The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands

A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices

Konrad Hirschler

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Contents

Illustrations

Figures

Plates

Situated between pages 90 and 91

Tables

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Introduction

Societies within the Islamic world, especially those in the belt stretching from al-Andalus in the west to Persia in the east, belonged in the medieval era to the world's most bookish societies. The sheer number of works that existed – Ibn al-Nadīm in fourth/tenth-century Baghdad was already aware of several thousand titles – and the sophisticated division of labour for producing manuscripts, including author, copyist, 'copy editor' (*muḥarrir*), calligrapher, illustrator, cutter and binder bear witness to the central role of the written word. Reports on the lively manuscript markets, as well as on the countless individual legacies of manuscripts bequeathed to one's children, colleagues or libraries suggest the extent to which the written word remained in constant circulation in these pre-print societies. At the same time, manuscript-books acquired, at least in some quarters, such outstanding prestige that scholars such as the towering figure of al-Jāḥiẓ, writing in the third/ninth century, could expend page upon page praising their excellence. This fascination with manuscripts, as well as their massive production and constant circulation, even led some medieval scholars to fear the 'over-production' of manuscript-books.[1]

Modern analytical scholarship on the written word in these societies has been characterised by a set of chronological and thematic features that account, to some extent, for the choice of the issues that this book explores.[2] In chronological terms, most scholars focused on the 'Classical' or Early Period up to the fourth/tenth century. Studies such as those by Schoeler, Günther, Toorawa and Touati, to name but the most recent, have discussed in detail the development of a 'writerly culture', to borrow Toorawa's term, in the first four Islamic centuries, especially its interplay with oral and aural practices. It comes as no surprise that this focus on the Early Period is matched at the other end of the chronological spectrum with a comparatively rich literature on literacy and publishing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In addition to the cluster of works around the issue of the 'late' introduction of print to the Middle East, studies such as those of Messick and Eickelman have also taken up the question of the relationship between orality and literacy. The best and most recent overview of the development of the Muslim manuscript-book has reproduced

scholarship's chronological profile by devoting its largest sections to these two periods.[3]

For the long gap between the Early and Modern Periods – both of which have attracted so much modern scholarly interest in the different fields of Islamic/Middle Eastern history in general that they have shaped its profile over the last century – the scholarly output has been rather meagre. For the Ottoman period, at least, we have a number of detailed studies on specific aspects of writerly culture such as Erünsal's articles on libraries. However, there are hardly any works that directly address the issue of writerly culture for the Middle Period, stretching from the early fifth/eleventh to the early tenth/sixteenth centuries. During the 1970s and the 1980s, when the Middle Period started to be reassessed in scholarship beyond notions of decline and degeneration, the contributions of Badawī, Amīn and Haarmann, to name but a few, have remarked upon the quantitative rise and diversification of literary production. More recent work, such as Gully's discussion of letter-writing, has added further dimensions to the development of an increasingly writerly culture. Yet these studies have not focused on the chronological development and the broader outline of the spread of the written word in the Middle Period or the history of reading practices. The closest we get to a study of the manuscript-book and its consumption are those studies concerned with the transmission of knowledge in cities such as Cairo and Damascus, most notably those by Petry, Berkey and Chamberlain. Studies on aspects of cultural changes, for instance, by Leder and Bauer, and some in-depth discussion of issues such as education by Nabāhīn and libraries by al-Nashshār, supplement this scholarship.[4]

The second distinct characteristic of modern scholarship has been thematic: namely, that the main focus in addressing writerly culture has been on the production side, discussing issues such as authorship and the distribution of the written word. Pedersen's work on the Arabic manuscript-book, still seminal in its breadth, has little to say about the consumers of the written word, while Schoeler, in his reflections on the relationship between the written and the oral, also focuses mostly on the issue of how written materials came into being, not so much on what happened to them subsequently in terms of reception. The question of readership itself is only directly in focus in Touati's almost programmatic article on reading in the Early Period, which tries to link the history of reading to studies on this issue in other pre-modern world regions, especially European medieval studies. However, the two main studies on reading in Middle Eastern history are not concerned with the Early and Middle Periods, but with developments in later centuries. Fortna's study on learning to read in

the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic has shown how reading practices were transformed by the spread of educational institutions, an increase in state intervention and market forces. The second study, Hanna's work on the cultural history of Cairo, also remarkable in that it breaks with the standard chronological pattern, addresses the issue of reading among what she calls the 'middle classes' between the tenth/sixteenth and twelfth/eighteenth centuries.[5]

The present book addresses this profile of scholarship on reading by studying the history of reading, or rather aspects of this history of reading, during the Middle Period in the Syrian and Egyptian lands. The Middle Period is chosen as the chronological framework for this study not only in order to fill the gap in scholarship, but also for two further reasons. The first is to address the idea of 'decline' in Arabic societies after the end of the Classical Period; a sterile debate that is fortunately disappearing from the academic study of Middle Eastern history. However, standard works on the history of the book with a comparative outlook, such as Kilgour, still assume that an all-encompassing cultural decline set in at some point around the sixth/twelfth century. In addition, although the decline paradigm has mostly vanished from scholarly writing its repercussions in terms of periodisation are still evident in fields such as library studies (cf. Chapter 4).[6]

The second, and more important, reason for the choice of this period transgresses historiographical considerations and goes back to the actual transformation of writerly culture and reading practices. Although this period did not witness a complete break with previous eras, the diffusion of the written word and the concomitant spread of reading skills in societies of the Middle Period allow one to speak of a distinctive transformation of cultural practices. Taking a span of five centuries, this study offers a broad chronological framework and a first outline of the long-term developments of this increasingly writerly culture. This outline allows, at least tentatively, the developments in the Arabic-speaking lands to be contrasted to other periodisations that scholarship has proposed, mainly with reference to transformations of reading practices in Latin Europe. Gauger's six periods of reading cultures in world history, for instance, include a decisive break around 1300 with the transition from high medieval reading to early modern reading culture that was to continue until 1800 – a periodisation that sits very uneasily with the argument advanced in the following pages for the Arabic-speaking lands. While this book argues that the early Middle Period was the starting point for a profound cultural transformation, this is not the case for the end of the period under consideration in the tenth/sixteenth century. To end the discussion at this point follows above

all the periodisation of political history, that is, the advent of the Ottoman Empire in the Arabic-speaking lands. It might be that new factors, such as the linguistic change at the elite level to Ottoman Turkish, had repercussions on reading practices, but this assumption remains purely speculative and requires as in so many other fields further work that will transcend the divide between the Middle Period and the Ottoman era.[7]

This study focuses on Egypt and Syria as these two regions constituted the hub of cultural activities in the Middle East during the centuries under discussion. In the course of the sixth/twelfth century Syria and its cities emerged as one of the main centres of Arabic literary life, scholarship and manuscript production that increasingly rivalled and ultimately replaced Iraq and especially Baghdad in this role. In this period, the 'Syrian Century' from the mid-sixth/twelfth to the mid-seventh/thirteenth century, under the Zangid and the Ayyubid dynasties the Syrian lands achieved a large degree of autonomy from the dominance of neighbouring regions, especially Egypt. This unusual degree of autonomy was to disappear only in the centuries to come under the Mamluk Empire, when the Syrian cities were subordinate to the political centre in Egypt. Egypt emerged at this point in the seventh/thirteenth century not only as the leading political, but also as the main cultural region in the Arabic-speaking Middle East and was to remain in this position for the following centuries.

However, the book does not completely follow this shift as it continues to refer to Syrian developments as far as they are traceable in order to rebalance the strong focus on Egypt that has so decisively characterised scholarship on the later Middle Period. The long-term development of most aspects of writerly culture and the history of reading during the Middle Period did not directly depend on processes of political regionalisation or centralisation. For instance, the spread of libraries in Egypt and Syria was not a consequence of the regionalisation of political control as it was the case for the rise of new libraries in the Abbasid Empire during the fourth/tenth century.[8] Here, the dwindling authority of central rule in Baghdad was instrumental in the rise of cultural activities in the former provinces and new regional centres. In Syria and Egypt, by contrast, a process of intense centralisation, which concentrated political authority, military might and economic capital in Cairo, accompanied the spread of libraries in the Middle Period. This process of centralisation, starting with the dynastic change from the Ayyubids to the Mamluks in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century, thus did not entail an all-compassing decline of cultural activities in those regions that had become little more than provinces of the centralised Mamluk Empire.

In its approach, the book stands in the tradition of the aforementioned

works by Berkey, Chamberlain, Leder and Petry that have decisively contributed to making the combination of cultural and social history a standard feature for studying this period. In order to address these two themes, the book asks, on the one hand, how the spread of the written word affected cultural practices over the course of the Middle Period, including issues such as collective and individual reading, places of reading and times of reading. On the other hand, it addresses the social background of those groups that were instrumental in these changes as they had increasing access to written texts and started to participate in reading practices. The study's central concern is thus to trace the effects that the spread of written texts in the Middle Period had on the social contexts and cultural practices of consuming and receiving the written word. Reading will thereby be considered mainly in relation to scholarly and literary texts and to the exclusion of pragmatic literacy, that is, the role of the written word in fields such as administration, business life and legal proceedings. Also excluded from this study is Koran recitation as the sacralisation of the Koranic word engendered specific recitation and reading practices that constitute a field apart. On the basis of these assumptions and limitations, it is the book's central argument that the Egyptian and Syrian societies underwent a drastic reconfiguration of cultural practices during the Middle Period where the role of the written word significantly increased, a process referred to in the following as 'textualisation'. This went hand-in-hand with a fundamental transformation of the social contexts in which these practices took place, the process of 'popularisation', as the spread of the written word enabled non-elite groups in society to play a more active role in the reception and ultimately in the production of the written word.

Reading practices are notoriously difficult to grasp as reading, in contrast to writing, leaves fewer traces in the historical record. However, this study proposes that at least for the Middle Period we have a sufficient array of narrative, normative and documentary textual sources as well as illustrations that allow the study of such reading practices in some detail. The narrative sources are in the first place the standard chronicles, biographical dictionaries, travel accounts, autobiographies and topographical works that have been widely used for the period, such as al-Maqrīzī's topographical overview of Cairo, his *Khiṭaṭ*; Ibn al-ᶜAdīm's *Bughyat*; the collection of biographies of scholars in Aleppo; and Ibn Ṭulūn's Damascus-focused chronicle, the *Qalā'id*. Among the normative sources, manuals for market inspectors, *fatwā* collections and pedagogical treatises are of particular importance. Starting with Ibn Saḥnūn's (d. 256/870) *Book of the Teachers' Right Conduct* the later genre witnessed a constant stream of works in the following centuries that provide some insights into

the realm of teaching and learning. However, the use of such normative sources has been limited in this study due to the obvious limitations of texts that were generally intended to depict what was understood to be the ideal. Even a cursory reading of a text such as the *Madkhal* by Ibn al-Ḥājj (d. 737/1336) – to take one of the most blatant examples of this issue – alerts one to the author's constant attempts to depict his present age as one of decay in contrast to what he understood to be the correct course of affairs.

Consequently, this study employs to a large extent documentary sources, some of which are well-established in scholarship such as endowment deeds and some of which have received less attention such as reading certificates (*samāᶜ*) and library catalogues. Although reading certificates have been studied for decades, their full implications for social and cultural history have only recently been understood, particularly in studies such as those by Leder (cf. Chapter 2). These certificates are one of the few pre-ninth/fifteenth-century documentary sources that are available in significant numbers for the Arabic-speaking lands. They provide historians of the region with a unique source genre for a variety of issues, including the history of textual reception, which is not available to the same extent for other world regions. Scholars issued these certificates mainly for readings of *ḥadīth* works, but it can be assumed that the practices reflected in them were not limited to this field. *Ḥadīth* studies had a paradigmatic function for other fields of learning in that authors often wrote, for example, pedagogical treatises as introductions to studying this field, although the texts obviously had implications for other fields of learning as well. The wider remit of the certificates is further evident from the works that straddled the borderline between *ḥadīth* and other fields such as the main case study in Chapter 2 that is positioned somewhere between *ḥadīth* and history.

While the reading certificates are a source genre that is practically unique to the region's history, library catalogues are a quasi-universal source genre. Scholarship has shown the potential of inventories and catalogues for gaining insights into the history of reception and reading, especially for Latin Europe in the Middle Ages.[9] For the pre-Ottoman Middle East, by contrast, research on libraries and book collections has traditionally relied on anecdotal evidence from narrative sources with some additions from endowment records. This study uses a set of documentary sources that provide more detailed evidence of the history of libraries and their organisation, most importantly the earliest surviving catalogue of a library in the Arabic-speaking lands that dates to the seventh/thirteenth century.

The final major group of sources for this study are illustrations in liter-

ary texts, which yield a fair amount of material – though far less than the textual sources – as their producers delighted in depicting their own world of scholarship and learning. While some might argue that their sole function was to elucidate the literary texts, this book regards them as a source that provides evidence of actual reading practices. When tracing the development of such illustrations over various regions and periods it clearly emerges that the illustrators also reacted to changing cultural practices in their non-textual environment. The most important group of illustrations for the history of reading features in the thirteen illustrated manuscripts of the *Maqāmāt* by al-Ḥarīrī (d. 516/1122), one of the rare pre-modern Arabic texts that has brought forth a considerable number of images. The *Maqāmāt*'s illustrated manuscripts date to the seventh/thirteenth and early eighth/fourteenth centuries and they were produced in Egypt and Syria, with some possibly originating in Iraq. References in the *Maqāmāt* to a children's school resulted in six relevant illustrations (Plates 2–7), and those to a library in three relevant illustrations (Plates 13–15).[10] The production of illustrated manuscripts of al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* suddenly stopped in the eighth/fourteenth century and no further Arabic work has produced a comparable set of material. Chapter 3 fills this gap with a set of illustrations (Plates 8–11) that were produced in the eastern Islamic world, including Iraq, for the romantic epic of Layla and Majnūn in the version of Niẓāmī Ganjawī (fl. seventh/thirteenth century). Due to their origin in the eastern lands they cannot serve as main primary sources for this study, but they allow the *Maqāmāt*'s images to be profiled in a comparative perspective, especially as both groups have some regional overlap in Iraq and with Plate 8 some periodical overlap in the early seventh/thirteenth century.

On the basis of this source material Chapter 1 introduces the issues of literacy, orality and aurality in pre-print Middle Eastern societies with a special focus on the Middle Period. It provides an overview of the long-term development of writerly culture and discusses the interplay between cultural and social history with regard to 'popular' cultural practices. The subsequent chapters progress chronologically, starting in the sixth/twelfth century with Chapter 2 and in the late seventh/thirteenth century with Chapters 3 and 4. The discussion in the latter two chapters leads up to the end of the Middle Period, which is also the focus of Chapter 5. At the same time, the chapters reflect the book's geographical shift, with Chapter 2 being mainly placed in Damascus and the following chapters being increasingly located in Cairo.

Chapter 2 focuses in particular on the issue of popularisation and discusses communal reading sessions with the large audiences that accompanied and followed the 'publication' of scholarly works. While these

reading sessions were a long-standing cultural practice for the purpose of transmitting knowledge and had always attracted non-scholarly audiences, documents started to systematically record the participation of these individuals only in the earlier parts of the Middle Period. The case study of *The History of Damascus* allows the social background of individual participants from a wide variety of walks of life, including craftsmen and traders, to be traced in detail. These non-scholarly groups attended reading sessions that closely resembled the standard scholarly sessions of the learned. Yet the 'popular' sessions that these groups attended had a distinct profile with regard to issues such as preferred weekdays and places of reading. While the popularisation of reading sessions transformed the social context of this cultural practice, its mostly aural character remained unchanged.

By contrast, Chapter 3 specifically addresses the close link between popularisation and textualisation by turning to the transformation of primary education and to the impact this transformation had on modes of reading acquisition. The spectacular spread of endowed institutions of learning and teaching that started to gain pace in Egypt and Syria during the seventh/thirteenth century entailed a significant rise in the provision of free schooling for children. Consequently, wider groups in society started to acquire at least a basic level of reading skills that enabled them to play a more active role as individual readers, and not only as participants in communal reading practices. This quantitative expansion of primary education was accompanied by qualitative changes in the curriculum. The written word increasingly played a central role in the teaching practices of children's schools to the detriment of mnemotechnical skills that had previously been dominant. These qualitative changes were ultimately to engender the first pedagogical reflections in Arabic on how to introduce children to the written word.

Chapter 4 returns to the spread of endowed institutions and traces the emergence of a new type of library: the local endowed library. These libraries replaced the central-ruler libraries of previous centuries and patrons from a wide variety of walks of life set them up. The increasing number of such libraries in cities and towns ensured that the written word was widely available even to those who could not afford to or did not want to purchase manuscripts. Documentary evidence of such collections shows that they had a thematic profile that was distinct from collections held by individual scholars and that they arguably catered for reading audiences beyond the scholarly world as well. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the organisation of the earliest extant Arabic library catalogue, which shows that cataloguers took care to make the collections accessible to non-specialists.

In Chapter 5 the argument turns away from the mostly scholarly settings of reading sessions, children's schools and libraries to discuss the emergence of distinct popular practices of reading. From the sixth/twelfth century onwards sources increasingly mentioned readings of popular epics, such as the *Sīrat ᶜAntar*, and scholarly authors strove to distance themselves from these reading practices. However, the scholarly criticism of these readings resulted not only from the content of the texts, but also from the fact that these written texts circulated in spatial and social settings that were beyond the scholarly world. The chapter traces how the emergence of these epics as written texts induced scholarly authors to criticise what they perceived as a challenge to their control over the transmission of authoritative knowledge. Finally, the chapter turns to popular works authored by individuals from those groups in society that were gaining more and more access to the written word during the Middle Period. At this point, these new readers started to appear not only as consumers, but also as producers of books who started to turn their literary skills into authorship with works that catered for the expanding popular realms of reading.

Notes

1. Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*. Al-Jāḥiẓ: Günther (2006b). Overproduction: Rosenthal (1995).
2. 'Analytical' by contrast with descriptive works that basically summarise primary sources such as Ḥabashī (1982), Tritton (1957) and Shalaby (1954).
3. Schoeler (2009); Günther (2006b); Toorawa (2005); Touati (2003). Introduction of print: cf., for instance, Kunt (2008); Messick (1993); Eickelman (1978). Overview: Roper (2010).
4. Erünsal (1987), (1989), (2007); Badawī (1979); Amīn (1980); Haarmann (1971); Gully (2008); Petry (1981); Berkey (1992); Chamberlain (1994); Leder (2003); Bauer (2003); Nabāhīn (1981); al-Nashshār (1993).
5. Pedersen (1984); Schoeler (2009); Touati (2007); Fortna (2011); Hanna (2003).
6. Kilgour (1998).
7. Gauger (1994).
8. Ḥammāda (1970).
9. Cf., for instance, Lapidge (2006); Sharpe (2008).
10. Non-textual environment: cf. Guthrie (1995); Contadini (2007); on illustrations of readers in Latin Europe cf. Nies (1991); Alexandre-Bidon (1989). *Maqāmāt*: Grabar (1984); cf. Haldane (1978) for illustrated manuscripts of the Mamluk period. Baer (2001) discusses illustrations of Islamic children's schools, but does so in isolation from most other relevant sources. Seventh/thirteenth-century manuscripts: MSS. Paris, BnF, arabe 3929, 5847 and

6094; Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Esad Efendi 2961; London, BL, or. 1200; St Petersburg, Academy of Sciences, C. 23. Eighth/fourth-century manuscripts: London, BL, or. 9718, or. ad. 7293 and 22114; Wien, Nationalbibliothek, A.F. 9; Oxford, Bodleian, Marsh 458. On dates and origins cf. Grabar (1984), 7–19 and Rice (1959), 213–19; on individual manuscripts cf. Buchthal (1940); Grabar (1963); Haldane (1985); Bolshakov (1997). Some of the manuscripts have two – generally quite similar – illustrations of the school scene. London, BL, or. add. 22114 has eight additional illustrations on fols 85, 85v, 86, 168, 168v, 169, 169v and 170 that each show just one pupil with the two protagonists. The illustrations in the manuscripts Paris, BnF, MS arabe 5847, fol. 148v, Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Esad Efendi 2961, fol. 192 and Oxford, Bodleian, Marsh 458, fol. 116v do not provide additional material for the present discussion. Additional illustrations on the second *maqāma* do not focus on the library (Paris, BnF, arabe 5847, fol. 4v; London, BL, or. add. 22114, fol. 6v.; Wien, Nationalbibliothek, A.F. 9, fol. 8v; Paris, BnF, arabe 5847, fol. 6v.). The illustrations in London, BL, or. 9718, fol. 9 and or. 1200, fol. 6v depict the library scene, but do not include additional information.

1

Reading and Writerly Culture

The history of reading of any period, particularly any pre-modern period, is intrinsically linked to the relationship between orality and literacy. What effects did the spread of the written word have on oral forms of communication? How did the textualisation of cultural practices interact with long-standing oral modes of transmitting knowledge? In what ways were competing notions of authority associated with orality and literacy renegotiated in the light of changing modes for safeguarding information? Questions such as these have preoccupied scholarship on the Early Period of Islamic history just as they have occupied scholars of medieval Europe and other world regions. For Islamic history such questions gained particular importance as they were, rightly or wrongly, closely bound to the key issue of the authenticity of information on the genesis and development of early Islamic societies. Consequently, the work of scholars such as Goldziher, Schacht, Sezgin, Kister, Cook, Crone and many others have directly or indirectly taken up the way in which information came to be seen as authoritative within the interplay of orality and literacy.

In addition, this subject has been virtually unavoidable in the study of the Early Period because it was not only the Koran, the foundational text of the emerging Muslim community, that was to be read and, more importantly, to be recited and heard. These different modes of preserving, transmitting and consuming the text also characterised the nascent community's second defining genre, *ḥadīth*. Some early scholars feared that a written tradition would endanger the unique status of the Koran and, furthermore, might lead to erroneous transmission and falsification. Such discussions on the validity and reliability of written information in the field of *ḥadīth* subsequently spread to other fields of knowledge such as grammar, philosophy and medicine. Even dictionaries such as al-Azharī's (d. 370/980) *Tahdhīb al-lugha* and earlier works reflected the long-standing primacy of the non-written word as they were not organised alphabetically but according to a phonetic system that differentiated between guttural and labial sounds.[1]

Literacy, Orality and Aurality

The work of Schoeler has most directly addressed those issues of the Early Period that are relevant for the present study. In a number of articles and books he developed a broad outline of the development of literacy that he synthesised in his 2009 monograph. He argues, in line with a number of other scholars, that the focus of scholarship needs to move away from the binary opposition between the written and the oral, as in the first three Islamic centuries an inseparable mixture between both modes of communication existed. The existence of *hypomnema*, that is, draft notes, notebooks and written records, epitomise this close interplay between the spoken and the written. These records did not constitute independent manuscript-books, but were closely linked to oral forms of transmission and served as a mnemonic aid during lectures or discussions. Actual manuscript-books (*syngramma*) that writers intended for wider circulation and that indicated the emergence of a distinct writerly culture started to come into existence, according to Schoeler, only in the third/ninth century. Scholarship has disagreed when exactly actual manuscript-books emerged, with Elad, for instance, assuming a substantially earlier date. Yet the main line of continuity between the Early and the Middle Period that follows out of this debate is that the different modes of communicating texts continued to co-exist, even after written texts had started to spread on a large scale. In neither of the two periods did this interplay between the oral and the written constitute a linear and unidirectional development whereby the written would necessarily replace the oral. Ali, for instance, has argued that the emergence of literary salons in third/ninth-century Baghdad and their subsequent development took place in an oral/aural environment in which written practices played hardly any role. Similar to the modern history of the region, as discussed by Messick, and also in medieval European history, where the works of Brantley, Green and Reynolds, to name but a few, have discussed the issue in detail, the picture that emerges is one where orality and literacy often not only co-existed, but were in many cases mutually dependent.[2]

The second relevant theme for the present study that has emerged out of discussion on orality and literacy in the Early Islamic Period complements these reflections on the nature of the written material by addressing the other side of the equation: namely, to what extent the term 'aural' rather than 'oral' captures the main issues that were at stake. The focus on orality implies that the specific way of preserving knowledge in memory, as written text or in another form, was the central point of scholarly discussion during the Early and the Middle Period. However, such discussions

were at least as much concerned with the aural mode of reception as they were with the question of whether the reader or reciter activated the material from a written text or from memory. Characteristically, given the marginal position of issues linked to reception, scholarship has hardly developed this theme and Schoeler, for instance, uses the term 'aural' in his book's title without discussing it in much detail. Yet numerous studies, such as Günther's discussion of a fourth/tenth-century historical work and Toorawa's discussion of third/ninth-century writerly culture, have taken up this term and have shown its analytical usefulness.[3]

One main challenge when dealing with the issue of 'aurality' is a terminological one, as the term could encompass modes that ranged from purely aural/oral forms of transmission to forms that match modern concepts of individual reading. This terminological fluidity resulted from the fact that texts were often directed as much at the ear (aural reading) as they were at the eye (visual reading). The consumption of a text could thus occur in either form and scholars could consider, depending on the concrete context, both modes of reception to be valid. The format, structure and transmission of many pre-modern texts can often be understood only against the background of this twofold reception. The classical example for hearing texts occurred in teaching sessions where the participant 'heard' (*samiᶜa*) the text. However, writers used this term irrespective of whether an individual followed the reading in a manuscript or not. Thus, the term 'to hear' by itself did not indicate in any way whether the reception took place in a purely aural mode or a mixed aural/visual mode, rather, it indicated that an authorised teacher transmitted the text. The terminological breadth could even go further: although authors on the etiquette of teaching evidently did not consider it 'good practice', students sometimes read a work on their own, then acquired an authorisation of this reading from a teacher and subsequently described this with the term *samiᶜa*. Again, the main claim was one of authorised transmission so that a mode of reception that was nothing but individual reading could easily be subsumed under this term. A similarly broad terminology is evident from Latin Europe where contemporaries could use the terms *audire* and *legere* as much as the Middle High German *hoeren* and *lesen* almost interchangeably to denote the mode of reception.[4]

If one were to apply binary notions of orality and literacy to those two Arabic terms that come closest to 'reading' in a modern sense a similar ambivalence emerges. *Ṭālaᶜa* is relatively unproblematic and denoted generally in the texts of the pre-modern period as an individual and silent reading of a text. Yet writers did not use this term often, but rather a second term, *qaraʾa*, was used most frequently when they referred to the

activation of a text. At first glance *qaraʾa* seems again to be reasonably well defined in that it denoted recitation to an audience, often without a written text being employed. The example of Koran recitation that contemporaries described with this term and manifold examples referring to the recitation of other works seem to confirm the differentiation between *qaraʾa* as linked to oral/aural culture in distinction to *ṭālaʿa* as linked to writerly culture and visual reading.

However, the exact form that the activation of a text in the *qaraʾa* mode took is again ambiguous and is generally evident only from further contextual information, not from the term alone. Contemporaries saw both the written text and the memorised text to be latent and could simultaneously refer with this term to the reading or the recitation that activated the text. They often explicitly described the recitation of a text without a manuscript as recitation from memory, *qaraʾa ḥifẓ*^{an}. Yet in combination with other modifiers *qaraʾa* could refer to the reading of a manuscript, for instance, *qaraʾa muqābalat*^{an}, that is, reading with the aim of collating a manuscript. To make things more complicated, even a complement often does not determine the exact mode and terms such as *qirāʾat istifsār/murājaʿa/istishrāḥ* might refer to a recitation or reading with or without a manuscript. They only explicate that the student interrupted his recitation/reading of the text in order to ask for explanations on specific passages. Only further information, in this case the existence of manuscript notes, shows that the student in question was reading from a manuscript.[5]

Finally, and for the present discussion most importantly, *qaraʾa* could even denote the individual reading of a text, as in the case of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, d. 428/1037). Out of dissatisfaction with his teachers he started to study independently and described his course of individual reading with this term rather than *ṭālaʿa*. *Qaraʾa* described even more clearly an individual reading of a written text in the case of a sixth/twelfth-century youngster who devoured popular epics. These occasional uses of *qaraʾa* as referring to individual reading became more frequent in the course of the second half of the Middle Period. The standard formula for describing individual reading started to be *qaraʾa bi-nafsihi*, which I take to mean 'he read on his own', because it cannot refer to a recitation at a teaching session that writers rather described as 'he read on his own to' (*qaraʾa bi-nafsishi ʿalā*). At the same time they did not use this formula in the sense of individual studies, which they rather denoted with 'he studied on his own' (*ṭalaba bi-nafsihi*). Here, *qaraʾa* thus referred to exactly the silent and individual reading where one would have expected *ṭālaʿa*.[6]

The chronological dynamic of this development is noteworthy: the phrase 'he read on his own' occurred only occasionally in biographical

dictionaries referring to scholars before the eighth/fourteenth century, such as al-Dhahabī's *History of Islām*. In dictionaries that dealt with scholars of the following century, however, we observe a veritable explosion of this phrase.[7] Terminological changes thus accompanied the spread of the written word in the Middle Period; changes that brought, however, the terms for recitation and individual reading only closer in meaning. Whereas one would have expected that the textualisation of cultural practices led to an increasing differentiation in terminology, the opposite was true as the borders between the written and the aural/oral were increasingly blurred. Arguably, this also contributed to the continuing absence of a concept of 'readers' that is, for example, evident from contemporary normative treatises, in contrast to a reasonably developed concept of authorship (*muʾallif*).

As a consequence of the fluid borders and the interdependence between the aural and the written, the following understands 'reading' as both, that is, the visual and the aural reception of a written text. On the one hand, this definition excludes the reception of a memorised text without a textual basis, that is, the purely oral/aural forms of transmitting and consuming texts. While such an exclusion would be highly problematic for the Early Period, the spread of literacy in the subsequent centuries allows such recitations, which still played a prominent role but had lost their central position, to be disregarded. On the other hand, this definition accounts for the historicity and plurality of reading practices in order to avoid an exclusive focus on the visual, solitary and silent modes of reading that have emerged as predominant in recent centuries. 'Aurality', in the sense of reading aloud a written text to a group of listeners, remained a prominent practice throughout the Middle Period. The exclusion of such aural modes of consumption would make sense only if one were to project a linear and teleological development from 'pre-modern' forms of orality to supposedly 'modern' reading practices. However, despite the process of textualisation, a plurality of practices continued to characterise reading and texts could be read individually, just as they could be read in groups. This plurality did not only concern the question of whether the reception was aural or visual, but also included issues such as reading in a loud voice, in a muffled voice or silently. Contemporary sources such as normative treatises reflected this plurality. For example, while some authors enjoined the student to avoid reading in loud voice – or banging the doors for that matter – in order to not disturb his peers, other authors encouraged the student to read aloud in order to facilitate memorisation and understanding of the text.[8]

A further, more pragmatic, reason for not exclusively focusing on

individual and visual reading is linked to the nature of the pertinent sources. A history of such reading practices – if indeed possible – would have to rely to a large extent on ego-documents and other material that referred mostly to prominent scholars and members of the social elite. As this book seeks in particular to illustrate how reading practices spread to new groups who were not part of such elites and who did not produce documents that would allow insights into possible individual reading practices the net had to be cast wider. For instance, a considerable number of traders and craftsmen in the reading audience discussed in Chapter 2 received the text aurally as they attended without their own manuscripts. A focus on individual and visual reading would sideline the participation of these individuals and the crucial changes that the audiences' social composition underwent in the early Middle Period.[9]

Finally, a history of reading has to take into account that literacy was 'a diverse and sliding scale, rather than one dominated by a sharp distinction between those who could and could not read'.[10] This sliding scale was devoid of sharp dividing lines, particularly because individuals with limited literary capacities had the opportunity to vary between aural and visual modes of receiving the text in different contexts. This should not mean, however, as has often been argued, that the acquisition of literacy was limited to a '*maktab* literacy' that centred on the memorisation of the Koran and sidelined individual reading. On the contrary, a remarkable number of children's schools existed in which individual reading was a prominent part of the curriculum as the textualisation of society was taking place in the Middle Period. The threshold to enter this sliding scale was quite low because the acquisition of basic reading skills was, in contrast to modern concepts of literacy, not necessarily linked with writing skills. In biographical dictionaries the separation between reading and writing skills is matter-of-factly registered when their authors described often quite established scholars as an 'illiterate person (*ummī*) who could not write'. The many examples of such scholars who could read but not write, suggest that this divide must have existed to an even greater extent in non-scholarly groups of the population.[11]

Non-written modes of transmission thus retained a prominent role in the Middle Period, and in fields ranging from *ḥadīth* to medicine written texts often needed to be validated by aural reception. Aural and visual modes of reception remained mutually dependent because the personal contact between the teacher as the authorised transmitter and the student was still crucial in many fields for activating the latent text. The active role of numerous blind teachers who not only taught in subjects as varied as *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence, philology and grammar indicates that recitation

from memory still commanded an elevated position in the hierarchies of scholarship. The ability to recite the texts from memory thus remained an indicator of prestige and a crucial element of cultural capital in order to make one's living. An Ayyubid ruler thus promised in the seventh/thirteenth century substantial rewards to those who memorised specified books, while scholars who depended on books in a disputation could be certain to encounter their peers' scorn. Finally, many books in the Middle Period continued to have a textual format that was clearly inscribed in oral modes of transmission. Al-Idrīsī (d. 649/1251), for instance, in his treatise on pyramids gave on many occasions chains of transmitters to validate reports even though this information existed in authoritative texts.[12]

The Written Word in the Middle Period

Despite this continuing importance of oral and aural practices, the Middle Period witnessed the spread of the written word to a degree that transformed cultural practices in numerous fields and entailed a textualisation of society on a new scale. In technological terms, the introduction of paper to the Arab Middle East from the second/eighth century onwards significantly contributed to the spread of the written word. However, this technological invention was able to make its impact only in cultural and social settings that were inclined towards using the written word. To this inclination belonged an impressively efficient system of manuscript production, where students and writers could produce several certified copies in one set of teaching sessions. Scholars could use each of these copies in turn for a new set of sessions where they again produced numerous copies. From the sixth/twelfth century onwards the rise of endowed institutions gave additional impetus to this mechanism as they offered considerable material resources for the production and storing of manuscript-books. Yet the starting point of the spread of the written word reaches back to the Early Period when wider groups in society had started to rely on writerly practices. Toorawa, for example, has described the emergence of the writerly culture in third/ninth-century Baghdad that witnessed the expansion of manuscript markets and transformed learned and literary life. Touati, in turn, studied the expansion of libraries that resulted from this development and argued that the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries were crucial for the spread of book collections.[13]

While there was thus an early transformation of cultural practices that ascribed a new role to the written word, new tendencies and practices dawned in the writerly culture of the Middle Period. This was, for instance, reflected in writing practices and the organisation of books. It is

too early to venture into whether textual organisation in the Middle East experienced a similar set of transformations to Latin Europe. The separation of words, the increasing use of punctuation and the whole set of 'artificial finding devices' offered readers of Latin and vernacular manuscripts, especially from the twelfth century onwards, texts that could be read more quickly and from which information could be retrieved with considerable ease and speed. These changes in turn led to more rapid reading practices that gradually replaced modes of reading that had been more reflective and painstaking. The first such studies on Arabic texts of the Middle Period indicate that by the eighth/fourteenth century authors were using techniques to increase the searchability of texts more frequently. Al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418), for instance, arranged his chancery compendium in terms of form and content so as to facilitate the quick retrieval of information. He also provided textual tools for this purpose, such as a table of contents. At the same time, copies of his work employed a layout with headlines, different sizes of letters, various colours and alternating spacing that eased visual orientation within the text.[14]

Most of these techniques had existed previously and in al-Qalqashandī's case the extent to which he employed them was far more remarkable than the novelty they represented. Yet new textual formats did also appear, such as indexes for biographical dictionaries that substantially facilitated access to texts from the eighth/fourteenth century onwards. Other novel techniques marked the syntactical flow more clearly and thus enhanced the intelligibility of texts, for example, by clearly signalling the end of quotations. As authors generally mentioned their source or inserted other markers such as 'he said . . .', the start of (acknowledged) quotations had always been unproblematic. The end of the quotation, by contrast, had been generally unmarked and the non-specialised reader had to pay especially close attention to follow at what point the narrative shifted back to the author's words. From the seventh/thirteenth century onwards authors started to insert end markers that became increasingly formalised in the following centuries with the term 'ended' (*intahā*). This is evident in the biographical dictionary of Ibn Rāfiᶜ (d. 774/1372), for example, who demarked many, though still not all, quotations in this way.[15]

A more fundamental change that enhanced the readability of the written word had preceded these new textual and formal tools. From the fourth/tenth century onwards simplified scripts had started to spread on a significant level in the eastern and western Islamic lands entailing what Déroche has called a 'graphic revolution'. On the one hand, these scripts were easier to write and allowed – in combination with paper – the production of books at a substantially lower cost. At the same time this

graphic simplification had also a bearing on the readability of texts. It arguably enabled wider and new groups of readers to access the written word and enhanced, with an effect similar to that of word separation in Latin Europe during the early and high Middle Ages, the speed of reading. Diacritical marks that became increasingly common and formalised over the centuries further enhanced the readability of texts, so that reading turned into a cultural practice that was not only significantly less burdensome to acquire, but also less demanding to perform. This transformation of reading practices and textual presentation – particularly remarkable in a manuscript culture that tended to avoid textual innovations and to preserve established formats – expressed a gradual shift of attitudes in favour of the written word. Scholarship has not yet traced these changes in much detail for the Middle Period and more codicological and palaeographical research is needed in order to understand the chronological and regional dynamics of this process.[16]

Yet the emergence of the 'encyclopedic age' in the later Middle Period indicates the scale of how attitudes towards texts had changed and in what ways the period's texts catered for different and new reading needs. Massive compendia, such as al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-arab*, Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ᶜUmarī's *Masālik al-abṣār* and again al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-aᶜshāʾ* were each an almost universal encyclopedia in their own right. The authors of these monumental texts did not only strive to give an overview of one specialised field of knowledge, they also offered a wide spectrum of information that was of interest to a broad audience. Well beyond the administrative audience that the works often claimed to address, a work such as al-Nuwayrī's offered a bewildering tour through all kinds of knowledge ranging from the quality of soil and perfume production, via extensive sections on flora and fauna, to history.

Most importantly, these texts were by themselves finding-devices that dispensed with the need to search vast amounts of literature in order to seek information for one specific purpose. They allowed relatively quick access to concise bits of knowledge – providing one had understood the authors' hierarchical division of their works, such as al-Nuwayrī's five main sections (*fann*), each having five parts which, in turn, are subdivided into chapters. The authors probably did not intend these texts to be read contemplatively, rather, their works offered convenient access to information whenever needed. Encyclopedias were by no means a new phenomenon in Arabic literature, but the sheer number of such works written in the later Middle Period suggests that reading practices had changed and that new attitudes to the written text had emerged. The spread of other textual formats that also provided quick access to information reinforced this

trend. Apart from encyclopedias, the massive production of summaries (*mukhtaṣar*) for specific fields of knowledge was remarkable and makes it possible – were it not for the somewhat negative connotations – that the period could be called an 'age of summaries'.

Again, summaries were not a new phenomenon, but the increasing popularity of such texts indicated the requirements of ever more readers who sought quick access to essential information on a given field. The *Summary* by an Abū al-Fidāʾ (d. 732/1331), for instance, offered a very concise run through the history of mankind. Based on Ibn al-Athīr's seventh/thirteenth-century chronicle, which was in itself to a large extent a summary of previous universal histories, the numerous continuations that authors of following centuries wrote for it prove the popularity of this 'beginner's guide to history'. The concerns that seventh/thirteenth-century normative treatises started to express on hasty studying reflected the new possibilities of reading more quickly and accessing texts with more ease. These treatises urged the reader more intensely than previous texts not to read too quickly, to limit the amount one read and not to immediately pass to the next book once one had completed a text.[17]

A field that this study will not discuss in detail, but one that deserves its own study, also embodied the textualisation of cultural practices: the ritual use of books. This issue is self-evident for the Koran, where new technologies of paper production enabled the production of massive and spectacular copies in the Mamluk era. A similar ritual use of the written word appeared also for books other than the Koran, for instance, when scholars specified that they were to be buried with a particular book, generally one of their own works. While individuals sought with this use of the book blessings in the hereafter, other practices employed books in order to gain a deceased author's blessing in this world. For instance, when the descendants of one of the great scholars of the seventh/thirteenth century sold – scandalously so in the eyes of contemporary authors – his book collection they retained two of his books that they seemingly perceived to be particularly beneficial. Rather than seeking blessings from a book, an author could also employ the written word to insert himself into the exchange between commemoration and intercession that existed at saints' tombs. Such a book was specifically authored for a tomb in the hope that future pilgrims would read and hear it. Beyond spiritual concerns, 'symbolic' readings could also occur during political protest, such as, for instance, the scholar who held in the Damascene Umayyad Mosque a 'read-in' of one of Ibn Taymīya's works after the latter had been arrested.[18]

The impact that the increased use of the written word had on different cultural practices, such as manuscript production, individual reading and

teaching, was certainly not uniform and followed separate chronologies. Yet it appears that the early Middle Period, especially the fifth/eleventh century, might be described as a transitional period where crucial changes took place. This is, for instance, evident in the normative views on the use of written material in teaching sessions. The treatises of al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, who wrote in this century, make clear that the discussion from the Early Period had not yet become irrelevant when he discussed questions such as the validity of a transmission that the teacher did not know by heart but had merely read from his notes/books. However, in his works the increasing role of the written word became clear when he cited the opinion – obviously against the majority view – that those participants at a reading session who did not read along in their own manuscripts during a teaching session, should not receive a certificate for the text. The transitional character of his works is also apparent in his other treatises when he conceded that the recitation without a written text was permissible in a teaching context, but promptly added that the use of books was preferable, or when he argued that the use of written materials was obligatory and praised the excellence of books. As Heck has argued, al-Baghdādī's discussion shows the author's attempt to reconcile the ideal of oral transmission as the supreme form of knowledge transmission with a reality where written modes of transmission had gained authoritative status. In other words, over the centuries the primacy ascribed to the spoken word became increasingly, especially in the Middle Period, a mere discursive stance and authors such as al-Baghdādī tried to negotiate these two trends in their texts.[19]

While al-Baghdādī was still concerned with the role of the written word in the fifth/eleventh century this changed thereafter. Such discussions became less and less relevant and authors of normative treatises simply assumed as a matter of fact that the written text played a significant role in teaching and learning and they hardly saw a need to engage with this topic. A case in point is the sixth/twelfth-century scholar al-Samᶜānī, who wrote a rather short passage to the effect that the teacher should read from a book because the memory was deceptive. A century later, we find Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ in his authoritative work on *ḥadīth* studies discussing some famous examples of scholars from the earlier centuries who argued against the use of the written word. However, he obviously considered this to be an irrelevant position of a bygone era that had no significance for his own age.[20]

With Ibn Jamāᶜa's treatise in the eighth/fourteenth century the issue had all but disappeared. This author's main interest was rather to give detailed instructions on how the student had to hand the book to the

teacher and how the student had to hold the book during the teaching session. He only briefly referred to fundamental questioning of the legitimacy of the written word and – more interestingly – linked this questioning to a new consideration that had seemingly supplanted the manifold and complex reasons for this debate during the Early Period: 'Some condemn the composition and writing of books in this age, even by those who are qualified and who are renowned for their knowledge. There is no basis for this criticism but envy and rivalry between generations.' The main issue in the debate, at least for this author, had now become linked to the standard topic of constant decline, with its glorification of the Early Period and disdain towards one's own period. It was no longer a question of what form of transmission was more reliable, rather it was the purported deficiency of any later composition compared with those of earlier periods that was at stake. The textualisation of cultural practices that the following chapters will trace with regard to issues such as reading acquisition, libraries and popular epics were thus part of a broader transformation that gained pace from the fifth/eleventh century onwards with the emergence of new genres, new scripts, new textual formats and new uses of the written word.[21]

'Popular' Practices of Reading

In parallel with the beginnings of the textualisation of cultural practices during the Early Period a wider readership developed that included groups such as landlords, merchants and physicians. These new readers, as Toorawa has shown, broadened the social profile of those who consumed the written word beyond the elite and in consequence authors started to specifically produce works for these audiences. However, scholarship for this period has focused mainly on the group of the *ẓarīf*s, that is, the 'refined people' who possessed the intellectual, literary and personal characteristics that the cultivated elites valued and who featured prominently in the sources of the period. A similar emphasis on elites has characterised some of those studies that have made the first enquiries into the link between cultural and social history during the Middle Period. Chamberlain, for instance, has focused on how scholarly communities and elite households employed cultural practices in order to build up and sustain their status. This study takes up the interest in new readerships, but its main interest is the process of popularisation and how the spread of the written word enabled non-elite groups in society to play a more active role in the reception and ultimately in the production of the written word. These non-elite groups included, most importantly, merchants and

craftsmen who started to profit from the textualisation of cultural practices and the subsequent wider availability of manuscripts.[22]

The concept of popularisation is fraught with problems that resemble the conceptual pitfalls of textualisation and its inherent danger of assuming a clear-cut dichotomy between the written and the aural/oral. 'Popular' practices can be understood as pertaining to a cultural realm that would be clearly delimited from a sphere of high culture. An absence of the official religious establishment was, for instance, one of the criteria used to define popular practices in a recent overview of popular culture in the Middle Period.[23] The following chapters will question the underlying assumption that clearly delineated spheres of scholarly and non-scholarly cultures existed by showing the close connection between the scholarly world and wider groups in society. Even the popular reading practices discussed in Chapter 5 were never entirely detached from the learned world and the same is true for most other expressions of popular culture. This holds true even though scholarly authors depicted such popular practices to be at considerable distance from their world and strove to demonstrate that they were clearly distinct from their own scholarly practices.

As popular culture cannot be convincingly defined in clear juxtaposition to a high culture, modern scholarship has attempted to define the 'popular' nature of cultural practices in the Middle Period in two other ways: either with an emphasis on their social context or, in the case of popular literature, on the textual characteristics of the works. The first school of thought found its clearest expression in Shoshan's influential study of popular culture in Cairo where he defined 'popular' as the culture of 'those socially inferior to the bourgeoisie'. This social definition has its attraction for the present study as it focuses on cultural practices among the wider population on the different scales of social stratification. However, this definition's assumption of a direct link between social status and specific cultural forms might lead to a rather reductionist understanding of the cultural field. According to this perspective, developments in the cultural field would depend exclusively on social changes and specific cultural practices would be seen in turn as a direct expression of social differences. For instance, the traders and craftsmen who appear throughout this study shared a social position and actively participated in reading communities, such as those identified in Chapter 2, often as one group. Yet these reading communities were not necessarily 'interpretive communities' in the sense that they shared a particular way of reading a text, of ascribing meaning to it and of interpreting it. It is very likely that the understanding of texts significantly differed among the numerous participants of reading sessions, but there is no indication that this can be directly linked to social background.[24]

The difficulty of defining popular culture with reference to social stratification has led the second school of thought to define the popular character of literature with hardly any reference to social context at all but, rather, to focus on textual criteria. This is, for instance, the approach of many of the contributors to the section on 'popular prose' in *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, such as Reynolds who defined popular texts as those that 'preserve or imitate to varying degrees a colloquial aesthetic'.[25] This exclusive focus on the texts poses numerous problems of definition, for instance, with regard to genres (were there any inherently 'popular' types of literature?), forms of literary expressions (was there a tendency to favour prose, poetry or rhymed prose in popular literature?) and language (were colloquialisms necessarily a feature of popular literature?). Yet even on a practical level it is difficult to rely on a text-focused definition for discussing popular reading during the Middle Period. Many texts that are of relevance are known only from manuscripts of later periods. Manuscripts of popular epics, for example, go back only to the ninth/fifteenth century, which makes issues such as the employment of colloquialisms simply not researchable.

The present study proposes to address these problems in defining popular culture by analysing concrete sets of reading practices without the *a priori* assumption that they pertained to either a realm of popular or high culture. In this sense, it identifies communities that shared a similar relationship to the written word and studies mechanisms of differentiation that indicate variations in cultural practices. A set of three criteria characterised the popular reading practices that emerge out of this approach: they were situated, or at least scholarly authors perceived them to be situated, at the intersection of specific texts, spatial settings and social contexts. The popular character of reading practices thus depended on what was read, where it was read and who participated in the readings in terms of social profile. This definition neither assumes that the social status of readers alone determined cultural practices, nor that the character of texts is crucial for understanding what constitutes popular reading practices. This understanding of popular culture also allows the many ways in which the popular realms of reading remained linked to scholarly practices to be addressed, be it by individuals who were situated on the blurred border between popular and scholarly reading practices or by venues that were used for both sets of reading practices. Although the term 'popular' does not directly match any pre-modern Arabic term, the historical evidence suggests that around the three factors – content, space and social context – a coherent set of reading practices emerged during the Middle Period that can legitimately be defined as 'popular'.

The third factor, social context, refers to the numerous individuals who had a keen interest in reading and texts, but who never made it – or never wanted to make it – into the ranks of scholars. The main textual repository of the scholarly community, the biographical dictionaries, did not include them and they earned their living in non-scholarly walks of life as traders and craftsmen, some of them perhaps holding in addition rather poorly paid 'part-time' positions on the margins of the scholarly world. Although they received some education they did not regularly participate in those processes that were crucial for the scholarly group identity, especially the close and regular personal and written exchange of knowledge. This 'middle class' is of special interest because it functioned as a link between the most bookish and reading-active part of the population, the scholarly world, and wider sections of the population that also started to participate in the writerly culture, without however developing the same closeness to this scholarly world as the traders and craftsmen.

However, the role of these traders and craftsmen should not be overstated and their prominence in this study is to some extent a result of the source material. These individuals left more traces in the historical record as active readers and recipients of the written word – even if these traces are often rather shadowy. Those participants in the writerly culture who came from wider sections of the population, by contrast, make even fewer appearances in sources and if they appear they do so mostly as objects of scholarly writings, especially in normative texts. Chapter 5 gives some insights into reading practices and the role of the written word in these groups, but it does so without recourse to documentary sources. It can only be hoped that future studies will fill this gap by either discovering new documentary sources or by putting known documentary sources to a more creative use.

In social terms, 'popularisation' in this study is thus understood as the increasing participation of individuals in reading practices who had hitherto been excluded. These individuals belonged to different social layers, but they all participated in the spread of the written word beyond the confines of the narrow scholarly, political and cultural elites. Al-Maqrīzī's classification of the population of ninth/fifteenth-century Egypt in his treatise calling for monetary reform provides a useful template for illustrating these individuals' social backgrounds. He divided society into seven categories: (1) the political elite; (2) wealthy merchants; (3) merchants of modest means and shopkeepers; (4) peasants; (5) scholars who held salaried posts; (6) artisans and salaried workers; and (7) paupers. The traders and craftsmen that will reappear in the following pages were mostly individuals in al-Maqrīzī's third group and the relatively well-off members of

the sixth group, that is, they were merchants, owners of small shops and artisans of modest means. Those merchants who endowed primary schools and libraries, by contrast, belonged to the affluent second group. The lower echelons of the commoners who have less visibility in this study are those of the sixth group, whom the author described as porters, servants and unskilled workers as well as the paupers of the seventh group.[26]

The following chapters will trace the popularisation of reading practices by considering audiences of popular reading sessions and the role of wider social groups as patrons of children's schools and libraries, as well as the emergence of these groups as consumers and producers of the written word. This trend towards popularisation was as much inscribed into broader developments as the process of textualisation of cultural practices in the Middle Period. One of the prime examples for this development was the rise of the popular epic that will be discussed in Chapter 5. In addition, the trend also encompassed texts that belonged to genres that had previously been the reserve of scholarly authors. Haarmann was one of the first scholars who hinted at this development when he described the changing style of chronicles from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards as 'a popularisation of historical writing'.[27] He drew attention to new groups of authors from the lower ranks of society who started to produce historical works and he asked to what extent these works found new reading audiences.

Berkey's study on the transmission of knowledge in Cairo between the seventh/thirteenth and the tenth/sixteenth centuries considered the process of popularisation in a wider perspective as he showed in detail the diverse social backgrounds of those who participated in the learned world. Yet his study mainly focused on institutions of learning and how their spread framed cultural practices and enabled wider non-scholarly or popular sections of the city's inhabitants to participate in learned activities. While the role of endowed institutions in transforming cultural practices and in broadening access was crucial – Chapters 3 and 4 very much take up this point – the aim of the following is to move beyond the institutionalised world of scholarship. Reading certificates, for instance, are not only a unique venue for studying the social dimension of reading practices, but they allow such study to be independent of the question of institutions, because scholars also issued such certificates for readings in other settings. In the same sense, popular literature that wider sections of the population consumed and ultimately authored, circulated to a large extent in cultural spaces beyond the institutions of learning.[28]

While the process of popularisation in the field of historiography and in institutionalised settings remained closely bound to scholarship, the

same process also occurred in entirely different areas. One of these was arguably the transformation of public text, especially monumental inscriptions, which indicated the popularisation of reading skills among non-elite groups. Public text is particularly crucial for the societies under discussion due to their largely aniconic tradition. As communication with wider sections of the population could not rely on images, the written word played a central role in communicating key ideas, be it from the sacred or other realms. These texts could also be aurally consumed, as had been a widespread practice in the Early Period, and this aural consumption certainly retained a most prominent position for communication, as is evident from the constant reports on the reading of official decrees and letters to the wider populace on matters such as appointments to high posts, taxation, military campaigns and the ruler's succession. In the same vein, the ruling elites continued throughout the Middle Period to rely on established forms of public ceremonial readings or to invent new ones that were crucial for gaining legitimacy as patrons of scholarship and guardians of the faith. The most prominent example for Egypt was certainly the ritualised recitation of al-Bukhārī's *ḥadīth* collection during the month of Ramadan that gained in importance from the eighth/fourteenth century onwards.

Yet the transformations of the Middle Period also endowed broader parts of the population with basic visual reading skills and in this context public text, such as that on coins and inscriptions, gained new significance for wider social groups. One has not necessarily to agree with the wide-ranging arguments made about the Fatimid period, but it is evident that the written text was used more widely in order to address larger sections of the population. The concern of making public texts more intelligible underlay, for instance, the transformation of monumental inscriptions that Tabbaa tentatively identified for Syria in the sixth/twelfth century and for Egypt in the following century. The shift to cursive scripts and the more regular use of diacritical marks, another part of the aforementioned graphical transformation, rendered these inscriptions and their contents more accessible for broader audiences.[29]

However, the role of public text changed beyond these monumental inscriptions and also became evident on a much smaller, but no less fascinating, level. One such example is the documents that certified pilgrimages of substitution. These were ritual pilgrimages to Mecca that an individual performed for the benefit of another person who was unable or unwilling to perform himself or herself. Almost 200 of these spectacular certificates have survived from Damascus either in fragments or in their entirety from between the fifth/eleventh and eighth/fourteenth centuries. The likelihood is that the beneficiaries of these pilgrimages of substitution,

who belonged mostly to the political and social elite, displayed their certificates on the walls of the Umayyad Mosque. The beneficiaries obviously expected that many of those attending the mosque would be able to read these attestations of their piety, which also prevented criticism being directed at them for not performing the pilgrimage. These patrons invested substantial means in the execution of the certificates and the documents' features indicate that specialised workshops catered for the demand to produce public illustrated texts on this scale.[30]

The popularisation of reading practices that will be discussed in the following chapters was thus part of a wider transformation of cultural practices that found their expression in the field of historiography, in the role of endowed institutions and in the use of public text. Against this background, this study implicitly addresses a theme that Lapidus raised, one which has recurred in scholarship on the Middle Period: namely, how urban society was able to assure social cohesion in the absence of strong central agencies such as municipalities, communes and state bureaucracies for coordinating or administering urban affairs. The following contributes to this issue by highlighting the social embeddedness of cultural practices that sustained and forged links and interdependencies between different sections of society. In this regard, it attempts in particular to move the study of cultural practices as a means of integrating society away from the focus on the religious scholars and their purportedly instrumental role in this process.[31]

Although much of what follows is quite akin to 'ulamaology', the emphasis is on showing the active role and agency of non-scholarly groups. The readers this book is interested in were able to participate in writerly culture and to actively shape it without necessarily merging into the group of scholars. Yet social stability and cohesion was not the only possible outcome of the textualisation of cultural practices and the spread of reading skills to new groups. Certainly, Chapters 2–4 all discuss examples that hint at the close relationships between scholars and other groups, but the focus on non-scholars and their active role also allows social friction and conflicts that emerged out of the cultural transitions to be highlighted. Chapter 5 shows in particular that the emergence of new readers and authors did not go unchallenged and that parts of the scholarly world perceived them as a threat to their central role in transmitting authoritative knowledge.

However, this study's contribution to the broader history of the period and its more specific arguments on the popularisation and textualisation of reading practices is limited to a restricted part of the population due to its focus on Arabic material and on Muslim practices of reading. The 'reading scene' in Egypt and Syria in the Middle Period went well beyond Arabic

as the language that was to be acquired and beyond Muslim children who strove to do so. It also included Jewish children learning to master Hebrew, Jewish and Christian children learning to read Arabic and adult readers from both groups. In addition, the influx of military slaves speaking Turkic languages rendered the scene more complex and there are signs of increasing literacy of Turkic over the Middle Period. This linguistic and religious plurality of reading practices cannot be underplayed and even though the groups considered here were quantitatively the most important section of the population the transformations described in this book cannot be automatically applied to the different reading communities.

Finally, this study will not venture into any exact quantification of the deep penetration of reading practices in society. Tempting as it might be to offer a figure that summarises the developments of textualisation and popularisation outlined in this book, there is not, and probably will not be, any vaguely reliable method of determining the percentage of the population that could be described as literate. If one has confidence in studies on medieval Latin Europe, these have set literacy rates remarkably high, with Wendehorst estimating literacy rates in late medieval German cities at between 10 and 30 per cent, Grendler suggesting that up to a third of adult males were literate in Florence and Venice of this period and Moran-Cruz suggesting a similar rate for the urban and rural areas of the diocese of York. Different aspects, such as the number of manuscripts in circulation, the multitude of libraries in the larger cities and the constant discussion of the written word in the different genres of literature all suggest that Egypt and Syria did not have a less bookish culture than these regions. The number of children's schools, the participation of non-scholars in reading sessions and the textualisation of popular literature furthermore suggest how far the written word penetrated into different layers of society. Consequently, it seems likely that at least for Syrian and Egyptian cities the proportion of those able to read simple texts was rather a two-digit than a one-digit number. However, the developments described in this book are certainly not part of a linear history of the expansion of literacy up to the present. Studies on the early twentieth century argue, for example, that literacy rates in a city such as Marrakesh could be well below what one would expect to find in an average Egyptian or Syrian city of the late Middle Period.[32]

Notes

1. Koran: Kermani (2000). *Ḥadīth*: Cook (1997), for a neighbouring field cf. Elad (2003). Al-Azharī: al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb*; Wild (1965).

2. Elad (2003); Ali (2010); Messick (1993); Brantley (2007); Green (1996); S. Reynolds (1996).
3. Schoeler (2009); Günther (1991); Toorawa (2005).
4. Teaching sessions: cf. Chapter 2. Latin Europe: S. Reynolds (1996); Green (1996), 79–94.
5. *Qaraʾa ḥifẓ*^{an}: Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, IV, 164. *Qaraʾa muqābalat*^{an}: Sharḥ jamᶜ al-jawāmiᶜ, Chester Beatty Nr. 4797 (cf. Sayyid (1999), 92). *Qirāʾat istifsār*. . .: Iᶜjāz al-bayān, Köprülü Nr. 41 (cf.: Ritter (1953), 71).
6. Ibn Sīnā: Ibn Abī Uṣaybiᶜa, *ᶜUyūn*, III, 4. Popular epics: Samawʾal, *Ifḥām*, 100–1 (uses it interchangeably with *ṭ-l-*ᶜ). For further examples cf. Makdisi (1981), 141–4. *Qaraʾa bi-nafsihi*: al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 691–700, p. 447. *Ṭalaba bi-nafsihi*: ibid. 601–10, pp. 71–2; ibid. 691–700, pp. 146–7, 251, 264, 310–11, 481; Ibn Rāfiᶜ, *Wafayāt*, I, 313–14, 318–20, 409–10, 486–7, II, 290–1, 309–10, 362–3.
7. For example, Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, I, 388, II, 121–2, 179–82, 390–1, 474, III, 20–1, 99, 112, 195–6, 464, IV, 265, V, 116–17; Ibn Rāfiᶜ, *Wafayāt*, I, 139–40, 142–3, 232–3, 333–4, 343–4, 355–7, 376–7, 473–7, 482–4, 490–1, II, 79–80, 84–5, 92, 95–6, 117, 122–3, 163–4, 185–7, 206–7, 214–16, 373–4.
8. On aurality cf. Coleman (1996). Loud voice: Ibn Abī Uṣaybiᶜa, *ᶜUyūn*, 342 and Ibn Jamāᶜa, *Tadhkirat*, 216.
9. Cf. Chartier (1990) for 'aural readers' in Early Modern Europe.
10. Berkey (2001), 10.
11. *Maktab* literacy: Street (1984). Biographical dictionaries: al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 541–50, p. 190; ibid. 621–30, pp. 319–20; al-Mundhirī, *Takmila*, II, 241; for usages of *ummī* referring only to writing abilities cf. Lane, E.: *Arabic-English Lexicon*, London, 1863.
12. Personal contact: Leder (2002); Nasr (1995). Blind teachers: Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XVII, 78; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 581–90, pp. 166–7; ibid. 601–10, pp. 133–5. Ability to recite: cf., for instance, reports in Yāqūt, *Muᶜjam al-udabāʾ*, III, 1332. Ayyubid: Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, VIII, 647. Al-Idrīsī, *Anwār*, ar. 42, 77–8, 103.
13. Paper: Bloom (2001); Loveday (2001). Toorawa (2005); Touati (2003).
14. Latin Europe: Hamesse (1999); Petrucci (1995); Parkes (1992); Rouse and Rouse (1982). Al-Qalqashandī: Berkel (1997).
15. Indexes: Rosenthal (1947), 40. Quotations: Ibn Rāfiᶜ, *Wafayāt*, I, 420, 423, 432, 458, 486, 498, II, 143, 156, 224, 251, 252; Rosenthal (1947), 39.
16. Déroche (2004), 75. Latin Europe: Saenger (1997). Diacritical marks: Rāġib (1991).
17. Abū al-Fidāʾ, *Mukhtaṣar*. Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*. Normative treatises: Ibn Jamāᶜa, *Tadhkirat*, 117–19; al-Zarnūjī, *Taᶜlīm*, 47.
18. Burial: Schöller (2004), 208. Descendants: al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, IV, 184–5. Tombs: Taylor (1999), 220–1. Ibn Taymīya: Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIV, 38.
19. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 227–8 and 238; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Jāmiᶜ*, 235–41; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taqyīd*. Heck (2002).

