pit, taking also Suʿdā (Arabicized for Sūdābe) back to Babylon. Then the author briefly refers (*Badʾ* III: 148–149) to the story of Siyāwush and Suʿdā, which, he says, is like that of Joseph and Zulaykhā. Siyāwush is imprisoned, and

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23   See also Hämeen-Anttila (2012).

Rustam comes to kill Suʿdā. (There is no mention of the Turkish adventures of Siyāwush, except that he was killed in the land of the Turks.) The passage ends by throwing doubt on the credibility of the story of al-ʿAnqāʾ, *wa-llāhu aʿlam*.

Even the best authority on pre-Islamic Iran, Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 350/961 or 360/971), almost completely ignores Rustam in his *Taʾrīkh sinī l-mulūk*, which was written on the basis of several versions of the Arabic translations of the *Khwadāynāmag* and other historical works (Chapter 3.6). In the chapter on the South Arabian kings (not the Persians), Ḥamza only mentions (p. 101) that the South Arabian Shammar-Yarʿash was, according to some, killed by Rustam ibn Dastān. It is indicative that the focus here is on the South Arabian king, not Rustam. This absolute paucity of Rustam material is significant since Ḥamza seems to have followed very closely the Arabic translation(s) of the *Khwadāynāmag*, on which he is our most reliable and best-informed authority.

Another usually well-informed author is Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), whose *Tajārib* again provides meagre results concerning Rustam. *Tajārib* I: 70–72, resumes the story of Kay Qābūs, Siyāwukhsh and Rustam: Rustam educates Siyāwukhsh (I: 70). Siyāwukhsh implores Rustam to ask Kay Qābūs to send him to fight against Afrāsiyāb (I: 71, as in Firdawsī, but this detail is lacking from al-Ṭabarī, one of Miskawayh's sources). When Bīb (= Gīw) brings Kay Khusraw to Iran, Rustam comes with an army to welcome him and in several battles defeats the Turkish forces that had followed the fugitives (I: 72). Finally, Rustam saves Kay Qābūs from Yemen. This is the longest passage on Rustam in Miskawayh's work, but there is also a reference to the Persians telling stories about Rustam's strength (I: 72). Miskawayh (I: 72), presents a manumission letter to Rustam, a Persian version of which is found in Ibn al-Balkhī's *Fārsnāme*, p. 43.[24] He provides no further references to Rustam in the Kayanid history and has nothing on him in the chapter on Kay Khusraw.

Other early Arabic historical and geographical sources, excepting al-Masʿūdī and al-Thaʿālibī, *Ghurar*, to be discussed later, provide only negligible references to Rustam or follow one of the above-discussed sources. Al-Balādhurī (d. 279/892), *Futūḥ*, p. 394, Ibn al-Faqīh (wrote in 290/903 or soon after), *Mukhtaṣar*, p. 208, and Ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239), *Kāmil* III: 128, mention "Rustam's Stable" in connection with the Arab-Islamic conquest of Sistan,

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24   Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 15/12//23–24 (from al-Jahshiyārī, d. 331/942–3, *Kitāb al-Wuzarāʾ*, where, however, the letter is not found in the present editions), gives the first part of the letter in a very similar form, but ignores the latter part of the text. The letter is also reproduced in, e.g., al-Maqrīzī, *Khabar* §115 (as in Miskawayh) and in Persian in *Tawārīkh-e Shaykh Uways*, p. 57. Cf. also Mīrkhwānd, *Rawḍa* II: 670.

which has been taken[25] as an indication that Rustam was already famous at that time. As the passage concerns Iran and more specifically Sistan, he was obviously famous, but again one should keep in mind the historiographical difficulties: what in a historical source is set at the time of the conquests, need not, and very often does not, date from that far back.

In his *Āthār*, al-Bīrūnī (d. about 442/1050), mentions in one sentence (p. 121/104//112) how Rustam ibn Dastān ibn Karshāsb *al-malik* rescued Kay Kāwūs when Shammar-Yarʿash of Yemen had imprisoned him, deriving this information from Ḥamza (in whose *Taʾrīkh* this detail is, however, not given or preserved). Some pages later, on p. 151,[26] Rustam is said to have killed Shammar-Yarʿash, which does come from Ḥamza. In this book, al-Bīrūnī seems almost completely unaware of Rustam's heroic deeds. It should be noted that al-Bīrūnī is one of the rare Arabic authors who had Abū ʿAlī al-Balkhī's *al-Shāhnāma* at their disposal (*Āthār*, p. 114/99//107–108, cf. Chapter 4.1.2), and al-Balkhī had been able to use both Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's *Siyar* and possibly other Arabic translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Hence, the almost complete lack of Rustam material is highly significant when assessing what Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* contained and what it did not.

The situation does not change much in al-Bīrūnī's other books. In *Kitāb Mā li'l-Hind*, there is only one mention of Rustam at the very end of the book, p. 547 (trans. Sachau 1910, II: 246). The rainbow, *qaws-Quzaḥ*, is attached by Indians to the name of a hero of theirs "just as our common people attach it to the name of Rustam".[27] Al-Bīrūnī, who is usually extremely well informed about matters Persian, seems to know surprisingly little about Rustam (although the short note in *Kitāb Mā li'l-Hind* is interesting in itself).

Later geographical works are equally sparse when it comes to Rustam. Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), *Muʿjam*, mentions him twice.[28] In an article on Zābulistān (III: 125), he explains that the toponym derives from an eponymous Zābul (cf. Zāl), the grandfather (sic) of Rustam ibn Dastān. The second mention comes in an article on Sistan (III: 191) and, on the authority of Ibn al-Faqīh, defines it as the kingdom of Rustam the Mighty, who had been made king over it by Kay Qāwūs.

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25   Nöldeke (1920): 11; Barthold (1944): 134.

26   Lacuna in ed. Sachau after p. 131.

27   Cf. also al-Ṭarsūsī (d. 589/1193), *Tabṣira*, p. 79, according to whom Rustam was among the very first to use a bow. The first was Adam, who had been taught by Gabriel.

28   In addition, there are three possibly related place names, Rustamābādh, Rustamkūya, and al-Rustamiyya (III: 43), but without explicit reference to Rustam ibn Dastān.

Finally, we come to al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956), one of our main sources on pre-Islamic Persia. In his *Tanbīh*, p. 94//136, there is an extremely important passage on the wars between the Persians and the Turks:

> At the end of the seventh part of *Kitāb Murūj al-dhahab* we have mentioned the reason why Persians exaggerate the [regnal] years of these kings, their secrets concerning this, and their wars against the kings of the Turks – these wars are called *Baykār*, which means "battle" – and other nations, as well as the battles between Rustam ibn Dastān and Isfandiyār in Khurasan, Sistan, and Zābulistān.

The term *baykār* would seem primarily to refer to the battles between the Persians and the Turks, where Rustam plays a major role.

Al-Masʿūdī's *Murūj*, §§541 and 543 (on Farāsiyāb), gives the key to our understanding of the place of Rustam in pre-Islamic and early Islamic sources. The passages read:

> The Persians tell a lot about Afrāsiyāb's death and his battles, the battles and raids between the Persians and the Turks, the death of Siyāwush, and the story of Rustam ibn Dastān. All this is found explained in the book titled *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, which was translated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ from Ancient Persian into Arabic. The story of Isfandiyār (…) and how Rustam ibn Dastān killed him is narrated there, as well as how Bahman ibn Isfandiyār killed Rustam and other wonders and tales of the Ancient Persians. Persians think highly of this book because it contains stories about their ancestors and their kings' histories. Thank God, we have been able to narrate many of their histories in our earlier books.
>
> MURŪJ §541

> According to what is told in the *Book of al-Sakīsarān* the Persians say that his paternal grandfather Kay Qāwūs was the king before Kay Khusraw and that Kay Khusraw had no offspring, so he gave the kingship to Luhrāsb.
>
> MURŪJ §543

Thus, this *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān* seems to have concentrated on the Turkish wars, Siyāwush, Isfandiyār, and Rustam. It also shows that the story of Rustam was already integrated with royal matter in the *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*.[29]

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29   For this book, see Chapter 2.2.1.

In another passage, al-Masʿūdī seems to derive partly the same information from *Kitāb al-Baykār*, also translated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ:

> This fortress was built by an Ancient Persian king of old times, called Isbandiyār ibn Bistāsf (…). This is one of the fortresses in the world that are described as impenetrable. The Persians mention it in their poems (*ashʿārihā*) and tell how Isbandiyār ibn Bistāsf built it. Isbandiyār waged many wars in the East against various peoples. He was the one who travelled to the farthest parts of the Turkish lands and destroyed the City of Brass. The deeds of Isbandiyār and all the things we have told are mentioned in the book known as *Kitāb al-Baykār*, which Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ translated into Arabic.
>
> *MURŪJ* §§479–480

What the passages clearly tell is that there was a vivid tradition of historical books, other than the *Khwadāynāmag*, and some of these came to be translated into Arabic, whether by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ or others (see Chapter 2.2.1). At least two such books, *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān* and *Kitāb al-Baykār*, contained Rustam material, and it is specifically this material that we find quoted, or referred to, in early Arabic works. The *Khwadāynāmag*, or its Arabic translation, the *Siyar al-mulūk*, on the contrary, is not mentioned by al-Masʿūdī, and may have contained next to no mentions of Rustam, which would not be surprising, as the refractory vassal would not have fitted in easily into a royal chronicle. The two books, as described by al-Masʿūdī, cover virtually all the material that may be found in early Arabic sources, and it is probable that they were the sources the other authors tapped, too, for this material, not the *Khwadāynāmag* and its translations. It should be emphasized that no source of ours, excepting the problematic *Nihāya*, claims to derive Rustam material from the *Khwadāynāmag* or its Arabic translations. To speculate about this without tangible evidence is rather futile.

In *Murūj* §542, the unlucky Yemenite excursion of Kay Qāwūs is referred to, and the Yemenite king is identified as Shammar-Yarʿash, and his daughter is Suʿdā, the Sūdābe (Sūdāwe) of the Iranian tradition. Al-Masʿūdī briefly tells how Rustam ibn Dastān marched to Yemen with 4,000 men, killed Shammar-Yarʿash, and saved Kay Qāwūs, together with Suʿdā, which led to the scene between Suʿdā and Siyāwukhsh "until what famously happened to him with Afrāsiyāb the Turk, how he sought asylum with him, and married his daughter", how Kay Khusraw was born, how Siyāwukhsh was killed by Afrāsiyāb, and how Rustam killed Suʿdā and took revenge for Siyāwukhsh's death by killing noble Turks.

According to *Murūj* §550, it was Bahman who, after several battles, killed Rustam.[30] The conversion of Bishtāsb to Zoroastrianism is mentioned in the same paragraph, but the two incidents are not explicitly connected.

Al-Masʿūdī is not alone in giving us information about separate translations of Rustam stories into Arabic. Ibn al-Nadīm (d. in 380s/990s), *Fihrist*, p. 364/305//716, mentions a *Kitāb Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*, translated by Jabala ibn Sālim (late second/eighth century) (cf. Chapter 2.2.1).[31]

Al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868–869), *Risālat al-Ḥanīn* (*Rasāʾil* II: 408) may refer to this book's Middle Persian original: "the Mōbad has told that he has read in the *Life of Isfandiyār* (…), written in Persian,[32] that when Isfandiyār raided the land of the Khazars in order to save his sister[33] from captivity (…)". This quotation explicitly comes from a written Persian, most probably Middle Persian, source, not its Arabic translation. If it refers to the original text of the *Rustam wa-Isfandiyār* mentioned by Ibn al-Nadīm, then the focus of this book may have been on Isfandiyār rather than Rustam.

The only case where the *Khwadāynāmag*, in its Arabic translation, would seemingly be the source for an episode related to Rustam and his family is *Nihāya*, p. 82, quoted above. In addition, on p. 85, it is told, again on the authority of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, that Bahman married the great-granddaughter of Solomon, Ūmīdh-dukht: "I have found in *Siyar mulūk al-ʿajam* in the story of Bahman ibn Isfandiyār (…)". At first sight, this would seem to locate at least these episodes in an Arabic Book of Kings. The *Nihāya*, however, is a highly problematic source, which attributes materials in a blatantly anachronistic way to eminent authorities to gain prestige for its tales (cf. Chapter 3.4). The latter passage is also problematic because it makes Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ refer to his own translation as his source.

Thus, reading extant early Arabic sources only, one receives the impression that, with the exception of the story of Isfandiyār, Rustam is a minor hero, on

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30   For a theory about the meaning of Rustam's killer, see Davidson (2006): 90–91 (= first edition, 1985, pp. 72–73). See also Yamamoto (2003): 75, n. 64.

31   Listed sub *Asmāʾ al-kutub allatī allafahā l-Furs fī l-siyar wa-l-asmār al-ṣaḥīḥa allatī li-mulūkihim*. For another of Jabala's translations, that of the story of Bahrām Chūbīn, see Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 364/305//716 (Bahrām Shūs, i.e., Chūbīn). Cf. also al-Masʿūdī, *Murūj* §644, and Christensen (1936a): 59. For Jabala, see Shahîd (1984): 408–410. In Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*, p. 305/245//589, he is called the secretary of Hishām, and Barthold (1944): 140, takes this to imply that he was probably the secretary of the Caliph Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, not the historian Hishām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī.

32   For the language terminology in al-Jāḥiẓ's time, see, most recently, based on Lazard's studies, Perry (2009).

33   Note the singular. In the Firdawsian version, there are several sisters.

a par with other Persian generals. It is significant that none of the stories about him are attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* (except for the dubious case of the *Nihāya*), and the information is probably derived from other, independent works, either translated from Middle Persian or written in Arabic on the basis of (Middle) Persian sources, either written or oral.

Kitāb al-Sakīsarān, *Kitāb al-Baykār*, and *Kitāb Rustam wa-Isfandiyār* (perhaps translated from the Persian *Sīrat Isfandiyār*), as far as we can deduce their contents, actually cover all the material that was transmitted in other Arabic sources, which means that there is no reason to attribute any of it to the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* where, moreover, Rustam would have been out of character if we assume, as is usually, and with good reason, done that the *Khwadāynāmag* was a royal chronicle.[34] A subaltern prince would not too easily have been shown superior to the kings in such a source, so one would expect this to be the situation: the Rustam stories' mise-en-scène could more easily be expected to be separate narratives of perhaps more popular origin than a royal chronicle.

On the other hand, there is reason to assume that many such stories were not translated from Middle Persian but were first composed in Arabic, although based on Persian lore. In some cases, such as that of Bahrām Gūr, it would be difficult to explain how the Arabs could have played such a major role in a book authored by Persians in Sasanian times or even soon after. If, on the other hand, the Arabs are removed from this story, very little remains, which makes it rather obvious that the story was first composed in an Arab context and probably in Arabic.

Once we turn to Classical Persian sources of the sixth/twelfth century and thereafter, the picture dramatically changes. The anonymous *Mujmal* (written 520/1126) shows both the influence of Firdawsī (explicitly mentioned), of other tenth-century versions of the Classical Persian Book of Kings, and of various other *nāmes* (Chapter 4.7), some of the last mentioned probably not in the form they have been preserved to us, but as earlier versions. The author also used the historical works of Ḥamza and al-Ṭabarī, thus combining various lines of traditions. The "official" Islamic version of history, as presented by al-Ṭabarī, does not, however, push the Persian tradition aside. On the contrary, on, e.g., p. 71/89, the author explicitly prefers these ancient sources to al-Ṭabarī.

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34   Whereas Agathias (Chapter 1.3.1) claims to have derived his information from an official source, Arabic and Persian sources do not make a similar claim for the *Khwadāynāmag*, though. It is, however, natural to assume that the Sasanids did keep official records of their own, and their Empire's, history, and the *Khwadāynāmag* would fit well the role of an official chronicle.

The difference to Arabic sources is huge. The anonymous author summarizes virtually everything Firdawsī narrates about Rustam, but it must be kept in mind that the author is also partly using the same sources as Firdawsī, so we cannot be sure whether in a particular case he is summarizing Firdawsī or his other sources. The *Mujmal* lists the family members of Rustam, both ancestors and descendants, with genealogical details (pp. 23–24/25–26) and synchronizes or equates them with Biblical figures: Narīmān is identified with Noah and Rustam is given an alternative Arab genealogy (p. 32/38).[35] Isfandiyār fled from Rustam to Turkistān, but Rustam followed him there to kill him. "This is utter nonsense," concludes the author, "but we mention it because it is found in (the Persians') tall tales (*khurāfāt*) and decrepit (*dāris*) books, which we have seen" (p. 34/38).

The marriage of Zāl to Mihrāb, Rustam's mother, is mentioned on pp. 36–37/42–43, and the following page (p. 37/43–44) summarizes the deeds of Sām. On p. 38/45, we come to Rustam's story: Zāl sends him to bring Kay Qubād to be crowned. Rustam's first battle (p. 38/45) is told in the same way as in Firdawsī: Rustam almost captures Afrāsiyāb, but Afrāsiyāb's belt breaks and he gets away.

Mujmal, p. 39/45–46, narrates how Rustam saved Kay Kāwūs and killed the White Demon and the King of Māzandarān. Rustam and Afrāsiyāb fought in the Sawād of Baghdad or, according to another version, Rustam followed the Turkish King into Turkistān and fought him there. On the same page, it is told how Rustam freed Kay Kāwūs from Hāmāwarān. Brief mentions of Rustam's new battles against Afrāsiyāb follow and then we are told the story of Suhrāb with all the details familiar from Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, starting with Rakhsh having gone missing and ending with Rustam tragically killing his own son.

After this, the *Mujmal* moves on to narrate the story of Siyāwush. Rustam rears Siyāwush, whom Sūdāwe later attempts to seduce, although to no avail. Finally, Rustam slays the scheming stepmother and brings Kay Khusraw to Iran. Rustam fights in Turkistān for seven years (p. 40/46).

In Kay Khusraw's time Rustam intercedes for Ṭūs, kills Fūlādwand, and fights against Afrāsiyāb. This is followed by "the story of Akwān Dēw". Then Rustam frees Bīzhan by disguising himself and his men as merchants and attacking

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35   There is also an interesting story about Isfandiyār's invulnerability, which ties his story to Biblical characters: God created for Solomon a spring of molten copper, of which statues were made. Solomon prayed to God to give these statues souls, and as he had no son, Gustāsf adopted Isfandiyār, who was one of the animated statues, which explains his unwoundable body. This is also why he was called *rūyīn-tan*, Copperbody (*Mujmal*, pp. 32–33/38). Cf. *Nihāya*, p. 83, which says that "according to the Arabs, his (Isfandiyār's) skin was made of copper".

Afrāsiyāb by night. All this is told on p. 41/48. Farāmarz is sent to India, and Rustam takes part in renewed battles against Afrāsiyāb (pp. 41–42/49). Later, p. 44/52, it is told how Gustāsf sent Isfandiyār to fight Rustam and bring him to Iran in chains. Isfandiyār was mortally wounded (no mention of Sīmurgh is made) and left Bahman to be reared by Rustam. Later Gustāsf demanded Bahman back. Shaghād managed to kill Rustam and Zawāre (p. 44/53), and later Bahman marched to Sistan to take revenge on the remaining family members (pp. 44–45/53–54).

There are also a few scattered mentions of Rustam elsewhere in the book, which further testify to Rustam's fame at the time (cf. the Index of the *Mujmal*). Zarathustra's sleight-of-hand in Balkh is mentioned on p. 72/92, but Rustam plays no role in this context.

