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Introduction:

Manuscript notes as documentary sources

Andreas Görke/Konrad Hirschler

Reviewing the field

Arabic manuscripts abound in hand-written notes. This abundance is apparent in many manuscripts, even at a cursory glance. The recto of the first folio, the *ḡabr al-kitāb*, for instance, is regularly filled with a variety of notes in different hands and from different periods. However, this space was often not sufficient for the multitude of notes, so users of the manuscripts started to have recourse to additional unused space (*bayād*) that was available, most importantly in the margins of the main text and the spaces alongside or below the colophon. Once these spaces were filled, users could resort to more intrusive ways of adding notes, such as writing between lines of the original text. Ultimately, they could append additional folios. Indeed, occasionally manuscripts were bound from the outset with blank folios that were meant to provide space for future notes by the manuscript's users.

As notes are such a conspicuous feature of Arabic manuscript culture, they come in many different forms and with many different types of content. For instance, notes could be of varying length, starting with terse statements of a few words (*min kutub XY/ex libris XY*) to extended remarks, which – especially in the case of certificates of transmission – are occasionally longer than the main text itself. In terms of content, we find, to name but a few, reading notes (*muṡāla'a*), certificates of transmission (*samā'*), licences for transmission (*ijāza*), ownership statements (*tamlīk/tamalluk*, often in combination with seals), statements that praise or disparage the text (*taqrīz* in the former case), verses by the copyists, and endowment attestations (*waqfīya/taḡbīs*).¹ In addition to these notes that refer directly to the main text and the legal status of the manuscript, we find independent textual fragments such as poetry, autobiographical statements, and registers of events. This wide range of notation is reflected in the contributions to this volume that adopt a deliberately comprehensive definition of 'manuscript note'. Here, the term will be understood to refer to any written material that is found

¹ Not discussed in this volume are *taqrīz* and verses by the copyists. On the former cf. Rudolf Vesely, "Das Taqrīz in der arabischen Literatur", in: Stephan Conermann/Anja Pistor-Hatam, eds. *Die Mamluken. Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur. Zum Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942-1999)*, Hamburg 2003, 379-385. On the latter cf. Max Weisweiler, "Arabische Schreibverse", in: R. Paret, ed. *Orientalische Studien Emno Littmann zu seinem 60. Geburtstag am 16. September 1935 überreicht [...]*. Leiden 1935, 101-120.

on a manuscript that does not belong to the main text(s), irrespective of whether it refers to the main text and the legal status of the manuscript or is entirely unrelated to text and manuscript itself.

Due to the wide range of content that we find in such notes, they are a rich source for a number of fields, from the history of ideas, to social, economic, and urban history, historical topography, and biographical studies. We encounter the names of persons, dates, topographical information, the names of buildings, links of kinship, prices, historical events, and terms for various crafts and trades. It goes without saying that, especially in a comparative perspective with other world regions, such as Latin Europe, this copious material represents a considerable resource for widening our understanding of Middle Eastern societies. The certificates of transmission, for instance, are arguably a source genre unique to Middle Eastern societies in the pre-modern period.

Historically, writers have been to some degree aware of the manuscript notes' source value and significance. Biographers, for example, mentioned in entries that a person acted as a writer of certificates of transmission² and they routinely referred to manuscript notes as sources, stating for instance that a specific person 'attended a reading of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* Muslim under the presidency of al-ʿAlam al-Sakhāwī according to what is apparent from Ibn ʿAsākir's manuscript'.³ From a modern perspective, the notes' source value is evidently even broader, not only because of the variety of content, but also because they were written – or ordered to be written – by a wide range of persons. Wealthy individuals had their endowment deeds registered on them, book owners applied their *ex libris*, readers signalled that they had read the text – or at least claimed that they had done so – some readers 'corrected' the text or commented upon it, scholars wrote certificates of transmission, copyists left verses, owners used empty space for unrelated notes etc. As a consequence, the notes inform us about significantly more issues than those in which most contemporary readers were interested, namely who possessed the manuscripts and how were they transmitted?

Due to the rich information contained in manuscript notes, one of the central issues of this volume is their importance as an additional set of documentary sources for the study of Middle Eastern societies. The use of the term 'documentary sources' in the following is based on an ideal-typical definition, one primarily understood in contradistinction to the genre of narrative sources – such as

² From the 7th/13th century this was described as '*kataba l-ṭibāq*', for example Aḥmad b. Ismāʿil al-Ḥalabī (d. 698/1299, Muḥammad al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh al-Islām wa-waḥayāt al-mashābir wa-l-ʿalām*, ed. ʿU. ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī, Beirut 1987-2000, vol. 691-700, 344), ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Mūsā (d. 700/1300-1, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 691-700, 484), Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan Ibn Ghānim (d. 740/1339, Muḥammad Ibn Rāfiʿ, *al-Waḥayāt*, ed. Ṣāliḥ Mahdī ʿAbbās/Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf, Damascus 1982, I, 318-20), Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā al-Maqdisī (d. 759/1358, Ibn Rāfiʿ, *al-Waḥayāt*, II, 214-6), ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Muḥammad al-Shāfiʿī (d. 767/1366, Ibn Rāfiʿ, *al-Waḥayāt*, II, 305-8).

