



Review Article

The Story of a Lost Book: Two Recent Studies on the *Khwadāynāmag*

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Abstract

The Arabic historiographical tradition is considered to be one of the most important textual sources for the reconstruction of Sāsānian history. Historians such as al-Ṭabarī, al-Masʿūdī or al-Thaʿālibī explicitly claimed to have used older material of Persian origin. The basis of their accounts seem to have been translations, excerpts and adaptations of translations, which commonly are traced back to the Middle-Persian “Book of Kings”, the *Khwadāynāmag*. While it may be assumed a scientific consensus that there were in the late Sāsānian period books dealing with Iran’s history, the opaque character of this historical tradition has repeatedly given rise to scientific controversy over the question of whether there was one or several books bearing the title *Khwadāynāmag*, when the content was first written down, whether the tradition could be regarded as sound or not, which earlier sources finally became a part of the *Khwadāynāmag*, etc. In the following, two inspiring recent contributions to the research on the *Khwadāynāmag* will be presented.

Keywords

Sāsānian History, Khwādaynāmag, Arabic Historiography

Zwischen die Bücher und die Wirklichkeit ist eine alte Feindschaft gesetzt. Das Geschriebene schob sich an die Stelle der Wirklichkeit in der Funktion, sie als das endgültig Rubrizierte und Gesicherte überflüssig zu machen. Die geschriebene und schließlich gedruckte Tradition ist immer wieder zur Schwächung von Authentizität der Erfahrung geworden (*Blumenberg 1986: 17*).

Things become even more complicated if the book we are talking about does not (any longer) exist. For this very reason, the fact of its sheer non-

existence contributes very much to the charm of the imagined book. In such a book there can be all sorts of things and the reader can prove from this construct of his imagination almost everything that might come to his mind. The disadvantage, however, is that another author can justify an exactly opposite thesis just as well with the reference that what he postulates is in the book, the non-existence of which his counterpart will not be inclined to admit. An awkward situation. This is how books about books that do not exist are created, and the sheer existence of these imaginary creations may be capable of discouraging the critical inquirer. It is this point where Jaako Hämeen-Anttila (2018) starts his masterful investigation on the *Khwadāynāmag* stating “Among books that all know and none has seen, the Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* presents a towering figure” (p. IX; his previous relevant publications, see 2012; 2014; 2017a; 2017b).

Almost at the same time Robert Hoyland (2018) published his monograph, which, in addition to an annotated translation of the chapters dedicated to the history of Iran in the works of al-Ya‘qūbī (d. 284/897), al-Mas‘ūdī (d. 345/956) and Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī (d. 350/961 or 360/971), also contains further thoughts on the genesis, content and transmission of the *Khwadāynāmag*. Both publications can be regarded as milestones in their specific field and lead numerous questions connected with the *Khwadāynāmag* several decisive steps towards a tentative solution.

SCHOLARS ON THE *KHWANDĀYNĀMAG*

The *Khwadāynāmag* has been attested an enigmatic character already at an early stage. Rather baffled Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī states:

Their (*the Persians*’) chronologies are all confused, rather than accurate, because they have been transmitted for 150 years from one language into another [...] (*Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī 1961: 59–60*).¹

Something very similar had already occurred to Mūsā b. ‘Īsā al-Kisrawī, as cited by Ḥamza:

I looked into the book called *Khudāynāme*, which is the book that, when translated from Persian into Arabic, is called *Ta’rikh 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

¹ Translation: Hämeen-Anttila 2018: 59.

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 (*ibid.*, 16).²

For some researchers, however, the *Khwadāy-nāmag* still represents the most important source for reconstructing the history of the Sāsānian Empire. Parvaneh Pourshariati (2008: 10) observes in this context: “to reconstruct Sasanian history one relies on the *Xwadāy-Nāmag* tradition as contained, for example, in Classical Arabic historiography”.³ She also states: “Among the most important sources containing the *Xwadāy-Nāmag* (or Book of Kings) tradition, however, is the *Shāhnāma* of Ferdowsī” (*ibid.*: 14). Another dogma states that the lost book would be substantially at our disposal in the historical work of al-Ṭabarī (Klima 1968: 224; Shahbazi 1990, *passim*; Pourshariati 2008, *passim*; cautious Gabrieli 1932: 217; Rubin 1995: 235–236).

