

## 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 ‘Abbāsīd period onward Persian culture, itself influenced by Greek culture,<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>

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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),<sup>4</sup> but it gained strength only with the ‘Abbāsids 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”.<sup>5</sup> The ‘Abbāsids 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.<sup>6</sup>

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.<sup>7</sup>

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:<sup>8</sup>

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 ‘Uthmān al-Dimashqī (d. after 914): Greek → Arabic.
4. by Ishāq ibn Ḥunayn<sup>9</sup> (d. 910): Greek → Syriac.
5. by Yaḥyā ibn ‘Adī (d. 974): Syriac (of Ishāq) → Arabic.

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-Mu’taḍid (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 Ishāq.

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.<sup>10</sup>

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-Mas'ūdī, and al-Jāhīz. 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-Muqaffa'. 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.<sup>11</sup>

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

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-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, p. 104//149, as the (Chief) Mōbad in 345/956 might well come into question. For Persian scripts, see also al-Mas'ūdī, *Tanbih*, 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-Muqaffa’<sup>c</sup>’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-Muqaffa’ may have looked like.<sup>12</sup>

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.<sup>13</sup>

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-Mas'ūdī mentions two books that are not known from other sources. The first is *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, which al-Mas'ūdī mentions in *Murūj* §§541 and 543, saying that the book was translated by Ibn al-Muqaffa' 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".<sup>14</sup> 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-Mas'ūdī 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-Muqaffa' 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

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

14 See also Şafā (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.<sup>15</sup>

*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.<sup>16</sup>

*Murūj* §541 is problematic and one wonders why this famous book is so obscure? We have little information about any Pahlavi texts on the Sistanian heroes 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-Mas'ūdī's contemporaries 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 original 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-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj* §480, is *Kitāb al-Baykār*, from the Middle Persian \**Paykār*.<sup>17</sup> In *Tanbih*, p. 94/136, the same author gives *baykār* as the name of the wars of the Persians against the Turkish kings and

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 Šafā (1374): 67–68, and Zakeri (2007a) 1: 131–132.

translates the word as *al-jihād*.<sup>18</sup> According to the *Murūj*, the book was translated by Ibn al-Muqaffa' and contained, among other things, the deeds of Isbandiyār.

Al-Mas'ūdī 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<sup>19</sup> ibn Bistāsf (with variants) (...). This is one of the fortresses in the world that are considered impenetrable. The Persians mention it in their poems (*ash'ārihā*)<sup>20</sup> 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*,<sup>21</sup> which Ibn al-Muqaffa' translated into Arabic.

MURŪJ §479–480

What the passages clearly tell is that there was a vivid tradition of other historical books and at least some of these came to be translated into Arabic, whether by Ibn al-Muqaffa' 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 attested 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 fictitious) entertaining stories (*asmār*) about their kings” (*Asmā' 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.<sup>22</sup> This may be the same as the book mentioned by al-Jāḥiẓ in his *Risālat al-Ḥanīn ilā l-awṭān* (*Rasā'il* II: 408), where the author says that his informant, the *mōbad*, had read

18 For the use of the word *paykār* in the *Muǧmal*, 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 speculate on the possibility that al-ḂYK'R (and variants) could be a corruption of al-SKYSR'N.

20 It should be emphasized that al-Mas'ūdī 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-ḂNKSH and al-SKS. It would need some emendations to read this as *al-Sakīsarān*.

22 Cf. Ṣafā (1374): 65.

in *Sīrat Isfandiyār* in *al-Fārsīyya*<sup>23</sup> how Isfandiyār had raided the land of the Khazars in order to save his sister<sup>24</sup> 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.<sup>25</sup> 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-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj* §644, who further describes it as follows:

Persians have a separate book for the stories of Bahrām Jūbīn (*wa-līl-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 *sim‘*, which is like a great goat<sup>26</sup> 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-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj* §§613–614 knows about poems/songs by Bahrām in

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-Jāhīz’s time. There have been attempts to reattribute the *risāla* to Mūsā ibn ‘Isā 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-Jāhīz this does not affect the language question. For the language terminology in al-Jāhīz’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. Šafā (1374): 64; Nöldeke (1879a): 474–478; Christensen (1907); Rubin (2005): 60–61; Rubin (2004); Jackson Bonner (2015): 62–67, 112–124; Czeplédy (1958). Bal‘ami, *Tārīkh-nāme* 11: 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 ‘ajam* (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 Nizām al-Mulk, *Sīyāsatnāme*, 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 *Sim‘* is usually described as a wolf-like beast, see, e.g., al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt* 1: 564–565. Cf. Eisenstein (1991).