³ Al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 691-700, 279, the scholar in question is al-Tanūkhī, d. 695/1296.

chronicles, treatises, biographical dictionaries, autobiographies, and travel accounts. The common feature of these narrative sources is that they – more or less successfully – tend to offer a coherent account and/or interpretation of the past and the present. Documentary sources, on the contrary, are rather fragmentary remains that bear witness to specific individual or collective acts. Such documentary sources include tombstone inscriptions, letters, records of legal proceedings, public inscriptions, endowment deeds, treaties, pilgrimage certificates – and manuscript notes. This understanding of documentary sources is distinct from J. Droysen's classical definition of the term. He primarily classified sources as documentary 'remains' (*Überreste*) on the basis that they were not produced with the intention of preserving the account and/or interpretation for posterity.⁴ Yet, many of the above documentary sources were produced with precisely this aim. Endowment records, for example, were as much legal records as textual spaces to celebrate the respective endower. Other notes were clearly written with an eye on posterity, for instance with the aim of 'correcting' the main text, testifying to its transmission, and registering the act of having read the work. Consequently, the documentary character of sources as defined here is not determined by the authors' intentions. Rather, it is based upon the less developed narrative structure of the sources relative to narrative sources.

The role of manuscript notes as an additional set of documentary sources is so crucial because against 'the ten thousand original documents [...] from the archive of the Abbey of Cluny alone a historian of the high medieval Middle East might counterpoise a much smaller number from some very large empires'.⁵ No doubt this statement, on a period of over two centuries, includes some hyperbole, seeming to rest on a rather restricted view of what constitutes 'original documents'. However, it is beyond doubt that the field of Middle Eastern history is characterised by the relative abundance of narrative sources and the relative scarcity of documentary material. Exceptions, such as the extraordinarily rich material emanating from Cairo's Geniza collection, do not alter the fact that, compared to Latin Europe or Sung China, the available documentary sources for the study of Middle Eastern history before the 9th/15th century are relatively limited.⁶

This issue of documentary material is topical, as the field of Middle Eastern history has experienced in the last decades important and exciting developments that added decisively to the pool of available sources. This refers, on one hand, to material beyond the classical textual sources: fields such as numismatics and archaeology have increasingly contributed to our understanding of pre-modern

⁴ Johann G. Droysen, *Grundriss der Historik*, Leipzig 1868, 14.

⁵ Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190-1350*, Cambridge 1994, 2. 'High medieval' refers to the period from the mid-9th/12th century to the early 9th/15th century.

⁶ For an overview over source genres cf. R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History. A Framework for Inquiry*, 2nd ed., London 1995, 25ff.

Middle Eastern societies.⁷ On the other hand, the field of classical documentary sources has also experienced decisive developments. Arguably, the study of letters and the work on endowment deeds have been among the most significant contributions in this respect. Letters of various kinds have proven to be of particular importance for the first centuries after the rise of Islam. An increasing number of works has been dedicated to this source material: Diem's study of private, official, and business letters from different collections dating back as far as the 1st/7th century;⁸ Khan's work on mostly Egyptian letters from the Nasser Khalili Collection, some of them again going back to the earliest centuries;⁹ Gignoux's study of 1st/7th-century business letters from Persia;¹⁰ and such projects as Kaplony's work on business letters¹¹ and Shahin's investigation of official letters from the 1st/7th to 3rd/9th centuries.¹²

The second documentary source genre that has significantly contributed to our understanding of pre-modern society have been endowment deeds. Compared to letters, original endowment deeds are available in significant numbers only from the 14th century onwards. Pioneering works by Amīn and Haarmann are inextricably linked to the 'discovery' of this material for the study of the Mamluk period.¹³ This work has been carried on and significantly expanded by the contributions of Behrens-Abouseif,¹⁴ students of Haarmann such as

⁷ For the use of numismatics cf. for example Stefan Heidemann, *Die Renaissance der Städte in Nordsyrien und Nordmesopotamien: städtische Entwicklung und wirtschaftliche Bedingungen in ar-Raqqa und Harrān von der Zeit der beduinischen Vorherrschaft bis zu den Seldschuken*, Leiden 2002; on the use of archaeological evidence cf. the examination of pottery shards by Marcus Milwright, *The Fortress of the Raven: Karak in the Middle Islamic Period (1100 -1650)*, Leiden 2008; on various source materials cf. M. Cerasi/A. Petruccioli/A. Sarro/S. Weber, eds. *Multicultural Urban Fabric and Types in the South and Eastern Mediterranean*, Beirut 2007, 102.