These are the most significant arguments that have dominated the scientific debate since the publication of Theodor Nöldeke’s translation of the passages dedicated to Sāsānian history in al-Ṭabarī’s *Ta’rikh al-rusūl wa-l-mulūk* (Nöldeke 1879): the *Khwadāy-nāmag* is seen as a manifold tradition whose basic components, despite opalescent diversity, could be grasped in al-Ṭabarī’s *Ta’rikh*, written at the beginning of the 10th century A.D., or in Firdawsī’s *Shāhnāma*, composed almost 400 years after the Arab conquest of Iran.

Nöldeke explained the similarities between the *Shāhnāma* and works by Arab historians on the basis of a “gemeinschaftliche letzte Grundlage”, conceding that the work must have undergone some modification during the transmission-process. Concerning the process of textualisation, he regards the reign of Khusraw I. (r. 531–579) as the *terminus post quem*, whereby the final version was only completed under Yazdgird III. (r. 632–651) by a certain Dānishwar (Nöldeke 1879: XIV–XV). Nöldeke emphasises the importance of legendary themes, while he observes, with some astonishment, the gap in the tradition for the time between the Achaemenids and the Arsacids attributing a tendentious and rhetorical character to the

² Translation: *ibid.*: 216.

³ Similar ad-Dūrī (1983: 58–60), who notes that: “The *Khoday-Nāmag* presents the story of Iranian national history as viewed by the nobility and religious authorities”.

work itself (ibid.: XVII–XVIII). Based on Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī, he accepts already for the time of the Sāsānians different recensions, which would explain the differences between the Arab historiographers, as well as between them and the *Shāhnāma* (ibid.: XIX). The latter, however, is seen as being compiled predominantly from written sources in Classical Persian (ibid.: XXIII–XXIV). Although al-Ṭabarī himself would have neither used the book in Pahlavi nor Ibn al-Muqaffa’s translation, he is nonetheless regarded as the “wichtigste der noch vorhandenen arabischen Repräsentanten des Chodhāināme” (ibid.: XXV, XXVII). Even before Nöldeke, Alfred von Gutschmid (1861:5) dated the *Khwadāynāmag* to the time of Khusraw I, postulating a close relationship to the *Shāhnāma*. Nöldeke’s opinion subsequently became established as a tradition.

Baron Victor Rosen, who has differentiated between three types of adaptioners: translators, compilers, and editors (Rosen 1895)⁴, is cited frequently as an authority for the assumption of many different *Khwadāynāmag*s, differing in more than marginal details, in Islamic times.⁵

About one hundred years later Ehsan Yarshater has summarised all this again. While contributing a lot to our understanding of late Sāsānian literature in general, he has also ventured the impressive attempt to reconstruct the content of the *Khwadāynāmag* (Yarshater 1983: 343–480).⁶

Alireza Shahbazi essentially follows Yarshater and offers a four-stage scheme of textualisation: under Bahrām V the *Khwadāynāmag* already existed in some form, under Khusraw I it was definitely brought to writing, under Khusraw II it was significantly extended, and, finally, under Yazdgird III put into its final form (Shahbazi 1990: 213–214). Shahbazi thus seems to implicitly accept several versions of the *Khwadāynāmag*, since he also assumes a priestly, heroic and royal version (ibid.: 215–218).

These are the three authors who are always cited as references when the *Khwadāynāmag* is to be dealt with. In addition, some individual aspects have been examined separately.

Articles by Mario Grignaschi (1973) and Zeev Rubin (2005; 2008) deal with Ibn al-Muqaffa’s role. Grignaschi, following Nöldeke, saw the *Khwa-*

⁴ Rosen’s article is still not translated. A short summary is given by Kirste 1896.

⁵ See, for example, among others Widengren 1952: 72; Rubin 2008: 44–45; Jackson Bonner 2011: 23. For a critical attitude, see Zakeri 2008: 29.

⁶ However, this attempt must be regarded as highly speculative.

dāynāmag as one of the two main sources of al-Ṭabarī and that it constituted the source for Sāsānian history summarised by al-Ya‘qūbī in his *Ta’rikh*. Grignaschi, moreover, believed that Ibn al-Muqaffa’s translation could be reconstructed from the anonymous *Nihāya* (Grignaschi 1973: 125). Rubin, on the other hand, assumes that there have been numerous heavily differing Arabic works that can be traced back to the *Khwadāynāmag* (Rubin 2008: 44–45). However, he considers Ibn al-Muqaffa’s translation neither as a direct source for al-Ṭabarī nor for the anonymous manuscript Sprenger 30 and tentatively assumes an “anthological selection from various books bearing the title *Kitāb siyar muluk al-‘ajam*” (Rubin 2005: 87).