Keeping in mind that the author wished to present a concise historical work and hence condensed his material, it can be said that the whole Rustam material found in Firdawsī's epic, and some other episodes, is contained in this work. The additional pieces certainly came from the group of narratives known as the Sistanian Cycle, i.e., independent epics on the family of Rustam (see Chapter 4.7). We do know from the *Mujmal's* Preface (p. 2/2) that the author used several Sistanian books as his sources (Chapter 3.6). These early versions should not be confused with later epics with the same titles.

Although the *Mujmal* is the clearest example of Rustam's importance in early Persian sources (excluding Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*), many other works give a similar impression of his fame. Ibn al-Balkhī's *Fārsnāme* (written before 510/1116) is largely dependent on Arabic sources, but the author has augmented these with Persian ones. In this book, the main passage on Rustam comes in the chapter on Kay Kāwūs, pp. 40–43.[36] The passage relates how Rustam educated Siyāwūsh (sic, elsewhere in the *Fārsnāme* Siyāwush) in Zāwulistān; how with his troops he brought Kay Khusraw to Iran and slew the army of the pursuers (no other generals are mentioned: Rustam is the sole hero); and how he freed Kay Kāwūs from Yemen. Two versions of this are given, one according to Persian and the other according to (South) Arab historians, but both come from Arabic sources. The passage ends with Kay Kāwūs' manumission of Rustam, and the manumission letter (*āzādnāme*) is given in full (cf. above).

In addition, there is on p. 53 a short mention of how Wishtāsf sent Isfandiyār to fight (*paykār*) Rustam-e Dastān "as is well known" and Isfandiyār was killed.

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36 Incidentally, the chapter is very close to the Arabic tradition, as exemplified by al-Maqrīzī, *Khabar* §§112–122, which shows that at least here Ibn al-Balkhī closely follows Arabic sources.

Although this is only a brief mention, it shows how this particular episode was considered to be generally known. The use of the word *paykār* is again worthy of attention.

In Gardīzī's *Zayn* (written in the early 440s/1050s), the influence of Firdawsī, or his source, explains Rustam's strong presence.[37] Rustam frees Kay Kāwūs from "Māzandarān, which is called Yemen". Kay Kāwūs rewards him by giving him Sistan and other fiefs (p. 74, no manumission letter is mentioned). In the Siyāwush episode, Rustam marches to Turkistān to take revenge on Afrāsiyāb for the death of Siyāwush and fights many battles there, finally killing Afrāsiyāb (p. 76). When he grew tired of worldly life, Kay Khusraw gave presents and fiefs, giving Rustam Sistan (again) and other provinces, as well as his personal clothes and gardens. Rustam and the other nobles followed him on his last mysterious trip (pp. 76–77). On pp. 77–78, Gardīzī tells how at the time of Kay Gushtāsp, Zarathustra introduced a new religion. No mention of Rustam's reaction is given. On pp. 78–79, it is told how Gushtāsp sent Isfandiyār against Rustam, and Isfandiyār gave him the choice either to convert, to fight, or to be bound in chains and brought to the court of the king (the demand of conversion was not mentioned on p. 78). Rustam chose to fight. Sīmurgh is not mentioned, otherwise the fight follows (in an abbreviated form) the version of Firdawsī (or his source). The dying Isfandiyār left Bahman for Rustam to rear. Finally, on p. 80, it is told that when Bahman took his revenge, Rustam was already dead.

Ḥamdallāh Mustawfī (d. 750/1349), *Tārīkh-e guzīde*, follows the model of Firdawsī. Kay Qubād freed Iran from the hands of Afrāsiyāb by the aid of *Zāl-e zar* and his son Rustam and made Rustam the champion (*jahān-pahlawān*, p. 86). In the chapter on Kay Kāwūs' reign Rustam's heroic deeds, the *haft-khān*, are referred to but not related, and later he frees the King in Hāmāwarān, and Kāwūs gives him his sister Mihrnāz as wife (p. 87). This is followed by Rustam's hunt in Samangān and the episode of Rustam and Suhrāb, told in five lines, under the indubitable influence of Firdawsī (p. 88). Next, Rustam, the *atābak* of the king, kills Sūdāwe, and later destroys Turkistān, taking part in the war against the Turks, to revenge Siyāwush's death (pp. 88–89). The story of Bīzhan and Manīzhe is briefly told in Firdawsī's version (pp. 89–90). Then Gushtāsf marches against Arjāsf, but Rustam remains behind. Later, Isfandiyār is sent against Rustam and is killed. Finally, Bahman kills Farāmarz in his war against Rustam's family (one manuscript mentions that Rustam had already been killed by a brother of his) (pp. 93–94).

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37   On the relations between the two, see Chapter 5.2.

In the anonymous *Tārīkh-e Sīstān* (the main part of which was probably written soon after 448/1062) the whole Sistanian family is prominent.[38] In this book, Rustam's story starts during Kay Qubād's rule when the hero is fourteen and fights in Turkistān, taking revenge for Siyāwukhsh (p. 53, trans. Browne 1905: 5). The anonymous author refers to Farāmarz's deeds, which he knows in an edition of twelve volumes.[39] As the deeds of Narīmān, Sām, and Dastān are told in the *Shāhnāme* (but it remains open to whose *Shāhnāme* the author is referring) they need not be repeated here, the author says. He also knows that the *ḥadīth-e Rustam* has been versified by Bū l-Qāsim Firdawsī and repeats the legend that Maḥmūd of Ghazna said that the *Shāhnāme* was nothing, except for the story of Rustam, and that he had in his army a thousand Rustams. All the heroes of the Sistanian family are well known, the author adds, and it is not possible to repeat all their deeds. He even mentions the *Bakhtiyārnāme*, thus bringing the story of Rustam's family up to the fifth generation, counting from Rustam's grandfather, Sām.[40] All this is told within the limits of one page, p. 53 (trans. Browne 1905: 5). On the next page, p. 54 (trans. Browne 1905: 6), the genealogy of the author's patron is taken up to Rustam and the Sistanian heroes.

The author also knows Bū l-Muʾayyad's *Kitāb-e Garshāsb* (p. 75, trans. Browne 1905: 24).[41] He emphasizes that the Sistanian family, up to Farāmarz, kept their aboriginal religion, which they derived from Adam (p. 73, trans. Browne 1905: 23). The battle, *paykār* (note again the word), between Isfandiyār and Rustam was caused by the new religion of Zartusht (pp. 73–74, trans. Browne 1905: 23).

To end the section of Persian authors, Ṭūsī's *ʿAjāʾib* is a valuable, but all too little studied book. It takes us to a different tradition, which is sparsely documented. Ṭūsī's *ʿAjāʾib* taps sources, oral or written, which are more popular than those used by historians of the time and gives us a glimpse of what went on outside learned circles. It is not surprising that Ṭūsī includes references to stories which later surface in popular epics.

Ṭūsī's *ʿAjāʾib* was written soon after the last date mentioned in the text, 562/1166 (p. 300, cf. Preface, p. xvi)[42] and it uses a lot of material familiar from later epics, but little from Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. However, the author highly

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38   Malikshāh Sīstānī's (d. after 1028/1620) *Iḥyāʾ al-mulūk* follows *Tārīkh-e Sīstān* rather closely while elaborating some parts.

39   Cf. van Zutphen (2014): 416.

40   For the *Bakhtiyārnāme*, see van Zutphen (2014): 261, 270.

41   Cf. Chapter 4.1.3.

42   Other contemporary dates mentioned include 555 (p. 276) and 561 ("in our times", p. 299).

respects Ḥasan-e (sic) Firdawsī of Ṭūs (p. 246).[43] On p. 473, there is the earliest attestation of a story, another version of which is found in, e.g., the *Bāysunqurī Shāhnāme*.[44] According to it, Firdawsī became rich after having seen Rustam-e Zāl in a dream and been told about a treasure in Ṭūs. The book also contains dozens (if not hundreds) of references to Alexander, largely familiar from the various versions of the *Alexander Romance*,[45] and also to Anūshirwān's miraculous deeds and journeys. Afrīdūn, Ḍaḥḥāk, and Bahrām Chūbīn also often appear.

Ṭūsī mentions Narīmān's conquest of China (pp. 191, 419) and tells an interesting variant concerning the reason why Zāl was abandoned by Sām (p. 418): it was the blackness of Zāl's body, not the whiteness of his hair that was the cause of shame. Also otherwise the story differs from Firdawsī: the author knew Firdawsī and respected him, but he either did not know the contents of the *Shāhnāme* too well or did not care to offer the version told there, but preferred other narratives that, as in this case, directly contradict what Firdawsī wrote.

Ṭūsī uses Rustam's standard Arabic epithet *al-Shadīd*, the Mighty (pp. 263, 419),[46] which may indicate that at least sometimes he used, either directly or indirectly, Arabic sources for Persian national history. The author tells that Rustam and Zāl's tombs are in Samanjūr and that Rustam's palace lies in ruins outside of Zāwulistān (p. 230). He also tells that the descendants of Rustam still rule BWLS, which lies on the coast of *daryā-ye Maghrib*, only six parasangs from al-Andalus (p. 190).

Like many other sources, Ṭūsī tells (p. 420) how Rustam liberated Kay Kāwūs. The story of Rustam and Akwān Dēw is mainly told on the lines of Firdawsī, but with some significant differences (pp. 493–494). The source is given as "it is told in books" (*dar kutubhā āwurde-and*) and Firdawsī is not mentioned. On p. 510, Ṭūsī briefly relates the story of Rustam and the White Demon. The most interesting passage comes on p. 75, where it is told why Rustam did not believe in Zarathustra: in his early career Zarathustra had practised jugglery

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43   This shows how misguided we are if we automatically expect Firdawsī to dominate the twelfth-century sources: Ṭūsī knew Firdawsī, but either did not feel inclined to use his epic or did not have it at hand. For the name of Firdawsī, cf. Shahbazi (1991): 20 and note 3.

44   See Dabīr-Siyāqī (1383): 180 (= *Shāhnāme*, ed. Macan I: 41–42). Cf. Shahbazi (1991): 7.

45   E.g., pp. 5–9. In general, see Doufikar-Aerts (2010).

46   Written al-Sadīd on p. 419.

(*ḥuqqa-bāzī*) in the court of Rustam, who had given him a small reward. When Zarathustra later claimed to be a prophet, Rustam did not believe in him.[47]

The Sistanian material of the book in the main differs from that in the earlier Arabic and Persian sources, including Firdawsī. Most probably it comes from the separate epic stories about the Sistanians (Chapter 4.7) and thus through a line separate from that of the *Khwadāynāmag* and its Nachleben. Note that very few traces of these traditions are found in early Arabic literature, as shown above, which further supports the by now rather obvious conclusions that there was no such material in the *Khwadāynāmag*.

This selection of Persian sources shows that the image of Rustam was much more central in the Persian than in the Arabic tradition. Yet even though all early Persian historical sources, except Balʿamī, are later than Firdawsī they do not slavishly follow his version of Rustam's adventures. In some, the influence of Firdawsī is clear, and some mention him as one of their sources, but even these add incidents known neither from Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* nor from the Arabic tradition. When narrating the same episodes, they may also have significant differences to Firdawsī, which implies that they also had other sources at hand and sometimes preferred these to Firdawsī.

It is clear that in early Islamic Iran a wide range of Rustam narratives was in circulation. Some may have been oral, but references to separate books, where Rustam played a role (*Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, *Kitāb al-Baykār*, *Kitāb Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*, *Sīrat Isfandiyār*) and which were not integrated into the *Khwadāynāmag*, or its Arabic translation(s), imply that written Middle Persian versions were also available. Some of these separate stories may first have been written down in Arabic, while others may have circulated in written Middle Persian texts, and yet others may have been set down in early Classical Persian in the tenth century directly from oral tradition.

Al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* stands out among early Arabic sources (cf. Chapter 4.4). The difference to earlier Arabic sources is considerable. For al-Thaʿālibī – and one should keep in mind that he may, or may not, be the same al-Thaʿālibī as the famous author of the *Thimār* and the *Iʿjāz* – Rustam is a figure of central importance and there are few stories of him in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* that are not paralleled in the *Ghurar*. Thus, one finds there the story of Rustam's birth and youth (pp. 104–106), his finding a horse, Rakhsh (pp. 140–145), his first fight against Afrāsiyāb (pp. 145–147), his freeing Kay Kāwūs from the King of Yemen, Dhū l-Adhʿār (pp. 161–163), a brief mention of Rustam being made the

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47   On pp. 442–443, the origin of Zoroastrianism is again told, but this time without mentioning Rustam.

iṣbahbadh of Iran by Kay Kāwūs, who also renews his vice-regency (*tawliya*) in Nīmrūz, Zābulistān, and India (p. 165), the story of Siyāwush, including Rustam rearing him (pp. 168–170), Siyāwush going to war against Afrāsiyāb with Rustam and their making peace with the Turkish King (pp. 187–198), the killing of Suʿdā alias Sūdāne (sic)[48] by Rustam, and the revenge for Siyāwush (pp. 216–218), Rustam and others welcoming the returning Kay Khusraw (p. 221), his receiving a legacy from Kay Khusraw, and the new King, Luhrāsf, giving an audience to him (p. 238), and the *haft-khān* of Isfandiyādh, which ties up with the story of Rustam (pp. 301ff.).

The conflict between Isfandiyādh and Rustam is discussed in detail on pp. 341–375. The story is very similar to that given by Firdawsī (and, presumably, the source common to both), but it contains some interesting differences, the most remarkable of which is the mention of a raven that guided Bahman, the son of Isfandiyādh, to where Rustam was hunting. This detail is attributed to *khurāfāt al-Furs*, which, again, implies that al-Thaʿālibī is using other (oral or written) sources to complement his main source. Finally, on pp. 379–385, it is told how a brother of Rustam, Shaghāy,[49] killed him by a ruse, and how Bahman later took his revenge on the other members of Rustam's family (pp. 386–388). The same passage, p. 388, also mentions that according to Masʿūdī-ye Marwazī's Persian *muzdawija*, Bahman also killed Zāl during this expedition, a detail running contrary to the main story of al-Thaʿālibī (and Firdawsī). What it shows is that al-Masʿūdī al-Marwazī had already interwoven the fates of the dynasty of the Sistanians with national history, which, of course, we also know on the Arabic side from the other al-Masʿūdī, the author of the *Murūj* and *Tanbīh*, onward.

On pp. 301–302, al-Thaʿālibī refers to Isfandiyādh's *haft-khān* as irrational and says that he repeats the story only because it is famous, and kings and ordinary people like it, and because it is found on *ṣuḥuf* (separate, short manuscripts?) as well as in pictorial representations.[50]

The version of al-Thaʿālibī gives Rustam the central place he also has in Firdawsī's epic, and it seems obvious that the *Prose Shāhnāme* is the origin

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48   Whether this is a mere scribal error for Sūdābe or a sign of a tradition different from that of Firdawsī is not clear. The Arabicized name Suʿdā shows the influence of Arabic historical works, but the author mainly uses the Iranian form Sūdān/be.

49   I.e., Shaghād–the change is easily explainable either by a phonetic or orthographic change and cannot be taken as an indication that al-Thaʿālibī would here be using a different source.

50   In addition, there are some passing mentions of Rustam. For pictorial representations of Bahrām Gūr, see Fontana (1986).

of the Rustam stories that are common to both Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī. Episodes found in Firdawsī and lacking in al-Thaʿālibī and presumably in the *Prose Shāhnāme* are few, the most important being the story of Bīzhan and Manīzhe; Rustam's *haft-khān*; Akwān Dēw; and the tragic story of Rustam and Suhrāb.[51] These were probably lacking in the common source of al-Thaʿālibī and Firdawsī, as al-Thaʿālibī does not usually drop whole scenes, and only the dropping of Rustam's *haft-khān* and his encounter with Akwān Dēw could be explained by al-Thaʿālibī's negative attitude towards the *khurāfāt al-Furs*. More probably they were added to the whole story by Firdawsī, the *haft-khān* probably on the basis of Isfandiyār's similar deeds.[52] However, they cannot be used as binding evidence for Firdawsī having invented these episodes or having been the first to insert them into national history. What does strike one, though, is that these particular episodes stand out as rather separate stories, not quite as clearly linked to the main story as most other episodes are.[53]

The inspection of early Arabic and Classical Persian sources enables us to assess the position of Rustam before Firdawsī. Our sources on Rustam in pre-Islamic times are meagre, but there is no reason to doubt that he was a major character in the Eastern Iranian world, that stories about him were told or sung in some Iranian language(s), and that he was known at least by name also in the Western parts of Iran and in Armenia.

In the mid-eighth century some of these stories reached the Arabic world through the translation by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ of *Kitāb al-Baykār* and *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān* and Jabala's *Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*. It is not clear whether it was Rustam or Isfandiyār who was the main focus in the last-mentioned book: the title *Sīrat Isfandiyār*, used by al-Jāḥiẓ and possibly referring to the same work, would imply that it may well have been Isfandiyār, who, despite his final defeat at the hands of Rustam, was the work's main character.[54] In the first two books,

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51 Cf. also van Zutphen (2014): 235.

52 This was suggested early on by Nöldeke (1920): 47–48. Later, e.g., in the *Ṭūmār*, several Sistanian heroes perform their own *haft-khāns*, thus showing how this topic found favour among the audience of epic tales.

53 Shahbazi (1991): 66, believes that the stories of Bīzhan and Manīzhe, Akwān Dēw, the White Demon, and Suhrāb belonged to the first edition of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. Did Firdawsī start his career by complementing the received version of the Book of Kings by versifying episodes that were lacking from the *Prose Shāhnāme*?

54 I find it improbable, but not impossible, that there could have been a version where it was Isfandiyār who slew Rustam, not the other way round: the sole piece of evidence for this comes from a late and somewhat insecure passage in al-Suhaylī's *Rawḍ*. Isfandiyār's *haft-khān* were clearly older than Rustam's, and the latter may have been copied from the former by Firdawsī.

Rustam was clearly present but again it remains uncertain whether or not he was their main character.

The Rustam episodes of these separate books influenced only a small part of Arabic historical literature. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* was, on the other hand, extremely influential and many later Arabic historical works seem to tap it for materials. Thus, we have no dearth of material on mythological figures such as al-Ḍaḥḥāk (cf. Chapter 5.2) or Jamshīd and later kings in Arabic sources that discuss pre-Islamic Iran. Yet, Rustam is almost ignored in the Arabic tradition before al-Thaʿālibī, except for the matter covered by the separate translations by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and Jabala and quoted only in a few books. Had Rustam been strongly present in Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation of the *Khwadāynāmag*, it would be difficult to explain why certain early sources, such as al-Yaʿqūbī's *Taʾrīkh* and Ibn Qutayba's *Maʿārif*, have nothing on Rustam, though they have plenty of material on other figures of Persian national history.

This seems to leave but one explanation. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs widely-known translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* contained little material on Rustam. Further, although it is not impossible that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ could have left out such material on purpose, no obvious reason for this can be seen. More probably, Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* had little to tell about Rustam because its Middle Persian original did not have much on Rustam either.

This is actually what we might expect. If the *Khwadāynāmag* was, as it seems to have been, a *royal* chronicle, the counterweight to the kings had little to do in it: the Sasanian kings were hardly enthusiastic about a hero who is often shown to be superior to his overlords in a moral sense. Hence, *a priori*, one expects Rustam not to have been given much place in such a work and Ibn al-Muqaffaʿs lack of Rustam stories corroborates this. The Arabic evidence makes it hard to claim Rustam had more than a marginal role to play in the *Khwadāynāmag*, if even that.

The Arabic translations of some separate episodes of Persian national history (*Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, *Kitāb al-Baykār*, *Rustam wa-Isfandiyār*, perhaps the same as *Sīrat Isfandiyār*) show that by the mid-eighth century Rustam had to some extent been integrated into the history of the kings, but this does not mean that he would have found a place in the *Khwadāynāmag* itself. The integration took place through independent books that have nothing to do with the *Khwadāynāmag*.