⁸ Amongst others: Werner Diem, *Arabische Briefe aus dem 7.-10. Jahrhundert*, Wien 1993; idem. *Arabische Privatbriefe des 9.-15. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, Wiesbaden 1996; idem. *Arabische Briefe des 7.-13. Jahrhunderts aus den Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin*, Wiesbaden 1997.

⁹ Geoffrey Khan, *Bills, Letters and Deeds. Arabic papyri of the seventh-eleventh centuries*, Oxford 1993.

¹⁰ Philippe Gignoux, "Lettres privées et lettres d'affaires dans l'Iran du 7ème siècle", *Asiatische Studien/Études asiatiques* 62 (2008), 827-842.

¹¹ Andreas Kaplony (University of Zürich), *Shipment on the Red Sea: The Interplay of Business Letters, Writs of Consignment, Receipts of Delivery, and Accounting Journals at al-Qusayr (13th Century)*.

¹² Ayman A. Shahin (University of Munich), *Paläographie und Orthographie der arabischen amtlichen Briefe in den beiden ältesten Corpora aus Ägypten und Afghanistan (7.-8. Jh.) und andere amtliche Briefe aus Ägypten (7.-9. Jh.)*.

¹³ Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, *al-Awqāf wa-l-ḥayāt al-ijtimā'īya fī Miṣr, 648-923 H/1250-1517 M: dirāsa ta'rīkhīya waṭṭa'iḳīya*, Cairo 1980. Ulrich Haarmann, "Mamluk Endowment Deeds As a Source For the History Of Education In Late Medieval Egypt", *al-Abḥāth* (American University of Beirut) 28 (1980), 31-47.

¹⁴ Such as her contribution to the respective article in the Encyclopaedia of Islam 2 ("waḳf (a) - 1. In Egypt", in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., vol. 11, 59ff. and her article "Qaytbay's Investments in the City of Cairo: Waqf and Power", *Annales Islamologiques* 32 (1998), 29-40.

Reinfandt¹⁵ and a number of colleagues working in the tradition of Amīn, such as Nuwayṣar, ʿUthmān, and ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm.¹⁶ The accessibility of this material and the accumulated experience of working with it have made more thematically focused studies possible, especially on social and economic issues.¹⁷

It is against this background, that the present volume aims to highlight the usefulness and potential of manuscript notes as an additional documentary source. This source genre sheds new light on aspects of pre-modern Middle Eastern societies, just as letters and endowment records have done over the past decades. Despite this source value, however, the material placed in the margins and other unused spaces of manuscripts has still not received sufficient scholarly attention. Notes have started to play a more prominent role only in recent years with a rising number of studies that edit, catalogue, describe, and use them. A modest peak in interest was evident in the mid-1950s, when a number of seminal studies were published. Al-Munajjid published in 1955 an overview article about certificates of transmission, significantly in the very first edition of the newly founded Cairene journal of the Institute for Arabic Manuscripts.¹⁸ In the same period, Vajda published his catalogue of certificates pertaining to manuscripts held in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris.¹⁹ Ritter's article on certificates and other manuscript notes in Turkey, published in 1953, had already set the high level on which the work with this material was to be conducted.²⁰ However, the coincidental publication of these studies was not followed by a comparable interest in this source material in the subsequent decades. Among the few exceptions were Lecomte, for instance, who studied certificates pertaining to works of one specific author, and Sellheim, who drew attention to remarkable isolated cases of certificates.²¹

¹⁵ Lucian Reinfandt, *Mamlukische Sultansstiftungen des 9./15. Jahrhunderts: nach den Urkunden der Stifter al-Asraf Tuḥal und al-Muʿayyad Ahmad ibn Tuḥal*, Berlin 2003.

¹⁶ Ḥusnī Nuwayṣar, *Madrasa Jarkasīya ʿalā namaṭ al-masājid al-jāmiʿa. Madrasat al-amīr Sudūn min Zāda bi-Sūq al-salāḥ*, Cairo 1985, 67-114; M. ʿA. ʿUthmān, *Wathīqat waqf Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Ustādār. Dirāsa taʾrīkhīya atharīya wathaʾiqīya*, Cairo 1983; Fahmī ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm, *al-ʿImāra al-islāmīya fī ʿaṣr al-mamālīk al-jarākisa, ʿaṣr al-Sulṭān al-Muʿayyad Shaykh*, Cairo 2003.

