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Devotional Annotations: Preserving the Family's Memory in Arabic Manuscripts

Torsten Wollina

Asien-Afrika Institut, Hamburg University, Mittelweg 177, 20148 Hamburg, Germany;
torsten.wollina@uni-hamburg.de

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Abstract: This contribution explores a peculiar kind of annotation in Arabic multiple-text manuscripts. These manuscripts were often compiled as a personal 'one-volume library', containing copies and excerpts of a unique selection of texts. Further, they were often used for less guided writing activities. The owners left notes, lists and sometimes even sketches in the margins or on blank pages between the texts. Among these, lists of life dates of relatives are a valuable source for studies on domestic devotion. On the one hand, they give glimpses on the composition of households. How many people lived together and who were they? These lists inform us about names regardless of gender. On the other hand, the penning of these list is in itself a trace of a practice intricately tied to the familial and domestic spheres. These lists are usually the only place, in which the memory of those people is preserved.

Keywords: book history; family history; ottoman empire; Arabic manuscripts

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1. Introduction

Among the Daiber collection in Tokyo, there is a nondescript manuscript of 92 folios measuring 16.5 × 21.2 cm. As so many Arabic manuscripts, MS Daiber II 146 is a *majmū'a*, a book that contains several texts that were bound into one book. Such books could either be compiled from composite materials, i.e., pages written by several different people in diverse places and at different times (=composite manuscripts). Or they were the product of one textual engagement during which a more or less deliberate selection of texts was penned and compiled to function as a "one-volume library" (=multiple-text manuscripts, short MTMs).[1] Gerhard Endress describes *majmū'as* as "the least formal genre of books among the familiar types of collecting and organizing knowledge in medieval manuscripts"[2]: "Not complete works or "best of" collections, nor corpus sets (the Organon of logic, described above, is not a typical instance), are united in such volumes, but treasure troves resulting from months, or even years, of activity.[3]" And these characteristics would be kept during the early modern period and beyond, as well.

Depending on their context of production, MTMs often constitute entirely unique compilations of materials, notes and even sketches which in themselves already hint at a devotional component in engagements with the written word. This is also true for MS Daiber II 146 which contains eight different textual units (described below), as well as a list of life dates of life dates of, assumedly, relatives of the former owner. What, however, distinguishes this manuscript from many other MTMs, is that we can identify the person who penned this list and thus wanted to preserve the memory of

1 On this distinction, see (Endress 2016; Schmidt 2016; Friedrich and Schwarke 2016).
2 (Endress 2016, p. 177).
3 (Endress 2016, p. 204).

his relatives. He was the manuscript's former owner—and most probably compiler—Muḥammad al-Qarmashlī who furthermore wrote one work in the compilation and endowed it in the Great Mosque of Diyarbakr as he tells in an endowment note on the first page (fol. 1r): "I have endowed this volume [. . .] for my son Muḥammad Sa'īd, then for his son Muḥammad Rashīd and for both their offspring . . . , then for the Sunni scholars and the community; signed the endower, Muḥammad al-Qarmashlī, 3.12.1269 [7.9.1853]."

The concern for remembrance in writing is not particular to predominantly Muslim societies, be they pre-modern or modern. However, they developed specific modes and practices of remembrance, tackled with their own concerns about the afterlife, drew on diverse sources and reacted to particular social and material conditions. With regard to the early modern period, the increasing availability of affordable paper due to the 'European paper revolution' should be mentioned in one breath with the relatively high levels of literacy and the overall growing importance of the written word.[4] At the same time, there was a great deal of continuity to the medieval period in terms of the preservation of writing. As we have seen, the endowment remained a viable mode of assuring the survival of one's book, well beyond the early modern period. Al-Qarmashlī thus participated in a long tradition concerned with remembrance, creating his own personal 'treasure trove' and using it to secure his and his family's memory.

This article connects the making of such lists to a wider framework of practices of remembrance in the early modern Middle East. It sets out by situating the use of books within the field of domestic devotion with a focus on the Ottoman period (Section 2). It then introduces several lists of life dates (Section 3). While we do not know enough of the concrete motivations for including such lists in a given manuscript, I argue that more often than not we should consider the placement of such lists as deliberate. Moreover, they were put in a specific place within a specific manuscript for a variety of reasons, as will be shown below. Finally, I will link these lists to other expressions of remembrance practices found in pre-modern Muslim cultural production, such as ḥadīth studies with their concern for uninterrupted oral/aural transmissions of the Prophet's deeds and sayings, the connected emergence of a rich biographical tradition, and literary genres intended to help bereaved parents to cope with the death of their children (Sections 4 and 5).

Although the lists at the center of this contribution rarely give away emotions directly, the act of writing down names and life dates in itself shows a concern over the well-being of one's descendants (be they children or adults) in this world and the next. Moreover, in contrast to the highly public nature of most large-scale biographical collections concerned with the pillars of community, those humble lists were concerned with the realm of family and thus with relations built and formed to a large degree in the domestic sphere.

2. Ottoman Domestic Devotion

In 2012, the journal *History Compass* published a special issue in which several scholars discussed the influence of Michael McKeon's *The Secret History of Domesticity* on public sphere theory and state building processes during the early modern period. Thereby, the contributors shed further light on the division of public and private spheres in both language and diverse social contexts. Whereas this endeavor remained restricted to a very limited imagination of European history, concurrent processes which brought domestic spaces to the foreground seem to have taken place in early modern Islamicate societies as well.