Gregor Schoeler has addressed the lacuna concerning the dynasties of the Medes, Achaemenids and Seleucids and the very superficial representation of the Arsacids, shaped by manifest anachronisms. Schoeler refers in his remarks on the oral transmission of knowledge to the classical study of the British ethnologist and historian Jan Vansina. Vansina’s theory of the “floating gap”, which in simplified terms assumes that the memory of a mythical past and the more recent present are relatively stable in oral societies, while the memory of the interim period shifts with the progression of time, increasingly forgetting older time layers of the middle period, helps to explain the oblivion of the Achaemenids and the anachronistic presence of Arsacid kings at the court of the Kayanids as the transposition of a narrative unit into another period of time (Schoeler 1995).

Prods Oktor Skjærvø (1998: 161), highlighting the influence of oral traditions, as already emphasised by Boyce, Yarshater and others (Boyce 1957; Yarshater 1983: 367, 369, 370, *passim*), describes the *Khwadāynāmag* as “the totality of the oral historical-epic tradition of western Iran at the End of the Sasanian period and during the first centuries of foreign rule in Iran” understanding this tradition as “a composite of numerous traditions, of various age and provenience”.

While in relation to the time of textualisation there is some relative consensus that it must have taken place between the time of Khusraw I and Khusraw II and some rudimentary additions had been made under Yazdgird III, there is sharp disagreement concerning the character of the work. While on the one hand it is implicitly and explicitly assumed that in al-Ṭabarī and other historians, where they are dealing with the history of pre-Islamic Iran, one has the *Khwadāynāmag* at disposal (Howard-John-

ston 2008 121–124; idem 2010: 341–353; Wood 2013: 13, 18, 165; see also references given above), others, sometimes the same authors, stress that there had already been several *Khwadāynāmag*'s during the Sāsānian period (Howard-Johnston 2010: 341–343). Thus, Philip Wood (2013: 172) has recently claimed: “The *Xwadāy-Nāmag* was already a multifaceted and complex cluster of texts by the end of the Sasanian period”.

The hypothesis of Syrian material in the “*Khwadāynāmag*-tradition” (Jackson Bonner 2011: 23) further contributes to the confusion. Here the problems of a vague terminology become evident; while Jackson Bonner apparently refers to Syrian material in Agathias only, which he counts as part of the “tradition”, Wood (2016: 421–422) seems to regard the incorporation of Syrian material into Sāsānian historiography to reflect an increasing Christian influence in the later Sāsānian period (see on this Schilling 2008).

All this shows a certain perplexity when the *Khwadāynāmag* comes into focus, which some researchers also concretise. Mahmoud Omidzalar (1998: 338-346) states quite apodictically: “I do not believe that the *Khudāynāmag* was a single text. The evidence supports a genre of epic literature by that name”. Disillusioned Kumiko Yamamoto (2003: 7) laments “our knowledge of the Xn is hypothetical rather than factual”, an opinion, which Marlojin van Zutphen (2014: 18) seems to corroborate when he observes: “Our knowledge of the work is mainly hypothetical”. Jackson Bonner (2011: 22) finally considers the efforts to have reached an inevitable endpoint: “It seems unlikely that we shall ever be able to explain how indigenous Sasanian history made its way into Muslim texts”.

The *Khwadāynāmag* could thus be described with a saying by Winston Churchill as “a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma”. Fortunately, two recent books contribute something new and substantial to our understanding of the opaque work.

TWO RECENT STUDIES

Jaako Hämeen-Anttila's monograph (2018) represents the culmination of a series of articles by the author dealing with the form, content and transmission process of the “Book of Kings” (2012; 2013; 2014; 2017a; 2017b). In a sense, these studies constitute the skeleton of the book presented now, as the author himself notes (p. XII).

A concise preface (pp. IX–XII), in which the lack of definitory precision regarding the “*Khwadāynāmag*-tradition” is lamented and a “lack of critical discussion” is observed (p. IX), prepares the stage for outlining the research desiderata to be redeemed: it is the author’s aim to reconstruct the content and transmission process of the *Khwadāynāmag*. The insights gained as a result could, as the author proposes, also give new impulses to the *Shāhnāma*-research and, in addition, contribute to the debate on the alleged influence of Sāsānian prototypes on the emerging Arabic historiography. Hämeen-Anttila is, therefore, not concerned with describing in a Rankian approach “wie es wirklich gewesen”, as Theodor Nöldeke had intended, he rather concentrates on “the lost Middle Persian *Khwadāynāmag* and its translations and reverberations in later literature” (p. X).