¹⁷ Cf. for example Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt, 1250-1517*, Cambridge 2000.

¹⁸ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, "Ijāzāt al-samāʿ fī l-makhtūṭāt al-qadīma", *Majallat maʿhad al-makhtūṭāt al-ʿarabīya/Revue de l'institut des manuscrits arabes* (Cairo) 1 (1955), 232-251.

¹⁹ Georges Vajda, "Les certificats de transmissions dans les manuscrits arabes de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris", *Bulletin d'Information de l'Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes* 3 (1954), 107-110. idem. *Les certificats de lecture et de transmission dans les manuscrits arabes de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris*, Paris 1956.

²⁰ Hellmut Ritter, "Autographs in Turkish Libraries", *Oriens* 6 (1953), 63-90. The interest in these sources is also in other articles apparent where authors discuss them in some detail although they are not central to the discussion, such as for instance S.M. Stern, "Some noteworthy manuscripts of the poems of Abu 'l-ʿAlā' al-Maʿarrī", *Oriens* 7 (1954), 322-47.

²¹ Gérard Lecomte, "A propos de la résurgence des ouvrages d'Ibn Qutayba sur le hadith aux VIe/XIIe et VIIe/XIIIe siècles. Les certificats de lecture du 'K. Gharīb al-hadīth' et de 'K.

It was only in the 1990s that this source material came back into the focus of a significant number of studies.²² The studies that have been published since have mapped new areas of research, made more primary material available, and ultimately rendered the publication of the present volume possible. In 1999, Sayyid discussed ownership statements and summarised the state of the art with regard to scholarly manuscript notes.²³ Witkam examined the role of certificates in pre-modern scholarship and discussed specific examples. In a second article, he discussed the numerous notes of transmission on one specific ḥadīth manuscript held in Leiden.²⁴ Şeşen returned to some of the material that Ritter had discussed in order to underline the richness of the coincidental information on the manuscripts' title pages.²⁵ Nevertheless, in the first instance it was Leder's work that has contributed to drawing attention back to this source material, especially

Ishl al-ghalat fi gharib al-ḥadīth' li-Abi 'Ubayd al-Qasim b. Sallam", *Bulletin d'études orientales* 21 (1968), 347-409 ; Rudolf Sellheim, *Arabische Handschriften: Materialien zur arabischen Literaturgeschichte*, Wiesbaden/Stuttgart 1976-1987. Further noteworthy publications are Gérard Lecomte, "Bedeutung der „Randzeugnisse“ (samā'āt) in den alten arabischen Handschriften", *Supplement 1 der Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (27. Deutscher Orientalistentag Würzburg 1968), Wiesbaden 1969, II, 562-566; 'Abd Allāh Fayyād, *al-Ijāzāt al-'ilmīya 'inda l-muslimīn*, Baghdad 1967; P. A. MacKay, *Certificates of Transmission on a Manuscript of the Maqāmāt of al-Ḥarīrī*, *MS. Cairo Adab* 105, Philadelphia 1971; Albert Dietrich, "Zur Überlieferung einiger ḥadīth-Handschriften der Zāhiriyya in Damascus", in: J.M. Barral, ed. *Orientalia Hispanica. vol. 1: Arabica-Islamica*, Leiden 1974, 226-44; Qāsim Ahmad al-Samirā'i, "al-Ijāzāt wa-taṭawwuruhā l-ta'rikhiya", *Ālam al-kutub* 2 (1981), 278-285; Yūnus al-Khārūf "al-Samā'āt wa-l-ijāzāt fi l-makḥṭūṭāt al-'arabiya", *Risālat al-maktaba* (Jordanien) 10 (1975), 16-22.