Research on the historical Middle East has usually approached the topic of domestic space in conjuncture with other topics more prominent in the field. This can be partly attributed to differences in available sources on the domestic sphere. However, in the introduction to her recent edited volume *Performing Religion*, Ines Weinrich has summarized that devotion more generally had long been

[4] Cf. (Hirschler 2012; Hanna 2004).

sidelined in the philologically oriented discipline of Islamic Studies: "[. . .] for a long time the main written text in Islam was treated solely as a book, i.e., a textual composition in its entirety, and the oral character of the text and its formation was thereby largely neglected."[5] Weinrich identifies a scholarly division of labor as a main cause for the neglect of practices surrounding devotional texts:

> On the other hand, the study of [. . .] the interaction between religious specialists and believers, the body or of devices aiming at the senses has often been carried out by scholars from the field of Cultural Anthropology [. . .]. This labour division has unfortunately led to a tendency which has further deepened the division: studies of Islamic religious practice have tended to focus on the seemingly sensational, on the so-called 'different' [. . .]. Valuable as these works are, showing the great diversity of Islamic practices and lending deep insight into individual forms of it, they have at the same time suggested—often without intention—that the use of aesthetic sensation or bodily techniques is limited to the extra-ordinary practices and groups of Islam.[6]

Only recently a growing literature, both contemporary and historical, has begun to explore more or less 'ordinary' devotional experiences, as well. Among those, Marion Katz's work on several pillars of religiosity is particularly noteworthy.[7] This being said, a certain shift towards 'domesticity' during the Ottoman period is visible in, particularly but not restricted to, court cultures, which witnessed a transformation of domestic space itself.[8] In Ottoman Egypt, the houses of higher military officers (*amīr*/*umarāʾ*) gained functions that before were served by public building projects. Their residences featured a *dīwān* chamber for semi-public receptions and gatherings. Likewise, the scholarly or literary sessions (*majālis*) enjoyed by large parts of the "bourgeoisie" were moved from communal to domestic settings. The same shift apparently affected education, including the establishment of private libraries in separate rooms or niches, where guests could read or borrow books.[9]

Houses thus became more private and more public at the same time. Among the most impressive manifestations of this shift are certainly the wall decorations, which encompassed the reception areas in Ottoman-era upper-class houses. Four rooms from Damascus (18th–19th centuries) and one earlier example from Aleppo (16th century) are currently on exhibition in museums in Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, Dresden, and Berlin, all of which feature panels with inscriptions of passages from religious texts. Whereas the Damascus Rooms were presumably ordered by Muslim patrons, the Aleppo Room in the Pergamon Museum in Berlin points towards a Christian owner.[10] Apparently inscriptions were selected to be inviting to people of all (monotheistic) faiths present in the region. In the more recent rooms, religion-specific phrases are avoided—neither the Prophet Muḥammad nor even the basmalla (invocation of God's name) are mentioned—so that its contents would be agreeable to Christian, Samaritan, or Jewish guests. The earlier Aleppo Room proceeds in a different manner but with a similar result: while it includes passages from the psalms, it also features a quote from the Quran and an "ecumenical invocation of God".[11] Furthermore, these reception halls featured a niche at the entrance where a pitcher of water and a bowl were kept for the washing before and after meals as well as for the ablution before prayers. Thus, these new domestic arrangements provided a material basis for domestic devotional practices to emerge as well as being a testimony to, and a result of, their increased importance during the Ottoman period. Last but not least, these wall decorations included spaces where books could be kept.

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5 (Weinrich 2016, p. 11).
6 (Weinrich 2016, p. 12).
7 (Katz 2013, 2014, 2019).
8 (Peirce 1993; Lal 2005).
9 (Hanna 1998, pp. 93, 97–99). See also (Pfeifer 2015).
10 (Ott 2008). For the New York room, see (Mathews 1997).
11 (Ott 2008, pp. 215–16).

A higher valuation of activities in the domestic sphere is further tangible in narrative sources from Syria and Egypt between, roughly, the 14th and 18th centuries. The literary output and variety increased due to concurrent processes described as "textualisation" and "popularisation".[12] A number of contingencies contributed to this development. On one hand, writing seems to have gained growing importance vis-a-vis the oral tradition of Muslim education and knowledge transmission. Domestic matters appear with higher frequency in these and offer possibilities for an assessment of normative sources. In this context, literature sought out new audiences and adapted to them in format, language, style, and content. The Ottoman period further provided the necessary stability for written and material evidence to survive in larger numbers.

The proliferation of private libraries certainly benefitted the survival and transmission also of texts which could be considered miscellaneous, were unedited or were written outside the traditional circles of authors.[13] The complementary relationship of private collections with endowed libraries, particularly the legal framework that ideally should secure the integrity of book endowments over time, is already visible in the short description of MS Daiber II 146 above. While the communal repositories depended upon private endowments to become and remain libraries, they also constituted a source of texts which would enter—either directly or through the book market—private collections. In turn, those collections would once again be bequeathed upon an endowed library.