In Chapter One (1–25) we learn that the uncertainties already arise from the nomenclature: *Khwadāynāmag* is a reconstruction. The Arabic sources report both one (*Kitāb*) *siyar mulūk (al-‘ajam)* and numerous derivatives and corruptions of the Arabic transcription from which the presumptively most likely title of the Book as *Khwadāynāmag* is deduced (pp. 1–2). The genre that later became famous under the *Shāhnāma* inherits its generic term from its alleged predecessor.

Chapter Two (pp. 26–58) provides an overview of the Translation-Movement during the formative period of Arabic historiography, with a particular focus on translations from Middle Persian. An outline of the Translation-Movement (pp. 26–28) and the observation that the first translations from a foreign language into Arabic took place in the late-Umayyad period from Middle Persian is followed by a presentation of the translated works according to Ibn al-Nadīm’s *Fihrist* (pp. 28–45). Hämeen-Anttila is able to show that numerous historical works, that were not related to the *Khwadāynāmag*, have treated the “National History” of Iran (pp. 30–41). Using the example of the *Kitāb al-Sakīsarān*, he demonstrates that Rustam-material, presumably of Sistānian provenance, was combined with the historical master narrative long before Firdawsī, and has not been part of the *Khwadāynāmag* (pp. 36–38). This overview is concluded by a critical reflection on the thesis of a Middle Persian Alexander romance, whereby the author comes to the conclusion that a translation into Middle Persian itself is questionable and that the work certainly could not have been included into the *Khwadāynāmag* (pp. 47–51). Fi-

nally, Hämeen-Anttila gives some general reflections on translation practice (pp. 51–57). While translations of religious and scientific texts are characterised by a high degree of accuracy, literary and historical texts are seen as being subjected to various forms of invasive modification. The author exemplifies this with a scheme of transmission of translated works, distinguishing four categories: (i) the full transmission of the translation; (ii) excerpts and short quotations in other works; (iii) forms of abridging and expanding editing as far as a rather free rewriting; (iv) the retranslation into the original language (pp. 56–57). Hämeen-Anttila shows very impressively, using al-Tha‘ālibī who pretends to quote al-Ṭabarī, that such a quotation could often represent essentially nothing else but a very free, augmenting and interpolating variation of the original (pp. 52–54).

This prepares the ground for the history of the translation and adaptation of the *Khwadāynāmag* presented in Chapter Three (pp. 59–130). In addition to a detailed discussion of the authors who seem to have used Middle Persian sources in the original or in translation (pp. 100–128), Ḥamza al-Iṣfahānī’s list of seven manuscripts, which researchers have regarded as variants of the *Khwadāynāmag*, is in focus (pp. 59–89). Contrary to previous interpretations, Hämeen-Anttila argues for understanding the term *nusakh* as “manuscripts” (p. 60), stressing that there must not necessarily have been seven manuscripts of the same work (pp. 68–69), which in turn means that not all historical information in Ḥamza’s work could be traced back to translations of the *Khwadāynāmag*. In addition, the author provides strong arguments for the list possibly being a topos, since some of the authors mentioned were never quoted (pp. 67–76), and later historians copied the list virtually verbatim (p. 67).

Moreover, the author addresses the issue of the relationship between the anonymous *Nihāya* and Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (pp. 89–99). The analysis indicates that only a small part of the information could be derived from translations by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ and that only a part of it could be traced back to the translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* (pp. 98–99). Hämeen-Anttila arrives, after excluding longer narrative episodes, at a scheme according to which the *Khwadāynāmag* was structured around entries on individual kings as a concise chronicle. This could have contained words spoken during the accession to the throne, a formalised speech on various topics and a short report about the circumstances of the rulers death,

perhaps including summarising remarks about the years of rule, city foundations etc. (pp. 94–95). The concise form is most likely comparable to Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ's *Ta'rīkh*, but has little in common with the universal histories usually regarded as reflecting the *Khwadāynāmag*. Ibn al-Muqaffa's translation, so the conclusion, is to be conceived as a synchronisation of the *Khwadāynāmag* with other Middle Persian sources and Islamic salvation history (pp. 128–130).