20. Al-Samᶜānī, *Adab*, 46–8. Al-Silafī (d. 576/1180) held a similar view in his treatise *al-Wajīz fī dhikr al-mujāz wa-al-mujīz* (cf. Vajda, 1966). On the difference between al-Samᶜānī's text and those of the Early Period cf. also Melchert (2004). Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddimat*, 169–85.
21. Detailed instructions: Ibn Jamāᶜa, *Tadhkirat*, 108, 161; similar passages from this period are in al-Subkī, *Muᶜīd*, 156. Quote: Ibn Jamāᶜa, *Tadhkirat*, 30.
22. Toorawa (2005). *Ẓarīf*s: Touati (2003). Chamberlain (1994).
23. Frenkel (2008).
24. Quote: Shoshan (1993), 7. Interpretive community: Fish (1976).
25. *Arabic Literature*: Allen and Richards (2006). Reynolds (2006a), 246.
26. Al-Maqrīzī, *Ighāthat*, 72–3.
27. Haarmann (1971), 59.
28. Berkey (1992).
29. Fatimid period: Bierman (1998). Tabbaa (2001).
30. Sourdel and Sourdel-Thomine (2006).
31. Lapidus (1967).
32. Latin Europe: cf. Sheffler (2010), 1074. Marrakesh: Eickelman (1978), 492.

2

A City is Reading: Popular and Scholarly Reading Sessions

During the Middle Period Damascus witnessed the publication of a number of major works that were to grip the city's reading audiences. In the mid-sixth/twelfth century it was to witness yet another such publication and in the following years and decades numerous reading sessions of this work were held. For wide sections of the city's population participation in these aural reading sessions became a crucial mode of cultural practice: reading communities met regularly, often for as long as a decade, in order to go through the entire work; individual reading sessions attracted up to eighty participants; many reading sessions took place in the central 'public' space of the city, the Umayyad Mosque; and in total over 1,000 people participated in the readings. The author, Ibn ᶜAsākir, started to publish his monumental *History of Damascus* from 559/1164 at reading sessions and hundreds of sessions under different teachers followed over the next eighty years. The person of the author himself, an outstanding scholar who belonged to one of the great scholarly families of Damascus between the sixth/twelfth and eighth/fourteenth centuries, partly explains the popularity of this work. The ᶜAsākir family not only featured prominently in the city's civilian and scholarly elites, but maintained excellent relations with the military and political leadership. That its most prominent member was publishing a major work was an event in itself, even more so as it proved to be Ibn ᶜAsākir's magnum opus.[1]

However, it was not just readings of the *History of Damascus* that attracted large audiences; the turnout cannot therefore be solely explained by the author's background and status. This was only one of the many reading events that cities such as Damascus and Cairo started to experience in this period whenever a major work was put into circulation. The *History of Damascus* is chosen here merely as a case study to show the gradual transformation of cultural practices. Yet this work has one important characteristic: namely, that it straddles two genres, those of history and *ḥadīth*. In this sense it shows that the large audiences at reading sessions were not limited, as is often assumed, to the field of *ḥadīth*, but

that they attended a far wider variety of sessions. The reading certificates issued at these sessions, as well as reports in narrative and normative works, traced the increasing inclusion of participants who were not part of the scholarly world and reflected a popularisation of written culture. This chapter outlines as a first step the methodology that underpins the analysis of its principal source genre, reading certificates. The second part introduces the differentiation between the two main modes of reading sessions, learned and popular, that catered for different audiences. The social and cultural differences that existed between various groups are further shown in the third part, which analyses the order of seating in reading sessions. Subsequently, the chapter discusses the manifold motivations that underlay the participation of specific groups. The final part sets the popularisation of scholarly cultural practices over the Middle Period in a wider chronological and regional perspective.

Methodological Considerations

The following analysis of reading sessions is based upon manuscript notes, the *samāᶜ* certificates, which primarily served to document lines of transmission by registering that the work was read in the presence of the author or, more often, an authorised teacher. The main interest of these reading certificates for the present analysis is that they generally contain not only detailed information on the authorised teacher, the writer of the certificate and the reader of the work as well as the date and place of the session, but they also list the names of all other participants. With this information the certificates provide unique insights into the micro-history of reading sessions, although modern studies have only recently started to recognise their value and to work with them more systematically. The discussion of certificates for the *History of Damascus*, the main group of sources for this chapter, is supplemented by an analysis of certificates pertaining to the readings of other works in order to show broader trends. On the one hand, these certificates pertain to the Damascene Corpus of Certificates (mostly covering readings of *ḥadīth* works) of which Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī have published those covering the years 550/1115 to 750/1349. In addition, certificates from a wider geographical area, including Cairo, pertaining to a broader time span and belonging to works from a wider array of genres are taken into consideration.[2]

The main methodological argument put forward here is that reading certificates can be employed to determine the background of individual participants in terms of cultural milieu, social position and status. To this end, each of the participants in the reading sessions is allocated to one of

six groups: scholars; craftsmen and traders; military; dependants (slaves and clients); children; and the residual category non-scholars. It has to be underlined that the numbers used in this chapter are approximate because the source material for the *History of Damascus* is not complete and some of the certificates are copies that list only the most prominent participants. Additional source problems arise from the fact that the scribes who wrote certificates did not uniformly register the names of the participants so that their names might vary considerably from one certificate to the other. However, the relative numbers used in this chapter are valid because the large number of certificates, more than 500, provides ample material for comparison.[3]

The background of participants is ascertained in two steps. First, the individuals are looked up in biographical dictionaries which, if their name is included, generally allows their conclusive identification as a scholar. The biographical tradition for this period offers broad coverage of the scholarly networks associated with readings such as those of the *History of Damascus*. With al-Dhahabī's *Taʾrīkh al-islām*, and to a lesser extent Abū Shāma's *al-Dhayl ʿalā al-Rawḍatayn*, virtually all participants in the Damascene scholarly world, even the more obscure ones, are well documented. To exclude oversights of non-Damascene scholars, those individuals who have no entry in either al-Dhahabī's or Abū Shāma's dictionaries are checked in the main works of the Egyptian biographical tradition (*al-Takmila* by al-Mundhirī, which is of particular significance as the author was contemporary to most of the readings, *al-Wāfī* by al-Ṣafadī and *al-Muqaffā* by al-Maqrīzī) as well as in Ibn al-ʿAdīm's biographical dictionary of Aleppo and northern Syria, the *Bughyat*.[4]

The second step is to allot all those who are not named in biographical dictionaries to one of the six groups on the basis of their names, information on their kinfolk and comparison with the Damascene Corpus of Certificates. The onosmatic analysis is embedded in a number of assumptions relating to the occurrence of the five components of the pre-modern Arabic name: personal name (*ism*); patronym (*kunya*); relational name (*nisba*); genealogy (*nasab*); and honorific title or nickname (*laqab*). In addition to those named in biographical dictionaries, individuals are classified as scholars if (1) they carry a relational name referring to a school of law, a relational name or honorific title indicating a background in mysticism (such as Ṣūfī and *zāhid*), an honorific title with 'Dīn' (such as Niẓām al-Dīn) or additional elements such as *shaykh*, *muqriʾ* (reciter) and *faqīh* (jurisprudent), (2) they acted in a reading as an authorised teacher, reader or writer or (3) belonged to a family of scholars.

The label craftsman and trader is given to those participants who

have not been identified as scholars and who carry a pertinent relational name. Such professional relational names did not differentiate between trade and production so these two activities are considered together. It has been repeatedly observed that relational names might refer not to the actual individual, but to that of one of his or her ancestors, developing over the course of time into 'family names'. However, while this was often the case for geographical relational names, professional relational names tended to refer to the individual himself. If an individual carried in addition to the relational name only the most basic naming elements, personal or patronymic, one can generally assume that the relational name referred to the concrete profession and was not the name of a more or less prominent family. In addition, even if a relational name developed into a family name, the individual could still follow the same trade. A second problem with relational names is that they are often ambiguous such as, for instance, '*shaᶜīrī*', which could refer to a barley trader as well as to a quarter in Baghdad. To err on the side of caution, in such cases it is assumed that the relational name did not refer to the individual's occupation. The criteria used for labelling individuals as craftsmen or traders are in general rather conservative and their number is on the lower end of the scale of numbers that can be legitimately put forward.[5]

Obviously, many part-time scholars were at the same time craftsmen and/or traders and the lines of division between the groups were often blurred. However, studies on biographical dictionaries have shown that those part-time scholars who were discussed in dictionaries had generally stopped at some point in their careers to be predominantly active in trading or crafts. By contrast, individuals who remained craftsmen and traders throughout their life and only participated on an irregular basis in learned practices were generally not included in these dictionaries. The individuals named in the *History of Damascus* certificates have confirmed this assumption. The biographical entries implied only in two cases that non-scholarly activities were the more prominent features in the individuals' careers.[6] At the same time, even if some craftsmen and traders were part-time scholars, which is quite unlikely as they were not included in biographical dictionaries, strikingly the certificates referred to them exclusively with their professional relational names. In other words, the certificates expressed a perception that they did not belong to the group of scholars and the seating order at reading sessions, discussed below, confirms this. That the use of professional relational names was generally a deliberate choice to draw a textual border line between scholars and non-scholars is evident in the case of the *History of Damascus*. Only very few individuals who were referred to in the certificates with their professional

relational names could be identified in the biographical dictionaries. At the same time, biographical dictionaries mention for some figures part-time trade or crafts activities that were not evident from the reading certificates. In these cases the participants were primarily considered as members of the learned networks and the certificates' scribes deliberately excluded their professional relational names from the certificates.

Individuals who carried a pertinent title (such as *amīr*), honorific title (especially those including al-Dawla) or relational name (for instance, al-Jundī and al-ᶜAskarī) are classified as military. In addition, those participants with Turkic personal names who neither belonged to the scholars nor to the craftsmen and traders are classified in the same category. 'Dependants' are those persons whom the certificates explicitly described as either slaves (*fatā*) or the subordinate partner in a relationship of clientage (*mawlā*). The separation between slaves and clients is in practice often blurred and the terminology in the reading certificates is also undifferentiated with the same individual sometimes being labelled as slave, sometimes as client. For the classification as 'child' an age limit of fifteen is used if the age is identifiable. As majority (*bulūgh*) was not linked to a specific age, but depended upon puberty such a value remains arbitrary. Nevertheless, fifteen is chosen because scholars generally argued that an individual should be declared to have reached majority at this point even if puberty had not set in. In additional cases, the individuals participated together with their parents/grandparents without their age being giving. It is assumed that they were children if the following conditions were met: they always attended with an older relative; certificates always mentioned that they were sons, nephews or grandsons; and certificates referred to them with their personal name and/or the 'provisional' patronym that was carried by persons before they had children.[7]

The final group is the 'non-scholars' who do not fit into any of the previous groups. A general characteristic of these individuals is that the certificates referred to them only with their personal name and/or patronym as well as a genealogy going back to their parents' or their grandparents' generation at most. If they carry relational names these are generally geographical and tribal or have ethnic connotations (such as al-Kurdī). The absence of professional relational names probably goes back to the writers' concerns about efficiency as they often had to register very large groups. In addition, it might be linked to the fact that certain professions, such as tanner, street sweeper and those professions linked to death, were not deemed to be worthy or appropriate to be mentioned in the vicinity of such exalted texts. Similar reservations about naming such professions were also evident in epitaphs, and *fatwā*s discussed the problem that was

posed by the participation of these individuals in communal prayer, as they were potentially in a state of ritual impurity.[8]

Reading Communities between Popular Sessions and Scholarly Sessions

The hundreds of reading sessions of the *History of Damascus* can be grouped on the basis of their date, authorised teacher, reader, place and writer into twelve reading series or reading communities (cf. Table 2.1). Five of these, communities B, D, E, G and K, will be taken as the main examples in the following. The various communities that sustained these readings had different intentions and motivations that can be conceptualised by a differentiation between 'scholarly sessions' and 'popular sessions'. The most important criterion for this differentiation is how prominent the scholars, craftsmen and traders, military, dependants, children and non-scholars were respectively represented. Further criteria are the total number of participants, that is, the number of those persons who attended at least one of the sessions in a given community, the place where the session was held and the pattern of attendance that is termed 'occasional' if an individual attended more than 25 per cent of a community's sessions and 'regular' if more than 75 per cent of the sessions were attended.[9]

On the basis of these criteria, scholarly sessions are defined as a series where most participants were scholars, the total number of participants was low and the venue was one from which some participants of popular sessions would have been excluded. In addition, a relatively high number of participants in these sessions attended on a regular or at least occasional basis. Typical examples for scholarly sessions are those of series K, which had started in the Umayyad Mosque but was subsequently transferred to the house of the authorised teacher making it less accessible for non-scholarly participants. Only thirty-eight individuals participated in this community, half of whom were scholars and almost the same proportion occasionally or regularly participated in the readings. Community G has a comparable profile: 60 per cent of its fifty-seven participants were scholars, a third of the participants attended on an occasional or regular basis and most of the sessions were held in learned institutions.[10]

Typical examples for popular sessions, by contrast, are those of series B that took place throughout the years at a central location in the city, the Umayyad Mosque. Among the almost 500 participants, only 16 per cent attended on a regular or at least occasional basis and the ratio of scholars was similarly low. In the same vein, the popular series D almost always

Table 2.1 Reading communities of the *History of Damascus* in Damascus, 6th/12th and 7th/13th centuries

	Start	Approximate length in years	Place(s)	Authorised teacher(s)
A	559/1164	?	Umayyad Mosque	ᶜAlī Ibn ᶜAsākir (author)
B	560/1164	6	Umayyad Mosque	ᶜAlī Ibn ᶜAsākir (author)
C	560/1165	5	ᶜAlī Ibn ᶜAsākir's residence?	ᶜAlī Ibn ᶜAsākir (author)
D	571/1176	10	Umayyad Mosque, Dār al-Ḥadīth	al-Qāsim Ibn ᶜAsākir (author's son)[1]
E	587/1191	10	Umayyad Mosque, Dār al-Ḥadīth	al-Qāsim Ibn ᶜAsākir (author's son)
F	581/1185	?	Dār al-Ḥadīth	al-Qāsim Ibn ᶜAsākir (author's son)
G	614/1217	?	Jārūkhīya Madrasa, Umayyad Mosque, Dār al-Ḥadīth, mosque in Mizza	Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī,[2] ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Maqdisī,[3] al-Ḥasan Ibn ᶜAsākir,[4] ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn ᶜAsākir[5] (author's nephews)
H	614/1218	?	ᶜĀdilīya Madrasa, citadel of Damaskus	Sulaymān al-Bānyāsī,[6] Muḥammad al-Bakrī,[7] ᶜAlī al-ᶜAmīrī[8]
I	616/1219	3	Umayyad Mosque, garden, Dār al-Ḥadīth	al-Ḥasan Ibn ᶜAsākir (author's nephew)
J	618/1221	5	Umayyad Mosque, Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī's residence	Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī, al-Ḥasan Ibn ᶜAsākir (author's nephew)
K	621/1224	7.5	Umayyad Mosque, al-Ḥasan Ibn ᶜAsākir's residence	al-Ḥasan Ibn ᶜAsākir (author's nephew)
L	631/1234	?	Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī's residence	Muḥammad al-Shīrāzī

Notes:
[1] Al-Qāsim b. ᶜAlī, d. 600/1205 (al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 591–600, pp. 471–3).
[2] Muḥammad b. Hibbat Allāh al-Shīrāzī al-Shāfiᶜī, d. 635/1238 (al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 631–40, pp. 261–3).
[3] ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Manṣūr al-Maqdisī al-Shāfiᶜī, d. 616/1219 (al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 611–20, pp. 299–300).
[4] Zayn al-Umanāʾ al-Ḥasan Abū al-Barakāt b. Muḥammad Ibn ᶜAsākir, d. 627/1230 (al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 621–30, pp. 280–2).
[5] Fakhr al-Dīn ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān Abū Manṣūr b. Muḥammad Ibn ᶜAsākir, d. 620/1223 (al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 611–20, pp. 500–3).
[6] Sulaymān b. al-Faḍl b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bānyāsī, d. 615/1218 (al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 611–20, p. 24).
[7] Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bakrī, d. 615/1218 (al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 611–20, pp. 262–3).
[8] Nūr al-Dawla ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd al-Karīm al-ᶜAmīrī, Ibn al-Kuways, d. 615/1219 (al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 611–20, p. 252).

took place in the Umayyad Mosque, a mere 17 per cent of its 321 participants attended occasionally or regularly and it had less than half of the proportion of scholars compared with the scholarly sessions G and K. A further indicator for scholarly sessions is the high proportion of children who participated. This reflects the fact that the number of participating children depended on the proportion of scholars who strove to acquire prestigious rights of transmission for their children at a young age. Normative sources, especially from the sixth/twelfth century onwards, criticised the participation of children in reading sessions and their acquisition of rights of transmission, but this had no impact in practice. Rather, reading certificates show that scholars perceived it to be legitimate to integrate their progeny into scholarly networks at a young age. Consequently, in communities G and K we find a high proportion of children (19 per cent), whereas they represented fewer than 3 per cent in communities B and D. In addition, the children in communities G and K with only one exception came from scholarly families, but an important number of children in communities B and D (44 and 39 per cent) came from families with no scholarly background.

The differentiation between popular and scholarly sessions is ideal typical as is evident from the example of community E that falls between these two categories: with 156 participants, almost a quarter of whom participated occasionally and 39 per cent of whom were scholars, it stands between communities B and D, on the one hand, and G and K, on the other. This blurred border between learned and popular sessions partly reflects the fact that normative texts never adopted this differentiation as both kinds of session shared similar functions in the learned world, most importantly to issue and acquire rights of transmission. Although the differentiation between popular and scholarly sessions did not exist in theory, it influenced the reading practices. This is evident, for instance, in the days of the week that were chosen for the sessions. In general, Friday, Monday and Thursday were the preferred days for readings owing to their religious significance in the weekly calendar. Friday was obviously the day of communal prayer, but Monday and Thursday also had strong religious connotations on which fasting was enjoined and the gates of paradise said to be opened. Accordingly, normative treatises particularly encouraged scholars to study *ḥadīth* on these two days. The readings of the *History of Damascus* show that more concrete factors were taken into consideration when choosing the days of session, namely, the profile of the participants. For popular sessions Friday was clearly preferred, so 46 per cent of the sessions of community B and 40 per cent of community D were held on this day. By contrast, scholarly sessions were not regularly held on a

Friday and in the case of the *History of Damascus* not one of the datable sessions of communities G and K took place on that day.[11]

Arguably, the fact that attendance on a Friday was less burdensome for many of the traders, craftsmen and other non-scholarly groups as it proved to be less disruptive to their professional activities informed the preference of Fridays for popular sessions. Narrative sources and reading certificates other than those pertaining to the *History of Damascus* underline the preference of Friday for popular sessions. The Damascene Corpus of Certificates shows that Friday, with 20 per cent of all dateable sessions, was the most popular day. Yet taking into account only those sessions that were held in the Umayyad Mosque, the main setting for popular readings, more than a third of the sessions took place on a Friday. That learned communities avoided the Friday partly goes back to the rhythm of teaching in learned institutions that generally took a break on this day, but it has to be underlined that scholarly sessions in other venues also tended not to take place on this day.[12]

That Friday sessions, especially in a setting as prestigious as the Umayyad Mosque, allowed a socially heterogeneous audience to participate is also evident from other popular reading practices that were not directed at scholarly audiences. One Damascene scholar, for instance, regularly read before the Friday prayer 'quires of *ḥadīth* and reports on the virtuous' from the steps of the mosque's pulpit. Particularly common were popular readings after prayer, partly because the afternoon was considered to be a meritorious time span. Accordingly, endowment records asked the *ḥadīth* reciter (*qāriʾ al-mīʿād*) to hold sessions after the Friday prayer. The presence of the wording 'as it is common' indicates the widespread nature of this practice. Normative treatises for scholars do indeed show a concern for the day chosen for the reading and the targeted audience. A contemporary of Ibn ʿAsākir enjoined the authorised teacher to 'choose the day of the session for his students so that they are not prevented from pursuing their business', obviously referring to part-time scholars. At the same time he called for holding sessions for this audience on Fridays in the main mosque. The line of argument of one eighth/fourteenth-century scholar indicates that Friday was increasingly used as a 'holiday' where such sessions were held. The author lamented this and complained in particular about the participation of many individuals in these *ḥadīth* sessions who were not scholars.[13]

The fact that popular and scholarly sessions catered for distinct audiences brought about another characteristic: namely, the varying number of sessions devoted to each part of the work read. In the case of the *History of Damascus* most reading communities divided the work into 570 parts

with an average of twenty folios per part. The division into parts was arbitrary and served merely to subdivide the manuscript into portions of equal length, in contrast to chapters (*faṣl*) that were of varying length but were coherent units in terms of content. Even readers of those works that had not been divided into parts often adopted a reading rhythm of portions of equal length. The fifth/eleventh-century reader of a poetry anthology, for instance, wrote a reading certificate on the manuscript every ten folios. As all parts of a work were roughly the same length, one would expect the number of sessions devoted to each of them to follow a similar pattern. Reading one part in a session took approximately two hours and scholars regarded peers who read at a significantly quicker pace with distrust. Ibn ᶜAsākir's Syrian contemporary Ibn al-Ukhūwa, for instance, read through one or even two parts in one hour. But when one of the participants brought along his own manuscript he proved that Ibn al-Ukhūwa jumped sections and even whole pages to finish quickly.[14]

Speedy readings were especially common for *ḥadīth* collections such as the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of al-Bukhārī. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (d. 463/1071) read this work with its 7,000 traditions in Mecca within five days and trumped this eighteen years later when he read the work near Baghdad in only three sessions. It was more common for scholars to read at a slower pace and the readings of the *History of Damascus* were conducted at a rather leisurely rhythm. It is remarkable that many of its parts were read in two or even more sessions, presumably because the participants repeatedly interrupted the reading in order for difficult passages to be explained and discussed. This is corroborated by an endowment deed that states that 'those students capable of intensive study should discuss [the work] and the teacher should explain what is difficult to them.' In order to avoid lengthy sessions – normative treatises express a clear understanding that participants were more quickly bored than the teacher – the readings of a part could in these cases be divided into two or more sessions.[15]

For the *History of Damascus*, the distribution of parts that the participants read in one session and those that they read in two or more sessions followed a systematic pattern. Reading communities generally completed one part in sessions that took place on a Friday, while they often needed more than one session to complete parts on the other days of the week. As it was unattractive and disruptive for non-scholarly participants to have the reading of one single part distributed over several days of the week, readings on Friday, generally popular readings for a wider audience, clearly strove to finalise the part in a single session. The analysis of individual participation profiles below shows the difficulties that some non-scholarly participants faced when attending multi-session readings. The

Table 2.2 Participants in selected reading communities of the *History of Damascus*

Community	B	D	E	G	K
Total No.	498	321	156	57	38
Occasional attendance (>25% of sessions)	12.3% (61)	13.4% (43)	23.7% (37)	28.1% (16)	36.8% (14)
Regular attendance (>75% of sessions)	3.6% (18)	3.7% (12)	6.4% (10)	5.3% (3)	10.5% (4)
Scholars	16.1% (80)	24.9% (80)	39.1% (61)	59.6% (34)	50% (19)
Traders/craftsmen	7.4% (37)	10.9% (35)	2.6% (4)	1.8% (1)	0
Non-scholars	70.5% (351)	56.7% (182)	45.5% (71)	17.5% (10)	15.8% (6)
Military	2.2% (11)	3.4% (11)	0.6% (1)	1.8% (1)	0
Slaves/dependants	1.8% (9)	1.6% (5)	1.9% (3)	1.8% (1)	15.8% (6)
Children	2.6% (13)	2.8% (9)	10.3% (16)	19.3% (11)	18.4% (7)

Friday sessions after prayer often catered for a wide audience and offered the reading of one textual unit that could be completed within two hours and dispensed with detailed explanations and discussions.

However, the most striking feature of the popular sessions is the attendance of non-scholarly participants (cf. Table 2.2). In readings of community B, some thirty-seven craftsmen and traders participated, among them a clay worker, a saddler, a weaver, a pannier maker, a bow maker, a trader of tanned hides, two cushion makers and two bakers. In community D we find thirty-five craftsmen and traders including a blacksmith, a butcher, a mender of garments, a linen weaver, a felt maker, a coppersmith, a thong cutter and two tailors. Thus, in the popular reading sessions of communities B and D between 7 and 11 per cent of the participants were craftsmen and traders. In the scholarly sessions of community K not one participant came from this group, while in community G only one cloth trader participated. Community E, with 2.6 per cent of craftsmen and traders, holds the typical middle position between popular and scholarly sessions.[16]

Taking place in Damascus, those who worked in rural professions were hardly represented in any of the reading sessions of the *History of Damascus*, or at least they were not recorded. The same is also true for the certificates pertaining to the Damascene Corpus where again very few participants can be traced to a rural background.[17] In contrast, the popular communities B and D featured a recognisable number of military figures who represented 2 and 3 per cent of their participants. These included high-ranking officers such as Shams al-Dawla ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, a member of the north Syrian local dynasty of the Banū Munqidh, the military governor of Damascus, Badr al-Dīn Mamdūd, and Saladin's officer/scholar, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn ʿĪsā. More numerous, however, were low-ranking military,

such as the soldiers Yārūq b. al-Kindikī al-Jundī, Sunqur b. ᶜAbd Allāh and Qarāja b. ᶜAbd Allāh. Again the situation was markedly different in the scholarly sessions, as community K did not have a single military figure among its participants and community G had only one scholar/officer.[18]

The presence of wider sections of the population in the popular sessions B and D is also evident from the group of dependants that participated. At first glance this seems to be contradicted by the scholarly sessions of community K, where 16 per cent of the participants were either slaves or clients. However, except for one case, they all belonged to the household of al-Ashraf Aḥmad, who acted as reader in the sessions and whom we will encounter again in Chapter 4 as the founder of a library. These dependants were closely integrated into the scholarly world and also participated in readings of works other than the *History of Damascus*. One of these slaves, Sunqur b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Turkī, embarked upon a scholarly career following his manumission and travelled to Baghdad and Egypt. The situation is similar for community G, where the slave Ṣāfī was closely connected with the scholarly world: he was owned by a scholar of some local prominence who acted in sessions of the *History of Damascus* as reader, writer and authorised teacher and who participated in readings of other works. Ṣāfī himself even acted in one reading as an authorised teacher. Communities B and D also had some dependants who were closely connected to the scholarly world, but these represent fewer than half of the participants from this group. Again, the profile was much more diverse in these popular sessions and the dependants who participated also belonged to non-scholars.[19]

The certificates from the Damascene Corpus show that the participation of dependants was in no sense an unusual occurrence. Among the more than 120 slaves who appear in these certificates, several participated in up to six sessions. At the same time we find scholarly sessions with a high number of dependants similar to community K of the *History of Damascus*. For instance, ten slaves who accompanied their masters were among the eighty-five participants in the reading of a *ḥadīth* compendium in the year 640/1243. Numerous slaves took part particularly at sessions with a substantial number of participants from the military elite. In contrast to the readings of the *History of Damascus*, the presence of female dependants is noteworthy, especially of female slaves accompanying their male or female masters. The large majority of female dependants were linked to scholars or members of the military elite.[20] Not only certificates, but also narrative sources document the participation of slaves. The most famous example is Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 626/1229) whose owner, a

Baghdadi trader, enabled him to learn to read and write as well as to study grammar and philology. Subsequent to his manumission Yāqūt earned his living, amongst others, from copying manuscripts. The client Faraj b. ᶜAbd Allāh (d. 652/1254), to take a less prominent example, gained a reputation as *ḥadīth* scholar and collected a sufficient number of manuscripts to endow them. Reading certificates of another Damascene work of history documented a typical example of the close relationship between a scholar and his slave. In the eighteen sessions of the Prophet's biography, only the reader and the authorised teacher's slave, Ṭaydumur, participated in all sessions.[21]

Finally, in addition to the military, clearly identifiable craftsmen and traders and dependants, there was also a prominent role played by non-scholars in the popular reading sessions of the *History of Damascus* and they constituted the majority in communities B (71 per cent) and D (57 per cent). In the scholarly session of communities G (18 per cent) and K (16 per cent), by contrast, their participation was less important and community E (46 per cent) is again situated between these two modes of reading sessions. The Damascene Corpus shows that the participation of a wide section of the population in reading practices was a current phenomenon during the period beyond the *History of Damascus*. For instance, in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century a *ḥadīth* compendium was read in the Damascene Muẓaffarī Mosque, a typical public space in the city. Among the 338 participants were, to name but a few examples, a furrier, a coppersmith, a sawyer, a wool trader, a miller, a glazier, a baker, a mason, two tailors and two carpenters.[22]

Other large gatherings had similar profiles, such as the reading of another *ḥadīth* compendium in the same mosque in 721/1321. Its 105 participants included a perfumer, a broker, a tailor and two brick makers. The majority of these participants only attended a single reading and participants who did not belong to the scholarly world were rarely named in more than one reading certificate. Exceptions include the carpenter Muḥammad, who participated in the readings of four different works, and the mason al-Ḥasan, who appears in six certificates. The participation of a wider section of the population was again not an exclusively male phenomenon. The daughters of shoemakers, saddlers, masons, carpenters, bakers, tailors, bow makers and furriers, as well as the wife of a miller participated in reading sessions.[23]

Popular readings with heterogeneous audiences generally took place in 'public' spaces, but even sessions held in residences of scholars could attract individuals from different professional backgrounds. For instance, in 664/1266 some thirty-seven people assembled in the house of a

Damascene *ḥadīth* scholar, including a butcher, a baker, a weaver, a butter merchant, two carpenters and four tailors.[24] In the same year this scholar presided over another reading in the residence of a colleague. Among the twenty-eight participants were the weaver, the butter merchant, one of the two carpenters and the baker who had been present in the previous session. In addition, a brother of the baker, a broker, a butcher and two masons attended.[25] The absence of these craftsmen and traders from other reading certificates show that they were not closely integrated into the scholarly world. Although private residences repeatedly featured as venues for popular sessions, mosques played overall a decisively more prominent role in extending reading practices to larger sections of the population. In addition to the reading certificates, the eighth/fourteenth-century normative treatise by the Egyptian author Ibn al-Ḥājj reflected this when he argued that the mosque

> is the place where persons meet, irrespective of their rank and of whether they are scholars or uneducated. This stands in contrast to the residence, which is limited to those selected persons who are granted entry. Even if the scholar grants entry to everybody who comes to him, the residence commands respect.[26]

Mosques, by contrast, were easily accessible places, at least for the male population, which regularly used them for praying and other rituals. The Umayyad Mosque especially was the focus of Damascene piety with a multitude of holy sites situated within it. Rituals such as daily Koran recitations in the late sixth/twelfth century by several hundred commoners who received a small stipend enhanced the mosque's accessibility for a wider section of the population. Many additional occasions, for example, popular protest marches that generally started or ended at the Umayyad Mosque, reconfirmed its centrality to the city. The spread of the *madrasa* and other learned institutions that, especially over the eighth/fourteenth century, were to become places where scholars and other groups increasingly interacted eroded the central role of the mosque to some extent. However, this development had not yet changed cultural practices in the time span when the readings of the *History of Damascus* took place.[27]

Despite the variety of different groups participating in reading sessions of the *History of Damascus*, women were hardly present at either popular or scholarly sessions. From over 1,000 participants only four were female; three of whom were young daughters of a scholar and the fourth of whom, Hadiya bt. Aḥmad b. Mufarrij, is not identifiable. This *de facto* absence of women was not the rule in reading sessions conducted in this period as is evident in the Damascene Corpus of Certificates. Here we find some 400

female participants of whom twenty-four acted as authorised teachers. Among the teachers were the outstanding scholars Zaynab bt. Aḥmad and Sitt al-ᶜArab bt. Muḥammad as well as members of the ruling Ayyubid family. A typical session with female participation in Damascus would take place in the residence of the authorised teacher, a female scholar of the prominent Maqdisī family, with eight women among the participants or in the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nūrīya with eleven women attending the reading. Certificates from other regions and periods register similar sessions, such as in sixth/twelfth-century Baghdad. Women thus attended reading sessions and they did so in mixed audiences as also shown by an analysis of the narrative sources for late Mamluk Cairo. Although women did not profit from the financial support offered by the increasing number of endowed institutions, they retained a prominent role in the scholarly world, especially in the transmission of *ḥadīth*.[28]

The fact that many of these sessions took place in mosques partly explains the low number of female participants in readings of the *History of Damascus*. In this period as well, scholars repeatedly prohibited women from participation in the communal prayer or had at least an ambivalent position on this issue. Although this normative position was not necessarily universally implemented it does indicate that mosques were, especially in comparison with *madrasa*s, less accessible places for women who wanted to attend reading sessions. Even a prominent scholar such as Zaynab bt. Aḥmad, who acted as an authorised teacher in thirty-four sessions, only once did so in a mosque and this was a session where ten scholars collectively acted as authorised teachers, eight of whom were men. The relatively low importance of mosques as venues for readings under female authorised teachers contrasts with the overall figure in the Damascene Corpus where 29 per cent of all readings were held in mosques. With regard to gender roles in reading sessions, the Damascene Corpus shows finally that while women could act as authorised teachers they hardly ever did so as readers. The only examples are two sessions with the prominent scholar Karīma al-Zubayrīya, but again these sessions were exceptional as she acted as authorised teacher and reader at the same time, while only two and three participants, respectively, attended the sessions. While the scholarly world closely integrated women as teachers and students, female public reading seemed to be virtually non-existent.[29]

The Order of Seating: Social and Cultural Differences

The previous part has demonstrated that craftsmen, traders and other non-scholarly groups participated in substantial numbers in popular reading

sessions. A close reading of the reading certificates allows this argument to be taken one step further to suggest that these participants had a consciousness of their group-specific profile and that they played a distinct role within the reading communities. The order of seating in the reading sessions particularly indicated this distinct role. The following will first show on the basis of narrative and normative sources that social and cultural norms framed the seating order at reading sessions and determined where and in proximity to whom a given individual could sit. In a second step, reading certificates will be analysed in order to argue that they can be used to demonstrate how such norms were translated into a clearly hierarchical seating order where individuals with similar profiles, such as craftsmen and traders, tended to sit together in what was considered to be their appropriate position.

The most basic norm for the seating order was that closeness to or distance from the authorised teacher expressed one's position in the session's hierarchy. Anecdotes on teaching and reading practices express this clearly, such as the report of an Iraqi jurisprudent who described his studies:

> When I first began to study law I sat at the end of the study circle, the members of which took their places according to their several grades. One day a disputation took place between me and a student who sat close to the teacher, there being between us two or three students. On the following day I took my place as usual at the end of the study circle. The man in question came and sat beside me. Whereupon the teacher asked him: 'Why did you relinquish your place?' And he replied: 'I am in the same grade as this student. I shall sit with him so that I can benefit thereby.' By God! It was not long before I advanced in the field of law, and became strong in my knowledge of it, and I began to sit next to the teacher with two students between me and the man in question.[30]

Participants in study circles and reading sessions took the hierarchical seating order for granted and displayed a clear understanding of the rules. Normative texts repeatedly refer to this issue and encouraged older participants to give precedence to more learned participants, even if they were younger. In general, the texts assumed that students sat in a semicircle in front of the teacher and that the most advanced student faced him. The other students were to take their places not only according to their learnedness, but the ranked seating order depended also on other social and cultural factors. One scholar reported on his first entrance to a study circle: 'My clothes were ragged and did not resemble the attires of the scholars. When I came to the study circle of Abū al-Ḥārith al-Sarakhī, I sat at the extreme end.' Normative treatises also lay special emphasis on the

fact that relatives and acquaintances should be seated together and that no participant should sit between them without asking their permission. Thus, the arrangement in these reading sessions was of one (or more) concentric semicircle(s), with the one nearest the teacher seating the most advanced participants.[31]

Although all the written prescriptions on seating order focused exclusively on the group of scholars, unwritten rules on the seating order can be deduced from reading certificates as they give insights into where non-scholarly participants were positioned. Normative texts did not contain any regulations on how the writer had to register the participants, but the certificates can be read as reflections of the actual seating order as the position of names followed regular patterns. Two persons always have a fixed position in the certificates: the authorised teacher at the beginning, as he was seated at the front; and the writer who concluded the certificate's main part with his own name, not because he sat in the least prominent position, but because his name had to certify the correctness of the information. The enumeration of the participants between these two names followed cultural and social norms that partly reflected and partly completed the normative rules on the seating order. The prominent scholars, generally including the reader, always headed the list, followed by or intermixed with members of the political and military elites. Non-scholars as well as craftsmen and traders were positioned in the final lines. When community B, for instance, met for a reading of the *History of Damascus* on a Friday in the mid-560s/1160s the almost fifty participants were seated in the following order: (1) scholar (the reader); (2) authorised teacher's son; (3)–(4) two scholars; (5)–(6) two officers; (7)–(8) scholar and his slave; (9)–(11) three scholars; (12)–(18) seven children of non-attending scholars; (19) scholar/cloth trader; (20)–(21) scholar and his slave; (22)–(23) two non-scholars; (24) scholar; (25) military; (26) non-scholar; (27) scholar/jeweller; (28) non-scholar; (29)–(31) three craftsmen and traders (furrier, broker, weaver); (32)–(33) two non-scholars; (34)–(35) two scholars; (36)–(37) two craftsmen and traders (furrier, silk trader); (38) dependant; (39)–(45) seven non-scholars; (46) craftsman (clay worker).[32]

In this typical case, the nineteen participants following the authorised teacher, up to the scholar/cloth trader, belonged to the scholarly and military elites. They were all of sufficient prominence that other sources such as biographical dictionaries also named them or – in the case of the children – had fathers that these texts mentioned. Prominence and family relations constituted an important factor in determining the seating order among these nineteen participants. The scholars at positions three and four were the most prominent scholars in this session, while the part-time

scholar/cloth trader was at the end of this inner group. The children who attended without their scholarly fathers were all seated together and siblings always sat next to each other. The relationship between the authorised teacher and his son enabled the son to take one of the most prominent positions, directly next to the reader.

The following twenty-seven participants, the outer circle so to speak, were of a more heterogeneous background and hardly any of them appear in sources other than these certificates. They include non-scholars, craftsmen and traders, a dependant and five minor scholars. The factors determining their seating order were more complex and included regional background, as the seven non-scholars seated together at positions 39–45, for instance, originated from the Damascene extra-muros quarter of Shāghūr. Social differences seem to have featured highly: craftsmen and traders tend to group together as much as the non-scholars. Among the craftsmen and traders the clay worker was positioned at the very end at a considerable distance from more prestigious professions such as the furrier. Owing to this social ranking, the minor military figure in the outer circle at position 25 was clearly separated from the officers at positions 5 and 6, who sat with the prominent scholars. The two scholars who were named together towards the end of the certificate, and thus seated on less prominent positions, can be identified as scholars via their relational name, but no other sources, even not the Damascene Corpus of Certificates, mention them. It is this outer circle that allows such a reading session to be labelled as popular. Whereas the inner circle could have easily attended any scholarly session, it was precisely this popular element that differentiated these sessions from their learned counterparts.

That certificates reproduced the social and cultural logic of reading sessions and the hierarchies among the participants is especially evident when considering those seated side by side. For instance, in community D two descendants of the Prophet (*sharīf*) who were not directly related participated in three sessions and always sat together. Twenty years later they participated in a reading of another work and again sat side by side. Regional groupings were also common, although more difficult to ascertain in the source material as most participants originated from Damascus. However, participants from the rural areas were often seated together. Although they were from different villages their rural background was evidently enough to dictate where they sat within mostly urban reading communities. The regional factor was also prominent in readings of the *History of Damascus*. In community D, for example, two participants from Mosul in Iraq sat side by side at the sessions they attended as often as two participants from al-Raqqa in northern Syria. In community G, of

which most participants attended regularly, two men from Urmiya in western Azerbaijan sat together in the only session that they attended. Arguably, they took seats next to each other because of their shared background and their rather uncommon pattern of participation in this scholarly session. The frequent use of dual and plural forms (al-Andalusīyān, al-Shawāghira) for geographical relational names in the certificates indicates that shared geographical origin was a crucial factor in the seating order.[33]

Children and dependants generally sat with their parents and (former) masters so these groups did not display specific seating profiles. As hardly any women attended reading sessions of the *History of Damascus* it is impossible to comment upon how gender played into the seating order. However, the Damascene Corpus of Certificates shows that women, except for the prominent scholars, generally sat with their male relatives or at the end of the semicircles if they attended on their own. In a reading at a private residence, for instance, the daughter of the host sat with her father at the front, but two other women who attended on their own were placed at the end. In an example from the early eighth/fourteenth century, the seating arrangements for the five male participants took precedence over those of the thirteen women who attended the reading in a learned institution.[34]

Particularly evident is the grouping of participants according to shared cultural and social identities in the case of the craftsmen and traders. The numerous examples of participants of this group who sat together in popular readings of the *History of Damascus* show that this socially regulated seating order was systematic and transcended individual contacts. The furrier ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, for instance, always sat with his colleague, Ismāʿīl b. Jawhar, in the four sessions that he attended in community D. In these four sessions further craftsmen and traders were seated either next to or close to them, such as the linen weaver, Abū Ṭālib, and the felt maker, ʿAbd al-Khāliq. In one of these sessions the carpenter Muḥammad and the sword maker Maḥāsin sat close to ʿAbd al-Khāliq. In this last example – and this illustrates a systematic problem in analysing seating orders – it cannot be ascertained whether these three figures were seated in proximity to the furrier who was also present as they only attended part of the session, so their names were registered in a separate section of the certificate. As non-scholarly participants had a strong proclivity to partial participation this source problem is particularly relevant in their cases and it might be assumed that more cases of grouped seating existed than is discernible from the certificates.[35]

The social dimension of seating orders is even clearer when tracing the

place of specific craftsmen and traders over the course of several popular sessions. Although the composition of the reading community, and thus the seating order, was in each case different, craftsmen and traders were in general placed next to or in proximity to participants with the same background. The aforementioned carpenter Muḥammad, for example, was seated in a session together with the blacksmith Abū Muḥammad, the scholar/jeweller Ḥamza and the butcher Faḍāʾil. In the following session two days later these three did not attend so the carpenter took a seat beside the sword maker Maḥāsin. When Muḥammad attended a session in the following year none of these four attended and we find him next to the weaver Ibrāhīm and in proximity to the furrier Ismāʿīl b. Jawhar and Muḥammad, a mender of garments. We met the furrier Ismāʿīl earlier in the company of one of his colleagues, a linen weaver and a felt maker. In further sessions that these three figures and the carpenter did not attend, Ismāʿīl was seated with individuals such as the meat roaster ʿUthmān, the blacksmith Abū Muḥammad, the scale maker ʿUmar, the broker Yūsuf and Ismāʿīl's colleague Futūḥ.[36]

The characteristic profile of craftsmen and traders in the seating order of reading sessions is also evident from the Damascene Corpus of Certificates. In the aforementioned large gathering for the popular reading of a work of *ḥadīth* in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century in the Damascene Muẓaffarī Mosque the craftsmen and traders among the 338 participants were seated in close proximity. Almost all of the relevant entries, such as coppersmiths, millers, bakers, masons and tailors are on two of the certificate's eight folios and there is no entry for them on the first folio at all. In a smaller popular reading with twenty-eight participants in this period we find a weaver, a carpenter, two masons, two bakers, a butter merchant, a trader and a butcher close to each other.[37]

Motivations for Participating in Popular Readings

The structured seating order that emerges from reading certificates thus confirms that the craftsmen, traders and other non-scholarly individuals participated in the popular reading sessions as distinct groups and were an important feature of the popularisation of one specific form of cultural practice. However, the participation of these groups in sessions of the *History of Damascus* where mostly *ḥadīth* material was read out might be simply understood as a form of ritual practice that was more akin to participating in communal prayer rather than a transformation indicating that wider groups in society started to partake in the transmission of knowledge. The differentiation between learned and popular sessions,

which might be understood as a dichotomy between scholarly interests, on the one hand, and a ritual interest, on the other, seems at first glance to support such a reading of the motivations. According to this view, the participation of scholars and their children would be grounded in their search for information authenticated by *isnād*s and entailing prestigious rights of transmission. At the same time, this view would disregard the fact that participants from the non-scholarly groups had an interest in the content of the works, and it would rather see the ritual aspect as the primary factor explaining their participation. This part will argue by contrast that the motivations of at least the craftsmen and traders cannot be reduced to an exclusively ritual aspect, but included other aspects such as the aesthetic value of sessions and most importantly the content of the work itself played a considerable role.

The reading rhythm of the *History of Damascus* suggests that one motivation in particular definitely did not play a paramount role in any of the reading series: namely, the quest to swiftly acquire rights of transmission. The reading communities, whether learned or popular, met over and over again to read through the entire work at a leisurely pace so that communities E and D took some ten years, K over seven years and B six years. The faster pace for readings of other works mentioned above – especially *ḥadīth* compendia – was arguably an outcome of the quest for prestigious lines of transmission and the ensuing cultural and social capital. Accordingly, contemporaries commented that acquiring prestige had become a central concern for the scholars and that participants and the authorised teacher did not follow the reading at all, preferring rather to sleep, and that the sessions had turned into a playground for the scholars' children. These criticisms should be taken with a pinch of salt as such lamentations were a standard feature of normative treatises on the scholarly world that provided the authors with a rationale for writing their work. However, fast reading sessions in which the participants had a rather pragmatic approach towards the texts undoubtedly existed and it is striking that none of the reading communities of the *History of Damascus*, including the scholarly ones, adopted such a quick pace.[38]

Just as this pragmatic approach to the readings can be excluded for the scholars on the basis of the slow pace of the readings, an exclusively ritual approach can be excluded for the craftsmen and traders on the basis of individual patterns of participation. The underlying assumption for this argument is that those who saw attendance at readings as a purely ritual practice had no need to attend several readings of the same work. Rather, they could attend a single session and then move on to readings of different works, of which there was an ample offering in a city such as

Damascus, or they could choose entirely different forms of ritual, such as prayers or visitations of shrines. Many of the participants in the readings of the *History of Damascus* did indeed only participate in a single session and never returned. In the popular series B, for instance, over 40 per cent fell into this group. While it cannot be assumed that all these participants had an exclusively ritual interest in attending, it seems in these cases at least highly probable.

The *History of Damascus* had a particular appeal to these ritual readers due to its emphasis on the 'Golden Age' of the Prophet Muḥammad and the following four caliphs who had detailed biographies in this work which were, in places, strongly moralistic. This ritual interest was firmly grounded in changed religious practices during this period: namely, the increasing veneration of Muḥammad. This veneration was an important factor that attracted large audiences to *ḥadīth* readings, as documented in the Damascene Corpus of Certificates, and also found its expression in new forms of venerating relics. Characteristically, one of the learned institutions where numerous readings of *ḥadīth* took place displayed the Prophet's sandal, brought to Damascus in the seventh/thirteenth century. Biographies that explicitly mentioned readings of *ḥadīth* at this relic emphasised the relic's role in merging material and textual closeness to the Prophet. The *History of Damascus* with its many *ḥadīth*s and short *isnād*s replicated this quest for closeness to the Prophet Muḥammad and increased its spiritual significance for its audiences.[39]

For most participants this ritual dimension was important beyond doubt and for many 'ritual readers' who attended only one session this was possibly the main motivation. Yet the distribution of the ritual readers strongly varied among the different groups that attended. While the ratio of those attending only one session in community B stood for the non-scholars at 54 per cent, it was comparatively low among the craftsmen and traders at 19 per cent. This difference gains in profile if we turn to those readers who attended more often and for whom it can be assumed that other factors, such as a content-focused interest, played some role. In the following the indicator chosen for such a pattern of attendance will be the 'occasional' participation, that is, having participated in more than 25 per cent of the sessions. Participation in all or almost all sessions, by contrast, cannot be taken as a criterion. For a work as voluminous as the *History of Damascus* attendance at sessions for the entire work was not a realistic aim, not even for the scholarly participants. For example, other sources such as biographical dictionaries said of one scholar that 'he was unique in having rights of transmission for more than 200 parts of the *History of Damascus*', that is about a third of the work. Some ambitious individuals

Table 2.3 Attendance of ʿUthmān the clay worker in readings of the *History of Damascus*, community B

	Part	Date	Day	Total number of participants**
1*	1	9 I 560	Thursday‡	69 (31)
2*	5	23 I 560	Thursday‡	75 (22)
3	92	14 XII 560	Friday	37 (2)
4	94	21 XII 560	Friday	37 (0)
5	96	28 XII 560	Friday	48 (0)
6	98	6 I 561	Friday	49 (0)
7	232	23 V 562	Friday	46 (0)
8	235	30 V 562	Friday	47 (0)
9*	237	6 VI 562	Thursday	40 (3)
10	238	7 VI 562	Friday	42 (0)
11	261	4 VIII 562	Friday	36 (0)
12	263	25 VIII 562	Friday	48 (0)
13	268	10 IX 562	Friday	58 (0)
14	270	17 IX 562	Friday	60 (0)
15	286	7 XI 562	Friday	49 (2)
16	289	14 XI 562	Friday	48 (0)
17*	319	23 II 563	Friday‡	61 (37)
18	325	21 III 563	Friday	73 (0)
19*	326	28 III 563	Friday‡	73 (34)
20*	327	2 IV 563	Monday‡	73 (34)
21	411	13 I 564	Friday	37 (0)

Key to symbols used in Tables 2.3–2.6:
* Partial attendance.
** In brackets: number of participants who attended partially.
‡ The reading was spread over two or more sessions on different days; the day of the week refers to the last session.

in later periods, such as the prominent historian al-Dhahabī, attempted to acquire rights of transmission for the entire work, but they regularly had to abandon these attempts due to the work's sheer length.[40]

The proportion of those who occasionally attended readings of the *History of Damascus* was expectedly high among the scholars and they constituted in community B some 38 per cent of the occasional participants. Conversely, only 6 per cent of non-scholars occasionally attended sessions. While this difference is of little surprise, there is one group that did not belong to the scholarly world, the craftsmen and traders, but showed a significantly higher proportion of occasional attendance, with 14 per cent. Community D, the other community with considerable participation of craftsmen and traders, shows again that the participation ratios for this group were between those for scholars, on the one hand, and non-scholars, on the other.[41] Thus, a relatively high number of partici-

Table 2.4 Attendance of Ibrāhīm the furrier in readings of the *History of Damascus*, community B

	Part	Date	Day	Total number of participants**
1*	1	9 I 560	Thursday‡	69 (31)
2	2	10 I 560	Friday	72 (2)
3	3	16 I 560	Thursday‡	80 (31)
4	5	23 I 560	Thursday‡	75 (22)
5	6	24 I 560	Friday	84 (0)
6	7	30 I 560	Thursday‡	71 (15)
7	8	1 II 560	Friday	79 (2)
8	9	7 II 560	Thursday‡	83 (22)
9	10	8 II 560	Friday	71 (0)
10	231	22 V 562	Thursday‡	43 (4)
11	232	23 V 562	Friday	46 (0)
12*	269	17 IX 562	Thursday‡	62 (17)
13	319	23 II 563	Friday‡	61 (37)
14	325	21 III 563	Friday	73 (0)
15	326	28 III 563	Friday‡	73 (34)
16	327	2 IV 563	Monday‡	73 (34)
17	328	5 IV 563	Thursday‡	51 (11)
18	330	12 IV 563	Thursday‡	62 (16)
19	331	13 IV 563	Friday	73 (1)
20	377	27 IX 563	Friday	65 (0)
21	378	4 X 563	Thursday‡	70 (38)

pants with this background had a profile that indicated that their interest in participating in popular reading sessions went beyond ritual aspects and arguably included other considerations.

The link between the motives for participation and the patterns of attendance can be discussed in more detail by taking four concrete examples of craftsmen and traders who attended occasionally popular reading sessions. These are ʿUthmān the clay worker (Table 2.3) and Ibrāhīm the furrier (Table 2.4), who both participated in readings over a period of four years, Muḥammad the carpenter (Table 2.5) who attended sessions over three years and Yūsuf the silk trader (Table 2.6) who was present in sessions over a period of two years. These individuals not only strove to attend a large number of sessions, but their participation displayed a further characteristic that indicates a genuine interest in the work's content: namely, that they did not attended a random selection of session, but that they strove to attend consecutive sessions. This was especially the case for Ibrāhīm the furrier and Yūsuf the silk trader, who both attended only one isolated session. ʿUthmān the clay worker by contrast attended

a larger number of isolated sessions (some 30 per cent) and had in this regard a profile more similar to that of the group of non-scholars.[42]

These differences in attending isolated or consecutive sessions, arguably, cannot be explained with reference to differing motivations alone, but introduce another factor, social differences. Evidently, Friday sessions constituted the least problems for ʿUthmān, but he repeatedly missed consecutive meetings that took place on other days of the week. By contrast, the other three craftsmen and traders, especially Ibrāhīm the furrier and Muḥammad the carpenter, did not depend on Friday sessions. They were able to attend sessions on any day and consequently could more easily participate in consecutive meetings. ʿUthmān the clay worker was seemingly not in a position to attend sessions that would have taken several hours of his working day on any given day of the week.[43] Participants from the lower social classes could hardly attend, as Ibrāhīm the furrier did, four sessions within one single week (cf. in Table 2.4, for instance, the readings of parts 327 and 328 that were both divided into two sessions each). ʿUthmān's profile as a 'Friday reader' is also evident in the readings that he attended only partially, when he was either late or had to leave before the reading was completed. This was the case whenever he participated on a day other than Friday. Ibrāhīm the furrier and Yūsuf the silk trader, by contrast, had hardly any partial attendances irrespective of the day of the week and irrespective of the number of meetings needed to complete the reading.

The patterns of participation of these four craftsmen and traders

Table 2.5 Attendance of Muḥammad the carpenter in readings of the *History of Damascus*, community D

	Part	Date	Day	Total number of participants**
1	234	2 IX 575	Thursday‡	29 (& others)
2	235	4 IX 575	Saturday‡	21 (0)
3	236	7 IX 575	Monday‡	26 (& others)
4	268	1 IV 576	Monday‡	18 (& others)
5	286	11 X 576	Friday‡	23 (1)
6*	288	27 X 576	Monday‡	19 (4)
7	289	9 XI 576	Friday‡	20 (0)
8*	325	18 XII 577	Friday‡	30 (17)
9*	326	20 XII 577	Monday‡	45 (33)
10*	328	5 I 578	Monday‡	43 (28)
11*	329	9 I 578	Friday‡	51 (29)
12*	332	14 II 578	Friday‡	52 (36)
13*	374	28 XII 578	Friday‡	36 (26)

Table 2.6 Attendance of Yūsuf the silk trader in readings of the *History of Damascus*, community B

	Part	Date	Day	Total number of participants**
1	92	14 XII 560	Friday	37 (2)
2	93	20 XII 560	Thursday‡	45 (17)
3	94	21 XII 560	Friday	37 (0)
4	98	5 I 561	Friday	49 (0)
5	99	11 I 561	Thursday‡	47 (16)
6	231	22 V 562	Thursday‡	43 (4)
7	232	23 V 562	Friday	46 (0)
8	233	29 V 562	Thursday‡	37 (5)
9	234	562	Friday‡	40 (0)
10	235	30 V 562	Friday	47 (0)
11	236	3 VI 562	Monday	38 (0)
12	238	7 VI 562	Friday	42 (0)
13	263	27 VIII 562	Friday	48 (0)
14	266	4 IX 562	Friday	34 (0)
15	285	6 XI 562	Thursday	35 (0)
16	287	10 XI 562	Monday	41 (0)
17	289	14 XI 562	Friday	48 (0)
18	290	17 XI 562	Monday	37 (2)

share some features, most importantly that almost all sessions that they attended took place in the Umayyad Mosque – the main venue for audiences beyond the scholarly world. However, their profiles were different in the sense that ʿUthmān's pattern as a 'Friday reader' closely resembled the profile of the group of the non-scholars who depended on that day of the week, often participated only in part of a given meeting and tended to attend isolated sessions. The pattern of the other three craftsmen and traders, by contrast, is rather similar to that of scholars who attended session on any given day, tried to participate in consecutive sessions and were able to take part in sessions that required more than one meeting. To a certain extent, these differences go back to social differences, but they indicate also that the motivations for attending reading sessions within the group of craftsmen and traders cannot be reduced to one single factor. Rather, they reflect the different meanings ascribed to readings of works such as the *History of Damascus*, be they of a ritualistic or other nature. At the same time, they show that a clear separation between the profiles of scholars and non-scholarly participants is not possible. Rather, there was a gradual area of overlap of cultural practices reaching from the group of non-scholars to the group of scholars. The craftsmen and traders seem to have taken a middle position between participants for whom attendance

was largely a ritual act and those who were motivated by other interests – they were, so to speak, the link between these groups.

If the motives of the craftsmen and traders for attending readings of a work such as the *History of Damascus* cannot be reduced to an exclusively ritual interest why, then, did they participate when clearly they could not have any interest in acquiring scholarly rights of transmission? One factor that played a role was arguably the aesthetic quality of the readings. As much as for the Koran, such aesthetic considerations did play a role in readings of works containing *ḥadīth* material. For instance, biographical dictionaries always described a profiled *ḥadīth* scholar and contemporary of Ibn ᶜAsākir with the words that he 'beautifully recited *ḥadīth* with an articulate voice'.[44] The number of participants in each community and the size of the audience in each session obviously depended to a large extent on the prominence and prestige of the teacher. The reading sessions of community B, for instance, proved initially popular with sixty to seventy participants because the author himself acted as authorised teacher. However, the size of the audience in reading sessions depended also on the person of the reader who had, in contrast to the teacher, no direct impact on the 'quality' of the right of transmission. Readers such as Ismāᶜīl Ibn al-Anmāṭī and al-Ashraf Aḥmad who were famous only for their quick, but not necessarily appealing, reading qualities acted in scholarly sessions where such qualities were seemingly valued but that attracted few participants. In the larger reading communities we rather find readers who were described in normative treatises as 'possessing the most eloquent style, the most beautiful expression and the best articulation'.[45]

Another factor that explains why individuals participated in the readings of the *History of Damascus* was the work's content and the multiple layers of meaning that the audience could ascribe to it. The *History of Damascus* starts with the merits (*faḍāᵓil*) of Syria and Damascus, a description of the urban topography and an extended biography of the Prophet Muḥammad. The main part of the work is devoted to the biographies of prominent individuals (some 10,000, among them over 200 women) who lived in the city or at least visited it. In chronological terms the work's emphasis is obviously on the Islamic periods, but some thirty entries deal with pre-Islamic salvation history, such as Adam, Noah, Moses, John the Baptist and Mary. In this sense, readings of the work allowed a local audience to assure itself of the city's excellence and its prominent position in salvation history. The author conceptualised – and celebrated – the history of the city and Syria at large as the sum of its prominent and especially scholarly inhabitants. In scholarly terms, the entries on the Islamic period focus on information relevant for *ḥadīth*

studies and actually contain a large number of *ḥadīth*s including the lines of transmission. This material contributed to the work's dissemination in the following centuries beyond Syria, especially in Cairo where many of its sixteen summaries and continuations were authored.[46]

Beyond local pride and scholarly content, the popularity of the work crucially resulted from the fact that it imagined a wider Syria that was of increasing relevance when the work was published and read. The text painted a geographical space that was clearly separate from the neighbouring regions of Egypt and northern Mesopotamia (al-Jazīra) by including Syrian individuals from well beyond the city's immediate confines. The imagination of such a larger space was a new phenomenon within the genre of local historiography that had started to gain in importance from the fifth/eleventh century onwards. The *History of Baghdad* by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, for instance, had no comparable concept of a wider space of 'Iraq' and focused on the city itself. That Ibn ᶜAsākir chose Syria as his geographical frame of reference went hand-in-hand with the centralistic policies of the Zangids under Nūr al-Dīn that ended the previous period of local lordships and created an increasingly unified political realm. The *History of Damascus* had in this sense a particularly strong resonance for an audience that lived through the 'Syrian Century'.