- ²² Besides those mentioned hereafter, the following studies are noteworthy: Dominique Sourdel, "Documents sur l'enseignement donné a damas par le savant et traditioniste Ibn 'Asākir", *Revue D'Études Islamiques* 61 (1993), 1-17. Rāshid ibn Sa'd al-Qaḥṭānī, "Şafahāt al-'anāwīn fi l-makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabiya", *Ālam al-makḥṭūṭāt wa-l-nawādir* [Riyad] 2 (1997-8), 365-383. Gérard Troupeau, "Les actes de waqf des manuscrits arabes chrétiens de la Bibliothèque Nationale de France", *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 99-100 (La tradition manuscrite en écriture arabe) 2002, 45-51.
- ²³ Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, "Les marques de possession sur les manuscrits et la reconstitution des anciens fonds de manuscrits arabes", *Manuscripta Orientalia: International Journal for Oriental Manuscript Research* 9 (2003), 14-23. idem. "al-Samā' wa-l-qir'ā wa-l-munāwala wa-quyūd al-muqābala wa-l-mu'āraḍa", in: Fayṣal al-Hafyān, ed. *Fann fabrasat al-makḥṭūṭāt: madkhal wa-qaḍāyā*, Cairo 1999, 73-101. Jacqueline Sublet, "De passage à Damas en 688/1286. Ibn al-Najīb et la transmission du savoir", in: Chase F. Robinson, ed. *Texts, Documents and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D.S.Richards*, Leiden 2003, 357-383.
- ²⁴ Jan Just Witkam, "The Human Element Between Text and Reader: The ijāza in Arabic Manuscripts", in: Yasin Dutton, ed. *The Codicology of Islamic Manuscripts: Proceedings of the Second Conference of Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, 4-5 December 1993*, London 1995, 123-136; idem, "Sporen van lees- en leercultuur in een twaalfde-eeuws handschrift uit Damascus", in: idem, *Van Leiden naar Damascus, en weer terug: over vormen van islamitische lees- en leercultuur*. Leiden 2003, 33-142. These and a number of other texts can be found online at the Islamic Manuscripts website (<http://www.islamicmanuscripts.info/index.html>) that is maintained by Jan Just Witkam and that offers a wealth of additional resources.
- ²⁵ Ramazan Şeşen, "Ahammiyat şafḥat al-'unwān (al-zāhiriya) fi tawṣīf al-makḥṭūṭāt", in: Rāshid al-Inānī, ed. *Dirāsāt al-makḥṭūṭāt al-Islāmiya bayna 'tibārāt al-madda wa-l-bashar. A'māl al-mu'tamar al-thānī li-mu'assasat al-Furqān li-l-Turāth al-Islāmī*, London 1997, 179-196.

to certificates of transmission. In a number of articles he has examined this material and its usefulness, especially for studying the history of education and urban history.²⁶ Of equal importance has been the collaborative project to publish and index facsimiles of a selection of certificates from Damascus. This has for the first time made a quantitatively significant number of certificates available to scholarship.²⁷

The 1990s also witnessed the start of the project *Fichier des manuscrits moyen-orientaux datés* (FiMMOD, File of Dated Middle Eastern Manuscripts) under the aegis of Déroche. The description of manuscripts from libraries and archives as diverse as Algiers, Berlin, Bologna, Brussels, Geneva, Istanbul, Leiden, Leipzig, Liege, London, Lyon, Munich, Oxford, Paris, Rabat, Strasburg, Tashkent, and Vatican City has provided important information on scholarly notes. Projects such as the FiMMOD and the reproduction of the Damascene notes have compensated to some degree for a problem that has persisted to the present day, namely that many editions of manuscripts disregard the notes. There are many noteworthy exceptions,²⁸ but the standard is still that editions are limited to the 'main' text itself and devote only scant attention to other textual elements. The same is true of manuscript catalogues that only rarely include such information.²⁹

The scholarship on manuscript notes over the last decades and the following contributions show that manuscript notes do not constitute an easily definable and well-established category. Rather, the line between notes and other material can be blurred in two regards. On the one hand, notes that comment in the margins on the text could develop into comprehensive commentaries and consequently start to constitute a second main text. On the other hand, most of the material that falls within the category of manuscript notes could also be trans-

²⁶ Stefan Leder, "Dokumente zum Ḥadīṭ in Schrifttum und Unterricht aus Damaskus im 6./12. Jhdt.," *Oriens* 34 (1994), 57-75; idem. "Eine neue Quelle zur Stadtgeschichte von Damaskus. Zur Alltagsgeschichte der Ḥadīṭwissenschaft," *Supplement XI der Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (26. Deutscher Orientalistentag Leipzig 1995), Stuttgart 1998, 268-79; idem. "Hörerzertifikate als Dokumente für die islamische Lehrkultur des Mittelalters", in: Raif Georges Khoury, ed. *Urkunden und Urkundenformulare im klassischen Altertum und in den orientalischen Kulturen*, Heidelberg 1999, 147-166.

²⁷ Stefan Leder/Yāsīn Muḥammad al-Sawwās/al-Ṣāgarjī Ma'mūn, *Mu'jam al-samā'āt al-Dimashqīya. Les certificats d'audition à Damas. 550-750/1155-1349*, Damascus 1996; Stefan Leder/Yāsīn Muḥammad al-Sawwās/Ma'mūn al-Ṣāgarjī, *Mu'jam al-samā'āt al-Dimashqīya - ṣūwar al-makḥṭūāt. Recueil de documents fac-similés des certificats d'audition à Damas. 550-750/1155-1349*, Damascus 2000.