Texts, books, single quires or even pages circulated between high-profile communal book repositories in mosques, Sufi convents, or madrasas, local book and paper markets, and also in the domestic spaces described above. The prevalence of these circulations is both a blessing and a curse in terms of studying domestic devotional book use. On the one hand, many manuscripts that have been used in such ways have survived due to their (repeated) endowment. On the other hand, their circulation makes it difficult to distinguish which of those traces are connected to domestic spaces and which were particular to other spaces. Still, I would reiterate that during the early modern period manuscripts would increasingly be used in domestic spaces, even if they, or parts thereof, were produced elsewhere. More importantly, books could only function as vessels of remembrance if they circulated:

> Whereas it is difficult to establish which books were written in domestic settings, it is clear that they were used there. In fact, the *memoria* functions of books can only be understood against the background of their circulation between private and endowed libraries and a wider readership. A book was a tangible object that connected one's present to the great figures of the past or to one's forefathers—and promised to offer the same for oneself in the future. This was not to be achieved by storing it away. Its value was realized only by its future readers and copyists.[14]

These traces include the individual organization of texts within any given MTM. They also become visible in the annotations made by a manuscript's users and owners. By appropriating its margins and blank spaces for notes with one's own domestic or family life or other forms of annotations, any 'academic' or 'religious' manuscript could be turned into an object of domestic devotion. Using a manuscript as a seemingly arbitrary writing surface was not simply the result of scarcity of paper. Placing notes—and thus the names of dear ones—in close proximity to revered texts and the handwriting of esteemed individuals was in itself an aim of a devotional practice. Defying an easy definition, *baraka,* as something that was embedded in multiple practices has best been circumscribed by Fartacek and Nigst:

> Baraka is seen as a force that augments the good, increases fertility and which helps people to make the right decisions; it keeps people grounded and gives strength; it makes an

12 (Hirschler 2012, p. 21).
13 (Herzog 2013).
14 (Wollina 2019, p. 164).

> individual healthy and is conducive to 'sound' relations between the people. Baraka, one is told, is helpful in respect of remorse and forgiveness. Moreover, baraka is said to be a preventive force against the machinations of the demons and the effects of the Evil Eye. [. . .] Baraka is thought to be an exclusively positive force and this characteristic trait bestows upon baraka a unique rank: it is of divine origin—from an emic perspective as well.[15]

Through their traceable circulation, manuscripts could become carriers of *baraka*: "The devotional value of a book was thus not only enshrined in the text but in the object itself. The transmission of *baraka* dependeds on direct interaction between people—and apparently between people and books.[16]" Moreover, *baraka* was accumulated through the same circulation which it helped fuel. The relationship between this complex notion and the modes of production, reproduction, and preservation of texts[17] was thus more than complex itself. It was certainly a factor which informed al-Qarmashlī's penning of a list of birth dates and bespeak of a hope that those dates and more so the names attached to them would be remembered.

3. Simple Lists of Names and Dates?

The following analysis explores the content and placement of three lists of life dates. This endeavor is guided by the question of whether the placement was deliberate or if it was simply predetermined by material constraints such as the scarcity of blank space. Did scribes place lists of life dates of their relatives in a particular manuscript they owned? Did they place it in a specific place within that manuscript? The manuscripts introduced here indicate that there was a wide spectrum of possibilities. Choices were influenced by social criteria such as a scribe's involvement in writerly culture and traditions of learning. They were further influenced by the difference of MTMs and composite manuscripts. Whereas the annotation of a composite manuscript always had to take the pre-existing mis en page into account, the compiler of an MTM could plan ahead and deliberately leave free space for annotation. In both cases, however, owners could include blank pages to later be filled with annotations of their own.[18] Finally, these lists were not a set writerly genre in themselves and therefore granted the respective scribe a great amount of agency.

3.1. MS Daiber II 146

Muḥammad al-Qarmashlī penned the eight texts included in the manuscript between 1241 and 1253 (1825–26 to 1837–38), and later compiled it and endowed it in 1269 (1853). The following list gives the contents in their order:

1. Kalimat bayān madhhab al-ṭā'ifa al-Yazīdiyya wa-ḥukmihim wa-ḥukm al-amwāl al-kā'ina bi-aydīhim (fols. 1v-7r): a text on the Yezidis and the conditions should they convert to Islam by "al-Ṣāliḥ"; followed by a commentary by "Mụhammad al-Barqal'ī".
2. Excerpts from Anwār al-Tanzīl by al-Bayḍāwī on the first three Suras of the Qur'ān (fols. 7r-v).
3. Fragment of a legal work (fols. 7v-8v).
4. Risālat al-tunbāk (fols. 9r-10r) by Muḥyī al-Dīn al-Jazārī: a legal treatise on smoking.
5. Al-Qaṣīda al-lāmiyya fī al-tawḥīd (fols. 10r-31v) by 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Farghānī al-Ūshī: a creed; with the commentary Nafīs al-riyāḍ li-i'dām al-amrāḍ by Khalīl b. 'Alā al-Dīn al-Bukhārī (ca. 750/1349)

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15 (Fartacek and Nigst 2016, pp. 53, 57)
16 (Wollina 2019, p. 162).
17 (Wollina 2019, pp. 161–62).
18 In the case of composite manuscripts, a rebinding of pre-existing contents with a few blank pages would create a new composite manuscript. For MTMs, blank pages could appear especially at the end of quires when a copied work did not correspond exactly with the number of leaves in that quire.