The publication and the popularity of the work were intimately linked to this formation of a wider identity that accompanied the political autonomy of the Syrian lands. The relationship between Ibn ᶜAsākir and the political elites who stood in a long-lasting alliance with him reflected this close link between the production and reception of knowledge, on the one hand, and the wider political field, on the other. While Nūr al-Dīn could legitimise his policies with the support of prominent scholars such as Ibn ᶜAsākir, the scholarly world could rely on stronger patronage. In the case of Ibn ᶜAsākir, Nūr al-Dīn founded for him the first *dār al-ḥadīth* in Syria that remained in the hands of the family for the following century. Ibn ᶜAsākir in turn authored treatises that endowed the ruler's policies with legitimacy, such as a collection of forty *ḥadīth* extolling the *jihād*.[47]

The work also allowed those who were calling for fighting the *jihād* against the Franks to affirm the superiority of the Muslim community, as expressed in salvation history. Ibn ᶜAsākir significantly reworked the material on Jesus with reference to Christian–Muslim polemics that had gained in importance during the Crusader period. In addition, the author was certain that Jesus' return was imminent, to lead the Muslims in their fight against the Crusaders. The *History of Damascus* was, as much as Ibn ᶜAsākir's treatise on *jihād*, part of the increasing *jihād* propaganda under the Zangids. It was authored in the intellectual centre for *jihād* in Syria, the

dār al-ḥadīth that was founded for the author, and Nūr al-Dīn himself took a close personal interest in the work's progress. The origin of the *History of Damascus* in this newly erected complex illustrated the close relationship of the text with the centralisation and the 'renaissance' of Sunni Islam that materialised under the new political and military elites who undertook an ambitious building programme in the urban centres of the region.[48]

The individual motivations to participate in readings of the *History of Damascus*, be they ritualistic, aesthetic or content-focused, cannot be completely separated nor can they be reconstructed for individual participants. However, the individual patterns of participation can give insights into what motivated non-scholarly participants besides ritualistic reading. Obviously, it would be impossible to differentiate the content-focused interest any further with regard to issues such as local pride and the formation of a regional identity, but the consideration of individual patterns of participation at least allows the analysis of cultures of reading to go beyond the *a priori* assumption that social differences determined cultural practices. This approach has shown that at least some traders and craftsmen shared similar interests with scholarly participants as their attendance of readings of the *History of Damascus* went beyond ritualistic considerations.

Changes over Time: Reading Certificates and 'Popular' Culture

The composition of audiences at popular reading sessions indicates that the participation in readings on a reasonably regular basis was not only the privilege of scholars or the military and political elites. Rather, a considerable number of popular sessions were organised in urban spaces and on days of the week that allowed a large number of non-scholarly participants to attend. Individuals with different social and cultural backgrounds who had different motives for participating in these major cultural events did indeed take up this opportunity. The question arises as to what extent this phenomenon of popular reading communities that bridged social and cultural differences was new? Was this, in other words, a quasi atemporal characteristic of Muslim teaching and reading cultures or was it the outcome of more comprehensive transformations that took place during the Middle Period?

Holding popular sessions that also catered for non-scholarly audiences was not in itself a break with practices from previous centuries. A wide variety of sources regularly documented reading sessions directed at wider audiences, especially readings of *ḥadīth*, well before the Middle Period. Al-Samᶜānī (d. 562/1166), for instance, listed in his treatise on the right

conduct of scholars numerous examples from the period between the first/seventh to the fourth/tenth centuries, although one might wonder whether there really were 120,000 participants. In his standard work on the study of *ḥadīth* the Damascene Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ described similar sessions for earlier periods. He wondered whether rights of transmission acquired in sessions with thousands of participants could be valid in view of the noise and possible misunderstandings. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in turn again mentioned such sessions, but unequivocally considered them to be useful for scholars.[49]

The popular readings of the *History of Damascus* and their large audiences were thus by themselves not new phenomena. However, they constituted a change compared with previous practices in one crucial way: the certificates now registered the non-scholarly participants on an equal footing with the scholars. The broader background for this was the rise of the comprehensive *samāᶜ* certificate as a central element of reading and teaching cultures in Muslim societies. These certificates started to develop in considerable numbers from the fifth/eleventh century onwards, but gained their central position only in the following century. The certificates on manuscripts held in the French National Library illustrate this development. Among the 179 datable certificates only six originate from the fifth/eleventh century. For the following three centuries the numbers are substantially higher (forty-two for the sixth/twelfth century, fifty for the seventh/thirteenth century and forty-nine for the eighth/fourteenth century). Thereafter the number of certificates starts to decline (seventeen for the ninth/fifteenth century and seven for the tenth/sixteenth century).[50]

The Paris collection is certainly not a representative sample of the Arabic manuscript tradition in terms of regions, subjects and periods. However, the seventy manuscripts that do have certificates reach back to the fifth/eleventh century and cover a wide area between Khurāsān in the east and al-Andalus in the west. As expected, *ḥadīth* features most prominently, but other fields such as history, medicine and grammar can also be found. Despite the relatively low number of early manuscripts an analysis of the chronological development of the certificates is possible. As scribes often copied the certificates together with the main text, later manuscripts regularly contained earlier certificates. Around 40 per cent of the sixth/twelfth-century certificates and around half of each of the seventh/thirteenth- and eighth/fourteenth-century certificates have been transmitted only as copies. Consequently, the low number of copies of certificates from the fifth/twelfth century, or at least of summaries of them, and the complete absence of this material for earlier centuries cannot be explained just in terms of survival rates of manuscripts, but indicates

instead the rise of the certificate as a new phenomenon in cultures of teaching and reading.[51]

The reading certificates that started to spread from the fifth/eleventh century onwards developed out of earlier certificates in which teachers confirmed that students had read specific works to them. The decisive change in the *samāᶜ* certificate was that they now listed all participants in a reading session, whereas earlier certificates had tended to register only the name of the reader himself. Normative works that deal with the ensuing questions for transmission practices also reflected this gradual change. Authors of the fifth/eleventh century still had to argue in extensive passages that merely attending a session, irrespective of whether one was the reader or not, was sufficient to acquire rights of transmission. A contemporary of Ibn ᶜAsākir writing a normative work in the sixth/twelfth century, by contrast, sufficed with a statement that this practice was legitimate and saw no need to go into further details. Finally, in the seventh/thirteenth century the transformation was completed and Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ considered the participation in a reading and the reading itself not only to be of equal footing, but conflated them into one single category of transmission: 'There is no difference whether you are the reader or whether somebody else reads and you are listening.' From this point the need to discuss the legitimacy of this form of transmission vanished and authors no longer saw even aural reading as a separate category.[52]

The increased role of certificates became evident in a wide variety of fields. For instance, copyists repeatedly strove to integrate them into the arrangement of the manuscript, as they considered certificates to be an integral part of the text to be copied. Conversely, scholars started to refer in disputes to the absence of certificates in manuscripts in order to identify what they perceived to be reprehensible works. At the same time, the reading certificate gained a position that allowed it to be kept as an independent document and, more importantly, their lists of names had become so long that they occasionally necessitated the production of separate manuscripts. In eighth/fourteenth-century Damascus, for instance, the certificates for some famous works became so voluminous that specific quires were kept to write them down. At the same time, endowments for some learned institutions provided considerable funds for the writer of certificates and constituted this function as a separate post. The creation of this formalised post shows that the endowers not only assumed that large gatherings would take place, but that they saw the need to register all those who were present, irrespective of their background. Beyond these formalised positions, biographies started to consider the writing of certificates as worthy of mention from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards.[53]

With the increased importance of certificates, scholars started to formulate the requirements for those writing them in more precise terms. An eighth/fourteenth-century normative treatise stated, for instance:

> It is incumbent on [the writer of the certificate] to register the names of all those who participated and listened as well as to make sure who really did listen. If he lies to the Prophet Muḥammad [eulogy] stating that somebody listened although this was not the case – and even if [the writer] is only lenient in this regard – he will take his place in hell.[54]

Writers of certificates were meant to be as reliable as notary witnesses and biographies started to include statements on who had been renowned for his reliability, and who had tampered with the material. Indeed, the crucial position of the certificates in the scholarly world, as well as the social and cultural capital associated with them, led to a blooming practice of forgery. Scholars such as Ibn al-Qāḍī, Ibn al-ᶜUllayq and Ibn Ṭabarzad in the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries more or less successfully attempted to promote their careers in this way and were said to have forged up to 1,000 certificates.[55]

A regional shift accompanied the rise of the certificate. In the early phase, in the fifth/eleventh century, certificates played a particularly important role in Baghdad. In the following century the number of certificates from Baghdad decreased and Damascus became the new centre. With the cultural blossoming of Damascus from the sixth/twelfth century onwards an unrivalled number of such documents appeared in the Syrian region. The margins of the manuscripts from this period abound with certificates and sometimes the folia that were added to manuscripts to provide additional space for them were more numerous than the folia for the main text itself. This regional shift was also an expression of the rise of *ḥadīth* studies in Syria during the Syrian Century from the mid-sixth/twelfth to the mid-seventh/thirteenth century under the Zangids and the Ayyubids. In this period the registration of all participants was not the only reason for more detail in the certificates. In addition, they started to include more detailed information on the exact place of the reading, the day of the week and occasionally even the time. By contrast, earlier certificates, such as those for a fifth/eleventh-century reading under al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in Tyre (Ṣūr), had been inchoate.[56]

This development is particularly evident in works that carried certificates written over long periods of time. For instance, in an eschatological work that had an almost uninterrupted succession of certificates for three centuries, the earliest certificate from 432/1040 did not specify the exact date or other details. A certificate written some two centuries later, by

contrast, included the precise date, the day of the week and the prayer niche in the Umayyad Mosque where the reading was held. A manuscript of al-Shāfiᶜī's compendium of legal methods for which the transmission was documented for some 250 years reflected the same development. The early certificates from 394/1005 again had only the month and the year, while the last ones included precise information on time and place. With the increasing amount of detail, authors of narrative sources also started to use them as sources in their own right: 'He [al-Tanūkhī, d. 695/1296] attended a reading of the *Ṣaḥīḥ* by Muslim under the authorised teacher al-ᶜAlam al-Sakhāwī and those who were with him according to what is found on Ibn ᶜAsākir's manuscript.'[57]

The increasing amount of detail in certificates affected most importantly the way in which participants were recorded, for instance, with regard to the issue of partial attendance. A certificate from 671/1273 for the *History of Damascus*, for example, specified after the usual data on the authorised teacher, the reader and the participants that:

> Jamāl al-Dīn attended, except for two pages towards the end [of the part that was read]. Shaykh Muḥammad . . . and Shihāb al-Dīn . . . attended from its beginning up to the chapter [name of chapter given] and from chapter [name given] to the end. Shaykh Ibrāhīm . . . attended the entire text except the last page on which is a [corresponding] comment. Aḥmad b. Muḥammad . . . only attended one of the last pages.[58]

The ways in which writers supplemented certificates if the need arose also reflected their increasing precision. In another session of the *History of Damascus* one participant had missed the start of a reading, which the writer duly recorded in the manuscript. One month later a brief certificate was added that documented a special session for this ᶜIzz al-Dīn to cover what he 'had missed in the beginning of this part'.[59]

This drive for precision and comprehensiveness entailed also that all participants were systematically registered, including those with no scholarly background. In the certificates for the *History of Damascus* this was not uniform practice and while the majority of the writers recorded all participants, one writer named only some scholars and succinctly added that 'a large crowd whose names I do not know [attended as well]'. Disregarding those who were not part of one's scholarly world was not representative, but it shows that the development towards recording all participants was not yet complete. A vestige of this practice survived in a different form, namely, in the form of secondary certificates. Here, a writer recorded a complete, or primary, certificate on the manuscript pages that he produced during the session and wrote only an abridged, or secondary, version on

the original manuscript. In this secondary certificate he recorded only the most prominent participants together with a brief reference to the primary certificate. Copyists could produce similar summaries when they copied certificates together with a manuscript and one of them explained that he did not copy the names of some persons 'because they [did not attend] with the intention of a subsequent transmission'. While these practices show that those involved in reading sessions had a clear concept of the differentiation between scholars and other participants, the vast majority of certificates for the *History of Damascus* and the Damascene Corpus included all participants irrespective of their position within the scholarly world.[60]

This increasing inclusion of wider sections of the population into reading cultures via the symbolic instrument of certificates did not go unchallenged in normative texts. The eighth/fourteenth-century scholar of Damascus Ibn Kathīr, for instance, complained that persons who are 'not knowledgeable' attended sessions and that their names were recorded. Ibn Kathīr's text strongly relied upon an earlier work, which he paraphrased and summarised in long sections. This comment, by contrast, was his own and here he diverted from the original text to express his misgivings about this state of affairs. While the original author had not seen any reason to comment on the development, Ibn Kathīr felt compelled to do so in the light of the increasing participation of wider sections of the population in popular sessions.[61]

Modern scholarship has repeatedly ascribed the main factor for the rise of the role of the reading certificate in the scholarly world to the spread of learned institutions (*madrasa* and *dār al-ḥadīth*). Explicitly or implicitly it has been assumed that changed forms of teaching and studying fostered its increasing importance.[62] Research over recent decades on teaching practices in these institutions has rendered this argument mostly obsolete as it has been shown that the impact of the spread of learned institutions on teaching and studying, at least in the early stages, remained minimal and that their main impact was rather in the field of social history.[63] Furthermore, why should institutions have played a prominent role in the development of certificates as most of the reading sessions, at least until the seventh/thirteenth century, took place elsewhere? The certificates for communities B and D of the *History of Damascus* and those from the Damascene Corpus clearly show that places beyond the learned institutions remained preferred sites for readings and the transmission of knowledge.

In order to understand the rise of the reading certificate it is more fruitful to look at the increasing inclusion of wider sections of the population,

as this development was more than just an incidental by-product of the spread of these documents. Certificates such as those for the *History of Damascus* named craftsmen and traders, as well as other non-scholarly groups, because they started to be integral to these sessions, particularly in their popular mode. In this sense they were more than 'ritual' attendees who were irrelevant for scholarly practices and ended up in the certificates only by chance. A concrete example of this inclusion of non-scholarly groups into the world of reading and teaching and the changes that this process entailed is the case of Aḥmad Ibn al-Shiḥna (d. 730/1329). Aḥmad was born in Damascus into a humble background, so biographies described him somewhat condescendingly as 'someone from the commoners' who did not know his own birthday. In his youth he had worked as a tailor, belonged for some time to the citadel's guard and finally followed his paternal uncle in becoming a mason. The rather unremarkable course of his life dramatically changed in his eighties when certificates showed that he had attended *ḥadīth* readings at a young age. As he was the only surviving 'student' of the authorised teacher at these readings he suddenly became a sought-after authorised teacher himself. He presided over more than seventy sessions not only in Damascus, but also in other Syrian cities and finally in Cairo. According to narrative sources he transmitted the texts especially in the Umayyad Mosque, but certificates show that he also presided over sessions in one of the most prestigious Damascene institutions, the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafīya.[64]

The case of Aḥmad was exceptional; otherwise we would not be so well informed about his career. What is outstanding is not just that he participated in sessions but that he was able to activate this cultural capital as an authorised teacher, although he had no scholarly background whatsoever. The main reason for this unexpected career change lay in further changes in scholarly practices that are not relevant here, most importantly the increased search for 'short' lines of transmission (*isnād ᶜālī*).[65] However, his case demonstrates that the participation of non-scholarly individuals could be perceived and understood in a variety of ways that transcended ritual aspects and could in exceptional circumstances even include turning the individual into a scholar. These changes obviously struck a scholar from al-Andalus as he wrote in the early eighth/fourteenth century:

> The people of this region have a different kind of *ḥadīth* session compared to the people of al-Andalus. They allow the uneducated commoner to participate in what they read [and] the *ḥadīth* scholars are . . . in majority commoners. None of them studied with a . . . scholar. Rather they learn at a young age to write at a children's school and are subsequently introduced to *ḥadīth* read-

> ings by one of the common people. If someone takes part in many sessions, he attains prestige and becomes so proud that he deems himself superior, not only to those who are excellent but also to the scholars.[66]

Obviously this outsider's description embellished the situation for polemic effect, but, significantly, he chose the issue of the commoners' participation in the scholarly world in order to make his main point, the superiority of the Andalusian scholarly world. The participation of commoners was seemingly a topic that he could convincingly draw upon in order to discredit Egyptian and Syrian scholars and their cultural practices.

This description and the case of Aḥmad are certainly interesting indicators for the transformation of cultural practices in Egypt and Syria. However, an active role of non-scholarly individuals in scholarship remained rather a marginal phenomenon. Of more relevance were the numerous participants who never activated the potential authority that they had acquired and who remained passive in terms of the scholarly world. The most interesting characteristic of the craftsmen and traders was precisely that the biographical dictionaries, the main textual reflection of the scholarly world, never included them. They did not belong to the many cases where individuals started out as craftsmen and traders and gradually developed a career as part-time or full-time scholars. Rather, they remained craftsmen and traders throughout their life and merely chose to participate in some or many of the popular sessions of a given reading community.

The increasing inclusion of non-scholarly participants in reading sessions engendered discussions in normative treaties. These not only touched upon the question of whether scribes should note down such participants in the certificates, as brought up by Ibn Kathīr, but referred to the issue of their attendance itself. For a start, there was a clear consensus that 'dangerous' material that might unsettle the faith was not appropriate for non-scholarly participants. This was especially a concern for material that dealt with complex theological issues, such as God's attributes, which might lead to 'erroneous' beliefs – a concern that critics of popular preaching raised as well. In the same vein, discussions on exemptions to God's commands (*rukhaṣ*) were deemed to be inappropriate and potentially dangerous for the participants' salvation. Finally, transmissions on conflicts among the Prophet's companions or among scholars were to be avoided as they endangered the believer's faith and as participants, in the often-cited words of Mālik, 'enter [the session] with faith and leave it in doubt'. Yet there was a more far-reaching position that strove to limit reading sessions to scholars and that assumed that pearls should not be cast before swine or,

to use the original wording: 'Who adorns swine with pearls?' The statement that manuscripts should be lent only to those worthy of them, that is, scholars, expressed this position in more refined terms, but with the same intention: to draw a clear line between scholars and non-scholars. One earlier scholar displayed a similar attitude when he dismissively countered a student's challenge in a teaching session with the comment that he 'will not turn the sons of grocers into grammarians'.[67]

Yet these discussions seemingly had little influence on the praxis of knowledge transmission as documented not only in certificates, but also in narrative sources that show a similar inclusion of wider sections of the population into the scholarly world. For instance, during the ninth/fifteenth century numerous scholars specifically read and recited to the common people in mosques. Certainly, many of these meetings were edifying sessions, not dissimilar to extended sermons, but contemporary authors perceived a clear difference between the tasks of these scholars (sing. *qāriʾ al-kursī*) and those of the preachers:

> He is someone who reads to the common people from edifying stories, *ḥadīth* and Koran commentary. He shares this [characteristic] with the preacher (*qāṣṣ*), but they are different in the sense that the preacher recites by heart in the streets, sitting or standing. The *qāriʾ al-kursī* by contrast is sitting on a seat in the main mosque, [one of the smaller] mosques, a *madrasa* or a Ṣūfī-convent.[68]

Biographies did indeed repeatedly mention such activities that took place in mosques, *madrasa*s and *zāwiya*s. Such readings were not only held in the main cities, but also in smaller towns such as Nablus, Hama, Ṣafad and Gaza in Syria. Some of these scholars did not limit their readings to easily accessible texts, but included complex issues in the sessions. One scholar, for instance, taught not only the standard religious disciplines but also logic in sessions that commoners attended. Other scholars turned in such lectures to complex theological questions and they were occasionally censured for this. Generally, these were rather low-ranking scholars who functioned in some regards as a link between the scholarly world and commoners.[69]

These reports on ninth/fifteenth-century readings and lectures to commoners resulted from the double processes of textualisation and popularisation that had an increasing impact on cultural activities over the course of the Middle Period. The way in which narrative texts commented upon this development also reflected the gradually increasing involvement of wider sections of the population in reading sessions, that is, the process of popularisation. A salient textual marker of the process of popularisation

in such texts was the prominence of scholarly readings to commoners as expressed by the phrase 'he recited/read to the commoners'. In texts that cover the seventh/thirteenth century, such as al-Yūnīnī's chronicle and biographical dictionary, this phrase is virtually absent. A century later the biographical dictionary of Ibn Ḥajar started to employ this phrase more frequently, but it became a constant feature only in the texts covering the ninth/fifteenth century. The practice of these readings was not entirely new and they had taken place prior to the seventh/thirteenth century. Yet authors of narrative texts started to take note of them and to perceive them as a relevant cultural practice only in this period. This changed attitude in narrative texts expressed, as much as the reading certificates, that outwardly similar cultural practices gained additional layers of meaning as they moved into new social contexts.[70]

Finally, endowment records, which provide particularly strong evidence of the scholarly world for the late Mamluk Period, also reflected the popularisation of established cultural practices. Some of these endowments specifically provided salaries for those who taught Koran recitation and writing to wider audiences. Of more relevance, however, were again the reading sessions, especially those of *ḥadīth* works, that allowed wider sections of the population to participate in the transmission of knowledge. Provisions in endowment records show that the attendance of non-scholarly participants was assumed as a matter of fact.[71] Beyond these institutionalised settings, certificates show that such reading sessions were routinely conducted in easily accessible places that belonged to the everyday topography of urban and rural populations. In the case of Damascus numerous readings were held in gardens, in surrounding villages and in the city's markets so that such 'public' places constituted some 8 per cent of those certificates in the Damascene Corpus that registered the place of reading.

Overall, this chapter has argued that the popular reading sessions of the *History of Damascus* constituted an early expression of how reading cultures were changing in the Middle Period, especially with regard to popularisation. Considerable numbers of craftsmen, traders and other non-scholars not only interacted – as they had arguably also done before – in these readings with the scholarly world, but the various sources show that their participation started to be taken seriously. As might be expected, this transformation thus occurred first in a cultural practice that had a low threshold for participation and that often constituted the first contact with the learned world.[72] Yet reading sessions were part of the rites of initiation to the learned world and were thus an important part in sustaining the most constitutive element of the scholarly world: the student–teacher

relationships. The craftsmen, traders and other non-scholars were able to insert themselves with their participation into one of the main forums for building up social and cultural capital. Although this capital was of limited relevance to them as they did not become part of the scholarly world, their registration in the certificates that documented these crucial rites of initiation shows how profound the transformation towards the popularisation of reading practices was.

Furthermore, at least in the case of the craftsmen and traders, the patterns of participation suggest that they did not attend these sessions exclusively as part of ritual practices. Rather, it seems that the multiple meanings of the work in terms of local pride, regional identity and anti-Frankish *jihād* all spoke to these participants' concerns. The *History of Damascus* was thus firmly embedded in the Damascene and Syrian society of its time and its contents aroused genuine interest among the city's audiences. The city's craftsmen and traders appeared here as a salient element in reading audiences and the evidence implies that this popularisation of scholarly practices was to continue and to intensify in the following centuries. This was not a popularisation in the sense that popular texts penetrated into the scholarly realms or started to compete with it, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. Rather, this popularisation meant that broader sections of the population started to partake in the circulation, transmission and circulation of texts that had hitherto been seen as a reserve of the scholarly elites.

Notes

1. 'Public space' refers, following Eisenstadt and Schluchter (1998), 10 to the sphere of social interaction that is positioned between the private sphere, on the one hand, and the official sphere, on the other. On 'public' space in premodern Muslim societies cf. also Eisenstadt, Hoexter and Levtzion (2002). ᶜAsākir family: al-Iṣfahānī, *Kharīdat*, I, 274–80; Yāqūt, *Muᶜjam al-udabāᵓ*, IV, 1697–703; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, III, 309–11; al-Dhahabī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 571–80, pp. 70–82; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XX, 554–71; al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, XII, 215–23; Elisséeff (1959); *Wizārat al-taᶜlīm al-ᶜālī* (1979); al-Ḥāfiẓ (1979); Abiad (1981); Shumaysānī (1990); Lindsay (1994), (1995), (2001); Hirschler (2011). For an overview of the secondary literature cf. Mourad (2010). Readings of Ibn ᶜAsākir's other works often attracted rather moderate numbers, such as his *ḥadīth* treatise, which attracted only twenty-six and fourteen participants in the Umayyad Mosque in 564/1169 and 565/1170, respectively (Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Arbaᶜūn*, 86–8).
2. The mid-1950s experienced a short-lived surge of interest in *samāᶜ* and other similar certificates (Ritter (1953); Vajda (1954); al-Munajjid (1955)), fol-

lowed by sporadic studies in the following decades (such as MacKay (1971); Sellheim (1976–87)). A second and broader surge has taken place since the mid-1990s (Leder (1994), (1999); Witkam (1995); Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (1996), (2000); Sayyid (1999); Frenkel (2005)). Damascene Corpus of Certificates: Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (1996), (2000). I analysed those 823 certificates of this Corpus that had sufficiently detailed information.

3. In particular, comparisons with the Damascene Corpus of Certificates proved crucial in ascertaining names. For instance, the certificate of the reading of the *History of Damascus*' part 2 (community D), 9 VIII 571/22 February 1176 (Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taᵓrīkh*, I, 639) registered a certain Abū al-Fahm b. Abī al-Ḥusayn b. Shibl, rather uncommonly named with the patronym (*kunya*) for himself and his father. A certificate written some two decades later for another work uses exactly the same uncommon form for this individual (Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3761/13/6, fol. 136v, l. 3 (*Ḥadīth Ibn Jurayḥ*), 591/1195).
4. Around 80 per cent of the 1,005 participants in the communities B, D, E, G and K (some individuals participated in more than one community) had sufficiently detailed names to warrant a check in biographical dictionaries. Of these some 16 per cent had an entry.
5. Professional relational names: Shatzmiller (1994), 101–68 and specifically on sixth/twelfth-century Damascus Elisséeff (1956). 'Family names': Sellheim (1984–6), 379; for further discussions cf. Cohen (1970); Goitein (1970). 'To the individual himself': Sublet (1991), 12; Leder (1997), 289–90; Diem (2004), 24. Individual still following same trade: Hibat Allāh b. Aḥmad Ibn al-Zajjāj (d. 1220-1, al-Dhahabī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 611–20, p. 386).
6. Biographical dictionaries: Petry (1981), 241–6 for ninth/fifteenth-century Cairo. *History of Damascus*: ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd al-Karīm al-Bayyiᶜ (trader and scholar, d. 615/1219, al-Dhahabī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 611–20, p. 252) and Ḥamza b. Ibrāhīm al-Khayyāṭ (tailor and scholar, d. 611/1214, ibid. p. 68). The adjective 'non-scholarly' as it is used in the following refers not only to the group of the non-scholars, but also to those of the craftsmen/traders, military and dependants.
7. '*Jundī*' can also be read as the geographical relational name 'jandī'/'janadī', but in the case of the certificates discussed here the individuals carried always Turkic personal names so that a military background is highly probable. Client/slave: Qaymāz ('*fatā*' in reading of part 236, community D, Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taᵓrīkh*, XXXII, 95, but '*mawlā*' in reading of part 239, community D, ibid. 266) and Bilāl b. ᶜAbd Allāh ('*fatā*' in reading of part 270, community B, ibid. XXXV–XXXVI, 610, but '*mawlā*' in reading of part 284, community B, ibid. XXXIX, 15). On childhood cf. Motzki (1986); Giladi (1992), (1995). The Maliki tradition that set majority at 18 can be ignored as it was only of marginal importance in the region under discussion.
8. On the status of professions cf. Havemann (2005); Shatzmiller (1994),

369–98; Brunschvig (1962). Epitaphs: Diem (2004), 25–6. *Fatwā*: al-Sulamī, *Fatāwā*, 226.

9. Thirteen of the 550 certificates analysed could not be assigned to a series. Narrative sources give anecdotal evidence for a number of additional readings (Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 131; al-Iṣfahānī, *Kharīdat*, I, 274; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, III, 310).
10. Series K's change of the location was also reflected in the number of participants that dropped from between nine and thirteen to between four and eight.
11. Normative treatises on days of study: cf., for instance, al-Qāḍī ᶜIyāḍ, *Ilmāᶜ*, 51. Popular sessions: ninety-five of the datable sessions of community B, for instance, took place on Friday, thirty-nine on Thursday and twelve on Monday.
12. Damascene Corpus of Certificates: 645 sessions were datable and one-fifth of these were held on a Friday (Monday: 90 (14 per cent), Tuesday: 101 (15.7 per cent), Wednesday: 63 (9.8 per cent), Thursday: 88 (13.6 per cent), Friday: 126 (19.5 per cent), Saturday: 97 (15 per cent) Sunday: 80 (12.4 per cent)). Yet of the 151 sessions in the Umayyad Mosque one-third (52) took place on a Friday. For Friday readings cf. also Leder (1994), 72–3. Rhythm of teaching: cf. examples in Berkey (1992), 79–80.
13. Damascene scholar: Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 130 on Muḥammad al-Maqdisī (d. 618/1221), probably reading in the Muẓaffarī Mosque. Afternoon: cf. Goldziher (1906), 293–302. 'As it is common': endowment deed, officer Sūdūn min Zāda, 804/1401, ll, 268–9. Contemporary: al-Samᶜānī, *Adab*, 38–42. Eighth/fourteenth-century scholar: Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, II, 148–53. On early Islamic discussion on the status of Friday cf. Rippin (1995); Goitein (1965).
14. The 570-part division was the author's original division. Most copies followed the 800-part division that the author's son al-Qāsim subsequently introduced, but this did not change the practice of the reading sessions. Fifth/eleventh-century reader: Stern (1954), 325–6 on *Siqṭ al-zand*. ᶜAbd al-Raḥīm b. Aḥmad Ibn al-Ukhūwa (d. 548/1153, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 541–50, p. 311) reading the *ḥadīth* work *al-Muᶜjam al-kabīr* of Sulaymān al-Ṭabarānī (d. 360/971). On similar criticisms of fast readers cf., for example, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, IX, 248–52.
15. Mecca, 405/1015: Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XVI, 129. Baghdad: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh*, VI, 314 and al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 431–40, pp. 282–4. On similar reports on *ḥadīth* readings cf. Ibn al-ᶜImād, *Shadharāt*, VI, 95–6, IX, 247 and X, 288; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, I, 388; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XXII, 357; al-Sakhāwī, *Fatḥ*, 46; al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 275; al-Qāsimī (1935), 348–9. *History of Damascus*: the certificates read '*wa-dhālika fī majlisayni ākhirihimā yawm*^{a}' or '*wa-dhālika fī muddat*^{in}*/nuwab*^{in} *ākhirihā yawm*^{a}'. Reading two parts in one day was extremely rare, one example is Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, X, 455–6, and authors assumed that dividing readings of one single part into several sessions was common (Ibn Khaldūn,

Muqaddima, tr. Rosenthal, 194). Endowment deed, officer Ṣarghatmish, 757/1356, pp. 147–8. Normative treatises: cf. al-Samᶜānī, *Adab*, 66–8.

16. Community B: ᶜUthmān b. Abī al-Qāsim al-Ṭayyān (e.g., Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taᵓrīkh*, I, 669, l. 29, cf. also Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3823/3/1, fol. 29r), ᶜAlī b. Muḥammad al-Sarrāj (e.g., Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taᵓrīkh*, XXXII, 203, l. 18–19), Khalīl b. Salmān al-Nassāj (e.g., ibid. XXXI, 350, l. 14), Ḥusayn b. Yaḥyā al-Maḥāmilī (e.g., ibid. XXXV–XXXVI, 610, l. 21–2), ᶜAlī b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qawwās (e.g., ibid. I, 678, l. 25), Ilyās b. Ibrāhīm al-Adamī (e.g., ibid. XLVII, 38, l. 29), Sayyidhum b. Katāᵓib al-Najjād (e.g., ibid. I, 693–5, l. 28–9), Khiḍr b. Muḥammad al-Najjād (e.g., ibid. I, 704, l. 29), Nazzār b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Khabbāz (ibid. I, 704, l. 30-1), ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz b. ᶜUthmān al-Khabbāz (e.g., ibid. I, 626, l. 31). Community D: Abū Muḥammad b. Abī al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥaddād (e.g., ibid. XXXII, 34, l. 23), ᶜAlī b. Yaᶜqūb al-Qaṣṣāb (ibid. XLVI, 126, l. 13), Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Raffāᵓ (e.g., ibid. XXXIX, 141, l. 9), Abū Ṭālib b. ᶜAlī al-Kattānī (e.g., ibid. LIV, 72, l. 15), ᶜAbd al-Khāliq b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Labūdī (e.g., ibid. LIV, 127, 26), ᶜAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-Naḥḥās (e.g., ibid. XXXV-XXXVI, 480, l. 14), Muᵓmin b. ᶜAbd al-Jabbār al-Suyūrī (e.g., ibid. LIX, 157, l. 8; Ibn al-Athīr, *Lubāb*, II, 170: the 'Suyūrī' cuts thongs out of leather to make saddles), ᶜUthmān b. Raslān al-Khayyāṭ (e.g., Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taᵓrīkh*, XLVI, 126, l. 31–2), ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Khayyāṭ (e.g., ibid. LIX, 157, l. 4). Community G: Muḥammad b. al-Muᶜīn al-Bazzāz (participated once in reading of part 240, ibid. XXXII, 332, l. 6–7).
17. The only example in the *History of Damascus* is Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Fallāḥ in community D, most probably a farmer (Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taᵓrīkh*, XXXIX, 213, l. 6–7). Examples in the Damascene Corpus include Ibrāhīm b. ᶜUlwān (from the village Jīm Ṣāfūṭ, Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 955/9/7, fol. 181r and 955/9/72, fol. 196v), Bahādir b. ᶜAbd Allāh (governor of the village Tall Dhunūb, ibid. 1039/5/1, fol. 38r), ᶜAlī b. Ismāᶜīl (from the village Tulayl, ibid. 1039/5/1, fol. 38r), Ḥajjī b. Ḥāmid (from the village Kafr L-n-d, ibid. 955/9/7, fol. 181v), Dunyā bt. al-Jamāl (from the village Diqāniya, ibid. 1137/1/3, fol. 1v and 3775/9/10, fol. 116v), ᶜAwn b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān (from the village al-Nuᶜayma, ibid. 955/9/80, fol. 198v), Masᶜūd b. ᶜUlyān (from the village al-Fayja, ibid. 1139/1/34, fol. 21r) and Zaynab bt. Abī Bakr (from the village Diqāniya, ibid. 1137/1/3, fol. 1v; 1137/1/31, fol. 32v and 3775/9/10, fol. 116v).
18. Shams al-Dawla (d. 600/1203–4, al-Dhahabī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 591–600, p. 441) participated in eighty sessions of community B (e.g., Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taᵓrīkh*, XXXV–XXXVI, 233, l. 7). Badr al-Dīn (d. 602/1206, al-Dhahabī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 601–10, p. 104; Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 54) participated in three sessions of community D (e.g., Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taᵓrīkh*, XLVI, 63, l. 26, 'Mamdūd b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Ḥājib'). Ḍiyāᵓ al-Dīn (d. 585/1189–90, al-Dhahabī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 581–90, pp. 224–5) participated in nine sessions of community B (e.g., Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taᵓrīkh*, XXXIX, 284–5, l. 9). Yārūq participated in thirty-nine

sessions of community B (e.g., ibid. I, 625, l. 23 ('Bārūq'). Sunqur participated in two sessions of community B (e.g., ibid. I, 715, l. 21). Qarāja participated in one session of community B (ibid. XXXII, 149, l. 22). Community G: Taqī al-Dīn Ṣāliḥ b. Ismāʿīl (d. 633/1235–6, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 631–40, p. 149), participated in twelve sessions (e.g., Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, X, 512, l. 3).

19. Works other than the *History of Damascus*: Aqqūsh b. Aybak al-Turkī (Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3740/3/4, fol. 54v) and Aybak b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Turkī (ibid. 1139/1/44, fol. 24r; 1178/22/23, fol. 244r and 3740/3/4, fol. 54v). Sunqur: d. 654/1256–7, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 651–60, pp. 165–6; Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3740/3/4, fol. 54v. Owner of Ṣāfī: Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Anmāṭī (d. 619/1222, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 611–20, pp. 443–5; Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 1088/14/19, fol. 231r and 3817/15/4, fol. 199r). Ṣāfī as authorised teacher: Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, LIX, 381. Communities B and D: Sunqur, slave of the Wazir Zayn al-Dawla Ḥusayn b. al-Muḥsin al-Baʿlbakī who participated in one session (ibid. I, 667, l. 5). Bilāl b. ʿAbd Allāh, slave of Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Tamīmī (participated in nine sessions altogether, e.g., ibid. XXXIX, 15, l. 5).
20. Repeated participation: for example Bilāl al-Ḥabashī (e.g., Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 955/9/7, fol. 181r) and Mubārak b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Takrūrī (e.g., ibid. 955/9/71, fol. 196r). 640/1243: ibid. 3798/21/2, fol. 222r: Aqqush (*fatā* Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān), Aqqush (*fatā* Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan), Sinjār (*fatā* Muḥammad), Sunqur (*fatā*), Ṣubayḥ (*fatā*), Kāfūr (*fatā*); ibid. fol. 222v: Aqqush (*fatā* Ḥasan), Aydikīn (*fatā*), Sinjār (*fatā* Ibrāhīm), K-ī-k-ldī (*fatā*). Military elite: for instance, in a reading session in 670/1272 in the residence of the governor Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ayyāz (d. 684/1285, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 681–90, p. 196) ten of the twenty-eight participants were slaves, among them seven slaves of Nāṣir al-Dīn, the brothers Aybak, Aydughdī, Biktūr, Bīlbak, Jawhar, Sunqur and Shafīʿ. A further slave accompanied the officer Sinjār, himself a manumitted slave of Nāṣir al-Dīn's father (Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 1139/1/46, fol. 25r). Female dependants: Luʾluʾa, *fatāt* of Umm ʿAbd Allāh (ibid. 955/9/2, fol. 180r); Quṭlū al-Rūmīya, *fatāt* of Khadīja bt. Ibrāhīm (ibid. 3759/9/17, fol. 124r); Māhjān, *fatāt* of Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Munʿim (ibid. 1178/22/15, fol. 229r); Ṣafāʾ, *fatāt* of ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Yūsuf (ibid. 3759/9/14, fol. 123v); Anjū, *ʿatīqa* of the officer Rukn al-Dīn Baybars (ibid. 3818/3/27, fol. 47v).
21. Yāqūt: Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, VI, 127. Faraj: al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XXIII, 290–1. Ṭaydumur: al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 'al-Sīra al-nabawīya', MS Istanbul, Hagia Sophia, No. 2005 (printed edition p. 8).
22. Reading in the Muẓaffarī Mosque: Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3757/8/1 (reading of *al-Miʾa al-sharīḥīya*, 633/1236): ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Ibrāhīm al-Farrā[ʾ] (fol. 112r), ʿĪsā b. ʿAlī al-Naḥḥās (fol. 112v), Muḥammad

b. Aḥmad al-Nashshār (fol. 112r), Aḥmad b. ʿUmar al-Ṣawwāf (fol. 111v), ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Aḥmad al-Ṭaḥḥān (fol. 112v), Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Zajjāj (fol. 112r), ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Khabbāz (fol. 112v), ʿUmar b. al-Muslim al-Ḥajjār (fol.112v), Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān al-Khayyāṭ (fol. 112v), Muẓaffar b. Ṣadīq al-Khayyāṭ (fol. 112r), Aḥmad b. Muẓaffar al-Najjār (fol. 112r) and ʿAbd al-Muḥsin b. ʿAlī al-Najjār (fol. 113r).

23. 721/1321: Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3757/10/11, fol. 182r (reading of *Juzʾ fīhi ḥadīth wāḥid ʿan Ādam*): Muḥammad b. Ismāʿīl al-ʿAṭṭār, Shujāʿ b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dallāl, Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Khayyāṭ with his son Muḥammad, Ḥasan b. ʿAlī al-Labbān and his cousin Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān al-Labbān. Exceptions: Muḥammad b. Zakariyā al-Najjār (e.g., ibid. 1088/14/9, fol. 226r) and al-Ḥasan b. Ismāʿīl al-Ḥajjār (e.g., ibid. 3774/6/11, fol. 75v). Women: Āsiya bt. Muḥammad al-Iskāf (ibid. 3838/2, fol. 80v), Rūmīya bt. ʿUmar al-Sarrāj (ibid. 3798/9/7, fol. 83v), Zāhida bt. ʿUthmān al-Ḥajjār (ibid. 1137/1/31, fol. 32v), Zāhida bt. Muḥammad al-Najjār (ibid. 1088/8/12, fol. 126v), Zaynab bt. Ibrāhīm al-Khabbāz (ibid. 3764/5/7, fol. 64r), Zīna bt. al-ʿAfīf al-Khayyāṭ (ibid. 3764/12/6, fol. 171v), Fāṭima bt. Muḥammad al-Qawwās (ibid. 3803/3/17, fol. 36v), Hadiya bt. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Farrāʾ (ibid. 1039/9/11, fol. 119v), ʿĀʾisha bt. Yaḥyā (ibid. 3798/9/6, fol. 83v).
24. Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3817/10/23, fol. 126v. The scholar is Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Munʿim al-Ḥarrānī (d. 671/1273, al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, IV, 50; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 671–80, pp. 76–7). The craftsmen and traders are Aḥmad b. Abī al-Nūr al-Laḥḥām, Yūsuf b. ʿAlī al-Khabbāz, Abū Bakr b. Ibrāhīm al-Nassāj, Muḥammad b. Bahrām al-Sammān, ʿAlī b. Aḥmad al-Najjār and Qāsim b. Aḥmad al-Najjār (brothers), Aḥmad b. Ghassān al-Khayyāṭ, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm al-Khayyāṭ, ʿUmar b. Aḥmad al-Khayyāṭ and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Khayyāṭ.
25. Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 1178/22/18, fol. 242r: reading in the residence of Ismāʿīl b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḥanbalī (d. 703/1303, al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, IX, 65). The craftsmen and traders are Abū Bakr b. Ibrāhīm al-Nassāj, Muḥammad b. Bahrām al-Sammān, Qāsim b. Aḥmad al-Najjār, Yūsuf b. ʿAlī al-Khabbāz and Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī al-Khabbāz, Muḥammad b. Dāwūd al-Tājir, al-ʿImād b. Aḥmad al-Laḥḥām, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Ḥajjār and ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Ḥajjār (brothers).
26. Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, I, 85.
27. Umayyad Mosque: Pouzet ([2]1991), 341 and Talmon-Heller (2007), 30–1, 55. Recitations: Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, tr. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 313. Protest: Hirschler (2007). *Madrasa*: Berkey (1992), 182–218; Behrens-Abouseif (1985).
28. *History of Damascus*: Āsiya, Ḥannān and M-h-r-wā (community G), daughters of Sālim b. Nājī (d. 643/1245, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 641–50, p. 164). Hadiya (community B): Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, XLVII, 39. Zaynab bt. Aḥmad (d. 740/1339, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 701–46, pp. 369–9; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, II,

209–10). Sitt al-ᶜArab bt. Muḥammad (d. 767/1365, ibid. II, 220). Ayyubid: Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3777/21/4, fol. 318r. Al-Maqdisī: ibid. 1178/20/21, fol. 212r, reading of *Musnad ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜUmar* in 701/1302 with Fāṭima bt. Sulaymān as authorised teacher. Dār al-Ḥadīth: ibid. 3817/15/9, fol. 200r, 724/1324. Baghdad: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taqyīd*, 25: readings in 511/1117. Mamluk Cairo: Berkey (1992), 161–81.

29. Normative position: cf. Talmon-Heller (2007), 59–60. Zaynab: In twenty-five cases the place is clearly identifiable: thirteen readings in private residences; ten in learned institutions and one in a garden. Damascene Corpus: 238 (28.9 per cent) of the 823 readings with an identifiable place within Damascus (151 sessions in the Umayyad Mosque and 87 in other mosques). Karīma (d. 641/1243, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 641–50, pp. 93–4) in Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 1178/20/17, fol. 211r (641/1243) and ibid. 1178/20/18, fol. 211r (640/1242).
30. Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XVII, 328–9 citing Aḥmad al-Dīnawarī, d. 535/1141, translation Makdisi (1981), 93–4.
31. More learned participants: al-Samᶜānī, *Adab*, 120; cf. also al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Faqīh*, 122. Semicircle: al-Zarnūjī, *Taᶜlīm*, 36–7. Quote: Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, III, 133 citing ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mutawallī, d. 478/1086. Relatives: al-Ghazzī, *Durr*, 160–3.
32. Mid-560s/1160s: reading of part 232 in the Umayyad Mosque, 23 V 562/17 March 1167 (Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, XXXI, 350–1). No. 1: Muḥammad b. al-Mundhir al-Anṣārī (d. 628/1230, al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, V, 67–8); No. 2: Ḥasan b. ᶜAlī Ibn ᶜAsākir (d. 600/1204, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 591–600, p. 432); Nos 3–4: ᶜAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad (d. 584/1188–9, ibid. 581–90, pp. 183–4) and al-Khiḍr b. Ḥasan; Nos. 5–6: ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad Ibn Munqidh (d. 600/1203–4, ibid. 591–600, p. 441) and Zayn al-Dawla Ḥusayn b. al-Muḥsin (Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3761/13/5, fol. 136r); Nos 7–8: Ḥusayn b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 589/1193, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 581–90, p. 323) with his *fatā* Rayḥān; Nos 9–11: ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz Ibn Abī al-ᶜAjāʾiz (d. 576/1180, ibid. 571–80, pp. 217–18); Muḥammad b. ᶜAlī al-Qurashī (d. 598/1202, ibid. 591–600, pp. 367–70); ᶜAbd al-Wāḥid b. ᶜAbd al-Wahhāb al-Anṣārī; Nos 12–18: Yaḥyā and Sulaymān, sons of ᶜAfīf al-Dīn al-Faḍl (d. 581/1186, ibid. 581–90, pp. 121–2); Sulaymān, Muḥammad, ᶜAbd Allāh and Aḥmad, sons of al-Qāḍī Shākir (al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, XVI, 85–7); Muḥammad b. Hibat Allāh (d. 635/1238, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 631–40, pp. 261–3); No. 19: ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd al-Karīm al-Bazzāz (d. 615/1219, ibid. 611–20, p. 252).
33. *Sharīf*s: Abū Ṭālib al-Muslim b. ᶜAbd al-Bāqī and Abū al-Ḥasan Idrīs b. al-Ḥasan (b. 545/1150–1, Ibn al-ᶜAdīm, *Bughyat*, III, 1324–6) in Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 627, ll. 7–8; 638, ll. 7–8; 648, ll. 5–6 and Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3761/13/6, fol. 136r (‘*al-sharīfān*’). Rural background: for instance Ibrāhīm b. ᶜUlwān from Jīm Ṣāfūṭ with his cousin and Ḥajjī b. Ḥāmid from Kafr L-n-d with his brother (ibid. 955/9/7,

fols 181r and 181v). Community D: Maḥāsin b. Ḥusayn al-Mawṣilī and ʿAlī b. Ḥusayn al-Mawṣilī, for example, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, XXXV–XXXVI, 547, ll. 26–7. Muḥammad b. Abī al-Qāsim al-Raqqī and Shukr Allāh b. Abī ʿAlī al-Raqqī, e.g., ibid. XLVI, 521, l. 2. Community G: Ismāʿīl b. ʿUmar al-Urmawī and Muḥammad b. al-Muʿīn al-Urmawī (ibid. XXXII, 332, ll. 27–9).

34. Private residence: Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 1139/1/46, fol. 25r, reading of *Ḥadīth Ibn Shādhān* in the residence of the officer Nāṣir al-Dīn in Damascus, 670/1272. Eighth/fourteenth century: ibid. 3817/15/9, fol. 200r, reading of *Tuḥfat ʿīd al-fiṭr* in Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nūrīya, 724/1324.
35. Furriers: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Farrāʾ and Ismāʿīl b. Jawhar al-Farrāʾ, reading of parts 372, 373, 374 and 375 (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, LIV, 72, ll. 15–16; 127, ll. 24–5; 182, l. 35; 234, l. 27). Abū Ṭālib b. ʿAlī al-Kattānī in community D's reading of part 372 (ibid. LIV, 72, l. 15) and 375 (ibid. 234, ll. 25–6, separated from the furrier by two persons). ʿAbd al-Khāliq b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Labūdī in reading of part 373 (ibid. 127, ll. 25–6, separated from the furrier by one person) and 375 (ibid. 234, l. 28, separated from the furrier by one person). On the carpenter Muḥammad cf. Table 2.5. Maḥāsin b. Rāfiʿ al-Ṭabbāʿ in community D's reading of part 374 (ibid. LIV, 183, ll. 7–8).
36. Abū Muḥammad b. Abī Ḥusayn al-Ḥaddād, Ḥamza b. Ibrāhīm al-Jawharī (d. 611/1214, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 611–20, p. 68; Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3761/13/5, fol. 136r and 3761/13/6, fol. 136v) and Faḍāʾil b. Ṭāhir al-Munaqqī in community D's reading of part 235 (575/1180, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, XXXII, 34, ll. 21–3 (*nisba* 'al-Taqī' is wrong cf. ibid. I, 119, l. 1; XXXI, 495, l. 28; XXXII, 204, l. 8; XXXV–XXXVI, 480, l. 18)). The '*munaqqī*' 'removes the choice from foodstuff' (Ibn al-Athīr, *Lubāb*, III, 264) and Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, specified that it might refer to removing the marrow from the bone. Two days later: community D's reading of part 236 (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, XXXII, 95, l. 1). Following year: Ibrāhīm b. Yūsuf al-Nassāj and Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Raffāʾ in community D's reading of part 286 (576/1181, ibid. XXXIX, 141, ll. 6–10). ʿUthmān: community D's reading of part 237 (575/1180, ibid. XXXII, 148–9, ll. 16–18; ʿUthmān's *nisba*, Shawwāʾ, is mentioned in ibid. XLVI, 451, l. 12). Abū Muḥammad b. Abī Ḥusayn al-Ḥaddād (ibid. vol. al-Sīra/2, 252, l. 14), ʿUmar b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Mawāzīnī, Yūsuf b. Abī al-Ḥusayn al-Simsār and Futūḥ b. Maʿālī al-Farrāʾ (cf. Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 1879/3/2, fol. 79r) in community B's reading of part 376, 563/1168, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, LIV, 291, ll. 10–11.
37. Muẓaffarī Mosque: for instance Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3757/8/1, fol. 112v: ʿĪsā b. ʿAlī al-Naḥḥās, ʿAbd al-Qādir b. Aḥmad al-Ṭaḥḥān, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Khabbāz, ʿUmar b. al-Muslim al-Ḥajjār, Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān al-Khayyāṭ. The second folio is fol. 112r. Smaller popular reading: ibid. 1178/22/18, fol. 242r, reading of *Majālis al-khamsa* in

the writer's residence, 664/1266: Abū Bakr b. Ibrāhīm al-Nassāj, Qāsim b. Aḥmad al-Najjār, Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Ḥajjār, ᶜUmar b. ᶜAbd al-Ḥamīd al-Ḥajjār, Ḥusayn b. ᶜAlī al-Khabbāz, Yūsuf b. ᶜAlī al-Khabbāz, Muḥammad b. Bahrām al-Sammān, Muḥammad b. Dāwūd al-Tājir, al-ᶜImād b. Aḥmad al-Laḥḥām. The masons and bakers are brothers and their professional identity is not unequivocal as the *nisba* is in each case in the singular. However, in the case of the bakers they are also referred to as bakers when they participate alone, cf., for instance, ibid. 3817/10/23, fol. 126v.

38. The length of the *History of Damascus*' reading series goes also back to the volume of the work that encompassed up to 16,000 folios (al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XX, 558–9). Copying this work was a daunting task cf. Ibn Abī Uṣaybiᶜa, *ᶜUyūn*, III, 386; al-Dhahabī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 621–30, p. 387 and 661–70, p. 255. Faster pace for readings: cf. Dickinson (2002). Contemporaries: al-Dhahabī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāẓ* cited in al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 189; al-Qāḍī ᶜIyāḍ, *Mashāriq*, I, 21–2; al-Samᶜānī, *Adab*, 142; Ibn Kathīr, *Bāᶜith*, 111.
39. Golden Age: cf. Donner (2001). Biographies: for instance Ibn al-Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) who read the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim in front of the sandal (al-Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 275).
40. Transmission quote: Muḥammad b. Hibat Allāh al-Shīrāzī (al-Dhahabī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 631–40, p. 262: '*infarada bi-riwāyat akthar min miᵓatay juzᵓ min Taᵓrīkh Dimashq*'). Attempt: ibid. 681–90, p. 195.
41. Unique attendance: 21 per cent of the scholars, 58 per cent of the non-scholars, 43 per cent of craftsmen and traders; occasional attendance: 31 per cent of the scholars, 5.5 per cent of the non-scholars, 20 per cent of craftsmen and traders.
42. ᶜUthmān al-Ṭayyān, Ibrāhīm al-Farrāᵓ, Muḥammad al-Najjār, Yūsuf al-Ḥarīrī. 'Consecutive sessions' are defined as at least two sessions that are not separated by more than one session.
43. Fifty-five per cent of all sessions of community B took place on a Friday. For ᶜUthmān the proportion is 80 per cent, while it is for Ibrāhīm 48 per cent and Yūsuf 56 per cent.
44. Aḥmad b. Ṣāliḥ al-Baghdādī (d. 565/1170, al-Dhahabī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 561–70, pp. 217–18: '*yaqraᵓu al-ḥadīth qirāᵓatᵃⁿ malīḥatᵃⁿ bi-ṣawt rafīᶜ*'). On the aesthetic dimension of Koran recitation cf. Kermani (2000).
45. On Ibn al-Anmāṭī: Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 131 ('*aḥdhaq al-nās bi-qirāᵓat al-ḥadīth . . . sarīᶜ al-kitāba wa-al-qirāᵓa jiddᵃⁿ maᶜa maᶜrifa bi-ᶜilm al-ḥadīth*'). Readings of other works show as well that Ibn al-Anmāṭī attracted in general few participants: Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3817/15/4, fol. 199r (*Tuḥfat ᶜīd al-fiṭr*), Mujāhidīya Madrasa, eleven participants; ibid. 3817/7/10, fol. 71r (*Ḥadīth Hibat Allāh al-Akfānī*), Umayyad Mosque (Bāb al-Sharqī), five participants; ibid. 3774/11/1, fol. 116v (*Musnad Saᶜd b. Abī Waqqāṣ*), three participants. Only a reading of the popular work *Min ḥadīth Muḥammad b. Yazīd b. ᶜAbd al-Ṣamad al-Dimashqī ᶜan shaykhihi* (ibid. 1088/14/19, fol. 231r) attracted sixty par-

ticipants. On al-Ashraf Aḥmad: al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 641–50, p. 150 (‘*sarīᶜ al-qirāʾa*’). Quote: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Jāmiᶜ*, 144.

46. Content of *History of Damascus*: Lindsay (1995), (2001); Mourad (2001); Antrim (2006). Summaries and continuations: cf., for instance, the works by Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449); al-ᶜAynī (d. 855/1451); al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505). Shumaysānī (1990) gives an overview of summaries and continuations.
47. *Arbaᶜūn ḥadīthᵃⁿ fī al-ḥathth ᶜalā al-jihād*, cf. Ḥalwānī (1991). On readings of this work cf. Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 1592/3, fols. 67r, 79v–81v. On Ibn ᶜAsākir and *jihād* cf. Mourad and Lindsay (2007).
48. Jesus: Mourad (2001), 24–43. Renaissance: Tabbaa (2001), especially to Aleppo cf. Tabbaa (1997). Cf. Heidemann (2002) on the economic development that provided the necessary material resources for this development.
49. Al-Samᶜānī, *Adab*, 15–18. On the use of symbolic numbers cf. Conrad (1988). Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddimat*, 149–50. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Jāmiᶜ*, 407–8.
50. Based on the register of certificates in Vajda (1956).
51. On the collection cf. Seguy’s introduction in Vajda and Sauvan (1978), II, pp. XIII–XXXII. On the manuscripts cf. also Vajda (1954).
52. Development of certificates: Sellheim (1995). Fifth/eleventh century: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 262–71. Sixth/twelfth century: al-Samᶜānī, *Adab*, 8–10. Quote: Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddimat*, 142.
53. Integral part: Ducène (2006), 282–3. Disputes: Ibn Taymīya argued for instance that the preachers (*quṣaṣ*) should only consult manuscripts ‘in which certificates of the scholars are found’ (‘*min kutub ᶜalayhā samāᶜāt mashāʾikh ahl al-ᶜilm*’, Ibn Taymīya, *Fatāwā*, XVIII, 164). Eighth/fourteenth-century Damascus: al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 701–46, p. 273: ‘*kurrās asmāʾ al-sāmiᶜīn bi-al-Jabal li-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*’. Endowments: for instance, endowment deed for the Ẓāhirīya Madrasa, 688/1286 (cited in Berkey (1992), 215). Biographies: the terms used are ‘*kataba al-ṭibāq*’, cf. Aḥmad al-Ḥalabī (d. 698/1299, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 691–700, p. 344), ᶜAlāʾ al-Dīn ᶜAlī (d. 700/1300–1, ibid. 691–700, p. 484), Muḥammad Ibn Ghānim (d. 740/1339, Ibn Rāfiᶜ, *Wafayāt*, I, 318-20), Muḥammad al-Maqdisī (d. 759/1358, ibid. II, 214–16), ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz al-Shāfiᶜī (d. 767/1366, ibid. II, 305–8).
54. Al-Subkī, *Muᶜīd*, 160.
55. Biographies: al-Munajjid (1955), 239; cf. Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 131 on the reliability of Ibn al-Anmāṭī, the writer in communities E and G. Ibn al-Qāḍī (d. 601/1204, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 601–10, p. 51); Ibn al-ᶜUllayq (d. 601/1205, ibid. 601–10, pp. 49–50); Ibn Ṭabarzad (d. 542/1147, ibid. 541–50, p. 122). Al-Nīsābūrī, *Maᶜrifat*, 16 had already complained about this praxis in the fourth/tenth century for which we have also reports on the removal of certificates from stolen manuscripts to prevent their identification (Yāqūt, *Muᶜjam al-buldān*, II, 142).
56. Fifth/eleventh-century reading: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Faqīh*, I, 39–40, 77–8, 116, 156–8, 197, 235–6 and II, 74, 146, 205.

57. Eschatological work: Khoury (1976), certificates I and XIII. Al-Shāfiᶜī, *Risāla*, 34–62. Quote: al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 691–700, p. 279. Further examples for use of certificates as sources: ibid. pp. 68, 418 and 382; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, IV, 264; Ibn Rāfiᶜ, *Wafayāt*, II, 48–9.
58. Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 644.
59. Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 674–5. On ᶜIzz al-Dīn cf. al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 641–50, p. 254.
60. Quote 'large crowd': Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 643; on the writer, Khālid al-Nābulusī (d. 663/1265), cf. al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 661–70, p. 146. Secondary certificates: Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, I, 660, 670, 679, 688, 696, 705, 716; X, 234, 290–1, 400, 453–4, 509–10; XXXII, 94–5; XXXV–XXXVI, 124–5; XXXV–XXXVI, 179 (community D). Quote 'subsequent transmission': cited in Leder (1998), 278 on basis of Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3759/1/16, fol. 14r.
61. Ibn Kathīr, *Bāᶜith*, 111. The original work is Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī's (d. 643/1245) *ᶜUlūm al-ḥadīth/Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*.
62. For instance, Vajda (1975), 4; al-Munajjid (1955), 233; Sellheim (1995). Dickinson (2002) refers to the correlation between the rise of the certificate and the quest for short *isnād*s.
63. Cf. Berkey (1992); Chamberlain (1994); Leder (2003).
64. Commoners quote: al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 701–46, p. 274. Certificates: Leder, al-Sawwās and al-Ṣāgharjī (2000), 3777/11/9, fol. 123r and 3775/11/12, fol. 136v: Both readings took place when Ibn Shiḥna was some 100 years old.
65. Cf. Dickinson (2002).
66. Athīr al-Dīn al-Andalusī (d. 745/1344), cited in al-Zarkashī, *Nukat*, 45–7.
67. Popular preaching: Berkey (2001), 76. Believer's faith: al-Samᶜānī, *Adab*, 59–60. Quote Mālik: Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, II, 148–53. Swine: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Jāmiᶜ*, 173. Lending of manuscripts: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taqyīd*, 148. For further critical comments cf. Leder (2003), 298ff. Sons of grocers: Yāqūt, *Muᶜjam al-udabāʾ*, IV, 1829.
68. Al-Subkī, *Muᶜīd*, 162–3. On preaching cf. Berkey (2001).
69. Biographies: al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ* has some fifty entries on scholars reading to the common people for the ninth/fifteenth century, such as Abū al-Ghayth al-Khānikī (d. 891/1486) who read to the commoners in the Qāsimīya Madrasa in Cairo (XI, 121) and Aḥmad Ibn ᶜAbd al-Salām (b. 847/1443) whom we find in the Zāwiyat Sharaf al-Dīn (II, 181–2). Smaller towns: Nablus (Aḥmad b. (ᶜAbd) al-Raḥmān, d. before 870/1466, I, 331), Hama (Aḥmad b. ᶜAlī, b. 848/1444, II, 42), Ṣafad (Muḥammad b. ᶜĪsā, d. 887/1482, VIII, 273–4), Gaza (Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-ᶜĀmirī, d. 885/1480, IX, 51). Logic: Ibrāhīm b. Ali (d. 891/1486, I, 89–99). Theological questions: ᶜUmar b. Aḥmad al-Sarrāj (d. 867/1462, VI, 69–70); Majlī b. Abī Bakr (d. 864/1459, VI, 240); Muḥammad b. Sālim (fl. ninth/fifteenth century, VII, 248); Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Dimashqī (d. 895/1489, II, 184); ᶜAbd

al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505, IV, 65–70). Low-ranking scholars: Berkey (1992), 211–12.

70. Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*. Ibn Ḥajar: for example Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Shādhilī (d. 709/1309, Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, I, 291–3): *takallama ʿalā al-nās fa-sāraʿat ʿalayhi al-ʿāmma*; ʿAlī b. Muḥammad (d. 712/1312, ibid. III 195–6): *kāna yaqraʾu bi-nafsihi li-l-ʿāmma*; Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad (d. 729/1329, ibid. I, 9): *qaraʾa li-l-ʿāmma baʿda akhīhi*; ʿĪsā b. ʿAlī (d. 734/1334, ibid. III, 284–5): *kāna yaqraʾu al-mawāʿīd li-l-ʿāmma*; Aḥmad b. ʿAlī (d. 737/1337, ibid. I, 233): *qaraʾa al-ḥadīth ʿalā al-ʿāmma*; Aḥmad b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Gharnāṭī (d. 759/1358, ibid. I, 200–1): *yatakallamu ʿalā al-ʿāmma*; Muḥammad b. ʿAlī al-ʿAbdarī (d. 775/1373, ibid. IV, 208): *kāna yaqraʾu fī kutub al-raqāʾiq li-l-ʿāmma*.
71. Berkey (1992), 210–16.
72 Berkey (1992), 217.

3

Learning to Read: Popularisation and the Written Word in Children's Schools

The popularisation of reading sessions in the earlier Middle Period constituted first and foremost a departure from previous practices in terms of the social contexts of knowledge transmission. At the same time these reading sessions continued long-established cultural practices, most importantly aural reading. While some of the participants in these sessions attended with their own manuscripts, and arguably this practice became more common over the centuries, the vast majority of the audience did not follow the readings of the *History of Damascus* with visual reading. The present chapter discusses the field of child education, where the process of popularisation did, by contrast, go hand-in-hand with the spread of visual reading. It examines the profound transformation of children's schools during the Middle Period, discussing first the process of textualisation, especially with regard to curricular changes. The next part of the chapter focuses on the second major consequence of textualisation: the appearance of methodological reflections on how to teach reading and writing. In the third part the process of popularisation is at centre stage with the increasing availability of free places in endowed children's schools. The main sources for this discussion are normative texts (mostly manuals for the market inspector and pedagogical treatises), narrative texts, endowment deeds and illustrations. Additional documentary sources such as school registers, of which some medieval European examples have survived, and children's exercise books, of which we have Hebrew examples from the Geniza collection, have not yet been discovered for teaching in Arabic.[1]

Those children who acquired the five R's of pre-modern teaching – recitation, reading, writing, arithmetic and rituals – did so mostly in the 'children's school' (*kuttāb* or *maktab*). Children from wealthy households, by contrast, received their education from private tutors (*muʾaddib* or *muʿallim*) who were not only to impart a broad knowledge to them, but also the norms of *adab* that were expected from members of the social and political elites. However, the role of this individual tutoring was, in quantitative terms, a marginal phenomenon within the history of education and

will not be discussed here. Children's schools had existed since the early Islamic period. Anecdotes and biographies document their existence in the various parts of the Arabic-speaking lands, such as the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Syria and North Africa. The early development of children's schools has not yet been studied in detail, but examples from narrative sources show that such schools existed during the Umayyad period and were, at least for the elite, quite common during the Abbasid period.[2]

Modern scholarship has also not yet considered the development of these schools during the Middle Period in much detail, partly because it has considered the source basis to be too deficient: 'We know almost nothing about early education in this period, because the sources were largely uninterested in childhood.' Some modern studies contain short passages on children's schools, but these have few analytical ambitions and have remained virtually unchanged over the decades. Only the 'discovery' of endowment records for the Middle Period and the reconsideration of normative sources for the Early Period has brought forth new results on education. Yet these studies have mostly focused on the advanced pupil in the *madrasa* and not on the early stages of child education.[3] The following discussion of children's schools addresses this gap by focusing on Cairo, for which we have from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards the richest source material, in particular significant numbers of endowment records and chronicles. Cairo as the political and economic centre of the Mamluk Empire and as a major cultural metropolis witnessed such an outstanding number of endowments that one might question to what extent this chapter's results can be applied to the region at large. However, the information on other urban centres, most importantly Syrian cities, indicates that the curricular changes towards a more prominent role of the written word were not confined to Cairo. Similarly, the absolute number of children's schools in Cairo was certainly higher than elsewhere, but other regions showed a comparable spread of endowed children's schools in relative numbers.

Textualisation and Curricular Changes

At first glance, the basic aim of children's schools was to ensure that the pupils memorised (parts of) the Koran and that they had some acquaintance with Islamic rituals. Stipulations in endowments on when pupils were meant to leave the school reflected the centrality of Koran recitation in school curricula. The only exception from the rule that children had to leave with the onset of puberty was made for those who had almost completed the memorisation of the Koran and who could thus remain on

the roll for a few more months. Narrative sources in particular seconded this and represented the curriculum of children's schools as almost exclusively focused on Koran recitation and oral and aural practices. From these narrative sources an almost ahistoric picture of unchanged practices over the centuries emerges. As late as the Mamluk period such texts still characterised children's schools by referring to Koran recitation. Modern secondary literature has reproduced to some extent the salient position that narrative sources ascribed to Koran recitation and has partly tended to reduce curricula in schools on this one aspect.[4]

However, the picture that the narrative sources drew is strongly biased as they tended to neglect practices associated with the written word – similar to what Messick has shown for late Ottoman Yemen. Other source genres show, rather, that teaching to children to read and write became standard and often an important part of curricula in schools, a term that I prefer to 'Koranic school', over the Middle Period. The genre of pedagogical treatises, for instance, traced the gradual curricular changes in children's schools: the third/ninth-century author Ibn Saḥnūn hardly touched upon reading and writing skills and merely recommended that 'the teacher takes the time to teach his pupils writing' – a rather terse comment compared with this author's detailed elaborations on Koran recitation. By contrast, from the fifth/eleventh century onwards comparable treatises started to put more emphasis on reading and writing and showed more interest in these curricular elements. Ibn Sīnā explicitly recommended teaching young pupils not only Koran recitation and the basic rituals, but also the letters of the alphabet. Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064) went a step further and required that pupils first learned to read and write and set out the – quite ambitious – aim that they should be able to read any text written in their mother tongue. Furthermore, from Ibn Ḥazm's lines it clearly emerges that he ascribed to these skills an intrinsic value and saw them not only as means to facilitate Koran recitation as earlier authors had done.[5]

Manuals of the market inspector drew a similarly close connection for the Middle Period between children's schools, on the one hand, and reading and writing skills, on the other. One such fifth/eleventh-century manual from Spain required the schoolmaster to teach the children 'recitation, fine writing and reading' and made clear that these three were equally useful life skills. A Syrian handbook from the following century positioned the knowledge of the alphabet at the beginning of the curriculum, prior to the acquisition of recitation and basic rituals. Finally, an Egyptian manual from the eighth/fourteenth century stipulated only modest minimum requirements for Koran recitation, but underlined that

reading and writing skills were to be acquired. In some sense, this manual reversed the curricular priorities that Ibn Saḥnūn had outlined some five centuries earlier as reading and writing skills had moved from a marginal position to become one of the central concerns.[6]

Endowment deeds, in which the patrons occasionally detailed the curriculum, also reflected the rising importance of reading and writing skills in the Middle Period. In these curricular prescriptions, writing skills became one of the standard items that the deeds mentioned. A deed from the mid-eighth/fourteenth century, for instance, instructed the teacher not only to focus on recitation, but also on writing and mathematics (*istikhrāj*). Another deed of a school set up some years later also explicitly required the schoolmaster to teach the pupils reading (*hijāʾ*) and writing in addition to Koran recitation. These curricular prescriptions were standard and many deeds, after setting out such prescriptions, included the phrase 'as is customary in other [children's schools]'. That a late Mamluk endowment deed referred to the role of the written word in the teaching routine as a matter of course is characteristic of the process of textualisation that occurred over the Middle Period: '[The schoolmaster] should teach the basics of religion, the written texts of the venerated sciences and that what is useful to those who have learnt the Koran.' In the same vein, those rare deeds that set out detailed stipulations for the person of the schoolmaster required him to have the ability to teach 'the Koran, writing and reading'. Inscriptions carried similar curricular descriptions as is evident from two Syrian eighth/fourteenth-century *madrasa*s in Ḥiṣn al-Akrād (Crac des Chevaliers) and Tripoli that enjoined the schoolmasters to teach both recitation and writing.[7]

The majority of deeds and inscriptions thus simultaneously mentioned skills associated with recitation and the written word. Yet towards the end of the Middle Period we have the first example of a deed that did not mention recitation at all, but focused exclusively on the written word (in addition to mathematics). Beyond doubt, teaching recitation was still part of the teacher's duties, but it was characteristic of the textualisation of cultural practices that this deed no longer considered it to be one of the curricular items in need of discussion. In this late Mamluk period even the narrative sources started to mention reading and writing skills more frequently in connection with children's schools. At this point, for example, they no longer defined children's school teachers exclusively as teaching recitation, but formulations pertaining to the written word started to appear. One biography reported that a teacher 'was among those with whom the children corrected their slates', another teacher was characterised by teaching recitation as well as writing, and one pupil reported

that his schoolmaster had taught him recitation (*qirāʾa*) and reading (*muṭālaʿa*).[8]

The textualisation of curricula in children's schools also entailed changes in teaching materials. In earlier periods, as narrative and normative texts described, pupils generally used slates for their reading and writing drills that they wiped after each use. One such *abecedarium*, dating from the late sixth/twelfth or early seventh/thirteenth century, has recently been recovered during excavations at the Ṣadr Castle in the Sinai. In the same vein, illustrations originating from al-Ḥarīrī's Arabic *Maqāmāt* in the seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries, rarely depicted sheets of paper or entire manuscripts. Except for Plate 7, where one of the pupils is holding a sheet and two others are holding a manuscript, the object that appeared most often in all other al-Ḥarīrī illustrations was the wooden slate (Plates 2–6). The Persian Plate 8, presumably from the seventh/thirteenth century, also depicts the children with slates and the only manuscript, resting on the book-stand close to the teacher's head, seems to be a Koran.[9]

By contrast, sheets and manuscripts plays a significantly more prominent role in illustrations from the late ninth/fifteenth and early tenth/sixteenth centuries – a development that occurred also in illustrations of English children's schools from c. 1400 onwards that generally started to show the pupils holding books individually. Plate 10 (848/1445) has only two slates (one for the boys and one for the girls), but has several book-stands for the children and two pupils holding sheets at the back. The near contemporary Plate 9 (835/1431–2) again shows slates in the margins, but here virtually every pupil is holding either a manuscript or a sheet. The increasing number of written texts is also evident from Plate 11, which was produced some five decades later and where all pupils (except those chatting or dozing) are busying themselves either with woodblock printing or holding their own manuscript or at least a sheet. From the eighth/fourteenth century onwards endowment deeds provided also for further writing materials such as quills, ink and inkwells. Illustrations of children's schools again confirm this development: while those originating from the eighth/fourteenth century or earlier (Plates 2–8) do not include any writing materials, later illustrations routinely include them. Plate 9, for instance, depicts cases for storing writing materials in front of the teacher and the male protagonist of the text, Majnūn.[10]

The textual and visual sources thus show that advanced pupils started to use a range of reading and writing materials including sheets and manuscripts after progressing from their initial exercises on slates. Remarkably, endowment deeds did not provide financial means for paper, although

demand must have been quite substantial. Most likely, Muslim children's schools, similar to their Jewish counterparts, were able to reuse paper from manuscripts, letters and contracts that had been disposed of. Due to its high cost the reuse of paper was a standard feature well beyond children's schools in this period: The ninth/fifteenth-century historian al-Maqrīzī, for instance, wrote his notebooks on the reverse of official decrees that had been cut into smaller format and resold on the market. It is not possible to deduce from the sources whether pupils used other materials for writing practise, such as bark, wood, dough, leather and clay as in medieval Europe.[11]

The textualisation of curricula affected the school timetables as they started to include specific lessons for reading and writing. In a ninth/fifteenth-century children's school in Cairo, for instance, the endowment stipulations especially reserved Tuesday mornings for reading and writing. A normative text had already described a similar division between the different curricular elements in the preceding century and had advised that regular time slots should be reserved for activities such as writing, revising one's notes, reading and recitation. Towards the end of the Middle Period some schools took up this division of instruction into clearly defined curricular units and developed specialisations in certain areas. A scholar from the late ninth/fifteenth century reported, for instance, that he had first attended a school to learn to write and had then transferred to a second school where he acquired recitation skills. However, such specialised schools remained a rather marginal phenomenon and never appeared in considerable numbers during the Middle Period.[12]

This differentiation between areas of learning at this time should not be confounded with an earlier specialisation that had taken place, the specialisation in teaching calligraphy. In a famous passage in his travel report, Ibn Jubayr noted that early education in late sixth/twelfth-century Damascus (and other parts of the eastern Islamic world) strictly separated the teaching of recitation from the teaching of writing, and that both activities had their own teachers who taught only their respective field. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) corrected this description when he discussed the regional differences in curricula. He showed that elements of the written word had not entirely disappeared from teaching recitation in the central Islamic world and, more importantly for the present discussion, that the specialised schools for writing were devoted to teaching calligraphy. In a Cairene school some decades later this specialisation in calligraphy did indeed exist. However, there are no further narrative or documentary sources that would indicate a systematic institutional differentiation in children's schools in Syria and Egypt, while the curricular differentiation

between reading and writing, on the one hand, and recitation, on the other hand, became widespread.[13]

What exactly were these texts that started to appear in children's schools and how did this affect the curricula? At the centre of the daily teaching routine was, without doubt, Koran recitation, which also allowed for the elementary skills of reading and writing to be imparted. Normative texts thus advised the pupils to pour the water with which they had wiped their slates into a mould in the ground that was reserved for this purpose. Endowment deeds also refer to the sacred status of this water that the pupils should pour on the founder's grave. During the five to seven years that the children remained in school they repeatedly went through the Koran so that they were able to recite at least some passages or – depending on the individual pupil – the entire text. Autobiographical texts written in the Middle Period claimed that the authors had mastered the entire text at a very young age. This was certainly also the result of the important role that the elements 'prestigious teacher' and 'early education' played in this genre. The majority of pupils – those who did not author an autobiography – reached some mastery of the text at a rather later age, most likely at some point during early puberty. Authors such as Ibn Khaldūn occasionally discussed the possibility of starting to teach children with texts other than the Koran. He referred to the Andalusian scholar Ibn al-ᶜArabī (d. 543/1148), who had argued that the Koran was too difficult for children and proposed starting with basic texts from the fields of poetry and philology. Yet Ibn Khaldūn himself rejected this idea as being unrealistic because the parents were too concerned with their children's salvation and there is no evidence that this proposition was ever put into practice.[14]

Although the instruction thus started with the Koran, children's schools subsequently used additional texts. The endowment records, as the most reliable documentary source genre, let us down at this point as they mention the methodological skills that the pupils had to acquire, such as reading and writing, but they do not expound on the concrete texts. Yet this absence of a prescription gave the schoolmasters considerable room to manoeuvre when deciding which texts they wanted to use in addition to the Koran. This room to manoeuvre was not self-evident as the deeds for advanced teaching in *madrasa*s, by contrast, could lay down quite detailed rules as to which works were to be used.[15] The titles that schoolmasters employed in children's schools certainly depended, as normative texts and biographical dictionaries explicated, on their individual taste, the ability of the pupil and the institutional context (Ṣūfī convent, mosque, *madrasa* of a specific school of law).

Authors of earlier centuries, such as al-Jāḥiẓ in the third/ninth century

in his work on teachers, had already described quite broad curricula that entailed a range of texts from fields such as mathematics, grammar, Islamic inheritance jurisprudence and poetry. Ibn Ḥazm proposed in the following century an even more elaborate programme with an introduction to reading and writing, followed by grammar and lexicography. While he considered poetry to be optional, he deemed alchemy, astrology, logic, mathematics, scientific subjects such as zoology and, finally, history to be compulsory. These authors obviously wrote for the children of the cultural, social and political elites who had to acquire the knowledge that was appropriate for their status. Authors of the Middle Period, such as Ibn al-ᶜAdīm in *The Luminous Book on Children* that he authored in seven/thirteenth-century Aleppo, continued to develop such programmes.[16]

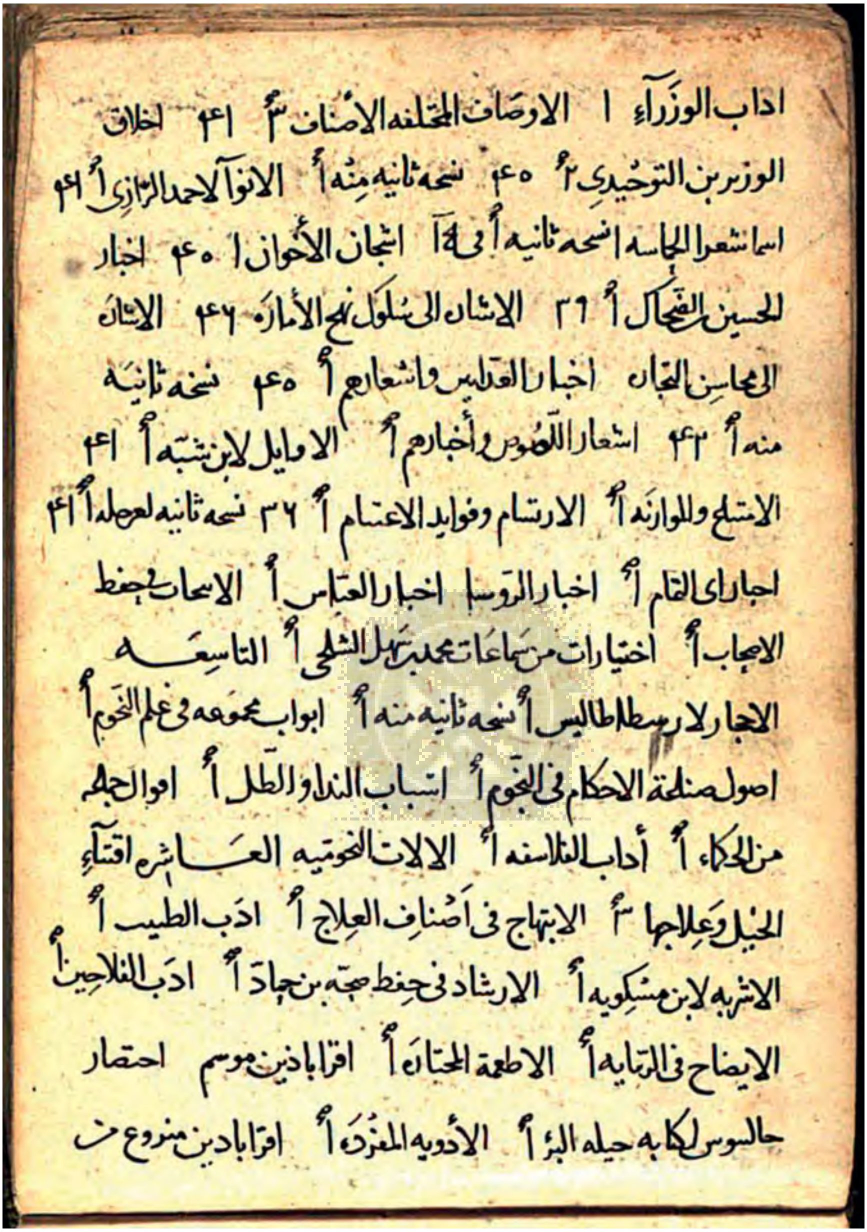
Manuals for market inspectors give more realistic insights into teaching practices for wider sections of the population as these inspectors supervised children's schools in the city, schools that for the most part did not cater for the youngsters of elite households. Tellingly, a manual authored in the fifth/eleventh century had nothing to say on a curriculum or the texts to be studied. In the following century a Syrian manual was more detailed and prescribed that pupils should start with reading, writing and recitation of the short chapters of the Koran and the basic religious practices. This was to be followed by an introduction to mathematics, written correspondence and poetry. An eighth/fourteenth-century Egyptian work mapped a similar programme, except that it excluded poetry after the first basic stage (reading, writing, recitation of short chapters of the Koran, basic religious practices) and focused on mathematics and written correspondence.[17]

The exclusion of poetry was certainly no coincidence as numerous authors considered it to be the principal means for the spread of reprehensible ideas. The same Egyptian author explicitly warned that the poems of Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 391/1000) – a writer who was often considered to be obscene and vulgar – should not be taught in children's schools. In addition to Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, the Syrian manual mentioned other texts that schoolmasters should avoid, most importantly Shiite poems that disparaged the companions of the Prophet and the anthology by Ṣarīᶜ al-Dallāl (d. 412/1021), who praised, among others, the Fatimid caliph. The Egyptian author al-Muḥtasib took up this list and encouraged teachers to beat those students whom he caught reading such poetry. Arguably, the strictest author in the genre of normative texts, Ibn al-Ḥājj, warned against love poetry in general and urged teachers to keep children from the men of letters (*udabāʾ*). These statements in manuals for the market inspector still do not provide concrete evidence for the titles that children's schools

used, but they demonstrate at least that the authors assumed that teachers were using written texts other than the Koran and that even poetry was not exclusively transmitted in oral and aural modes, but that it was available in children's schools in written form as well.[18]

Biographies which expounded upon the years in the children's school add not only to our knowledge of the significant role that the written word played in these institutions, but mentioned also specific texts. We have, for instance, reports from the ninth/fifteenth century that pupils, after they had completed reading and recitation exercises, read a variety of titles to their teachers, such as works by the jurist, traditionalist and historian Ibn Kathīr; in another case a versified grammar, a legal treatise and a *ḥadīth* compendium; and in a third example a *ḥadīth* commentary and one of the foundational works of the Shafi'i school of law. These texts were certainly not standard in the curricula of children's schools and one wonders how a pupil at the age of twelve years at the most dealt with such material. However, these reports demonstrate at least that schoolmasters could use a wide variety of different manuscripts in school in order to teach the required methodological skills.[19]

As curricula included a broader range of texts, manuscript collections and even small libraries appeared in children's school from the eighth/fourteenth century onwards. Endowers and administrators often amended the layout of the teaching rooms so that a small niche could accommodate the manuscripts that schoolmasters increasingly used. The school in the complex of Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq from the ninth/fifteenth century, for instance, had a bookcase that stood 3 m high with a base of 1.66 m by 0.48 m. In some cases the number of manuscripts held in a children's school was so substantial that the endowment made funds available for a librarian. The historian Ibn Taghrībirdī, for example, provided for such a post in his endowment, although it made no provisions for more advanced students. Rather, the only form of instruction was the teaching of recitation, reading and writing to children. That libraries started to appear in children's schools that were not linked to any institution of higher learning was also relevant for the large majority of other schools that were part of institutions of higher learning. While children and their teachers in these latter schools did not generally have their own manuscripts it was very likely that they could access the works in the institution's main library. The proliferation of reading skills was in this sense closely intertwined with the expansion of endowed local libraries (cf. Chapter 4) that increased the availability of the written word not only for adult readers, but also for pupils of the schools that were part of many endowments.[20]



اداب الوزراء ١ الاوصاف المختلفه الاصناف ٣ ٤١ اخلاق
الوزيرين التوحيدي ٢ ٤٥ نسخه ثانيه منه ١ الانوا لاحمد الرازي ١ ٤١
اسما شعرا الحماسه ١ نسخه ثانيه ١ في ١ اشجان الاخوان ١ ٤٥ اخبار
الحسين الضحاك ١ ٣٦ الاشاره الى سلوك نهج الامارة ٤٦ الاشاره
الى المحاسن النجار اخبار العدليس واشعارهم ١ ٤٥ نسخه ثانيه
منه ١ ٤٢ اشعار اللصوص واخبارهم ١ الاوايل لابن شبه ١ ٤١
الاسجاع والموازنه ١ الارتسام وفوايد الاغتنام ١ ٣٦ نسخه ثانيه لعرجله ١ ٤١
اخبار اهل الشام ١ اخبار الروسا اخبار العباس ١ الاسعاف بحفظ
الاصحاب ١ اختيارات من سماعات محمد بن سهل الشلحي ١ التاسعه
الاخبار لارسطاطاليس ١ نسخه ثانيه منه ١ ابواب مجموعه في علم النجوم ١
اصول صناعة الاحكام في النجوم ١ اسباب الندا والطل ١ اقوال الحكم
من الحكماء ١ اداب الفلاسفه ١ الالات النجوميه العاشر اقتناء
الخيل وعلاجها ٣ الابتهاج في اصناف العلاج ١ ادب الطبيب ١
الاشربه لابن مسكويه ١ الارشاد في حفظ صحه بن جماد ١ ادب الفلاحين ١
الايضاح في الرمايه ١ الاطعمه المختاره ١ اقراباذين موسى احتصار
جالينوس لكتابه حيله البرء ١ الادويه المفرده ١ اقراباذين منروع

Plate 1 Ashrafīya inventory (mid-7th/13th century). © Istanbul, Süleymaniye, Fatih 5433, fol. 247v

Plate 2 Abū Zayd in the children's school (al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, 619/1220?, Syria?).
© Paris, BnF, MS arabe 6094, fol. 167r

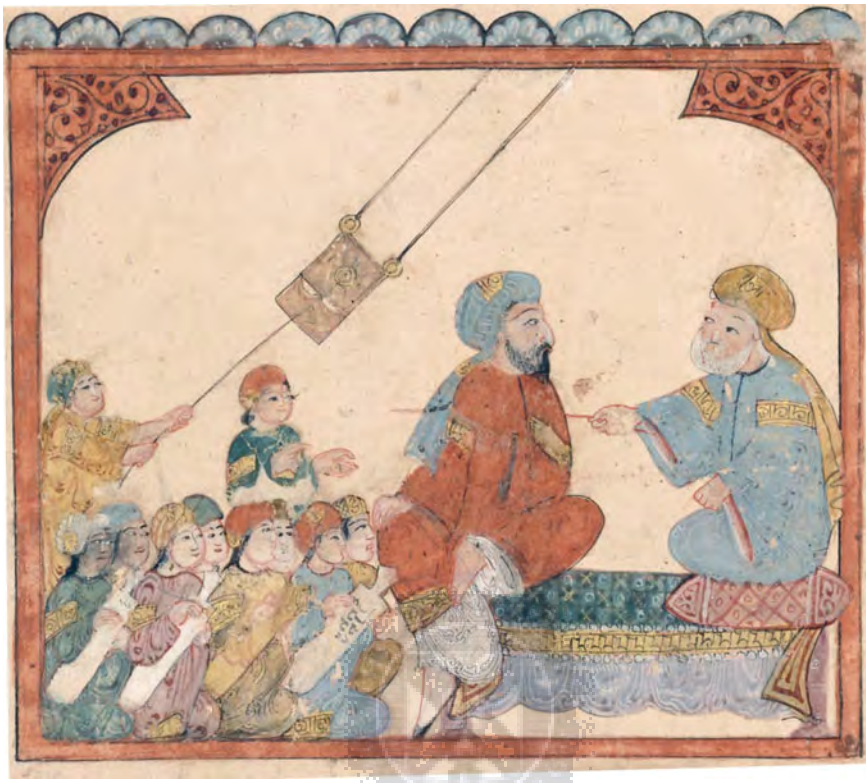


Plate 3 Abū Zayd in the children's school (al-Harīrī, *Maqāmāt*, 634/1237). © Paris, BnF, MS arabe 5847, fol. 152r

Plate 3a Slate with first letters of alphabet. © Paris, BnF, MS arabe 5847, fol. 152r

Plate 4 Abū Zayd in the children's school (al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, 734/1334, Cairo?). © Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliotek, A.F. 9, fol. 170v

Plate 5 Abū Zayd in the children's school (al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, 654/1256?). © The British Library Board, or. 1200, fol. 156v

Plate 6 Abū Zayd in the children's school (al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, second half 7th/13th century, Damascus). © The British Library Board, or. 9718, fol. 191

Plate 7 Abū Zayd in the children's school (al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, first half 7th/13th century?). © St Petersburg, Academy of Sciences, C. 23, fol. 160r

Plate 8 Layla and Majnūn in the children's school (Persian dish, c. early 7th/13th century). © The David Collection, Copenhagen, No. 50/1966/Pernille Klemp

Plate 8a Steps 1 and 2: reading and writing individual letters. © The David Collection, Copenhagen, No. 50/1966/Pernille Klemp

Plate 8b Step 3: combining two letters. © The David Collection, Copenhagen, No. 50/1966/Pernille Klemp

Plate 8c Step 4: reading and writing words. © The David Collection, Copenhagen, No. 50/1966/Pernille Klemp

Plate 9 Layla and Majnūn in the children's school (Niẓāmī Ganjawī, *Khamsa*, 835/1431–2, Herat). © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 13255, fol. 15r

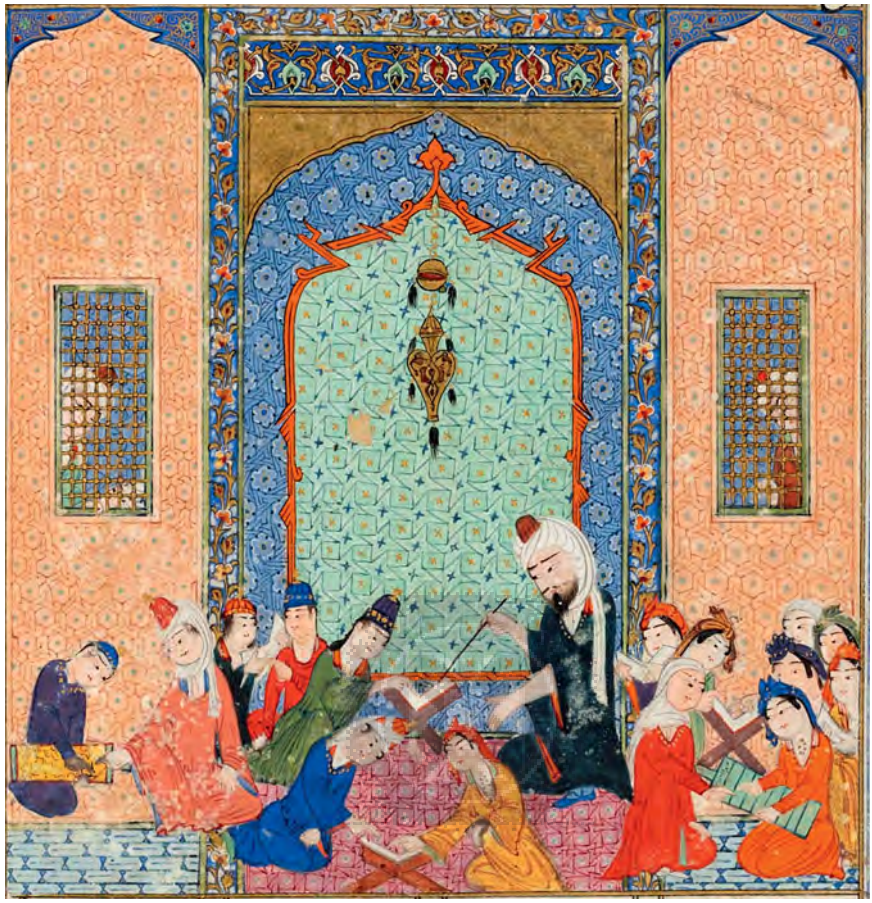


Plate 10 Layla and Majnūn in the children's school (Niẓāmī Ganjawī, *Khamsa*, 848/1445, Shiraz?). Reproduced by courtesy of the University Librarian and Director, John Rylands University Library, University of Manchester, Persian MS 36, fol. 107v

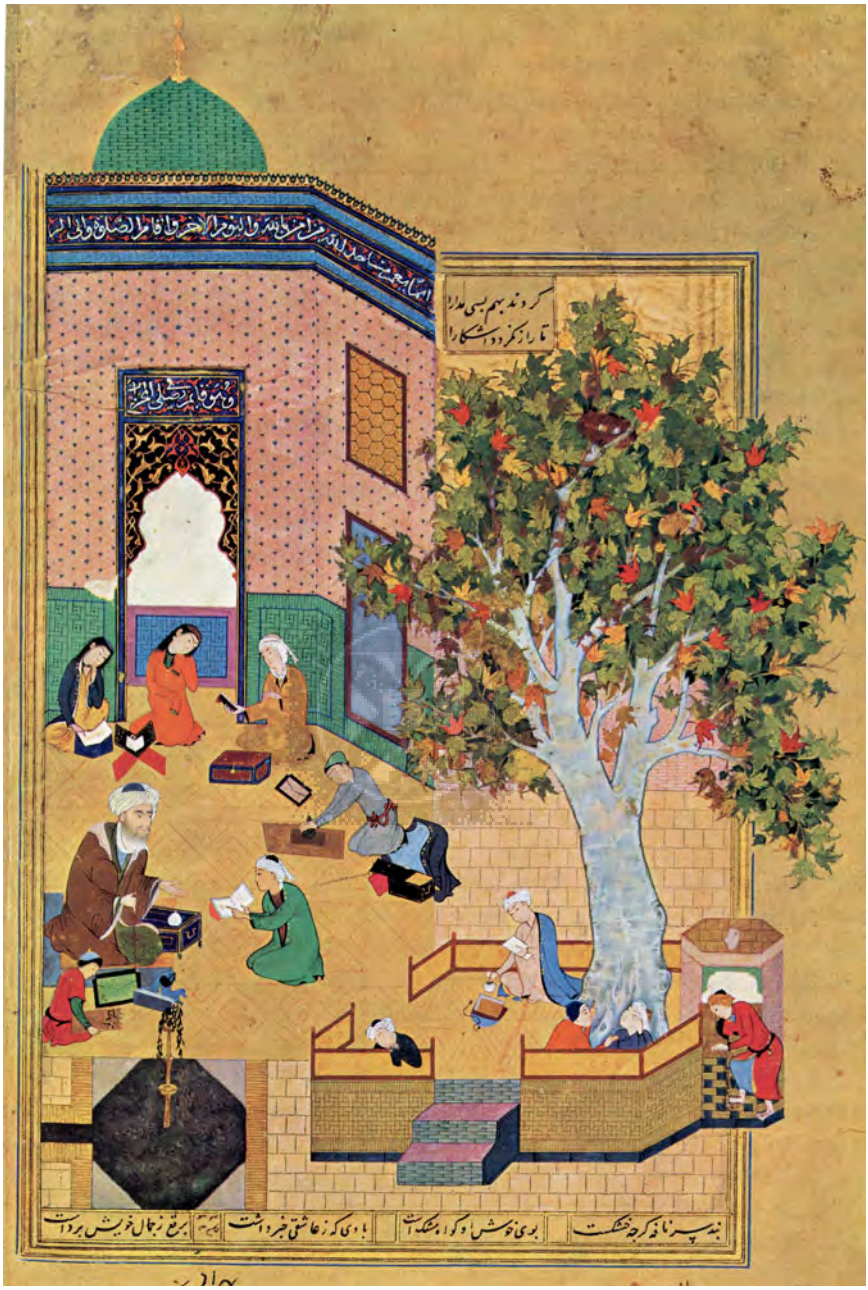


Plate 11 Layla and Majnūn in the children's school (Niẓāmī Ganjawī, *Khamsa*, illustr. Bihzād, 899/1494–5, Herat). © The British Library Board, or. 6810, fol. 106v

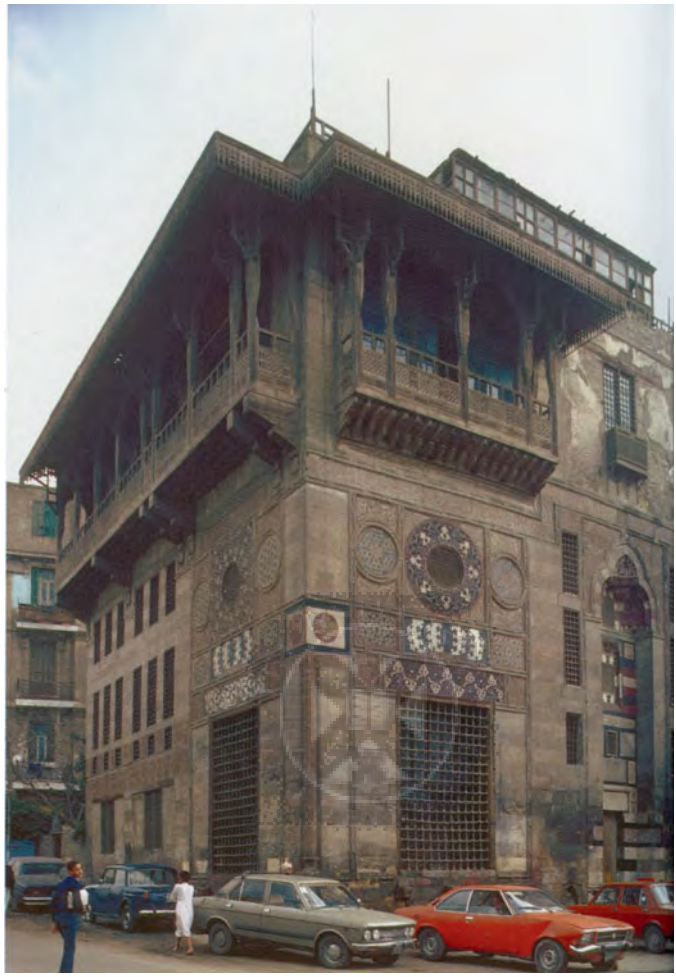


Plate 12 Public fountain and school of Qāyit Bay in Salība Street, Cairo (884/1480).

Plate 13 Abū Zayd in the library (al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, 634/1237). Paris, BnF, MS arabe 5847, fol. 5v

Plate 14 Abū Zayd in the library (al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, 640s/1240s). Paris, BnF, MS arabe 3929, fol. 2v

Plate 15 Abū Zayd in the library (al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, first half 7th/13th century?).
© St Petersburg, Academy of Sciences, C. 23, fol. 13r

Methods to Teach Reading and Writing

Owing to the increasing role of the written word in curricula in children's schools the first explicit methodological reflections on how to teach reading and writing started to appear in the eighth/fourteenth century. Such reflections were particularly essential as children who were learning to read Arabic confronted two challenges, diglossia and defective script, which complicated this process when compared with other languages. An accentuated diglossia already characterised the Arabic-language area of the Middle Period. The differences between the spoken (dialect) Arabic and the written post-classical Arabic had become considerable and the acquisition of written Arabic amounted to some extent to learning a different language. This gap was evident in daily school life, because children's schools used texts that conformed to the educational aspirations of the learned elites and that hardly included elements of dialect. Texts that were more receptive to the changes and developments of the spoken language ('Middle Arabic'), such as private letters, business correspondence and treatises of physicians, by contrast, did not appear in the curriculum of these schools.[21]

The diglossic challenge for children was especially evident in phonetics, because changes in the spoken dialect (such as merging the letters *ḍāʾ* and *ẓāʾ*) were not reflected in the written language that they had to acquire. Children were also faced with numerous grammatical constructions that were unknown to them from the spoken language. They had to get used to a different syntax and a great many words in the texts were new to them. Modern empirical reading research has repeatedly described the problems that children encounter when learning to read Arabic due to diglossia. However, for the pre-modern context this challenge should not be over-stated as diglossia was not specific to the Arabic-language area, but was faced by children in other language areas. To some extent the diglossia was even an advantage in the pre-modern period compared with those cases where learning to read amounted to learning an entirely new language, such as Latin in Europe and Hebrew for Jewish children. In addition, the fact that the Koran was the first text the children recited and read attenuated to some extent the problems resulting from diglossia, especially as they started with the shortest chapters of the Koran that were frequently used for prayers. This is comparable with the European context of the period where children often started to learn to read using common prayers and popular passages from the Bible with which they had some prior acquaintance.[22]

While the use of the Koran thus attenuated the diglossic challenge,

this was less the case for the second main challenge the children had to face: the defective script. The acquisition of consonants and long vowels was quite unproblematic as a reasonably direct link existed between letter and (classical) pronunciation. In the fourth/tenth century, the grammarian al-Zajjājī had differentiated between an alphabet of hearing (*hijāʾ li-l-samᶜ*) and an alphabet of sight (*li-raʾy al-ᶜayn*), but this referred only to some isolated cases that pupils could master easily, such as the assimilation of the article, the use of letters for differentiating between homographs and the shortening of words in the written language. Yet the short vowels that the Arabic script only rarely represents constituted the main challenge. In most cases the reader had to have the required experience and/or knowledge of morphology in order to read a word with the correct short vowels. As the short vowels within the words are decisive for the meaning and as those at the end of the words are crucial for the grammatical structure, this exercise demanded considerable efforts from the child. The correct reading was, especially in the case of homographs, only possible with a firm understanding of the context and required considerable linguistic experience.[23]

These challenges made the correct reading of some non-vocalised complex texts a considerable problem, even for advanced scholars. Consequently, biographies explicitly highlighted this competence, as in the case of a rather minor *ḥadīth* scholar who 'specialised in reading to the scholars owing to his knowledge, keen perception and good reading' and who enjoyed some prestige for this capability. In the same vein, Abū Nūwās (d. c. 198/813–200/815) praised his teacher Khalaf al-Aḥmar for faultless reading: 'When reading (*qirāʾa*) he did not confound the *ḥāʾ* with the *khāʾ* and not the *lām* with the *alif*.' At the same time, some scholars had a reputation for skipping difficult words at reading sessions or for reading them so inaccurately that those present could not collate their manuscripts. One *ḥadīth* scholar dismissed the reader from a reading session after repeated misreading, but had to reinstate him after his successor proved to be even less capable of mastering the text.[24]

Misreading was such a frequent occurrence in the different fields of knowledge that the genre of *taṣḥīf* (misreading) literature developed in its own right. These texts were closely associated with the fields of grammar and *ḥadīth* and up to the seventh/thirteenth century at least six writers had authored a work on this subject. In the following centuries prominent scholars such as the Damascene Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, and the Cairene scholars al-Ṣafadī, Ibn Ḥajar al-ᶜAsqalānī and al-Suyūṭī continued to contribute to this genre. The authors defined *taṣḥīf* as 'reading a passage in a way that differed from both how the author had intended it to be read

and from the consensus on it'. Authors such as al-Ḥasan al-ᶜAskarī (d. 382/993) delighted in gathering information on rare and difficult words and on names that readers often misread. Anecdotes concerning scholars who erroneously transmitted names of transmitters or distorted the meaning of the transmitted text were a special topic of interest. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī discussed problems that arose from homograph names (Muslim/Musallam) and missing/unclear diacritics (for example, Bishr/Busr) in his *taṣḥīf* work in the fifth/eleventh century.[25] Al-Iṣfahānī had indentified in the fourth/tenth century the basic problem that caused the widespread phenomenon of misreading:

> The reason for misreading the Arabic script is that whoever invented the shape of letters did not act wisely and did not consider those who lived thereafter. [For instance], he used one single shape for five different letters . . . whereas it would have been wiser to define for each letter a distinct shape so to avoid confusion.[26]

The problem of misreading was especially accentuated for those who regularly worked with non-Arabic terms and names, for example, in the natural sciences. The scholar al-Bīrūnī (fl. 442/1050) lamented such problems in his pharmaceutical work *Kitāb al-ṣaydala fī al-ṭibb*:

> The Arabic script has one decisive disadvantage: the similarity of the letters' shapes and the need to differentiate them with diacritical marks and vowel marks. If these are omitted the sense becomes unclear and if, furthermore, the text is not compared and corrected by collation – and this is common practice among contemporaries – it is as if the text had never existed and it is of no consequence whether one is acquainted with its content or not.[27]

On account of these problems normative treatises urged the writers of manuscripts to use diacritical marks, to apply vowel marks, especially to names and difficult words, and to adhere to the rules of separating specific letters.[28] In these admonishments the authors particularly alluded to readers with little experience who would be in need of fully vocalised texts with diacritical marks:

> The beginner cannot differentiate between difficult and plain passages and also not between correct and erroneous vocalisation. . . . At least, ambiguous names must be clarified [with diacritical and vowel marks], because they cannot be understood with reference to analogies and the preceding or following texts.[29]

Taking into account these challenges in acquiring strong reading competences, it is remarkable that for long periods no author composed a full-scale treatise on how to teach reading and that pertinent passages in treatises on related subjects remained few in number. The normative

literature on children's schools and teachers remained as silent on the methods as the manuals for the market inspector and treatises on child education.[30] Those rare reflections that give some insight into how schoolmasters taught reading clearly show that the acquisition of reading skills went hand-in-hand with the acquisition of writing skills. Although the sources discussed above often listed reading and writing as independent skills, those cases that defined distinct units of instruction in school curricula assumed that these two skills were always taught together. Furthermore, pupils acquired the capacity to read and write generally in close interplay with Koran recitation. In an autobiographical report from the seventh/thirteenth century, for instance, the pupil described his teacher demonstrating how to write a single letter and the pupil eagerly wrote 'In the name of [God]', the opening of virtually each chapter in the Koran:

> When I was seven years old I was taken to school and seated in front of the teacher who began instructing me as one instructed children, drawing a line and placing three times the letter s (*sīn*) upon it. I took the pen from him and, having seen him write the word *bism* (in the name of) and extend it, I did the same.[31]

With regard to the methodology of teaching, this passage and other texts indicate that in the first instance children learnt to read and write isolated letters. Endowment deeds that generally used the term *al-hijāʾ* ('the letters of the alphabet') when referring to the instruction of reading confirm this. Dictionaries of the period understood this term and the derived verb to be synonymous with reading/reciting. The dictionaries also give a hint as to how the process of reading was understood as they elaborated that the term refers to 'breaking the word up into its letters'.[32]

However, this situation where authors made only brief references fundamentally changed in the early eighth/fourteenth century when the first more extensive reflections on how to teach reading and writing started to appear. In this period, which was crucial for the textualisation of cultural practices, the Cairene encyclopedist al-Nuwayrī described how children's schools should teach reading and writing skills. He made a clear differentiation between the instruction of beginners, which will be discussed below, and advanced lessons for calligraphy training, which is irrelevant for the present discussion. Al-Nuwayrī divided the instruction of the beginner into four stages that allowed the pupil to gradually acquire reading and writing skills. His passage corroborates the previous autobiographical evidence that teaching reading and writing was by this point closely intertwined.[33] The first step of al-Nuwayrī's method – in which there are many similarities to those used in antiquity and medieval Europe[34] – aimed at acquaint-

ing the pupil with the individual letters of the alphabet and especially with the diacritical marks:

> The schoolmaster starts teaching the children by training them to write the letters one by one. Once the pupil has mastered them and has learned to differentiate between those letters with diacritical marks and those without, the schoolmaster examines him. In doing so, he asks him about the letters without paying heed to the alphabetical order, for instance he examines him on the *nūn*, then the *jīm*, then the *ḍād* and so on. If the pupil correctly responds to the letters in this arbitrary order, the schoolmaster is certain that the pupil has mastered the letters.[35]

After having learned to write the characters, the second step of this method acquainted the pupil with the sound of each letter and gradually introduced him to reading: 'Subsequently, [the schoolmaster] asks [the student] to pronounce the letters one after the other, each letter with the vowels "a", "i", "u" and [then] without vowels. Thereupon he examines him in the same way as before.'[36] While in the first step the pupil had learnt to convert the sounds into characters he now learnt to convert the character into its sound. In this exercise the schoolmaster had to devote special attention to one of the main challenges in learning to read Arabic, as mentioned above: the defective script that does not represent short vowels. Al-Nuwayrī's method taught the pupil at an early stage of reading acquisition to anticipate the possible vocalisations. At the same time, this second step accustomed the pupil with the sounds of the letters as he stopped using their abstract names (*nūn*, *jīm*, *ḍād*, and so on). In this way the pupils mastered bit by bit the actual pronunciation of the consonants in combination with vowels.

In the third step the pupil started to join the letters in writing: 'Subsequently, he writes each letter with the others [letters], using the letters *bāʾ*, *jīm*, *dāl*, *rāʾ*, *sīn*, *ṣād*, *ṭāʾ*, *ʿayn*, *fāʾ*, *kāf* and *lām*. He starts with the *bāʾ* together with the *alif* and then in the [usual] order.'[37] This step focused exclusively on writing, as is evident from the eleven letters that al-Nuwayrī chose. Each of these represents one of the main shapes of the Arabic script, but he did not include those merely differentiated by diacritical marks so that the *bāʾ*, for instance, stood for the letters *tāʾ*, *thāʾ*, *nūn* and *yāʾ* as well. While this was an efficient way to teach basic writing skills, it was of limited use for reading as, when reading, a central challenge is to ascribe the correct sound to letters that are merely differentiated by diacritical marks.

The drill set out in this third step required the student to join the letters without taking into account whether the combinations made sense. To

use abstract combinations of letters and not to introduce actual words was also standard practice in the Jewish children's schools in Egypt in this period. Exercise books of pupils who were learning Hebrew show the same phenomenon and the pupils systematically went through all the possible combinations of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.[38] Al-Nuwayrī's concise statement that the schoolmaster 'starts with the *bāʾ* together with the *alif* and then [continues] in the [usual] order' indicates a similar procedure of systematically running through the alphabet. The use of abstract letter combinations was clearly different from the phonetic combinations of consonants and vowels in the reading-focused second stage that was in step with the actual practice of reading.

The fourth step focused on the capacity to engage with whole sentences and simultaneously trained in both reading and writing skills. The pupils started to join the letters in order to write actual words and ultimately sentences that they also had to read aloud.

> [The schoolmaster] asks [the pupil] to write the formula 'In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful'. [The schoolmaster] gradually introduces him to writing and trains him also in deducing the individual letters of the alphabet [from the written text] and in joining them. The schoolmaster continues in this way until the pupil has good pronunciation and a steady hand and until he reads what is written for him and writes what is dictated to him.[39]

The method that al-Nuwayrī described is a variant of the modern method of synthetic phonetics, or the bottom-up approach, which starts with the letter-sound correspondence and proceeds to joining these units into words. Al-Nuwayrī's description shows that pupils did not systematically engage with words or longer passages before they had mastered the letter-sound correspondence and his method put a special emphasis on introducing the consonant-vowel combinations in the second step. This corresponds with the insistence of modern authors who support the synthetic phonetics approach on teaching this relationship as early as possible. While going through al-Nuwayrī's programme the pupils were learning at the same time to recite individual verses and entire chapters of the Koran, which enhanced their consciousness of the phonetic rules of the Arabic language. In some sense, the rhymed prose of the Koran contributed to an understanding of the different sounds of letters similar to the effect of modern nursery rhymes.[40]

Illustrations of children's schools show that al-Nuwayrī's synthetic method had some pedigree. The seventh/thirteenth-century Plate 3a has a slate with the first nine letters of the alphabet and exemplifies the early stages of learning. This drill is also evident in the aforementioned slightly

earlier slate from the Ṣadr Castle in the Sinai. A pupil used the Ṣadr-slate's recto to write all letters of the alphabet in the usual order, interrupted at the letter *lām* owing to the missing part on the lower left side (the drill on the verso cannot be reconstructed due to the slate's deteriorated state). In Plates 2, 4 and 5, all dating to the seventh/thirteenth or eighth/fourteenth centuries, slates show the subsequent steps of combinations of letters and especially complete words. Except for Plate 2 where the illustrator used two slates to provide information about the date when he produced the manuscript ('made in the year 619') and the time it took ('ten days'), the other slates show only illegible scribble. However, the slates in Plate 5, for instance, were clearly meant to depict entire words. Al-Nuwayrī's individual stages are all represented in one single illustration, namely, on the slates of Plate 8, most presumably dating to the early seventh/thirteenth century. The slate on the right of the teacher's head (Plate 8a) has the first seven letters of the alphabet in a relatively neat hand. However, from the third line onwards the writing becomes awkward and turns into scribble as this slate was meant to show the pupil's first attempts. The neighbouring slate repeats the same exercise. The difference from al-Nuwayrī's method is that the pupils in this illustration wrote all letters of the alphabet and not just one example of those letters differentiated by diacritical marks.

More advanced pupils had already started to write arbitrary combinations of two letters, al-Nuwayrī's third step, to familiarise themselves with the varying forms of the letters according to their position. The slate to the teacher's left (Plate 8b) shows the first ten letters of the alphabet, each written with the letter '*waw*'. The slate to the right of the teacher's leg shows exactly the same exercise, but this second example was written in an unsteady hand to show again the different levels of the pupils in the classroom. Other slates show the first letters of the alphabet in combination with the letters '*alif*', '*ḥāʾ*' and '*bāʾ*'. In the first two cases the slates again represent different stages with one slate in each case in an unsteady hand. Two slates (lower margin to the teacher's left and Plate 8c, above the teacher between Layla and Majnūn, the only two pupils facing each other), represent the final step. Here, the children had started to make their first attempts to write entire words and Plate 8c has two words, each written twice, in a beginner's hand. The teacher is holding the only slate in this illustration that has, at first glance, senseless scribble and that does not correspond to any of al-Nuwayrī's four steps.

Although al-Nuwayrī's method was not new, as these illustrations that dated from the previous century show, significantly, he was the first who saw the need to pen a detailed methodological explanation. His text shows how important the written word had become in the daily teaching routine

and demonstrates the central position that reading skills had started to take in the curriculum of children's schools. The appearance of this text in the early eighth/fourteenth century must be read in connection with the previously discussed evidence from endowment deeds, as well as from normative and narrative texts that indicated the same trend. The aim of the curriculum was to impart broad reading skills that not only supported the acquisition of Koran recitation, but that pupils could also use for reading other texts. The acquisition of such broad skills explains to some extent the above examples of advanced pupils who already read law texts at children's school or whom the schoolmaster caught reading poetry that was disapproved of. The actual reading skills after several years of schooling did, as today, vary between individual pupils and were dependent on a variety of individual, social, methodological and other factors. However, it can be assumed that the majority of pupils left school with basic reading skills and that a significant number of students had acquired advanced reading skills.

This was because children remained at school for several years and had thus sufficient time to acquire the skills that the curricula set out. Endowment deeds did not regulate the schooling age, but other sources considered an age between five and seven to be normal for starting school. Autobiographical reports, although certainly of limited value for wider sections of the population, often mentioned this age span as the point of entry into children's school. Normative treatises assumed in general an age of seven years as the standard, but an eighth/fourteenth-century author lamented that most parents sent their children to school at such a young age that they still wet themselves. Attending the children's school ended with puberty (*bulūgh*), as endowment deeds uniformly prescribed. As mentioned above, deeds occasionally granted pupils some additional time in case they were about to finalise learning the Koran by heart and normative treatises show that this was quite a regular occurrence. The overall evidence thus indicates that those children who attended children's schools remained in these institutions for a considerable time span that was not less than five years and more likely amounted to some seven years. Arguably, the wide spread of the children's school and the five to seven years that the children spent in them contributed also to the advanced age – compared with medieval European societies – at which children generally entered the labour market.[41]

The pupils attended school five days a week from early morning until the afternoon call to prayer, which in Cairo, depending on the season, is between 2.30 pm and 3.30 pm. On Tuesdays the lessons ended in many schools with the call to prayer at noon, while schools remained closed on

Fridays and the usual holidays. On average, the pupils thus spent slightly more than thirty hours a week in the classroom. The quality and the intensity of instruction cannot be measured by such quantitative information and the repeated exhortations in normative sources that the teacher should concentrate on the lesson indicate that the length of the lesson and intensity of instruction were not necessarily synonymous. However, the ratio between teachers and pupils in the endowed schools was surprisingly low and allowed, at least theoretically, intensive teaching. Generally, one schoolmaster taught twenty pupils and occasionally an assistant teacher supported him. The long school day and the low pupil–teacher ratio, taken together with the five to seven years of school attendance, rendered it feasible that many children attained quite advanced literacy and numeracy skills in school.[42]

The Spread of the Endowed School and Social Changes

A process of popularisation accompanied this textualisation of curricula in children's schools as the number of schools increased and as they catered for larger parts of the population. Up to the sixth/twelfth century children's schools in Egypt and Syria were mostly 'private' schools. Parental contributions made up the schoolmaster's salary and the schools thus catered only for those social groups that could afford the school's fees. Wealthy individuals, especially rulers, had certainly supported children's schools prior to the sixth/twelfth century. Examples include the Umayyad ruler of Spain, al-Ḥakam al-Mustanṣir (d. 366/976), who reportedly supported twenty-seven schools for poor children in fourth/tenth-century Cordoba; the Fatimid Caliph al-Muᶜizz (d. 375/996), who founded a palace school in Cairo that catered for up to 5,000 children; and the North African ruler al-Manṣūr Abū Yūsuf (d. 595/1199), who set up a school for some 1,000 orphans. However, these reports are scattered and they do not make clear whether these schools were short-lived *ad hoc* foundations or whether endowments underpinned them securing some degree of continuity.[43]

From the sixth/twelfth century onwards the mode of financing children's schools changed decisively as an increasing number of endowed schools started to be set up. In consequence, children's schools became more institutionalised and offered free instruction for Muslim children in a systematic manner. Endowment deeds and also an increasing number of references to such schools in the narrative sources document this trend. These schools primarily targeted needy orphans, but they also accepted children from poor families, especially if orphans did not take up all of the places, and in one isolated example a school provided places for the

progeny of needy members of the military. Children's schools specifically endowed for orphans from notable families, by contrast, were rare. Children who attended these endowed schools received in most cases, in addition to free instruction, food, clothes (generally an outfit for summer and one for winter) and sometimes a small stipend. However, boarding schools did not exist, in contrast to the case of the *madrasa*, so the orphans must have lodged with members of their extended family.[44]

Up to the early ninth/fifteenth century, endowed children's schools were never the main raison d'être for any endowment, but they were always 'secondary' endowments that supplemented the main institution, such as mosque, *madrasa* or Ṣūfī convent. In consequence, their patrons were identical to the patrons of the main institutions, who came from a wide variety of backgrounds ranging from rulers and their family members, to members of the military and political elite and affluent persons from the scholarly and economic elites. Typical examples of rulers include: Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir, who erected a large building complex, including a mosque, *madrasa*, mausoleum and a children's school; Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq, who some decades later endowed a similar complex with a convent, mausoleum and two children's schools; and his successor al-Malik al-Muʾayyad Shaykh, who supplemented his mosque and *madrasa* with a children's school. Deeds document in detail officers who endowed children's schools, such as Sūdūn min Zāda in the early eighth/fourteenth century, Sayf al-Dīn Ṣarghatmish al-Nāṣirī some decades later and Qarāqujā al-Ḥasanī in the mid-ninth/fifteenth century. The deeds for children's schools that officers and members of the political elites endowed have often not been preserved, but references to them began to appear regularly in narrative sources. These cases include the Wazir Ibn Ḥinnā, who endowed a children's school on the Cairene Qarāfa Cemetery; the judge Ibn al-Ṣāfī, who erected buildings including a school in north Cairo; and the officers Arghūn al-ʿAlāʾī and Sayf al-Dīn al-Muẓaffarī. The final group who played a salient role as patrons of endowed schools were traders.[45]

The rise of the endowed children's school was not limited to Cairo. Damascus experienced a comparable development with schools endowed by rulers and members of the political and military elites, such as the eunuch Ẓahīr al-Dīn Mukhtār, the governor Tankiz, his wife Sutayta and the officers Sayf al-Dīn Fāris al-Dawādār and Badr al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Ṭarābulusī. Similar to Cairo, traders such as Aḥmad b. Dawlāma and Aḥmad Ibn al-Ṣābūnī who endowed schools in the mid-ninth/fifteenth century were among the patrons. Even beyond the metropolises of Cairo and Damascus a large number of endowments are documented,

such as in Aleppo, where the Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir erected a school close to the citadel. In Aleppo, it was not only numerous governors who acted as patrons, such as Ishiqtamur al-Māridānī, Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī, Taghrībirdī min Bāshbughā, Yashbak al-Muʾayyadī and Taghrībirmish al-Turkumānī, but also other members of the military and economic elites. Even for provincial cities such as Tripoli and Jerusalem, for castles such as Ḥiṣn al-Akrād (Crac des Chevaliers) and for rural areas such as the Egyptian Fayyūm province numerous examples of children's schools are documented.[46]

The early stages of the spread of endowed schools, and other endowed institutions, in Syria go back to the Zangid Period in the mid-sixth/twelfth century. Panegyrics described the last significant ruler of this dynasty, Nūr al-Dīn, as the first who founded institutions for teaching *ḥadīth* (*dār al-ḥadīth*) and who endowed a number of children's schools. This spread of the children's school went hand-in-hand with the wave of endowed *madrasa*s that had started in Baghdad and had subsequently spread to Syria and Egypt. However, no deeds have come down from before the late seventh/thirteenth century and the period's narrative sources rarely bothered to mention such schools. During this early stage of the spread of endowed schools changes in their institutional structure were not yet visible. Biographies, for instance, did not mention in entries on school teachers at which institution they taught. At this point it was still irrelevant for the authors as to whether the instruction, be it in Cairo, Damascus or smaller cities, took place in a 'private' school or in an endowed school. Even in cases where the authors identified a school they did not use a specific name, which would have indicated a higher degree of institutionalisation, but they rather described where it was located in the city.[47]

The subsequent institutionalisation of primary teaching came at the same time as the emergence of salaried teachers reliant not on fees from their pupils, but receiving a more or less guaranteed salary out of the endowment income. This new institutionalised framework for paying teachers made an increasing impact in the sources from the late seventh/thirteenth century onwards. Authors now started to be interested in the institutional framework of children's schools and consequently named the school in which an individual taught. Among these references, not very surprisingly, were teachers in schools attached to the prestigious endowment complexes of Cairo, such as the children's schools in the Manṣūrīya and Ashrafīya complexes as well as those attached to the Ṣarghatmishīya Madrasa and the Sulṭān Ḥasan Mosque. In addition, they now started to name teaching posts in schools that belonged to small endowments, such

as the schools in the Kharrūbīya Madrasa and the Sābiqīya Madrasa as well as schools beyond Cairo. Even marginal schools, such as the Ibn ᶜAbd School in the Damascene Bāb Tūmā quarter were now referred to by name. The process of institutionalisation was certainly not all-encompassing and we continue to find substantial numbers of teachers' biographies without a named institution. However, these cases mostly refer to the previously discussed 'private' schools that were not linked to any endowment. The sources indicate these private schools at best by their location, such as being close to the main mosque in Syrian Baᶜlbak, on the glass market in Cairo, in a village in the Syrian Bekaa Valley or in a Cairene residential building. Yet, in contrast to earlier periods, such cases had decreased by the early eighth/fourteenth century when they started to constitute the minority.[48]

The actual position of children's schools within the urban setting also reflected their increasing institutionalisation. By the ninth/fifteenth century, owing to two architectural developments, schools had become an integral feature of the urban landscape. The first development was that from the mid-eighth/fourteenth century onwards the children's school was typically located, with the public fountain, on a building corner that faced the main street. The builders of the Uljāy al-Yūsufī Madrasa in Cairo, erected 774/1373, first employed this element and it subsequently became a standard feature of Mamluk architecture. While this prominent location of the school was certainly also a result of normative sources' stipulations that they should be placed close to busy streets and markets in order to ensure social control of the schoolmaster, the architectural prominence indicates that it responded to more profound social changes.[49]

During the course of the ninth/fifteenth century a second development started to enhance even further the role of the children's school as an independent institution in the urban landscape. The children's school retained its characteristic link with the public fountain, but now these two functions became combined in a distinctive stand-alone building that housed the school on the first floor. The Duhaysha building (811/1408) was the first such example, but stand-alone buildings were to multiply, especially during the reign of Sultan Qāyit Bay in the late ninth/fifteenth century (Plate 12), and they became a standard element of the Ottoman city.[50] The rise of buildings combining a public fountain and a school also contributed to the further spread of children's schools as the financial burden for such an endowment was significantly lower than for a *madrasa* or even larger endowment complexes. Less wealthy patrons from broader sections of the population thus had the opportunity not only to erect at comparably low cost a distinct monument within the urban topography, but also to

leave an acoustic impact. The pupils' recitation and reading aloud, which were audible in the immediate neighbourhood, completed in this sense the architectural impact of the building.