Tenth-century evidence shows that at that time Rustam was fully integrated into the storyline of national history and had found a place in works that related this history. This should not be taken to mean that the *Khwadāynāmag*

would later have been revised in its Middle Persian form.[55] When tenth-century kings patronized the writing of Persian history, Middle Persian texts were not what they were after. They wanted to have texts in their own literary language, the emerging Classical Persian, such as the translation/re-working of al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* by Balʿamī. The story about the compilation of the *Prose Shāhnāme* does not indicate that the scholars involved would have *written* their work in Middle Persian and it is not even clear to what extent they used Middle Persian works as their sources (Chapter 4.2). They probably did use whatever Middle Persian material they had at hand (Chapter 4.6), but they will also have used earlier texts written in Persian or Arabic, as well as oral information, whether epic songs or prose stories. To claim that these scholars, or anyone else, wrote new Middle Persian versions of the *Khwadāynāmag* – or any new Middle Persian works – is speculative and unwarranted. We have no evidence for this, and it would run counter to the currents of the tenth century, which favoured translations from Middle Persian into Classical Persian, not new secular works in Pahlavi.

From the point of view of Firdawsī, it seems that he received most of the Rustam material already integrated into national history in the *Prose Shāhnāme*.[56] In addition, he may well have found other separate stories involving Rustam in a variety of roles, such as that of Bīzhan and Manīzhe or Rustam and Suhrāb, which first surface in his *Shāhnāme*. Whether they derived from Āzādsarw[57] we cannot know, but it is possible. Some of these stories may already have been added to the *Prose Shāhnāme* or the other *Shāhnāmes* of the tenth century, even though the evidence from al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* would seem to speak against this.

A separate origin for at least some of Firdawsī's Rustam stories finds some evidence in his habit of referring to old *dihqāns* and other authorities when he comes to such passages. It seems that when versifying his main source, the *Prose Shāhnāme*, Firdawsī does not bother to give proofs for the authority of his stories – he was resuming well-known material and hence was not in need of further authorization. When adding separate incidents, on the contrary, he was stepping outside the limits of the authoritative history of Iran and had

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55   Pourshariati (2008): 462, speaks of "editorial manipulations of the Ispahbudhān family" through which Rustam found a place in the Book of Kings tradition, but sees this as a redaction of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

56   Van Zutphen (2014): 28, 552, believes that the Sistanian heroes had been incorporated into the *Khwadāynāmag*, but sees this as a "collective title".

57   For Āzādsarw, see van Zutphen (2014): 29–31, 111, 113.

to defend his additions by referring to authorities. Only when he was being innovative did he feel the need to refer to venerable sources. This is also seen in the fact that references to "ancient sources" start with the Rustam cycle, as if Firdawsī wanted to emphasize that these stories, too, were worthy of inclusion into national history. Other orphan stories, which are marked by such references and thus probably originally come from outside the established tradition, seem mainly to include stories inappropriate for a Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* (e.g., especially, Dārāb's fight against the Arab army led by Shuʿayb, perhaps modelled after stories about Abū Muslim, d. 137/755).[58]

To resume, we have next to no indication that Rustam would have been known to the Arabs before Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ in the mid-eighth century. Up until the mid-tenth century, sources seem to concentrate on a limited number of scenes in Rustam's life and these particular scenes were the subject of separate texts on Rustam, known to have existed in the mid-eighth and the ninth century and nowhere claimed to have constituted part of the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* or any of its translations into Arabic. They were only integrated in the tenth century into the *Shāhnāmes* written in early Classical Persian. The Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag*, as we can see from the Arabic books that used it, may not perhaps even have mentioned Rustam and if it did, he was probably on a par with other heroes, and was not the central character of the narrative. The separate Arabic texts, on the other hand, show that the stories of Rustam were interwoven into the lives of some Persian kings (especially Kay Qubād, Kay Kāwūs, and Kay Khusraw), which proves that the process of intermingling the two traditions had begun by the mid-eighth century.

In the tenth century, as shown by Firdawsī's epic, other *Shāhnāmes*, and al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar*, the process had been finalized and Rustam had become the greatest hero of Persian national history, but there is no tangible evidence that this would have found form in any rewritten version that would have been titled *Khwadāynāmag* or would have been in Middle Persian. What is clear, though, is that the various *Shāhnāmes* of the tenth century had produced a storyline mainly in harmony with the later work of Firdawsī.

The existence of a voluminous repertoire of stories about the Sistanian heroes is proven by the later epics which contain individual details that can be corroborated by sources earlier than Firdawsī and have, hence, to tap sources

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58   Cf. Yamamoto (2003): 74–76, which also includes a list of such orphan stories. Yamamoto does not quite seem to realize the implications of her own argumentation as to Firdawsī's use of sources. For the "opening lines", mechanically used in the tales of the Sasanian period, see Yamamoto (2003): 76. Cf. also Jackson Bonner (2011): 37 on the story of Anūshzād's insurrection, attributed to an old *dihqān*.

(oral or otherwise) that existed before him. This also makes it probable that instead of inventing new episodes, Firdawsī, as most contemporary authors were wont to, received the stories from older tradition and merely versified them. Later, he inserted them into his magisterial epic. It is possible that he himself conceived the concept of a unified narrative only after he had begun his career as an epic poet by composing separate stories.

5.2   Armāyīl and Garmāyīl: The Formation of an Episode in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*

In the previous chapter (5.1), I endeavoured to approach the question of the contents of the *Khwadāynāmag* through an analysis of several works that may derive their material partly from the *Khwadāynāmag*, although mainly indirectly. This chapter (5.2) turns the focus on Firdawsī and his *Shāhnāme* and studies one specific episode to show what may have been Firdawsī's part in developing the text he versified (cf. also Chapter 4.6).

Among the many impressive episodes in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* is the feeding of human brains to the snakes which grow out of Ḍaḥḥāk's shoulders. It is a favourite passage in Arabic and Classical Persian literature and the concomitant aetiological myth of the origin of the Kurds is told in perhaps more sources than almost any other passage of the *Shāhnāme*.

Told in brief, Iblīs, who earlier had incited Ḍaḥḥāk to parricide, reappears to him in the shape of a cook and accustoms him, now the King of Yemen, to eating meat instead of his earlier, mainly vegetarian dishes (J125–146).[59] In J147–155 Iblīs, as a reward for his gastronomic prowess, asks permission to kiss Ḍaḥḥāk's shoulders. Receiving the permission he kisses him and instantaneously disappears, as if the ground had swallowed him up. Two black snakes grow out of Ḍaḥḥāk's shoulders. Whenever cut down the snakes grow again, and physicians are unable to help the king (J156–160). Iblīs again reappears, now in the shape of a doctor, and tells what to do: the snakes have to be fed with human brains (J161–166). Firdawsī does not explicitly say that the snakes annoyed Ḍaḥḥāk, but, evidently, they would have done so.[60]

After telling this, Firdawsī drops the subject for some forty verses, to return to it in Z12–37. Here he tells how two pious men, Armāyil and Garmāyil,[61]

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59   J refers to the story of Jamshīd (1: 41–52), Z to that of Ḍaḥḥāk (1: 55–86).

60   Other sources stress the pain and many mention Ḍaḥḥāk's inability to sleep.

61   The characters have been discussed by Asmussen (1987): 413, in a slightly disappointing article. In Z15 Khaleghi-Motlagh prefers the variant *zi-kishwar-e pādishā* to *zi-gōhar-e*

discussed the iniquities of Ḍaḥḥāk, now also known as Bīwarasp, who had meanwhile become the King of Iran. They infiltrate his service as cooks in order to save at least one of the two men daily slaughtered for the snakes and each day start letting one of the two intended victims free and replacing his brains with those of a sheep. When two hundred (or, according to a variant, twenty) men have been rescued, they give them some sheep and some goats and send them off, telling them to keep out of towns. This, says the narrator, is the origin of the Kurds. After this, the narrator goes on to relate the revolt of Kāwe and the uprising of Ferīdūn.

Some of the themes in this episode go back to Indo-Iranian mythology. From Avestic times myths about the man-eating Azhi Dahāka had hovered between him being a humanized dragon or a dragonized mythic hero.[62] The episode as a whole, though, is much more recent and the purpose of this chapter is to delineate the development of the episode in Early Islamic times, focusing on the figure of Armāyīl.

The oldest testimony for Armāyīl is *Shahrestānīhā ī Ērānshahr* §28, where an Armāyīl is mentioned in connection with Azhi Dahāg:

> Twenty-one cities that were built in Padishkhwārgar were either built by Armāyīl or, following his order, by the mountaineers, who had acquired from Aži Dahāg the mountains as their dominion.[63]

The passage tells us little more than that Ḍaḥḥāk and Armāyīl were somehow connected at the time of this text, the final redaction of which seems to date to the eighth century, although much of the material is considerably earlier.[64]

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 pādishā, which was adopted in the Moscow edition. Whichever variant we prefer, it is obvious that for Firdawsī the two were noblemen, not ordinary cooks. For the length of the vowel, see Khaleghi-Motlagh (2001): 71 (on Z16), who takes the original form to have been Armāyīl, which was changed, *metri gratia*, into Armāyil by Firdawsī. As will be seen, most sources have a long final vowel in this name. Khaleghi-Motlagh also mentions other, stray variants of the names.

62 See Skjaervø (1989).

63 Daryaee (2002): 19, translates this as "21 cities were built in Padišxwārgar, either Armāyīl or by the order of Armāyīl were built by the mountaineers who had acquired from Aži Dahāg the dominion of the mountains." In his notes, p. 44, he understands this to mean that they acquired the dominion out of fear of Azhdahāg. I am not convinced of this interpretation, and one should beware of retrojecting later legends back on this early text. The oldest sources present Armāyīl as Ḍaḥḥāk's vizier and linguistically the least forced interpretation is to take this as a royal gift to the mountaineers.

64 Daryaee (2002): 1. Daryaee, p. 7, dates the main material of the text to the sixth century.

It uses the term *kōfyārān* "mountaineers", which we will meet again in later sources as *kōhyār* (Arab. *kūhiyar* [written *kūhbār*] in al-Dīnawarī, *Akhbār*, p. 10; al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* I: 229//II: 26, has *qūhiyār*).[65] It also presents Armāyīl as a person who was important enough to have twenty-one cities built by or for him.

The name Armāyīl has been explained by Markwart (1931: 68) as the Middle Persian Armāyēl with a Georgian ethnic suffix ("the Aramean"), and it is attested in Armenian sources.[66] The etymology is less than certain, though, and one might equally well see it as an invented name.

It seems that the next reference to the episode comes from Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), who in his *Maʿārif*, p. 618, mentions that the Kurds are the leftovers of Bīwarasf's food. He also tells that Bīwarasf ordered two persons to be slaughtered every day, but that his Vizier Armāʾīl pitied the victims and let one of them live. It is noteworthy that Ibn Qutayba does not speak about the *brains* of the men, merely saying that Bīwarasf ate their flesh.[67] Ibn Qutayba does not mention snakes, but sees Bīwarasf in his archaic role as a cannibalistic monster, Ḍaḥḥāk-*e mardās*.[68]

This seems to be the original scenario of the episode: one nobleman, Armāyīl, feeds Ḍaḥḥāk. Only late sources mention two persons and make them cooks, and even they make it clear that they were no ordinary cooks but noblemen disguised as such. There is no evidence that the other character, Garmāyīl (or Karmāyīl) would have been invented before the mid-tenth century and, taking into consideration the large number of texts that do contain this episode, it is improbable that a variant version with two cooks would have left no traces, had the second cook been an early addition. The second name seems to have been created as a Schallwort to echo the first.[69]

The earliest source to speak specifically of brains and at the same time the first to mention the snakes on the King's shoulders is al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 284/897), *Taʾrīkh* I: 158. Al-Yaʿqūbī is very concise, criticizing the irrationality of these

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65   For the title, see Markwart (1931): 69–70, and Bailey (1930–32): 947.

66   Cf. Dowsett (1961): 108, 225. Markwart seems to have been inspired to this etymology by Yāqūt, *Muʿjam* II: 475, which he quotes and which tells us that Armāʾīl was a Nabatean from al-Zāb.

67   Cf. Ṭūsī's *ʿAjāʾib*, p. 130, where the text, and even more clearly a manuscript variant, gives us to understand that it was Ḍaḥḥāk himself who ate human flesh.

68   For the original meaning of *mardās* "man-eating", see, e.g., Roth (1850): 423, and Umīdsālār (1381a), but see also Nöldeke (1920): 19, note 2. Firdawsī or his source has, consciously or not, associated the original epithet with the Arabic name Mirdās and made it Ḍaḥḥāk's patronym.

69   Markwart (1931): 68, analyses the name as "the man from Bēth Garmē".

stories.[70] He does not identify this Persian king by name but, obviously, he is speaking of Ḍaḥḥāk. His knowledge of this mythical material was, though, not intimate, as can be seen from the list in which he claims that one of the kings had several mouths and eyes and *another* had snakes on his shoulders and ate men's brains. Anyone familiar with Persian mythology would have seen he was speaking of the one and the same monstrous king.

The dislike of *khurāfāt* may have been behind the rationalizing explanation for the snakes growing on Ḍaḥḥāk's shoulders. The first to explain away the unnatural was the contemporary of al-Yaʿqūbī, al-Dīnawarī (d. not later than 290/902), who offers this explanation in *al-Akhbār al-ṭiwāl*, pp. 6–7. He uses the word *silʿa* "sebaceous cyst" for the things that grew on Ḍaḥḥāk's shoulders. This remains the standard expression in rationalistic descriptions, although *laḥma*[71] and *faḍla*, or *gūsht-faḍla*,[72] are also occasionally used. In late versions this rationalization is taken a step further by speaking of wounds.

From a medical diagnosis, there was only a short step to a medical cure. Al-Dīnawarī, however, does not take this step. Contradicting himself he says that the brains were *fed* to the *silʿas*. Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), *Taʾrīkh* I: 204–205//II: 3–4, is the first to speak of anointing the *silʿas* with brains to alleviate the pain. Al-Ṭabarī claims that this passage, as well as much else he tells about Ḍaḥḥāk in his *Taʾrīkh*, derives from Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 204/819). The first to mention that the snakes grew after Iblīs had kissed Ḍaḥḥāk is al-Maqdisī (d. after 355/966), *Badʾ* III: 141, and the first to explain this as a reward for his gastronomic feats is Firdawsī, followed by al-Thaʿālibī (wrote around 412/1022), *Ghurar*, p. 18.

The archaic version of the story seems to have been that Ḍaḥḥāk's vizier fed his master, or the snakes growing out of his shoulders, with human flesh, or brains. This is amply documented in early sources. The following list contains the most important early (pre-1200) attestations of the theme, as well as one later one which is of particular interest. Most later sources merely repeat what Firdawsī or the historical tradition have already said. The contents which are related to this episode in each work are briefly described after each item.

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70   This is a common motif among Arab historians, who seem to have vied with each other in who could say the nastiest thing about Persian myths. Ibn al-Athīr perhaps goes furthest in saying (*Kāmil* I: 66) that he only tells stories about Jamshīd to show the Persians' ignorance. He calls these stories "stupid lies of the Persians" (I: 76), as does Ibn Isfandiyār in his *Tārīkh-e Ṭabaristān*, p. 83. The latter author is loth to transmit mythological tales from Persian national history but eager to relate various other *ʿajāʾib*.

71   Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* I: 206//II: 6; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil* I: 75.

72   Ibn al-Balkhī, *Fārsnāme*, p. 35 (in explanation of the word *silʿa*); Ḥamdallāh, *Tārikh-e guzīde*, pp. 81–82.

Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), *Maʿārif*, p. 618: Persians say that the Kurds are the leftovers of Bīwarasf's food. Every day he ordered two people to be slaughtered and ate of their flesh. He had a Vizier, called Armāʾīl, who slaughtered one of the intended victims but let the other live, sending him[73] off to the mountains of Fārs, where they multiplied.

al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 284/897), *Taʾrīkh*, I: 158: upon the shoulders of a king there were two snakes that ate men's brains.

al-Dīnawarī (d. not later than 290/902), *Akhbār*, pp. 6–7: Persians call al-Ḍaḥḥāk by the name Bīwarasf. Two *silʿas* grew out of his shoulders in the shape of snakes. They pained him until they were fed (sic) with human brains. Four bulky men were daily brought to be slaughtered. He had a Vizier, Armiyāyīl, who let two of them live, substituting their brains with those of two rams, and told them to go where no one could find them. They went to the mountains. People say that this is the origin of the Kurds.

Ibn al-Faqīh (wrote in 290/903 or soon after), *Mukhtaṣar*, pp. 275–276: Afrīdhūn brought al-Bīwarasf to Mt. Demavend and put Armāʾīl in charge of him and his nourishment. Every day he used to slaughter for him two people with whose brains al-Bīwarasf nourished himself. Armāʾīl thought it a sin to slaughter people and managed to save (some of) them.[74]

al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), *Taʾrīkh* I: 204–205//II: 3–4 (← Ibn al-Kalbī, d. 204/819): Two *silʿas* grew out of al-Ḍaḥḥāk's, alias Bīwarasb's, shoulders and pained him until they were anointed with human brains. Every day, two men were slaughtered. I: 206/II: 6: Many people say that they were pieces of swollen flesh, shaped like a viper's head, while others say that they were snakes.

al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956), *Murūj* §§1115–1116: Two snakes grew out of al-Ḍaḥḥāk's shoulders and fed on human brains. This led to the death of many until people rose against him. Afrīdūn chained him in a cave in Mt. Demavend, as has been mentioned (§538). Every day the Vizier of al-Ḍaḥḥāk had slaughtered (*qad kāna ... yadhbaḥ*) a man and a ram, mixing their brains for the snakes to eat. He drove the other man to the mountains where the freed men grew numerous. This is the origin of the Kurds.[75]

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73 Strictly speaking, this would imply that they were sent there one by one, but as Ibn Qutayba's version is very short, he may just have simplified the story.

74 Ibn al-Faqīh goes on to tell how Armāʾīl built the village of Mandān for the people that were saved. It should be noted that he does not mention the rams that were substituted for these freed people.

75 Note that this is told only after the mention of al-Ḍaḥḥāk's imprisonment on Mt. Demavend, implying that this happened at that time.

al-Masʿūdī (d. 345/956), *Tanbīh*, pp. 85–86//123–124: Persians exaggerate about al-Bīwarasb, alias al-Ḍaḥḥāk, telling how two snakes grew out of his shoulders and were only pacified by human brains. More about this has been told in the *Murūj*.[76]

Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 350/961 or 360/971), Commentary to Abū Nuwās (d. c. 198/813), *Dīwān* II: 2: Persians claim that al-Ḍaḥḥāk is still alive on Mt. Demavend. On his back there are two snakes, which daily feed on flesh. If flesh is not given to them, they bite him.[77]

Balʿamī (wrote in 352/963–4), *Tārīkh*, pp. 97–99; *Tārīkhnāme* I: 102–103: two long pieces of flesh (*gūsht*) grew on Ḍaḥḥāk's, or as Magians say, Bīwarasb's, shoulders and after 700 years of his rule these became wounds and started to ache. No one knew how to cure them until Ḍaḥḥāk had a dream, wherein a voice said to him that he should cure the wounds with human brains. After this he daily slaughtered two people and put some of their brains upon the wounds. This went on for 200 years. He had a cook (*khwān-sālār*) who took care of this. Every day he killed one man, but let the other one go, mixing lamb's brains with one of the victim's. When some time had gone by, he smuggled the saved people by night out of the town. This is the origin of the Kurds.

al-Maqdisī (d. after 355/966), *Badʾ* III: 141–143: Iblīs, in the shape of a young man, came to al-Ḍaḥḥāk, i.e., Bīwarasb, and kissed his shoulders. Two snakes grew out of them and fed on human brains. Every day al-Ḍaḥḥāk slaughtered two men. Bīwarasb had a cook, called Azmāyil. When young men were brought to him to be slaughtered, he let one of the two live and sent him out into desert. The Kurds derive from these men.[78]

Firdawsī (d. 411/1019–20), *Shāhnāme* (see above).