6. Nubdha fī ta'rīf awsāf sayf 'Alī karramahu Allāh wa-ḥarasahu al-musammā bi-dhī al-faqār (fols. 32r-v) by Muḥammad b. Ni'ma al-Qarmashlī (see below)
7. Badī' al-ma'ānī fī sharḥ 'aqīdat al-Shaybānī (fols. 33r-69r): a commentary on al-Shaybānī's creed by the Damascene scholar Najm al-Dīn Ibn Qāḍī 'Ajlūn (d. 866/1472)
8. Dhāt al-shifā' fī sīrat al-nabī wa-l-khulafā' (fols. 70v-93r) by Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Jazarī (d. 833/1429): poem on the biographies of the Prophet and the first four caliphs; followed a historical survey concluding with the Ottoman sultan Bayezid's conquest of Constantinople.

The composition of this manuscript can be regarded as typical for a personal compilation of the early modern period. It combines general works on Muslim faith and devotion with more topical aspects relevant to specific places—the Yezidis have been settled close to al-Qarmashlī's hometown in the border regions between Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, or time periods—treatises on the permissibility of smoking proliferated since the 17th century immediately following the spread of tobacco.[19] The manuscript possibly served as a form of compendium or almanac, being consulted by its owner in a variety of situations while, at the same time, revealing much of its owner's positioning within society. Most of the manuscript is written by al-Qarmashlī's hand except for parts in the beginning of the seventh work, where he restored the texts from fragments of an older copy (fols. 34a-39b). The list of life dates is placed between this title and the following on fols. 69v-70r. I give here translated summaries (the text in brackets was added above the line):

1. Āmina, daughter of Ḥawwā', born 3 Ramaḍān 1276/25 March 1860
2. Fāṭima, daughter of Sittiyya, born on the night of Muḥammad's Nightly Journey, i.e., 27 Rajab 1277/8 February 1861
3. Ḥawwā', daughter of Ḥawwā', born one hour after the evening prayer on a Wednesday night in the second half of Jumādā II 1278/December 1861
4. Ummat Allāh, daughter of Maryam, born shortly before the afternoon prayer on Saturday, 15 Ramaḍān 1278, 3 Adhār/16 March 1862
5. Raqiyya, daughter of Muḥammad Sa'īd, born on Monday night, 26 Jumādā II 1280, 25 Tishrīn II/6 December 1863 [she then lived 11 nights and died]
6. Muḥammad 'Azīz, son of Muḥammad Ṭāhir, born in the night of the Bayram, i.e., 1 Shawwāl 1281/27 February 1865
7. Āsya, daughter of Muḥammad Sa'īd, born in the night of 6 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1282/22 April 1866
8. Muḥammad(?) on 7 [Jumādā I around the afternoon prayer 1284/6 September 1867] and he lived until 30 Tammūz, 12 Rabī' II of the following year/2 August 1868, his age was one year
9. Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn, born one hour after the morning prayer on Monday, 22 Kānūn II, 9 Shawwāl 1284/3 February 1868, then died on the seventh day after his birth in his first year
10. [Fol. 70a] Ḥawwā, daughter of Mullā Muḥammad, born around the afternoon prayer on Thursday, 3 Jumādā II, 13 Tammūz 1257/23 July 1841
11. Her sister Maymūna, born one hour after the call to the evening prayer on Thursday night, 21 Adhār, 6 Rabī' II 1262/3 April 1846
12. Muḥammad Rashīd, son of Muḥammad Sa'īd, born in the first half of Tuesday night, 22(?) Tishrīn II, 8 Muḥarram 1267/13 November 1850
13. Ḥafṣa, daughter of Muḥammad Sa'īd [from Āmina], born in the first third of Monday night, 26 Sha'bān, 10 Kānūn 1270/24 May 1854
14. Zaynab, daughter of Muḥammad Sa'īd [from Sittiyya], born in the beginning third of Monday night, 4 Jumādā I, 10 Kānūn II 1274/21 December 1857

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[19] (Grehan 2006).

15. Fāṭima, daughter of Ḥawwā’, born just after sunrise on Friday, 11 Jumādā II, 2 Kānūn II 1277/25 December 1860
16. ‘Ā’isha, daughter of Muḥammad Sa’īd from his wife Āmina, born on the last night of 1275, i.e., 30 Dhū al-Ḥijja 1275/20 June 1860
17. The final entry does not give a name but only states “10 days on 22 R(ajab) ‘85/8 November 1868” which might refer to the time of writing this list.

The positioning of this list between a creed that lays out the ritual obligations of every Muslim on the one hand and a work of Prophetic reverence on the other might be regarded as intentional as it carries symbolic meaning, placing those people close to his heart in close textual proximity to the Prophet, while asserting their adherence to the Muslim faith through the equal proximity to a work expounding the rules upheld by this faith. The dates of the entries show that this list was added to the manuscript after it had been endowed. The former owner still had access to and could even alter the manuscript. The order of the entries with the later dates having been penned on the first page (fol. 69v) further indicates that this list was not continuously expanded. Rather, the entire list was connected to the manuscript’s endowment. It might even have carried legal weight in that it elaborates on his endowment note on fol. 1r., several people listed were, in fact, intended beneficiaries of his book endowment, “for my son Muḥammad Sa’īd, then for his son Muḥammad Rashīd and for both their offspring”. As will become apparent below, the list’s placement within the manuscript benefitted the survival of the memory of his mentioned family members.