Chapter Four (pp. 131–173) covers the representation of the literary elaboration on Iranian myths and historical narratives up to Firdawsī and its epigones. After a brief overview of the Prose-*Shāhnāma*'s preliminary stages (pp. 131–139), Hämeen-Anttila emphasises that already here many different sources have been merged, which certainly had nothing to do with the *Khwadāynāmag* (pp. 141–146). Since the Prose-*Shāhnāma*, presumably written by Daqīqī (d. 365/975) around 346/957, was one of the most important sources for Firdawsī, it could already be stated at this stage that the work was “rather far removed from the *Khwadāynāmag*” (p. 145). After discussing al-Tha'ālibī (d. 429/1038), whose *Ghurar akhbār mulūk al-Furs wa-siyarīhim*, based on a now lost book, which possibly would have included the *Khwadāynāmag* as one among many other sources, the author dedicates himself to Firdawsī (pp. 152–158). Hämeen-Anttila concludes from what is stated in Chapter Three that the relationship of the *Shāhnāma* to the *Khwadāynāmag* could only have been the fact that Firdawsī had used the Prose-*Shāhnāma* as one of various sources, which in turn, possibly, could reflect translation(s) of the *Khwadāynāmag*, among other sources.

A brilliant analysis of four Pahlavi texts, traces of which have been preserved in Firdawsī and Tha'ālibī (*Wizārīshn ī chatrang*, *Ayādgar ī Zarērān*, *Kārnāmag ī Ardashīr* and *Khusraw-ī Kāvādān ud rēdag-ē*), suggests that these texts have not been incorporated into Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* and Tha'ālibī's *Ghurar* in their original form, but in strongly modified translations (pp. 158–167). After an epilogue describing the increasing prominence of Sistānian material in the later *Nāma*-literature (pp. 167–173), Hämeen-Anttila focuses on the thesis that this material has already found its way into the *Khwadāynāmag* as part of “national history”, according to some researches.

Chapter Five (pp. 174–212) offers two case studies concerning the Rustam-theme and the history of Armāyīl and Garmāyīl. Hämeen-Anttila examines the validity of the thesis suggesting a substantial congruence of the material contained in the *Khwadāynāmag* with Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*. Rustam is the central hero figure in this text and, as such, should also play a prominent role in Arab authors, provided that the *Khwadāynāmag* has represented the most important source for the Prose-*Shāhnāma* and thus for Firdawsī. Hämeen-Anttila demonstrates, however, that in Arabic texts of the first millennium, especially in *adab*-literature, there is a complete absence of Rustam-material. As examples Hämeen-Anttila cites al-Jāhīz, Ibn Qutaybah and Abū 'l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī among others (pp. 175–176). In historiographical works, the courageous hero also plays a rather marginal role, as Hämeen-Anttila impressively demonstrates for authors ranging from al-Dīnawarī and al-Ṭabarī to al-Maqdisī, Miskawayh to al-Bīrūnī (pp. 178–187). In contrast, a cursory examination of early Classical Persian texts reveals that Rustam appears there as a figure of central importance (pp. 187–194). Hämeen-Anttila draws two important conclusions from this.

First: the Rustam-material had nothing to do with the *Khwadāynāmag* and had only been merged with other sources, possibly also derivatives of the *Khwadāynāmag*, in the Prose-*Shāhnāma* (pp. 196–198). He is thus in a position to substantiate his previously expressed conviction that *Shāhnāma* is “a poor representative of the *Khwadāynāmag* and there is no reason to assume that the contents of the *Shāhnāma* could give us any clear idea of the contents of the *Khwadāynāmag*” (p. 157).⁷ Secondly, the *Khwadāynāmag* does not represent the totality of the “national history of Iran”, as has often been stated. Such a view, strongly narrowed to the imperial centre, rather reflects the “Sehepunkt” of the historian trying to categorise, rather than the diversity of literary production in the late-Sāsānian period.

Chapter Six (pp. 213–232) is an attempt to summarise what has been said and to draw some preliminary conclusions. Hämeen-Anttila comes to the somewhat disillusioning conclusion: “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 Khusraw Anūshirwān or, more probably, Khus-

⁷ See on this Shahbazi 1993; Skjærvø 1998: 162.

raw Parwīz.” (p. 232). Concerning size and content the *Khwadāynāmag* is to be characterised as a “rather dry chronicle”, more precisely “a book of very small size, be it of 10, 20, or 30 pages”, that “clearly started with Gayōmard and continued until the time of its writing” (p. 225).