Miskawayhi (d. 421/1030), *Tajārib* I: 62: al-Ḍaḥḥāk, alias Bīwarasb, had on his shoulders two *silʿas*, which he moved to frighten people, claiming they were snakes. (No mention of slaughtering anyone, except for the general one that al-Ḍaḥḥāk, alias Bīwarasf, killed and crucified people, but this is not connected with the *silʿas*).

al-Thaʿālibī (wrote around 412/1022), *Ghurar*, pp. 20–25: Two snakes grew out of al-Ḍaḥḥāk's, alias Bīwarasf's, shoulders when Iblīs kissed them and blew on them. Some say that they were *silʿas*, merely resembling snakes. Iblīs appeared to him and told him that the snakes will never be separated from

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76   Actually, al-Masʿūdī tells little more than this in the *Murūj*. When cross-referencing, he sometimes exaggerates the amount of information contained in his other books.

77   This is only found in MS-A and may be an interpolation.

78   Again this is told only after the mention of Bīwarasb's imprisonment.

him, but that they can be pacified by feeding them with human brains. Al-Ṭabarī has said that most people of the Book say that they were lengthy pieces of flesh, like the head of a viper. Two men were slaughtered every day and their brains were fed to the snakes. Al-Ḍaḥḥāk had two cooks, Armāyīl and Karmāyīl, who one day decided to set free one of the two men and to substitute a sheep's brains for those of his, feeding the (freed) one with the (rest of the) sheep. Set free, they became the origin of the Kurds.

al-Thaʿālibī (429/1038), *Thimār*, p. 284: the two "horns" (*qarn*) of al-Ḍaḥḥāk, alias Bīwarasf, were two *silʿas*, which people call snakes.[79]

al-Bīrūnī (d. about 442/1050), *Āthār*, pp. 282–283/227//213–214: Bīwarasf ordered two men every day to be slaughtered to feed his two snakes with their brains. Azmāʾīl was commissioned to take care of this, but he freed one of the two, replacing the brains of the freed one with those of a ram. Others say that they were two *silʿas*, which were anointed with the brains.

Gardīzī (wrote in early 440s/1050s), *Zayn*, p. 67: two snakes, some say two wounds, grew on the shoulders of Ḍaḥḥāk, alias Bīwarasp. Every day two men were killed and their brains were given to the snakes or put upon the wounds. P. 70: after Ḍaḥḥāk was imprisoned, Afrīdhūn thanked the Vizier of Ḍaḥḥāk, Armāyīl, who had set the men free. They became the Kurds of the West of Kūhistān. P. 354: Bīwarasb, i.e., Ḍaḥḥāk, wanted two men to be slaughtered daily, but his Vizier Armāyīl set one of them free.

Ibn al-Balkhī (wrote before 510/1116), *Fārsnāme*, p. 35: Upon the shoulders of Bīwarasf, alias Ḍaḥḥāk, there were two *silʿas*, i.e., *gūsht-faḍlas*. To frighten them he let people think they were snakes. Finally they became painful, but the pain was alleviated when they were anointed with brains. The killing of young men continued until the rebellion of Kāwe.

Mujmal al-tawārīkh (written 520/1126), pp. 34–35/40–41: there was on Bīwarasb's, alias Ḍaḥḥāk's, shoulders a sickness (*ʿillat*), which people called snakes. The world was depopulated as people's brains were extracted to feed the snakes. After 700 years Armāyil and Karmāyil came into his service and slaughtered one of the two men but let the other one free and sent him off into the desert. The Kurds are the offspring of the freed men.

Muḥammad Ṭūsī (wrote in the late sixth/twelfth c.), *ʿAjāʾib*, pp. 130–131: Ḍaḥḥāk was a tyrant who used to give human flesh to feed the snakes which grew out of his shoulders. After imprisoning Ḍaḥḥāk in a pit in Mt. Demavend, Afrīdūn ordered Armiyāyīl to provide him daily with two human brains. Some time went by. Finally, Armiyāyīl repented and started giving him the

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79   This is related to the question whether Dhū'l-Qarnayn should be identified with Ḍaḥḥāk or not.

brains of two sheep and let the men go. P. 236: Sarakhs is a city built during
the time of Ḍaḥḥāk, who ate people. People were fed to the snakes which
grew out of his shoulders, but some of these people escaped.

Yāqūt (d. 626/1229), *Muʿjam* II: 475 (← Ibn al-Kalbī): Armāʾīl, the Nabatean from
al-Zāb, supervised al-Ḍaḥḥāk's, alias Bīwarasf's, kitchen. He used to slay one
young man and let the other free, mixing the flesh of a ram with that of the
other. After having imprisoned al-Ḍaḥḥāk, Afrīdūn wanted to kill Armāʾīl.

When this act of cannibalism took place is somewhat obscure. Early sources
give two possibilities. Either Ḍaḥḥāk, or his snakes, ate the victims while he
was ruling as the King or he did this when imprisoned in Mt. Demavend.[80] The
latter option is slightly surprising, as this evil act is difficult to explain when
the monster is in chains. This unmotivated act might yet be the earlier, for two
reasons. Firstly, we may take this as a *lectio difficilior* of sorts: it is easier to
understand why the eating would have been retrojected from the imprison-
ment period back to Ḍaḥḥāk's rule than vice versa. Secondly, the freed men,
the forefathers of the Kurds, are in many early versions said to live around
Mt. Demavend, which is understandable if they were set free there. However,
Ḍaḥḥāk is also otherwise connected with Mt. Demavend, so this is by no means
decisive.[81]

Eating people during Ḍaḥḥāk's reign is attested earlier in our sources than
the other option, being implicitly mentioned by Ibn Qutayba in his *Maʿārif*,
p. 618, where Bīwarasf is said to have *ordered* two men to be slaughtered. The
earliest source to date this habit to the period of Ḍaḥḥāk's imprisonment
in Mt. Demavend is, though, not much later, as the detail turns up in Ibn
al-Faqīh's[82] *Mukhtaṣar*, pp. 275–276. Here the one to feed the beast is Armāyīl,
set by Ferīdūn to guard the prisoner.[83] Whether the tradition which derived

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80   Firdawsī, who seems to have invented the scene that takes place in Yemen, lets this habit
      start before Ḍaḥḥāk had become the Shah, but when he was already the King of Yemen.

81   For the connections of Ḍaḥḥāk and other legendary kings with Mt. Demavend, see
      Tafazzoli (1993).

82   Ibn al-Faqīh wrote in 290/903 or soon thereafter. The edition of de Goeje is based on the
      text's abridgement, *mukhtaṣar*, but there is no reason to take this passage as a later inter-
      polation. The whole text has been edited by Yūsuf al-Hādī in 2009, but his edition has not
      been available to me.

83   The motif of a talisman/spell (*ṭilasm*) used on Ḍaḥḥāk to keep his food eternally in him
      is related to this situation: to avoid the need of fresh brains, the monster is sealed up
      and made to live on what he already had eaten. This motif is found in, e.g., Ibn al-Faqīh,
      Mukhtaṣar, p. 275.

the Zoroastrian dynasty of Maṣmughān from the descendants of Armāyīl is ancient or not is uncertain, but it, too, is already found in Ibn al-Faqīh.

Balʿamī (wrote in 352/963–4) is the first to mention that the habit of eating brains only began after 700 years of Ḍaḥḥāk's reign (*Tārīkh*, p. 98, *Tārīkhnāme* 1: 102).[84] This is in contradiction to Firdawsī's version because in his *Shāhnāme* the snakes grow out of Ḍaḥḥāk's shoulders and Iblīs gives his nefarious advice before Ḍaḥḥāk's victory on Jamshīd. Balʿamī, who does not mention Iblīs at all, also has the curious detail of Ḍaḥḥāk seeing in a dream the cure for his pains, whereas all other sources attribute this advice to Iblīs. Balʿamī's version cannot be easily brushed aside because he has remarkably archaic features in his narrative. Implicitly, and rather surprisingly, this is supported by ps.-ʿUmar-e Khayyāmī,[85] *Nawrūznāme*, p. 9, which tells that in the beginning of his rule Ḍaḥḥāk ruled justly, which is directly contrary to the main tradition.[86]

At whatever time Ḍaḥḥāk adopted his, or his snakes', unnatural diet, all early sources agree, if they mention the matter at all, that he was fed by only one man, Armāyīl.[87] For the entrance of the second nobleman/cook we have to wait until Firdawsī himself. But was he the inventor of the second cook?

Most of the earlier sources have disappeared, but Arabic and Persian texts that derive their material from the lost sources help us partially to reconstruct the material in circulation before Firdawsī.

The earliest source, after Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī, to have two cooks is the anonymous *Mujmal*, which mentions them by name (p. 35/40–41). In the same passage the author quotes a verse (Z309) by Firdawsī. By the 13th century

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84 This, though, may be a later interpolation. On l. 6 (of *Tārīkh*) we have the sentence *khalq-e jahān az-ū sutūh shudand* and on l. 15, this is more or less repeated (*hame jahān az way bi-sutūh shudand*). For a similar case, which seems to be proven to be an interpolation by a comparison of manuscripts, see Peacock (2007): 64. *Mujmal*, pp. 34–35/40–41, says that the two cooks came to serve Ḍaḥḥāk after 700 years of his rule, implying that the snakes appeared only then.

85 The real ʿUmar probably died in 526/1131, but the text is somewhat later.

86 The tension between the evil and good characteristics of Ḍaḥḥāk is clearly visible in Asadī Ṭūsī's *Garshāsbnāme*, where the eponymous hero, Garshāsb, is in the service of the monster King. It may well be that this goes back to a version where Ḍaḥḥāk had not been demonized, but may have been an ambivalent character similar to Jamshīd.

87 With orthographic and phonetic variants. The variation in the vowel length of the final syllable is not relevant as it is easily generated by the writing system. Its shortening in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* is due to the exigencies of the metre. The variation between Armāʾīl, Armāyīl, and Azmāyīl is due to careless copying, but the variation in the forms of Bīwarasp in Arabic and Persian is relevant for an analysis of the interdependencies of the sources and the names have been carefully kept in the form they are attested in the texts.

Firdawsī had attained great fame and it is easy to find sources following his version of the story, but it should be emphasized that until the 13th century the existence of two cooks is rarely mentioned and the scene with one cook, or vizier, remains standard throughout the twelfth century.

So far, Firdawsī seems the obvious inventor of the second cook, but the question is not as simple as one might think. Al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* closely agrees with Firdawsī in this episode, as well as in many others, though also using al-Ṭabarī and other sources. Al-Thaʿālibī, too, has two cooks with these names. Did he use Firdawsī as one of his sources or do both authors derive the second cook from the lost common source, the *Prose Shāhnāme*?

As we have seen, the *Prose Shāhnāme* was the source of both Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī (Chapters 4.4–6). In this episode, there is one significant detail that strengthens the case and shows that al-Thaʿālibī did not base his translation on Firdawsī's text. Firdawsī mentions (Z35) that whenever a group of two hundred (*duwīst*) men, rescued from the kitchen, had been collected, or in a variant twenty (*bīst*), they were sent off to the wilderness. The rhyme (*kīst*) fixes the possible readings to 200 or 20. Al-Thaʿālibī, however, speaks of groups of ten (*Ghurar*, p. 25). When he wants to embellish his text al-Thaʿālibī freely elaborates his source by adding maxims or using rhymed prose, but he rarely invents unnecessary details. Moreover, the number of the men does not seem to be an issue in any early source and one wonders why in his prose he should have changed the original number.[88] Firdawsī, on the other hand, has a possible reason for doing so because of the rhyme, although one has to admit that he would have mastered rhymes well enough to keep the number had he wanted to do so. But as the exact number is of no great importance he may well have changed the original "ten" to "twenty" for an easy rhyme.

On the other hand, we come across certain difficulties with Gardīzī's *Zayn*, which contains a version with only one cook. Gardīzī's version is very similar to both Firdawsī's and al-Thaʿālibī's, though there are significant differences, which show that the author cannot be dependent, or solely dependent, on Firdawsī. The combat scene between Ḍaḥḥāk and Afrīdūn (pp. 69–70) is firm proof that Gardīzī used another source or other sources. The scene is full of seemingly archaic magic, Ḍaḥḥāk taking the shape of a sparrowhawk to get on the roof of the pavilion, *kūshk*, whereas in Firdawsī's version he does the same

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88   A rare case of mentioning the number of freed men comes in Gardīzī, *Zayn*, p. 354, where the festival of *sade-ye buzurg* is said to have derived its name from the hundred (*sad*) men freed by Armāyīl. The passage is transmitted on the authority of Magians (*mughān*) and is clearly based on a folk etymology (*sad–sade*).

prosaically with the help of his lariat.[89] On the other hand, there are detailed lexical links between Gardīzī and Firdawsī, including the very significant use of the word *maḥḍar* (Gardīzī, p. 68; four occurrences in Z210–215), which cannot be a coincidence. In Firdawsī, this manifestly Arabic word calls attention to itself. The scene in which it is used is rarely found in other sources and it is even lacking in al-Thaʿālibī. If we assume it was invented by Firdawsī, we encounter two difficulties. Why did Firdawsī break his habits and use a manifestly Arabic word where Persian words would easily have been available?[90] And secondly, how does Gardīzī end up using that particular word? In short, we seem to be in a situation where we have to assume that both authors are here making use of the same source, which, however, only had one cook, or vizier.[91]

Incidentally, also in another case Gardīzī and Firdawsī agree with each other as opposed to the *Prose Shāhnāme*, as documented in its Older Preface. The Preface mentions that Afrīdūn stopped with his foot the stone his envious brothers had set rolling down upon him.[92] Firdawsī makes him use magic (Z291)[93] and Gardīzī implies the same by making (*Zayn*, pp. 68–69) him stop it with his word. Al-Thaʿālibī does not have this scene.

There may also be a third significant similarity between Firdawsī and Gardīzī. In several early versions of the story, Armāyīl is the Vizier of Ḍaḥḥāk, but in Firdawsī a mysterious character called Kundraw takes this role and also warns his master of the unwelcome guests that had stormed his harem, *shabistān*. In the notes (on Z369) to his edition, Khaleghi-Motlagh (2001): 98, takes up the possibility that the name is a corrupt form of Gandarw, another pre-Islamic dragon, but provides no evidence for this.

It seems that the name is attested, besides Firdawsī, in only two sources, both intriguing in their ways. *Mujmal*, p. 71/89, refers to a certain Kundrawaq. The author of the *Mujmal* often follows Firdawsī, even quoting his verses and

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89 Cf. Meisami (1999): 69.

90 Omidsalar (2002) has heavily criticized seeing Firdawsī's language as consciously purified of Arabic elements and has claimed that it represented the normal language of the day. This, however, seems a somewhat exaggerated reaction to equally exaggerated claims about Firdawsī single-handedly vivifying a dying language. In fact, the language of Firdawsī seems more "Persian" than contemporary prose texts, although this may not have been a nationalistic avoidance of "foreign" words but just an archaisizing tendency dictated by the subject matter.

91 Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* does not show any signs of being a work of compilatory character, where within one episode there would usually be materials deriving from several sources. In each case, Firdawsī seems to be versifying one source at a time.

92 Ed. Qazwīnī, pp. 37–38; ed. Monchi-Zadeh, p. 7, l. 2; trans. Minorsky (1956): 170, §7.

93 This was noted by de Blois (1992–97): 122.

mentioning him by name, so there is a proven dependency of the work in general on Firdawsī.

But there are difficulties. The *Mujmal* does not place the character into the story, merely mentioning him at the end of Ḍaḥḥāk's rule as his *wakīl*,[94] in a way that closely resembles the style of early chronicles. But how do we explain the form Kundrawaq? The prosaic author of the *Mujmal* had no need to change the name, but again the reverse is true: for a poet writing in the *mutaqārib*, the name Kundrawaq is difficult, as it should regularly become Kunděrawaq, with two short syllables following each other, and other options are equally unpersuasive. The only way to solve the problem is to posit another source (possibly with a chronicle structure) using the name Kundrawaq, which the author of the *Mujmal* has kept, while Firdawsī has changed it to fit the metre. The final Q would speak for an Arabic source, as the expected Persian form would be *Kundrawag, which is not attested in any of the preserved sources.

As the author of the *Mujmal* knew Firdawsī, we cannot know from which source he took the second cook. One should, though, note that the detail of the two cooks comes in the middle of a passage quite unrelated to what is given in the *Shāhnāme* of Firdawsī, and the two cooks are said to have come to Ḍaḥḥāk's service after he had ruled for 700 years, a detail lacking in Firdawsī, but supported by Balʿamī, *Tārīkh*, p. 98; *Tārīkhnāme*, p. 102. Without this detail, the passage on the cooks would evidently be an unmarked interpolation from Firdawsī, as it comes somewhat abruptly and interrupts the narrative. It is quite possible, perhaps even probable, that the author of the *Mujmal* has throughout his book used Firdawsī only as a secondary source, excerpting him whenever convenient but basing his narrative on other sources. Thus, he could well have changed his main source's Armāyīl to Armāyil and Karmāyil by inspiration from Firdawsī.

The name Kundraw/Kundrawaq is also found, albeit in a somewhat garbled form, in Gardīzī, *Zayn*, pp. 69–70, which mentions a treasurer (*ganjwar*), who performs more or less the same function as Firdawsī's Kundraw. It is probable that *ganjwar* is a corruption of either Kundraw, which it rather closely resembles, or Kundrawaq (or *Kundrawaj), which is not far off either.[95] Thus, it does not help in deciding which of the forms is the older, but again it shows the dependence of Gardīzī on either Firdawsī or their common source.

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94   Ḍaḥḥāk's Vizier is here named Banāh.

95   As is well known, early Persian manuscripts rarely differentiate between K and G.

The *Mujmal* is a compilation that uses various interwoven sources[96] and it is quite possible its author took the passage on Armāyil from another source, but added the second cook from Firdawsī. In a similar fashion, he has added much material from the *Garsāsbnāme*, which he mentions among his sources on p. 2/2, and has woven this into his narrative, which otherwise follows other sources, Firdawsī and Gardīzī virtually ignoring Garsāsb.

If we focus on the word *maḥḍar* and claim that Firdawsī and Gardīzī used the same source, we come across the difficulty that Gardīzī (*Zayn*, p. 70) only knows one Vizier, Azmāʾīl (p. 70 – p. 354 reads Armāyīl). If the common source of al-Thaʿālibī and Firdawsī already had two cooks, then Gardīzī should agree with them if he, too, used the very same source as Firdawsī as the use of the word *maḥḍar* would imply. Hence, it is easier to assume that this common source only had one cook and the second cook was added by Firdawsī.

That the second cook was not present in Firdawsī's source might further be supported by some linguistic evidence in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. In Z30–32 and 35–36, Firdawsī lapses into the use of the singular when speaking of the cooks. Such use of singular forms for plurals is not unknown in early Persian and without any supporting evidence, one might take this as an admissible linguistic lapse in marking the plural. Considering, however, all the evidence, the verses may well echo a text where there was only one cook, Armāyīl. Firdawsī would have added another character but not been consistent when versifying his source and making the necessary changes.