The list identifies who belonged to “their offspring”. Thus, we can identify Muḥammad Sa’īd’s children as Raqiyya (no 5), Āsya (no 7), Ḥafṣa (no 13), Zaynab (no 14), and ‘Ā’isha (no 16), besides the mentioned Muḥammad Rashīd (no 12).[20] What is striking in this respect is the large number of entries where the mother is mentioned instead of the father. I assume that these women belonged to al-Qarmashlī’s family and married men outside the family. However, the other entries show that the list did not only serve to support legal claims but was meant to preserve the memory of all those members of al-Qarmashlī’s family. The list also includes several entries where the person had died in infancy (nos 5, 8, 9) and thus raises the question what the purpose of their inclusion was.

Andreas Görke and Konrad Hischler have stated that the documentation of endowments was indeed produced with the intention of preserving one’s memory. They were “as much legal records as textual spaces to celebrate [i.e., commemorate] the respective endower.”[21] The manuscript at hand is not in itself an endowment record (*waqfiyya*). But in a similar way it offers itself for the preservation of people’s memory. As it was compiled by the endower and starts out with an endowment note, I would argue that we could subject the entirety of his al-Qarmashlī’s annotations to a joint reading of a paratext which is scattered throughout the manuscript. Anchored by the endowment note, all his annotations constitute a joint textual space which allowed him room for maneuvering in his self-presentation comparable to that in an endowment record, if not more so. The list would thus respond to those annotations as well as to the works in the manuscript.

3.2. Earlier Examples

There are two other instances of such lists that I have found in the Egyptian National Library under the call numbers MS Fiqh Taymūr 58 and MS Fiqh Taymūr 511. Neither is an MTM but their blank spaces have been used in a similar way to preserve life dates of an owner’s family members. At the same time, those lists are different from the one in MS Daiber II 146 in several respects. Both are placed on their manuscript’s final page, after the end of the text they contain. This placement marks

[20] The parentage of the entries 10 and 11 is more difficult to identify as all three generations of males share the first name Muḥammad. The honorific “mullā” does not really tell us which one of them was their father. However, judging by their dates of birth it seems most likely that they too, were Muḥammad Sa’īd’s children.

[21] (Görke and Hirschler 2011, p. 11).

those lists as paratextual annotations, which are dissociated from the respective content, whereas in the former manuscript it appears on the first glance as a part of the compilation. This aspect is emphasized by the difference in handwriting. Al-Qarmashlī's handwriting is found throughout his manuscript, whereas in these two cases the owner's/scribe's handwriting is distinct from the one which penned the text of the manuscript.

Their position is also more prominent in regard to cursory readings of the manuscript, and at least the list in MS Fiqh Taymūr 58 might have been interpreted as a proof of legal ownership. This might explain why the scribe's signature has been rendered illegible. This list consists of only two entries from the end of the 17th century on the otherwise blank verso of the text's last page. Neither entry gives a name but they refer to the birth of a "hopefully blissful" son and daughter respectively. Apart from the time and date of birth, the latter entry also gives the place of birth as "the city of God's Prophet [peace be upon him]", i.e., Medina. The two births are five years apart, the former occurring in 1104/1692 and the latter in 1109/1697.

The other list in MS Fiqh Taymūr 511 is more comprehensive in that it consists of seven entries, all of which give a name. Unfortunately, the handwriting is difficult to decipher. This 'list' consists of seemingly independent notes all around the colophon of the work included in the manuscript. Some run vertical on the page and their order is not apparent from their arrangement. I have indicated the position on the page in brackets and also where dates are difficult parts to decipher.

1. 'Abd al-Malik, born 1 Rajab 1161 (1171?)/27 June 1748 [left of the colophon, vertical script][22]
2. Nafīsa, born 2 Ramaḍān 1162/16 August 1749 [left of the colophon, horizontal script, below no 1]
3. Ḥalīma, born 27 Dhū al-Qa'da 116(4?)/17 October 1751(?) [lower left corner of the page, below no 2, horizontal script]
4. 'Abd al-Raḥīm, born 16 Jumādā I 1167/11 March 1754 [right of colophon, horizontal script]
5. 'Abd al-Raḥmān, born 16 (26?) Jumādā II 1167/10 (20?) April 1754 [right of colophon, horizontal script, above no 4][23]
6. Much of this entry is hidden by a paper slip carrying the stamp of the Taymūriyya Library, thus neither the name nor the person's gender can be identified. They were born in Ramaḍān of one year between 1168 and 1171/1754–1758 [below the colophon, right of no 3 and below no 4, diagonal script][24]
7. 'Abd Allāh "the last son/child", born 15 Sha'bān 1172/13 April 1759 (top right of colophon, above no 5, vertical script)

This list discloses a different engagement with a manuscript. It was turned around for the entries to be written in different directions, which might indicate a dialogical situation of writing. It further suggests that not all of the entries were penned in one session but rather as part of a continuous practice, in particular, the final entry had to be 'squeezed in' above the others on the right side of the colophon. Neither list is as developed as al-Qarmashlī's list, which supports this notion. Nevertheless, they result from the same motivation, using the respective manuscript as a vessel to preserve the memory of one's children. When the manuscripts were endowed, this memory could be perpetuated and, with it, the memory of the familial relationships between those people—as well as between them and the scribe.