²⁸ These exceptions are generally limited to certificates of transmission such as 'Alī Ibn 'Asākir, *al-Arbā'ūn al-'abdāl al-'awālī al-masmū'a bi-l-Jāmi' al-Umawī bi-Dimashq*, ed. M. al-'Ajmi, Beirut 2004 (with certificates from 7th/13th-century Damascus); Muḥammad al-Shāfi'i, *Al-Risāla*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, Beirut (reprint of the Cairo-edition 1940) (with certificates stretching over 300 years); R. G. Khoury, *Kitab al-Zuhd par Asad b. Mūsā (132-212/750/827)*, Wiesbaden 1976; A. Ben Shemesh, *Taxation in Islam*, Leiden 1967.

²⁹ Cf. for example M. 'Awwād, *Makḥṭūāt al-majma' al-'ilmī al-'Irāqī. Dirāsa wa-fabrisa*, vol. I, Bagdad 1979.

mitted independently of the manuscript to which they refer. Individuals could report on their reading biography in autobiographical texts instead of, or in addition to, writing reading notes.³⁰ We possess lists of books that were held by individual scholars in addition to ownership statements and these do complement our knowledge of personal libraries.³¹ Certificates of transmission (*samāʿāt*) and especially licences for transmission (*ijāzāt*) could be issued as separate texts, statements that praise a text could be collected in a treatise, and endowment attestation registered elsewhere.³² Nevertheless, the material with which the contributors to this volume are dealing can confidently be described as ‘manuscript notes’ according to the comprehensive definition above, and it remains for further studies to explore the borders of this genre.

The contributions

The contributions to this volume discuss and explore the usefulness of manuscript notes as documentary sources from different perspectives, touch on different aspects and deal with sources of different genres and from various regions and eras. Irrespective of their different approaches, the contributions may be divided into two discrete groups according to the types of sources they use. The first group deals with *samāʿāt* and *ijāzāt* notes. These notes – certificates of transmission and licences for transmission – are closely connected to each other. Often-times, a certificate of transmission may serve as the basis for a licence for transmission. As shown above, *samāʿāt* and *ijāzāt* notes are the two types of manuscript notes which have attracted most scholarship so far. The contributions in this first group draw upon the existing scholarship, but show a wider range of perspectives to study this kind of material and suggest further directions for future research.

The second group focuses on other types of notes on manuscripts, such as endowment notes, readers’ and owners’ notes, the opening *isnād* on the title page of a work, marginal and fore-edge titles, and notes – or their absence – on autograph manuscripts. Some of these studies point to notes that, until now, have been almost completely neglected. However, the contributions demonstrate that

³⁰ On testimonies of reading in autobiographical works cf. Dwight F. Reynolds, ed. *Interpreting the Self. Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 2001.

³¹ Such as the list of the 6th/12th-century scholar Tāj al-Dīn al-Kindī as seen by Abū Shāma (Abū Shāma, *Al-Dhayl ʿalā l-Rawḍatayn* (published as *Tarājim rijāl al-qarnayn al-sādis wa-l-sābiʿ*), ed. Muḥammad al-Kawthārī, Beirut 1974 (reprint of Cairo-edition 1947), 98. On such lists see also Youssef Eche, *Les bibliothèques arabes publiques et semi-publiques en Mésopotamie, en Syrie et en Égypte au moyen âge*, Damascus 1967, 286-291.

³² On certificates of transmission cf. the discussion of a manuscript that contains exclusively certificates in Jacqueline Sublet, “Passage”; on *taqrīz* cf. Franz Rosenthal, “‘Blurbs’ (Taqrīz) from 8th/14th-century Egypt”, *Oriens* 27-28 (1981), 177-196 and Vesley, “Taqrīz”.

they do deserve further study and that they tend to shed light upon unexpected areas of research. Together, the two groups give an overview of the range of different kinds of material that can collectively be referred to as manuscript notes. They give an idea of the breadth of research questions and problems connected with the topic and show in which ways these notes may be used as a documentary source in the sense defined above.

Of the first group, Sobieroj and Lohlker focus on different aspects of *ijāzāt*. Sobieroj analyses several *ijāzāt* from a variety of regions and different periods in order to inquire whether *ijāzāt* are generally composed in standard forms or whether they display particular traits. The *ijāzāt* that are analysed date from between the 4th/10th century and the 14th/19th century and were issued in different parts of the Ottoman Empire, Persia, Syria and Yemen. Sobieroj shows that although there is an underlying formula, the *ijāzāt* were never standardized and therefore display a wide range of variants and individual elaborations. He also points to continuities and changes in the *ijāzāt* from their earliest traces to the recent past.

