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

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

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

3.1 The List of Ḥamza

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

Their (the Persians’) chronologies are all confused, rather than accurate, because they have been transmitted for 150 years2 from one language into another and from one script, in which the number signs are

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

2 It is not clear what this number refers to. It does come rather close to the number of years between the presumed date of the original Middle Persian work and Ibn al-Muqaffāʾ’s translation (see Chapter 6.2).
equivocal, into another language, in which the “knotted” number signs are also equivocal. In this chapter, I have had to take the recourse of collecting variously transmitted manuscripts (nusakh),3 of which I have come across eight, namely:

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

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

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

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

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