The question remains what qualifies this practice as a devotional practice and what can such a small sample tell us about domestic devotion more generally. In the remaining two sections, I will contextualize these terse lists with regards to more visible and prevalent communal practices. Although

[22] As this entry is the only one which calls the son a "blessed son", I assume it refers to the scribe's firstborn. Therefore, the earlier date would make more sense.
[23] I am rather uncertain of my reading in the case of nos. 4. and 5. It might well be that both were born on the same day and that the order in which their names are written on the page recreates that of the basmalla: bi-smi llāhi al-raḥmān al-raḥīm.
[24] For the later date, see the following entry no. 7; concerning the earlier date, I speculate that the entry's position on the page indicates that it was added after the two sons born in 1167.

only traces of a more complex social practice, they indicate that the following saying of the Damascene scholar Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 1546) was widely heeded: “It is not fitting that anyone who possesses even a small amount of knowledge should allow himself to be forgotten.”[25] Moreover, their preoccupation with kinship ties and birth dates could build on models prevalent in the wide-spread ḥadīth and biographical literature (Section 4). From another perspective, al-Qarmashlī’s inclusion of deceased children resonates with genres concerned with the consolation of bereaved parents and with their overcoming of grief (Section 5). Whereas the lists discussed here do not amount to a narrative engagement with mourning, they do bespeak of a concern over one’s children in this world, and the next, and therefore can qualify as traces of devotional practices.

4. Biographical Literature

The longstanding concern over preserving the memory of individuals in Arabic Islamicate literature and writing more generally is epitomized in a long and broad tradition of biography, collective biography, and prosopography.[26] There is consensus that the origins of those literary genres lay in the field of ḥadīth, the discipline concerned with preserving and interpreting the deeds and sayings of the Prophet, his family, and his companions. The biographical interest lay initially in ascertaining the validity of individual traditions and, therefore, the credibility of the traditionaries themselves. Following the composition of the canonical ḥadīth collections (the ‘six books’) by the 11th century, the post-canonical transmission shifted to a more distinctly devotional character with “a unique view of temporality and history based not on the passing of days, years or months, but on the successive acts of ḥadīth transmission, each act of transmission forming a unit of time.”[27] Garrett Davidson argues that within this temporality, a generation was not understood “as a group of people having been born during some period of years [. . .] but rather as a group of people with the same number of links of transmission separating them from the Prophet.”[28] As the prosopographical or collective biographical literature organized its material according to these generations, they recreated temporality itself in devotional terms:

> In this understanding of a generation, the Prophet’s generation is the first and each act of transmission creates a new generation, each generation consisting of all those people who had the same number of links of transmission separating them from the Prophet. In a degenerative model of temporality, the Prophet’s founding generation is, of course, the best of all generations and each successive generation is of less merit than the one before it. Thus, the short chain of transmission brought “one closer to the generations of merit” and by attaching oneself to a short chain of transmission one could belong to a generation superior to the one he would be considered to belong to in a conception of generation based on years.[29]

Through the participation in the transmission of Prophetic traditions, one could approximate the Prophet, and by collecting short chains of transmission (*isnād*), the distance created by historical time itself could be bridged. Those works were themselves essentially lists of biographies with a focus on giving the name and life dates of their biographees as well as information on their place in the transmission of Prophetic traditions. However, with the development of the genre, more information as to their lives and characters was included, perhaps in service to wider and different audiences. And with the diffusion of ḥadīth transmission, details about more and more lives would be recorded in writing, if not always in the biographical literature as such.

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25 Quoted from (Sajdi 2013, p. 1)
26 (e.g., Robinson 2007, p. 66; Al-Qadi 2006).
27 (Davidson 2014, p. 12).
28 (Davidson 2014, p. 43).
29 (Davidson 2014, p. 43).

In both cases, those works should be understood as embedded within a wide-ranging intertextual network. On the one hand, they guided an interested person to further readings, including the works authored by a biographee or the sources on which they themselves relied. On the other hand, their reliance on external sources often comes to the surface in their own descriptions. These included oral testimonies as well as written documentation, particularly on acts of transmission (*ijāza*, *samā*ʻ), but also other notes in the margins of manuscripts. In this, writing reproduced and continued relations between the author of such a work and the older relatives and possibly teachers of a biographee.[30] Often enough, such personal connections were both the reason for a person to be included as a biographee and an aspect that was emphasized by the author, by which he increased his own standing in the transmission of knowledge. One curious case was the 'binge-reading' (as Konrad Hirschler phrases it) that the 15th century Damascene scholar Yūsuf Ibn ʻAbd al-Hādī conducted in the circle of his family. The dates and attendants of the reading sessions were documented on the respective manuscript. This documentation was part of "a devotional ritual", using "textual proximity to the Prophet" in order to "come close to the Prophet himself".[31] This documentation is further relevant as it simultaneously provides biographical information on Ibn ʻAbd al-Hādī's family members. In particular, it makes clear that his youngest son ʻAbd al-Hādī joined these reading sessions from the day after his birth.