Topographical descriptions of the large urban centres reflected this transformation of the city. Up to the seventh/thirteenth century works such as those by al-Khaṭīb on Baghdad, as well as by Ibn ᶜAsākir and Ibn Shaddād on Damascus, did not mention children's schools. In the early ninth/fifteenth-century work by al-Maqrīzī, however, the high number of references to schools demonstrates the normalisation and spread of the institutionalised school. These reports and the increasing number of deeds give an insight into the actual location of many of these schools. They were not only positioned in, or adjacent to, mosques and *madrasa*s, but also in larger complexes that included Ṣūfī convents, mausoleums, hospices, morgues and shops, and they also stood as independent institutions in cemeteries. The increasing prominence of children's schools was not limited to cities, as indicated by a description of the features of a newly founded rural settlement in Middle Egypt, which 'became a village (*balad*) with children's schools (*makātib aṭfāl*) . . . and the Friday sermon'.[51]

Preserved children's schools show the importance that their patrons ascribed to them and the substantial resources that they invested in the building and decoration. Consequently, we find among the deeds a veritable textual celebration of these buildings, such as the splendid example of the Faraj b. Barqūq Mosque:

> Ascending the mentioned staircase and turning left one comes up to a large rectangular doorway with a door of choice wood. This leads to a spacious, graciously built and beautifully outfitted room with an Īwān on the eastern side that is entered via a step. The floor is laid with lime sand brick and the entire room has a ceiling with beams of fine and painted wood finished with a range of embellishments. The middle of the Īwān's ceiling has a lantern made of wood painted in gold and other colours and inset with small plates of coloured glass that delight the onlooker. Two sides of the Īwān have a niche: The eastern niche is a bay of wood in gold and other colours with brackets that are similarly decorated. Both niches have a row of wooden columns painted in different beautiful colours and gilded. [The brackets] support these columns and a canopy that is embellished with gilded inscriptions and colour decorations of outstanding beauty. [The entire room] does not lack appropriate facilities and other objects that gladden the onlooker who feasts his eyes upon it. This room is designated for the children's school that belongs to the public fountain; more specifically this is the teaching room for the orphans and their teacher.[52]

In contrast to this splendid architecture of children's schools, earlier illustrations show that up to the eighth/fourteenth century schools in Syria

and Egypt did not yet have any characteristic features. The Ḥarīrī illustrations placed the school scene into different architectural settings without developing any specific school architecture. The only shared feature at this point concerned the internal design: namely, the teacher's elevated platform (Plates 2, 3, 5–7).

Even if schools did become such distinctive elements of the urban landscape, the classical question concerning charitable endowments arises: namely, to what extent these institutions actually pursued the lofty aims that the deeds laid down. Patrons tended to place their descendants into profitable positions in endowments and substantial parts of the endowed capital did *de facto* rotate only within the elite. Those endowments that had a clear charitable profile, such as feeding the poor, played a relatively marginal role in Mamluk Cairo and they had rather limited funds at their disposal. It is most likely that this problem affected children's schools as well and their administrators did not always implement the endower's stipulations word for word. For instance, when a minaret of the endowment complex of Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir collapsed, some 300 'orphans and non-orphans' were among the victims in the adjacent children's school. Two years earlier the endowment deed had provisioned for orphans only and had limited the number of pupils to 200.[53]

However, the background of individual pupils, as far as we are able to trace them from the biographies of scholars, displayed a consistent pattern where the entry to an endowed school was indeed linked with the loss of the father and/or poverty. This anecdotal evidence indicates that administrators implemented at least to some degree the stipulations in endowment deeds concerning the admission of children from indigent families. Examples include the orphan Ḥasan al-Nāʾī, who was from a peasant background and was able to attend an endowed school, as well as ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī, the son of a miller (or in another version the son of an illiterate peasant), who entered school after he had moved to Cairo. In other cases, the sources do not explicitly state the social background, but the link between becoming an orphan and being admitted to a school is distinct. The endowment provisions of food, clothes and so on were crucial for this intake of indigent children as their extended families could ill afford to have young members of the family out of work. The free education in combination with the allowances in kind ensured that even though the children could not contribute to the household income they at least did not constitute an additional financial burden.[54]

To add up the numbers of endowed schools exactly is impossible as it is not feasible to determine the available places at any given point, because endowments were unstable and could disappear within relatively short

periods, as was the fate of the school in the Cairene Āq Sunqur Mosque. This school's income came from lands in Syria and fifty years into the endowment civil war stopped the transfer of capital and the endowment's activities ceased. The recurrent illegal appropriation of endowments on the part of the political and military elites and the provision of insufficient funds by the patron further added elements of instability. The trader Burhān al-Dīn al-Maḥallī, for example, built a *madrasa* with a children's school adjacent to his magnificent residency, but was not able to cover the running costs. However, not all schools disappeared within decades of their foundation and some, such as the school of the officer Sābiq al-Dīn Mithqāl al-Anūkī, existed for at least a century. Scribes still copied deeds for small schools in Jerusalem two centuries after their foundation, indicating that these schools were still functioning.[55]

Although it is impossible to quantify exactly the spread of the endowed children's school from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards their numbers must have been substantial. Within three years of the late eighth/fourteenth century, for instance, the sultan's daughter and his mother, a court official and two high-ranking officers endowed at least five schools in Cairo alone. Although this period is not representative, deeds document the foundation of forty-six schools in Cairo between the years 683/1284–5 and 922/1516 that catered for some 1,500 children. To this we have to add the significantly higher number of endowed schools for which no deeds have survived, but that narrative sources mention. Consequently, it is safe to assume that their number was well beyond 100 in the ninth/fifteenth century. Even if we do not use absolute numbers, the relative expansion of the institutionalised and free instruction that these schools offered was distinctive. Various narrative and normative sources reflect this development, such as an eighth/fourteenth-century normative treatise explicitly underlining that the task of the children's school was also to cater for children from indigent families.[56]

According to the deeds, the number of orphans and needy children who were able to attend individual endowed schools was considerable. The school in the endowment complexes of Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir and of Sultan al-Malik al-Muʾayyad Shaykh catered for 200 and for sixty-five children, respectively; the Manṣūrīya Madrasa admitted sixty children; Sultan al-Ghawrī's Ṣūfī convent had forty places; and twenty children each were schooled in the endowment complex of Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbay, the minor mosque of Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq and the endowment of the officer Sūdūn min Zāda. The largest schools belonged to the grand endowments of rulers and were not representative of the often more modest endowments of members of the political, military, scholarly and

economic elites. Although an officer such as Sayf al-Dīn Ṣarghatmish could endow a children's school with forty places, this was rather the exception and the number of places in such endowments was generally lower. Deeds normally give a number of between ten and twenty children as the standard size of a children's school and narrative sources confirm this, such as, for instance, the report that twelve children had died and nine been injured when a school collapsed in the early ninth/fifteenth century. Patrons seemingly made efforts to reach this standard number: the eunuch Jawhar al-Lālā initially endowed ten places, but when some years later an additional building was added to the endowment the number of places in the school was promptly raised to fifteen. Less prominent patrons, such as the Cairene officer Qarāqujā (ten places) and the Damascene trader Aḥmad b. Dawlāma (six places), endowed smaller schools. However, even accounting for the modest size of many schools, the sheer number of them must have provided a significant number of places.[57]

Surviving building structures show that children's schools could indeed accommodate at least the number of children that the deeds stipulated, and sometimes even more. The school in Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq's endowment complex had two quite spacious rooms measuring 44 m^2 and 63 m^2, which is comparable to the 75-m^2 room in the school of the early Ottoman governor Khādim Pāsha. It is likely that less generous facilities were the norm, such as in the school of Jawhar al-Lālā (Figure 3.1) that offered 12 m^2 for ten children. However, as soon as the five additional places were created, the children were taught in the mausoleum, which offered more space. The twenty children in Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq's other endowment, his mosque, were less fortunate and they squeezed into a teaching room of 15 m^2 (Figure 3.2), similar to the pupils in the school of Asanbughā b. Baktimur al-Abūbakrī (d. 777/1375–6) where the two rooms measured hardly more than 16 m^2 (Figure 3.3).[58]

Taking into account the institutionalisation of children's schools, their emergence as characteristic elements in the urban landscape and their distinct profile in terms of social intake, the late seventh/thirteenth and early eighth/fourteenth century constituted a significant period in the history of child education. It was probably not by chance that in this period a pertinent conflict occurred: the newly appointed Shafi'i judge Ibn Jamāᶜa, confronted a deficit in the endowment of the Ibn Ṭūlūn Mosque in Cairo. He duly set out to cut the stipends for some beneficiaries, including those for the schoolchildren, in order to safeguard those for more important individuals and groups such as the imam and the preacher as well as the teachers and students in the *madrasa*. However, he encountered stiff opposition to his cuts as different stakeholders did not agree at all with his definition of

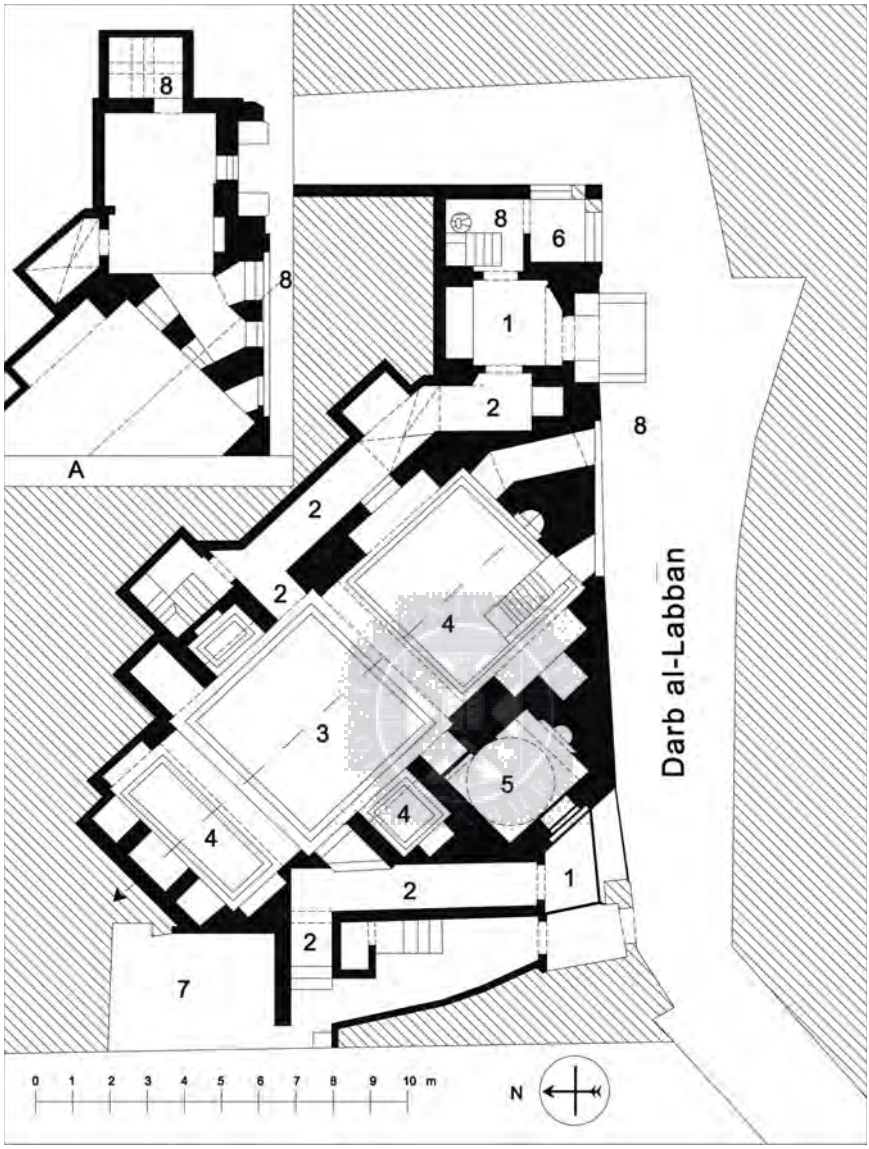


Figure 3.1 Floor plan: Jawhar al-Lālā (d. 842/1438) endowment with school (Nos 6/8) for 10–15 children. Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, Rapport de la deuxième commission, Exercice 1892, pl. VII (redrawn by Gülüstan Değirmenci)

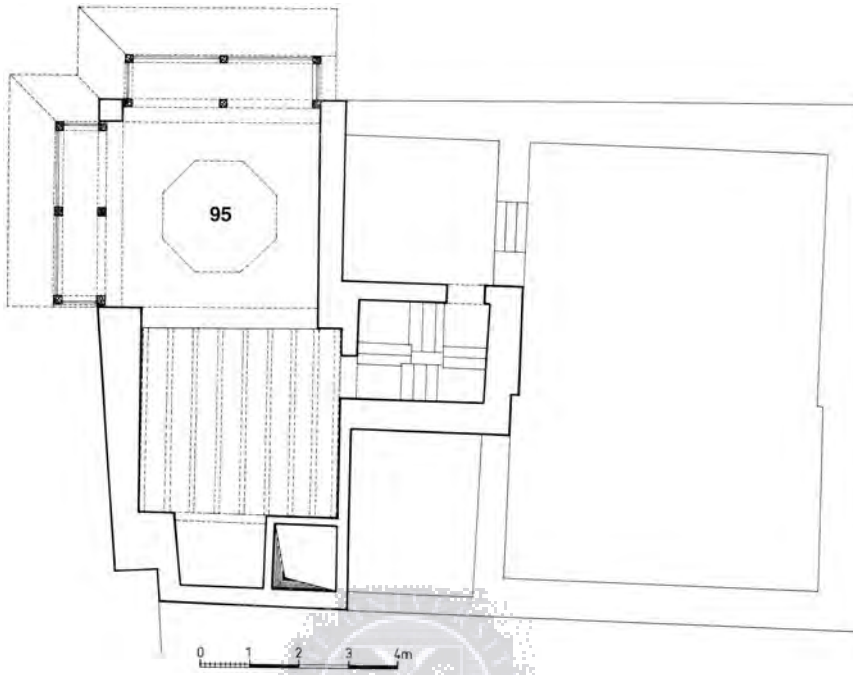


Figure 3.2 Floor plan: Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq endowment with school (No. 95) for 20 children (812/1409). © Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo (Mostafa (1972), fig. 7)

what was easily dispensable. At the same time the private schoolmasters felt the pressure of the emerging network of endowed schools and consequently started in the early eighth/fourteenth century to put up placards on their schools to advertise their services. Arguably, the salaried schoolmasters in endowments started to squeeze out their private peers. Similar to the situation in late medieval northern Italy where school teachers started to receive salaries from the commune or the state, families were reluctant to pay fees for something that they could get elsewhere for free or at least at substantially lower costs.[59]

The one group that did not profit from the spread of endowed schools were girls and women. Deeds mention children only in the masculine form and make no stipulations that would have covered the possible issues arising from a mixed intake. The exclusion of girls was not the outcome of any general ban on schooling and normative treatises forbade only the mixed instruction of children and occasionally teaching adult women to write. However, although a manual for the market inspector mentions girl's schools with female teachers, narrative sources hardly ever

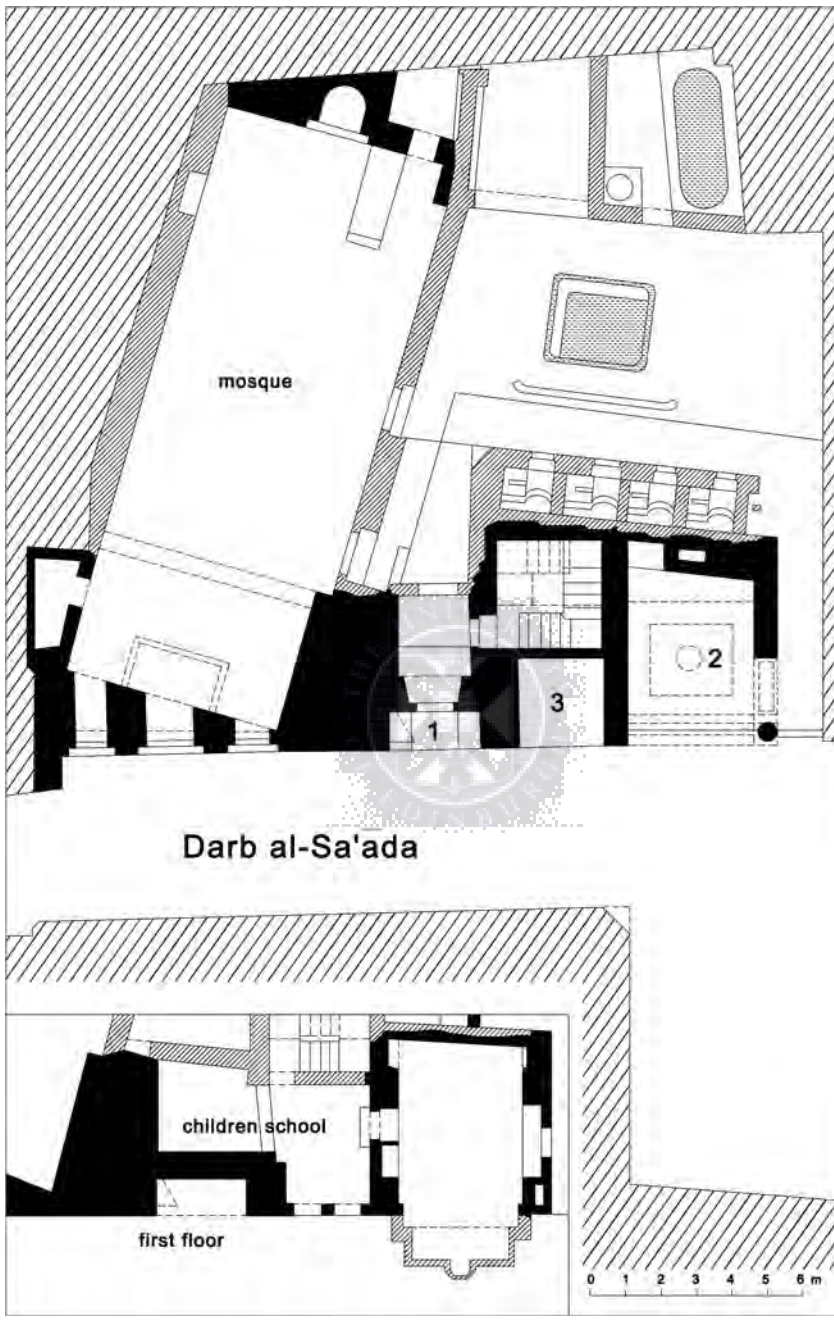


Figure 3.3 Floor plan: Asanbughā (d. 777/1375–6) endowment with school. Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe, Rapport de la deuxième commission, Exercice 1895, pl. XI (redrawn by Gülüstan Değirmenci)

speak of such schools. It seems that schooling for girls took place mainly outside the endowed schools with household tutors and that the number of schools for girls was, similar to medieval England, southern France and Italy, low. Consequently, the biographical dictionaries mention numerous female scholars who had acquired reading and writing skills from relatives outside schools – a phenomenon that they did not register for male scholars. That formalised structures to educate girls hardly existed in Syria, Egypt and North Africa might explain Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's astonishment when he reported from eighth/fourteenth-century Honavar in south-west India where all women mastered the Koran and where he counted not only twenty-three boy's schools, but also thirteen schools for girls.[60]

The prominence of boys in institutionalised instruction appears also in the Ḥarīrī illustrations of children's schools that artists produced in Syria and Egypt during the seventh/thirteenth and the early eighth/fourteenth centuries and that depicted only boys. Plates 2–7 clearly represent the ten boys that al-Ḥarīrī mentions in his text (some illustrations represent the examined pupil as an adult). Later illustrations from the eastern Islamic world accompanying the love story of Layla and Majnūn, by contrast, not only include the female protagonist, but also more girls. Plate 10 has, in addition to the protagonists, eight girls to the right of the teacher and five boys to his left. Plates 9 and 11 have at least one additional girl each. While the gap of some two centuries that separates the illustrations from Syria and Egypt, on the one hand, and those from the eastern Islamic world, on the other, might explain this difference, Plate 8 shows that this is not the only possible explanation. In this eastern illustration, which also goes back to the early seventh/thirteenth century, twelve of the children are girls. The different textual environment of the illustrations precludes sweeping generalisation, because the Arabic material (Plates 2–7) that accompanied the forty-sixth *maqāma* of al-Ḥarīrī describes ten boys, while the Persian material (Plates 8–11) refers to a version of the Layla and Majnūn story in which the future lovers meet in the children's school. However, it is significant that the Persian text could choose a children's school setting for this encounter, whereas the Arabic text assumed as a matter of fact that the children's school had only boys. Arabic narrative sources also did not mention any female scholars who were teachers in endowed or private schools.[61]

Women could not profit from the increasing number of salaried positions that became available in the endowed children's schools, just as *madrasa* endowments excluded them from the increasing number of posts. The exclusion of women from posts in *madrasa* is less surprising as these positions were subject to fierce competition among members of influential

families due to the relatively good salaries and the high prestige that they entailed. However, the salaries for school teachers were quite modest and they hardly ever exceeded a third (Ṣūfī convents of the officer Jamāl al-Dīn and Sultan Barsbay), a quarter (Manṣūrīya Madrasa, endowment of the officer Itmish/Aytmish al-Bujāsī) or a fifth (endowment of Sultan al-Malik al-Muʾayyad Shaykh) of the salary of the *madrasa*'s professor. More often they amounted to less than a seventh of the professor's salary and they were often below even the salaries of the caretaker and the gate keeper. In consequence, the teachers were often entitled, similarly to the orphans, to daily rations of bread and allowances for clothes. That some deeds devolved to the endowment's administrator the task of setting the teacher's salary certainly did not lead to more generous payments and a teacher being obliged to ask for food was not an entirely uncommon phenomenon.[62]

The schoolmasters' low salaries went hand-in-hand with the low esteem in which they were held. The image of the stupid, foolish, crazy, imbecile and retarded teacher was a well-established topos in classical Arabic literature and in later popular works such as the *1001 Nights*. The traveller Ibn Ḥawqal, for example, explained in detail that teaching in children's schools was the lowest of all professions, the basest of all activities and the most reprehensible of all occupations. Posts in children's schools were consequently not the object of rivalries among leading scholars or influential families and these posts did not attract candidates from other regions as the positions in *madrasa*s did. Rather, the spread of endowed schools provided positions for many individuals who would not have had access to the more prestigious posts in *madrasa*s and other institutions. While we find some established scholars teaching in schools, schoolmasters in general did not play any significant role in the learned life of the period. In this was, the increasing availability of posts in children's schools offered salaried positions to individuals who did not have the social and cultural capital to participate in the higher echelons of scholarly life. However, women could not even compete for these teaching positions due to their social marginalisation within the institutionalised world of scholarship. The increasing institutionalisation of cultural practices in the Middle Period and the resulting opportunities to build up cultural and social capital thus entailed exclusion for women from practices in which they had previously been involved. However, as shown in Chapter 2, women continued to play a salient role in informal practices such as the reading sessions.[63]

By contrast, one group that did profit to some degree from the new possibilities that the endowed school offered were illiterate male adults,

because some schools offered not only instruction for children, but in addition explicitly targeted the adult population. In the endowment complex of Sultan Qāyit Bay, for instance, one teacher was responsible for teaching the children, but also for instructing 'the Muslim men who attend'. The deed indicates that this instruction was not limited to Koran recitation, but that the schoolmaster should teach the children and the adults in Arabic script alike. This deed lacks any reference to the usual stipends and allowances for food and clothes for the orphans. It thus seems that this endowment did not so much offer regular instruction for a clearly defined set of pupils who attended on a daily basis, but rather offered instruction that individuals took up occasionally. Those *madrasa*s that included a position for teaching pupils who did not belong to the institution but came from among the inhabitants of the institution's neighbourhood supplemented this widening of the schoolmaster's tasks. In some of these cases teaching was explicitly meant to focus on the written word, such as in the endowment complex of Sultan Barqūq where one schoolmaster was to instruct writing to whoever attended.[64]

In sum, the expansion of the endowed school in Egypt and Syria from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards displays how the two trends of textualisation and popularisation were intertwined. In curricular terms there was a remarkable shift towards practices associated with the written word, including reading, and mnemotechnical skills lost their dominant position. This was also evident in the first methodological reflections on teaching reading and writing. At the same time primary education expanded substantially in the large urban centres, but also in smaller towns and rural areas that enjoyed increased access to primary education. This expansion offered new opportunities as wider groups beyond the social, cultural and political elites started to participate in the reception and circulation of the written word. This entailed a significant spread of literacy and at least for the urban centres in Syria and Egypt reading and writing skills were increasingly common for important sections of the (male) population from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards.

With the increasing textualisation of cultural practices, patrons from the military and social elites considered it to be a matter of course that schoolmasters also taught basic utilitarian skills in reading, writing and mathematics in their endowments. The endowment records underline, for instance, that mathematical skills were of importance and that teaching them was a 'usual' practice. Deeds that do not mention mathematical skills constitute a minority and Ibn al-Ḥājj's censure of Muslim parents who sent their children to Christian schools because these schools purportedly taught mathematics better was limited to individual cases. Patrons

did not thus endow the high number of schools only for pious and charitable purposes, but also out of utilitarian considerations. The children did not only learn Koran recitation, but became acquainted with basic skills that they could also use in their later non-scholarly professions. Most pedagogical treatises as well as manuals for market inspectors mention the prominent role of such utilitarian skills and some of these texts explicitly mention that these skills were necessary for those who were to become traders.[65]

Notes

1. European examples: Orme (2006), 128f. Hebrew examples: Olszowy-Schlanger (2003).
2. On private tutors in the early Islamic period cf. Abū Jibla (1998), 59–85. Private schools that charged fees will not be discussed here as the source material does not allow a systematic comparison with the endowed schools. Arabian Peninsula: ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644, al-Ṣūlī, *Adab*, 30 and Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, III, 356) and ʿUthmān b. ʿUbayd Allāh (ibid. IV, 180), Iraq: al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Hilālī (d. 105/723, ibid. VI, 301 and al-Dhahabī, *ʿIbar*, I, 124), Syria: ʿAbd Allāh b. Zayd al-Jarmī (d. 104/723, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, XXXIII, 567), North Africa (Ifrīqiya): Dabbāgh, *Maʿālim*, I, 151. Umayyad/Abbasid periods: Ṣafwān b. Salīm (d. 132/749, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tahdhīb*, VI, 435); Ashʿab al-Ṭāmiʿ (d. 154/770–1, Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, VII, 175–6); ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAmr al-Awzāʿī (d. 157/774, Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, XLI, 146); Maʿrūf al-Karkhī (d. 200/815–16, Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, X, 88); Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Salām (d. 224/838–9, ibid. XI, 95); Waṣīf al-Turkī (d. 253/867, ibid. XII, 71); al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870, ibid. XII, 114); Ibn Ḥamza (d. 298/910–11, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh*, IX, 234–7). Cf. ʿAlī (1947) for the Fatimid period.
3. Quote: Chamberlain (1994), 140. Short passages: Shalaby (1954), 16–18; Tritton (1957), 1–26; Dodge (1962), 3–5; Stanton (1990), 13–19; Landau (1986). Endowment records: Amīn (1980), 261–75; Sabra (2000), 80–3; Lev (2005), 85–95. Normative sources: Günther (2005), (2006a); Afsaruddin (2005); Shams al-Dīn (1988). One recent publication on Islamic education, Kadi/Billeh (2007), tellingly includes no study that focuses on children's education in the pre-modern period.
4. Narrative sources: for instance, Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, VI, 301 on al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Muzāḥim al-Hilālī (d. 105/723) who ran a children's school in Basra. Mamluk period: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 510 on the Ẓāhirīya al-ʿAtīqa Madrasa, 662/1263; ibid. 239–40 on the Jāmiʿ Āq Sunqur, 747/1346; ibid. 531–2 on the Ḥijāzīya Madrasa, 771/1370; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 827 on the endowed school in the Ṭūlūn-Mosque, 696/1296; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, XXXI, 112–13 on the Manṣūrīya Madrasa, 683/1285. Secondary literature:

cf. Chamberlain (1994), 139–40 who assumes in his study of Damascus that children's schools were synonymous to Koranic schools where recitation played the dominant role and Lev (2005), 92–3 who ascribes only a marginal role to reading and writing skills in the Jewish children's schools of the period.

5. Messick (1993). Ibn Saḥnūn, *Ādāb* (Lecomte, 91–2). Al-Qābisī (d. 403/1012) put a comparable emphasis on recitation in his treatise for teachers (*Risāla*, 112). Ibn Sīnā, *Siyāsa*, 253. Ibn Ḥazm, *Marātib*, 220.
6. Spain: Ibn ᶜAbdūn, *Risāla*, 215: '*al-qirāᵓa wa-al-khaṭṭ al-ḥasan wa-al-hijāᵓ*'. Syria: al-Shayzarī, *Rutba*, 103. Egypt: Ibn al-Ukhūwa, *Maᶜālim*, 170.
7. Writing and mathematics: endowment deed, officer Ṣarghatmish, 757/1356, p. 153. Reading and writing: endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, 760/1359, pp. 408–9. A number of other deeds such as the deed of the officer Sūdūn min Zāda, 804/1401, ll. 301–2 use the same terminology. 'As is customary': endowment deed, Sultan Qāyit Bay (mosque), 879/1474, p. 71, ll. 16ff. and endowment deed, Jawhar al-Lālā, 833/1430. Late Mamluk deed: endowment deed, Sultan Ghawrī (cited in Amīn (1980), 271). Stipulations for schoolmaster: endowment deed, Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq (mosque), 812/1409, ll. 582–8. Inscriptions: Ḥiṣn al-Akrād: children's school at the main mosque (719/1310, *RCEA*, No. 5412); Tripoli: Khātūnīya Madrasa (773/1373, *RCEA*, No. 775005).
8. Exclusive focus on the written word: endowment deed, Sultan Qāyit Bay (Ashrafīya Madrasa), 881/1477, ll. 108–9. Teachers in narrative sources: ᶜUmar b. Muḥammad al-Sarrāj (d. 897/1492, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawᵓ*, VI, 136); ᶜĪsā b. Aḥmad al-Qāhirī (d. 865/1461, ibid. 150–1); Aḥmad b. Asad b. ᶜAbd al-Wāḥid (d. 872/1468, ibid. I, 227–31).
9. Ṣadr: Personal communication by Jean-Michel Mouton (Paris). This *abecedarium* will be published in the forthcoming excavation report. The mid-seventh/thirteenth-century illustration of the *Maqāmāt* in the Istanbul manuscript (Süleymaniye, Esad Efendi 2961, fol. 192) also has manuscripts on a storage rack.
10. English children's schools: Orme (2006), 153. Writing materials in endowment deeds: for instance endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, 760/1359, pp. 408–9 and 432–3; endowment deed, Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq (mosque), 812/1409, l. 595; endowment deed, officer Ṣarghatmish, 757/1356, p. 153; endowment deed, officer Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ustādār, 811/1408, l. 151.
11. For the reuse of paper in Jewish children's schools cf. Olszowy-Schlanger (2003), 56. Al-Maqrīzī: Bauden (2004), 59–76. Medieval Europe: Alexandre-Bidon (1989), 971–80.
12. Tuesday: '*Li-yuaᶜllimahum al-hijāᵓ* [in original '*hijāya*'] *wa-al-khaṭṭ al-ᶜarabī*' (endowment deed, officer Qarāqujā, 845/1441, ll. 156–8). Normative text: Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, II, 316. Ninth/fifteenth-century scholar: Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Fulk*, 28 who first attended the children's schools in the Ḥājibīya Madrasa and subsequently in the Kawāfī Mosque. A similar

division was reported from the North-African Fès in the early tenth/sixteenth century where schools specialised in teaching writing and grammar (Leo Africanus/al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Wazzān al-Zayyātī/al-Fāsī (fl. 957/1550): *Descrittione dell' Africa,* cited in: al-Najjār and al-Zarībī (1985), 70–1).

13. Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 272–3. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa's report on Damascus from the early eighth/fourteenth century seems to confirm this division (Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥla*, 93), but Ibn Baṭṭūṭa most probably copied Ibn Jubayr's passage (on this cf. Mattock (1981), 209–18). Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, tr. F. Rosenthal, 300–4. The similar passage by Ibn al-Azraq, *Badāʾiᶜ*, 364–8 merely adopted Ibn Khaldūn's passage. Cairene school: endowment deed, Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbay, 827/1424, pp. 3–4.
14. Normative texts: Ibn Saḥnūn, *Ādāb* (Lecomte, 86), al-Qābisī, *Risāla*, 134 and later texts such as Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, II, 317. Endowment deeds: endowment of the Wazir Ibn Ḥinnā on the Qarāfa Cemetery (d. 707/1307, Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, IV, 322–3). Autobiographical texts: for instance, Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Fulk*, 28 and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (Sartain (1975), II, 236) who claimed to have learnt the Koran at the age of seven. The historians Ibn al-ᶜAdīm and Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) were more modest and reported that they had completed the Koran at the age of nine (Yāqūt, *Muᶜjam al-udabāʾ*, V, 2084 and Ibn Ḥajar, *Rafᶜ*, I, 85/6). Ibn Sīnā gives an age of ten (Ibn Abī Uṣaybiᶜa, *ᶜUyūn*, III, 3). On the autobiographical genre cf. Reynolds (2001). The importance of early education is also evident in *Legends of the Prophets* that report that Jesus outmatched the schoolmaster on his first day in the children's school (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, II, 20–1). Ibn Khaldūn, *Muqaddima*, tr. Rosenthal, 300–4.
15. For instance, endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Muʾayyad Shaykh, 823/1420 that summoned the professor to use the law compendium by the Hanafi jurist al-Ṭaḥāwī (d. 321/933) (ᶜAlī Pāshā Mubārak (²1986), V, 290).
16. Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Muᶜallimīn*, 64–5 (cf. Günther (2009) on al-Jāḥiẓ's view on education). Ibn Ḥazm, *Marātib*, 221–8. Ibn al-ᶜAdīm: cf. Eddé (1992).
17. Fifth/eleventh century: Ibn ᶜAbdūn, *Risāla*. Syrian manual: al-Shayzarī, *Rutba*, 103. Eighth/fourteenth century: Ibn al-Ukhūwa, *Maᶜālim*, 170.
18. Egyptian author: Ibn al-Ukhūwa, *Maᶜālim*, 172. Ibn al-Ḥajjāj's work was the standard example of texts to be avoided: the copyist Shujāᶜ b. Fāris al-Dhuhlī (d. 507/1113), for instance, later regretted that he had produced copies of Ibn al-Ḥajjāj's poems (al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 501–20, pp. 160–1). Syrian manual: al-Shayzarī, *Rutba*, 104–5. Al-Muḥtasib, *Nihāyat*, 162–3. Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 296. An anonymous sixth/twelfth-century mirror for princes from Syria stated also that children were to be kept from romances and love poetry (*Baḥr al-favāʾid*, 80 and 154–5).
19. Ibn Kathīr: Aḥmad b. Asad (d. 872/1468, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, I, 227–31). Versified grammar (*Alfīyat al-naḥw* by Ibn Mālik, d. 672/1274), legal treatise (*Minhāj al-ṭālibīn* by al-Nawawī, d. 676/1277), *ḥadīth* compendium

(*Mishkat al-maṣābiḥ* by Muḥammad al-Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī, eighth/fourteenth century): Yūsuf b. ᶜAlī al-Qāhirī (d. 854/1450, ibid. X, 324). *Ḥadīth* commentary (*ᶜUmdat al-qāriʾ fī sharḥ al-Bukhārī* by al-ᶜAynī, d. 855/1451), law (*Risāla fī al-fiqh* by al-Shāfiᶜī, d. 204/820): Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz (d. 874/1470, ibid. VIII, 291).

20. Endowment of Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq (*madrasa*, Ṣūfī-convent, mausoleum), 801/1399 to 813/1411 (Mostafa (1968), 71–2). Endowment deed, Ibn Taghrībirdī, 870/1465.
21. On diglossia in the Middle Period cf. Fischer (1982a), I, 45–8; Fischer (1982b), 83–93. On Middle Arabic cf. Blau (2002), (1982). On diglossia in the early Islamic period cf. Blau (1977), 175–202.
22. On the challenges of diglossia in the present cf. Ayari (1996); Abu-Rabia (2000); Saiegh-Haddad (2003). El-Hassan (1978) challenges the usefulness of applying the concept of diglossia to modern Arabic. On medieval Latin Europe cf. S. Reynolds (1996), 22–40; Orme (2006), 55–66. On reading acquisition of Jewish children in the Arab lands cf. Olszowy-Schlanger (2003). Bible: Alexandre-Bidon (1989), 954–61.
23. Al-Zajjājī, *Jumal*, 271–5. For modern studies on defective script cf. Ibrahim, Eviatar and Aharon-Peretz (2002); Azzam (1993); Abu-Rabia (2000), (1998), (1997). Shimron (1993), however, argues that the non-representation of short vowels has only a minor influence on a given language's readability.
24. Biographies: Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī (d. 515/1121–2, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 501–20, p. 392: '*kāna mukhtaṣṣ*^{an} *bi-al-qirāʾa ᶜalā al-shuyūkh li-maᶜrifatihi wa-dhakāʾihi wa-ḥusn qirāʾatihi*'). Abū Nūwās: al-Iṣfahānī, *Tanbīh*, 72. Skipping difficult words: Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Bakrī (d. 656/1258, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 651–60, p. 236) and Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Qaṭṭān (d. 879/1475, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, IX, 248–52). Dismissal: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Jāmiᶜ*, 144–5 on ᶜAmr b. ᶜAwn al-Wāsiṭī (d. 225/840).
25. On an overview of the *taṣḥīf* genre cf. Jamāl (1997), 453–75 and Rosenthal (1947), 24–6. Quote: al-Iṣfahānī, *Tanbīh*, 71. Al-ᶜAskarī, *Sharḥ*. Anecdotes: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Jāmiᶜ*, 145–52. *Taṣḥīf* work: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Talkhīṣ*. The material on this issue in other genres is abundant. Al-Ḥarīrī, for instance, reacted with enthusiasm to a misreading of his *Maqāmāt* when the reader got the diacritics wrong (Ritter (1953), 67–8) and al-Jāḥiẓ, *Ḥayawān*, I, 121–2 commented on a similar misreading on account of the diacritics.
26. Al-Iṣfahānī, *Tanbīh*, 72.
27. Based on Meyerhof (1933), 42.
28. Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 84; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddimat*, 172–4; al-Ghazzī, *Durr*, 257.
29. Al-Qāḍī Iᶜyāḍ b. Mūsā al-Mālikī (d. 544/1149) cited in al-Ghazzī, *Durr*, 262–5.
30. Such as al-Ghazālī's work on studying (al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ*, 132, on this cf.

Giladi (1992), 54ff.) and Ibn Sīnā's reflections on child education (Ibn Sīnā, *Siyāsa*).

31. Autobiographical report of Ibn al-ᶜAdīm (d. 660/1262), in: Yāqūt, *Muᶜjam al-udabāᵓ*, V, 2083, transl. based on Reynolds (2001), 171.
32. *Hijāᵓ*: endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, 760/1359, pp. 408–9; endowment deed, Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq (mosque), 812/1409, l. 584; endowment deed, officer Qarāqujā, 845/1441, l. 156–8. Synonymous: for example, Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, lemma *h-j-w*. Quote: Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān* and al-Fīrūzābādī, *Qāmūs*: '*al-hijāᵓ: taqṭīᶜ al-lafẓa bi-ḥurūfihā*'. The translation of Biberstein-Kazimirski, A. de, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, Paris 1860, *h-j-ᵓ*: 'rassembler les lettres en syllabes' is misleading.
33. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, IX, 218–19. Earlier references to methodology include, for example, Ibn Sīnā's comment that 'the letters of the alphabet are written to him [the pupil]' (Ibn Sīnā, *Siyāsa*, 253: '*wa-ṣuwira lahu ḥurūf al-hijāᵓ*'). On this cf. Günther (2006a), 379.
34. Cf. Grendler (1989), 142–61.
35. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, IX, 218–19.
36. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, IX, 219.
37. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, IX, 219.
38. Olszowy-Schlanger (2003), 59–60.
39. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, IX, 219.
40. On the discussion concerning the *bottom-up*, *top-down* and *whole language* approaches cf. Grabe and Stoller (2002), 33ff; Stanovich and Stanovich (1999), 12–41; Riley (1999), 217–28. Synthetic phonetics: Cullingford (2001), 92–5; Stuart, Masterson and Dixon (1999), 110–18; Riley (1999).
41. Autobiographical reports: Ibn al-ᶜAdīm (d. 660/1262) reported that he started at the age of seven (Yāqūt, *Muᶜjam al-udabāᵓ*, V, 2083) and argued in his treatise on childhood that this was the right age for starting school in general (cf. Eddé (1992), 146; Ibn Ḥajar, *Rafᶜ*, I, 85–6). Ibn al-Jawzī started at the age of six (Ibn al-Jawzī, *Laftat*, 35–6). ᶜAbd al-ᶜĀṭī (1984), 107 assumes in his study of education in the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods that a schooling age of six was standard. The starting point for specialised studies such as in *ḥadīth* was slightly higher: Bulliet (1983), 108–9 shows in his study on Nīshāpūr that the starting age was roughly at seven and a half years old. On the schooling age cf. also Giladi (1992), 53. Normative treatises: al-Shayzarī, *Rutba*, 103 and Ibn Ḥazm, *Marātib*, 220 assumes an entry age of five years. Eighth/fourteenth century: Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, II, 315. Additional time: endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, 760/1359, p. 410; endowment deed, Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq (mosque), 812/1409, ll. 599–602; endowment deed, Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbay, 827/1424, pp. 3–4; endowment deed, officer Sūdūn min Zāda, 804/1401, ll. 302–3. Al-Qābisī, *Risāla*, 147 discussed whether young children and those beyond puberty should be taught together. Time span: a report on tenth/sixteenth-century Fès assumed a period of seven years for attending children's schools (Leo Africanus/al-Ḥasan b.

Muḥammad al-Wazzān al-Zayyātī/al-Fāsī (fl. 957/1550): *Descrittione dell' Africa,* cited in: al-Najjār and al-Zarībī (1985), 70–1). Advanced age: Giladi (1992), 116.

42. On teaching schedules cf., for instance, endowment deeds, Jawhar al-Lālā, 833/1430 and officer Qarāqujā, 845/1441. One schoolmaster per twenty pupils is the standard ratio given in the endowment deeds (cf. also the overview in Sabra (2000), 82–3).
43. Cordoba: Ibn ᶜIdhārī al-Marrākushī (fl. 712/1312–13), *al-Bayyān al-mughrib fī (ikhtiṣār) akhbār mulūk al-Andalus wa-al-Maghrib,* cited in: al-Najjār and al-Zarībī (1985), 65. Cairo: ᶜAlī (1947), 69. Al-Manṣūr Abū Yūsuf: al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XXI, 317.
44. The endowment deed: Ibn Taghrībirdī, 870/1465 reserved, for instance, the places in the school for 'orphans and children of the needy poor' (l. 378). Military: ᶜAbd al-ᶜĀṭī (1984), 123–4; ᶜAbd al-ᶜĀl (1985), 71–2. Notable families: one exception was the school by ᶜAbd al-Laṭīf al-Zaynī (cf. Ibrāhīm (1965–6), 172). Food, clothes, stipend: children's school adjacent to the Ẓāhirīya al-ᶜAtīqa Madrasa (662/1263, al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 504; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 510); children's school in the Manṣūrīya Madrasa (683/1285, Ibn al-Furāt, *Taᵓrīkh*, VIII, 9–10; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, XXXI, 112–13); children's school in the Ṣūfī-convent al-ᶜAlāᵓīya (730/1330, ibid. XXXIII, 306); children's school adjacent to the Ḥijāzīya Madrasa (771/1370, al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 531–2); endowment deed, officer Ṣarghatmish, 757/1356, p. 153; endowment deed, Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq (*madrasa*, Ṣūfī-convent, mausoleum), 801/1399 to 813/1411, p. 110; endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Muᵓayyad Shaykh, 823/1420, l. 666f. ᶜAbd al-ᶜĀṭī (1984) discusses relevant endowment deeds regarding the provision for poor children.
45. Rulers: endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, 760/1359; endowment deed, Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq (*madrasa*, Ṣūfī-convent, mausoleum), 801/1399 to 813/1411; endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Muᵓayyad Shaykh, 823/1420 (cf. Berkey (1992), 336–7). Officers: endowment deed, officer Sūdūn min Zāda, 804/1401; endowment deed, officer Ṣarghatmish, 757/1356; endowment deed, officer Qarāqujā, 845/1441. Political elites: Ibn Ḥinnā (d. 707/1307, Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, IV, 322–3); Qāḍī Yūsuf Ibn al-Ṣāfī al-Karakī, who erected the buildings most presumably before 828/1425 (Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, XIV, 103); endowment, Arghūn al-ᶜAlāᵓī (d. 748/1347, Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, I, 376); endowment, Sayf al-Dīn (d. 750/1349, al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 765). Traders: for instance, ᶜAbd al-ᶜAzīz Ibn al-Marāḥilī (d. 889/1484, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawᵓ*, IV, 213–14), Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Maḥallī (d. 806/1403, al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 469) and Muḥibb al-Dīn (endowment deed, Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Ṭayyib, 934/1528).
46. Rulers/political and military elites: Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ḥasan ordered the founding of a school at the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus (al-Nuᶜaymī, *Dāris*, I, 490), Ẓahīr al-Dīn Mukhtār (d. 716/1316, ibid. II, 287), Tankiz (d. 741/1340, Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, II, 55–62), Sutayta (d. 730/1330, al-Nuᶜaymī,

Dāris, II, 274–5), Sayf al-Dīn Fāris al-Dawādār (ibid. I, 428) and Badr al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Ṭarābulusī (d. 824/1421, ibid. II, 234). Traders: Aḥmad b. Dawlāma (ibid. I, 9f.) and Aḥmad Ibn al-Ṣābūnī (ibid. I, 15). Governors in Aleppo: Meinecke (1992), II, 252, 276, 287, 327, 355. Military and economic elites in Aleppo: officer Aḥmad b. Yaʿqūb b. Abī al-Maʿālī (d. 765/1363–4, Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, I, 358–9), secretary Dāʾūd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Dāʾūd (d. 826/1423, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, III, 212–14) and trader-scholar ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm al-Ḥalabī (d. 786/1384, Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, II, 462). Tripoli/Ḥiṣn al-Akrād: *RCEA*, No. 775005 and 5412. Jerusalem: endowment deed Ṭāriq, 763/1361–2, endowment deed Manjak, 771/1369–70 (with a further school in Gaza) and endowment deed ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ, 834/1430-1. Al-Fayyūm, cf. al-Makīn, *Chronique*, 135.

47. Nūr al-Dīn: Ibn al-Athīr, *Bāhir*, 172; Ibn Jubayr, *Riḥla*, 272; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, I, 284. Narrative sources: evident in chronicles such as Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam* and Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*. Exceptions were schools that belonged to large endowment complexes such as the Fāḍilīya Madrasa by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's secretary al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil (580/1184). Biographies: Cairo: Musāfir b. Yaʿmar (d. 620/1223, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 611–20, p. 514); ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Anṣārī (d. 656/1258, ibid. 651–60, p. 271); ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Mālikī (d. 656/1258, ibid. p. 264); Ṣāliḥ al-Maghribī (d. 657/1259, ibid. p. 317); Zakarīyā al-Mālikī (d. 661/1262, ibid. 661–70, p. 70). Damascus: Shaybān al-Ḥanbalī (d. 620/1223, ibid. 611–20, pp. 481–2); Ibrāhīm al-ʿĀmirī (d. 647/1249, ibid. 641–50, p. 337); Aḥmad al-Anṣārī (d. 650/1253, ibid. p. 438); ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ḥarrānī (d. 656/1258, ibid. 651–60, p. 267); Aḥmad al-Maqdisī (d. 680/1281, ibid. 671–80, p. 339). Alexandria: Aḥmad al-Qurashī (d. 654/1256, ibid. 651–60, p. 162); ʿAlī al-Ṣaʿīdī (fl. 678/1279, ibid. 661–70, p. 308); Muḥammad al-Shāfiʿī (d. c. 684/1285, ibid. 681–90, p. 200); ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Qārī (d. 691/1292, ibid. 691–700, p. 123). Location in city: ʿAbd al-Ḥaqq al-Tamīmī (d. 643/1245) who taught in the mosque in the Damascene Raḥba quarter (ibid. 641–50, p. 337); ʿImād al-Dīn (d. 658/1260) who headed a school in the Damascene Qaṣṣāʿīn quarter (ibid. 651–60, p. 346); al-Jamāl al-Iskandarānī (d. 680/1282) who taught in Damascus below the Fayrūz minaret (ibid. 661–70, p. 350). Among the few exceptions was Badr al-Dīn ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Ṣamad (d. 639/1241) who taught in the Jārūkh school (ibid. 631–40, pp. 406–7; Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 171).

48. Manṣūrīya: Aḥmad b. Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā (d. eighth/fourteenth century, Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, I, 102). Ashrafīya: Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Aḥmad (b. c. 829/1425, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, V, 189–90), Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Shams (fl. 860/1455, ibid. VIII, 270–1). Ṣarghatmishīya: ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 835/1432, ibid. IV, 98–101, cf. also Petry (1981), 338–9). Sulṭān Ḥasan Mosque (founded 757/1356): Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā (d. 840/1436, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, X, 263–4, cf. also Petry (1981), 337–8). Kharrūbīya: Aḥmad b. ʿAlī b. Aḥmad b. ʿAbbās al-Qāhirī (d. 848/1445, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, II, 7–8). Sābiqīya: al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad b.

Ḥasan al-ᶜĀmulī (d. 873/1468–9, ibid. III, 93) and Muḥammad b. ᶜUmar al-Shams al-Qāhirī (886/1486, ibid. VIII, 270). On the Sābiqīya cf. al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 579–82, Meinecke (1980); Petry (1981), 330. Damascus: ᶜAlī b. Baktūt al-Dimashqī, teacher in the school attached to the ᶜĀdilīya al-Ṣughrā Madrasa, (d. 745/1345, Ibn Rāfiᶜ, *Wafayāt*, I, 502–3). Ibn ᶜAbd School: Ismāᶜīl Ibn al-Khabbāz (d. 703/1303, al-Dhahabī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 701–46, pp. 44–5). Examples of later teachers without a named institution: Shaykh Saᶜd (fl. 825/1421, al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, IV, 602), ᶜĪsā b. Aḥmad al-Qāhirī (d. 865/1461, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawᵓ*, VI, 150–1), Muḥammad b. ᶜAbd Allāh al-Khānikī (d. before 890/1485, ibid. VIII, 115), Muḥammad b. Ṣalāḥ al-Shams (d. 855/1451, ibid. VII, 272–3) and Sayyidī Aḥmad (d. 863/1459, ibid. II, 28–9). Baᶜlbāk: Muḥammad b. Muḥammad (fl. 830/1426, ibid. IX, 4). Glass market: Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan (d. 831/1427–8, ibid. I, 280). Bekaa Valley (Khirbat Rūḥāᵓ): Muḥammad b. ᶜUthmān al-Shāfiᶜī (d. 850/1447, ibid. VIII, 141). Residential building: ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd al-Muḥsin (fl. 893/1487, ibid. V, 256–7).

49. Uljāy al-Yūsufī Madrasa: Behrens-Abouseif (2007), 84, 221–3. Normative sources: al-Shayzarī, *Rutba*, 103; al-Muḥtasib, *Nihāyat*, 161; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, II, 313.
50. Behrens-Abouseif (2007), 237–8, 290–1. On the Cairene public fountain cf. Mostafa (1989); on schools under Qāyit Bay cf. al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawᵓ*, VI, 209; on Ottoman schools cf. Behrens-Abouseif (1994), 184, 186–7, 195, 201–2, 213, 216; Raymond (1979).
51. Topographical descriptions: al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taᵓrīkh*, I; Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taᵓrīkh*, I; Ibn Shaddād, *Aᶜlāq* (1956); al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, passim. Location, for instance, in Cairo: Ṣūfī convent (endowment officer Sayf al-Dīn al-Muẓaffarī, d. 750/1349, cf. al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 765, further examples in Fernandes (1988), 77–8, 83–4, 89–90 and 92–3), mausoleum (endowment officer Yūnus al-Dawādār, d. 791/1389, cf. al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 920), hospice (endowment officer Arghūn al-ᶜAlāᵓī, d. 748/1347, cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, I, 376), morgue (*maghsil*, endowment officer Yashbak min Mahdī, d. 885/1480, cf. al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawᵓ*, X, 273), shop (Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan, d. 831/1427–8, taught children in a shop on the glass market, cf. ibid. I, 280), cemetery (endowment on the Qarāfa Cemetery by the Wazir Ibn Ḥinnā, d. 707/1307, cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, IV, 322–3). Rural settlement: al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawᵓ*, III, 307–8.
52. Based on Haarmann's translation in Mostafa (1972), ll, 100–8.
53. On endowments cf. Stillman (2000); Sabra (2000), 88ff and on the Ottoman period Singer (2005). Al-Malik al-Nāṣir: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 272 (quote); al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III, 60; endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, 760/1359, pp. 408–9, 422–3 (cf. Al-Ḥarithy (2001); Kahil (2008), 35–6).
54. Ḥasan al-Nāᵓī (b. 849/1445–6, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawᵓ*, III, 98–9). ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. ᶜAlī b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān (d. 835/1432, ibid. IV, 98–101). Orphans: Yaḥyā b. Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad (d. 840/1436) who lived in the school of the Ḥasan

Madrasa in Damascus after his father had passed away (ibid. X, 263–4); Ibrāhīm Sibṭ Ibn al-ᶜAjamī (d. 841/1437) who entered the endowed school of Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭawāshī in Aleppo after his father's death (ibid. I, 138–45); Yūsuf b. ᶜAlī al-Qāhirī (d. 854/1450) who moved to Damascus to live with his uncle and to enter school after he had been orphaned (ibid. X, 324).

55. On the number of *madrasa*s, cf. Berkey (1992), 46. Āq Sunqur Mosque, 747/1346: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 239–40, cf. Meinecke (1973). Maḥallī Madrasa: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 469. Mithqāl al-Anūkī founded the school in 772/1370–1 and later teachers included al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-ᶜĀmulī (d. 873/1468–9, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawᵓ*, III, 93) and Muḥammad b. ᶜUmar al-Shams al-Qāhirī (d. 886/1481, ibid. VIII, 270). Jerusalem: endowment deeds Ṭāriq and Manjak, 954/1547 referring to schools founded in 763/1361–2 and 771/1369–70.
56. Three years: Ḥijāzīya Madrasa with mausoleum and school, 771/1370 (al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 531–2); Umm al-Sulṭān Madrasa with public fountain and school, 771/1369–70 (ibid. 620–1); Abū Ghālib Madrasa with school, 770/1368 (ibid. 676–7); Abū Bakrīya Madrasa with public fountain and school, 772/1370–1 (ibid. 563–4); Sābiqīya Madrasa with school, 772/1370–1 (ibid. 582). Forty-six schools: Sabra (2000), 82–3. Ninth/fifteenth century: Berkey (1998), 403. Eighth/fourteenth-century normative treatise: Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, II, 313–14.
57. Endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, 760/1359, pp. 408–9, 422–3. Endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Muᵓayyad Shaykh, 823/1420, ll. 666–7. Manṣūrīya Madrasa (683/1285: al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, XXXI, 112–13). Khānqāh of Sultan al-Ghawrī (911/1506: Fernandes (1988), 89–90). Endowment deed, Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbay, 827/1424, pp. 3–4. Endowment deed, Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq (mosque), 812/1409, l. 585. Endowment deed, officer Sūdūn min Zāda, 804/1401, ll. 298–9. Endowment deed, officer Ṣarghatmish, 757/1356, p. 152. On the numbers of pupils in endowed school cf. also ᶜAbd al-ᶜĀṭī (1984), 122. Early ninth/fifteenth century: al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, IV, 803. Endowment deed Jawhar al-Lālā, 833/1430. Endowment deed, officer Qarāqujā, 845/1441, ll. 151–2. Endowment Aḥmad b. Dawlāma (847/1443: al-Nuᶜaymī, *Dāris*, I, 9f.). Similar examples of small schools include the Khātūnīya Madrasa in Tripoli (eight places, 773/1373: *RCEA*, No. 775005) and a late-Mamluk Ṣūfī-convent (seven places, Fernandes (1988), 92–3).
58. Faraj b. Barqūq: Mostafa (1968), 71–2, 76. Khādim Pāsha: El-Masry (1991), 86–7. Endowment deed Jawhar al-Lālā, 833/1430. Endowment deed, Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq (mosque), 812/1409, l. 585. Asanbughā's school: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 563–4.
59. Ibn Ṭūlūn Mosque: Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, I, 197–200. Placards: Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, II, 321–2. Northern Italy: Denley (2007).
60. Normative treatises on mixed instruction: Ibn Saḥnūn, *Ādāb* (Lecomte, 97); Ibn al-Ukhūwa, *Maᶜālim*, 171. Manual for the market inspector:

al-Muḥtasib, *Nihāyat*, 161. Narrative source: the fifth/eleventh-century 'diary' from Baghdad mentioned a 'Dār al-Ajall b. Jarāda li-l-banāt' (Makdisi (1956–7), vol. 19, p. 25). Medieval England, southern France and Italy: Orme (2006), 129; Grendler (1989); Bednarski and Courtemanche (2009). Biographical dictionaries: Khadīja bt. Yūsuf al-Baghdādīya (d. 699/1399, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 691–700, p. 404), Zaynab bt. ʿAlī al-Maḥallī (fl. 894/1488, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, XII, 45), Zaynab bt. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Ṭūkhīya (fl. 892/1486, ibid. XII, 45), Zaynab bt. ʿAlī b. Muḥammad (ibid. XII, 44) and Umm Ḥusayn bt. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 825/1422, ibid. XII, 140). Goitein (1999), II, 183–5, underlines the role of relatives in the instruction of Jewish girls of the period. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥla*, 555.

61. One of the few examples of a female teacher is Khadīja bt. ʿAlī al-Anṣārī (d. 873/1468, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, XII, 29). In the same vein, only very few examples are documented for earlier periods such as Umm al-Dardāʾ (d. 80/700), who taught children in the Damascene Umayyad Mosque (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, Tarājim al-Nisāʾ, 428).
62. On *madrasa*s cf. Berkey (1992), 161–81. Salaries: endowment deed, officer Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ustādār, 811/1408 (teacher: 30 dirhām, professor: 100 dirhām); endowment deed, Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbay, 827/1424 (teacher: 300 dirhām, professor: 1,000 dirhām, Fernandes (1988), 83–4); Manṣūrīya Madrasa, 683/1285 (teacher: 30 dirhām, professor: 133 dirhām, al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, XXXI, 112); endowment deed, Itmish and Aytmish al-Bujāsī, 798/1396 (teacher: 50 dirhām, professor: 200 dirhām, Fernandes (1987), 92–3); endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Muʾayyad Shaykh, 823/1420, ll. 666f. (teacher: 30 nuṣf, professor: 150 nuṣf). One-seventh of professor's salary: endowment deed, officer Ṣarghatmish, 757/1356, pp. 152–3 (teacher: 40 dirhām, professor: 300 dirhām); endowment deed, Ibn Taghrībirdī, 870/1465 (teacher: 300 dirhām (ll. 385–6), gatekeeper (*bawwāb*): 400 dirhām (ll. 353–7), 'caretaker' (*farrāsh*): 500 dirhām (ll. 370–5). Administrator setting the salary: endowment deed Ṭāriq, 763/1361–2. Teacher asking for food: Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, II, 313ff.
63. Topos: Ghersetti (2010), but positive descriptions of teachers can be found in works such as al-Jāḥiẓ, *Muʿallimīn*. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Ṣūrat*, 121. Posts in children's schools: Petry (1981), 80. Examples of 'non-scholarly' teachers in Syria and Egypt during the seventh/thirteenth century cf. al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 621–30, p. 68, 286; ibid. 641–50, pp. 240, 327 337, 438; ibid. 651–60, pp. 99, 162, 200, 264, 267, 271, 317; ibid. 661–70, pp. 70, 72, 97–8, 155, 308; ibid. 671–80, p. 339; ibid. 681–90, pp. 200, 323; ibid. 691–700, pp. 123, 125. On scholars teaching in schools during earlier periods cf. Cohen (1970).
64. Endowment deed, Sultan Qāyit Bay (Ashrafīya Madrasa), 881/1477, ll. 198–9. Similar stipulations are in the deeds of Jawhar al-Lālā (cf. Berkey (1992), 204 and Garcin and Taher (1995)) and Sultan Ghawrī (cf. Amīn (1980), 270). Institution's neighbourhood: Berkey (1992), 203–4.