Lohlker draws our attention to the point that in Islamic studies *ijāzāt* have been analysed almost exclusively as formal documents, while other aspects have been neglected. With reference to the works of Pierre Bordieu, he emphasises the function of the *ijāza* as a kind of symbolic and social capital and its importance for analysing scholarly and social networks in Islam. From this perspective, Lohlker analyses a range of *ijāzāt* originating from 11th-century al-Andalus, via 12th- and 16th-century Morocco, to 20th-century Senegal and the internet.

In contrast to the wide-ranging studies of Sobieroj and Lohlker, Quiring-Zoche takes a different approach by focusing on one specific manuscript. She uses *samāʿāt* and other notes in a manuscript of the Yemenite jurist and diplomat Qāsim Abū Ṭalib (1291/1874-1380/1960) as a source for a biographical study. She demonstrates to what degree such notes contain information that can not be found in the hitherto used standard sources. Apart from details on the dates and places of his studies, which are not documented elsewhere, the manuscript contains, among other things, information about his interests and the books he read and thus helps provide a better view of his life. In addition, her contribution shows that the traditional modes of learning and teaching with their institutions of *samāʿāt* and *ijāzāt* were still alive in the recent past – at least in Yemen. Finally, Quiring-Zoche draws our attention to regional peculiarities in Yemenite *samāʿāt*. This point indicates that Sobieroj's study on the differences and variations of *ijāzāt* could in future be fruitfully extended to the genre of *samāʿāt* as well.

Like Quiring-Zoche, Leder studies the notes on one manuscript, in his case that of *Maʿānī al-Qurʾān* by al-Farrāʾ (d. ca. 207/821). By studying the manuscript's *samāʿāt* notes – mostly originating from 6th/12th-century Baghdad – he draws our attention to the interplay between *samāʿāt* notes and the main text itself. He shows that *samāʿāt* notes do not only testify to the authorized transmis-

sion of a fixed text. Rather, they also determine to a large extent the value of a manuscript and play a vital role in the question of its dissemination or disappearance. In particular, he underlines the important role of the practices of transmission, which often involve oral performance in the constitution of the text.

Hirschler and Görke both concentrate on strands of *samāʿāt* notes that do not document single lectures, but lecture series of several sessions, which were necessary to read voluminous works. Hirschler analyses *samāʿāt* notes of Ibn ʿAsākir’s monumental history of Damascus and shows how *samāʿāt* notes can help to draw a wider picture of the society and overcome the narrow focus on ʿulamāʾ that the biographical dictionaries purport. From the notes he is able to trace the declining role of a family in Damascus in the 6th/12th and 7th/13th century. He also points out how the order of seating is represented in the notes and what information on the social rank of lecture participants can be gained from the *samāʿāt*.

Like Quiring-Zoche and Leder, Görke focuses on the notes of a single manuscript, in this case a manuscript of the *Kitāb al-Amwāl* by Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. ca. 224/838). He studies a large number of *samāʿāt* strands from 5th/11th-century Baghdad, which involve the same authorizing Shaykh, to gain a clearer picture of the procedures and practices and the persons involved in the transmission of texts. He shows that text transmission was much less informal than usually assumed, being highly formalized and professionalized in several ways – through the employment of professional readers, for instance. He also shows how the character of the lectures changed over the course of time from small study groups to talks delivered to larger audiences, in accordance with the prestige of the teacher, which grew continuously with his age.

The contributions belonging to the above-mentioned second group considerably broaden our perspective on the role and importance of notes, other than *samāʿāt* and *ijāzāt*. As most of these kinds of notes have been neglected so far, the contributions of this group can generally be said to break new ground in their aim to establish the value of these notes as documentary sources.

Haase shows how the study of inconspicuous and seemingly unimportant manuscripts can enhance our knowledge of social life in Islamic societies. The main texts in the Ottoman manuscript that he studies probably date from the late 18th and 19th centuries and were penned by different persons. They cover topics ranging from Qurʾānic commentary, to juridical treatises, medical recipes, and a pregnancy test. This colourful collection of texts is rendered even more interesting by the fact that a 19th-century qadi in Anatolia used the manuscript as a personal notebook, writing in the margins and other blank spaces. His letters and commentaries not only give a revealing view on his life, but also indicate his social links, interests and beliefs. In this sense, the notes give a unique perspective on Ottoman provincial life, which is complementary to what can be gleaned

from official documents. A study of these (hitherto mostly neglected) documents also opens the possibility of comparing personal notes on administrative deeds with the respective archive documents, thus affording a livelier view on the everyday business of a qadi.