Arabic and Persian (*wa-lahu ash'ar kathīra bi-l-'arabiyya wa-l-fārsiyya*).<sup>27</sup> Later, the story has found its way into an Arabic popular book, *Qiṣṣat Bahrām-shāh*.<sup>28</sup> 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-Mas'ūdī in *Murūj* §586, although his description of the book (*wa-li-Ardashīr ibn Bābak kitāb yu'raf bi-Kitāb al-Kārnāmaj fīhi dhikr akhbārihi wa-ḥurūbihi wa-masīrihi fi 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-Mas'ūdī's summary as broadly descriptive of the Pahlavi book.<sup>29</sup>

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.<sup>30</sup> 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 Isfandiyyār, *Tārīkh-e Ṭabaristān*, pp. 12–41, in a Persian translation made from Ibn al-Muqaffa's lost Arabic translation of the Middle Persian original.<sup>31</sup> Al-Mas'ūdī 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 bad' mulkihi ma'a zāhid min zuhhādihim wa-abnā' mulūkihim yuqālu lahu Tansar*), but he does not discuss them, merely stating that he has given them *in extenso* in his former books (*a'raḍnā 'an*

27 Two fragments of such poems in Arabic are found in al-Tha'ālibī, *Ghurur*, pp. 556–557, and a further Persian version on p. 557 (and Ibn Khuradādhbih, *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-siyāsāt*), 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 Minuwī (1311), translated by Boyce (1968a). See also Macuch (2009): 181.

*dhikrihā hāhunā idh kunnā qad ataynā ‘alā jamī’ dhālika fī kitābinā fī Akhbār al-zamān wa-fī l-Kitāb al-Awsaṭ ma‘a 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, *Ahd Ardashīr*,<sup>32</sup> already mentioned by al-Jāhīz, *Dhamm akhlāq al-kuttāb* (*Rasā’il* 11: 191, 193, together with two other little known works, *Sīyāsāt Ardashīr Bābakān* and *Istiḡāmat al-bilād li-Āl Sāsān*) and al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj* §584 (*wa-lahu ‘ahd fī aydī l-nās*) and it is preserved in Miskawayhi, *Tajārib* 1: 97–107. The work is not historical, though, but a typical *andarz* collection.<sup>33</sup>

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-Muqaffa‘ (*Fihrist*, p. 132/118//260),<sup>34</sup> a *Kitāb al-Kārnāmaj fī sīrat Anūshirwān* and a *Kitāb Anūshirwān* (*Fihrist*, p. 364/305//717). Further, al-Jāhīz, *Dhamm akhlāq al-kuttāb* (*Rasā’il* 11: 193) mentions a *Tadbīr Anūshirwān*. Some of these may be variant titles of the same book.<sup>35</sup>

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-Muqaffa‘ translated from Pahlavi a *Kitāb Mazdak*, with manuscript variant *Marwak*.<sup>36</sup> Ḥamza, *Ta’rīkh*, 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-Jāhīz, *Dhamm akhlāq al-kuttāb* (*Rasā’il* 11: 192) reads *Kitāb Marwak*, though this has been “corrected” by the editor to *\*Mazdak*.<sup>37</sup>

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-shū‘r*), 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 Bābūl 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-Jāhīz, *Kitāb al-Ḥujjāb* (*Rasā’il* 11: 39–40) for a lengthy quotation from Kisrā Anūshirwān “*fī kitābihi l-musammā Shāhīn*” (var. *Shāhī*), which discusses the qualifications of various *ḥājibs*.