Endowment deed, Sultan Barqūq, 788/1386, ll. 2184–90 (in the original deed this position did not exist and it was added at a later point, at the earliest in 797/1395).

65. 'Usual' practice: The term '*ʿalā al-ʿādat*' is, for instance, used in this sense in the following deeds: endowment deed, Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq (mosque), 812/1409, ll. 582–3, 588–9; endowment deed, Sultan Qāyit Bay (Ashrafīya Madrasa), 881/1477, ll. 108–9; endowment deed, Sultan Qāyit Bay (mosque), 879/1474, p. 71, l. 16ff.; endowment deed Jawhar al-Lālā, 833/1430, l. 26. Teaching mathematical skills is additionally mentioned in the following deeds: endowment deed, officer Ṣarghatmish, 757/1356, p. 153; endowment deed, officer Sūdūn min Zāda, 804/1401, ll. 301–2; endowment deed, officer Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ustādār, 811/1408, l. 147. Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, II, 326. Muslim pupils could also attend Jewish schools as evident from legal decisions by Jewish scholars (cf. Goitein (1999), II, 177). Manuals for market inspectors: Ibn ʿAbdūn, *Risāla*, 215.

4

Local Endowed Libraries and their Readers

While wider groups of the population started to participate in reading sessions and instruction in reading spread more widely, a new type of library, the local endowed library, developed in Egypt and Syria from the sixth/twelfth century onwards. These libraries were an important venue where new readers in the Middle Period could access the written word and actually translate their skills into individual reading. This chapter's first part discusses the main institutional type of library in earlier periods, the central ruler library, and the closely linked question of how to evaluate reports on the decline of libraries due to warfare, plunder and misappropriation of manuscripts. The second part examines the development of the local endowed library itself. These libraries often had only modest manuscript holdings in comparison with central ruler libraries. Yet they started to make written texts available within a tightly knit network of institutions throughout the urban centres and thus contributed to the textualisation of cultural practices. Patrons within and beyond the traditional boundaries of the political and military elites drove this transformation and in particular wealthy members of the civilian elites, such as traders and secretaries, started to appear more frequently as those who built up and maintained manuscript collections. The chapter's final part turns to the thematic profile of the works that these libraries held. These indicate that the patrons not only founded and maintained the libraries for an audience of scholars, but, rather, that the holdings of such libraries catered also for wider groups of readers in society and played a considerable role in the popularisation of reading practices.

Modern scholarship has repeatedly discussed the numerous manuscript collections and libraries in the Islamic world that existed from at least the third/ninth century onwards. In many of these studies, including Ribera, Pinto, Mackensen, Eche, Endreß, Sirḥān and al-Kattānī, the decline paradigm has retained remarkable influence. Such studies have focused on the purported centuries of cultural blossoming in the Classical Period and have typically ended with the seventh/thirteenth century. References to the ostensibly comprehensive destruction of libraries during the Mongol expansion and the Crusader period often explain the peculiar decision to

stop the discussion at this point. Even relatively recent overviews of the general history of the library and the book, such as works by Lerner and Kilgour, have adopted this vision of the rise and fall of libraries in their respective chapters on the Islamic world.[1]

Decline studies have shared one further characteristic: namely, that narrative texts were the main or often even the exclusive source genre, while documentary sources played only a marginal role.[2] Since the 1960s scholars such as Ghanem, ʿAbd al-Mahdī and Sibai have turned towards the period beyond the seventh/thirteenth century, but often only continued to carry forward this reliance on narrative sources. However, at the same time studies began to appear that did not merely extend the established approach to the 'post-Classical' age, but started to tap the increasingly available documentary sources such as endowment records, manuscript notes and catalogues. Ibrāhīm and Haarmann, for instance, studied manuscript collections in bequests, while Shabbūḥ and Voguet discussed the register of book holdings in the Kairouan Library in modern-day Tunisia. Al-Nashshār, finally, was the first to attempt to integrate documentary-based studies into an overview work. The results of these studies have added substantially to our understanding of manuscript collections and libraries, particularly on the internal organisation of libraries. The following discussion will employ, in addition to the source genres that previous studies have used, library inventories that document specific book collections.[3]

'Library' refers in the following to manuscript holdings that were, at least theoretically, accessible to a wider audience of users in contrast to 'private collections' where the owner controlled access, generally on an *ad hoc* basis. In the Middle Period, such libraries were almost without exception part of larger endowment complexes and the term '*khizāna*' that the sources routinely use never denoted an institution in its own right. Independent libraries that were not part of mosques, *madrasa*s, *dār al-ʿilm*s and other institutions came into existence only in the late eleventh/seventeenth century during the Ottoman period with the founding of the Köprülü-Library in Istanbul. '*Khizāna*' could refer to collections of various sizes ranging from a fully-fledged library with several thousand volumes to a mere book chest or several shelves for storing manuscripts. A ninth/fifteenth-century legal opinion from North Africa, for example, refers to a seemingly quite modest *khizāna* when it discusses whether it was permissible to employ a disused fruit dryer for storing the manuscripts of a mosque. The endowment record of a Cairene *madrasa* merely mentions a modest chest with some shelves. Not only did documentary sources and narrative texts interpret the term in different ways, but illustrators

did so too, with some illustrations pertaining to al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*, for instance, reducing the '*khizāna*' to a small chest with four shelves (Plate 14), while others depicted walls covered with manuscripts (Plates 13 and 15).[4]

The Central Ruler Library and the 'Decline' of Post-Classical Libraries

In the early ninth/fifteenth century the Egyptian encyclopedist al-Qalqashandī, looking back on earlier centuries, stated that three grand libraries had existed in the lands of Islam. The Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, the Fatimid caliphate in Cairo and the Umayyad caliphate in Cordoba had each maintained their own collection. He continued that in his age, however, 'the rulers' interest in libraries has faded. They content themselves rather with libraries in the *madrasa*s as they consider these to be of greater necessity.' Al-Qalqashandī summarised here with his considerable gift for simplification and systematisation the development of libraries over the Middle Period, while simultaneously reducing – again characteristically so – the patrons of the new libraries to rulers and disregarding other groups who founded such institutions. In addition, al-Qalqashandī, like numerous other authors of his period, refers to the three classical libraries merely as an example of the splendour of past empires without showing further interest in providing specific information on them.[5]

The Abbasid Dār al-Ḥikma in Baghdad had its heyday during the reign of the Caliph al-Maʾmūn in the early third/ninth century as a centre for the translation movement of works from antiquity into Arabic. Its role faded when the caliphs' residence was temporarily transferred to Sāmarrāʾ between the years 221/836 and 279/892. Thereafter sources hardly mention this institution and it ceased to play a significant role in the scholarly life of Baghdad. In parallel to the Dār al-Ḥikma, a court library existed that continued to function during and after the transfer of the residence to Sāmarrāʾ. Characteristically, the borderline between the court library and the Dār al-Ḥikma is often unclear as authors considered both libraries to be 'private' collections of the caliphs. A wide scholarly audience could certainly access the Dār al-Ḥikma and the court library, but no act of endowment or any other means ever formalised a 'public' function. This was also the case for ruler libraries other than the three classical libraries, such as those founded in this period by the Buyid ruler ʿAḍud al-Dawla (d. 372/982) in Baghdad and by the Samanid Sultan Nūḥ b. Manṣūr (r. 387/997–389/999) in Transoxania that the young Ibn Sīnā

visited. In both cases the patrons granted access to their collections on an *ad hoc* basis and there are no indications as to whether they were intended for a wide audience.[6]

This private status of the Abbasid collection arguably resulted from disputes during the early Islamic period on whether the endowment of manuscripts was legally permissible. When the Umayyad Caliph al-Ḥakam II (r. 350/961–366/976) founded the library in Cordoba legal scholarship had positively resolved this question, but again only a restricted audience could access this library. The historical significance of this library was also limited because it was only fully functional for one generation after its foundation. While it played a significant role for the image and identity of the Umayyad caliphate – as the Dār al-Ḥikma did for the Abbasid caliphate – the library's importance for cultural practices, even for those of the scholarly group, was rather restricted. Strikingly, as is often the case for early libraries, we have very limited concrete information on titles that the library held and on the basis of documentary evidence only a single manuscript has categorically been ascribed to its stock. Arguably, these libraries were similar to the grand Hellenistic libraries in that they were not so much reading libraries, but served as an expression of the image of the ruling dynasties and offered a working environment for a very limited circle of scholars and literati.[7]

When the Umayyad library came to an end the Fatimids founded the third classical ruler library in Cairo, the Dār al-ʿIlm, which differed from its predecessors in two regards. First, it existed, with some interruptions, for a relatively long period of more than 150 years from 395/1005 to 567/1171. Secondly, this library was meant – at least theoretically – to serve a wider audience. The sources generally agree with al-Maqrīzī's statement from the ninth/fifteenth century that:

> all people irrespective of their position could read (*qirāʾa*) the texts and consult (*naẓr*) them. . . . Individuals of different ranks came, some to read the texts, some to copy and some to study. The users had at their disposition what they needed in terms of ink, quills, paper and desks.[8]

These two characteristics, longevity and relatively open access, were to be typical of the local endowed libraries and the Fatimid Dār al-ʿIlm was in this sense a crucial link in the transition of the central ruler library to the local endowed library.

Thus, the central ruler library of earlier periods catered mostly for a limited readership drawn from the scholarly, and possibly also the political, elites. Nevertheless, they seem to be of utmost importance because the size of their holdings, as quoted in contemporary sources, was impressive.

Yet the numerical information in narrative sources – since we cannot fall back on substantial documentary material for these libraries – cannot be trusted as an approximate quantification of the manuscripts in a library, such as the number of 400,000 titles that authors gave for the library in Cordoba. As this library's catalogue had 1,760 pages, this would have meant that the rather impressive number of 227 titles was found on each page. At the same time, the numbers given for one and the same library are bewilderingly disparate without the authors displaying any concerns about these contradictions.[9]

Disparate figures for a given library occasionally stem from the fact that some scholars gave the number of 'titles', while others referred to the number of 'volumes'. For the latter the authors use the terms *juzʾ* and *mujallad*, which can be translated as volume or quire. A *juzʾ* can refer to (1) a collection of (mostly twenty) folia that constituted a separate (sometimes bound) quire, (2) one of several quires that are bound together and (3) a volume consisting of several quires, while *mujallad* generally referred to either (1) or (3), but not (2). A figure by title (often *kitāb*) counts multi-volume works only once, while a figure by volumes or quires counts each volume separately. Documentary evidence suggests that a figure by volumes for the same collection was some 25 per cent higher than the number by titles. However, these two different systems do not account for cases such as the Fatimid library for which the numbers quoted on the number of titles and volumes in it start at 120,000 or 200,000 and go up to 1,600,000 or 2,600,000 works. They also do not explain that authors gave similarly disparate figures for the number of copies of one specific title: The same library had, according to the chronicler al-Musabbiḥī (d. 420/1030), some twenty copies of al-Ṭabarī's universal chronicle. In the early seventh/thirteenth century, by contrast, the Shiite author Ibn Abī Ṭayy, who was well informed on Fatimid affairs, gave the number of copies as 1,220.[10]

These differences in the sources were unproblematic for the authors because such quantitative statements on manuscript holdings were first and foremost a literary means of expressing concepts such as status and prestige. To this end authors employed especially those numbers that had a strong resonance in the Middle East, multiples of four and seven. This phenomenon continued well beyond the period of the central ruler libraries as a cursory glance at numbers throughout the Middle Period shows. The Andalusian library of the wazir of Almeria in the early fifth/eleventh century, for instance, purportedly had 400,000 manuscripts, as many as the library of Cordoba. In Iraq, the Ḥaydarīya library in the main mosque of Najaf again had either 40,000 or 400,000 manuscripts, whereas the

Fatimid library in Cairo encompassed forty sections, a fifth/eleventh-century Baghdadi scholar endowed 400 volumes and the collection of another scholar was sold in the third/ninth century for 400,000 dirhams. When Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn conquered Amad (Diyarbakir) in 579/1183 he found in the library 1,040,000 manuscripts from which his secretary al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil chose seventy loads for his collection, which itself included some 70,000 titles. Finally, an Egyptian chief judge in the tenth/sixteenth century was said to have misappropriated 40,000 volumes.[11]

The figurative nature of these numbers is particularly evident when the statements in narrative texts are compared with the numbers given in documentary sources that start to become available for the Middle Period. Most of these sources were legal documents, so their authors/writers had less room to manoeuvre in terms of embellishing the numbers. It is striking that not only were the numbers far lower, but also that multiples of four and seven disappeared. The mosque library in the North African city of Kairouan had according to its seventh/thirteenth-century registry only 125 titles, the inventory of the library of the Ashrafīya Mausoleum in Damascus from the same period lists some 2,100 titles, a Cairene endowment record from the early tenth/sixteenth century names 182 titles that form the basis of the library and the endowment of a wealthy scholar in this period consisted of 263 works. As comparable documentary evidence for the ruler libraries does not exist, it can only be assumed that their holdings must have been considerable. Yet they were most probably smaller than the symbolic figures that narrative sources gave to underline the respective dynasty's grandeur.[12]

The figurative numbers for library holdings in narrative sources were closely connected with a second issue that featured highly in reports on libraries: namely, the destruction and plunder of these institutions. Authors often cited such impressive numbers once a library had been dissolved in order to amplify the historical break resulting from a dynastic change, conquest by outsiders or internal revolt. As a literary topos, the destruction of libraries served two purposes: if the enemy attacked one's own libraries the destruction underlined the barbarity of the 'Other', while if one attacked the enemies' libraries the destruction underlined the virtue in destroying the books of unbelievers. The Mongol conquerors of the seventh/thirteenth century under Hulegu were the classical example of the former use of this topos. Arab authors used the destruction of the manuscript collections and libraries of Baghdad to illustrate the Mongols' barbarity and the profound changes that had occurred with the fall of the city to unbelievers, who supposedly hurled the manuscripts into the Tigris. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's panegyrists of the sixth/twelfth century illustrate how the

topos was used in the latter sense. They reported without hesitation that the ruler had ordered the dissolution and plunder of the Fatimid library in Cairo and that his high secretaries had ransacked libraries in newly conquered towns and cities such as Amad and Aleppo without Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn objecting. The topos of the destruction and dissolution of libraries was here thus meant to praise the break with the Fatimid period and to laud the religious credentials of the Ayyubid ruler. However, some authors broke with these conventions and argued, for instance, that the Mongols merely repeated what the Muslim conquerors had done six centuries previously in Persia. Ibn Khaldūn reported that the Muslim conquerors destroyed the manuscripts in Persia so systematically that 'nothing has been transmitted to us from the old Persian sciences'.[13]

Reports on the destruction of libraries were central for the modern paradigm that Islamic libraries experienced a comprehensive decline in the Middle Period. Quatremère's study, one of the first on Islamic libraries, set the parameters in this regard as it was basically a history of the destruction of libraries up until the seventh/thirteenth century and the fall of Baghdad. Yet, while the Mongol conquests caused wide-scale destruction in many regions, the evidence for the actual destruction of libraries is far from convincing. There is, for instance, evidence that libraries continued to function throughout the conquest period and that patrons founded several new libraries in the conquered area during the Mongol period. Not all manuscripts that the Mongol troops had plundered during the conquest of Iraq, parts of Syria and northern Mesopotamia perished and many of them constituted the foundation stock of the Marāgha library (unsurprisingly with some 400,000 volumes). Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), who was responsible for setting up the library and completing its stock, was able to acquire substantial holdings in Iraq just a few years after the Mongol conquest.[14]

Two decades after the conquests, the most important library in Baghdad, which was located in the Mustanṣirīya Madrasa, was still (or again?) of a sufficient size to warrant two posts to run it, the librarian and the inspector (*mushrif*). Private collections also survived the conquests without substantial damage. Just as authors had illustrated the fall of Baghdad with the topos of library destruction, the same occurred when the Ilkhanid troops conquered Damascus in 699/1300. Al-Dhahabī, for instance, implied in his biographical dictionary that the loss of the manuscripts in the Ḍiyāʾīya Madrasa was comprehensive. However, numerous manuscripts in the Syrian National Library contradict this as they carry endowment notes showing that manuscripts from the library of this *madrasa* survived the plundering.[15]

The use of the destruction or dissolution of libraries as a topos also clearly appears in reports on Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's conquests. In contrast to the narrative sources, which imply their wholesale destruction during the expansion of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's realms, the history of the manuscript collection of the Sultan's secretary al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil tells of a different and more complicated process as many manuscripts found their way into new collections. Al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil built up his personal library from the spoils of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's expansion in Syria, northern Mesopotamia and Egypt, especially from the Fatimid library in Cairo and the mosque library in Amad. He endowed a significant part of the collection (sources refer to up to 100,000 titles) to the Fāḍilīya Madrasa in Cairo that he set up in 580/1184. His collection remained in this *madrasa* for over a century until the famine of 694/1294, when students bartered the manuscripts for bread or sold them for next to nothing. Although the manuscripts were thus dispersed, they did not disappear because new owners subsequently integrated them into their private collections or endowed libraries. Rather than destruction, the main characteristic of the fate of the manuscripts was thus that they continuously changed hands and legal status. Over a period of 120 years the manuscripts had their status changed from being part of a (Fatimid) endowment, to (al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil's) private property, back to an endowment (in the Fāḍilīya Madrasa), back again to private property (during the 694/1294 famine) and in the next decades many of them reappeared in different endowed libraries.[16]

In addition, al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil did not endow all of his manuscripts in his *madrasa*, but bequeathed a significant part (the sources give the figure of 70,000) to his son al-Ashraf Aḥmad, whom we have already encountered as one of the readers of the *History of Damascus*. Al-Ashraf's collection experienced a similar pattern, back and forth between private and endowed status, over the course of the next decades. Some thirty years after he had inherited the collection, the Ayyubid ruler of Cairo confiscated his private property in 626/1229 and used al-Ashraf's manuscripts to build up a library in the citadel. Part of the collection was, however, returned to al-Ashraf (some 10,000 volumes), who in turn endowed some of them in the Umayyad Mosque from where many were subsequently transferred to the library of the Ashrafīya Mausoleum (named after the Damascene ruler, not al-Ashraf Aḥmad). Remarkably, the dissolution of the Fatimid library and the complicated processes of continuously restructuring its holdings did even not entail the systematic destruction of specifically Shiite titles. Some of them reappeared, for instance, in the stock of the (Sunni) Ashrafīya Mausoleum, such as the *ḥadīth* collection of ᶜAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, a treatise proving his *imāmat* and a report on the martyrdom of

his son, Ḥusayn. The example of other libraries, such as the Damascene Sumaysāṭīya Khānqāh in which other manuscripts plundered under Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn from the mosque in Aleppo reappeared, indicate that the restructuring of dissolved libraries in new collections and libraries was a recurrent phenomenon.[17]

Beyond doubt, not all dissolutions of libraries were just processes of restructuring, and conquests or revolts destroyed numerous manuscripts over the centuries. Especially during religious conflicts such as those with the Muᶜtazilīs or the Ismāᶜīlis libraries tended to vanish. In Aleppo, for instance, the main mosque's library was plundered during conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites in the fifth/eleventh century. Some years later, about 460/1067–8, the Fatimid Caliph al-Mustanṣir ordered the destruction of a library in the city that included the writings of a former Fatimid propagandist (*dāᶜī*) who had fallen from grace. In addition to this conflict-related destruction the usual losses occurred as a result of incidents such as the fire in the library of the Cairene citadel in 691/1292. In this incident some of the manuscripts that had been confiscated from al-Ashraf Aḥmad perished, but servants of the palace sold on other works. As manuscripts were valuable, promised their owners social prestige and played a crucial role for cultural practices the wilful destruction of libraries remained the exception. The process of restructuring a library's stock in private collections or libraries during invasions, crises, catastrophes and revolts was recurrent and the change between private and endowed status was a characteristic phenomenon of this process.[18]

Misappropriated manuscripts generally followed the fate of the collection of al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil. Like him, other owners of such manuscripts endowed them after some decades in another library, restoring their previous legal status. A pertinent example of this is the Cairene Maḥmūdīya Madrasa where the librarians and users again and again depleted the holdings. During the tenure of the first librarian 130 of the originally 4,000 volumes disappeared, under his successor the stock dropped by another 400 volumes and subsequent librarians, such as the Hanafi chief judge Muḥammad Ibn al-Shiḥna (d. 890/1485), also enriched their private collections with texts from the Maḥmūdīya library. When the authorities centralised the historical manuscript holdings of Cairo in the late nineteenth century this library contained only fifty-eight works. However, the remaining manuscripts were not all lost and a large number of texts with endowment notes from the Maḥmūdīya Madrasa are still in Istanbul, where the Ottoman conquerors took them in the early tenth/sixteenth century. Among them are endowment notes on the biographical dictionary of al-Dhahabī and the universal history of Miskawayh. Owing to the

interplay between endowed and private status, the transfer of endowed manuscripts in one's own collection was not an unusual element in biographies of scholars. For instance, descendants found several hundred manuscripts from endowed libraries in the estate of an Egyptian scholar in the ninth/fifteenth century and a chief judge assembled a substantial collection (sources give the number as 40,000 volumes), mostly manuscripts from which he had removed the endowment notes. While this judge had a dubious reputation, the case of Ṣāliḥ al-Bulqīnī (d. 868/1464) was different. Although over 1,000 endowed volumes were found in his private collection, his biographers described him in positive terms and did not imply that he was of questionable character.[19]

The recurrent changes between the endowed and private status of manuscripts seem at first glance to be irregular and arbitrary, but these changes allow for insights into social processes of transformation and changing cultural practices. In an immediate sense the transfer of stock often indicated an institution's decline and the marginal importance of its library for social and cultural practices. The administrator of the Cairene Ṣāḥibīya Bahā'īya Madrasa, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 813/1410), for instance, took possession of the library's holdings shortly before his death and after he had passed away the manuscripts were dispersed into numerous private collections. Legally, this constituted a clear case of misappropriation by Shams al-Dīn, a fifth generation descendant of the *madrasa*'s founder. However, at the point that he took possession of the manuscripts scholars held hardly any lectures in the institution and some years later it ceased to function in its entirety. The misappropriation of the manuscripts was thus rather an acknowledgement that the *madrasa* was about to stop teaching after 150 years of existence and it ensured not only some wealth for Shams al-Dīn and his descendants, but also a relatively systematic process of transferring the texts into new collections and libraries. A second example from fifth/eleventh-century Baghdad shows that contemporaries could explicitly employ this rationale. When contemporaries criticised a librarian for removing the endowment notes from manuscripts and selling them he could argue that the library's income had drastically declined and was no longer able to fund his salary. The institution's library had furthermore lost its significance, he underlined, due to the foundation of the Niẓāmīya Madrasa with a considerably larger holding. The sale of the manuscripts was thus also a reaction to the changed cultural landscape of the city that had marginalised this relatively small library (estimated at some 400 volumes).[20]

The restructuring of holdings could indicate, in addition to such institutional changes and the transformation of the cultural landscape of a city

or region, the relative economic decline of a region. The foundation of the Niẓāmīya Madrasa and similar institutions by the Saljuk Wazir Niẓām al-Mulk not only diminished the role of other libraries in Baghdad, but also enlivened the trans-regional manuscript market. On account of the increased demand for manuscripts in order to build up the new institutions' libraries, the Iraqi scholar ᶜAbd al-Salām al-Qazwīnī (d. 488/1095) travelled to Egypt where he was able to buy large quantities of low-priced manuscripts during a famine and to present some unique copies to Niẓām al-Mulk. The combination of cultural efflorescence in Iraq with the crisis in Egypt encouraged others to follow al-Qazwīnī, such as an Iraqi manuscript merchant who agreed with the Egyptian physician Afrāʾīm b. al-Zaffān to purchase his collection of 10,000 volumes. The sale was only aborted due to the intervention of the Egyptian Wazir al-Afḍal, who bought the volumes from Afrāʾīm to prevent their transfer to Iraq.[21]

The characteristic element in the development of libraries during the Middle Period was thus not one of decline due to the destruction of libraries, but rather one of changes between endowed and private status. To transfer an endowed manuscript into a private collection was theoretically illegal and scandalous, as endowment deeds always stipulated that the manuscripts were inalienable. Modern scholarship has occasionally taken up this normative perspective and has depicted such changes of status as one of the main factors for the purported decline of libraries in the Mamluk period.[22] However, the fate of al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil's collection had already shown that the interplay between endowed status and private status was not a major impediment to the availability of the written word.

The Development of the Local Endowed Library

Restructuring the stock of libraries became especially common with the rise of the local endowed library when a multitude of smaller institutions started to hold works. Although these libraries often had only a few books, the sheer number of them ensured a steady process of founding new and dissolving existing libraries. Local endowed libraries had their origin in the eastern Islamic world, where institutions such as *madrasa*s with substantial manuscript holdings started to spread from the fourth/tenth century onwards. The evolution of these libraries within the framework of the endowment closely resembled that of the children's schools which also, up to that point, had no stable legal framework. The first such libraries came into existence in Persia, for example, in Qazwīn, and in Iraq, such as the libraries in the *dār al-ᶜilm*s in Mosul, in al-Karkh close to Baghdad and in Basra. The endowed libraries of this transition

period in some ways still resembled the ruler libraries. The one in Basra, for example, was endowed by the Buyid ʿAḍud al-Dawla and, like non-endowed ruler libraries, it was open only to a limited audience. However, two unique characteristics are evident in this transition period. First, the founders came from a wider variety of backgrounds and included not only the Buyid Wazir Sābūr (Shābūr) b. Ardashīr (d. 416/1025-6, al-Karkh), but also scholars such as Muḥammad al-Jaʿfarī (Qazwīn) and Jaʿfar Ibn Ḥamdān (Mosul). Secondly, wider access became more apparent. The library in Qazwīn, for example, was located at the main mosque and the library in Mosul, like the Fatimid library, was open to all with writing materials provided for the needy.[23]

The growth of the local endowed library in northern Mesopotamia, Syria and finally Egypt slowly started in the fifth/eleventh century and gained pace during the sixth/twelfth century. For instance, in northern Mesopotamia, the Marwanid officials al-Ḥusayn al-Maghribī (d. 428/1037) and Aḥmad al-Manāzī (d. 437/1045) founded libraries in Mayyāfāriqīn and Amad. In Syria, the first ruler of the Banū ʿAmmār dynasty in Tripoli, Amīn al-Dawla al-Ḥasan (d. 464/1072), set up a *dār al-ʿilm* with an endowed library and in most other Syrian cities, as discussed in Chapter 3, endowments, often including libraries, were established in the Zangid Period under Nūr al-Dīn (d. 569/1174). Some decades later al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil founded his *madrasa* in Cairo with a large library that included manuscripts from the Fatimid library. However, Syrian and Egyptian cities experienced the development of a tight network of local libraries only in the seventh/thirteenth century. Narrative and documentary sources report this process in abundant detail and modern scholarship has compiled lists of these institutions. These libraries were not only part of *madrasa*s and mosques, but also of other institutions, such as hospitals, the different types of Ṣūfī convents and mausoleums. This spread of libraries went beyond the boundaries of the large metropolises and in Egypt, for instance, patrons founded numerous libraries beyond Cairo in the Middle Period. Counting the libraries in *madrasa*s alone, Alexandria had twenty-five, Qūṣ sixteen, Adfū five, Aswān three and libraries were also set up in minor towns such as Isnā, Asyūṭ, Akhmīm, Qanā, Luxor, al-Fayyūm, Damietta, Bilbays and al-Maḥalla.[24]

The rise of the local endowed library from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards with their multitude of small holdings meant that, compared with the central ruler library, the number of manuscripts held by each institution was rather modest. The figures that documentary evidence gives for the foundation stock of local endowed libraries were consequently quite low. An early tenth/sixteenth-century endowment record

for a mosque library in Cairo lists 182 titles for setting up the library. Another record from the eighth/fourteenth century vaguely refers to a 'chest with shelves' that was provided for the possible later endowment of manuscripts. The founder had thus provided the chest but not the manuscripts and he seemingly did not expect a large stock to develop. Ottoman libraries that are significantly better documented confirm the impression that local endowed libraries, initially at least, had quite modest foundation stocks. These foundation stocks often consisted of less than a hundred manuscripts and in one specific example the library of a *madrasa* seemingly had only eighteen manuscripts. Even the endowments of Maḥmūd Pāsha, Grand Wazir of Sultan Mehmed II, were rather modest. After the conquest of Constantinople he endowed two *madrasa*s with libraries of 195 and 84 manuscripts, respectively. However, the newly discovered inventory of the library in the Damascene Ashrafīya Mausoleum with over 2,000 titles indicates that there is more to the story and that foundation stocks could be significantly larger. This library is of particular significance in this regard as it was by no means an important library within the city and as it was part of an institution that never attracted scholars of high repute.[25]

In addition, even if the foundation stock of many libraries was rather unimpressive the supplementary endowments could not only secure a library's upkeep, but could significantly augment the number of manuscripts. One scholar, for instance, endowed 106 titles in the Cairene Azhar Mosque in the late ninth/fifteenth century, but some decades later another endowment augmented this collection with a further 263 works. The scale of these figures corresponds with other collections for which we have documentary evidence, such as the late eighth/fourteenth-century inventory of a minor Jerusalemite scholar that lists 138 titles. Narrative sources give higher figures, such as the officer ʿIzz al-Dīn who endowed 500 volumes in the Umm al-Khalīfa Mausoleum in Baghdad and the Cairene secretary Ibn al-Bārizī who handed 500 volumes to the library of the newly established Muʾayyadīya Madrasa. These figures seem credible as larger supplementary endowments such as these also appear in documentary evidence, for instance, in the early tenth/sixteenth century when a Damascene scholar endowed his private collection of 600 titles to a *madrasa*. Originally, this collection had included even more manuscripts, but one of the scholar's students had already bought parts of it. Kohlberg has shown in his detailed study that the scholar Ibn Ṭāwūs held a private collection in Baghdad of some 1,500 titles, but in this and other cases it is not clear whether or not these manuscripts were endowed.[26]

The seventh/thirteenth-century inventory of libraries in Aleppo that

listed a selection of titles in the city's libraries gives an impression of the titles available in a specific city. The unknown author of this fascinating inventory did not state his criteria for selecting the titles he included, but he almost exclusively listed works by Muslim authors. In addition, he had a clear preference for literary works, especially from the fields of *adab* and poetry that constituted some 45 per cent of the 915 titles. By contrast, religious sciences (with some 24 per cent) and the natural sciences have a relatively marginal position in the list. The author did not even list standard titles such as the grand compendia of law and the *ḥadīth* compendia of Muslim and al-Bukhārī. Consequently, it can be assumed that this inventory represented only a small number of the titles that were available in Aleppo in this period and it gives an idea how many more titles from the religious and natural sciences were in circulation in the libraries of *madrasas*, *dār al-ḥadīth*s and hospitals of a – when compared with Cairo and Damascus – second-rate city such as Aleppo in the Middle Period.[27]

A final indicator for the size of holdings in local endowed libraries is the existence of librarians. The libraries in most institutions were of a sufficient size to routinely employ librarians and provisions for librarians and their salaries were a standard feature in endowment records, not only for the large institutions but also for the smaller ones. Even the endowment record for the mausoleum of Ibn Taghrībirdī, which included a children's school but no *madrasa*, provided, as previously mentioned, a salary for the librarian. As Berkey has argued, the fact that we have little information about the librarians in many of these smaller institutions and that biographical dictionaries hardly ever mentioned them, does not indicate that the number of librarians was low. Rather, most of these librarians were simply not prominent enough to be mentioned in the dictionaries and they were probably just as elusive as their counterparts in medieval English libraries. Librarians are known by name only in the case of the large libraries, such as the one in the Maḥmūdīya Madrasa in Cairo.[28]

The salaries for librarianships show that they were indeed not prestigious positions. The librarian generally earned as little as a teacher in a children's school – as seen in the previous chapter, one of the lower paid officials – but occasionally even less and in many cases the librarianship was presumably only a part-time position. Such evidence from endowment records is somewhat problematic as the salaries only reflected the size of the foundation stock. The substantial supplementary endowments that augmented the number of manuscripts sometimes necessitated the employment of a deputy librarian, even though the endowment record had not mentioned this position. In addition, the biographies of scholars

who reached some prominence give evidence of further librarianships that would have remained unknown if their career had taken a less fortunate course. Ibn Ṭūlūn, for instance, mentioned in the early tenth/sixteenth century four librarianships that he held in Damascus, two of which were in mausoleums.[29]

By the late seventh/thirteenth century Syrian and Egyptian cities thus had a network of local libraries of considerable size and these libraries developed three characteristics that differentiated them from the central ruler library: longevity; social diversity of the founders; and access for wider sections of the population. The longevity is evident in many examples such as the library of the Cairene Maḥmūdīya Madrasa that was founded in 797/1395 and some 120 years later was still of sufficient significance to cause a conflict between the Shafi'i and the Hanafi chief judges. The Ḍiyāʾīya Madrasa in Damascus was established with a library in the 630s/1230s. Despite being plundered in 699/1300, chronicles named librarians who worked in it and reported that scholars misappropriated – once again – large parts of its stocks some two centuries after its foundation. The library of the Ashrafīya Mausoleum in Damascus, to cite a final example, also started to function in the 630s/1230s. Some 150 years later it was still deemed important enough to be controlled by a chief judge and the list of scholars who held the Ashrafīya's professorship stretches at least up to the ninth/fifteenth century. This increased longevity of libraries is noteworthy because, as discussed in Chapter 3, endowments in general were often unstable and could swiftly disappear. This was also the case for some endowed libraries, but in general they provided a stable institutional framework that clearly set these libraries apart from private collections in residences of scholars and ruler libraries.[30]

The stability of local endowed libraries was closely linked to their second characteristic feature, the social diversity of their founders, which started to widen in the Middle Period to include members of the elite who were not rulers. As founding and funding these libraries was widely distributed within society and not bound to one specific ruler or dynasty these libraries were better equipped to survive political changes. Among the founders were immediate members of the political elite such as Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's secretary al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil and Baybar's Wazir Ibn Ḥinnā in Cairo, as well as the Ayyubid Wazir Majd al-Dīn al-Ḥārith in Damascus. Those founders who acted in proximity to the political elite also belonged to this group, such as the historian Ibn Taghrībirdī, who provided for a library in his mausoleum. In the Mamluk period especially leading officers started to play a prominent rule, such as Sayf al-Dīn Mankūtamur in the seventh/thirteenth century and ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Ṭaybars, ʿIzz al-Dīn

Aydamur, Sayf al-Dīn Ṣarghatmish and Saᶜd al-Dīn Bashīr al-Jamdār in the following century. Among the founders were also women who belonged to the ruling dynasty or the political–military elites, for instance, Khawand al-Ḥijāzīya, daughter of the Sultan al-Malik al-Saᶜīd and the Sultan's mother, Khātūn.[31]

Yet more interesting and more characteristic of developments in the Middle Period were those founders who were not directly associated with the political–military elites. Most prominent among them were scholars, including Abd Allāh al-Bādarrāʾī, who collected manuscripts throughout his life and set up the *madrasa* of the same name in Damascus. Part-time scholars who succeeded in their non-scholarly careers played an especially important role, as they had the required financial resources at their disposal to found large libraries. The scholar and trader Ḥasan b. Muḥammad, for instance, endowed a significant manuscript collection for the study circle that he established in the Umayyad Mosque and Ibn al-Buzūrī, also a trader and scholar, provided for a library in his mausoleum. Finally, members of the civilian elite who displayed no notable involvement in scholarly activities recur as patrons of libraries, such as the trader Ibn Rawāḥa who made sure that his Damascene *madrasa* included a substantial library. Evidently, rulers continued to endow libraries and the transition from ruler libraries to local endowed libraries did not mean that their contribution disappeared completely. However, their libraries were few among the many new libraries founded in the Middle Period and they lost their hitherto dominant position – a development that was to continue in the Ottoman period where the founders of libraries in the eleventh/seventeenth centuries display a comparable diversity.[32]

Because libraries rarely had a stable stock of manuscripts it is not sufficient to focus exclusively on the founder in order to understand the new social context of libraries. As discussed above, the misappropriation of manuscripts from libraries was not always tantamount to their decline, but was often part of the interplay between endowed and private status with users purloining manuscripts that were to reappear some time later in a different endowment. Consequently, those persons who added titles to an existing endowment in order to guarantee the libraries' upkeep or expansion were of similar importance to the original founders themselves. In this – relatively unexciting – process of reconstituting libraries, rulers played hardly any role and scholars took on the most prominent role. At least seven scholars augmented, for instance, the stock of the aforementioned Ḍiyāʾīya Madrasa in the decades following its foundation. Many of the scholars who engaged in such partial endowments originated from the grand scholarly families, such as the Banū Ṣaṣrā in Damascus, who, like

the successful part-time scholars, possessed the necessary financial means to replenish the stock of libraries.[33]

Such supplementary endowments by scholars could even form the very basis of libraries that rulers had formally set up. When the Damascene ruler founded the ᶜĀdilīya Madrasa in the seventh/thirteenth century, for example, manuscripts from the estate of the scholar Quṭb al-Dīn formed the basis of its library. In the same vein, supplementary endowments were crucial for the continuing existence of libraries that rulers had established. Ten years after the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafīya had been founded in seventh/thirteenth-century Damascus, the scholar Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ significantly enlarged the library with an endowment. Other individuals who undertook supplementary endowments were scholars who functioned as officials, such as al-Tiflīsī who acted as envoy and who endowed his manuscripts to the Damascene Sumaysāṭīya Khānqāh. The military elite also played some role in this regard, but members of the civilian elites were especially noteworthy. The trader Maḥmūd b. Dāwūd, for instance, endowed large collections in Damascus and also in Baghdad.[34]

The phenomenon of supplementary endowments was so common that some endowment records explicitly prohibited them. This probably explains why the seventh/thirteenth-century inventory for the library in the Damascene Ashrafīya Mausoleum provided no space for further additions in order that any supplementary endowments, if not banned from the outset, were at least clearly separated from the original stock. The numerous reports on supplementary endowments, however, show that the stipulations of the founders were of little relevance in practice and that libraries that repeatedly attracted such additions to their stock often had numerous separate holdings and book chests. The phenomenon of supplementary endowments affected so many libraries because individuals often spread their collections over several institutions. One place that attracted many of these endowments was the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, where individuals deposited a multitude of manuscript endowments over the course of the sixth/twelfth and seventh/thirteenth centuries. Faced with this issue al-Malik al-Muᶜaẓẓam ᶜĪsā, the city's ruler, persuaded scholars in the early seventh/thirteenth century to merge the increasing number of disparate holdings in one place within the mosque, the Mashhad Ibn ᶜUrwa. Although this initiative was evidently contrary to the stipulations set out in most of these endowments and obliterated the individual character of the holdings, the majority of scholars supported it as the situation had become untenable. It is not clear how long this 'central' library within the mosque retained its position, but it remained at least a significant stock

that employed a scholar as prominent as Ibn Ṭūlūn as librarian in the early tenth/sixteenth century.[35]

The third characteristic change caused by the spread of the local endowed library in the Middle Period was that the written word became accessible at many more sites within the urban setting. While the central ruler libraries had provided much more extensive holdings, the newly arisen and tight network of local endowed libraries widely spread the written word and brought it closer to larger sections of the urban populations. The large endowed libraries in prestigious institutions of learning did not play the most important role in this process because they remained, first and foremost, places where scholars read individually, discussed and studied, as described in narrative sources and also depicted in Plates 13–15. For wider groups of the urban population it was rather the numerous small libraries, such as the Damascene Ashrafīya Mausoleum, that were of prime significance for this process of popularisation.

The number of libraries in a specific city at any given point is not quantifiable, even for the relatively well-documented cases of Cairo and Damascus because, as with children's schools, it is often not ascertainable how long an endowment functioned effectively. However, this network of libraries was continuously tight and the Ashrafīya was, for instance, only one of over seventy mausoleums that al-Nuᶜaymī listed in his work on learned institutions in Damascus during the Ayyubid and Mamluk period, in addition to the larger numbers of *madrasa*s as well as the Ṣūfī convents and other institutions. Not all of these institutions included libraries comparable with the Ashrafīya, but they all held some manuscripts and the relatively insignificant Ashrafīya with its 2,100 titles was in all likelihood not the largest among them. The number of titles available in local endowed libraries of a city such as Damascus was certainly counted at any given point during the Middle Period in tens of thousands. Even without those manuscripts that private collections held, the written word was truly ubiquitous in this period.

The role of the written word in urban societies did not only increase because it became more widely available, but also because endowed libraries were generally open to all users and allowed the borrowing of manuscripts. Theoretically, endowment records for institutions and notes of endowment on manuscripts often prohibited borrowing and normative texts enjoined the librarians to strictly implement these rules. In these cases the user would have read the manuscripts in the reading room of the library (*qāᶜat al-muṭālaᶜa*) that some endowment notes attested. Illustrations such as Plate 14 where most readers hold a manuscript confirm the importance of individual reading practices in libraries. However, the above

examples of 'misappropriation' of manuscripts show that stipulations of endowment, including those concerning lending, were flexible in practice. In the ninth/fifteenth century, the Egyptian scholar al-Suyūṭī tried to legalise the lending of manuscripts, even if it was contrary to stipulations set out in the endowment deed. He argued in his short treatise that it was not the wording of the deed but the founder's intention that was decisive and that manuscripts could consequently be lent to ensure a wider circulation. North African legal opinions on this matter took a similar position and occasionally tried to reinterpret the texts of deeds, for instance, by permitting the reader to borrow more than one volume of a work in contrast to the stipulations set out in the endowment. Scholars could even formally revoke an endowment's stipulations on lending if they considered them to be too restrictive.[36]

As well as this flexible interpretation of endowments that restricted lending, many deeds explicitly endorsed this practice. In these cases manuscripts were to be lent against a deposit and numerous examples show that this was indeed implemented. When the reader of a Damascene library lost one of its manuscripts in the seventh/thirteenth century, the librarian obliged him to produce a new copy of the work from a second manuscript held in the library before returning the deposit. Normative treatises indicate that readers widely exercised the opportunity to borrow, as one work on the correct behaviour of scholars included a lengthy passage on this issue enjoining the reader not to keep the borrowed manuscripts longer than necessary, not to make notes in them and not to lend them to third parties. Those libraries that permitted borrowing hardly put any restrictions on the titles that could be taken out – a Damascene *madrasa* even permitted borrowing the Koran. For the most part stipulations on lending were generous and users could often take out manuscripts for a month or longer. Some endowments attempted to restrict the geographical area to where lenders took the work, for instance, endowment notes from the library of the Damascene Ḍiyā'īya Madrasa stipulated that they could use the manuscripts only within the city. However, founders of endowments had seemingly little hope that users would follow their stipulations and several endowment notes that demanded the payment of a deposit at the same time praised those who returned manuscripts despite not having paid it. Further notes left it to the respective administrator of the endowment to decide whether he allowed borrowing and authorised him to set the specific stipulations.[37]

Borrowing manuscripts – whether legally or illegally – was thus widespread and significantly contributed to the presence of the written word within urban society, in contrast to earlier evaluations in scholarship that

'texts were to be read in situ [in the libraries] and did not circulate'. It was generally left to the reader's discretion how he used the work. Although legal opinions insisted that restrictions on the manuscript's use had to be respected, most endowment deeds and notes do not contain any pertinent passages. If these sources mention the issue they generally permitted the reader to employ it in a wide variety of ways: public lecture, copying, individual reading and/or collation. Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1375) endowed a copy of his historical work, *Iḥāṭa*, to the Saᶜīd al-Suᶜadāᵓ Khānqāh in Cairo. In the manuscript's endowment notes he stipulated that lenders could use it for public lecture (*qirāᵓa*), copying (*naskh*) and individual reading (*muṭālaᶜa*). Some endowment deeds contained such stipulations for the entire library, such as in the ninth/fifteenth-century endowment of Sultan Faraj b. Barqūq where the deed explicitly permitted borrowing manuscripts for the purpose of copying, individual reading and collation. Borrowers occasionally noted down on the manuscript how they used it, such as in Ibn Khaldūn's history: 'Muḥammad ᶜAbd al-Ḥayy al-Kitānī borrowed [this volume] and read it.'[38]

The possibility of using a borrowed manuscript in different ways was especially important for the less affluent reader. Even though we do not yet have a systematic analysis of manuscript prices in the Middle Period, they clearly remained an unobtainable luxury good for the vast majority of the population. Manuscript prices occasionally collapsed, for instance, during the Egyptian famine in 694/1294 or during the economic crisis in the aftermath of the Black Death in the mid-eighth/fourteenth century. However, only few individuals, often from outside the region, could take advantage of this development and in normal periods manuscripts even remained beyond the reach of many students and scholars. Two relatively well-documented examples of large library foundations in Baghdad, in the fifth/eleventh century by the Wazir Niẓām al-Mulk, as aforementioned, and in the seventh/thirteenth century by the Caliph al-Mustanṣir, show to what extent manuscript prices could swiftly rise once demand increased. Since manuscript possession remained the prerogative of small elites, authors took the ownership of manuscripts, together with ownership of estates, as an indicator of wealth until the end of the Middle Period. At the same time, fraud remained a salient feature of manuscript trade in this period, encompassing rather simple practices such as ripping pages from a manuscript in order to buy it subsequently at a discounted price, but also more sophisticated strategies such as the eighth/fourteenth-century imam of a Cairene *madrasa* who forged the origins of manuscripts and ascribed them to famous scholars in order to sell them at high cost.[39]

Owing to these high prices, reading texts in or borrowing them from the local endowed library became a crucial, often the exclusive, venue for wide sections of the population to access the written word. Seventh/thirteenth-century normative treatises urged the student to purchase texts, but conceded that borrowing might be an option if the student did not have the required wealth. It seems that the importance of borrowing manuscripts decreased towards the end of the Middle Period as prices became more moderate. Al-Ghazzī, for instance, based his tenth/sixteenth-century treatise on previous works and often reproduced them verbatim, but the author considerably shortened the passage on borrowing manuscripts and only described this practice as a necessary evil that one should avoid. However, throughout most of the Middle Period borrowing remained central and it had clear social connotations, as shown by the example of the ninth/fifteenth-century librarian of the Maḥmūdīya Madrasa in Cairo, Fakhr al-Dīn ʿUthmān. ʿUthmān lost his position after stocktaking revealed that 10 per cent of the library's holding had disappeared during his tenure, particularly because users had not returned manuscripts. That this library lent out manuscripts at all is noteworthy as its founder had explicitly prohibited this practice, but it is even more striking which two user groups actually took works out. On the one hand, members of the military elite tried to borrow manuscripts, often by offering bribes, and ʿUthmān was dismissed only after he refused to partake in this. The other group that played an important role in his dismissal was the impecunious students to whom he lent manuscripts, in contravention of the endowment's stipulations, out of pity and without taking bribes.[40]

Similar connotations became evident in the case of ʿUthmān's successor in the library, Ibn al-Shiḥna, who again lent out manuscripts. His detractors criticised him, not for contravening the endowment's stipulations, but for restricting his lending policy to the political elite. In this way he made the texts available to a group that could have easily bought manuscripts, while preventing needy students from gaining better access to them. Endowment deeds occasionally reflected these social connotations, such as the tenth/sixteenth-century deed regarding the endowment of manuscripts for the benefit of the Azhar Mosque that stipulated that rulers and the holders of high offices should be barred from accessing them. The same deed underlined that the ascetics, as a religious category, and the poor, as a social category, were those who should benefit from the texts. Normative treatises took up this social dimension and al-Subkī enjoined the librarian to 'favour the needy, who only with difficulties purchase manuscripts, to the detriment of the wealthy'.[41]

Profiles of Holdings in Private and Local Endowed Libraries

The tight network of local endowed libraries that distributed the written word more evenly within the urban setting was thus an integral part of the process of textualisation. At the same time, the previous part has alluded to the process of popularisation by demonstrating that these libraries offered wide access that was not only of relevance to the scholarly and political–military elites, but signalled a more profound transformation of the libraries. No inventory of borrowed titles or other documents that might give immediate insight into the actual reading audiences of libraries have come down to us, in contrast to the Ottoman period.[42] In addition, narrative sources and normative sources generally maintain their usual focus on elite groups when reporting on libraries. Endowment records, with their detailed regulations, at least make it clear that external users were a common phenomenon. A ninth/fifteenth-century deed stated:

> If the borrower is not resident in the *khānqāh*, the librarian gives him access to what he intends to borrow. [The borrower] can read it during the day in the *khānqāh* and deposit it for the night with the official so that he can access it again on the following day.[43]

Beyond the scholars, the traders and craftsmen are of interest here as they played a crucial role in the spread of reading practices to wider groups in society and as they particularly profited from the spread of children's schools and the reading skills that were taught in them. They participated in the development of libraries as patrons who founded new institutions and who augmented existing holdings with supplementary endowments, but they were also relevant in a further sense, namely, as potential users of libraries. In the absence of immediate documentary evidence on library users in the Middle Period the following will examine the thematic profiles of holdings as one means of gaining insights into the reading interests that specific libraries served. To this end, the contemporary classifications of fields of knowledge and their differentiation between religious and auxiliary disciplines, on the one hand, and literature and rational disciplines, on the other hand, can be used. The former includes texts on fields such as the Koranic disciplines (commentary and recitation), *ḥadīth*, law, mysticism, theology, as well as prayer books and pilgrim guides in addition to the auxiliary disciplines of grammar, lexicography, morphology and history. Separate from this is the second group including literature, especially *adab* literature, and the rational sciences such as logic, medicine, alchemy, mathematics and philosophy that scholars explicitly or implicitly ascribed to the antique canon of knowledge.[44]

Thematically organised manuscript lists of the Middle Period used these categories. An early tenth/sixteenth-century endowment deed, for instance, listed first the manuscripts in the fields of Koran and *ḥadīth*, followed by law (according to *madhhab*s), philology, grammar, Sufism, medicine and history. Thus, the writer first turned to the religious disciplines (only Sufism comes later), subsequently to the auxiliary sciences (with history as the exception) and finally medicine as the only field in the rational sciences. Most informative for profiles of holdings are the inventories of endowed or private libraries, while other material such as inventories of manuscripts for which a scholar had received rights of transmission cannot be consulted for this end. An example of such a 'transmission list' is the inventory that al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī had with him when he came to Damascus to teach in the fifth/eleventh century. This list has some 474 titles, but it is unclear, as is the case for other such lists, to what extent it did indeed reflect his private collection or at least part of it. Arguably, he 'owned' many of these titles only in the sense of rights of transmission that he had received for these works. In the practice of teaching these works could be read to him from other copies and such an inventory is entirely irrelevant for the actual manuscript collection of this scholar.[45]

Considering those private collections of scholars that can be reconstructed with some certitude it is not surprising to see that the religious disciplines dominated. The scholar Ibn Ṭāwūs built up a considerable collection in seventh/thirteenth-century Baghdad with some 1,500 titles of which 670 are identifiable. Of these titles 75 per cent belonged to the religious disciplines, especially those linked to Koran and *ḥadīth*, law, polemics, eschatology, homiletics and heresiography. This is followed by the auxiliary disciplines and the rational sciences, with 9 per cent each, and *adab* literature with 7 per cent. Some decades earlier an inventory registering the estate of the Damascene scholar al-Kindī recorded a private collection of 761 volumes. The inventory itself has not survived, but we at least have a summary of it according to the main subject areas. This summary is based on volumes, not on titles as in Ibn Ṭāwūs' case, but the relative importance of subject areas can still be established. Religious and auxiliary sciences are again in the first position, with some 65 per cent of the volumes, while the rational sciences and *adab* literature each constitute some 16 per cent of al-Kindī's collection.[46]

The private collection of another Damascene religious scholar, Yūsuf Ibn ᶜAbd al-Hādī (d. 909/1503), has a comparable profile: the religious disciplines constituted 69 per cent of the collection, followed by the auxiliary fields of knowledge with 9 per cent and the rational sciences with 6

per cent. To cite a final example, the religious disciplines again comprised 65 per cent of the manuscripts of a private collection of a ninth/fifteenth-century scholar in Cairo, the auxiliary fields are in second position (but with a significantly high proportion of 23 per cent) and the rational sciences constitute some 7 per cent of the collection. In private collections of scholars there was thus a uniform ranking of the religious, auxiliary, literary and rational disciplines, respectively, with the former two categories representing the large majority of manuscripts in the collections.[47]

This might seem self-evident and narrative sources give the impression that this was also the thematic profile of the holdings in local endowed libraries. However, documentary sources show that the thematic profile of institutional stocks was not so similar to private collections and that in some regards they displayed striking differences. The earliest – and hitherto unstudied – inventory of an Arabic library belongs to the aforementioned Damascene Ashrafīya Mausoleum, where a teacher in Koran recitation was employed. A ruler, the Ayyubid al-Malik al-Ashraf (d. 635/1237), founded the institution itself, but a member of the civilian elite, the aforementioned al-Ashraf Aḥmad, endowed the library of this institution. The inventory of this library with its 2,100 works is not dated, but internal evidence, particularly the absence of later authors, indicates that it was produced shortly after the library had been set up in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century.

Scholarship has repeatedly assumed, owing to the disregard of documentary sources, that such libraries generally reflected the specialisation of the institution to which they belonged.[48] On account of the institutional framework of this library, a mausoleum dedicated to the founder's commemoration and specialised in training scholars in Koran recitation, one might have expected a profile similar to that of the private collections, with a special emphasis on the field of Koran recitation. Indeed, there were hundreds of works in the Ashrafīya library that belonged to the classical religious disciplines, such as Koran recitation, *ḥadīth* and law, and that clearly catered for the reading interests of those scholars who frequented this institution. However, manuscripts belonging to this category constituted only 21 per cent of the stock and thus a significantly lower number than in the private collections of scholars. In addition, the most prominent genre within this category was prayer books that played either none or only a marginal role in the private collections of scholars. The proportion of manuscripts in the Ashrafīya library belonging to the auxiliary disciplines (9 per cent) and the rational sciences (6 per cent) was similar to that of private collections.

The main feature that set the Ashrafīya library apart from the private

collections of scholars was that literary disciplines, namely, *adab* literature and poetry, constituted the most important category. Such works represented 22 and 38 per cent of the holdings, respectively, and take, at almost two-thirds of the entire library, the position that the religious disciplines held in private scholarly collections. The poetry in this category was not 'religious' poetry, such as eulogies on the Prophet Muḥammad, which did exist in this library but belonged to the field of religious disciplines. Rather, it included anthologies of the famous pre-Islamic poets such as Imruʾ al-Qays b. Ḥujr, al-Mutalammis, Salāma b. Jandal, ʿAlqama b. ʿAbada and Umayya Ibn Abī Ṣalt, as well as those of the early Islamic poets such as al-Mutanabbī, al-Buḥturī, al-Sarī b. Aḥmad al-Raffāʾ and Abū Tammām.[49]

Such anthologies were, judging from the number of copies held, seemingly the most popular works. The Ashrafīya library held, for instance, seven copies of the one by al-Mutalammis, fifteen of the one by Salāma b. Jandal and thirteen of the one by al-Sarī b. Aḥmad al-Raffāʾ. Ten copies of Abū Tammām's main work, the anthology *Ḥamāsa*, were available, as were nine copies of extracts from his poetry and seven works commenting upon his poetry. The author with the highest number of works held at the Ashrafīya was al-Mutanabbī: eight copies of his anthology; seventeen commentaries and explanations; and nine further titles with extracts from his work, among them two autographs, were held at the library. The literary profile of the library is also evident in a report that constitutes almost the only evidence that we have of its existence in a narrative source. Here, Ibn Khallikān, the seventh/thirteenth-century religious scholar and expert on poetry, reported that he had found in the Ashrafīya library an anthology of whose existence he had not even been sure.[50]

The Ashrafīya's stock is equally impressive when considering the field of *adab* literature: it held fifteen copies of the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī and al-Thaʿālibī's oeuvre was represented by twenty-two titles, many of these in multiple copies such as eleven copies of his anthology *Yatīmat al-dahr*, as well as four copies of its continuation, *Tatimmat al-yatīma*. As for the religious disciplines, however, multiple copies were rather rare and even the most important works, such as the *ḥadīth* compendia by Muslim and al-Bukhārī were only held in eight and five copies, respectively.[51] Hardly any author who specialised in the religious disciplines even came close to the number of titles held by poets and authors of *adab* works. The only two authors who had some prominence, al-Ghazālī with sixteen titles and Ibn al-Jawzī with fourteen, were still in the back seat compared with poets and authors of *adab* works. For an institution where the only paid position was for Koran recitation, the number of works dedicated to all the disciplines

of the Koran, fifty works, or less than 3 per cent, was strikingly weak. Even the most important sub-group within the religious disciplines, the prayer books, only represented seventy-five works or some 4 per cent of the collection, far fewer than genres such as pre-Islamic poetry.

The profile of the library clearly did not reflect this institution's specialisation, but it does indicate that the library was not exclusively relevant to religious scholars. Rather, readers who were mostly interested in *adab* literature and poetry could find works here. Beyond doubt, these fields were also of interest to many religious scholars, such as Ibn Khallikān, and some of the private collections discussed above also included such works. The interest of religious scholars in *adab* literature had significantly increased by the Mamluk period due to the process that has been described as the 'adabisation' of this group and the 'ulamisation' of *adab*. The profile of scholars' private collections did indeed show a significant number of works from this category. However, it is striking to what extent the emphasis on literary fields in this public endowed library differed from the scholarly private collections, thus indicating that the library also catered for non-scholarly reading audiences.[52]

The Ashrafīya library was a typical local endowed library, whose founder al-Ashraf Aḥmad and his family belonged to the civilian elite of their period. This might explain to some extent the library's broad profile and the rather weak interest in titles on Koran recitation and the religious disciplines. Besides the works of *adab* and poetry it included also other titles that were of relevance to a wider reading audience, for instance, medicine and veterinary medicine. For traders, works such as the fifth/eleventh-century *Pointing to the Excellent Characteristics of Trade* were of relevance, as it gave practical information on issues such as the different types of traders, how to detect deficient goods and how to manage one's capital. Remarkably, there is also a significant proportion of manuscripts with prayers of supplication and invocation. The user of the library thus had access to numerous volumes with titles such as *Prayer that Will Be Answered* and *Prayer Using God's Exalted Names* – again titles that private collections did not routinely include and that were certainly of interest to a wide circle of readers.[53]

The holding of the Ashrafīya library can partly be traced back to the Fatimid library in Cairo and one might object to its being presented as a typical example of local endowed libraries. However, works of the Fatimid library appeared in many libraries of the period and the inclusion of holdings of previous libraries was merely, as argued above, part of the continuous process of restructuring stocks. In addition, the profile of the Ashrafīya library was more than an arbitrary remainder of

a previous library holding as the new owners selectively augmented the stock with additional titles to complete its focus on poetry and literature. Al-Ashraf Aḥmad systematically purchased works of *adab* and poetry so that in addition to the pre-Islamic and early Islamic authors, the grand Ayyubid poets of his period such as Ibn al-Nabīh (d. 619/1222), Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk (d. 608/1211) and Bahāʾ al-Dīn Zuhayr (d. 656/1258) were represented.[54]

It was not exceptional that a local endowed library of the Middle Period such as the Ashrafīya Mausoleum had this profile of genres. From the late seventh/thirteenth century we have the inventory of titles in the libraries of Aleppo. The character of this inventory is entirely different from the Ashrafīya inventory because it focuses on titles in libraries from one particular city, but it also has the advantage of giving an impression of the titles held in more than one library. This inventory was written in 694/1294 when the local endowed library had become widespread in Egypt and Syria. Although this list was not, as argued above, representative of the profile of all libraries in the city, it is striking that the religious disciplines again had a comparatively weak representation with 24 per cent, while *adab* literature and poetry dominated with 45 per cent of the titles. The proportion of titles from the religious disciplines would beyond doubt have been higher if the author had included all works held in the libraries of Aleppo. However, it is significant that the anonymous author wrote an inventory with this distinct profile for which he seemingly expected a significant interest. Thus, when taken together, the Ashrafīya and the Aleppo inventories suggest that the comparatively low proportion of titles on the religious disciplines in the former library – at first glance an anomaly – actually suggests a reading profile of wider audiences. This development was not limited to Syria, but also occurred in Egypt where the library of the Manṣūrīya Madrasa was set up at this point. The original inventory has not been transmitted, but narrative sources report that in addition to the expected canon of works on Koran, *ḥadīth*, law and philology the library held numerous works on *adab* and poetry.[55]

In the course of the Middle Period the prominent role of fields other than the religious and auxiliary sciences in library profiles also started to have an impact on holdings in mosque libraries. Earlier mosque libraries for which we have documentary evidence tended to exclusively hold works from the religious disciplines. The seventh/thirteenth-century inventory of the library in the main mosque of Kairouan, for instance, had 125 titles and half of these works were copies of the Koran, one-third were titles on law and the remaining titles belonged to disciplines such as Koran and *ḥadīth*, while *adab* literature and the rational sciences were completely absent.