On the other end, people welcomed their inclusion into the biographical dictionaries, even if they were not themselves biographees. A mention of one's name meant that one would be remembered by future generations. And as the inclusion in such a work was coveted, people intentionally prepared for that possibility. This was one reason why they would keep documents that attested to birth and death dates in their possession. And it is also one reason why teaching and attendance certificates (*ijāza*, *samā*ʻ) became institutions in their own right. It might have been a motivation for some to engage in ḥadīth transmission—to secure their own place in the biographical literature.

The lists we encountered in the prior section attest to this impulse. At the same time, the creation of such lists pluralizes the preservation of memory. Those people might not have made it into any of the large selections of biographies, which constituted a central mechanism by which pious and scholarly communities created their shared identity, nor even into any documentation of ḥadīth transmission. It is difficult to say without more contextual information but we could hypothesize that these lists created their own small-scale identities and communities, connected by their ancestry and by their shared experience of living in the same household. The endowment of the manuscript suggests, at the same time, that these lists might serve as 'primary sources' for an eventual inclusion in a biographical work, and the departure from that connection through the establishment of a 'textualized community' as much of personal value to the scribe as the selection of texts within his 'one-volume library'. The above-mentioned Ibn ʻAbd al-Hādī also endowed his books, inscribed with the names of his family members, shortly after the end of his reading sessions.[32]

Whereas 'published' biographical works realized connections between people and books within each biography, al-Qarmashlī created a different quality of connection through the inscription of the list in between the works he compiled into MS Daiber II 146. As with the other lists discussed above, the penning of the list could function also as a surrogate of earlier certifications of education. The inscription of the names in the manuscripts might imply the familiarity of the manuscript owner's children with the manuscript's contents. It certainly cements not only the connection between those people and the manuscript but also between them and the scribe.

30 For a selection of both forms, see (Ibn Ṭūlūn n.d., pp. 20a, 25b, 82b); (Ibn Ṭūlūn n.d., pp. 30b, 44b, 52a, 90a–90b); (Ibn Ṭūlūn n.d., p. 59a).
31 (Hirschler 2017).
32 (Hirschler 2017).

5. Consolation Literature

The lists further resonate with two genres which have been coined 'consolation treatises' (Avner Giladi) and 'Kindertotenlieder' (Thomas Bauer). The fear of a child's untimely death is already palpable in the short list in MS Fiqh Taymūr 58 where the scribe repeatedly expresses his anxiety that the lives of his children may hopefully be blissful. Consolation treatises as a genre in its own right emerged during the Islamic middle periods (11th–16th centuries CE) and combined in new ways, or simply in a handy format, age-old materials such as "the Koran, ḥadīth reports, and poetry as well as sermons (*mawa'iz*), genealogical and biographical works, lexicography, and (other) works by authoritative religious scholars"[33], as well as chapters in books giving ethical and pedagogical, juridical and theological, hygienic and medical information. Giladi argues that the genre developed in unique ways, focusing on "psychological problems connected with and resulting from infant and child mortality" and "on practical ways of coping with the loss of one's offspring".[34] These materials were selected and organized in a way that used devotional and literary texts to speak about the unspeakable and, at the same time, would discipline expressions of grief. The central term in this respect is *ṣabr*, steadfastness, with which adult Muslims should face adversities. In contrast, loud wailing and other "un-Islamic" mourning practices were declaimed by religious scholars as they implied doubt in God's judgement and in the rewards that awaited the deceased children in Paradise.[35] While some recommendations can be understood from a communal perspective that valued stability in the public sphere over everything else, we can glimpse a serious concern over the individual well-being of the mourning. The "filling of the gap" left behind by a child's death was seen as the therapeutical state-of-the-art.[36] Scholarly consensus held that deceased children could intercede on their parents' behalf in the Hereafter, that they would immediately be granted access to Paradise, and that Paradise specifically provided for their well-being. Whereas the term 'martyr' often carries negative connotations today, it was at the core of premodern attempts to ease the painful experience of bereaved parents, especially during the period of the Black Death. The relevance of the genre continued well into the Ottoman period, as the issuing of new works attests.[37]

Those ideas were disseminated widely and also inform the obituaries that the Damascene court clerk Aḥmad Ibn Ṭawq (d. 1509) inserted into his diary chronicle.[38] During the covered period, he himself lost four daughters to recurring epidemics. Whether he practiced *ṣabr* or not, a lack of words often characterizes his entries on a child's death. Thus he restricts the obituaries for his daughters 'Ā'isha and Sāra to the time of death and burial, the cause of death, and their respective age. In the one for his daughter Fāṭima he speaks about the costs of her funeral. It is only in the devotional phrases in which his grief becomes palpable: "May God allow her [i.e., Fāṭima] immediate entry into Paradise and have her reserve a place for me"; "God created [Sāra] as a treasure for her mother and me on Judgement Day [. . .] this world will end but the Hereafter lasts for eternity"; "Oh God, reward me for her [i.e., his fourth daughter Umm al-Faḍl] misfortune and grant me compensation for her loss!"[39]

Practices of mourning thus emerge as a broader spectrum with one end defined by complete speechlessness and *ṣabr,* whereas on the other end we find the Kindertotenlieder studied by Bauer. Bauer identifies poetry as a means to talk about grief:

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33 (Giladi 1993, p. 371).
34 (Giladi 1993, p. 370); see also (Bauer 2003).
35 (Giladi 1993, p. 377).
36 (Wollina 2014, p. 95).
37 Giladi names another treatise from the mid-16th century. At around the same time, the Damascene scholar Ibn Ṭūlūn also authored "Tabrīd al-fu'ād'an mawt al-awlād" and "al-Tabyīn al-marsakh fī ḥikam aṭfāl al-muslimīn fī al-barzakh" whose titles suggest they belonged to the same genre.(Giladi 1993, p. 371; Ibn Ṭūlūn 1929, pp. 31–32)
38 Cf. (Wollina 2013).
39 (Wollina 2014, pp. 95–96).