The final Seventh Chapter (pp. 233–248) provides translations of Arabic and Persian “key texts” discussed in the previous chapters (pp. 233–248). The book is remarkably well edited. The transcription of Arabic and Persian names and terms is flawless, translations are superbly done and appealing to read.

In summary. The author was able to show convincingly how the idea of a pluralism of *Khwadāynāmag*'s in the Sāsānian and early Islamic period is erroneous. However, there were other Middle Persian works, attributed to historical or wisdom literature, oral traditions, perhaps even documents from the Imperial Archives, etc., which could be seen as representing something like the historiographical tradition of the late Sāsānian period, of which the *Khwadāynāmag* is only a part that should not be confused with the whole.

These heterogeneous sources, which contained historical information and were reflected in the Arabic historiography and the Prose-*Shāhnāma* at different points in time *via* different intermediate stages, have been combined during this process with Islamic salvation history and other narratives. The *Khwadāynāmag* may thus have been far more influential in the sequencing of the historical narrative in Arab chronicles than in the concrete textual material.

Finally, translations during the period in question were marked by a high degree of freedom in relation to the original. The manifold form of the translations, however, does not permit any ultimate conclusion about the original, so that it remains to be stated: “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” (p. 232).

As regards Robert Hoyland's monograph (2018), translations constitute the core of his work. Hoyland's translations are consistently very well done. They are characterised by a legible language and a modest yet fully contextualising way of commenting. Hoyland also offers the reader a de-

tailed introduction and three appendices, which represent a substantial contribution to the debate on the form and transmission of the *Khwadāynāmag*.

The introduction (pp. 1–22) provides a concise historical overview, a synopsis of research on the *Khwadāynāmag* and the author's critique of Nöldeke's deductive approach. He suggests to work backwards from our extant sources and to reconstruct the content and scope of the *Khwadāynāmag* inductively (pp. 10–13). Hoyland assumes that two strands of tradition have come together in Arabic historiographical works in varying degrees of blending: The "official" *Book of Kings*, which would have been relatively concise and chronologically structured, and a highly detailed epic tradition (p. 22). In Appendix 1 (pp. 134–143), Hoyland criticises the prominence, which has been attributed since Nöldeke to the translation of the *Khwadāynāmag* by Ibn al-Muqaffa' by emphasising that Ibn al-Muqaffa' was one of many authors who wrote a book on pre-Islamic Iran, which was by no means as influential as previous research had claimed.

The book is supplemented by a Gazetteer (pp. 157–161), three informative maps (pp. 163–165), lists of rulers and genealogical charts, facilitating the temporal situating of the kings mentioned (pp. 166–171), and a stemma, which illustrates the (hypothetical) transmission-process of the discussed material (p. 172).⁸

A few critical remarks. Although the decision not to use the scientific transcription was a formal requirement of the editors, as Hoyland notes (p. XI), the decision not to use the article *al-* in names such as al-Ṭabarī (given as Tabari), al-Dīnawarī (given as Dinawari), etc. is difficult to explain. It is somewhat surprising that although Hoyland gives a concise outline of Sāsānian history (p. 35), the relations of the Iranian empires to pre-Islamic Arabia are completely ignored. In another passage, Hoyland speaks of the Persians as "dualists, a group condemned in the Qur'an" (p. 6), which is obviously not accurate. The *Qur'ān* speaks of *majūs* (Q 22:17), an ambiguous term that can have a dualistic connotation, among others (see on this: Dandamayev 2012). Furthermore, the *majūs* are not condemned in the Qur'ān. Procopius (born ca. 500 A.D.) is not the "younger

⁸ For earlier visualisations of the transmission process see von Gutschmid 1880: 726; Rubin 2005: 88.

and more illustrious contemporary” of Agathias (born ca. 532 A.D.), as claimed (p. 9).

Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila and Robert Hoyland have presented two very important works. In the future, anyone who wants to examine Persian history, as it has been transmitted in the works of Arab historiographers, will have in Hämeen-Anttila’s meticulous reconstruction of the content and transmission process of the *Khwadāynāmag* the best work that contemporary Islamic studies can offer on this subject at his disposal. Robert Hoyland’s volume is an extraordinary resource not only for students and historians of other disciplines, but also an inspiring and provocative point of departure for further research. We need more books of this quality.

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