

ANDREAS GÖRKE and KONRAD HIRSCHLER (eds):

Manuscript Notes as Documentary Sources.

(Beiruter Texte und Studien.) 208 pp. Würzburg and Beirut: Ergon, 2011.

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This is a remarkable book. It addresses a type of documentary source for Middle Eastern history that has not yet been systematically tapped, namely the hand-written notes that abound on the margins, front pages and even in between the lines of pre-modern Arabic manuscripts. Manuscript notes testify for books' owners and readers and provide indications of their actual use (and non-use). They vary from short statements of a few words to lengthy essays. Some are explanations of, or comments on, certain passages of the manuscript, while others are related to the manuscript in principle or its owner in one way or another. Some are unrelated to the manuscript but are found on its pages and still have documentary value. The historical value of the notes is twofold: they enlarge the body of information about social, economic and urban matters, historical topography, biographical studies, or the history of ideas in the era in which the manuscript had been in active use; and they give evidence for the "people behind the books" and the living context of books. It is a matter of concern that critical editions so far have shown little awareness of such traces of use, as Görke and Hirschler rightly point out (p. 15). (A further step might be an assessment of traces of use of manuscripts, such as dirt from fingers, destruction, or traces of veneration, as has been suggested by Kathryn M. Rudy for European manuscripts in *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 2, 1, 2010, <http://www.jhna.org/index.php/past-issues/volume-2-issue-1-2/129-dirty-books>, accessed 2 May 2013.) It lies in the very nature of critical editions that they aim to restore "original" versions of literary works, whereby "works" is understood in an essentialist way. This method has unquestionable merits, but one has the creeping suspicion that with editorial achievements of this kind the baby may be thrown out with the bath water, the restored text of a work being a sterile shell of what had once been a living organism: the manuscript text in actual use and readers' discourse.

It is perhaps time for a fresh approach. Regarding manuscript notes as essential constituents of literary works creates a double benefit: they form an abundant source of historical documents; and they help to improve, perhaps even revolutionize, our understanding of what is in a book, written and oral, and to resensitize the instinct for the richness of texts in use. In spite of important pioneer studies by Šalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, Hellmut Ritter, Gérard Lecomte, Rudolf Sellheim, and especially Georges Vajda and Stefan Leder, as well as the collection of data undertaken by the *File of Dated Middle Eastern Manuscripts* (FiMMOD) since the 1990s, the state of the art is still at an early stage. The present book is the result of a workshop "Notes on Manuscripts in Islamic Studies: State of the Art and Future Research Perspectives" held at the University of Kiel, 2–5 April 2008, that sought to address the topic again and point to future research paths. The many possible approaches find expression in the thematic variety of the contributions. To do justice to all of them, Görke and Hirschler adopt a deliberately comprehensive definition of what is to be considered a manuscript note (p. 9). Included are reading notes, certificates of transmission, licences for transmission, ownership statements, statements that praise or disparage the text, verses by the copyists, and endowment attestations, as well as any additional notes not directly related to the manuscript's text but found on its leaves, such as poetry, autobiographical statements, and registers of

events. All of these constitute an additional set of documentary sources for social and cultural historians of pre-modern Middle Eastern societies. The editors define “documentary” as anything “based upon the less developed narrative structure of the sources relative to narrative sources” (p. 11), which seems a bit vague and may give rise to some questions. Moreover, they follow a conventional understanding of what a document is (p. 13), which may be misunderstood as the more we have, the more we know. This would be an unjustified reproach, however, because Görke and Hirschler convincingly demonstrate the enormous potential of manuscript notes in their introduction to the book, and Hirschler has demonstrated a careful and visionary approach to the documentary value of manuscript sources in another recent publication on Mamluk historiography (in Stephan Conermann (ed.), *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus?*, Göttingen, 2013, pp. 159–86, here 175–80).

The various contributions to the book are written in French, English or German and show the large scope of thematic fields in matters of time and space. They are arranged into two broad categories: studies of manuscript notes devoted to the transmission process of literary works, namely certificates of transmission (*samāʿ*) and licenses for transmission (*ijāza*); and focusing on notes related to the physical manuscripts and their possessors or users. The first group comprises studies about the formulae of *ijāzāt* (Florian Sobieroj); their social value in scholarly networks (Rüdiger Lohlker); their potential for biographical studies (Rosemarie Quiring-Zoche); the interplay between *samāʿāt* notes and the main texts (Stefan Leder); the potential of *samāʿāt* notes for family history (Konrad Hirschler); and the procedures and practices of the transmissions of texts (Andreas Görke). The second group deals with notes other than *samāʿāt* and *ijāzāt* for social history (Claus-Peter Haase); chains of transmissions noted on the title pages of books (Jan Just Witkam); readers’ and owners’ notes on title pages (Boris Liebreuz); deliberate variations of book titles on manuscripts (Nikolaj Serikoff); and notes on autographs (Jacqueline Sublet). Good photos of manuscript examples and an index conclude the book. We have to thank the editors and contributors for this very stimulating initiative.

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CARL F. PETRY:

The Criminal Underworld in a Medieval Islamic Society. Narratives from Cairo and Damascus under the Mamluks.

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Si de nombreuses études portant sur la norme et les instances judiciaires dans le Dār al-islām à l’époque médiévale ont vu le jour ces dernières années, elles ont souvent délaissé le monde de la délinquance et ses acteurs. Il faut donc saluer l’ouvrage de Carl Petry qui propose un travail précis et bien documenté sur la gent criminelle dans l’état syro-égyptien des Mamlouks (650–923/1250–1517). En effet, l’auteur appuie son argumentation sur de nombreux exemples et traductions. On mentionnera également un corpus de notes abondant. Toutefois, bien que remarquable, cet ouvrage suscite quelques réflexions.

Dans l’introduction, après une succincte contextualisation, l’auteur définit le sujet, puis aborde de manière scientifique et en respectant l’ordre chronologique