Between Home and Sufi Convent: Devotional Book Use in Early Modern Damascus

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1 Introduction

Research on domestic devotion in premodern Muslim societies is still in its infancy and no study has yet been devoted explicitly to the subject. For instance, Daniella Talmon-Heller laments in her book *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria* that the 'regrettable absence of chapters on religiosity at [...] the private home is due to the dearth of relevant source material'.¹ Nevertheless, she frequently refers to domestic practices throughout the book. Likewise, they have been hinted at for quite some time by historians of architecture, literature, economy, childhood, family, medicine, gender, mysticism, and law.

Lamentation over a lack of certain source genres has accompanied Middle Eastern History from its humble beginnings and is, in the context of domestic practices, readily repeated. Yet, that the home was a site of devotional activities stands to reason. Even religious scholars advised believers to perform certain devotions at home instead of in public places. Women would usually perform their prayers at home. Recent studies by Marion Katz and others have shown both that domestic devotional practices were a ubiquitous – albeit elusive – phenomenon and that they can, to a certain extent, be reconstructed with the help of an eclectic array of sources.² The real issue at hand is not a dearth of sources but a lack of means to access them systematically. Large, even unknown, quantities of pertinent texts remain in manuscript form, held in collections dispersed all over the world and often insufficiently catalogued. This obstacle stands even in the face of current digitization projects, because proper cataloguing and indexing of the digitized manuscripts is often

1 Talmon-Heller D., *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons under the Zangids and Ayyubids (1146–1260)* (Leiden – Boston: 2007) 2.

2 Katz M., *The Birth of the Prophet Muhammad: Devotional Piety in Sunni Islam* (London: 2007); Katz M., *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice* (Cambridge: 2013); Katz M., *Women in the Mosque: A History of Legal Thought and Social Practice* (New York: 2014).

neglected due to a lack of funding. This, however, would prove instrumental in order to approach a peripheral research subject such as domestic devotion in any breadth or depth. Otherwise, we run the risk of reproducing the 'publication bias' that results from the fact that a large part of the texts selected to be published in modern editions are focused on political and communal activities, which thus perpetuates the impression that no sources are available to permit adequate study of Muslim domestic devotion.

Yet, even in the published sources, glimpses of domestic devotional activities are relatively frequent, if terse on the actual practices. Legal and advice literature deals with them from a prescriptive position, and even the historiographical genres address them, at least as far as they were of general interest: in cases of illicit behaviour, 'strange occurrences' (*ajā'ib/gharā'ib*), or semi-public rituals (wedding, childbirth, death, reception of guests), their gaze turns towards domestic settings.³ Partly drawing on these sources, Katz has shown that the *mawlid* festivities on the Prophet's birthday were from early on also celebrated in domestic settings. By the fifteenth century, the *mawlid* had also become 'a common, although far from universal, component' of wedding and circumcision festivities.⁴

Katz brings to light a crucial source for our topic: the journal the fifteenth-century Damascene notary Aḥmad Ibn Ṭawq (d. 1509) kept for over twenty years (1480–1501).⁵ Neither an important nor a remarkable person himself, Ibn Ṭawq stands out from his contemporaries in that he kept his journal diligently and in that it actually survived despite never being bound in a codex. As a unique example of a probably much wider cultural practice,⁶ it offers insights into many aspects of domestic devotion, including the age-old custom that a pious man should sleep in the bed of newly-weds for three days before their wedding, and domestic prayers and Qur'ān recitations in the house of his

3 For one exception, see Guo L., "Al-Biqā'ī's Chronicle: A Fifteenth Century Learned Man's Reflection on his Time and World", in Kennedy H. (ed.), *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt* (c. 950–1800) (Leiden – Boston: 2001) 121–148; Guo L., "Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem: Domestic Life in al-Biqā'ī's Autobiographical Chronicle", *Mamlūk Studies Review* 9, 1 (2005) 101–121.

4 Katz, *The Birth of the Prophet* 67, 70, citation from 72.

5 Wollina T., "Ibn Ṭawq's Ta'liq. An Ego-Document for Mamlūk Studies", in Conermann S. (ed.), *Ubi Sumus? Quo Vademus? Mamluk Studies - State of the Art*, *Mamluk Studies* 3 (Göttingen: 2013) 337–362.