36 Cf. al-Jāhīz, *Bayān* 111: 350, where “*al-aḥādīth ‘an Marwak*” (in a poem) seems to refer to wisdom literature. See also Tafazzoli (1984): 507, note 2.

37 Cf. also Zakeri (2007a) 1: 126–127. For the (rather improbable) hypothesis that Firdawsī used the *Mazdaknāmaq* 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,<sup>38</sup> a role hardly suitable to the heretic Mazdak. Al-Ṭurtūshī, *Sirāj*, pp. 475, 480, mentions some wise sayings by Mardak<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup>

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 pseudograph, 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*.<sup>41</sup> 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

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; Adhkāʿī (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 ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwān from Persian into Arabic.

The first of their kings in this book was Ardashīr, whose sign (*shi‘ār*) 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.<sup>42</sup>

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

The date given by al-Mas‘ūdī 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.<sup>43</sup>

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-Mas‘ūdī’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<sup>44</sup> onward (Chapter 6.2), *Kitāb al-Šuwar* was restricted to the Sasanians. As we shall see (Chapter 3.1), some of the Arabic books usually considered to have been

42 This might perhaps refer to writing material made of bast (*liḥā*). On writing on bast, see al-Lāhijī, *Mahbūb* 1: 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-‘ajam*, 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-Šuwar*.

The same book, titled *Kitāb Šuwar mulūk Banī Sāsān*, was used for Sasanian history by the contemporary of al-Mas‘ūdī, Ḥamza in his *Ta’rīkh*, pp. 38–49.<sup>45</sup> The descriptions of the kings’ signs have slight differences between the two (e.g., *Tanbīh*, p. 106//150, *lawn al-samā’*; Ḥamza, *Ta’rīkh*, p. 38, *āsmānjūnī*)<sup>46</sup> 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 (*shī‘ār*) of each king. All these clearly come from *Kitāb al-Šuwar*, which may well be the main source for Ḥamza, *Ta’rīkh*, pp. 38–49.

The authenticity of *Kitāb al-Šuwar* seems to be further warranted by the fact that its descriptions do, in fact, tally with archaeological evidence.<sup>47</sup>

Both Šafā (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). Adhkā’ī (2001): 561, identifies *Kitāb al-Šuwar* with the translation of Ishāq ibn Yazīd, but does not give any grounds for this identification. As will be shown in Chapter 3.2.7, Ishāq’s name should be taken off the list of the translators of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

According to al-Mas‘ūdī’s testimony, *Kitāb al-Šuwar* was a large book. The same author also knew another large book, titled the *Āyīnnāmāh*.<sup>48</sup> On it, al-Mas‘ūdī 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*

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

46 The Persian word *āsmānjūnī* raises a series of questions. Was it al-Mas‘ūdī who translated this into Arabic as *lawn al-samā’*? Did the two use different translations of the same book? Could Ḥamza have derived his knowledge of *Kitāb al-Šuwar* 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 Šafā (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-Šuwar*, al-Mas‘ūdī does not explicitly claim to have used, or even seen, these two books, and the translation he gives for the title *Āyinnāme*, “book of customs”, need not be an established title.<sup>49</sup>

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 *Āyinnāme* is (*Fihrist*, p. 364/305//717),<sup>50</sup> and on p. 132/118//260, Ibn al-Nadīm credits Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ with its translation (*Kitāb Āyinnāme 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).<sup>51</sup> As a pseudepigraph, one need not assume it necessarily had any Pahlavi original. The second is *Kitāb Āyīn al-ḍarb bi’l-šawālīja*, “The Manner of Polo”, which Ibn al-Nadīm only attributes to “Persians”.<sup>52</sup> There is no indication whether we should assume a Pahlavi original or take this as a later text. The *Āyinnāme* is often cited by Ibn Qutayba in his *‘Uyūn* (see Chapter 3.6),<sup>53</sup> and al-Tha‘ālibī, *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-Tha‘ālibī’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).

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 *Āyinnāme* 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.-‘Umar-e Khayyām, *Nawrūznāme*, p. 38, mentions a book on weapons attributed to a Bahrām (*Silāhnāme-ye Bahrām*). This may be the same book.