> [. . .] poetry—including its artistic and playful element—can be helpful in coping with the grief of the loss of one's own beloved, for poets as well as for their public. It may help the poet to prove his own abilities to create a work of art, and by way of the act of active creativity he may cope with the experience of loss. He may find relief from the experience of helplessness and passive suffering and prove to himself that he still has a share in life. Even more important may be the fact that a poem (or any other work of art) is a means to break the speechlessness of death, to resume communication and thereby to reassume a social role without having to interrupt the process of mourning.[40]

Bauer's research topic has the advantage that the expression of emotions can be traced and analyzed in a much more comprehensive manner than is allowed even by Ibn Ṭawq's short eulogies. In contrast to both, the scribes who inserted information on family members into manuscripts they owned, compiled, or even commissioned could not claim similar textual authority. Nonetheless, the inclusion of these lists should be viewed as a product of similar concerns and sentiments. Even though a list of dates is hardly "a work of art", it might give the scribe some feeling of control and thereby "relief from the experience of helplessness". It certainly constitutes a, however little, "means to break the speechlessness of death". Moreover, the juxtaposition of deceased children with those who lived on, might ease the feeling of loss. On the pages, they are back with their family. It does not necessarily contradict the call for *ṣabr* when the names of deceased ones are included. Rather, the terseness of those notes indicates an adherence to the notion. Even where they remain speechless, the naming of the deceased alone points at what is not being said outright. One could say, that whereas medieval scholars used biographical materials as a model for mourning, those scribes proceeded in almost the opposite way, creating biographical entries for the children they mourned. The concern with the well-being of their offspring in this world, and the next, certainly does qualify this seemingly simple practice as a devotional practice.

6. Conclusions

Claudine Moulin describes annotation as a prototypical act of writerly and communicative practice.[41] The lists of names and life dates discussed in this contribution support this notion. Although they offer themselves, at first glance, much more for social history or family history than for the history of domestic devotion, I hoped to demonstrate, particularly in the last two sections, that they are also part of a larger metatextual web which connects them to more outspoken and better researched types of writing concerned with or being used in devotional practices concerned with preserving people's memory. As much as they were a documentation of attendance for Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī, his lists combine in their content and codicological context, devotional, and in many cases, domestic devotional practices common in the Ottoman period with other concerns, be they of a legal or social nature. They further bespeak of the same need to capture important dates in the lives of loved ones in writing as Ibn Ṭawq's diary. Whereas the biographical, consolation or even ḥadīth related 'genres' offer more comprehensive narratives and descriptions of pious concerns, they are also usually placed high within a hierarchy of defining to what devotion one should conform. In contrast, these lists are more or less individual expressions of practices that navigate those normative prescriptions. In this, the lists constitute another, more elusive writerly and communicative practice.

This contribution cannot present a conclusive statement as to the nature and purposes of this practice of list making. A more systematic investigation into the temporal and spatial distribution of this kind of annotation as part of devotional practices is, however, needed to situate it within the emergence of the broader phenomenon of Ottoman period domesticity outlined above. This entails biographical studies of book collectors of the era from a domestic devotional perspective. Who were

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40 (Bauer 2003, pp. 51–52).
41 (Moulin 2010, p. 19).

the people that engaged with those manuscripts? Where did they store their books and did they share access with others?[42] Where were those books used and who was allowed to leave annotations in them? In other words, we have to ask who was able to engage in this prototypical act of writerly and communicative practice and who was not?[43]

Another aspect which I have not fleshed out above is that the devotional relevance of the lists needs to take into account their specific codicological context. In turn, the placement of al-Qarmashlī's list raises the questions of reading practices as well as editorial choices. Would it have been read as a separate textual item or in conjunction with the devotional texts before and after it? Could it fulfill a function similar to ḥadīth documentation or endowment records? Finally, was it purposefully placed at this exact position within the manuscript? Recent studies on personal libraries have suggested that the specific placement of books creates a secondary level of metatextual meaning.[44] Would not the placement of texts within a compilation do the same? I would suggest that annotations can open up a door, not to discover private contents, but to trace practices which engage with either the texts or the object, or both. In order to do this, a study of texts is not enough but the layout, organization and materiality of books need to be taken into account as well.[45] The real source value of such lists will only emerge if we heed Weinrich's call and approach them as traces of performative practices.

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42 Cf. (Liebrenz 2016).
43 Cf. (Liebrenz 2013, particularly pp. 39–42).
44 (Stört 2010; Wieland 2015; Manguel 2018).
45 Cf. (Daub 2016).

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