This, however, would mean that al-Thaʿālibī, who also has two cooks, must have used Firdawsī, besides their common source. Thus, it seems that the only way out of this labyrinth is to posit that al-Thaʿālibī did occasionally use Firdawsī as a source, as already suggested in Chapter 4.4.

Why was the second cook invented out of thin air? Whoever did this, and I believe it was Firdawsī, probably did it in order to heighten the dramatic effect of the narrative by letting the two discuss the matter with each other and also perhaps to parallel the two victims. One is also tempted to see the mirroring scene of Iblīs as a cook due to an acute and conscious literary mind. However, we know this scene to have been invented before Firdawsī and to

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96   In this passage, one can clearly see the compilatory character of the *Mujmal*. The heading of chapter IX: 2 implies that the chapter draws on Bahrām *mōbad-e Shāpūr* (p. 33/39). In fact, this comes through Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*, p. 26ff., as a comparison of the two texts shows. While *Mujmal*, pp. 33–34/39, more or less comes from Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, pp. 26–27, the wanderings of the disposed Jamshīd and his final death, pp. 34/39–40, are told according to another source, clearly the *Garsāsbnāme*, before the author comes back to Jamshīd's building activities which again come from Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 27.

originate with another author: creative literary minds had been working with the material even before Firdawsī. It seems, though, that the "vegetarian" scene may well have developed hand in hand with turning a vizier into a cook. Both episodes are dramatic and thematically tied together. Both have cooks that are not what they seem and serve the king only to drive through their own agenda and manage to do so without arousing the king's suspicions. Obviously, they are the creation of a fine literary mind, or several fine literary minds.

What has this little study on Armāyīl taught us? Any analysis of Firdawsī should be based on a detailed study of both the epic and the early testimonies. To understand the working of the literary mind we have to know what materials the author had at hand to build on. An analysis of the text of the *Shāhnāme* which does not look at its sources may become seriously flawed. We all too easily think of Firdawsī as handling raw material to forge his unique epic, whereas in reality he may be closely following earlier sources of some literary value. This does not, however, diminish the value of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. Whatever the author's relation to his sources, the final result is a superb piece of epic poetry. This, though, should not blind us to the fact that the Book of Kings tradition can boast of more than one creative mind.

Secondly, we should not draw a line between history and literature. The *Shāhnāme* belongs to world literature, but it tapped historical sources and was itself used as a serious source for Persian history. Even today it provides materials for the study of Sasanian history. Similarly, not all historical sources are devoid of literary interest.[97] We have no way of clearly determining what kind of work the *Prose Shāhnāme* was, but undoubtedly it was a valuable literary work in its own right.

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97   It is curious how little attention al-Thaʿālibī's *Ghurar* has received as Arabic literature, whereas its versified Persian counterpart is unanimously, and with good reason, considered a great piece of world literature. There is a difference between Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī, but the difference is not enormous and occasionally al-Thaʿālibī is even able to outdo the Persian master.

Back to the *Khwadāynāmag*

After having reviewed the evidence we have for the *Khwadāynāmag*, its Arabic translation(s), and its later reverberations in Arabic and Persian literature it is now time to come back to the central question of this book. What was the *Khwadāynāmag*?

To give a tentative answer to this, we have to discuss two aspects separately: Was there one *Khwadāynāmag* or several? What were the contents of the book and when was it compiled? These questions will be discussed and partly answered in Chapters 6.1 and 6.2.

6.1   One *Khwadāynāmag*. Or Many?

For a long time, most scholars have spoken about many *Khwadāynāmags*, but usually without supporting this with sufficient evidence or defining more exactly what they mean by "many". There seem to be five main reasons for assuming plurality of the *Khwadāynāmags*. The first is the mistaken belief that Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, written some 400 years later and partly fictitious, can be read as documentary evidence for the Sasanian period: when Firdawsī mentions that a Book of Kings was read to some king, this is taken as evidence for the situation in the Sasanian period and, hence, it is concluded that there must have existed early versions of the book. The second is the equally mistaken belief, deriving ultimately from Nöldeke (1879a): xix, that if the same event in pre-Islamic Iran is described in two or more different ways in Arabic sources, each version must derive from the *Khwadāynāmag* and, hence, provides evidence for various redactions or versions of the book.[1] The third is the passage Ḥamza,

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1   Nöldeke, however, (1879a): xx, adds: "Die Frage, ob diese Differenz älter oder jünger ist als das Chodhâinâme, hat mehr literarische als geschichtliche Bedeutung." Again, it seems that later scholars have not read carefully what Nöldeke actually wrote. Nöldeke was interested in reconstructing Sasanian history *wie es eigentlich gewesen* and, hence, was more interested in knowing whether a piece of evidence matched what actually happened than in knowing which precise source transmitted the information to the Arabs. Nöldeke's formulation ("The question whether the difference is older or younger than the *Khwadāynāmag*, has more literary than historical importance") shows where his focus was: for a study on the *Khwadāynāmag* it is crucial to know whether a piece is older or younger than the *Khwadāynāmag*, as in the

Taʾrīkh, pp. 9–10, which is taken to refer to a plurality of Middle Persian texts, while, in fact, it speaks about Arabic translations. The fourth is the reference in Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 16, to a number of manuscripts of some texts, usually (mis)understood to refer only to the *Khudāynāme*, that were not found to be identical. The fifth and most weighty piece of evidence is Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh's reference to twenty-some copies of the *Khudāynāme* in Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 22.

The first reason can be easily dismissed. There *is* a lot of historical material in the *Shāhnāme* and it *can* be used for historical studies. Yet we cannot rely on its details, especially those that are used to create atmosphere or have other literary functions (writing of letters; entertainment of the kings and heroes; etc.). Unfortunately, the reading of ancient books clearly belongs to this category. While we may perhaps rely on the fact that a certain king waged a campaign against the Byzantines, we may hardly rely on the narrative that after the battle, the heroes drank wine, listened to music, or had books read to them for their edification or entertainment.

As we have already shown that the *Khwadāynāmag* was but one of Firdawsī's ultimate sources and not necessarily even that (Chapter 4.2), it should be clear that his *Shāhnāme* cannot be taken as representing a carefully preserved official record of those times.

The second reason has already been amply answered (Chapters 2.2.1 and 4.6): there was a variety of historical sources in Pahlavi and many of these are known to have been translated into Arabic (and yet others, unknown to us, may well have been translated, too), so that there is no reason automatically to assume that all variant versions of the same incident must by necessity come from variant versions of one book only.

The remaining three points need some more discussion. First, we have to distinguish between the *Khwadāynāmag* and its Arabic translations. If one refers to the Arabic translations, then certainly there was variation in them. We have seen that extraneous material was added to these translations, but the "Arab" material shows that this will definitely have been done within Arabic tradition by tapping Arabic sources, thus having nothing to do with the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag*. The reasons the Arabic versions differed from each other are attributable to two factors: 1) different translations of the same original obviously differ from each other in wording and style, etc.; 2) as translators added new materials to their translations, the result is, of course, that they differ from each other.

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latter case it cannot, by definition, derive from that particular book. In the other case, it may, or may not, derive from it.

How many of the Arabic translations were direct translations from the Middle Persian is not clear, but it is obvious that not all the authors discussed in Chapters 3.1–4 produced completely new translations and some may have merely revised the version of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ by additions and corrections in the light of other transmitted materials (whether in Arabic or Middle Persian, whether the *Khwadāynāmag* itself or some other texts, or even oral transmission). This admitted, one should then point out the obvious: the multiplicity of translations does not permit us to speak about multiple originals. The multiplicity of the translations of the Qurʾān or Bible does not allow us to speak about multiple Qurʾāns or Bibles.

To come to the third reason, we may repeat what has already been pointed out in Chapter 3.1: Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 9, unequivocally speaks of translations, not original texts. The crucial passages are marked below in bold:

> Their chronologies are confused, rather than accurate, because they have been **transmitted** for 150 years **from one language into another and from one script**, in which the number signs are equivocal, **into another**, in which the "knotted" number signs (*ʿuqūd*) are also equivocal.

What is perhaps even more significant is that Ḥamza, whose main interest is chronological, refers to confusion in number signs. He does not claim that any incidents were told differently or that the contents of the translations would have been different. Immediately after this, Ḥamza goes on to speak about the various manuscripts he had collected ("In this chapter, I have had to take recourse to collecting variously transmitted manuscripts (*nusakh*), of which I have come across eight"), after which he lists eight Arabic translations of Pahlavi texts, not original manuscripts in Pahlavi. There is, moreover, no reason to assume that all the eight Arabic texts were translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*. On the contrary, it has been shown in Chapters 3.1–3 that some of them in all probability were *not* translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that the passage testifies to (limited) differences between various Arabic texts. Some, but only some of these, were translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*, and the differences between these would mainly concern confusion in the numerals, which complicated the use of these texts for chronological purpose, and this was Ḥamza's main interest. What the passage does not say is that the differences between those texts that were translations of the *Khwadāynāmag* would necessarily have been significant outside of chronological matters or that all these eight texts would have been translations of the same text, or, finally, that any of them would have been in Pahlavi. What is more, if we accept the rather obvious conclusion that not all

these texts were translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*, then the reference to differences can only refer to numbers and chronology: it would be superfluous to say that different books differed from each other in their content. It is the different chronologies, partly based on miswritten numerals, that were compared and found to differ from each other.

Next we come to the fourth argument, which is based on Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 16:

> Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī has said in his book: I looked into the book called *Khudāynāme*, which is the book that, when translated from Persian into Arabic, is called *Taʾrīkh mulūk al-Furs*. I repeatedly looked into manuscripts (*nusakh*) of this book and perused them minutely, finding that they differ from each other. I was unable to find two identical copies. This is because the matter had been confused **by the translators of this book when they translated it from one language into another**.

At first sight, this would seem to refer to a Pahlavi text, al-Kisrawī first identifying *Khudāynāme* as the title of the original and then referring to the manuscripts of "this book". However, we have seen that the same title, *Khudāynāme*, was also used for its Arabic translation (Chapter 1.1.1) and the end of the passage shows that al-Kisrawī is, after all, speaking about translations: the matter has become confused because of problems in translation. Had he used Pahlavi original(s), the sentence would make no sense.

We should also contextualize the passage: this is a prefatory note to the chronological list given on pp. 19–21. What it refers to are the regnal years of the kings, which, as Ḥamza had already noted (*Taʾrīkh*, p. 9) get confused when texts are translated from one language into another. There is no indication that Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī was here speaking of various redactions or manuscripts which in broad lines differed from each other. What he says is that he perused the manuscripts minutely (*baḥathtuhā baḥth istiqṣāʾ*) and found that they differed from each other. What he seems to be speaking of are the usual scribal errors that take place during the transmission of a text and which are particularly problematic in chronology:[2] a small mistake may garble the chronology completely, whether the scribe uses letter or number signs or writes the numbers out in words. We cannot, however, completely rule out the possibility that there might have been other differences in the manuscripts used by Mūsā,

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2 In fact, Nöldeke (1879): xix, takes the variation mentioned in this passage and on p. 22 (Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh's collection of twenty-something copies, cf. below) to refer to regnal years. This is ignored in later discussion.

but the passage of Ḥamza cannot be used as proof of this. Note, moreover, that Mūsā does not claim that the differences were great[3] – on the contrary, he had to peruse the manuscripts *minutely* for comparison.

All in all, the first four arguments only show that there were, perhaps minor, differences in the Arabic translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*, as well as chronological differences between various Pahlavi texts in their Arabic translations. The main complaint against these Arabic translations concerns their numerals, not the texts as such.

Finally, we come to the fifth and most significant passage: Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 22. The passage reads in its entirety:

> (What follows) repeats what was mentioned in the first chapter of this History, with a commentary, which was brought by Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh, the *mōbad* of the district of Shābūr from the country (*balad*) of Fārs.
>
> Bahrām al-Mōbadhānī said: I collected more than twenty manuscripts of the book titled *Khudāynāme* and corrected (*aṣlaḥtu*) from them (i.e., on their basis) the chronologies (*tawārīkh*) of the kings of Persia from Kayūmarth, the Father of Mankind until the end of their days and the transfer of kingship from them to the Arabs.

The same Bahrām appears on Ḥamza's list (*Taʾrīkh*, p. 10), where he is listed as the last authority and the title of his book is given erroneously as *Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk Banī Sāsān* (see Chapter 3.2.6).

The language of this *Khudāynāme* is not indicated in the passage and we have just seen how al-Kisrawī (and following him, Ḥamza) refers to the Arabic translations under the same name. As a *mōbad*, Bahrām can be expected to have been familiar with Pahlavi, so he might well have used the original text, but this is not stated in the text.

However, there must have been Middle Persian copies of the text circulating at the time of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and available to those persons on Ḥamza's list that really translated the text anew from the original language and did not merely elaborate on Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation. It is quite possible that Bahrām used copies of the book in both languages and there is no reason to deny that there might well have been several copies of the original Pahlavi text

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3 Rubin (2008b): 44, claims that the passage shows that there were "great differences between all these books" and later, p. 44, speaks of "marked differences between them", but there is nothing in the text to imply that the differences were great or marked. Inconvenient they certainly were as even tiny mistakes in numbers tend to muddle the chronology.

still circulating in the tenth century, and they may even have come up to a high number, twenty-odd, but there is no more reason to deny that some of these twenty-odd copies might as well have been Arabic translations, better and more certainly known to have circulated at the time.

What seems to have remained unnoticed, though, is the content and extent of what "was brought by Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh, the *mōbad* of the district of Shābūr from the country (*balad*) of Fārs." The excerpt from Bahrām covers only four pages of text in Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh* (pp. 22–25): the following chapter (pp. 26–49) is not said to derive from Bahrām and, as we have seen (Chapter 3.6), some of its sources can be identified and these are known to have been books other than the *Khwadāynāmag*. Some individual pieces of this material (pp. 26–49) may come from Bahrām, but the chapter is given as an afterthought, or commentary, to the main chronological list, and it is this list that is the result of Bahrām's collection of twenty-odd copies. Whether the next chapter is by Bahrām or not, the references to *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar* etc. make it impossible to claim that all information on pp. 26–49 would derive from the *Khwadāynāmag* and it is ultimately insignificant whether it was Bahrām, Ḥamza, or somebody else, who added this "commentary" section to the chronological list given on pp. 22–25, which is explicitly attributed to the *Khudāynāme*, in whichever language.

It is also worth noticing that in whichever language(s) the *Khudāynāme* copies were, they must have been short enough for a *mōbad* to collect twenty-odd copies and collate them with each other. We will return in Chapter 6.2 to the question of the size of the original *Khwadāynāmag* and its translations.

Bahrām does not say that there were any major differences between the copies of the *Khudāynāme*, and as his text contains only a chronological skeleton consisting of the names of the kings and their regnal years, with little elaboration, the differences between the copies must have related to this information.

At the end of the following chapter, p. 49, there is a centrally important passage which describes the contents of the books used for this chapter:

> These short stories about the kings with which I fleshed this chapter (pp. 26–49) out are not found in the books of *tawārīkh* and *siyar*,[4] except in small measure. The rest of them are in (i.e., come from) their other books.

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4   These terms seem to be used here and often in Ḥamza's book with different meanings, although in some cases they may be interchangeable. For Ḥamza, *taʾrīkh* primarily refers to chronology, whereas *sīra* refers to narrative history. The latter term may in other books also mean "way of life; wisdom".

Hence, the preceding chapter, pp. 22–25, comes from chronological and historical books, obviously the *Khwadāynāmag* being one of these, and the next chapter gives the commentary to this skeleton history of Persian kings, *explicitly* derived from a variety of other sources ("their other books"), not the *Khwadāynāmag* or any one book, for that matter.

Based on these five arguments and their discussion, we may now sum up our results for the time being. The evidence shows that the Arabic translations of the *Khwadāynāmag* had differences between each other, mainly in the use of numerals but admittedly probably going further than this, namely to the content of the texts. The Arabic *Khudāynāme* also circulated in a number of copies and versions, attributed to several translators, some/many of which were probably working on the basis of earlier translations, not the original text. In addition, we have reason to assume that the original Pahlavi text was also in circulation, but whether the number "twenty-odd" refers solely to Pahlavi copies of the text or whether it includes Arabic translations, is not clear. Nowhere are these Pahlavi texts described as different recensions or versions: they are only called different manuscripts (*nuskha*) of the *Khwadāynāmag*.[5]

There is only one piece of evidence that I am aware of that might be interpreted as speaking in favour of the plurality of Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmags*. This comes from Ḥamza, *Ta'rīkh*, pp. 50–51:[6]

> The fifth chapter of the first book, concerning narrating some passages (*jumal*) of what there is in the *Khudāynāme*, which neither Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ nor Ibn al-Jahm narrated. I have put them at the end of this chapter, so that the reader might consider them in the same way he considers the Arabs' stories about Luqmān ibn ʿĀd and the Israelites' stories about ʿŪj and Bulūqiyā.[7] That should be understood.
>
> I have read in a book that was translated[8] from a book of theirs titled *al-Ābistā* (the *Avesta*) that … [there follows the story of Gayōmard, here Kahūmarth, and the twins Mashih and Mashyāna, in some seventeen lines].

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5   The above discussion also answers all the points but one raised by Shahbazi (1990): 208, 215–218, who claims that there were three different versions of the *Khwadāynāmag*, royal, priestly, and heroic. His inferences from Ḥamza, *Ta'rīkh*, pp. 50–51, will be discussed below.

6   Cf. Jackson Bonner (2011): 21–22. Yarshater (1983): 419, draws attention to the fact that the first version conforms to that of the *Bundahishn*.

7   I.e., non-historical tales.

8   Sic, thus referring to an Arabic book, as this cannot mean that the book was translated from the Avestan into Pahlavi, as Ḥamza does not seem to have known Pahlavi.

> I also read about this in a different form and with more commentaries to the narrative in another book: [there follows some ten lines with chronological and astronomical details that were lacking from the first narrative].

The passages come at the end of the chapter that discusses pre-Islamic Persia, as if an afterthought. There are three ways to explain the reference to passages in the *Khudāynāme* "which neither Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ nor Ibn al-Jahm narrated". The first is that Ḥamza here uses the title *Khudāynāme* in a generic sense[9] for various works on Persian national history. This would be our one and only such case.

The second possibility is that Ḥamza, who did not read Pahlavi, is here referring to the other versions of the Arabic Book of Kings (either under the title *Khudāynāma* or *Kitāb al-Siyar*), based on Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation (or new translations made from Middle Persian) that had been enlarged with other materials.

The third possibility is that Ḥamza, or the copyist, has simply been careless. A simple error of the copyist (or the author) may have set the expression *fī Khudāynāme* in a wrong position. If we change the place of this element, the passage conforms to our lack of any other evidence for a plurality of *Khwadāynāmags*. If, instead of "*fī ḥikāyati jumal mā fī Khudāynāme lam yaḥkihā Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ wa-lā Ibn al-Jahm*" we read "*fī ḥikāyati jumal mā lam yaḥkihā Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ wa-lā Ibn al-Jahm fī Khudāynāme*," the passage becomes unproblematic: "concerning narrating some passages (*jumal*) which neither Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ nor Ibn al-Jahm narrated in (their translations of) the *Khudāynāme*." This would also explain how Ḥamza suddenly first quotes the *Avesta* and then another book in Arabic (presumably through Abū Maʿshar al-Munajjim, who refers to the *Avesta* in a quotation on p. 11) after claiming to be quoting from the *Khwadāynāmag*.