The aforementioned early tenth/sixteenth-century Cairene mosque library, by contrast, included works from the rational sciences (14 per cent) and *adab* literature (6 per cent). When compared with the inventories of the Ashrafīya library and of the libraries in Aleppo it is clear that the religious disciplines and the auxiliary disciplines dominate with 64 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively. However, taking into account the institutional framework of this mosque library, the appearance of new fields of knowledge in its stock indicates the general trend towards more diverse themes and genres.[56]

The inclusion of these titles also went back to the social background of the library's founder, Muḥibb al-Dīn, who belonged to a family that had gained some prominence on account of his father's position as head of surgeons and orthopaedists. Muḥibb al-Dīn himself had amassed considerable wealth, presumably as a trader, and thus had the typical background of founders of local endowed libraries. A further early tenth/sixteenth-century manuscript endowment for a mosque shows that the profile of Muḥibb al-Dīn's library was not isolated. This endowment provided for two book chests in the Cairene Azhar mosque with a total of 263 titles, of which 39 per cent and 24 per cent belonged to the religious and auxiliary sciences, respectively. Again *adab* and poetry have a rather strong representation, at least for a mosque library, with 13 per cent and the rational sciences a little less with 11 per cent. Too little is known of the endowment's founder, ʿAlī al-Abshādī (fl. 940/1534), to situate him in social terms, but the proportion of rational sciences and *adab* literature in his endowment library is as remarkable as in the case of Muḥibb al-Dīn.[57]

That these titles started to appear in holdings was part of the wider development of local endowed libraries. These libraries were situated in new cultural and social contexts and their founders' backgrounds sometimes resembled those of Muḥibb al-Dīn as a trader and of al-Ashraf Aḥmad as scholar and member of the civilian elite. The increasing diversity of these libraries developed in parallel to two genres that gained in popularity during the same period: collective manuscripts and anthologies. In these works the writers effectively assembled for themselves, or for their customers, 'one-volume' libraries of miscellanea with a remarkable diversity of themes where extracts from literary works might be combined with texts on mysticism, philosophy, occultism, history and poetry. In the anthologies, which will be discussed in the following chapter, a similar broad mixture of poetry and prose, of the useful and the entertaining, the pious and the playful as well as the scholarly and the trivial was intertwined. Scholars had little use for some of these compilations

and their readers and owners were rather traders and craftsmen who could acquire with them basic knowledge, obtain convenient advice and acquaint themselves with learned topics of conversation.[58]

The point that the local endowed library of the Middle Period was part of the process of popularisation is not only evident from the profile of libraries, but also from the way in which library catalogues were structured. Judging from the organisation of some library catalogues from the Middle Period, these were clearly not exclusively directed at 'professional' scholars who regularly worked in the libraries, but served broader audiences. Sources refer to such catalogues as either register (*thabat/ithbāt*) or inventory (*fihrist*) indicating their different functions. The former were lists with a predominantly legal function that registered all those manuscripts that were part of an endowment, while the latter had an applied function and assisted the users of the library in identifying the location of manuscripts. Some libraries, especially the larger ones, had both types of catalogue such as in the Niẓāmīya Madrasa in Baghdad. Examples of legal registers were the documents referring to Muḥibb al-Dīn's and al-Abshādī's tenth/sixteenth-century endowments and it can be assumed that all endowed libraries possessed some kind of such registers. Inventories, by contrast, were not a legal requirement and it is difficult to assess how widespread they were. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that they existed also in some smaller libraries.[59]

Of interest for the present discussion are inventories that assisted readers in identifying manuscripts and in the period under discussion these were, in general, alphabetically organised title catalogues. Taken in isolation, such inventories would have been helpful only for quite educated users who were searching for a specific work and knew its exact title. However, if considered in more detail and in combination with the way that libraries were organised these catalogues gain additional importance and significance because they also offered less educated readers venues to find manuscripts. Contemporary descriptions show that libraries were often organised thematically with the explicit aim of being 'accessible with ease and with minimum effort'.[60] This allowed users either to search for specific titles in the alphabetical inventory or to browse for titles in the respective section of the library. Depending on the size of the library such thematic sections could fill entire rooms, a chest or just shelves as represented in Plates 13 and 15. The reader could browse in such a section, for instance, all titles on Hanbali law, medicine or grammar. Libraries often had lists attached to shelves that named all the manuscripts that were located in the respective section in order to facilitate the search.

In larger libraries it was a rather complicated and awkward process to

comb through the manuscripts on a shelf, a chest or even larger sections of the library. Consequently, cataloguers started to put considerable effort into combining the alphabetical organisation of catalogues with the thematic organisation of the libraries. The catalogue of the Damascene Ashrafīya Mausoleum offers a prime example of these efforts in local endowed libraries. The writer of this document of almost fifty pages did not indicate to what end he produced this title catalogue, which only rarely offered additional information such as the name of the author. The manuscript shows that it was used at some point for a partial revision of the stock as the abbreviation '*ṣ-ḥ*' ('*ṣaḥīḥ*'/'correct') was inserted behind the titles on the first folia. However, most of the folia were clearly not used for a revision and the main purpose of the inventory was arguably to facilitate the identification of titles by combining three layers of organisation. The inventory's principal organisational element was the usual alphabetical order of the titles with twenty-eight main sections for the letters of the alphabet. Within each of the letters we find the second organisational element, a sub-division in large-sized manuscripts, on the one hand, and those in small format, on the other. A similar separation according to the manuscripts' format is evident from Plate 13, where most of the shelves have either two piles with small manuscripts or one pile with large-sized manuscripts, and normative texts on the learned world enjoined the librarian to maintain such a separation.[61]

However, the writer of this inventory skilfully underlay the straightforward alphabetical organisation of the catalogue and its sub-division according to the format with a third organisational structure according to theme. To this end he used fifteen categories to facilitate the possibility of thematic searches. Category three, for instance, was Islamic law, category five history and category ten pharmacology, medicine and veterinary medicine. In the catalogue this meant that ordinal numbers sub-divided the large-sized and small-sized manuscripts of each letter into fifteen thematic categories. For example, the large-sized manuscripts starting with the letter *bāʾ* have in categories three, five and ten, respectively, one legal work, one historical title and eleven titles on pharmacology and veterinary medicine. Plate 1 shows the large-sized titles in categories eight, nine and ten of the letter *alif* with, for instance, eighteen titles in category ten. The category ten that continues on the following folio, includes among others the pharmacological works of Sābūr b. Sahl (d. 255/869), al-Rāzī/Rhazes (d. 313/925?) and Yūḥannā b. Sarābiyūn (fl. third/ninth century). The organisation of the catalogue with its twenty-eight letters, two formats and fifteen thematic categories meant that a three-figure 'class mark' could be assigned to each manuscript. The pharmacological works in Plate 1, for

instance, would have had the class mark A/large/10. The 840 potential class marks that resulted from this three-figure system allowed the number of works in each category to be kept manageable. The writer kept this system up reasonably well throughout the inventory and he correctly assigned almost all titles to their thematic categories so that it was a useful tool for browsing the holding.[62]

The combined alphabetical and thematic system of the Ashrafīya inventory allowed the user to search directly in the catalogue for a given title or to browse it for all titles in a specific thematic category. The latter seems complicated at first glance as the thematic categories were only the third layer of organisation, so the reader had to go through the two format categories for each letter, but the numbers of the categories were clearly indicated in the manuscript and made swift identification possible. That the Ashrafīya inventory primarily served practical purposes is also evident from the occasional information that the reader could find on a manuscript's location, such as '[this manuscript is located at the] beginning of the second shelf'.[63] Such instructions rarely remained valid for long periods, but they show the librarian's attempt to produce an inventory that was more than an abstract legal document. The fact that the manuscripts had their (short) title written either directly on the fore edge or on a piece of paper attached to the binding edge (cf. Plate 15) facilitated the task of finding a manuscript on the shelves. In both cases users could easily read the title because libraries generally stored manuscripts horizontally, as shown by the illustrations.

The scattered documentation does not, yet, allow for the development of Arabic library catalogues over time to be traced in detail. However, narrative sources indicate that thematic organisation became increasingly prominent and by the ninth/fifteenth century some catalogues exclusively used thematic organisation. In the first half of that century the librarian of the Cairene Maḥmūdīya library, for instance, prepared, in addition to the alphabetical catalogue, a further catalogue that used a thematic structure. The shift towards thematically organised catalogues catered for those users who did not want to access one specific manuscript with a title that was known to them, but who wanted to gain an overview of the holdings of the library in a given field. Professional scholars certainly profited from this organisation as well when they wanted to read works in fields that were not their speciality. Yet this organisation was especially helpful for readers who had no advanced scholarly training and who pursued a more general reading interest. For these readers alphabetical catalogues would have been of rather limited use, but they could now start to use library catalogues. This development continued in the Ottoman Period when

libraries increasingly organised their catalogues according to thematic categories. The library of Sultan Beyazit II. (d. 918/1512) in Istanbul, for example, classified the titles into eighteen categories that followed for the most part the standard categories in the classifications of the fields of knowledge.[64]

Both the profile of the local endowed libraries as well as the shift towards thematic catalogues indicate that new groups of readers started to use these libraries and illustrate the process of popularisation. While this was one of the main shifts in the function of libraries during the Middle Period, this was not an exclusive trend and private collections of scholars evidently continued to play a significant role. The rise of the local endowed library in no way marginalised these collections and narrative sources document their continued existence in large numbers. The multitude of local endowed libraries certainly withdrew large numbers of manuscripts from the market, but the increasing availability of the written word throughout the Middle Period easily compensated for this. In addition, the incessant restructuring of libraries offered many opportunities for wealthy individuals to acquire manuscripts, whether in 'legal' or 'illegal' ways. In the scholarly world these private collections continued to have a crucial function for providing access to written texts. Yet their role in wider society was quite limited, because in contrast to the local endowed library – and like the ruler library of earlier centuries – they did not provide regular access as this depended on personal contacts. The scholarly community certainly expected private collectors to grant them access to their collections and they scorned those collectors who did not do so. A ninth/fifteenth-century scholar from Egypt, for instance, held a substantial collection, but did not lend any manuscripts to others and in addition planned to destroy them before his death. Authors of contemporary sources gloatingly reported that the manuscripts of his estate were sold dirt-cheap and that the collection was dispersed.[65]

However, to confine lending to one's closest social environment was considered perfectly acceptable. Numerous verses on lending that users scribbled as margin notes on manuscripts bear testimony to the fact that such restrictions were current and hardly disputed. Those scholars who generously lent titles from their private collections were rather unusual and this trait was specifically highlighted in biographies. Contemporary sources took it for granted that texts held in private collections were rather difficult to borrow: for instance, when a scholar asked a peer to lend him an endowed manuscript that the peer had himself borrowed, the latter refused to do so. The scholar wondered how this colleague would have acted if he had asked him not just to lend an endowed manuscript, but

one that was in his private possession. On account of this unregulated and generally restrained access to private collections, they continued to play a marginal role in the process of popularisation.[66]

The local endowed libraries which spread in Syria and Egypt from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards were thus responding to an increasing interest in the written word by broader social groups beyond scholars. Not all of the aforementioned indicators for this development were novel, such as the peculiar profile of endowed libraries compared with private collections of scholars, especially the salience of *adab* literature and poetry. Touati has described a comparable broadened interest in the written word for fourth/tenth-century Baghdad where the *ẓarīf* milieu including wealthy patricians and partly also the 'middle classes' used manuscripts more widely.[67] These developments were to some extent similar, but it was only in the Middle Period that the library became increasingly distinct from the palace and court. The scattered *dār al-ḥikma*s and *dār al-ᶜilm*s that the political elite had founded cannot be compared with the surge in library foundations that occurred from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards. The sheer quantity of libraries set up at this time indicates the scale and pace of the processes of textualisation and popularisation. It brought with it a number of changes, the most significant of which were the wider availability of manuscripts in the urban setting, access to manuscripts for larger sections of the population and a widening of a library's holdings beyond its institutional identity.

Notes

1. Ribera (1928); Pinto (1929); Mackensen (1936–9), Eche (1967); Endreß (1987); Sirḥān (1997); al-Kattānī (2004); Lerner (1998); Kilgour (1998).
2. This reliance on narrative sources is also evident in contributions such as Ibn Dohaish (1989); Elayyan (1990); Pourhadi (2003); Kügelgen (2005).
3. Ghanem (1969); ᶜAbd al-Mahdī (1980); Sibai (1987); Ibrāhīm (1962); Haarmann (1984); Shabbūḥ (1956); Voguet (2003); al-Nashshār (1993).
4. Earlier terminological differences between '*bayt al-kutub*'/'*dār al-kutub*' or '*bayt al-ḥikma*'/'*dār al-ᶜilm*' (cf. Eche (1967)) ceased to be of relevance in the Middle Period. On the Ottoman period cf. Erünsal (1987), (1989), (2007); al-ᶜAsali (2000). Subtelny (2001) argues that an independent library existed in early ninth/fifteenth-century Bukhārā, but the example discussed seems rather to be a mausoleum library. Legal opinion: ᶜAbd Allāh al-ᶜAbdūsī (d. 849/1446, al-Wansharīsī, *Miᶜyār*, VII, 54–5). Cairene *madrasa*: endowment deed, Itmish/Aytmish al-Bujāsī, 798/1396, p. 474. Narrative texts: Yāqūt, *Muᶜjam al-udabāᵓ*, V, 2071. Scholarship has repeatedly misunderstood '*khizāna*'. Endreß (1987), 458, for instance, argued that Fatimid Cairo had

forty libraries, whereas the sources (cf. Ibn Zubayr, *Dhakhāʾir*, 262) refer to forty self-contained sections within one library.

5. Quote: al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, I, 466–7. On the Abbasid court library cf. ʿAwwād (1986) and Balty-Guesdon (1992); on the three grand libraries cf. Eche (1967); Ḥammāda (1970); Sirḥān (1997).
6. On libraries in *dār al-ḥikma*s cf. al-Daywah'chī (1972). ʿAḍud al-Dawla: al-Muqaddasī, *Divisions*, 395. Nūḥ b. Manṣūr: Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, III, 5–6.
7. On disputes regarding the endowment of manuscripts and libraries cf. al-Sāʿātī (1988) and Eche (1967), 68–74. Umayyad library: Wasserstein (1990–1). Ascription of manuscripts: for the Umayyad library cf. Lévi-Provençal (1934), for the Fatimid library cf. Sayyid (2003). Hellenistic libraries: Chartier and Cavallo (1999), 23–4.
8. Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 502–3. On the Fatimid library cf. Ḥasan (1937); Khoury (1981).
9. Wasserstein (1990–1), 99.
10. *Juzʾ/mujallad*: Kohlberg (1992), 79. Documentary evidence: endowment deed, ʿAlī al-Abshādī al-Azharī, 919/1513 (263 titles and 329 volumes); endowment deed, Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Ṭayyib, 934/1528 (182 titles and 240 volumes); endowment deed, ʿĪsā al-Maghribī al-Zawāwī, 878/1474 (106 titles and 127 volumes). Figures for Fatimid library: Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, I, 203; Ibn al-Ṭuwayr, *Nuzhat*, 126-8; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 358; Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, II, 210. Al-Ṭabarī: al-Musabbihī, *Nuṣūṣ*, 17; Ibn Abī Ṭayy cited in Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, II, 210; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XII, 286.
11. Richter-Bernburg (1998) hints at the importance of the number 40 and its multiples for statements on library holdings. On the symbolic value of numbers cf. Conrad (1987), 230–7, (1988). Almeria: Wasserstein (1990–1), 99. Najaf: Sibai (1987), 96. Cairo: Ibn Zubayr, *Dhakhāʾir*, 262. Baghdad: Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XVI, 276. Third/ninth century (ʿAbd Allāh al-Nīsābūrī): al-Qifṭī, *Inbāh*, II, 128. Amad: Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, III, 146. Al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil: al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, XVIII, 341. Chief judge: al-Ghazzī, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 367–8.
12. Kairouan: Shabbūḥ (1956); Voguet (2003). Damascus: *Fihrist al-Ashrafīya*, fols 246r–270r. Cairo: endowment deed, Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Ṭayyib, 934/1528 (my thanks go to Doris Behrens-Abouseif for granting me access to a copy of this deed) and endowment deed, ʿAlī al-Abshādī al-Azharī, 919/1513.
13. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's panegyrists: Cairo: Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, I, 203 and Abū Shāma, *Rawḍatayn*, II, 210. Amad: ibid. III, 146. Aleppo: Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, IV, 390–1; Ibn Khaldūn, *ʿIbar*, V, 150 and I, 891.
14. Quatremère (1838). Marāgha library: al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 671–80, p. 114. Al-Ṭūsī: pseudo-Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Ḥawādith*, 350.
15. Mustanṣirīya: Ibn al-Fuwaṭī was from 679/1280–1 onwards its librarian (Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, II, 474) and subsequently served as *mushrif* responsible

for supervising the two librarians Jamāl al-Dīn Yāqūt al-Mustaʿṣimī and Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh (Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ*, IV/4, 832 and 333). Private collections: for instance, the collection of Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1266, Kohlberg (1992)). Ḍiyāʾīya: al-Nuʿaymī, *Dāris*, II, 92; al-Dhahabī's report is in his *Taʾrīkh*, 641–50, p. 212; the endowment notes are discussed by Eche (1967), 221–4; on endowment notes in the Ottoman period cf. Kenderova (2002).

16. Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 359 and IV, 462.
17. Confiscation: al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, I, 232–3. Umayyad Mosque: Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 159. Shiite titles: *Fihrist al-Ashrafīya*, fols 265v, 246v, 257v. Sumaysāṭīya: Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, IV, 390–1.
18. On the destruction of libraries during religious conflicts cf. Bashiruddin (1967). Fifth/eleventh century: Ibn al-ʿAdīm, *Inṣāf*, 556. 460/1067–8: al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XVIII, 177. 691/1292: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, III, 683.
19. Maḥmūdīya: Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ*, VIII, 4–5. Ibn al-Shiḥna: al-Sakhāwī, *Dhayl*, 382–4. Endowment notes: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 593–4, note 1; al-Dhahabī: *Taʾrīkh*, vol. Sīra, pp. 6–7; Miskawayh: *Tajārib*, V, 1 and VI, 1. Estate: al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, IX, 248–52. Chief judge: al-Ghazzī, *Ṭabaqāt*, I, 367–8. Al-Bulqīnī: al-Sakhāwī, *Dhayl*, 181.
20. Ṣāḥibīya Bahāʾīya: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 476. Baghdad: library of the historian Muḥammad Ghars al-Niʿma (d. 480/1088, Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XVI, 61–2 and 276).
21. Al-Qazwīnī: al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, V, 121–2. Afrāʾīm: Ibn Abī Uṣaybiʿa, *ʿUyūn*, III, 174–5.
22. Al-Nashshār (1993), 237–9.
23. Qazwīn: al-Rāfiʿī, *Tadwīn*, I, 199. Mosul: Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, II, 794 and al-Sāʿātī (1988), 34–5. Al-Karkh: Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XVI, 48–9, Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, X, 7–8 and al-Sāʿātī (1988), 37–40. Basra: al-Sāʿātī (1988), 36–7 and Ḥammāda (1970), 127–8.
24. Al-Maghribī: Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlāq* (1978), I, 358, 361, 900. Al-Manāzī: Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, I, 143. Amīn al-Dawla: Ibn Shaddād, *Aʿlāq* (1963), 107 and al-Sāʿātī (1988), 48. Fāḍilīya: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 462. Lists of institutions: al-Sāʿātī (1988); Jīdah (2001). Hospitals: library in the Bīmāristān al-Manṣūrī (al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 671–80, p. 312 and al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, VIII, 305–6). Ṣūfī-convents: Saʿīd al-suʿadāʾ Khānqāh (endowment note for this library cited in al-Maqarrī, *Nafḥ*, VII, 105–7), al-Sumaysāṭīya Khānqāh (al-Kutubī, *Fawāt*, I, 270), *zāwiya* of Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā al-Qāhirī (d. 849/1445–6, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, I, 172–3) and *khalwa* (ibid. II, 256). Mausoleum: *turba* of Ibn Taghrībirdī (d. 874/1470, ibid. X, 308), ʿIzzīya *turba* of Ḥamza b. Mūsā b. Aḥmad (d. 769/1367–8, Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalāʾid*, I, 325) and *turba* of Majd al-Dīn al-Ḥārith b. Muhallab (d. 628/1230–1, al-Nuʿaymī, *Dāris*, I, 215 and Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, VIII, 671). Libraries beyond Cairo: al-Nashshār (1993), 100.
25. 182 titles: endowment deed, Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Ṭayyib, 934/1528. Chest:

endowment deed, Itmish/Aytmish al-Bujāsī, 798/1396. Ottoman period: Bilici (1999), 47–53; Erünsal (2007). Damascus: *Fihrist al-Ashrafīya*, fols 246r–270r (cf. al-Nuʿaymī, *Dāris*, II, 291–8 and al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, I, 221 on scholars in this institution).

26. 106 titles: endowment deed, ʿĪsā al-Maghribī al-Zawāwī, 878/1474. 263 titles: endowment deed, ʿAlī al-Abshādī al-Azharī, 919/1513. 138 titles: Haarmann (1984), 329. 500 volumes (Baghdad): Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ*, IV/1, 374. 500 volumes (Cairo): al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV/1, 343. 600 titles: Ibn ʿAbd al Hādī, *Thimār*, introduction, 15–17. 1,500 titles: Kohlberg (1992).
27. *Muntakhab*.
28. Berkey (1992), 197–8. English libraries: Sharpe (2006), 219. Maḥmūdīya: Fakhr al-Dīn ʿUthmān (Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ*, VIII, 4–5); Ibn al-Shiḥna (d. 890/1485, al-Sakhāwī, *Dhayl*, 382–4); Muḥammad al-ʿIbādī (d. 895/1490, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, VIII, 112).
29. On librarians in endowment deeds cf. Amīn (1980), 255ff. Salaries: endowment deed, officer Ṣarghatmish, 757/1356, pp. 152–3 (teacher: 40 dirhām, librarian: 50 dirhām, professor: 300 dirhām); endowment deed, officer Sūdūn min Zāda, 804/1401, ll. 255–300 (teacher: 60 dirhām, librarian: 25 dirhām, professor: 250 dirhām); endowment deed, Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbay, 827/1424 (teacher: 300 dirhām, librarian: 300 dirhām, professor: 1,000 dirhām, Fernandes (1988), 83–4); endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Muʾayyad Shaykh, 823/1420, ll. 597–9 and 666f. (teacher: 30 nuṣf, librarian: 40 nuṣf, professor: 150 nuṣf); endowment deed, Itmish/Aytmish al-Bujāsī, 798/1396 (teacher: 50 dirhām, librarian: 30 dirhām, professor: 200 dirhām, Fernandes (1987), 92–3). Part-time: endowment deed, officer Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ustādār, 811/1408, ll. 140ff. (teacher: 30 dirhām, librarian: 10 dirhām, professor: 100 dirhām); endowment deed, Ibn Taghrībirdī, 870/1465, ll. 353–404 (teacher: 300 dirhām, librarian: 200 dirhām, gate keeper: 400 dirhām, caretaker (*farrāsh*): 500 dirhām). Deputy librarian: for instance, Muḥammad b. ʿUmar (fl. 860/1455) was not only the teacher in the children's school in the Ashrafīya of Sultan Barsbay, but also its deputy librarian (al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, VIII, 270–1). Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Fulk*, 65–8.
30. Maḥmūdīya: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 592–3; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, V, 97; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, IV, 95; al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, V, 143–4 and VIII, 112. Ḍiyāʾīya: al-Nuʿaymī, *Dāris*, II, 92; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Qalāʾid*, I, 138; al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, V, 283. Ashrafīya: al-Nuʿaymī, *Dāris*, I, 506.
31. Al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil: al-Madrasa al-Fāḍilīya, 580/1184 (al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 462). Ibn Ḥinnā: Ṣāḥibīya Bahāʾīya Madrasa, 654/1256–7 (ibid. IV, 476). Majd al-Dīn al-Ḥārith (d. 628/1230–1) endowed a mausoleum (al-Nuʿaymī, *Dāris*, I, 215 and Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mirʾāt*, VIII, 671). Endowment deed, Ibn Taghrībirdī, 870/1465, ll. 392–404. Sayf al-Dīn Mankūtamur: Mankūtamurīya Madrasa, 698/1298–9 (al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 552-4). ʿAlāʾ

al-Dīn Ṭaybars: Ṭaybarsīya Madrasa, 709/1309–10 (ibid. IV, 536–8). ʿIzz al-Dīn Aydamur: Khaṭīrī Mosque, 737/1336–7 (ibid. IV, 252). Endowment deed, officer Ṣarghatmish, 757/1356, p. 152. Saʿd al-Dīn Bashīr al-Jamdār: Bashīrīya madrasa, 761/1359–60 (al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 610–12). Khawand al-Ḥijāzīya: Ḥijāzīya Madrasa, 761/1359 (ibid. IV, 531). Khātūn: Ẓāhirīya Madrasa, 681/1282–3 (al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, IV, 204–5).

32. Abd Allāh al-Bādarrāʾī (d. 655/1257): Bādarrāʾīya Madrasa (al-Nuʿaymī, *Dāris*, I, 207; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XXIII, 332–3; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 651–60, pp. 211–14). Ḥasan b. Muḥammad (d. 747/1347, Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, II, 118). Ibn al-Buzūrī (d. 694/1294, Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Talkhīṣ*, IV/1, 287). Ibn Rawāḥa (d. 623/1226): Rawāḥīya Madrasa (Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 149). On patrons of endowments in Ayyubid Damascus cf. Humphreys (1989), in Egypt and Syria cf. Korn (2004), 80–91; Ottoman period: Bilici (1999).
33. Banū Ṣaṣrā: al-Ḥasan who endowed his manuscripts in the Kallāsa (d. 586/1189–90, al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XXI, 265).
34. Quṭb al-Dīn: Masʿūd (d. 578/1183, al-Nuʿaymī, *Dāris*, I, 361). Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ: ʿUthmān (d. 643/1245, al-Asnawī, *Ṭabaqāt*, II, 133). Al-Tiflīsī: Thābit (d. 631/1234, al-Kutubī, *Fawāt*, I, 270). Maḥmūd b. Dāwūd (d. 728/1328, Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, IV, 57).
35. Prohibition: endowment deed, ʿAlī al-Abshādī al-Azharī, 919/1513. Spreading collections: Ibn al-Birzālī (d. 739/1338) endowed his manuscripts in two *dār al-ḥadīth*s, the Umayyad Mosque and other places (Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIV, 197). Umayyad Mosque: Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 105–6 and 136; al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 661–70, p. 510; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Fulk*, 60.
36. Endowment records: endowment deed, Sultan Muḥammad b. Qalāʾūn, 703/1303; endowment deed, Sultan al-Malik al-Muʾayyad Shaykh, 823/1420, ll. 597–9; endowment deed, ʿAlī al-Abshādī al-Azharī, 919/1513; endowment of the Ẓāhirīya Madrasa in Damascus in 681/1282–3, cf. al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, IV, 204–5. Endowment notes: notes from 797/1395 in volumes of al-Dhahabī's and Miskawayh's works for the Maḥmūdīya Madrasa, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. Sīra, pp. 6–7; Miskawayh, *Tajārib*, V, 1 and VI, 1; various manuscripts from the late Mamluk library of Sultan Qāyit Bay, Nashshār (1993), 92–3. Normative text: al-Subkī, *Muʿīd*, 159. *Qāʿat al-muṭālaʿa*: Binbīn (1988), 427. Al-Suyūṭī, *Badhl*, 134–6. North Africa: al-Wansharīsī, *Miʿyār*, VII, 37, 227–8 and 291. Revocation: al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, II, 368.
37. Damascene library: al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, IV, 210–11. Normative treatise: Ibn Jamāʿa, *Tadhkirat*, 167–9. Lending of Koran: Nashshār (1993), 170–1, *madrasa* of Khawand Baraka, 771/1369. Stipulations of lending: endowment deed, officer Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ustādār, 811/1408, ll. 134–5; endowment note of Ibn Khaldūn's *ʿIbar*, 799/1396 (Binbīn (1988), 417). Ḍiyāʾīya: Eche (1967), 221–6.
38. '*In situ*' quote: Petry (1981), 242. Legal opinion: al-Wansharīsī, *Miʿyār*, VII, 293. Ibn al-Khaṭīb (note dated 768/1366): al-Maqarrī, *Nafḥ*, VII, 105–7. Faraj b. Barqūq: Amīn (1980), 257. Al-Kitānī: cited in Binbīn (1988), 418.

39. On manuscript prices cf. the brief remarks in Déroche (2004), 58–9; Endreß (1982), 272; Ḥammāda (1970), 165ff. 694/1294: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, IV, 462. Eighth/fourteenth century: Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, X, 210. Niẓām al-Mulk: Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, XVI, 306. Al-Mustanṣir: al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, XXIII, 157. Indicator: Aḥmad al-Makīnī (d. 881/1476, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawᵓ*, II, 99–100). Discounted price: ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-Khashshāb (d. 567/1172, al-Dhahabī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 661–70, pp. 268–72). Cairo, eighth/fourteenth century: Muḥammad al-Ḥanafī (d. 864/1459, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawᵓ*, IX, 148–9).
40. Seventh/thirteenth-century treatises: al-Zarnūjī, *Taᶜlīm*, 52 and Ibn Jamāᶜa, *Tadhkirat*, 164. Al-Ghazzī, *Durr*, 251. Fakhr al-Dīn ᶜUthmān: Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāᵓ*, VIII, 4–5.
41. Ibn al-Shiḥna (d. 890/1485, al-Sakhāwī, *Dhayl*, 382–4). Tenth/sixteenth-century endowment deed, ᶜAlī al-Abshādī al-Azharī, 919/1513: '*fuqarāᵓ wa-masākīn*'. Al-Subkī, *Muᶜīd*, 159.
42. Cf. for instance, Deverdun (1944).
43. Endowment record, Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf al-Ustādār, 852/1448, cited in al-Nashshār (1993), 147.
44. Other contemporary classifications are not of relevance here, such as the differentiation between theoretical and applied disciplines, *al-ᶜulūm al-naẓarīya* and *al-ᶜulūm al-ᶜamalīya* (e.g., al-Fārābī, d. 339/950) or between those that were an individual obligation (*farḍ ᶜayn*) and a collective obligation (*farḍ kifāya*) (e.g., al-Ghazālī, d. 505/1111). On classifications of knowledge in general cf. Bakar (1998) and in libraries cf. Eche (1967), 325–30.
45. Tenth/sixteenth-century endowment deed: endowment deed, Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Ṭayyib, 934/1528. Ottoman inventories used similar categories, such as the endowment of the officer Muḥammad Bey Abū al-Dhahab, 1188/1774 (cf. Ibrāhīm 1958); on inventories cf. Witkam (1990–1). Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī: al-Andalusī, *Tasmiyat* (cf. also al-Munajjid (1976), 26–7).
46. Ibn Ṭāwūs: Kohlberg (1992). My quantitative statements are based on Kohlberg's 'index of subjects'. Al-Kindī: Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 98. The application of the categories by Abū Shāma could not be checked as he did not cite the individual titles and the often surprising categorisation of titles in thematic catalogues alerts one to the problems involved in such an endeavour, cf. Behrens-Abouseif (1995); Ibrāhīm (1962).
47. Ibn ᶜAbd al-Hādī: Eche (1967) 286–91. Ninth/fifteenth-century scholar: endowment deed, ᶜĪsā al-Maghribī al-Zawāwī, 878/1474.
48. For instance, Eche (1967), 293–9.
49. *Fihrist al-Ashrafīya*, fol. 245v (Imruᵓ al-Qays), fol. 254r (al-Mutalammis, Salāma b. Jandal, ᶜAlqama b. ᶜAbada), fol. 255r (Umayya Ibn Abī Ṣalt), 251v (al-Mutanabbī, al-Buḥturī, al-Sarī b. Aḥmad al-Raffāᵓ, Abū Tammām).
50. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt*, I, 214.
51. *Fihrist al-Ashrafīya*, fol. 259r (al-Ḥarīrī), fol. 260r (al-Thaᶜālibī, *Yatīmat*), fol. 250v (al-Thaᶜālibī, *Tatimmat al-yatīma*), fol. 255r (Muslim, al-Bukhārī).

52. 'Adabisation': Bauer (2003).
53. Al-Ashraf Aḥmad b. al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil: al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 641–50, pp. 149–51. Library's foundation: Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 159. Trader manual: *Fihrist al-Ashrafīya*, fol. 267r: *al-Ishāra ilā maḥāsin al-tijāra* by Jaʿfar al-Dimashqī (fl. fifth/eleventh century), ed. al-Basharī al-Shūrbajī, Alexandria: Maktabat al-Kullīyāt al-Azharīya, 1977. Prayer books: *Fihrist al-Ashrafīya*, fol. 252v.
54. *Fihrist al-Ashrafīya*, fol. 262v (Ibn al-Nabīh), fol. 251v (Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk), fol. 254v (Bahāʾ al-Dīn Zuhayr).
55. Aleppo: *Muntakhab*: auxiliary sciences 14 per cent, rational sciences 4 per cent. Manṣūrīya Madrasa: Ibn al-Furāt, *Taʾrīkh*, VIII, 9–10.
56. Kairouan: Shabbūḥ (1956) and Voguet (2003). Tenth/sixteenth-century Cairene Mosque library: Behrens-Abouseif (1995).
57. Endowment deed, Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Ṭayyib, 934/1528; endowment deed, ʿAlī al-Abshādī al-Azharī, 919/1513.
58. Collective manuscript: Rosenthal (1955). Anthologies: Bauer (2003).
59. Niẓāmīya Madrasa: Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣayd*, 549/50 (*thabat*) and Ibn al-Ṣuqāʿī, *Tālī*, ar. 140 (*fihrist*). Endowment deed, Muḥibb al-Dīn Abū Ṭayyib, 934/1528; endowment deed, ʿAlī al-Abshādī al-Azharī, 919/1513. Smaller libraries: For instance in the Egyptian Muwaffaq Ribāṭ where the librarian produced an inventory in 878/1473–4 (al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, III, 311–12).
60. Pseudo-Ibn al-Fuwaṭī, *Ḥawādith*, 53–7.
61. The fifteenth letter of the alphabet, *ḍād*, is missing in the catalogue, but an additional category is devoted to incomplete manuscripts (*al-makhāzīm*). Some titles are followed by one or two numbers that presumably referred to the number of volumes and quires. Plate 1 shows, for instance, the second folio of the catalogue that has titles starting with *hamza*. The entries on the upper half of the folio are followed by the numbers 3/41, 2/40 (second copy 1), 1/41, 1, 1/15, 1/40, 1/39, 46, 1/40, 1/42, 1, 1/41, 1, 1/36 and 1/41. Thus, the first title had three volumes with forty-one quires, the second title had two volumes with forty quires and so on. Normative text: Ibn Jamāʿa, *Tadhkirat*, 170–2.
62. The writer must have been well acquainted with the content of the titles in contrast to writers of other contemporary lists belonging to the Geniza collection, who described the manuscripts by external features (size, colour and so on) and showed little acquaintance with their content (cf. Allony (2006)).
63. *Fihrist al-Ashrafīya*, fol. 251r: '*al-ūlā min al-ṣaff al-thānī*'.
64. Eche (1967), 325–30 assumes in his overview of classification systems that they were always thematic. However, he uses mostly narrative sources and the Ashrafīya inventory shows that the praxis was more diverse. Maḥmūdīya: al-Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir*, 283–4. Ottoman period: Erünsal (1987), (2007), 78. Beyazit II: Maroth (2003).
65. Ninth/fifteenth-century scholar: Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Tanūkhī (d. 888/1483, al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, I, 12–13).

66. Marginal notes: Weisweiler (1935), 119. Generosity: for instance, Ismāʿīl Ibn al-Anmāṭī (d. 619/1222, al-Dhahabī, *Taʾrīkh*, 611–20, pp. 443–5). Refusal to lend: Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449, al-Sakhāwī, *Jawāhir*, 283–4).
67. Touati (2003).

5

Popular Reading Practices

The popularisation of reading practices in the course of the Middle Period was in many cases closely linked to the scholarly world: scholars conducted popular reading sessions in which they issued rights of transmission, many of the children's schools were part of institutions of scholarly learning and the same was true for the local endowed libraries. These settings offered numerous possibilities for non-scholars to participate in the performance of the written word and played a crucial role in making reading skills available to wider sections of the population. Yet these scholarly forums for reading did not remain the only venues for accessing the written word. In parallel, reading practices started to develop in which wider sections of the population participated and allowed them to set up their own forums for reading. The gradual formation of these popular forums gave non-scholarly groups considerable agency in the consumption of the written word with regard to issues such as what texts they read and where they read them.

The first part of this chapter will discuss the popular *sīra* or epic, an important type of work that featured in these popular reading practices. It will do so with reference to the three criteria for defining 'popular' reading practices as set out in Chapter 1: the nature of the texts read out (presented by scholarly authors as illegitimate); the setting where the reading took place (generally at some distance to scholarly forums); and the social composition of the group of readers (including many participants from lower social classes). The second part focuses on the issue of 'reading' as it traces the process of this genre's textualisation. The epics emerged out of a mainly oral and aural set of practices, but started to be written down and read out in this period. The following part examines how scholarly authors reacted to this shift of some popular epics into the sphere of the written word. It shows that these authors perceived the double processes of popularisation and textualisation as a challenge to their authority, which made them react with vehemence to the formation of popular forums of reading. The chapter will conclude with an examination of an entirely new role that non-scholarly groups took on due to the emergence of distinct popular reading practices: in the later Middle Period more authors started

to emerge who were not closely integrated into the scholarly world and who directed their texts at a readership that went well beyond the scholarly communities and the literary elites. These authors were catering for new markets and new readers that were no longer attached to the scholarly forums.

The Popular Epic

Popular epics are of particular chronological interest for this study because narrative and normative sources started to mention their production and consumption from the sixth/twelfth century onwards. The epic was obviously not the only genre that started to play a role in the popular practices of reading and a number of studies in recent decades have shown the spread of cultural activities that were not primarily directed at scholars or entertained by them.[1] Nevertheless, the epic best exemplifies how the processes of textualisation and popularisation not only allowed new groups to participate in reading practices situated close to the scholarly world, but also how these developments consolidated popular forums of reading at some distance from it.

Popular epics narrated in prose, rhymed prose and verse the heroic feats, adventures and romantic endeavours of their entirely fictional or pseudo-historical protagonists. These protagonists generally emerge out of a marginal position to claim their pre-destined position through a series of adventures that allow them to display their 'knightly' traits. The five principal epics in Syria and Egypt during the Middle Period were the *Sīrat ᶜAntar(a)* and *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*, which both take place in a Bedouin milieu; the *Sīrat Dalhama/Dhāt al-Himma wa-al-Baṭṭāl*; the *Sīrat Baybars*; and the *Sīrat Sayf Ibn Dhī Yazan*. Additional epics that were of less prominence during this period included, for example, the *Sīrat* (*al-amīr*) *Ḥamza* and the *Sīrat ᶜAlī al-Zaybaq*, the latter being a prime example of an urban narrative.[2]

Closely connected to the genre of the popular epic is the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad, *The Lights* (*al-Anwār*), by 'al-Bakrī', which previous scholarship has discussed in detail. Although it has a distinct focus on the Prophet's life that sets it apart from the standard popular epics, in the eyes of the majority of scholars these works belonged to the same category of condemnable texts and they generally mentioned them in the same breath. The main difference between popular epics and al-Bakrī's work is that pre-modern sources generally ascribed *The Lights* to one particular author. Although al-Bakrī might very well be a fictitious character, this stood in contrast to the other popular epics that were always left

'orphaned'. The scholarly authors never even made an attempt to ascribe them to a real or fictional writer, although many popular epics claimed a long tradition of oral transmission, such as the *Sīrat ʿAntar* that laid claim to the scholar al-Aṣmaʿī (d. 213/828) as its originator. The second main difference between al-Bakrī's biography and the popular epics is that the former moved more easily between popular and scholarly forums of reading. The very fact that scholars read it and occasionally even preferred it to works carrying reading notes attracted the ire of authors such as Ibn Taymīya and al-Dhahabī. Although the popular epic seemingly did not move with the same ease as al-Bakrī's work into scholarly forums of reading, scholars were no less concerned about the challenge posed by the epics to their authority.[3]

Owing to the absence of a manuscript tradition prior to the ninth/fifteenth century it is impossible to establish an exact chronology of the development of this genre and its reception over the Middle Period, but it is evident that the sixth/twelfth century constituted a turning point. The first clear reference to popular epics famously appeared in the well-known autobiography of the mathematician and physician Samawʾal al-Maghribī (d. 570/1175), who reported on reading texts such as the *sīra*s of ʿAntar, Dhū al-Himma/al-Baṭṭāl and Alexander in his early teens in Baghdad. In the same period another physician, Muḥammad Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh (d. c. 560/1164), who was originally from northern Mesopotamia, became known by the relational name 'al-ʿAntarī' because he earned a living at young age by copying or possibly authoring versions of the *Sīrat ʿAntar*. Further evidence comes from a lost *History of Egypt* that its author, al-Qurṭī, presented in the mid-sixth/twelfth century to the Fatimid Wazir Shāwar (d. 564/1169). Al-Qurṭī compared the recitation of the romantic story of the Bedouin girl Salmā and her cousin Ibn Mayyāḥ in his day with the circulation of stories of al-Baṭṭāl, the *1001 Nights* 'and what is similar to this'. Remarkably, we thus have three independent contemporary references to popular epics that demonstrate the extent to which they had become an issue that authors wrote about by the mid-sixth/twelfth century.[4]

It might be argued that this increased number of references to popular literature is simply a result of the survival of more sources that documented this literature compared with earlier centuries. It is likely that elements from these epics, at least of the earlier works, did indeed circulate prior to the Middle Period, for instance, the expression 'the feats of ʿAntar' for acts of bravery was current by the fourth/tenth century. However, none of the sources prior to the sixth/twelfth century explicitly mentioned a popular epic. Even Ibn al-Nadīm in his fourth/tenth-century bibliographi-

cal overview of Arabic texts made no reference to any such title, although he did refer to similar texts such as an early version of the *1001 Nights*, bawdy stories, tales of lovers and legendary histories of ancient peoples. Without doubt, this silence and the abrupt emergence of references in the sixth/twelfth century cannot be taken as evidence that popular epics came into being at this point. Yet the sudden emergence indicates that this was down to more than just the chance survival of sources and suggests that the consumption and circulation of these texts had gained new meanings. This is corroborated by the development of references to popular epics in the course of the Middle Period: The sixth/twelfth-century references were not isolated, but were followed by a continuous stream of references in subsequent centuries.[5]

While early authors merely registered the existence of the popular epics and made no value judgements on their reception and circulation, the tone changed from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards. Scholarly authors now started to criticise these texts in historical and legal works and to present their circulation as a problematic cultural practice. As discussed in the following parts, a social logic underlay the scholarly criticism of popular epics: namely, that the reading of these epics and their written circulation had become of sufficient importance that it challenged – or was perceived to challenge – scholarly authority over the textual transmission of the past. The example of the *Sīrat Dalhama wa-al-Baṭṭāl* allows the development of scholarly interest in popular epics to be traced from the sixth/twelfth century onwards. This epic focuses on the military encounters in the first three Islamic centuries between the Byzantines and the Muslims as well as on rivalries between the Kilāb and the Sulaym tribes. The two heroes of this epic are the female leader of all Muslim troops – the mythical Dalhama – and a shrewd and mighty fighter, the (pseudo-) historical al-Baṭṭāl. The Umayyad commander al-Baṭṭāl was well-known to scholars of the Middle Period who reported on this historical figure in their works.[6]

In the Syrian and Egyptian lands, the detailed biography in Ibn ᶜAsākir's sixth/twelfth-century *History of Damascus* remained the authoritative version of the historical al-Baṭṭāl for the following centuries. Ibn al-Athīr, for example, summarised Ibn al-ᶜAsākir's original version some fifty years later and retained Ibn al-ᶜAsākir's exclusive focus on the historical al-Baṭṭāl with no reference to the popular epic. However, Ibn ᶜAsākir's biography underwent a decisive shift during the subsequent course of its transmission by other authors, as there was less emphasis on the historical al-Baṭṭāl and a far greater emphasis on the al-Baṭṭāl of the popular epic. This shift in the scholarly works was the result of the increasing visibility

of the popular epics in the course of the Middle Period. Eighth/fourteenth-century scholars had thus to a large degree lost interest in the historical figure and had started to devote most available space to discussing his image in the popular epic. This transformation obliged authors such as the historian al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348) to denunciate the 'fabrications' and 'impossible tales' that appeared in the continuously extended versions of the epic. In the following years the Cairene author al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1362) felt moved to devote space to the itinerant storytellers of these 'legendary tales', while the Damascene historian Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) had to condemn its 'foolish and ignorant' consumers. This focus on the popular epic also remained the main characteristic of scholarly writings on al-Baṭṭāl in the ninth/fifteenth century. For Ibn Taghrībirdī (d. 874/1479), for instance, the commoners and their fascination with the numerous epics that mentioned al-Baṭṭāl was his main concern, not the person of the historical al-Baṭṭāl himself.[7]

This new scholarly preoccupation with popular epics focused to a large extent on the texts themselves: namely, that these epics supposedly belonged to genres that were markedly distinct from scholarly works. The popular epics did indeed draw far less than other genres on material that circulated in scholarly works, especially battle narratives of the pre-Islamic Arabs, *ayyām al-ᶜarab*, traditions on pre-Islamic Prophets, *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*, and historiographical reports of the Islamic periods. Consequently, a large number of their protagonists, such as Dalhama, never appeared in scholarly traditions and those that did appear could be quite different from the 'original' personage or could be set into new historical contexts, such as al-Baṭṭāl. For example, ᶜAntar was a well-known pre-Islamic warrior and poet in the scholarly tradition, but travelled in time to fight the Crusaders in the epic. Ḥamza was, at least in the Persian versions of his epic, the Prophet's uncle and he was also described in detail in scholarly accounts on the early Islamic period. However, in the epic he is portrayed as a proto-Muslim even before the birth of the Prophet, while scholarly texts say that he reacted with scepticism to his nephew's early preaching. In addition to their divergent historical material, further elements set these epics apart from scholarly works. While the plurality and diversity of the different epics cannot be disregarded, many of them share a fascination for supernatural forces, spells, miracles and their protagonists' romantic endeavours that would be inappropriate in this form in most scholarly texts. Such narrative elements might very well have appeared in non-popular texts, but the cumulative effect of these elements in the epics contributed to making them inherently popular texts.[8]

Such divergences enabled scholarly authors, especially those of nor-

mative texts, to condemn the content of popular epics and to depict them as entirely alien to scholarly works. In a *fatwā* in early eighth/fourteenth-century Damascus, Ibn Taymīya deplored the fabrications and lies of the *Sīrat Dalhama* and *Sīrat ᶜAntar* and enjoined the rulers to punish those who read or distributed them. Likewise, the Andalusian judge Ibn Qaddāḥ (d. 736/1335) stipulated at the same time that anyone who attended a reading of these two epics could neither lead the prayer nor act as notary witness. In Cairo, their contemporary Ibn al-Ḥājj admonished merchants not to trade with those who were transmitting illicit material such as the *Sīrat al-Baṭṭāl* and *Sīrat al-ᶜAntar*. The *Sīrat ᶜAntar* was also the example used in al-Subkī's work to illustrate the author's warning to market traders not to profit from the illicit word. Historians shared the concerns of these scholars and criticised the *Sīrat Dalhama* especially 'as nothing but lies, fabrication, stupid inventions, ignorance and abhorrent nonsense'.[9]

However, the scholarly line of argument that these popular epics were nothing but fabricated and ridiculous tales often does not hold when the story line of those popular epics that refer to historical figures is compared with the scholarly biographies on the same figures. In contrast to the scholars' attempt to draw a clear line between true scholarship and reliable transmission, on the one hand, and popular imagination and unreliability, on the other, the texts in both categories shared crucial narrative elements. The biography of al-Baṭṭāl in biographical dictionaries and universal histories is a case in point. Despite their condemnation of the 'popular' al-Baṭṭāl, the scholarly authors included in their own passages on the 'historical' al-Baṭṭāl a number of romantic and pseudo-historical anecdotes that appeared also in the popular epic. Among them was one in which al-Baṭṭāl's horse led him to a Greek convent where – after several narrative turns – he finally married the abbess. Another told of how his principal foe, the Byzantine emperor, attended his last moments on the battlefield, cared for him and permitted Muslim prisoners to bury him. In his detailed discussion of al-Bakrī's biography of Muḥammad, Shoshan came to the conclusion that 'it is difficult to understand fully why the *Anwār* was vehemently attacked by medieval scholars' as they often tended to include legendary material of a similar nature. This seems even more puzzling in the case of popular epics, as works such as the *Sīrat Baybars* could quite self-confidently employ a narrative formula and phrases that were analogous or even identical to those used in the historical chronicles.[10]

The reason why scholars mounted attacks on popular epics cannot be explained purely in terms of the content and style of these works. These texts also attracted the ire of scholars for reasons relating to the spatial and the social contexts in which they were read, the two other elements that

characterised the popular practices of reading. The space in which these popular texts were transmitted was not entirely separate from the scholarly world, as was implied in a request to Ibn Taymīya for his legal opinion on those who were transmitting al-Bakrī's work in the main mosques of Cairo. Documentary evidence in particular illustrates how there was some overlap between popular and scholarly reading spaces. A ninth/fifteenth-century endowment deed proscribed, for instance, reading 'anything from the mendacious *sīra* works' in a Cairene *madrasa*. It is most likely that this stipulation referred to the Muḥammad biography by al-Bakrī, but might have included popular epics as well.[11]

Documentary evidence for this overlapping space also comes from the local endowed library of the Ashrafīya in Damascus, which included not only scholarly works, but also popular works in its holdings. The user of this library was able to read there the story of *Dalīla the Crafty* (still entitled *Dalla the Crafty* in the catalogue), which was ultimately included in the *1001 Nights*. This story of a cunning female trickster was closely intertwined with the famous *Sīrat ᶜAlī al-Zaybaq* and narrations on a third character, Aḥmad al-Danaf, all of whom competed for leadership in the criminal underworlds of Cairo and/or Baghdad. The catalogue also lists a *Sīrat Iskandar*, which might refer to the popular Alexander epic that authors sometimes ascribed to the infamous al-Bakrī. This *sīra* centres on the successful worldwide mission of Alexander to convert mankind to monotheism with the support of Saint Khiḍr and is, in terms of narrative structure, style and language, similar to other epics, especially the *Sīrat Sayf Ibn Dhī Yazan*. The title might also refer to the scholarly type of works on the Alexander myth, but the existence of the *Dalīla the Crafty* story in the same library makes it at least feasible that this was a popular epic of Alexander. Thus, even in a library attached to a scholarly institution popular works could be found side by side with scholarly works.[12]

While this documentary evidence highlights that there was a common space shared by scholarly and popular reading practices, scholarly authors did not focus in their narrative texts on this overlap. Rather, they focused on places that were at some distance from the scholarly world and beyond the main sites of scholarship, such as *madrasa*s, Ṣūfī convents, mosques and mausoleums – as much as they strove to depict the content of these works as entirely different from scholarly works. For instance, in the eighth/fourteenth century al-Dhahabī mentioned readings of al-Bakrī's texts that took place in markets, most probably in Cairo, and a century later Ibn Ḥajar referred explicitly to readings of al-Bakrī's work that took place in the city's manuscript market. It was not only popular literature that was read at manuscript markets, as they also served as prominent

venues for various other public and individual reading practices. At the same time, however, they were certainly not places that were held in the highest regard for readings by the scholarly community. They were, rather, often the forum for controversial figures from the scholarly landscape such as the prominent scholar Mughulṭāy al-Bakjarī who was boycotted by his peers after his disputed nomination to a well-remunerated teaching position. When he read his title on love in the Cairene manuscript market, he caused uproar with his comments on ᶜĀᵓisha, the Prophet's wife, and was duly arrested.[13]

Even more so than in the case of al-Bakrī's work, narrative sources depicted the performance of popular epics as being situated in places that were beyond the immediate confines of the scholarly spaces of learning. As reading popular epics was perceived as not belonging to the sphere of scholarship, the spaces for reading were less fixed – similar to the places of reading for vernacular works, in contrast to Latin works, in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Latin Europe. The main site for performances of popular epics in later periods, the coffee house, evidently did not exist in the Middle Period. Nor did Cairo have many other public facilities for eating and drinking such as restaurants, taverns or inns where such readings might have taken place. Consequently, readings took place on the streets and in other public spaces in the city and seemingly itinerant performers conducted them.[14]

One of these public spaces was the Qarāfa Cemetery, where pilgrims visited graves and mausoleums of numerous saints and outstanding figures of the early Islamic period. The cemetery attracted large numbers of pilgrims from all walks of life who could rely upon guidebooks and the services of numerous individuals who conducted guided tours of the most prominent sites. In the ninth/fifteenth century two crafty individuals tried to tap the business opportunities that this cemetery and its pilgrims offered. In a remarkable joint venture a local resident who owned manuscripts of the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* and the *Sīrat Dalhama* collaborated with a popular preacher to offer readings of these popular epics at the cemetery. The owner changed the names of the epics in the quires, probably to make them more fitting for the Qarāfa Cemetery, and the preacher read them to a paying audience.[15]

Although the Qarāfa Cemetery was important, the main site for the performance of popular epics in Cairo was the Bayn al-Qaṣrayn area of the old Fatimid city. This was again in no sense a marginal site of the urban setting, but rather one of the central public spaces that retained its crucial importance throughout the Middle Period. The main thoroughfare of Mamluk Cairo, running from Bāb al-Futūḥ in the north to Bāb Zuwayla

in the south, had integrated the Bayn al-Qaṣrayn area and it bustled with street kitchens, peddlers and entertainers. As early as the 620s/1220s a miracle healer who worked in this area recast himself in the evening as a storyteller and narrated extracts from the *Sīrat al-Baṭṭāl*. Some two centuries later this street was still a popular area where peddlers sold various sorts of meat, fruit and sweets and which, by night, became a site for entertainment where the masses jostled to get a view. One of the forms of entertainment on offer was that 'several circles formed to read popular epics'.[16]

A former fortune teller (*faʾlātī*) who became a storyteller on the street in the same period provides another example of the intrinsic link that scholars made between street culture and popular epic. Beyond Cairo, a legal opinion by the Tunisian scholar Ibn ʿArafa (d. 803/1401) made a similar point. When Ibn ʿArafa stipulated that hearing the *Sīrat ʿAntar* disqualified an individual from acting as imam or notary witness he did so in a passage on street entertainment. Referring to the popular Bāb al-Manāra area in Tunis, which was comparable with the Bayn al-Qaṣrayn area in Cairo, he linked the performance of the popular epic with other forms of street entertainment that he described as sorcery. Ibn Qaḍḍāḥ (d. 736/1335), again a Tunisian scholar, had made an identical link two generations earlier, and referred not only to the *Sīrat ʿAntar* but also to those attending performances of the *Sīrat Dalhama wa-al-Baṭṭāl*.[17]

The third characteristic of the performance of epics that made the texts 'popular' while making the popular forums of reading particularly problematic in the eyes of scholars was the social context of the texts' transmission and consumption. For the Ottoman period, notes on manuscripts show that those who owned, read and lent copies of popular epics belonged to the urban 'middle class' of traders and craftsmen, including perfumers, cotton traders and tailors. The presence of a copy of the *Sīrat Dalhama* in one of the Damascene estates of civilians that were registered around the year 1700 indicates a similar readership. The same holds for an eleventh/sixteenth-century library that the head of the boat skippers in Istanbul had founded and which included (the Ottoman version) of the al-Baṭṭāl epic. The absence of such documentary evidence for the milieus of reception of popular epics during the pre-Ottoman periods precludes any such statement for the Middle Period and there is no basis for extrapolating these links to earlier periods. Yet it can be said that similar milieus of reception were at least perceived to exist by scholarly authors of narrative and normative sources.[18]

The scholarly authors matter-of-factly situated the milieu of production and reception among the commoners making it beyond doubt where the

origin of these epics lay to an author such as Ibn Taghrībirdī: 'The commoners invent lies on Abū Muḥammad [al-Baṭṭāl].' In the same vein the Damascene historian Ibn Kathīr scolded 'the commoners' for their fascination with the *sīra*s of Dalhama and ᶜAntar. This focus on the commoners is reproduced in a work of anti-Shiite polemics, one of the few sources on popular epics that did not belong to the usual canon of historical/legalistic texts. Here, the author, Ibn Taymīya, discussed at length what he saw as the misbelief of 'commoners' on the early Islamic period in juxtaposition with righteous transmission by scholars. In this discussion he also mentioned the *Sīrat Ḥamza* and specifically situated its circulation within 'a group of the Turcomans', underlining not only the social, but also the ethnic alterity of this forum of reading.[19]

These references to 'commoners' are obviously too fluid to allow any precise statement in social terms as it potentially included the entire non-military and non-scholarly range of the population from the lumpenproletariat to wealthy traders. However, the authors occasionally referred to the milieu of production or reception in more precise terms and sometimes they situated the epics' circulation within the social milieu of traders and craftsmen, the 'middle classes'. For instance, the local resident who was instrumental in setting up the readings of the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* and the *Sīrat Dalhama* on the Qarāfa Cemetery was a miller. The source referred to him merely with his *ism* or personal name, Khalīl, and did not indicate, as with the naming practice for his peers in the reading certificates, any further elements of his name that might have indicated a prominent social position.[20]

Yet the standard line in scholarly texts was to situate these milieus in the lower echelons of society. In particular, the association of reading popular epics with the murky world of street entertainment and street healers reinforced the notion that the popular epic was situated in an entirely different cultural and social sphere. In the case of the aforementioned fortune teller who turned to storytelling, for example, the sources stated that he sat in the street surrounded by his audience 'as it is the custom of the commoners', while his brother, who held similar sessions, was characterised as one of 'the literati of the commoners'. To cite a second example, the miracle healer who ended his daily routine with narrations from the *Sīrat al-Baṭṭāl*, as mentioned above, had a particularly dubious background and fittingly a work on tricksters has his story. Carrying the nickname the 'Syrian ox', he was on the margins of Cairene society and sold dried excrement as medicine in retribution for the ridicule that he encountered. Comments that expressed a wider fear of the social 'Other' reinforced this image of popular epics circulating in marginal forums of reading. For example, one

of the authors enjoined merchants not to sell paper to those who copied illicit texts such as the *Sīrat al-Baṭṭāl* and *Sīrat ʿAntar*. Arguably referring to the many instances of popular protest and violence demonstrated by these groups of the population during this period, he concluded his remarks with a warning not to publicise the reasons for refusing to sell the paper as 'this would cause much turmoil (*fitan kathīra*)'.[21]

However, this social distance between the scholarly world and those groups that produced and consumed popular epics was not as distinct as the elite authors wished it to be. This is not only evident from the places where these epics circulated that included, as shown above, places of learning, but it is particularly evident in the case of the *sīra* by al-Bakrī. A legalistic text not only criticised the commoners, but referred also to scholars who transmitted such texts. In addition, not all scholars were critical of these texts. When the scholar Samawʾal al-Maghribī reported in retrospect on his readings of the *sīra*s of ʿAntar, Alexander, Dalhama and al-Baṭṭāl, he did so in a sober tone and he did not represent his reading of these works as misguided youth. Rather, he considered reading these epics, which he described as 'the great compilations of tales' (*al-dawāwīn al-kibār*), as a step of initiation towards truthful scholarly works. It might be argued that this particular case was that of a scholar of the natural sciences, like the contemporary physician who carried the *nisba* al-ʿAntarī, and that scholars who focused on religious fields of knowledge took a different position.[22]

However, we have a number of references to popular epics that adopt a neutral tone from authors who were close to court circles and who had links to religious scholarship. Al-Qurṭī's passage in his *History of Egypt* merely takes the reports on al-Baṭṭāl as a point of comparison for the romantic story of Salmā and her cousin without expressing any value judgement. The Egyptian historian Ibn al-Dawādārī, to cite another example, reported on the course of a battle in the early eighth/fourteenth century and praised the heroism of the participants who achieved 'what the masters of the *sīra*s mention in Dalhama and al-Baṭṭāl'. In the same vein, roughly a century later the court official al-Qalqashandī mentioned in his chancery handbook in the section on the tribe of the Kilāb 'the *sīra* known as Dalhama and al-Baṭṭāl' and lauded the text for its 'anecdotes and brilliant stories of heroes'. Although these examples referred to a specific set of authors, they indicate that the links between popular milieus of reception and elite circles, arguably including scholarly circles, could be quite close. This also appears in the case of the fortune teller; we know about him only because his son, despite having grown up in the 'way of the commoners', pursued an impressive scholarly career that led a biographer to comment at length on his family background. Links between

socially hegemonic groups and popular literature have also been shown with regard to the *1001 Nights* where the political message was not in any sense one of opposition and subversion. Rather, it broadly supported the status quo and did not offer an alternative to, or escape from, existent political structures, similar to epics such as the *Sīrat Baybars*.[23]

Thus, the popular reading practices that emerge from the sources were clearly situated at a further distance from scholarly practices than those discussed in the previous chapters. Yet the relationship of these popular forums with the scholarly world was more complex and more intimate than the majority of scholars were willing to accept. The individuals who sustained it were not that different from the 'middle classes' that played a major role with regard to popular reading sessions, children's schools and libraries. The major difference was that the lower echelons of the commoners started to appear more distinctively as participants in readings of popular epics. This was not because they were excluded from cultural practices that were closer to the scholarly world. Rather, they are traceable as participants because the scholars who wrote about these readings of epics mentioned them in order to underline the alterity of these popular practices of reading.