52 In Ibn Qutayba, *‘Uyūn* 1: 217–218, there is a fragment on polo from *al-Āyīn*.

53 Cf. Šafā (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 wa'l-shaṭranj wa'l-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 *aqāṣiṣ*) 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, *Ajā'ib 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 Pārsīyān*), which may refer to Arabic genealogical works by Persians (or people from the province of Fārs?) or translations of such from Middle Persian.<sup>54</sup>

### 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.<sup>55</sup> The earliest translations were already made by Ibn al-Muqaffa', 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* (*Rasā'il* II: 191–195), al-Jāḥiẓ mentions a series of such books: *Amthāl Buzurjmīhr*, *Ahd Ardashīr* (II: 191); *Adab* of Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Kitāb Marwak*, *Kalīla wa-Dimna* (II: 192); *Sīyāsat Ardashīr Bābakān*, *Tadbīr Anūshīrwān*, and *Istiḡāmat al-bilād li-Āl Sāsān* (II: 193).<sup>56</sup> The passage ends with an aphorism by Ibn al-Muqaffa' (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

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 wa'l-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-Muqaffa's translations,<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> Among its best-known versifiers was Abān al-Lāhīqī (d. around 200/815), whom Ibn al-Nadīm credits with a number of versifications, listing *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, *Kitāb Sīrat Ardashīr*, *Kitāb Sīrat Anūshīrwān*, *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 Khālīd 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-Muqaffa's widely circulating translation.

In his chapter on popular stories (*Fī akhbār al-musāmīrīn*, *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 enumerating 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*;<sup>59</sup> *Būsfās wa-Filūs(?)*;<sup>60</sup> *Kitāb Jaḥd(?) Khusruwā*; *Kitāb al-Marbīn(?)*; *Kitāb Khurāfa wa-Nuz'ha*; *Kitāb al-Dubb wa'l-tha'lab*; *Kitāb*

57 E.g., al-Mas'ūdī, *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-Muqaffa'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 *Dastān*, presumably the same as *Hazār afsān*.

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

*Rūzbih*<sup>61</sup> *al-Yatīm*; *Kitāb MSKR zanāne(?) wa-Shāh Zanān*; *Kitāb Namrūd malik Bābil*,<sup>62</sup> and *Kitāb Khalīl wa-Da‘a (Da‘d?)*.<sup>63</sup>

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-Isfandi-yār*, translated by Jabala ibn Sālim; *Kitāb Bahrām Shūbīn* (written *Shūs*), also translated by Jabala; *Kitāb Shahrīzād ma‘a Abarwīz*; *Kitāb al-Kārnāmaj fī sirat Anūshirwān*; *Kitāb al-Tāj wa-mā tafā‘alat fīhi l-mulūk*; *Kitāb Dārā wa’l-šanam al-dhahab*; *Kitāb Āyīnnāme*; *Kitāb Khudāyinnāme*; *Kitāb Bahrām wa-Narsē*; 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 aḡsān(e)*, which in its Arabic version received the name of *Alf layla wa-layla* “The Thousand and One Nights”.<sup>64</sup> 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-Mas‘ūdī’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 Hazār aḡsāne*. 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”).<sup>65</sup> Also Ḥamza, *Ta‘rīkh*, 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 ‘adaduhā qarīban min sab‘īna kitāban*).<sup>66</sup> These will probably

61 I.e., Ibn al-Muqaffa‘.

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-fārsīyya wa’l-hīndīyya wa’l-rūmīyya ... mithla Kitāb Hazār aḡsāne wa-tafsīr dhālika min al-fārsīyya ilā l-‘arabīyya Alf khurāfa. wa’l-nās yusammūna hādihā l-kitāb Alf layla wa-layla. wa-mithla Kitāb Farza wa-Sīmās wa-mā fīhi min akhbār mulūk al-Hīnd wa’l-wuzarā’. wa-mithla Kitāb al-Sindbād wa-ghayrihā min al-kutub fī hādihā l-ma’nā.*