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9   As suggested by Rubin (2008b): 41–42, cf. also Jackson Bonner (2011): 21, n. 16. Omidsalar (2011): 37, too, takes the *Khwadāynāmag* to have been the name of a genre, not a book. His main argument comes from the misunderstanding of Ḥamza's text and needs no further refutation. This argument he supplements by speculation on the wide circulation of such "epics", as he calls them, but without introducing any tangible evidence. When we come back to what we really know from the earliest sources, there is nothing to imply that the *Khwadāynāmag* would have been a genre. Rubin (2005): 67, 70, very tentatively puts forward the possibility that an Arabic anthology existed from which all the various versions of Persian national history stemmed, but in the end, p. 87, is himself very sceptical about this. Indeed, there does not seem to be either any evidence for this or any reason for speculatation.

A variant of this would be that we just admit that Ḥamza has here been rather lax with his formulations. In any case, I find it difficult to conjure a plurality of *Khwadāynāmags* on the sole basis of this one short and problematic passage ("supported" by the various misunderstandings discussed above) that can, moreover, easily be emended to conform with the rest of the evidence. If we were to claim that this passage has to be taken at face value, we would still have to explain how the first passage is, however, attributed to the *Avesta*, not the *Khwadāynāmag*, and the second passage comes from "another book".

The existence of (at least) two different types of the Arabic *Siyar*, however, seems to be confirmed by Ḥamza, *Ta'rīkh*, p. 20, who mentions the existence of a long and a brief version of the *Siyar*. The latter may well be taken to represent more closely the *Khwadāynāmag*, whereas the former could well refer to an Arabic version expanded by stories which were originally separate. It is improbable that at least those stories which have an Arab point of view would first have been written down in Middle Persian and only then translated in two versions into Arabic. More probably a succinct Middle Persian version was first translated into Arabic and then expanded by adding material relevant to the Arabs and, perhaps, tales from other sources, some of which may have been in Middle Persian.

It also seems to be a rather common idea that the *Khwadāynāmag* was a priestly text or that there were two separate *Khwadāynāmags*, one of which was priestly. It is difficult to trace the origin of this idea which is often repeated as self-evident. As far as I am able to see the idea again derives from a confusion between other sources for Persian national history and the specific book called the *Khwadāynāmag*: passages from Arabic, Persian, and Middle Persian texts contain material with a strong Zoroastrian interest or even bias, and there is no doubt that some of this is "priestly" in the sense that its authors were probably *mōbads* or *hērbads* and the texts also reflect their ideas in their attitudes towards the kings.[10]

However, no such attitudes can be found in the material that might be considered specifically to derive from the *Khwadāynāmag*. Obviously, the kings were Zoroastrian and the Empire had a "Zoroastrian bias" because that was

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10   A typical case of confusion is found in Cameron (1969–70): 143, who writes: "The attitude displayed to the various kings in the *Khwadāynāmagh* was dictated entirely by their religious position, i.e., whether or not they were strictly orthodox". The claim is as far from what we can glean from the earliest and best sources as possible, and there is nothing to indicate this to have been the case. The sentence would be closer to the truth in the form: "There are many passages in the later Arabic-Islamic historical works, where the attitude displayed …". Cf. also her notes on Yazdagird the Sinner (p. 150).

the general, and at times official, religion of the dynasty, but no such bias in the sense of any antagonism between the kings and the Zoroastrian "Church" is to be seen in what we know about the *Khwadāynāmag*: kings are not assessed in this material according to their attitude towards the clergy or blamed for their lack of enthusiasm in religion. Even though there are various evaluations of them in the Arabic and Classical Persian material, this does not mean that they were differently evaluated in the *Khwadāynāmag*.

In short, "a priestly *Khwadāynāmag*" is a phantom based on inappropriate use of terminology, yet again an example of how the expression "the *Khwadāynāmag* tradition" has misled scholars.[11]

Finally, while the present study shows that there is no need to speak of several *Khwadāynāmags*, this does not mean that there would not have been any variation between the manuscripts of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Most probably there was. As we know from any historical or epic work, manuscript variants, short additions, deletions (either conscious or not), and so forth tend to accrue over the years even to a text which has been carefully transmitted. The *Khwadāynāmag* need not have been an exception to this. But just as there are variants in the manuscripts of, e.g., al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh*, and we still do not speak of a plurality of his *Taʾrīkhs*, the variants, if such there were, do not legitimate speaking about the book in the plural. The same goes for possible additions to the text. If the *Khwadāynāmag* was a brief chronological text (see the next Chapter 6.2), it is quite possible that the last few kings of Iran may have been added to the list by later scribes, either in the original Pahlavi text or, more probably, in its Arabic translation to keep it up to date.[12] Yet this does not give us reason to speak of several *Khwadāynāmags*.

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11 Shahbazi (1990): 217, adds a third version of the *Khwadāynāmag*, a heroic one. Here he refers to the heroes of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* and claims, without evidence, that the royal version did not "bestow upon them so elevated a position, but emphasized, instead, their roles as celebrated *bandas* (subjects) of the Great King." These heroes probably had only a minor role to play in the *Khwadāynāmag*, if even that (Chapter 5.1), and there is nothing to indicate that their stories ever found their way into this book–here there is again confusion between one specific book and pre-Islamic Persian history in general: that later authors narrate heroic stories does not prove that these stories must come from one particular book.

12 Cf. the similar attitude in the Preface to *Taʾrīkh-e Bukhārā*, p. 2, discussed in Chapter 2.4.

6.2   The Contents, Size, Sources, and Date of the Khwadāynāmag

What, then, was the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* like? To get an answer to this we must work backwards in time. The contents of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* may be deduced in rough outline from the extant references and quotations. As the second step, we may then speculate on the relationship between it and the original *Khwadāynāmag*, keeping in mind that the translation process for historical literature did not expect similar exactitude from the translator as with the translation of scientific and philosophical works. Even a complete reconstruction of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation would still leave much to do to reconstruct the original *Khwadāynāmag*.

Let us start with some negative remarks. Chapter 5.1 has shown that among Arabic scholars before al-Thaʿālibī very little was known about Rustam, which implies that he was at most a marginal character in the *Siyar* of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, and there is no reason to assume that Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ for some obscure reason purged him and the other Sistanians from his translation. Thus, one may surmise that there was little about Rustam in the *Khwadāynāmag*, too, and he may not even have been mentioned in the book. Neither do we have any evidence for the other heroes, Sistanians or others, in the *Khwadāynāmag*. The *Khwadāynāmag* clearly was what its title says, a book of kings, not of heroes.

Alexander and the Petty Kings are problematic. A Middle Persian *Alexander Romance* has been postulated, but in the light of the evidence its existence is seriously to be doubted (Chapter 2.3). Alexander was a problematic character for the Sasanids, who largely modified themselves on their enemies, the Achaemenids, about whom they knew little but were eager to imitate the little they did know. Hence, in Pahlavi literature Alexander is a negative character. The positive character in later, Islamic Persian tradition clearly comes from the *Romance* in one way or another, and there is no reason to assume that such features were included in the *Khwadāynāmag*. From a chronological point of view, Alexander was important, though, and one would presume that he was, in one way or another, mentioned in the *Khwadāynāmag*, presumably as a negative character whose evil deeds could be summed up in a few lines, perhaps mentioning the burning of Persian books and other acts of vandalism in the country or, perhaps, just giving the number of years of his interregnum. For the Sasanians, Alexander was hardly a legitimate Persian king, as he was for the later Persian tradition.

The Seleucids and the Parthians were little known in early Arabic historiography and were presumably only summarized in the *Khwadāynāmag*, if even that. We have to remain aware that this was a royal book of the Sasanids.

The Seleucids would have been usurpers to them, and a tension must have remained between the Sasanids and the previous dynasty, the Parthians, even though, as Pourshariati (2008) has shown, we should not think that the Parthian element disappeared after the emergence of the Sasanian Empire. However, the lack of information on these two dynasties in Arabic sources shows that not much was told about them in the *Khwadāynāmag*, if anything. Whatever the extent of the earlier parts, it is clear that the Sasanids were the main focus of the book.

Firdawsī's epic contains wonderful stories, both moving, entertaining, and full of suspense. But Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* is not the same as the *Khwadāynāmag*, as has often been emphasized throughout this book. How far the confusion has gone may be exemplified by an authoritative writer. Ehsan Yarshater writes about earlier Middle Persian sources in the *Cambridge History of Iran* 3/1 (1983): 393: "Some of these works must have been incorporated either in their entirety or in an abridged version in the later recensions of the *Khwadāy-nāmag*. We find, for instance, that a complete version of the *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* is reproduced by Firdausī and an abridged form by Ṭabarī and Thaʿālibī."

What this actually proves is merely that the story had existed and been translated, or summarized, in Arabic by the time of al-Ṭabarī and had been incorporated into the common source of Firdawsī and al-Thaʿālibī, the *Prose Shāhnāme* (see Chapter 4.2). Nothing more. Zarēr may have been mentioned in the *Khwadāynāmag*, but there is no reason to assume that his story would ever have become part of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

We have already shown that the Sistanians did not play any role in the book and that there is reason to doubt whether they were even mentioned there. Likewise, there is also reason to believe that many of Firdawsī's orphan stories, such as that of Bīzhan and Manīzhe, did not derive from Firdawsī's main source, the *Prose Shāhnāme*, and, hence, have nothing to link them to the *Khwadāynāmag*, which Firdawsī used, if he used it at all, through the *Prose Shāhnāme*.

This already minimizes the potential narrative element in the *Khwadāynāmag*, and in Chapter 3.4, we have pointed out that many of the other stories, too, are unlikely to have been included in the *Khwadāynāmag*: stories about rebellions against the Sasanids and others centrally featuring Arab characters and full of Arab interest are difficult to assume to have been parts of the royal Sasanian chronicle, and there is no evidence that they would have been parts of the *Khwadāynāmag* or even its Arabic translation.[13] Instead,

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13 Pace Cameron (1969–70): 146, who writes about Agathias' informant: "Sergius has evidently abbreviated the account in the Royal Annals (...), for Agathias does not give us

these stories are known to have existed in separate Arabic translations (Chapter 2.2.1).

When the *Khwadāynāmag* was translated into Arabic, narrative elements may have been added to it, at least to some extent, but it is only in the tenth-century Classical Persian texts that we first encounter a fully-developed narrative history of Iran, in which the episodes, hitherto transmitted as separate texts, have been integrated into the chronological framework, possibly provided by the *Khwadāynāmag*, creating a powerful epic narrative of great literary merit, which culminated in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*.

Seeing the *Khwadāynāmag* as a rather dry chronicle with little narrative also frees us from several problems. Had the *Khwadāynāmag* been a huge epic in prose, anywhere near the size of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, or even a quarter of it, it would have been the largest Pahlavi text of the time that we would be aware of. There are few long texts in Pahlavi literature, and the one that is the longest, the *Dēnkard*, is a text which was compiled much later and was based on shorter texts that have been excerpted and put together to form an encyclopaedia of knowledge, which despite this comes up in the modern facsimile edition to only 832 small pages.[14]

All other historical Pahlavi texts that are extant or that we know or presume to have existed are much shorter. The *Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr* covers less than 70 small pages in the modern edition and *Ayādgār ī Zarērān* even less (17 pages).[15] Even religious texts are usually rather brief. The *Bundahishn*, again a later compilation, has 83 and 240 small pages in its two redactions.[16] Of the *Hazār Afsāne* we know very little, and the book certainly did not contain one thousand stories, as the title would have it,[17] and the existence of a Pahlavi *Alexander Romance* is extremely dubious (Chapter 2.3), but if it existed and was about the same size as the Syriac texts, it would clearly be the longest single non-religious Pahlavi text we can point out.

Shāhpuhr's name, (…) which was given to him by reason of the barbarous punishment he inflicted on his Arab prisoners. Nor does he tell us anything of Shāhphur's Arab wars." Both incidents must have been seen to be of great importance by the Arabs. But why should the *Royal Annals* have bothered to take notice of the nickname Dhū'l-Aktāf by which the King was called by the Arabs and to document this?

14   Volumes 1–2 and the beginning of volume 3 have not been preserved, though, so that the original *Dēnkard* would perhaps have been a quarter longer than this.

15   *Pahlavi Texts* I: 1–17.

16   Ed. Justi (the Indian *Bundahishn*) and Ankleseria (the Greater, or Iranian, *Bundahishn*).

17   According to Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 363/304//714, it, or actually its translation, contained 200 stories. For a possible Persian translation of a variety of Pahlavi texts, coming up to 2,000 pages, see Chapter 4.7.

Similar conclusions may be reached by considering the translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* itself. If even some of the texts mentioned in Chapter 3.1 were new translations or even thorough reworkings of an earlier translation, one is hard put to claim that so many versions could have existed if the original was a voluminous book. Ibn Isḥāq's long *Life of the Prophet* circulated in several recensions, but it was a centrally important text for the Muslim community, which the translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* certainly was not. Did twenty-something (Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 22) scholars each copy and revise a book of, say, 250 pages for their private use? And would the result of the efforts of Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh be a disappointing four pages of text after having collated more than twenty copies of a voluminous work? Putting together all passages on pre-Islamic Iran in al-Ṭabarī's *Taʾrīkh* would hardly make up two hundred pages and it is clear that he used several sources to achieve this.

Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 9, may again be used to argue for a chronicle-type content of the *Khwadāynāmag*:

> Their (the Persians') chronologies are all confused, rather than accurate, because they have been transmitted after 150 years from one language into another and from a script, in which the number signs are equivocal, into another language, in which the "knotted" number signs are also equivocal.

While not saying anything about what else the *Khwadāynāmag* might have contained, this passage refers to a text where numbers play a major role, which would tally with the contents of the Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh quotation in Ḥamza's *Taʾrīkh*: a dry list of kings and their regnal years.

These examples should suffice to show that even on the Arabic side, a voluminous *Siyar al-mulūk* would perhaps be out of line with what we might expect and with what the evidence would seem to point to. Let me here take a purely speculative step and spell out what I believe the *Khwadāynāmag* to have been, based on the studies presented in this book but going beyond them into the unprovable, but, I hope, never coming in collision with any of the available evidence.

For me, the *Khwadāynāmag* is a book of very small size, be it of 10, 20, or 30 pages. It contained a list of Persian kings and its main interest may well have been chronological – at least, Ḥamza, who himself is admittedly specifically interested in chronology, would give us this impression and Agathias' evidence supports this. It clearly started with Gayōmard and continued until the time of its writing (cf. below), and individual copies may well have been expanded by adding a few lines on the last kings of Iran, to cover the whole story of pre-Islamic Iran until the conquest.

The *Khwadāynāmag* probably contained a rather short and dry account of each king, listing his regnal years, perhaps some throne speeches or maxims, mentions of the foundation of cities and Fires, and the main (positive) events during his reign, such as major victories. This image would equally well fit the evidence of Agathias and of Ḥamza, and it is hard to come by any tangible evidence to the contrary. In style, it would probably be comparable with the Pahlavi original of the Arabic *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar*.

Throne speeches and maxims are reported in several sources and they might well come from the *Khwadāynāmag*, although the genre of wisdom literature (*andarz*) was a favoured one in Middle Persian literature and there were certainly separate texts of that genre, many of which have even been preserved. But the tradition is rather unanimous in attributing a handful of maxims to many kings in contexts where we surmise the main source to have been the *Khwadāynāmag*, which shows that either the maxims were already there or some early author, be it Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ or someone else, had inserted them into the Arabic version.

This is further supported by a passage in Ḥamza, *Ta'rīkh*, p. 49. After describing what was mostly lacking in the books of chronology/history, Ḥamza adds two sentences which show that these chronological texts (i.e., the *Khwadāynāmag* and other historical books) did contain pieces of wisdom literature:

> fa-hādhā alladhī ḥashawtu bihi hādhā l-faṣl min qiṣār akhbār al-mulūk mā laysa fī kutub al-tawārīkh wa'l-siyar minhu illā qalīl wa-bāqīhi fī sā'ir kutubihim. fa-ammā rasā'iluhum wa-waṣāyāhum wa-mā ashbaha dhālika mimmā huwa fī kutub al-ta'rīkh fa-qad akhlaytu l-kitāb minhu.

> These short stories about the kings with which I fleshed this chapter out are not found in chronological and historical books, except in small measure. The rest of them are in (i.e., come from) their other books. I have, however, omitted from this book their letters and testaments and such material that is found in chronological books.

The foundation of cities is also very often mentioned in the texts belonging to this tradition, and *Shahrestānīhā ī Ērānshahr* might well have been compiled by taking these parts of the *Khwadāynāmag* aside to form a book with geographical orientation, although it has to be emphasized that this remains wholly speculative.

In addition, there will have been bits of information that are not listed here. Ḥamza himself obviously abbreviated the material, but this does not say how

much was left off. Did he cut half of the text away? Or a third or two thirds? We have no way of knowing, but it remains clear that the arguments presented in this chapter have to be taken into account in estimating this.

Reading the *Nihāya*, one gets a similar picture of the situation.[18] Excluding the long stories, as should be done (Chapter 3.4), the Sasanian biographies are usually built on only three or four elements. To take a typical example, the short biography of Bahrām ibn Sābūr ibn Sābūr Dhī l-Aktāf (*Nihāya*, pp. 247–248) consists of four elements:

1) words spoken by him on ascending the throne;
2) a throne speech;
3) the sending of an encyclica (this element is missing in many short biographies);
4) a short report of his death and the number of his regnal years, to which the towns founded by the king are sometimes added.

The mention of an encyclica is especially interesting in the light of what Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 49, says about the kings' letters having been quoted in Pahlavi chronological works (*kutub al-taʾrīkh*).

When it comes to the sources of the *Khwadāynāmag*, we are on even more speculative ground. Shahbazi (1990): 209–213, lists what he thinks were the sources of the *Khwadāynāmag*: old sagas (not further elaborated by Shahbazi), archival texts; narrations of contemporary events; and the "Ctesian" method, wherewith he means "anachronism whereby old history was enriched and its lacunae filled in by the projection of recent events or their reflections into remoter time" (p. 211).

While there were certainly some kinds of archives in the Sasanian Empire and while these may well have been fleshed out by knowledge of contemporary events, Shahbazi's claim to take them as sources for the *Khwadāynāmag* is purely speculative. Shahbazi also uses "documentation" from Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*, a text written four centuries after the *Khwadāynāmag*, where literacy is not only attributed to the Sasanians – whose Empire certainly was literate – but even to the mythical kings, whose kingdom certainly would not have been literate, had they any standing in real history in the first place.

Narrations of contemporary events could well have contributed to the *Khwadāynāmag*, but first we should be able to show that the book did contain extensive narratives, which does not seem to have been the case. Shahbazi also falls victim to the confusion between one specific book, the *Khwadāynāmag*,

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18   Cf. also an example translated from Ibn Qutayba's *Maʿārif* in Chapter 3.6.

and Persian national history in general, claiming without the slightest evidence that, e.g., the great campaign of Kay Khusraw against Afrāsiyāb "ultimately derived from" the *Khwadāynāmag* (p. 211), which we have very good reason to claim was not narrated, at least not extensively, in the *Khwadāynāmag* but in other Middle Persian texts (see Chapter 2.2.1).

Jackson Bonner (2015): 142, concludes his study by asking himself "whether there was any real historiography of Sasanian Iran at all."[19] While I would not go so far, this study would also imply that scholars tend to have an exaggerated idea of Sasanian historiography: the *Khwadāynāmag* is easily seen as a huge compilation living on in a great number of versions or recensions and, it would seem, mounting to hundreds of pages. About all this we have no tangible evidence.

The use of Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* as a historical document pops up again in Shahbazi's speculation on the date of the *Khwadāynāmag's* composition (1990: 213–215). Shahbazi claims that the book existed at the time of Bahrām Gūr because the *Shāhnāme* tells that Bahrām asked the book of kings (*nāme-ye khusrawān*) to be read in his presence. Again, this is a topos which should not be taken as historical truth, no more than the several letters written by various legendary heroes, such as Zāl and Sām, which cannot be used as evidence for the literacy of these legendary heroes.