Witkam draws our attention to the title pages of a work (or of each quire) and the *isnād* included on it. He discusses this *isnād*'s importance in indicating the line of transmission stretching from the author of the book to the manuscript's copyist. This *isnād* is typically a kind of high *isnād* (*isnād ʿālī*) in that it has very few persons involved, who usually heard the work in their youth and further transmitted after reaching a very great age. Taking a pertinent example from the Leiden library (a late-6th/12th-century copy of *Fawā'id al-ḥadīth* by al-Rāzī (d. 414/1023)), Witkam shows how the high *isnād* was used in practice. He compares this with the theoretical discussions of this issue in treatises by *ḥadīth* scholars, who started to deal with this topic in more detail starting from the 7th/13th century. His discussion underlines the crucial role of studying concrete notes in order to understand the practical implications of theoretical statements on scholarly practices.

Liebreuz focuses on a different type of notes that we routinely find on the title pages, namely readers' and owners' notes. While *samāʿāt* and *ijāzāt* flourished in Damascus mainly in Ayyubid and Mamluk times, such readers' and owners' notes continued to be used at least until the 19th century and therefore cover a much longer span of time. In addition, Liebreuz's article clearly underlines the importance of moving beyond the well-studied genres of *samāʿāt* and *ijāzāt* notes. The latter are largely limited to religious literature and can only occasionally be found on manuscripts linked to the rational sciences (*al-ʿulūm al-ʿaqliyya*), philosophy or literary accounts.³³

Consequently, the inclusion of manuscripts pertaining to other fields of knowledge, such as medicine, is generally only possible by turning to readers' and owners' notes. Liebreuz analyses these notes for insights into the development of the Damascene Rifāʿīya library and its users. By studying a wide array of notes, he demonstrates to what degree Jews and Christians participated in wider intellectual life. As the notes sometimes also mention the price paid for a manuscript, they constitute an important documentary source for information on book prices, and therefore on the book market.

Serikoff discusses another genre of notes on manuscripts that has been generally overlooked: the work's title that was placed in the margins or the book's fore-edge or head. Much like Liebreuz, Serikoff studies works pertaining mainly to one particular collection, in his case the collection of the Syrian-Lebanese Ḥaddād family in the early 20th century. He shows that in these notes the titles often took a different form than intended by the work's author. These marginal

³³ Aḥmad Ramaḍān Aḥmad, *al-Ijāzat wa-l-tawqīʿāt al-makhlūṭa fī l-ʿulūm al-naqliyya wa-l-ʿaqliyya min al-qarn 4h./10m. ilā 10h./16m.*, Cairo 1986.

and fore-edge titles fulfilled a crucial role in ordering and classifying books in collections. The changes that titles underwent when placed in the margins or on the fore-edge explain to some degree the multitude of names under which one specific work is often cited.

Sublet focuses on autographs, on manuscripts – final or draft versions – written by the authors themselves and not by scribes. Autographs were considered to be especially valuable for various reasons and were sought after by scholars. In this case the notes – or the absence of them – can be revealing on the status of the manuscripts and its latter use. Manuscripts that were dedicated to a prince or a local ruler, for instance, did not usually reach the scholarly community and therefore lack signs of readers' notes or the like.

As can be seen, the contributions all offer different ways of employing manuscript notes as documentary sources for a variety of questions and point to future research paths and desiderata. Most importantly, the contributions to this volume discuss notes from as far afield as Anatolia, Yemen, from North Africa, and Iraq. The discussions hint at differences that existed among these notes, but the degree to which such differences are due to regional peculiarities remains to be researched. Did regional traditions develop that led to the use of specific genres of notes, to local forms of how to write these notes, and to functions of notes that we would not find on other regions? In the same vein, the present contributions deal with notes from the 3rd/9th century to the present day. Again, differences are visible and the successive rise and fall of the use of the *samā'āt* in medieval Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo recalls the importance of studying notes in wider perspectives. Consequently, only further studies that draw upon a wider array of source material will allow us to understand how specific genres of notes developed over time.

The contributions also show the large scope of thematic fields for which manuscript notes can be used. They range from – but are not limited to – the study of the development and formalization of specific types of notes (Sobieroj), social history (Hirschler, Haase, Liebreuz), procedures of teaching and transmission (Leder, Görke, Witkam), the social role of manuscript notes (Lohlker, Sublet), bibliographical studies (Quiring-Zoche), and librarianship (Serikoff).

Although a broad approach was attempted with respect to the sources used, the methods employed, and the questions asked, much remains to be done. However, the contributions collected in this volume show that the study of manuscript notes in its widest sense will open new horizons that will enhance our knowledge of past and present Muslim societies. We hope that this volume will stimulate further research in this direction so that the abundance of notes in the Arabic manuscript culture will be complemented by a corresponding number of studies.