66 Cf. *Nihāya*, p. 158.

mostly have been Arabic pseudepigraphs. We know of such stories having been in vogue from the testimony of al-Jāhīz, *Faṣl mā bayn l-ʿadāwa wa'l-ḥasad* (*Rasāʾil* 1: 350–351). Al-Jāhīz 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 ṣāhib *Bayt al-ḥikma*, Yaḥyā ibn Khālīd, and al-ʿAttābī, they were better received by the very people who had undervalued them when published under his own name.<sup>67</sup> Likewise, Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, p. 367/308//723–724, tells that story books were fashionable especially during the reign of the caliph al-Muqtaḍir (r. 295–320/908–932) and that booksellers both compiled (*ṣannaḥū*) and forged (*kadhhabū*) such collections.

Longer narratives that once seem to have existed in Pahlavi and were translated into Arabic also include the story of *Būdāsf*,<sup>68</sup> known in a variety of languages, and *The Story of Sindbād*,<sup>69</sup> 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 Ḍahīrī Samarqandī (d. ca. 558/1161) in his *Sindbādnāme*, p. 25. According to Ḍahīrī, Fanārūzī translated the book from Pahlavi.<sup>70</sup>

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.<sup>71</sup> 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.<sup>72</sup>

67 This gains in interest when we note that al-Jāhīz's *Risālat al-Maʿād* and Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ' s *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 Ḍahīrī 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 *Wizīdagihā ī Zādspram*,<sup>73</sup> and some of these were later translated into Arabic, such as the *Warznāme*, studied by Nallino (1922): 346–351.<sup>74</sup> These works have left no traces in the works belonging to Persian national history.<sup>75</sup>

### 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

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.<sup>76</sup>

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.<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup>

As a brief case study, let us consider the *Alexander Romance*,<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup>

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,<sup>81</sup> 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.<sup>82</sup> Frye based his argument merely on

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.<sup>83</sup>

These voices were given little heed, just as Ciancaglini's (1998) painstaking analysis of the question has not received the attention it deserves.<sup>84</sup> 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 Grecisms,<sup>85</sup> 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 siriano 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

83 Examples from *Ardā Wirāz nāmag*; *Dēnkard*, *Shahrestāniha 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.<sup>86</sup> 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.<sup>87</sup> 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.<sup>88</sup> 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-Tha'ālibī 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 *Ta'rikh*, 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<sup>89</sup> 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.<sup>90</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup> 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 Ishāq in his *Risāla* show us, as well as the fact that such translations form a clear minority.<sup>92</sup>

Both religious translations, especially those of the Bible and the Qurʾān, and scientific translations, especially those made during the ‘Abbāsīd translation movement,<sup>93</sup> 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)<sup>94</sup> 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:<sup>95</sup>

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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-za‘amū annahū lam yusma‘ min umūri l-Ḍaḥḥāk shay’un yustaḥsanu ghayru shay’in wāḥidin wa-huwa anna *balīyyatahū lammā shtaddat wa-dāma jawruhū* wa-ṭālat ayyāmuhū ‘aẓuma ‘alā l-nāsi mā laqū minhu fa-tarāsala l-wujūhu fī amrihī fa-ajma‘ū ‘alā l-maṣīri ilā bābihī fa-wāfā bābahū l-wujūhu wa’l-‘uzamā’u min al-kuwari wa’l-nawāhī fa-tanāzarū fī l-dukhūli ‘alayhi wa’l-*tazallumi* ilayhi wa’l-ta’attī li-sti‘ṭāfihī fa-ttafaqū ‘alā an yuqaddimū li’l-khiṭābi ‘anhum *Kābī al-Iṣbahānīyya* fa-lammā *ṣārū ilā bābihī* u’lima bi-makānihim fa-**adhina lahum** fa-dakhalū wa-Kābī mutaqaḍdimun lahum fa-mathula bayna yadayhi wa-amsaka ‘an-i l-salāmi thumma qāla: **ayyuhā l-maliku ayya l-salāmi usallimu ‘alayka? a-salāma man yamliku hādhihī l-aqālīma kullahā am salāma man yamliku hādihā l-iqlīma l-wāḥida – ya’nī Bābila. fa-qāla lahu l-Ḍaḥḥāku: bal salāma man yamliku hādhihī l-aqālīma kullahā li-innī maliku l-arḍi. fa-qāla lahū l-Iṣbahānīyyu: fa-idhā kunta tamlīku l-aqālīma kullahā wa-kānat yaduka tanāluhā ajma‘a fa-mā bālunā qad khuṣiṣnā bi-ma’ūnatika wa-taḥāmulika wa-isā’atika min bayni ahli l-aqālīmi wa-kayfa lam taqsim amra kadhā-wa-kadhā baynanā wa-bayna l-aqālīmi. wa-‘addada ‘alayhi ashyā’a kāna yumkinuhū takhfifuhā ‘anhum.**