That the *Khwadāynāmag* was first written down at the time of Khusraw Anūshirwān is a legend based on the *Bāysunqurī Preface*.[20] It is, though, quite possible, although Nöldeke's note (1879a: xv) that until Khusraw Parwīz (r. 590–628) the information on Persian national history in Islamic sources is usually uniform would instead favour the dating of the book to his reign.

Shahbazi claims to have found geographical evidence for the dating of the *Khwadāynāmag* to Khusraw Parwīz's time from the Preface of the *Prose Shāhnāme* (1990: 214–215). There Iran is defined in geographical terms, extending from the Oxus to the Nile and from Rome (Byzantium) to the Land of the Berbers (North Africa?). While it is interesting that this defines with some exactitude the limits of Iran at the time, and only at the time, of Khusraw Parwīz, there are three points that make one hesitant to accept this. First, there is no indication that this definition would come from the *Khwadāynāmag* – it may well be, and probably is, a definition given in the tenth century, possibly in

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19   Huyse (2008): 150–153 situates the creation of Sasanian written history into the late Sasanian period when formerly orally transmitted historical knowledge was put down in writing.

20   See Dabīr-Siyāqī (1383): 158 = *Shāhnāme* (ed. Macan) I: 11. Cf. Nöldeke (1879): xv, and Shahbazi (1990): 214.

remembrance of the maximal area the Sasanians ruled at the height of their power. Second, the larger definition of Ērānshahr is also attested in late Pahlavi works (especially *Shahrestānīhā ī Ērānshahr*),[21] and as Daryaee (2002): 6–7, notes this became the late Sasanian (and post-Sasanian, one may add) concept of the Ērānshahr. Third, *nāme* literature (Chapter 4.7) extended the adventures of Iranian and Sistanian heroes far and wide, from Spain and North Africa to India and deep into Central Asia and China. This literature was well known in the mid-tenth century and may well have influenced the common idea of the area that, in some sense, belonged to the by then legendary *Ērānshahr*.

The date is tempting, though. If we accept it, then the next question would be, do we find any evidence for dating the *Khwadāynāmag* to the time of Khusraw Anūshirwān in the first place? The answer has to be in the negative. Khusraw Anūshirwān's fame as a patron of literature was in the Islamic period,[22] as it had already been in Agathias' time, great and it was only natural to ascribe any important book routinely to his reign. Outside of the Islamic tradition, only Agathias might be taken as evidence for the *Khwadāynāmag*'s existence in Khusraw Anūshirwān's time. Agathias (d. 582) died merely three years after Khusraw (d. 579). Now, if the *Royal Annals* that he was using indeed refers to the *Khwadāynāmag*, then the work must date back to the time of Khusraw Anūshirwān.

Some support for either dating might be got from Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī's *Taʾrīkh*, p. 9 ("Their (the Persians') chronologies are all confused, not sound because they have been transmitted after 150 years from one language into another"), if we read this as a reference to the translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* from Middle Persian into Arabic. Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ translated the work around 750, so the number could refer to the original having been written around 600 – but I am afraid we cannot demand great exactitude from the numbers to exclude Khusraw Anūshirwān's reign, and the fact remains that we cannot even be quite certain whether Ḥamza is here referring to the time between the original and the translation or something else.[23] In any case, if we date the *Khwadāynāmag* to Khusraw Parwīz's time, then there is no reason to attribute the text to Khusraw Anūshirwān's times and postulate a new redaction

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21 See §33 for the inclusion of Syria, Yemen, (North) Africa, Kufa, and even Mecca and Medina.

22 As already pointed out by Nöldeke (1879): xvi.

23 Rubin (2008b): 36, takes the beginning from which to count these 150 years onward to be the end of the Persian kingdom, which would take us to around 800.

of the book,[24] as the connection between Agathias' *Royal Annals* and the *Khwadāynāmag* is not certain.[25]

A further possibility would be to date the text to the time of the last Sasanian king, Yazdagird III. The Preface to the *Bāysunqurī Shāhnāme*[26] mentions a historical compilation based on earlier works and compiled by Dānishwar *dihqān* at the beginning of Yazdagird's reign, reaching up to the end of Khusraw Parwīz's reign.[27] The source is late, and the whole story very dubious, contradicting all the other sources and, moreover, often anachronistic. With good reason, Ṣafā (1374): 80–81, presents doubts as to the name of Dānishwar *dihqān*, which does not fit the Sasanian naming tradition and sounds like a name invented in conformity with other such expressions in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* (*dihqān-e sakhungūy, dānā*, etc.). Together with the name, we have good reason to doubt the whole story.[28]

In Ḥamza, *Taʾrīkh*, p. 22, Bahrām is quoted as saying that he compared his twenty-odd manuscripts and "corrected from them (on their basis) the chronologies of the kings of Persia from Kayūmarth, the Father of Mankind, until

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24   Contra Shahbazi (1990): 214.

25   It would, I think, be all too speculative to suggest that the interest in Sasanian archives shown by Agathias (through Sergius) might have caused the Sasanians themselves to become interested in them, so that they would have compiled and published the *Khwadāynāmag* some years later, during the reign of Khusraw Parwīz. We should remember (cf. Chapter 1.2), though, that Sasanian literature was developing quickly in the sixth century.

26   Cf. Nöldeke (1920): 13–14.

27   It should be emphasized that the Preface does not speak about editing an earlier translation, but explicitly says that the *dihqān* compiled his book from various (written) stories/histories (*tawārīkh-e mutafarriq*), supplementing this by what he heard from *mōbads* and learned men.

28   The story is found in the *Bāysunqurī Preface* (Dabīr-Siyāqī 1383: 158–160 = Firdawsī, *Shāhnāme*, ed. Macan, I: 11–13). After telling about the Dānishwar *dihqān*, it goes on to narrate the later history of his manuscript. Saʿd-e Waqqāṣ found it among the loot taken from Yazdagird's palace and sent it to the Caliph ʿUmar (!), who ordered an interpreter to inform him of its contents. Later, ʿUmar ordered him to translate into Arabic stories about the Pīshdādians' just rule and similar stories from it but to leave all other stories untranslated. With the division of the booty, the original manuscript then found its way as a gift to the King of Ethiopia (Ḥabashe), who had it translated (*ān rā tarjame kardand*). Copies of the work became numerous, especially in India (Ethiopia and India often being confused with each other). Later, Yaʿqūb-e Layth had the original manuscript brought to him from India and had it translated (into Persian). This is identified with the *Prose Shāhnāme* and its story is briefly resumed, after which the text goes on to relate the stories about the versifications by Daqīqī and Firdawsī.

the end of their days and the transfer of kingship from them to the Arabs."
Taken literally, this would mean that at least some of his copies, whether in
the original Pahlavi or in Arabic translation, took the story up to the end of the
Sasanian dynasty. In the case of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ's translation we have reason to
believe that his version did so (Chapter 3.7) and we might expect the same to
be true also in the case of the other Arabic translations.

Whether the Pahlavi texts did the same is not clear. Bahrām may himself
well have added the final kings (and queens) from other sources, but it is also
quite possible that an individual scribe copying the *Khwadāynāmag* updated
the manuscript by adding a few lines on the last rulers. It does not matter
whether it was Bahrām or some scribe of the *Khwadāynāmag* who added the
last rulers, the one to an Arabic compilation or the other to the Pahlavi origi-
nal, but what does matter is that even if the addition came from one or several
of the original Pahlavi manuscripts, the addition of a few lines at the end of
the manuscript hardly allows us to call such a manuscript a new version of the
Khwadāynāmag. If we did so, then almost any work written in Pahlavi, Arabic,
or Persian should be said to exist in several versions.

Ultimately, dating the *Khwadāynāmag* is full of problems, and the best
we can say is that in all probability it stems from the reign of either Khusraw
Anūshirwān or, more probably, Khusraw Parwīz.

Translations of the Key Texts Concerning the *Khwadāynāmag*

This chapter gives some key passages on the *Khwadāynāmag* and related issues in Arabic and Persian texts in English translation in a chronological order, mainly according to the year of the death of the author. All translations from Arabic and Persian are mine. The passage by Agathias has been taken from Cameron's translation (1969–70: 135).

7.1 Agathias

I have completed the list of Persian kings and the chronological table and, to put it briefly, I have fulfilled the whole of my promise. It is my belief that this is quite true and accurate, since it was translated from the Persian books. When Sergius the interpreter went there he asked the officials in charge of the Royal Annals to give him access to the records (for I had often urged him to do this). He added his reason – that his sole purpose in wanting this was so that their affairs could be recorded by us also and become known and honored. They agreed at once – rightly – thinking the idea a good one. It would actually bring credit to their kings, they thought, if the Romans too knew what they were like and how many they were, and how the succession of their dynasty had been preserved. So Sergius extracted the names, the chronology, and the most important happenings in their time, and translated all this most skillfully into Greek (for he was the best interpreter, admired by Chosroes himself as having the highest possible reputation for learning in both states). So it was to be expected that he made a very accurate translation, and he gave it all to me in a most conscientious and friendly way, and urged me to make good the reason for which he had procured it. This has been achieved.

IV.30.2–4; TRANS. CAMERON 1969–70: 135

7.2   **al-Masʿūdī**

At the end of the seventh part of *Kitāb Murūj al-dhahab* we have men-
tioned the reason why Persians exaggerate the [regnal] years of these
kings, their secrets concerning this, and their wars against the kings of the
Turks – these wars are called *Baykār*, which means "battle" – and other
nations, as well as the battles between Rustam ibn Dastān and Isfandiyār
in Khurasan, Sistan, and Zābulistān.

TANBĪH, P. 94//136

• • •

Persians have a book called *Kahnāmāh*, in which there are (listed) the
ranks in the kingdom of Fārs, which were 600, according to their count-
ing. This book forms part of the *Āyīnnāmāh*. The meaning of *Āyīnnāmāh*
is "book of customs", and it is large, (going up to) thousands of pages. It is
rarely found complete except in the hands of *mōbads* and suchlike.

TANBĪH, P. 104//149

• • •

In the year 303 I saw in the city of Iṣṭakhr of the land of Fārs a large book
in the possession of a member of one of the noble families. It contained
many kinds of their sciences, stories of their kings and their buildings and
ways of rule, things which I have not found in any other of the Persians'
books, such as the *Khudāynāmāh*, the *Āyīnnāmāh*, the *Kahnāmāh*, or
others.

It contained the pictures of the Sasanian kings of Fārs, twenty-seven
rulers, twenty-five of them male and two women. Each was depicted as
he was the day he died, whether old or young, with his decorations and
crown, the plaits of his beard and the features of his face. They ruled the
world for 433 years, one month and seven days.

When one of their kings died they used to draw a likeness of him and
take it to the treasury, so that the living among them would know the
features of the dead. The pictures of those kings that had been in wars
were (represented) standing, and the pictures of those that had been in
(peaceful) rule were (represented) seated. The way of life of each one of
them (was told in this book) with its private and public details and the
notable events and important occasions that had taken place during
their rule.

The date of this book is that it was written on the basis of what was found in the treasury of the kings of Fārs in the middle of Jumādā II in the year 113 (731) and translated for Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān from Persian into Arabic.

The first of their kings in this book was Ardashīr, whose sign in his picture was red-golden and he wore trousers of the colour of the sky and his crown was green on gold. He had a spear in his hand and he was standing. The last of them was Yazdajird ibn Shahriyār ibn Kisrā Abarwīz, whose sign was green with ornaments and he wore embroidered trousers of the colour of the sky and his crown was red. He was standing with a spear in his hand leaning against his sword. (The book and the portraits were painted) in Persian colours, the like of which are no longer found, using liquid gold and silver, and powdered copper. The paper was purple and wonderfully coloured, though I am not sure as to whether it was paper or parchment because it was so beautiful and so perfectly made.

We have mentioned some (of the book's content) in the seventh volume of *Murūj al-dhahab* (...).

  TANBĪH, P. 106//150–151, on *Kitāb al-Ṣuwar*

<p style="text-align:center">• • •</p>

This fortress was built by an Ancient Persian king of old times, called Isbandiyār ibn Bistāsf (...). This is one of the fortresses in the world that are described as impenetrable. The Persians mention it in their poems and tell how Isbandiyār ibn Bistāsf built it. Isbandiyār waged many wars in the East against various peoples. He was the one who travelled to the farthest parts of the Turkish lands and destroyed the City of Brass. The deeds of Isbandiyār and all the things we have told are mentioned in the book known as *Kitāb al-Baykār*, which Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ translated into Arabic.

  MURŪJ §§479–480

<p style="text-align:center">• • •</p>

The Persians tell a lot about Afrāsiyāb's death and his battles, the battles and raids between the Persians and the Turks, the death of Siyāwush, and the story of Rustam ibn Dastān. All this is found explained in the book titled *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, which was translated by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ from Ancient Persian into Arabic. The story of Isfandiyār (...) and how Rustam ibn Dastān killed him is narrated there, as well as how Bahman

ibn Isfandiyār killed Rustam and other wonders and tales of the Ancient Persians. The Persians think highly of this book because it contains stories about their ancestors and their kings' histories. Thank God, we have been able to narrate many of their histories in our earlier books.

MURŪJ §541

•••

According to what is told in the *Book of al-Sakīsarān* the Persians say that his paternal grandfather Kay Qāwūs was the king before Kay Khusraw and that Kay Khusraw had no offspring, so he gave the kingship to Luhrāsb.

MURŪJ §543

•••

The Persians have a separate book for the stories of Bahrām Jūbīn and his stratagems in the country of the Turks to which he travelled, saving the daughter of the King of the Turks from a beast called *simʿ*, which is like a great goat and which had captured her from among her maidens when she had gone to a park. (The book also contained Bahrām's story) from the beginning of his matter (*ḥāl*) until his death and included his genealogy.

MURŪJ §644

7.3 Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī

Their (the Persians') chronologies are all confused, rather than accurate, because they have been transmitted for 150 years from one language into another and from one script, in which the number signs are equivocal, into another language, in which the "knotted" number signs (*ʿuqūd*) are also equivocal.[1] In this chapter, I have had to take the recourse of collecting variously transmitted manuscripts, of which I have come across eight, namely: *Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-Furs*, translated/transmitted by Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ; *Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-Furs*, translated/transmitted by Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī; *Kitāb taʾrīkh mulūk al-Furs*, which was taken from the Treasury of al-Maʾmūn; *Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-Furs*,

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1 For *ʿuqūd*, see Rebstock (1992): 64–65, and the literature cited there.

translated/transmitted by Zādūye ibn Shāhūye al-Iṣbahānī; *Kitāb Siyar mulūk al-Furs*, translated/transmitted or compiled by Muḥammad ibn Bahrām ibn Miṭyār al-Iṣbahānī; *Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk Banī Sāsān*, translated/transmitted or compiled by Hishām ibn Qāsim al-Iṣbahānī; and *Kitāb Taʾrīkh mulūk Banī Sāsān*, corrected by Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh, the *mōbad* of Kūrat Sābūr of the province of Fārs.

When I had collected them I compared them with each other until I managed to compile what is correct in this chapter.

TAʾRĪKH, PP. 9–10

• • •

Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Kisrawī has said in his book: I looked into the book called *Khudāynāme*, which is the book that, when translated from Persian into Arabic, is called *Taʾrīkh mulūk al-Furs*. I repeatedly looked into manuscripts of this book and perused them minutely, finding that they differ from each other. I was unable to find two identical copies. This is because the matter had been confused by the translators of this book when they translated it from one language into another.

TAʾRĪKH, P. 16

• • •

I have not concerned myself with the chronologies of the Ashghānian kings before the Sasanians because of the misfortunes that occurred at the time of those kings. Namely, when he had conquered the land of Babel, Alexander envied the sciences that they (i.e., the Persians) had acquired, such as no nation had been able to acquire before. He burned all their books he was able to find and then turned to killing their *mōbads* and *hērbads* and learned and wise men and those who, among their other sciences, preserved their chronologies, until he had killed them all. This he did after he had translated what he needed of their sciences into Greek. After this, during all the days of the Ashghānians, also known as the Petty Kings, the Persians remained obscure, having no one to bring back knowledge or be concerned with any kind of wisdom until their rule returned to them with the appearance of Ardashīr.

When Ardashīr confirmed the kingship for himself, he started counting time from his own accession. After him, the Sasanian kings followed his way and each of them counted time by his own regnal years, which has caused confusion in their chronologies. What an excellent idea it was

that the Arab kings decided to count their years continuously, from the beginning of the *hijra* onward.

TAʾRĪKH, PP. 20–21

• • •

(What follows) repeats what was mentioned in the first chapter of this History, with a commentary, which was brought by Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh, the *mōbad* of the district of Shābūr from the country of Fārs.

Bahrām al-Mōbadhānī said: I collected more than twenty manuscripts of the book titled *Khudāynāme* and corrected from them (i.e., on their basis) the chronologies of the kings of Persia from Kayūmarth, the Father of Mankind until the end of their days and the transfer of kingship from them to the Arabs.

TAʾRĪKH, P. 22

• • •

The fourth chapter of the first book, containing an abbreviation of the mention of the stories of the Persian kings. It is appropriate to accompany the exposition of (their) chronologies and the interrelatedness of (it and) what is in the books of (their) lives. (…)

These short stories about the kings with which I fleshed this chapter out are not found in chronological and historical books, except in small measure. The rest of them are in (i.e., come from) their other books. I have, however, omitted from this book their letters and testaments and such material that is found in chronological books.

TAʾRĪKH, PP. 26, 49

• • •

The fifth chapter of the first book, concerning narrating some passages of what there is in the *Khudāynāme*, which neither Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ nor Ibn al-Jahm narrated [probably to be emended as: "concerning narrating some passages which neither Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ nor Ibn al-Jahm narrated in (their translations of) the *Khudāynāme*."] I have put them at the end of this chapter, so that the reader might consider them in the same way he considers the Arabs' stories about Luqmān ibn ʿĀd and the Israelites' stories about ʿŪj and Bulūqiyā. That should be understood.

I have read in a book that was translated from a book of theirs titled *al-Ābistā* (the *Avesta*) that … [there follows the story of Gayōmard, here Kahūmarth, and the twins Mashih and Mashyāna, in some seventeen lines].

I also read about this in a different form and with more commentaries to the narrative in another book: [there follows some ten lines with chronological and astronomical details that are lacking from the first narrative].

TA'RĪKH, PP. 50–51

7.4 The *Prose Shāhnāme*/Preface

The following translation is based on the texts of Qazwīnī (1332 AH) II: 30–90, and Monchi-Zadeh (1975): 4–15, with the paragraph division used by Minorsky (1956) for easy reference.[2]

§2 The beginning of *Kārnāme-ye Shāhān*,[3] which was compiled by Abū Manṣūr al-Maʿmarī, the minister (*dastūr*) of Abū Manṣūr-e ʿAbd al-Razzāq-e ʿAbdallāh-e Farrukh.

(The author) first says in this book: As long as the world has existed, people have pursued knowledge, valued words, and known them to be the best memorial, because in this world man becomes greater and richer by knowledge. As men know that nothing will remain of them, they strive that their name would remain and their mark would not be deleted by making places flourish and strengthening them, being courageous and

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2 The "Middle" Preface, *Muqaddime-ye awsaṭ* (see Dabīr-Siyāqī 1383: 126–140) contains an abbreviated version of the same story.