Popular Epics and the Written Word

The question arises as to why scholars spent such efforts on condemning popular epics as non-scholarly and presenting them as distant from the scholarly world. It is particularly intriguing that they only started to voice these criticisms and to adopt this discursive strategy from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards. Arguably, this change in tone was linked to the dual processes of textualisation and popularisation. Scholars started to see the circulation and consumption of these texts in their written format as a challenge to their control of this authoritative mode of transmission. In other words, if the performance of popular epics had remained a largely oral and aural practice at some distance from the spaces and social contexts of the scholarly world, the authors would have had little incentive to comment with such vitriol on the texts or to exert such efforts to depict their circulation as illegitimate.

Previous research on the performance of popular epics has generally focused on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for which we have descriptions by European travellers and anthropological studies. The first detailed and lengthy descriptions are those by Lane on the performance of popular epics in Cairo in the mid-nineteenth century. Recent research has in addition examined the oral epic tradition of the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl* in

Upper Egypt and performances of the *Sīrat Dalhama* in Morocco where spoken and written elements are closely intertwined. This focus on the Modern Period is the result of the limited evidence for earlier periods. In particular, the absence of any manuscripts copied prior to the ninth/fifteenth century excludes documentary research on how storytellers and readers performed popular epics in the Middle Period. Those manuscripts that have come down from the ninth/fifteenth century itself are so few in number, in contrast to the Ottoman period, that documentary research, for instance, in terms of manuscript notes, is even impossible for the late Middle Period. However, the narrative and normative sources do include a substantial number of references to the performance of popular epics. Previous research on popular epics discussing this material has generally tended to focus on those descriptions that were relevant for the respective epic under discussion, but taken together the sum of this evidence shows the increasing link between popular epics and the written word.[24]

Explicit references to performances of popular epics in the Middle Period as exclusively oral and aural practices without the use of written texts were rare. Only one text used the term 'narrate' that denotes in this non-scholarly context a performance that was a recitation without recourse to a manuscript. Significantly, this referred to the sessions of the miracle healer, the individual whom the sources most clearly depicted as being at a distance from the scholarly authors' social and cultural milieu. The same social and cultural distance from the authors is evident in the case of the fortune teller turned storyteller. This was the only example of the use of the term '*ḥakawī*' in the Middle Period, a term that in its form *ḥakawātī* was to become the main term for the performer of popular epics in the early modern Middle East and one that underlined the oral component of the performance.[25]

A more significant number of references were ambivalent with regard to the exact mode of these performances and the possible use of a written text. For the most part, the sources employed two sets of terms, one of which derived from the root *dh-k-r*, to mention. The Fatimid performers thus 'mentioned' the adventures of al-Baṭṭāl as much as the itinerant storytellers of Mamluk Cairo or those who presented the epics of Dalhama and ᶜAntar in Mamluk Damascus. While these were most likely oral performances the terminology itself does not exclude the possibility that manuscripts were used. The second set of terms that was frequently used for performances of popular epics was *qirāʾa*/*qaraʾa*. As discussed in Chapter 1 this term covered the whole array of reading practices and was particularly employed for denoting the public reading/recitation of a written/oral text to an audience of listeners. Scholars thus condemned

those who read or recited the work of al-Bakrī in Cairo or Damascus and employed the same term to describe the performance of other popular epics in the Bayn al-Qaṣrayn area and the Qarāfa Cemetery. These performers of popular epics might have employed manuscripts, but there is no positive evidence in the terminology that would unequivocally prove this.[26]

Yet additional evidence indicates that the written text probably played quite a prominent role in the performance of popular epics. A prime example is the loan of a copy of a manuscript to a performer as seen in the example of the mid-ninth/fifteenth-century sessions at the Qarāfa Cemetery. Ibn Taymīya's stipulation some 150 years earlier that lending al-Bakrī's *sīra* was forbidden indicated that this commercial lending was widespread. As early as the sixth/twelfth century works such as the *1001 Nights* were being loaned out in Cairo, which is evident from the notes of a doctor who duly registered in a notebook those manuscripts that he lent. Commercial lending played such a prominent role because of the considerable length of these works that – at least judging from the later manuscripts that have survived – could encompass some 1,500,000 words (in the case of the *Sīrat Dalhama*) or, depending on script and folio size, between 3,000 and 8,000 manuscript pages (in the case of the *Sīrat ᶜAntar*).[27]

To obtain a copy of such a massive work would have required substantial means and many performers were neither in a position nor willing to make such a hefty investment in a work that would have taken them – based on observations of modern-day readings – more than a year to go through. Owing to the prohibitive prices they turned to commercial lenders and obtained the respective parts that they were reading. The commercial lending of popular epics was seemingly so widespread that it had an effect on the prices at the manuscript market. Copyists could expect – if we are to trust an eighth/fourteenth-century normative source – above-average prices for a copy of such works from customers, who were probably often commercial lenders: 'Those who want copies of [the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* and similar works with fabled lies] are generally prepared to pay more than those who want to have copies of the scholarly manuscripts.' The lending practice of popular epics continued in the Ottoman period, for which numerous manuscript notes provide far better documentation of borrowers and lenders, as well as the different systems for dividing the work. Those manuscripts that were used for commercial lending tended to have a higher number of parts (*juzʾ*), arguably in order to guarantee their owners a higher turnover.[28]

The close relationship between popular epics and the written word in

the Middle Period was not limited to the issue of commercial lending. For instance, normative sources show how those involved in this field were discouraged on three levels: they enjoined paper sellers not to sell their merchandise to those who would copy popular epics; they urged copyists not to accept any commission for these works; and they called for sellers of manuscripts not to trade in works such as the *Sīrat ᶜAntar*. One author, for instance, criticised those 'who sell paper to those who are renowned for using it for illicit stories [such as those] of al-Baṭṭāl and ᶜAntara and similar [stories] that are numerous'. This close connection between the popular epic and those trading in the written word arguably explains why reading sessions of al-Bakrī's work so often took place at manuscript markets, such as the one in Cairo. The terms 'in much demand' or 'easy to sell' (*r-w-j*) that one author used are another indicator of the commercial role of popular epics. These terms generally referred to commodities and goods, but in this context implied the sale of manuscripts, particularly the circulation of such epics in Damascus. The recent assessment that the role of the written word in performances of the *Sīrat Baybars* was truly 'astonishing' can also be applied to most other epics that circulated in this period.[29]

The evidence for performances of popular epics is not sufficient for a chronological dynamic within the Middle Period with regard to the issues of orality and literacy to be set out. However, it is noteworthy that once popular epics started to appear in the mid-sixth/twelfth century they did so in a confidently written context. Ibn al-Ṣāʾigh al-ᶜAntarī acquired his *nisba* precisely because he professionally copied or authored written versions of this *sīra* and Samawʾal al-Maghribī's encounter with this genre was not via reading sessions, but he read the texts individually.[30] Samawʾal's example was the only instance where an author of the Middle Period described the reception of a popular epic with a word derived from the root *ṭ-l-ᶜ*, which suggests individual reading. The Ashrafīya inventory indicates at least a similar use of such works as it is likely that its copies of popular texts did not cater for public readings on the streets, but for individual reading within the library or elsewhere. The scarcity of explicit references to individual reading is linked to the nature of the source material, which is mostly derived from chronicles, biographical dictionaries and normative texts. If we had more autobiographical writings from scholars who did not become experts in the religious sciences, such as Samawʾal, and more documentary sources, such as library catalogues and manuscript notes, individual reading practices might feature more prominently. As it stands, it is possible to conclude only that the link between popular epics and the written word was intimate from the very moment when sources started to mention them.

The emergence of the popular epic in written form during the Middle Period went hand-in-hand with the same development for other genres that also seem at first glance to be rather unlikely candidates for a written tradition, such as plays for shadow theatre. Although the written texts are most likely to have played a marginal role in the performances themselves, the Cairene oculist Ibn Dāniyāl (d. c. 710/1310), the main author in this field, clearly wrote his plays for shadow puppeteers. This is not only evident from the stage directions in the text, but also from his introduction where he stated that:

> I have composed for you plays of buffoonery . . . so, when you design, cut out and divide up into scenes the figures for them, when you are alone before the audience and illuminate the screen with a candle, you will see that this [form of literature] is an admirable instance of facts surpassing the fiction of this play.[31]

The ease of his tone and his matter-of-fact style of address indicate that the circulation of written shadow plays was not seen to be uncommon in his time and that he expected his readership to be familiar with this practice. Thus, there were at least some practitioners of shadow plays who used written versions of texts in order to prepare their performances. The manuscripts for shadow plays by Ibn Dāniyāl that have been identified to date, four manuscripts written some two to three centuries after the author's death, is not extremely rich. However, these manuscripts show that the written versions of the play remained in circulation and in use throughout the Middle Period.[32]

Despite this process of textualisation that took place in different fields, the performances of texts such as the popular epics combined, as with the reading sessions of Chapter 2, elements of literacy (the performer might use a written text) and aurality (the audience listened to the epic). By contrast, the picture of performances and practices as drawn by the scholarly sources is distorted as they were mostly concerned about written elements and tended to disregard other elements. Authors of normative texts, for example, often condemned those who were 'reading' these texts, but only Ibn Qaddāḥ referred to the aural reception. He argued that those who 'listen' (*s-m-ᶜ*) to the epics of ᶜAntar and of Dalhama were disqualified from leading the prayer or standing as notary witness. This explicit reference to aural reception was arguably singular because authors saw no need to restate the self-evident as many texts were underlain with the assumption that they were dealing with public readings (*q-r-ᵓ*) and, more importantly, because the authors were not overly concerned with oral and aural modes of transmission.[33]

Textualisation and Challenges to Scholarly Authority

The remarkable emphasis on the written format in scholarly sources and the relative disregard for oral and aural elements arguably explains the ire that scholars expressed from the seventh/thirteenth century onwards about the epics' very existence and their popularity. Their concern was that the popular epics had intruded into the realm of the written and had thus started to lay claim to historical truth by contesting the versions that circulated in the scholarly world. These epics could no longer be ignored, as previous scholars such as Ibn al-Nadīm had done, because they started to compete in their written format and as cohesive narratives with the spheres of scholarly authority. The readership that had started to play an increasing role in scholarly reading practices formed their own forums of reading that were beyond scholarly control. Consequently, the scholars repeatedly attempted to suppress the copying, selling, transmission, individual reading and performance of the popular epics.

Samawʾal's unique ego-document by a reader of popular epics exemplifies to what extent the border between scholarly authenticity and popular myths that the scholars were so much at pains to uphold could become blurred for the individual reader. When Samawʾal read these texts he was some twelve or thirteen years old and had not yet encountered the scholarly tradition on the Islamic past in any detail. He made his way through collected works of stories and anecdotes (*ḥikāyāt wa-al-nawādir*), turned to evening tales and fictional stories (*al-asmāʾ wa-al-khurāfāt*) and arrived finally at the popular epics. He then realised that these epics were closely linked to the scholarly tradition of history: 'It became clear to me while I was studying these works that most of it came from the works of the [scholarly] historians (*min taʾlīfāt al-muʾarrikhīn*).' In the case of Samawʾal this had the effect that:

> I began to ask for true stories (*akhbār ṣaḥīḥa*) and my interest turned to [these] works of history. I read *Tajārib al-umam* of Ibn Miskawayh and I read the *History* of al-Ṭabarī as well as other [scholarly] works of history.[34]

However, the scholars' angry denunciations of popular epics as lies, fabrications, myths, inventions, illicit stories, absurdities and fables suggest that they were not entirely confident that all those who were exposed to popular epics would follow Samawʾal's trajectory. Rather, they feared that these written challenges to their authoritatively transmitted version of the past would become more widespread, for instance, when performers in the Cairene Bayn al-Qaṣrayn area mixed the reading of 'popular epics (*siyar*) and [scholarly] historical reports (*akhbār*)'. It

is evident that their reaction was particularly strong when a popular epic came close to the scholarly realm. The Muḥammad biography of al-Bakrī was in this sense their main target as it touched upon one of the most crucial issues in scholarship. The fact that this work made scholarly claims of genuine transmission, via *riwāya*, particularly incensed the authors. Consequently, they saw the need to reprimand the absence of the scholarly means of endorsement for al-Bakrī's work, most importantly the absence of chains of transmission, *isnād*, and of reading certificates by recognised scholars, *samāʿ*.[35]

Although the other popular epics were not transmitted with the same scholarly claim, their content repeatedly challenged authoritative versions of the past to the same extent. The *Sīrat Ḥamza* was particularly problematic in this regard as it described the spread of a proto-Islamic faith before the birth of the Prophet and the revelation of the Koran. In this sense it undermined, among others, the *jāhilīya* paradigm that saw pre-Muḥammadan Mecca as the pagan and disdained 'Other' in contrast to the alternative monotheistic order brought by the Prophet. In the *Sīrat Ḥamza*, Mecca became the point of departure for a geographically wide-ranging series of deeds by the protagonist, who set out to end chaos and paganism as a prefiguration of the imminent coming of the Prophet. In his deeds he was supported by the mystical figure of Khiḍr, who also appeared in the *Sīrat Iskandar* and who provided the link with the supernatural world. Full of references to figures and events from the scholarly versions of the past this epic, though not negating the scholarly version altogether, offered an alternative reading of the development and rise of Islam that refigured several central elements of the authoritative versions.[36]

The first reference on the circulation of this epic in an Arabic context, in contrast to earlier references to Persian versions, dates to early eighth/fourteenth-century Syria. As mentioned previously, this reference was not made in the usual narrative and normative texts, unlike almost all of the references to the other epics. Rather, it occurred within Ibn Taymīya's detailed discussion of the non-scholarly misbelief on the early Islamic period; including the belief that graves of the Prophets' wives existed in Damascus, the circulation of erroneous *ḥadīth*s and the conviction that the founders of the *madhhab*s had lived before the Prophet. In the same vein the author rejected the idea that Ḥamza had conducted proto-Islamic conquests (*maghāzī*) before the Prophet was born and he juxtaposed this with the scholarly consensus that Ḥamza's activities had been limited to participating in the early Islamic battles of Badr and Uḥud, where he died a martyr.[37]

This challenge posed by the little tradition in the Ḥamza epic and in

other popular epics to constitutive elements of the grand tradition induced a reaction from scholarly authors such as Ibn Taymīya. However, the scholarly authors did not focus entirely on such *sīra*s, which offer quite a substantial reinterpretation of the past. One might have expected that these epics would themselves have offered sufficient arguments to the authors for them to make their point that the reading of such material was illicit and that it should be banned. Rather, they most frequently cited two other epics: namely, those of ᶜAntar and of Dalhama/al-Baṭṭāl. This choice seems at first glance rather surprising as these epics were, in contrast to the *sīra*s by al-Bakrī and on Ḥamza, less problematic from a scholarly point of view. They did not set out to offer a deviant version of the Prophet, as al-Bakrī's work did to some extent, nor did they engage in rewriting the pre-Islamic period as the *Sīrat Ḥamza*. The *Sīrat Dalhama* is mostly set in the less contested Umayyad/early Abbasid period and the pre-Islamic *Sīrat ᶜAntar* has, compared with the *Sīrat Ḥamza*, few references to the subsequent rise of Islam.

The use of historical material in these two epics was certainly liberal – from a scholarly point of view – and narrators had at some points considerably reworked it in order to harmonise it with the narrative frameworks. However, compared with Ḥamza, who lives through a set of battles and events that were entirely unknown to the grand tradition, ᶜAntar generally remains firmly grounded within a widely accepted historical setting. The detail of events such as the battle of Dhū Qār and the tribal wars of Dāḥis and Ghabrāᵓ displays some differences to scholarly versions in detail, but such differences pale in comparison with the creative tendencies in the *Sīrat Ḥamza*. The narrators of the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* were also most willing to bridge gaps to ensure the narrative's flow, but references such as those to the Prophet's grandfather ᶜAbd al-Muṭṭalib and the Lakhmid and Ghassānid dynasties did not deviate far from the scholarly versions. Most importantly, while ᶜAntar and many of his companions converted to a proto-Islamic faith, he did not turn into the Ḥamzian agent of a proto-Islamic expansion supported by supernatural forces.[38]

Arguably, this very claim of historical veracity explains why the scholars focused so much on these two works. These texts were not as clearly fictional and not as removed from the grand tradition as other epics that the scholars hardly ever mentioned, such as the *Sīrat ᶜAlī Zaybaq* and *Sīrat Sayf Ibn Dhī Yazan*. Samawᵓal had believed the pseudo-historical epics of ᶜAntar, Dalhama and Alexander to be akin to the works of scholarly historians. Significantly, the only time a narrative or normative text of the Middle Period explicitly used the term 'history' (*taᵓrīkh*) for one of the epics, it did so when referring to the *Sīrat ᶜAntar*.[39] The authors generally

used a wide array of terms for describing what is here labelled as popular epic, most importantly *sīra*, *qiṣṣa* (story) and *qaṣīda* (ode), but they made sure that they preserved a sufficient distance between these texts and the grand tradition of the past. The implicit acknowledgement that the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* was not that far removed and could be labelled as *taʾrīkh*, only rendered its existence more challenging in the eyes of scholarly authors.

The authors' focus on the epics of ᶜAntar and Dalhama/al-Baṭṭāl is as interesting as their near complete silence on other works that were in circulation. This silence is crucial because it shows that epics could circulate perfectly well without attracting the scholars' interest or ire. There are two factors that made some popular texts unproblematic, the first of which was content that was clearly labelled as fictional and made no substantial claim to historicity. The *Sīrat Sayf Ibn Dhī Yazan* was certainly the prime example of a fantastical romance with many magic elements that scholars did not perceive as transgressing into their sphere. The second factor which made these texts unproblematic for elite scholars was exclusive, or almost exclusive, oral and aural transmission, such as was the case for the *Sīrat Banī Hilāl*. There are no manuscripts of this work dated prior to the twelfth/eighteenth century. In addition, the only reference to it during the Middle Period, by Ibn Khaldūn on the epic's poetic material, indicated that it had not moved into the realm of the written word.[40]

A second example of a work with largely oral and aural transmission is the *Sīrat Baybars*, the first layers of which presumably go back to the mid-seventh/thirteenth century. Yet the earliest manuscript of this epic dates only to the tenth/sixteenth century and even this date has been disputed. Consequently, the scholarly authors remained silent on this work throughout the Middle Period and the earliest reference to it in a narrative or normative work appeared only at the beginning of the tenth/sixteenth century. In this first mention of the epic the scholar Ibn Iyās (d. c. 930/1524) promptly referred to it as a written work that encompassed 'several volumes'. At the same time, his remarks again took up the issue of the relationship between history and popular epic that had been crucial for previous authors who had discussed the epics of ᶜAntar and Dalhama/al-Baṭṭāl. In his comments Ibn Iyās emphasised, as might be expected, the difference between the epics as 'fabrications and lies', in contrast to his own 'true reports' on this Mamluk sultan. However, he implicitly acknowledged that the project of scholarly writing of the past and the popular versions were not at all that distinct. When he referred to the 'true reports' he underlined that 'the scholars among the historians' had written them, conceding that historians might also come from other groups, such

as those who participated in the formation and transmission of the *Sīrat Baybars*.[41]

The popular epic is only one example that tells of the challenges that scholars faced in maintaining their authority over controlling the production and dissemination of knowledge in a period of increasing textualisation. Popular epics were relatively benign in this regard as they did not question the very foundation of authority based on 'sacred' knowledge. However, in other fields these challenges touched upon more fundamental questions as the textualisation of cultural practices gave a new topicality to issues such as knowledge gained by individual reading outside scholarly networks. For example, Berkey has shown for the case of popular storytelling and preaching that the question of authority over knowledge was the central bone of contention for many of the scholarly authors of the eighth/fourteenth and ninth/fifteenth centuries such as Ibn al-Ḥājj, Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī, al-Suyūṭī and Ibn Maymūn al-Idrīsī, who all criticised popular preachers. These authors accused those who engaged in illicit storytelling and preaching of having acquired their learning without authorisation from a teacher. The author ʿAlī b. al-Wafāʾ (d. 1404), however, strongly rebutted such arguments in his treatises that defended popular preaching, among them *The Means of Deliverance from the Low Opinions of the Elites*, and insisted that knowledge gained by individual reading was among acceptable forms of transmission.[42]

The question of whether, and to what extent, knowledge acquired by individual reading was acceptable did not represent a new development and previous discussions of this issue were, for instance, closely linked to the question of misreading (*taṣḥīf*, cf. Chapter 3). In the field of *ḥadīth* studies it had been, and continued to be, discussed under the heading of *wijāda* (find) and it had also come up in other fields of scholarship that were not part of the religious sciences. For example, the well-known conflict between the physicians Ibn Buṭlān (d. 458/1066) and Ibn Riḍwān (d. 453/1061) in fifth/eleventh-century Cairo concerned this very issue. The former attacked Ibn Riḍwān for transmitting knowledge that he had gained by individual reading and without having obtained rights of transmission from authorised teachers. Ibn Riḍwān, who finally prevailed in this conflict, vehemently argued in his writings that the individual acquisition of theoretical knowledge was perfectly acceptable.[43]

What was new in the later Middle Period and in the case of ʿAlī b. al-Wafāʾ was that the discussion had by now moved beyond the confines of the scholarly world in a narrow sense and had begun to be concerned with popular practices. Zayn al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī feared the popular preachers not only because they circulated erroneous material, but also due to

the social context in which their activities took place. Such concerns over preaching activities were so widespread that the Andalusian scholar Muḥammad al-Ḥaffār (d. 842/1438) criticised in a legal opinion those individuals who used popular works of exhortation in provincial mosques. These illicit titles, he wrote, naming as an example a work on the Prophet's prominent and contentious companion Abū Dharr, 'contain many falsities, abhorrent affairs and shameless deeds that are ascribed to the Prophets and Messengers as well as futile stories that contradict scholarly principles'. He enjoined the preachers to eschew such literature and rather to fall back on scholarly knowledge that they received in authoritative ways. The question of authorised and legitimate knowledge also came up in a controversy surrounding a Cairene preacher in the mid-eighth/fourteenth century who had already been banned from issuing legal opinions. The chief judge ordered him to preach at future sessions only on the basis of texts, implying texts of a scholarly nature, and had him arrested when the preacher refused to do so.[44]

The example of the shadow theatre shows that not every process of textualisation was necessarily perceived to be a challenge to authority. Its often quite vulgar content, colloquial language and underworld heroes, as well as the locations where it was performed, in streets and markets, situated it, like the popular epic, at some distance from the scholarly world. Consequently, it was also occasionally subject to repressive measures, such as in the late Mamluk period when the shadow players of Cairo had their puppets burnt in the year 855/1451 and were obliged to sign an undertaking that they would not perform again. However, the shadow play was less subject to a continuous stream of criticism in the narrative and normative sources than was the case for the popular epic. This goes back partly to the fact that the shadow theatre had a closer connection to elite culture, which is evident from the scholarly background of an Ibn Dāniyāl and the positive biographies that other scholars wrote about him. At the same time, performances of shadow theatre were not limited to 'public' spaces, but also took place in sites associated with elite culture such as palaces. It was perfectly acceptable for the Ayyubid Sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn to have shadow plays performed for him in the sixth/twelfth century. Furthermore, some two centuries later the Mamluk Sultan Shaʿbān had no reservations about taking a shadow player on his pilgrimage to Mecca to provide entertainment.[45] Thus, whether scholars started to perceive the textualisation of a genre as problematic depended, among other factors, on the content, the places of performance and the social context of production and reception. If they did not consider these factors to question their authority, as in the case of the shadow theatre, scholarly sources could report on

it in a nonchalant manner and praise, for instance, its literary qualities. The popular epic and popular sermon, by contrast, often combined these factors to an extent that many scholars were not willing to accept their existence in written form and severely criticised the emergence of popular forums where such works were read out.

Writing for a Popular Readership

The challenges to scholarly authority gained a new dimension when authored works started to appear that specifically catered for popular forums of reading with audiences beyond the scholarly world and the literary elites. The Middle Period witnessed the rise of various sets of popular literature that were – in contrast to the popular epic – not 'orphaned' works. Individuals, often of a non-scholarly background, self-confidently claimed authorship, or at least editorship, for these works, which they composed for their peers. Again, this did not take place in complete isolation from the scholarly world, scholars were certainly among the readers of these works and some of the authors were at least loosely attached to scholarly networks. However, the emergence of authors from this group that had been increasingly drawn into the realm of the written word significantly changed their relationship with the scholarly world: rather than being involved in practices that scholars conducted, which focused on scholarly texts and took place in scholarly institutions, new groups started not only to form their own popular forums of reading but also to boldly claim authorship.

One such authored genre of popular literature that emerged during the Middle Period of which there is a considerable number of works was that of anthologies. These anthologies – bringing together more or less coherent selections of poetry, prose and rhymed prose – were not a new phenomenon and some of the presumably oldest examples of Arabic literature, pre-Islamic poetry, had already been circulating in the form of anthologies. In the Abbasid period in particular they became a favourite genre and many of the most important literary figures authored at least one in the course of their career, such as Abū Tammām (d. 231/846) with his hugely popular collection of pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry. As seen in the previous chapter, these anthologies still constituted the most popular genre in the Ashrafīya library. Owing to the significant place that the anthology had taken in literary production by the third/ninth century this era has been called the 'Golden Age' of this genre.[46]

Recent scholarship, especially the studies by Bauer, has highlighted the Middle Period and particularly the Mamluk era as another (or rather

he argues the 'real') Golden Age of the anthology. Numerous authors compiled works in this burgeoning field, producing thematic collections that applied different principles of organisation. Most of these anthologies of the Middle Period had no 'popular' character whatsoever: their authors were often religious scholars who directed them at an audience of similar background. These works had a crucial social function for the group of scholars inasmuch as anthologies became a central element of literary communication. Authoring, circulating and consuming these texts was crucial for constituting group identity, because the inclusion or exclusion of one's texts and the participation or non-participation in consuming such anthologies was one factor in defining who did or did not belong to the scholarly community.[47]

However, in addition to these anthologies that were 'scholarly' in terms of authorship and readership, there was one group of anthologies that displayed characteristic elements of other popular genres such as the epic. Two elements of these popular anthologies are particularly striking, their content and the social context of their production and consumption. The scholarly anthologies were generally organised around a specific author/theme or served as a commentary for another poem/text, so that scholarly anthologies without an underlying organising principle hardly existed. By contrast, works without evident organisation that rather assembled a broad mixture of what the author thought was of interest to his readership featured prominently among the popular anthologies. These works, as mentioned in Chapter 4, could include anything, including a variety of useful and entertaining material from the genres of poetry and prose, from pious to amusing texts or learned to trivial anecdotes.

This characteristic was closely linked to the second feature of the texts: the social context of their production and consumption. The profile of these anthologies indicates that their writers did not compose them for a learned readership, which would not have had much use for such eclectic works that hardly discussed any topic in detail, but rather offered a broad collection of diverse material. These surveys were rather attractive for a professional readership that had some basic education but did not have the resources for, or an interest in, extensive studies.[48] Such readers also probably came from among those traders and craftsmen who strove to acquire a basic cultural knowledge for standing their ground when participating in the learned world or acting in their own forums of reading. This social context of popular anthologies was also reflected in their production. In contrast to the well-established scholarly authors, who included omnipresent individuals such as al-Ṣafadī, al-Qalqashandī and Ibn Taghrībirdī, the authors of popular anthologies often remained obscure and we frequently

lack even the most basic biographical data for them. Biographical dictionaries of the period did not include these authors, because they did not participate in the production, circulation and consumption of works that were of relevance to the scholarly community. Their works did not constitute an essential part of the scholarly community's internal communication nor did they contribute to sustaining a scholarly group identity.

Research on the anthologies of the Middle Period is still in its infancy, but it is evident that they proliferated in the later Mamluk period together with popular works in other genres such as the *maqāma*. Many of these popular works are still to be discovered and others fell into oblivion due to the slim chances of manuscript survival and the silence of scholarly sources on these authors. However, the surviving works give a taste of how the spread of reading abilities and reading practices to new groups over the course of the Middle Period opened up new possibilities and aspirations for these groups. The emergence of popular anthologies and other popular works was a remarkable step that turned the 'passive' participation of non-scholarly groups as readers into their active participation as authors and it took the development of popular reading practices a crucial step further.

Three examples of popular works and authors allow this development to be discussed in more detail with reference to their textual organisation and the social context of their circulation. The first example is an anthology, *The Buried Treasure*, of a certain Yūnus al-Mālikī (fl. late eighth/fourteenth century). None of the biographical dictionaries of his period, such as those by Ibn al-Ḥajar and Ibn Taghrībirdī, included this al-Mālikī and he was thus a typical representative of an author who never entered into the community of scholars. The relational name 'al-Mālikī' that he used when referring to himself implies that he had at least aspired to be a religious scholar, although the silence of the scholarly sources shows that he was not very successful in this. His work included a broad range of topics without, as is typical for popular anthologies, an evident underlying system of organisation. The material ranged from legal and theological problems, *ḥadīth*s, prayers, philology, historical anecdotes, geography, riddles, prescriptions, aphrodisiacs to talismans. On many occasions al-Mālikī took the opportunity to include on a specific topic poetic or prosaic texts that he considered to be of particular literary value. Most of the entries in his anthology are very brief and consist of little more than two lines, for example, concisely naming the first unjust judge (164), praising the winter season (71) and listing the different kinds of mice (224).[49]

In some sections of the work one has the impression that one is reading

an encyclopedia – with an admittedly elusive organisation – that gives the reader access to a broad range of information, including prescriptions against diarrhoea. A particular feature of this encyclopedic tendency was the inclusion of lists of names or terms on all imaginable topics. The reader could learn or refresh his or her memory, for instance, on the names of the twelve hours of daylight (109), of nocturnal birds (132), of famous horses and swords in history (143–4, 193), of rulers with disabilities (173), of nicknames (*kunya*) employed for specific animals (302–4), as well as of renowned mountains, springs and islands (244–7, 249–50, 251–2). The work also provided the terms for the different sounds made by animals (144–5), for writing instruments starting with the letter *mīm* (180), for the various kinds of rain (210) and for those parts of man that start with the letter *kāf* (128). A third category of lists enumerated synonyms, for example, for the sun, for lions and for wolves (63, 271–2, 132).

In other sections, al-Mālikī's work drops this style of brief entries and adopts a rather educational and instructive tone. He framed much of the material as responses to questions and in some cases, such as the discussion of Jesus' names and epithets, he structured an entire part as a dialogue between the fictive reader and the compiler (87). Responsa play a particularly significant part when discussing theological issues. Theological topics play a rather small part in the overall book, but are interesting as they indicate the readership at which the work was directed. The topics have a tendency to exclude the most complex issues discussed in theology and, rather, to focus on – from a scholarly point of view – comparatively peripheral questions such as (114–15): what is the rationale for showing Hell to the believers (before they go to heaven)? Why has God created Hell in seven levels, but Paradise in eight? Why has God created more unbelievers than believers? Information that would have been self-evident even to scholars with a very modest level of learning reinforces the impression that this anthology–encyclopedia was not aimed at trained scholars. Such items include the information that the eponyms of the six law schools were Mālik, al-Shāfiᶜī, Ibn Ḥanbal, Abū Ḥanīfa, Sufyān al-Thawrī and Dāwūd al-Ẓāhirī (28–9).

One of its most extensive sections, a long list of personal names (*ism*) of those persons who had become famous under another part of their name (63–8) best exemplifies the broad profile of *The Buried Treasure* and its implied readership. These persons include grand religious scholars, such as al-Bukhārī, al-Ghazālī, Ibn ᶜAsākir and Ibn Taymīya, (pseudo-) historical figures, such as the Caliph Abū Bakr, the Koranic Pharaoh, as well as the prophets Noah and Shuᶜayb, poets such as al-Mutalammis, al-Mutanabbī and Ḥayṣa Bayṣa, grammarians and philologists like

al-Sībawayhi, Thaʿlab and al-Mubarrad, as well as *adīb*s such as al-Jāḥiẓ and Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ. This list is as eclectic as the choice of topics throughout the book and again it would have come as little surprise to a moderately learned audience that al-Bukhārī and al-Shāfiʿī's personal name was Muḥammad. There are entries on basic grammatical and philological material, such as on the correct forms of plural (29) and on the difference between the terms love, passion and desire (306). These again indicate that the author directed this work at an audience that had a strong interest in learning and wanted to become acquainted with the 'indispensable' knowledge of its age. This information gave the reader sufficient knowledge in order to navigate the main marker of education, the written language. In a sense one is tempted to see in this work and works of similar character the popular equivalent of the scholarly encyclopedias that experienced their heyday in this period. As much as the scholarly encyclopedias offered an overview of the – quite substantial – knowledge that an educated member of the civilian elite should possess, their popular counterparts offered a considerably slimmer version for their readers.

The second example of a popular work, *Bringing a Laugh to a Scowling Face*, is distinct from the case of al-Mālikī as its author is reasonably well known. Ibn Sūdūn (d. 868/1464) had quite a promising start to his career as a scholar and studied with some of the leading scholars of his period. However, he was at some point obliged to turn, presumably in order to support his family, to a number of trades such as copying manuscripts and tailoring. Significantly, he also decided to author a collection of his poetry and prose that proved to be quite popular and that earned him – although it is not clear how this worked in practice – some wealth. However, this collection included a substantial number of pieces that were contentious and the verses on hashish and sexual themes wrecked the author's scholarly reputation. For this reason al-Sakhāwī wrote a rather critical biography of him and accused him of following 'a path of excessive buffoonery, jest, wantonness and dissoluteness'. His weak position in the scholarly world arguably contributed to his leaving Cairo for Damascus where he, according to the same author, nevertheless 'persevered in his path'.[50]

In this case we are thus not dealing with an obscure individual, but with a scholar in the making who consciously decided, seemingly for financial reasons, to move into the field of popular works. Owing to his scholarly background this work was, in contrast to other popular texts such as that by al-Mālikī and similar to scholarly works, consciously divided into chapters and sections according to form and content. However, in terms of content we find the usual mixture of topics including poems praising the Prophet Muḥammad, pieces on occasions of birth, circumcision and wed-

dings, a high number of texts on food, material akin to nursery rhymes, personal poems, love poems and the aforementioned material on sexuality and hashish consumption. Pious and satirical, serious and entertaining, poetic and prosaic material alternates in the work. It is noteworthy that craftsmen and traders repeatedly appear in the text, for instance, in epigrams on a fishmonger and a mason (38: 18–19; 39–40: 18–19) in the section on poetry praising the Prophet and love poetry.

More informative, however, is that the author included material that would have fitted perfectly into other popular texts. His section on fictional stories (65–79), one of the few entries in prose, sometimes resembles the *1001 Nights*. Although these stories are quite brief compared with the extensive narratives of the *Nights*, they show some similarity in terms of content, including elements such as the exotic places where the events take place, the role of ancient and wise kings and fortunes that wondrously appear and disappear. Moreh, who argued that at least two of the stories included in this collection were meant to be performed as sketches, has thus put forward a second link between the work and popular forms of literature. Vrolijk cautiously supported this argument and pointed to further material that might have been used for dramatic purposes. While the textual analysis does not yield conclusive arguments, it seems likely that the author penned some pieces for dramatic purposes as he is named in near contemporary sources as performing shadow plays.[51]

A case similar to Ibn Sūdūn is Ibrāhīm the master builder, 'a refined commoner', who lived in the first half of the eighth/fourteenth century. Although Ibrāhīm was never part of the scholarly community, one scholarly author commented on him in surprising detail. The entries in this author's two biographical dictionaries saved traces of the master builder, in contrast to many of his peers, from disappearing. The 'popular' character of Ibrāhīm's work resulted from the social context of its production and consumption: Ibrāhīm not only remained throughout his life within the group of craftsmen and traders and, despite al-Ṣafadī's interest in him, never entered the group of scholars. He also never gained a position prominent enough to have more stable elements to his name other than his personal and his relational names. That he did not address his work primarily to the scholarly audience is also evident from what Bauer termed 'the asymmetry' of his reception, that is scholars cited only from a rather narrow part of his oeuvre that seemingly fitted their expectations of popular poetry.[52]

The third example, the *Pleasantries and Curiosities from the Companionship of the Masters of Trades*, shows the emergence of a self-conscious popular group of authors in a further genre, *maqāma*s. Its author

Muḥammad al-Bilbaysī (fl. eighth/fourteenth century) is, like al-Mālikī, unknown.[53] In this work a hypocritical judge attempts to wreck a nightly gathering of mostly traders, craftsmen and low-ranking salaried personnel in endowments by banning them from drinking wine. Each of the forty-five participants then sets out to rebut the judge using the terminology of his own trade and praising the qualities of wine with poetic epigrams. The narrative is brought to a conclusion with the last participant, the washer of the dead, reminding all of life's transitory nature. Subsequently, not only did the judge repent and vow not to drink wine again, but all the other participants followed his lead.

Those participating represented a professional cross-section of society that was quite similar to those attending the popular reading sessions discussed in Chapter 2. For example, the craftsmen were represented by a carpenter, a tailor, a candle maker, a blacksmith, a coppersmith, a butcher, a goldsmith, a perfumer, a mason, a miller, a baker and a glazier. The traders included merchants of clothes, chicken, wine, fruit, vegetables, sweets, books and paper, while among those on low salaries were a teacher, a muezzin and a night watchman. Closer to the street culture of the popular epics were a snake charmer, a blind flautist and an astrologer who also participated in the gathering. These are intermingled with an eclectic mixture of a copyist, a supervisor of a mental asylum, an oven keeper, a physician, a dough maker, a cook, a shepherd, a fisherman and a mariner. Whether al-Bilbaysī's piece on this illustrious meeting was also meant to be performed as theatre is possible, but the text is sufficiently intriguing as its stands.[54]

The use of such traders and craftsmen as protagonists and reciters of poetry had a long tradition in Arabic literature going back at least to al-Jāḥiẓ in the third/ninth century.[55] However, al-Bilbaysī's work has several characteristics that differentiate it from such earlier and contemporary literature, chief among them being the shadowy figure of its author, who clearly did not belong to the scholarly and literary elite of his period. Apart from the authorship, the text itself indicates a different perspective on traders and craftsmen who were more than mere objects of humour and thinly disguised mouthpieces for the author as had often been the case in previous works. Rather, al-Bilbaysī had them speaking for themselves and confidently using Cairene colloquial Arabic, in contrast to the narrative which forms the framework that was held in standard written Arabic. Despite the author's brief aside in his introduction that incorrect Arabic is a characteristic of the commoners, the language skills ascribed to the professionals in the subsequent pages gives a different picture. Here, they expertly include their respective professional vocabulary into eloquent

statements against the judge. These elements of the *Pleasantries and Curiosities* tapped into a long-established literary form and appropriated it for a new readership.

The authored popular literature of writers such as al-Mālikī, Ibn Sūdūn and al-Bilbaysī was even less distinct from the scholarly world than the popular epic. The borderline between scholarly and popular works was often blurred, some authors retained links with the scholarly community and much of the content in the popular anthologies, for instance, overlapped with what could be found in learned works. Yet, even if a significant amount of material was shared between popular and scholarly texts, scholars decided to ignore the popular works and to exclude their authors from learned networks. As the circulation, exchange and consumption of such works was crucial for scholarly self-identity, the emergence of a group of non-scholarly authors challenged the scholars' self-view as the guardians of knowledge as much as the formation of popular forums of reading did. The scholars were thus not concerned about popular works because they reflected, as has been argued for the case of the epics, the 'Weltanschauung ... of a huge, but largely inarticulate, audience'.[56] Irrespective of the question as to whether the texts can be read as direct reflections of the milieu in which they circulated, the scholars' main concern was not that divergent material was in circulation, but rather that written texts emerged that were not so different from scholarly material and that often circulated in milieus that were not part of their community. In short, they feared that the textualisation and popularisation of cultural practices during the Middle Period endangered their monopoly over the production and transmission of authoritative knowledge.

Notes

1. For instance, Berkey (1992), 182–218; Shoshan (1993); Berkey (1998); Leder (2003).
2. In the following, the citation of titles of popular epics follows the convention of the primary texts cited.
3. Al-Bakrī: Shoshan (1993), 23–39. Ibn Taymīya, *Fatāwā*, XVIII, 162f. Al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, I, 112. Cf. also Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, I, 202; Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythāmī, *Fatāwā*, 138.
4. Samawᵓal, *Ifḥām*, 100–1. Ibn al-Ṣāᵓigh: Ibn Abī Uṣaybiᶜa, *ᶜUyūn*, II, 314: '*kāna fī awwal amrihi yaktubu aḥādīth ᶜAntar*'; al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, IV, 384–6. Al-Qurṭī: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 577 and III, 579. Canard (1965) erroneously states (on the basis of a later source) that Mughulṭāy (d. 762/1361) reported a recitation of the *Sīrat al-Baṭṭāl* in Cairo, at the time of the Fatimid ruler al-Ḥākim (d. 411/1021). Mughulṭāy rather quoted Ibn Ḥibbān (d. 354/965)

who referred to 'a ruler' (*ḥākim*^{an}), but did not give more chronological details. This isolated reference might pertain to an early version of the popular narrative, probably still closely linked with the 'historical' al-Baṭṭāl (Mughulṭāy, *Wāḍiḥ*, 402).

5. The point on the survival of manuscripts is made by Reynolds (2006a). Feats of ᶜAntar: Heath (1996), XV–XVI; Kruk (2006), 292. Prior to the sixth/twelfth century: Heath (1996), 27. *1001 Nights*: Irwin (1994), 50. Ibn al-Nadīm and popular literature: Reynolds (2006a), 249–52.
6. Authors of the Middle Period generally referred to this work with the title *Sīrat Dalhama wa-al-Baṭṭāl*, *Sīrat Dalhama* or *Sīrat al-Baṭṭāl*. Possibly, an independent al-Baṭṭāl narrative continued to exist after one of its versions had been amalgamated into the Dalhama epic. 'Dalhama wa-al-Baṭṭāl': Ibn Taymīya, *Fatāwā*, XVIII, 162; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, IX, 276; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, IX, 347; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, IV, 231; al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat*, 181; 'Sīrat al-Baṭṭāl': al-Jawbarī, *Kashf*, 274; Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 84; 'Sīrat Dalhama': al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, XVII, 696; 'Dhī al-Himma (?) wa-al-Baṭṭāl': Samawᵓal, *Ifḥām*, 100.
7. Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taᵓrīkh*, ed. al-ᶜAmrawī, XXXIII, 401–8; Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil*, V, 248; al-Dhahabī, *ᶜIbar*, I, 140 and 154; al-Dhahabī, *Taᵓrīkh*, 101–20, pp. 406–10; al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, XVII, 696; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, IX, 347; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm* , I, 272–3.
8. On popular epics cf. Leder (2007); Herzog (2006); Reynolds (2006a); Garcin (2004), (2003); Norris (1996); al-Najjār (1981), 279–318.
9. Ibn Taymīya, *Fatāwā*, XVIII, 162–3. Ibn Qaddāḥ: al-Wansharīsī, *Miᶜyār*, VI, 70. Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 79–80 and 83–4. Al-Subkī, *Muᶜīd*, 186 and 204–5. Historians: Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, IX, 347 (quote); al-Dhahabī, *ᶜIbar*, I, 140 and 154.
10. Biographical dictionary: Ibn ᶜAsākir, *Taᵓrīkh*, ed. al-ᶜAmrawī, XXXIII, 401–8. Universal chronicle: Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, IX, 347. Quote: Shoshan (1993), 35. *Sīrat Baybars*: Lentin (2003), 110.
11. Ibn Taymīya, *Fatāwā*, XVIII, 163. Endowment deed, officer Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ustādār, 811/1408, l. 247–8.
12. *Qiṣṣat Dalla al-Muḥtāla*: *Fihrist al-Ashrafīya*, fol. 249r. The author of the catalogue expected readers to look for copies of the *1001 Nights* as the story of *Dalīla the Crafty* is one of the few titles in the catalogue that is not in its alphabetical position. Rather than listing it in its 'correct' position under *qāf* (*Qiṣṣat Dalla al-Muḥtāla*), the catalogue's author included it under those titles starting with *alif*, arguably because the story was at this point already seen to be part of *Alf layla wa-layla*. *Sīrat Iskandar*: *Fihrist al-Ashrafīya*, fol. 253v. On the Alexander epic cf. Doufikar-Aerts (2003).
13. Al-Bakrī: al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, I, 112. Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, I, 202. Al-Bakjarī: Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, V, 122–3.
14. Europe: Petrucci (1995), 139–41. Absence of public facilities: Lewicka (2005). Itinerant performers: al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, XVII, 696.

15. Qarāfa Cemetery: Taylor (1999). Ninth/fifteenth century: al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat*, 181.
16. Miracle healer: al-Jawbarī, *Kashf*, 273–5. Site for entertainment: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, III, 81 (quote).
17. Fortune teller: Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, XVI, 349. Ibn ᶜArafa/Ibn Qaḍḍāḥ: al-Wansharīsī, *Miᶜyār*, XI, 172.
18. Notes on manuscripts: Ott (2003), 85–94. The fact that many of these notes are undated limits the analytical usefulness of this material. Estates: Establet/Pascual (1999), 155. Istanbul library: Bilici (1999), 57.
19. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, I, 272–3. Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, IX, 347. Ibn Taymīya, *Minhāj*, IV, 12.
20. Khalīl: al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat*, 181.
21. Fortune teller: Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, XVI, 349. Miracle healer: al-Jawbarī, *Kashf*, 273–5. Paper merchants: Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 79–80. Popular protest: Hirschler (2007).
22. Legalistic text: Ibn Taymīya, *Fatāwā*, XVIII, 164. Samawᵓal, *Ifḥām*, 101 (quote).
23. Al-Qurṭī: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 577 and III, 579. Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, IX, 276. Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, IV, 231. Fortune teller: Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, XVI, 349. *1001 Nights*: Irwin (2004). *Baybars*: Lerible (2003).
24. Lane (1908), 397–431. Anthropological fieldwork: Reynolds (1995); Ott (2003). Pre-Ottoman manuscripts: for example, the manuscripts of the *Sīrat Dalhama wa-al-Baṭṭāl* (Paris, BnF, MS arabe 3890: 834/1430, Ott (2003), 67); Sīrat ᶜAntar (Wien, Nationalbibliothek, A.F. 14: 872/1466, Heath (1996), 233).
25. Miracle healer: al-Jawbarī, *Kashf*, 273–5 (*yuḥaddithu*). Fortune teller: Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, XVI, 349.
26. Fatimid: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, II, 577 and III, 579 (*tadhākara*). Mamluk Cairo: al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, XVII, 696 (*sārat bi-dhikrihi*), Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, IX, 276 (*dhakarū*). Mamluk Damascus: Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, IX, 347 (*yadhkuruhu*). Al-Bakrī: Ibn Taymīya, *Fatāwā*, XVIII, 163; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, I, 202; Ibn Ḥajar al-Haythāmī, *Fatāwā*, 138. Bayn al-Qaṣrayn: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, III, 81. Al-Qarāfa Cemetery: al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat*, 181.
27. Al-Qarāfa Cemetery: al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfat*, 181. Ibn Taymīya, *Fatāwā*, XVIII, 163. *1001 Nights*: Goitein (1958), 301–2. Length: Dalhama: Ott (2003), 51; ᶜAntar: Heath (1996), XIV.
28. Modern-day readings: Ott (2003), 21. Copyists: al-Subkī, *Muᶜīd*, 186. Manuscript notes: Ott (2003), 57, 90–5.
29. Normative sources: Ibn al-Ḥājj, *Madkhal*, IV, 79–80 (quote); al-Subkī, *Muᶜīd*, 204–5. Al-Bakrī: Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, I, 202. *R-w-j*: Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, IX, 347. *Sīrat Baybars*: Lentin (2003), 109-10.
30. Ibn al-Ṣāᵓigh: Ibn Abī Uṣaybiᶜa, *ᶜUyūn*, II, 314. Samawᵓal, *Ifḥām*, 100–1.
31. Translation Moreh (1987), 53.
32. For popular literature in general Jamāl (1966) is still useful. Shadow play:

Ceccato (2006); Guo (2001); Badawi (1992); Moreh (1987); Ḥamāda (1963). Ibn Dāniyāl's biography: al-Kutubī, *Fawāt*, III, 330–9. Guo (forthcoming).

33. Ibn Qaddāḥ: al-Wansharīsī, *Miᶜyār*, VI, 70.
34. Samawᵓal, *Ifḥām*, 100–1.
35. Bayn al-Qaṣrayn: al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, III, 81 (quote). *Riwāya*: Ibn Taymīya, *Fatāwā*, XVIII, 163; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, I, 202. *Isnād*: al-Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, I, 112. *Samāᶜ*: Ibn Taymīya, *Fatāwā*, XVIII, 164.
36. On the interpretation of the *Sīrat Ḥamza* cf. Leder (2007).
37. Ibn Taymīya, *Minhāj,* IV, 12.
38. On the *Sīrat ᶜAntar* and history cf. Heath (1996), 149–64; Cherkaoui (2003).
39. Al-Wansharīsī, *Miᶜyār*, VI, 70.
40. Reynolds, (2006b), 308–13.
41. Layers: Herzog (2003). Manuscripts: Süleymaniye, Fatih 4392: 908/1503?, Herzog (2006), 433. Ibn Iyās, *Badāᵓiᶜ*, I/1, 341.
42. Berkey (2001), 74–5.
43. *Ḥadīth*: Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddimat*, 140–68. Ibn Buṭlān/Ibn Riḍwān: On this dispute cf. Schacht and Meyerhof (1937); Schoeler (1989).
44. Al-Ḥaffār: al-Wansharīsī, *Miᶜyār*, VII, 111–12. Cairene preacher: al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II, 47–8.
45. 855/1451: Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith*, VIII, 117. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn: al-Ghuzūlī, *Maṭāliᶜ*, I, 78. Shaᶜbān: Ibn Iyās, *Badāᵓiᶜ*, I/2, 174.
46. Grunebaum (1955), 23.
47. Bauer (2003), (2007).
48. Bauer (2003), 101.
49. Bauer (2003) discusses this work in detail. Numbers in brackets refer to the page numbers in the 1992 edition of al-Mālikī, *Kanz al-madfūn*.
50. Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawᵓ*, V, 229–30. My discussion of Ibn Sūdūn and his work relies to a large extent on Vrolijk (1998). On food in Ibn Sūdūn's work cf. Gelder (2000), 90–6.
51. Moreh (1992); Vrolijk (1998), 36–8.
52. Al-Ṣafadī, *Aᶜyān*, I, 86–9; al-Ṣafadī, *Wāfī*, VI, 173–8. For Ibrāhīm cf. the detailed article by Bauer (2002).
53. The editors of the 2009 edition of al-Bilbaysī's *al-Mulaḥ* erroneously ascribe the work to the Shafi'i scholar Muḥammad b. Isḥāq al-Bilbaysī (d. 749/1348). On the actual author, Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Bilbaysī, cf. Sadan (2010).
54. Moreh (1992), 114–15.
55. Sadan (1982/5).
56. Lyons (1995), 7.

Conclusion

The two interrelated developments of textualisation and popularisation thus profoundly transformed cultural practices linked to the production, transmission and reception of texts in Egypt and Syria over the Middle Period. The textualisation of society broadened the use of the written word and decisively enhanced its position within cultural practices. This led to the formation of, to borrow Clanchy's term, an increasingly 'literate mentality' where the consumption of texts became more closely tied to the written word and where a field such as popular literature moved confidently into the realm of visual reading and writing.[1] However, the oral and aural modes of cultural practices remained closely entwined with the written word and these non-written modes have reappeared throughout this study, especially in Chapters 2 and 5. The textualisation of society and the rise of the literate mentality thus did not simply dislocate non-written cultural practices as a zero-sum game. Oral forms of transmission and aural modes of reception remained deeply inscribed in textual practices as is evident in the careers of those scholars who were unable to read, but who could still attain high positions in the scholarly world throughout the Middle Period. Thus, the main point that this study makes with regard to the development of the written word is not that existing cultural practices were moved out of the realm of the oral and aural, but rather that when new practices emerged they took place more often than not in written form. The rise of a written tradition of popular epics, for example, did not supplant the oral transmission of these texts, which continued well into the twentieth century as an important, and in many cases even the principal, mode of performance. The emergence of the written tradition was in this sense only an important marker that the written word had added new modes of text consumption in realms where non-written practices had hitherto played an almost exclusive role. Thus, if there was a decline in oral and aural practices during the Middle Period this was merely a decline in relative, not absolute, terms. Furthermore, this did not fundamentally challenge the high esteem in which non-written forms of text transmission and text consumption continued to be held in some contexts.

The preceding chapters have argued that the main agent of the process

of popularisation was not scholars, but rather the traders and craftsmen who have reappeared throughout this study. These 'middle classes' were increasingly able to participate in cultural practices attached to the scholarly world, be it as aural participants in reading sessions or as those taking advantage of the new institutions that sustained the spread of the written word, most notably children's schools and libraries. Yet their role went further than mere participation and they also started to appear as patrons of these institutions who themselves fostered the broader teaching of reading skills and the wider availability of manuscripts. In the later Middle Period individuals from these groups finally emerged not only as recipients of the written word, but, more importantly, as authors of texts that they directed to their peers. The process of textualisation most probably went deeper into society and also embraced those commoners of its lower echelons. The scores of participants in popular reading sessions who belonged to the residual category of non-scholars included many who came from such lower echelons of society and these groups arguably also took up the availability of free schooling. Yet individuals from these groups are hardly traceable beyond the popular forums of reading and they retain a marginal position in the sources next to the traders and craftsmen.

This expansion of writerly culture in terms of its social basis and its penetration into different layers of society was part of a long-term trend in the Arab Middle East. A rough outline of this development is starting to be discernible from scholarship over the last decade: as much as new readerships among the social elites had emerged in the Early Period, especially from the third/ninth century onwards as Toorawa argued, the Middle Period witnessed an acceleration of this process that affected groups well below the elite level and that saw an increased availability of the written word. This writerly culture, as alluded to by Hanna, continued to expand or saw a new peak in tenth/sixteenth- to twelfth/eighteenth-century Cairo with new genres and also entailed an increased pragmatic literacy.[2]

However, the long-term development of reading practices prior to the nineteenth century will emerge in more detail only with further studies of 'pre-modern' reading and manuscript cultures in the Middle East. These would not only allow for changing practices over shorter periods of time and differences between regions and cities to be understood, but would also take into account variations in reading cultures according to factors such as generation and gender. The focus on the social background of readers has made this book virtually oblivious to other elements as it has only briefly considered how the spread of writerly culture was in many regards gender-specific. The emphasis on formal education in schools in Chapter 3, to cite but one example, sidelined other informal means of

reading acquisition, such as within families. In chronological terms, future studies would have to concentrate particularly on the earlier Ottoman period in order to understand the broad development of pre-print reading culture. These studies will be able to rely much more than this book has done on a wealth of documentary evidence, such as the countless notes on manuscripts including those of individual reading (*muṭāla*^{c}*a*), ownership statements (*tamlīk*/*tamalluk*) and endowment attestation (*waqfīya*/*taḥbīs*).

Arguably, the trends of textualisation and popularisation continued as increasingly broader sections of the population started to have access to the written word. The analysis of 450 Damascene estates from the late eleventh/seventeenth and early twelfth/eighteenth centuries shows, for instance, that numerous individuals who possessed manuscripts were traders and craftsmen and that scholars no longer represented the majority of those who owned written texts.[3] Such documentary material will not only allow reading cultures to be studied in more detail, going down to a micro-historical level, but will also contribute to gaining a better understanding of the diachronic dimension of cultural change and continuity across the periodisation of political history. In regional terms, this book's argument on changing reading practices in Syria and Egypt cannot *per se* be extended to other regions. It would be surprising if a similar transformation had not occurred in other regions of the Mediterranean during the Middle Period, such as al-Andalus and North Africa and also further to the east in those regions that came under Mongol rule. Yet any statement on the exact forms of these developments remains mere speculation until we have a series of regionalised studies.

Beyond the geographical and chronological focus, scholarship on writerly culture and reading practices would have to discuss in more detail the role of pragmatic literacy, which has been largely sidelined in recent decades and that has remained in many ways the thematic elephant in the room. This is partly due to the relatively small number of administrative and trade documents that have survived, at least from the earlier Middle Period. However, pragmatic literacy gained in importance as increasingly complex forms of financial transactions and an increasingly complex administration required more and more individuals who were able to deal confidently with the written word. While this study has focused like most previous scholarship on the scholarly and literary spheres of writerly culture, the role of traders as patrons of children's schools might be an indicator for a link between pragmatic literacy and the spread of reading skills. This link between the spread of primary education and the skills required for conducting written transactions seems less distinct than in many Latin European regions. In Italy and Flanders, for instance, the

mercantile classes that required broader education and communes that saw the civic and personal benefits of education drove to a large degree the expansion of schooling.[4] Yet pragmatic literacy appears to be the most promising thematic field to explore in order to get a better understanding of the transformations of pre-thirteenth/nineteenth-century reading cultures in the Middle East within their wider social contexts. A final desideratum for future studies on reading and writerly cultures that emerges out of the preceding pages is that we would also have to focus more on those periods, regions and social groups that saw a decrease in the production and circulation of the written word and a diminishing importance of literacy. As current scholarship, the present study included, has emphasised, occasionally in a somewhat celebratory tone, the vivacity of manuscript cultures and the expansion of reading practices, this needs ultimately to be balanced with a discussion of those instances that do not fit into this narrative of a linear development.

One underlying theme that has re-emerged throughout this study is that the double processes of textualisation and popularisation started to affect in one way or another the near-monopoly by scholarly and administrative elites on the written word as wider groups in the population started to use a mode of communication that was endowed with increasing cultural and social authority. While I am hesitant to use the term 'democratisation of education' for these broader developments, the question arises as to what this redistribution of authority signified for Middle Eastern society at large. Anecdotal evidence shows that scholarly concerns during the Middle Period were indeed not limited to the textualisation of popular epics with judges ordering, for example, the public destruction of learned books deemed to be problematic. This fear that the textualisation of cultural practices could spread deviant ideas and concepts was also shared in normative texts that enjoined the reader to destroy such books and prohibited traders from selling them or providing paper for copying them. Yet textualisation did not always improve the room for manoeuvre to develop and spread new ideas as it could also work the other way and be instrumental in preventing the spread of deviant ideas. Books, for example, could serve to enforce the teaching and circulation of 'rightly-guided' ideas, such as in the case of scholars who were obliged to preach hence on the basis of (acknowledged) books.[5]

The question of authority is especially pertinent as individuals from different backgrounds challenged the 'monopoly of knowledge by . . . the ʿulamāʾ' long before the introduction of the printing technology that purportedly constituted the decisive turning point in reading history.[6] Scholarship on the High Medieval and the Early Modern Periods in Latin

Europe has moved away from positioning the rise of print technology as the pivotal and all-transforming process that supposedly changed notions of authorship and readership. Rather, the changes that occurred from the thirteenth century onwards have increasingly been seen as leading towards a 'sophisticated media culture' in the pre-print era where new audiences for the written text had emerged before printing was introduced.[7] In the same vein, the question arises as to what extent the transition to print culture during the thirteenth/nineteenth century in the Middle East was not so much a turning point but merely accelerated existing long-term trends of textualisation and popularisation. The fact that printing played such a minor role before the thirteenth/nineteenth century must also be seen in the light of dynamic manuscript cultures that successfully responded to the aspirations and changing cultural practices of wider sections of the population. As a rough outline of the long-term development of writerly culture and reading practices is starting to emerge, their role in the wider history of mentalities with regard to issues such as heresy, rebellions and also individuality will need to be addressed for periods long before the emergence of large-scale print audiences.

Notes

1. Clanchy (1993).
2. Toorawa (2005); Hanna (2003).
3. Establet and Pascual (1999), 150–3.
4. Grendler (1989); Pirenne (1929); Sheffler (2010).
5. Quote 'democratisation': Berkey (1992), 188. Public destruction: Abū Shāma, *Dhayl*, 32; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, XIII, 36. Normative texts: Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Ṭuruq*, 399–402; al-Subkī, *Muʿīd*, 186–8, 204–5; al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, III, 31–2. Preaching on basis of book: al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, II, 47–8.
6. Roper (1995), 209.
7. Hobbins (2009).

Bibliography

Abbreviations

AI	*Annales Islamologiques*
BEO	*Bulletin d'Études Orientales*
BIRHT	*Bulletin d'Information de l'Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes*
BL	British Library
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
DF	Dār al-fikr
DGI	Dār al-gharb al-islāmī
DKḤ	Dār al-kutub al-ḥadītha
DKI	Dār al-kutub al-ᶜilmīya
DMU	Dāᵓirat al-maᶜārif al-ᶜuthmānīya
DṢ	Dār ṣādir
*EI*2	P. Bearman *et al*., *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, Leiden: Brill, 1960–2004.
*EI*3	G. Krämer *et al*., *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edn, Leiden: Brill 2007–.
GAP	Grundriss der arabischen Philologie (I, *Sprachwissenschaft*, W. Fischer (ed.), Wiesbaden, 1982; II, *Literaturwissenschaft*, H. Gätje (ed.), Wiesbaden, 1987.)
HMAK	Al-Hayᵓa al-miṣrīya al-ᶜāmma li-l-kitāb
IFAO	Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale
IFD	Institut Français de Damas
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle East Studies*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
LTTN	Lajnat al-taᵓlīf wa-al-tarjama wa-al-nashr
MDKM	Maṭbaᶜat dār al-kutub al-Miṣrīya
MKA	*Majallat kullīyat al-ādāb/Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts* (Cairo)
MLA	Majmaᶜ al-lugha al-ᶜarabīya
MMM	*Majallat maᶜhad al-makhṭūṭāt al-ᶜarabīya* (Cairo)
MR	Muᵓassasat al-risāla
MSR	*Mamlūk Studies Review*

RCEA *Répertoire Chronologique d'Épigraphie Arabe*, eds Combe, E. *et al*., Cairo: IFAO, 1931–82.
RMMM *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée*
RW *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*
SI *Studia Islamica*
ZDMG *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

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Index