AL-ṬABARĪ, *TA’RĪKH* 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 prolonged, and his days lengthened, the people felt that they were suffering so badly under his rule that their notables discussed the situation and agreed to travel to al-Ḍaḥḥāk’s gate. When the notables and powerful 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 greeting 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.

TRANSLATION BY WILLIAM M. BRINNER

As no translation is involved, we cannot say that al-Tha‘ālibī would not have understood the text correctly or that he would have been unable to transmit it into another language in an exact form.<sup>96</sup> 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-Tha‘ālibī simply aims at making the text as readable and as relevant for the reader as possible.<sup>97</sup>

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, recreations, or redactions, rather than translations proper. For our purposes, a translation may be defined as any new text in the target language that reproduces, partly or completely, a text in the source language, with or without enlargements 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 interest of a new audience. From historical texts, information that is no longer relevant 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.<sup>98</sup>

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

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-Muqaffa’s “translation” of the *Khwadāy-nāmag*. As shown by, e.g., Kirste (1896) and Umīdsālār (1381b), the now-lost translation contained synchronizations 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 (*saj'*) 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* 1: 34), clear similarities with Firdawsī's *Shāhnāme* 1: 49, have been marked in boldface:

**lammā dakhala 'alayya hādhā l-mutaḏallim ra'aytu ka-anna jabalan**  
**min al-ḥadīd ḥāla baynī wa-baynahu. wa-qad awjastu fī nafsī minhu**  
**khīfatan qalqalat aḥshā'ī wa-shaghalat khāṭirī. wa-mā arā dhālika**  
**illā min 'alāmāt zawāl mulkī wa-nqilāb ḥālī. wa-la'allā shams dawlatī**  
**ādhanat bi'l-ghurūb wa-wajh ḥazzī 'alat'hu yad al-shuḥūb.<sup>99</sup>**

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

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.<sup>100</sup> 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-Ma'mūn (r. 198–218/813–833), which left no identifiable traces of its existence to later literature.<sup>101</sup>

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,<sup>102</sup> 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.<sup>103</sup>
- 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.

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 *Ahd Ardashūr*, preserved, e.g., in Miskawayhi, *Tajārib* I: 97–107, and the *Letter of Tansar*, preserved in Persian translation made from Ibn al-Muqaffa's lost Arabic translation of the Middle Persian original in Ibn Isfandiyyār, *Tārikh-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 descendant (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. *Khwadāy-nāmag* (sixth c.) → Ar. Ibn al-Muqaffa' (eighth c.), *Siyar* →(?) Ar. al-Ṭabarī (tenth c.), *Ta'riḫ* → CPers. Bal'amī (eleventh c.), *Tāriḫnāme* → Ar. trans. of Bal'amī (eleventh c.)
  - ii) MPers. *Khwadāy-nāmag* → Ar. Ibn al-Muqaffa', *Siyar* →(?) CPers. *Prose Shāhnāme* (mid-tenth c.) → CPers. Firdawsī, *Shāhnāme* (early eleventh c.) → Ar. al-Bundārī (thirteenth c.), *al-Shāhnāma*<sup>104</sup>

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 fragments, 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.<sup>105</sup> 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 Ishāq.

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

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 Bal'amī's rather free Persian translation and adaptation of al-Ṭabarī's Arabic *Ta'rikh* is a good case of such back-translation.<sup>106</sup>

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.