3 The manuscripts give various confused readings, but both Qazwīnī and Monchi-Zadeh suggest this emendation. Minorsky seems to have based his translation on what Qazwīnī printed in his text (*kār-e Shāhnāme*), ignoring Qazwīnī's footnote where he suggests this emendation. It is unfortunate that this important passage is confused, but there are two strong reasons for accepting the conjecture. First, it is easy to understand how a later scribe changed the title into the *Shāhnāme*, as that title was more familiar to the scribe and the Preface was attached to Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme*. Secondly, *āghāz-e kār-e Shāhnāme* does not quite make sense. In order to make sense, Minorsky has to supply a verb at the end of the sentence and still the sentence is odd at this place, whereas "the beginning of the book xxx, which was …" is a standard opening sentence. Later, §9, we also have textual vacillation between *īn nāme o-kār-e shāhān* vs. *īn kārnāme-ye shāhān*, and other variants.

daring, giving their life (for something) or bringing forward new wisdom to people by making novel things

§3 like the King of India who brought forward *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, *Shānāq*, and *Rām o-Rāmīn*.

§4 Maʾmūn, the son of Hārūn al-Rashīd, had royal greatness and noble ambition. Once he was sitting with his grandees and said: "As long as they are in the world and have power, men must endeavour to leave a memorial (*yādgārī*) of themselves, so that after their death their name will remain alive." His secretary, ʿAbdallāh, son of Muqaffaʿ,[4] replied to him: "Kisrā Anūshīrwān left something that no king has left." Maʾmūn asked what that was, and ʿAbdallāh answered: "He brought from India a book, the one which the doctor Burzūye translated from Indian[5] into Pahlavi, and so his name remained alive among the people of the world. He spent 500 ass loads of dirhams (on this)."[6] Maʾmūn asked for this book[7] and when he saw it, he ordered his secretary to translate it from Pahlavi into Arabic.

§5 When he heard this Naṣr ibn Aḥmad was pleased and commissioned his minister *khwāja* Balʿamī to translate it from Arabic into Persian, so that the book came to the hands of people and everybody read it. He ordered Rūdakī to versify it, and so *Kalīla wa-Dimna* became familiar to both great and small and his[8] name remained alive because of this and this book remained as his memorial. Then people added so much to its embellishments that everyone was pleased with seeing and reading it.[9]

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4 Note that we either have to take this as the son of the famous Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ or admit a grave anachronism here.

5 I.e., Sanskrit.

6 The sum is extravagant. Minorsky takes the expression to mean that he spent 500 ass loads *daily*, presumably on his whole court, which is still extravagant and makes a sudden change in the topic: instead of the book, his fame is now (at least partly) due to his luxurious court. This does not fit the general story line.

7 Either to be brought from his library or to be acquired.

8 Minorsky takes this to refer to Rūdakī, but I would prefer to take this as referring to his patron.

9 This is a difficult passage and I follow here the reading of Monchi-Zadeh. Qazwīnī emended this to *pas chīniyān taṣwīr andar afzūdand*, which Minorsky translates as "The Chinese added images to it", adding a note that one might also read *chandān* and translate "so many images were added to it". I do not find the reference to Chinese illustrators convincing, but Minorsky's reading is possible, as the end of the sentence emphasizes that the (mere) seeing of the book caused pleasure, as if the book were also a visual pleasure. My translation leaves that as a possible reading without excluding the possibility that the *text* was "embellished", i.e., revised/added to.

§6 Now, the Emir Abū Manṣūr-e ʿAbd al-Razzāq was a magnificent and strong-willed man, able and great-minded in his enjoyment. He had a full share of kingship and princely manners, as well as high endeavours. He was of noble origin by nature and descended from the *ispahbads* of Iran.

He heard about the case of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* and the example set by the King of Khurasan and this pleased him. He wished from destiny that he, too, would have a memorial in the world. He gave orders to his minister Abū Manṣūr al-Maʿmarī that owners of books from among the *dihqāns*, learned men (*farzānagān*), and men of experience be brought from (various) towns. His servant Abū Manṣūr wrote a letter by his order and sent someone to the towns of Khurasan and brought from there, and everywhere, men of understanding, such as Shāj (Mākh), son of Khurasānī[10] from Herat, Yazdāndād, son of Shāpūr from Sistan, Māhūy-e Khwarshīd, son of Bahrām from Shābūr,[11] and Shādān, son of Burzīn from Ṭūs.

He brought (men from) every town[12] and set them down to collect[13] these books of theirs[14] and the kings' books of deeds (**kārnāmehā-ye shāhān*)[15] and the life of each: their deeds of justice and injustice, (their times of) peace[16] and war, and their manners (*āyīn*), from the first king (*kay*) who was in the world and set the manners of being human and distinguished men from animals down to Yazdagird-e Shahriyār, who was the last of Persian kings.

§7 (This was accomplished) in Muḥarram 346 after the *hijra* of the best of mankind, Muḥammad the Chosen, may God bless him, and they

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10   Variants Sarkhāy, Khwānī, Sarkhānī.

11   Probably to be read Bishābūr ← Wēh Shāpūr.

12   Again, a key passage is sadly confused. For [*az*] *har shāristān* there is a variant *har chahār-ishān* "every four of them", favoured by Minorsky, but it is slightly incongruent with the preceding use (four times!) of *chūn* "such as". If the four are just given as examples, there should surely have been more people included than just the four of them. On the other hand, the Preface is not always quite logical, and Minorsky's reading cannot be excluded.

13   Minorsky translates *farāz āwurdan* as "to produce", but a more natural and unforced translation is "to collect".

14   Again there are variants and an equally possible translation would be "these Books of Kings", depending on whether we follow the reading *nāmehā-ye shān* or *nāmehā-ye shāhān*.

15   Qazwīnī's reading is *nāmehā-ye shāhān o-kārnāmehāshān*.

16   As it conforms to parallelism, I prefer here Monchi-Zadeh's reading (*āshtī*) to Qazwīnī's (*āshūb*), which is followed by Minorsky.

gave it the title *Shāhnāme*, so the knowledgeable people would read it. (...)

§9 (...) Now we shall mention the deeds of kings (*kār-e shāhān*) and their stories from the beginning.

§10 The beginning of the story. Wherever there was a resting place for men, this earth was divided into four directions, from one end to the other. (...)[17]

§11 Know that people have said many (different) things about the beginning of this world.[18] We will mention the opinion of each group, so that it be known to him who seeks and asks and follows the way that seems to him the best.[19]

In the book of the son of Muqaffaʿ, of Ḥamza-ye Iṣfahānī, and suchlike we have heard that from the time of Adam the Pure, God's prayers and salutations upon him, down to this time, when they began this book,[20] 5,700 years have passed. The first man who appeared on this earth was Adam.

I have heard the same from Muḥammad-e Jahm-e Barmakī and Zādūy ibn Shāhūy. Similar information has come from the book of Bahrām-e Iṣfahānī and the *Book of the Sasanians* by Mūsā-ye ʿĪsā-ye Khusrawī,[21] and from Hishām-e Qāsim-e Iṣfahānī, and from the *Book of the Kings of Pārs* (*nāme-ye shāhān-e Pārs*) and[22] (from the book taken out) from the treasury of Maʾmūn and from Bahrāmshāh-e Mardānshāh-e Kirmānī, and from Farrukhān, *mōbadān mōbad* of Yazdagird-e Shahriyār, and from Rāmīn, who was the servant of Yazdagird-e Shahriyār.

§12 From them onwards (down to us) (the reckoning) comes to *three hundred[23] years, so that we should mention how many years have passed

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17   The paragraph continues with the Sasanian geographical division of the world into *kishwars*. It clearly comes from Sasanian sources and seems to be uncontaminated by later Islamic ideas of geography.

18   Qazwīnī printed in his main text *āghāz-e īn kitāb*, which is more or less nonsensical (even though followed by Minorsky in translation), but emended *kitāb* in his notes to *gītī* or *jahān* (Monchi-Zadeh emends this to *gīhān*).

19   I follow here the reading of Monchi-Zadeh.

20   If the emendation in §12 is correct, then this refers to the compilation of the Pahlavi *Khawadāynāmag*.

21   Minorsky takes these as two separate items: the Book (Minorsky, though, follows Qazwīnī in reading *Rāh* "Path") of the Sasanians *and* Mūsā.

22   So Qazwīnī and Monchi-Zadeh, but there are variants in which *o-* is missing and the two titles are joined together.

23   I adopt here the emendation of Monchi-Zadeh (see his comments on p. 27) and read *tirīst* for Qazwīnī's *duwīst*.

since Adam's time. They agreed on this which we will mention. Whatever we discuss in this book must derive from the *dihqāns* because this kingship was in their hands and they know their[24] deeds and doings, good or bad, more or less. Thus, we must take recourse to what they have said. So what we have learned about them (i.e., the kings), we have compiled from their (the *dihqāns'*) books.

The problem arises from (the fact) that whenever a reign extends long or the religion of one prophet goes (away) with the appearance of another prophet and time goes on, people[25] forget their deeds and change (the chronology) from its (true) nature, and so differences[26] are generated, as also happened to the Jews (in their reckoning) between Adam and Noah, likewise from Noah until Moses, likewise from Moses until Jesus and from Jesus until Muḥammad, may God bless him. (…)[27]

§16 After they had put (the book compiled for Abū Manṣūr) into prose, Sulṭān Maḥmūd Sabuktegin commanded the wise Abū l-Qāsim Manṣūr al-Firdawsī to versify it in Persian (*darī*). This will be told in its own place.

7.5 Ibn al-Nadīm

The names of those who translated from Persian into Arabic:

Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ, whom we have already mentioned. Most of the family of Nawbakht, whom we have already mentioned and some of whom we will later mention if God, the Most High, so wills. Mūsā and Yūsuf, the sons of Khālid, who were in the service of Dāʾūd ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn Ḥumayd ibn Qaḥṭaba. They used to translate for him from Persian into Arabic. Al-Tamīmī, whose name was ʿAlī ibn Ziyād and whose *kunya* was Abū l-Ḥasan. He translated from Persian into Arabic. Among what he translated was *Zīj al-Shahriyār*. Al-Ḥasan ibn Sahl, who will be mentioned in his proper place among the stories of astrologers. Al-Balādhurī Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā ibn Jābir, whom we have already mentioned. He translated into Arabic from Persian.[28] Isḥāq ibn Yazīd. He translated from Persian into Arabic.

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24   I.e., the kings'.

25   I follow Monchi-Zadeh's emendation of *buzurgān* to *bandagān*.

26   See Monchi-Zadeh (1975): 28.

27   The text continues with chronological problems, including Biblical ones (§§13–14) and the genealogy of Abū Manṣūr-e ʿAbd al-Razzāq and the deeds of his ancestors (§§15, 17–20), with §16 inserted in between.

28   Note the inverted order here.

Among what was translated (*nuqila*) was *Kitāb Sīrat al-Furs*, known by the name **Khudāynāme*. Among those who translated it were[29] Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī; Hishām ibn al-Qāsim; Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-*Kisrawī; Zādūye ibn Shāhūye al-Iṣbahānī; Muḥammad ibn Bahrām ibn Miṭyār al-Iṣbahānī; Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh, the *mōbad* of the city of Sābūr from the province of Fārs; and ʿUmar ibn al-Farrukhān, whom we will discuss in more detail among the authors.

FIHRIST, P. 305/245//589

7.6 Balʿamī

In *Shāhnāme-ye buzurg* Ḥamza-ye Iṣfahānī says thus: The son of Muqaffaʿ, i.e., ʿAbdallāh, (says that) the time between the coming of Adam, peace be upon him, until the time of our Prophet, may God bless him, was 6,013 years, but they also say (that it was) 5,900 years. They (also) say that the first person who lived on earth was Adam, but he was called Kayūmarth. Also Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī says thus and Zādūye ibn Shāhūye says thus and from the book by Bahrām ibn Bahrām, he (the author?) says thus, and from the *Book of the Sasanians* (*nāme-ye Sāsāniyān*) and Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā al-Khusrawī[30] and Hāshim and Qāsim-e Iṣfahānī (sic)[31] and the Rulers of Pārs (*Pādishāhān-e Pārs*), all these say the same as Zādūy-e Farrukhān *mōbad-e mōbadān*, who tells such from Yazdagird, too.[32]

TĀRĪKHNĀME I: 5

7.7 Firdawsī

There was a book from ancient times,
which contained many stories,
but it was scattered around at the hands of the *mōbads*,
a part of it was owned by every learned man.[33]

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29 For this translation, cf. the discussion in Chapter 3.1.

30 *Tārīkh*, p. 4, reads *nāme-ye Sāsāniyān-e* Mūsā-ye ʿĪsā-ye Khusrawī, thus making the two one item.

31 *Tārīkh*, pp. 4–5, reads Hāshim ibn Qāsim. Note the form of the first name (instead of Hishām) in both editions.

32 The end of the passage is slightly confused.

33 This closely resembles the legend of the *Avesta* that had contained all wisdom but had later been scattered after Alexander had destroyed the original copy.

A hero there was, descendant of the *dihqāns*,
brave and great, wise and intelligent,
who sought after (tales of) ancient times
and searched for lost stories.
He brought from every country
age-old *mōbads* in order to (re)compile this book.
He asked them about the *kays* of the world
and about those famous and blessed noblemen:
how did they live in the world in the beginning
and left it so lowly to us?
How, by good fate, had they been able
to accomplish heroic deeds at those times?
One by one they (the *mōbads*) narrated to him
the words of the kings and the turnings of the world.
When the lord had heard their words
he compiled a famous book.
It became a monument in this world
and both high and low praised it.

Readers read to everybody
many stories from this book.
Everybody was delighted by this book,
both wise men and right-minded ones.
Then there came an eloquent young man,
good with words and of nimble mind.
He said: "I will versify this book."
Everybody was happy to hear this.
Yet this youth was a friend of bad habits,
which he fought year in and out,
until he finally had to surrender his sweet life to those bad habits.
(…)
He died and this (planned book) remained uncomposed:
his wakeful fate fell asleep.
When my radiant heart left (hopes of) him,
it turned towards the Throne of the Lord of the World:
"Should I try to get that book
and start versifying (it) myself?"
I consulted innumerable people,
as I was worried because of changing fortunes.
Perhaps I would not have much time left
and would have to give it to other hands.

Moreover, my own treasures were not up to it:
would anyone be the buyer of my toils?
I had a dear friend in the town:
you might say we were like two persons in one skin.
He said to me: "This is an excellent idea!
You are going the right way!
I will bring you this heroic book,
in written form! Be not slack.
You are eloquent and still young,
you have the way to speak of heroes!
Go and retell this royal book,
seeking glory among noblemen by this deed!"

<div align="center"><i>SHĀHNĀME</i> I: 12–14, VV. 115–131, 134–144</div>

<div align="center">• • •</div>

One night the author (<i>gūyande</i>) saw in his sleep
that he had a bowl of wine, like rosewater.
Daqīqī appeared from somewhere
and started talking over the wine.
He said to Firdawsī: "Drink only in the fashion of Kay Kāwūs.
(…)
You have sought this book eagerly for some while,
but now you have reached all that you were seeking.
I have (also) said words in this manner.
If you find (my tales), do not act niggardly!
I composed a thousand verses on Gushtāsp and Arjāsp,
(but then) my days ended.
If that number (of my verses) reaches the King of Kings,
my spirit will soar from Earth to (the sphere of) Moon."

Now I will speak words that he spoke.
I live, but he has turned to dust!

<div align="center"><i>SHĀHNĀME</i> V: 75–76, VV. 1–3, 9–13</div>

<div align="center">• • •</div>

When I obtained this book (of Daqīqī)
and the fish was caught with my hook,
I looked at the versification, but it seemed lame to me,

and I found many unsound lines.
This much I have quoted from it so that the King
would know what imperfect verse is.
(…)
There was a book from ancient times.
Its words were worthy of the dignity of the right-minded.
The story was ancient and it was in prose
and did not appeal to the mind (of the readers).
It was six thousand years old!
– If someone asks, keep this in mind!
No one believed (he could) versify it,
so (my) happy heart became filled with worry.
I praised the author (Daqīqī)
who had shown the way to versify it,
even though he had versified but little,
a thousandth part of the battles and banquets.

<div style="text-align:right">

SHĀHNĀME V: 175–176, VV. 1029–1031, 1037–1042

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7.8 al-Bīrūnī

This is according to what I have heard from Abū l-Ḥasan Ādharkhwar
the Architect (*al-Muhandis*). Abū ʿAlī Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Balkhī
al-Shāʿir has told in *al-Shāhnāme* this story about the origin of mankind
differently from what we have narrated. He claims to have revised his re-
port on the basis of the *Kitāb Siyar al-mulūk* which is by ʿAbdallāh Ibn
al-Muqaffaʿ, and the one by Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī, and the
one by Hishām ibn al-Qāsim, and the one by Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh,
the *mōbad* of the city of Sābūr, and the one by Bahrām ibn Mihrān
al-Iṣbahānī. These he collated with what Bahrām al-Harawī al-Majūsī
brought him.

<div style="text-align:right">

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7.9 The *Mujmal*

In each period, the wise and learned men have collected together the sto-
ries of the turning of the spheres, the wonders of the world, the stories
of the prophets and kings, and everything that has happened, (but these
have become) scattered.

Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī has explained all these stories, among them the lives of Persian kings (*siyar-e mulūk-e ʿajam*), who lived in the fourth clime, but he did not give much commentary on these greatest kings of the world, just briefly mentioning them in listing the kings and their chronology. (This he did) even though the stories of our kings, *kisrās*, rulers, and noblemen have a clear prominence in works other than Jarir's *Taʾrīkh*. Each has in his own place a complete commentary, and earlier transmitters (*rāwiyān*) have transmitted from the books of the Persians and have left nothing unmentioned, in verse or prose. Everyone has adorned his topic and patron with beautiful descriptions and fine work.

We wanted to compile a book where the chronology of the Persian kings, their genealogy, and their manner of life and rule would be collected in the order of their reigns in a brief form from what we have read in the *Shāhnāme* of Firdawsī, which is the root, and other books, which are its branches and which other authors have versified, like the *Garshāsbnāme*, the *Farāmarznāme*, the stories of Bahman, and the story of Kūsh-e Pīldandān, as well as (what we have got) from the prose of Abū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī, like the stories of Narīmān, Sām, Kay Qubād, and Afrāsiyāb, and the stories of Luhrāsb and Āghush-e Wahādān and Kay Shikan, as well as (what we have got) from the *Taʾrīkh* of Jarīr and *Siyar al-mulūk* from the telling and version of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and the collection of Ḥamza ibn al-Ḥasan al-Iṣfahānī, who transmitted from the works of Muḥammad ibn al-Jahm al-Barmakī, Zādūye ibn Shāhūye al-Iṣfahānī, Muḥammad ibn Bahrām ibn *Miṭyār, Hishām ibn Qāsim, Mūsā ibn ʿĪsā [al-Kisrawī], and *Kitāb tārīkh-e pādishāhān*, corrected by Bahrām ibn Mardānshāh *mōbad-e* Shāpūr from the city of Fārs. (Ḥamza) revised these according to what he was able to do.

Even though these books that we have mentioned all disagreed with each other – we will explain why – everything that could be conceived and known has been put together, so that when readers take a close look, none of the original meanings will remain hidden to them, except for the art of versifications and the beautiful expressions in prose, in which they (the original authors) had gone far. Indeed, it is impossible to transmit the verse of Ḥakīm Firdawsī and Asadī and others, no less than the prose of Abū l-Muʾayyad al-Balkhī, (in a way that does justice to them).

MUJMAL, P. 2/2

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CHAL-Umayyads	A.F.L. Beeston et al. (eds.), *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983
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EI-Three	*The Encyclopaedia of Islam – Three*. Ed. Kate Fleet et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2007ff.)
EIr	*Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Online at http://www.iranicaonline.org
GAL	Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*. I–II + Supplementbände I–III. Leiden: Brill 1936–1944
GAS	Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*. I–IX. Leiden: Brill 1967–1984
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*
SLAEI	*Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam*
WZKM	*Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

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Indices

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