6 Makdisi G., "The Diary in Islamic Historiography: Some Notes", *History and Theory* 25, 2 (1986) 173–185; Wollina T., "The Samuel Pepys of Damascus? Aḥmad Ibn Ṭawq and the Arabic Diary Tradition", paper presented at the Second Annual Symposium on Medieval and Renaissance Studies, St. Louis University, 19 June 2014.

mentor and relative (through marriage) Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Qāḍī ‘Ajlūn.⁷ An account of deathbed piety stands out for the intensity of the emotions it conveys. This is the description of the rituals Ibn Ṭawq and others performed in the last hours of Muḥibb al-Dīn, a cousin of Taqī al-Dīn:

In the morning, Qāḍī Muḥibb al-Dīn lay on his deathbed (*dīwān al-muḥtaḍirīn*). He died shortly before sunset. I entered with Kamāl al-Dīn [and four other persons]. We recited for him the Sūra [Yā-sīn] and performed the *dhikr* [ritual invocations of God’s names]. Then I stepped outside. My compassion was too great to look at him. There I encountered the shaykh [Taqī al-Dīn] who had just arrived. I pulled him down to sit on the bench. Then [Muḥibb al-Dīn] died, may God be merciful with him!⁸

The instances in which Ibn Ṭawq addresses domestic devotion usually appear isolated and mostly stand apart from the rather communal focus of his journal. Often his accounts are restricted to a (selective) list of attendants or/and dishes served, if the occasion was a festive one. This article, however, will address Ibn Ṭawq’s reports on devotional usages of books or texts. Although he rarely addresses the issue directly, his notes on book circulation allow conclusions about how devotional book use connected devotional practices in domestic and other settings. Moreover, he gives insight into a rather ubiquitous circulation of objects, which is occasionally hinted at in other sources as well. As indicated above, devotional use of books was considered by religious scholars as something that could be beneficial as well as detrimental to the community of believers. Domestic book use by laypeople was regarded as potentially dangerous if not guided by the knowledgeable. On the other hand, to a large extent, domestic book use depended on endowed libraries, which were usually lending libraries, offering access to (devotional) books to a larger public. It is in this context that we should evaluate Ibn Ṭawq’s reports on the subject.

The emergence of ‘published’ prayer books seems to have occurred contemporaneously with the rise of the *mawlid* and Prophetic devotion more generally.⁹ The genre’s most successful emanation was certainly the *Dalā’il al-Khayrāt* by the Maghribī Sufi al-Jazūlī (d. 1465–70), which reached the eastern

7 Ibn Ṭawq Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, *Al-Ta’līq. Yawmiyyāt Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Ṭawq. Mudhakkirāt kutibat bi-Dimashq fī awākhir al-‘ahd al-mamlūkī*, ed. J. al-Muhājir, 4 vols. (Damascus: 2000–2007) vol. 1, 548; vol. 2, 584.

8 Ibn Ṭawq, *al-Ta’līq* vol. 2, 615.

9 For examples or precursors from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see Katz, *The Birth of the Prophet* 144; Ibn al-‘Arabī, Muḥyī al-Dīn, *The Seven Days of the Heart. Awrād al-usbū‘*

half of the Mediterranean only by the middle of the seventeenth century, but by the nineteenth century was known as far away as Indonesia. The *Dalā'il* is clearly 'organised as a manual for Muḥammad devotion'.¹⁰ Throughout it features full vocalization to enable correct reading. It states itself that it omits the 'chain of transmission, [so] it becomes easier to master [the prayers] in recitation, and [recitation] is most important in coming close to the Lord of the two worlds'.¹¹ Starting in the seventeenth century, copies also contained illustrations of the Prophet's grave in Medina and later also the Ka'ba in Mecca [Fig. 7.1]. In their design these prayer books clearly point towards a new quality of Muslim domestic devotion in the Ottoman period, which has not yet been examined beyond the *Dalā'il* itself.¹²

The *Dalā'il* was predated by other devotional texts concerned with the veneration of the Prophet.¹³ The so-called Mantle Ode (*qaṣīdat al-burda*), a praise poem by al-Būṣīrī (thirteenth century), has been identified as a central text for domestic devotion (not only) in Early Modern Cairo.¹⁴ A decisive difference between this and the later work was, however, that the latter is 'provided with detailed instructions for the reader telling him how to handle the book. Ritual purity before reading is one of them; the way of holding the book in one's hands is another'.¹⁵ As Ibn Ṭawq's account will show, these issues were in his time to be negotiated with recourse to different works and even genres. In this, books were never completely disentangled from the direct/oral

(Wird): *Prayers for the Nights and Days of the Week*, trans. P. Beneito – S. Hirtenstein (Oxford: 2008).

- 10 Witkam J.J., "The Battle of the Images: Mekka vs. Medina in the Iconography of the Manuscripts of al-Jazūlī's *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt*", in Pfeiffer J. – Kropp M. (eds.), *Theoretical Approaches to the Transmission and Edition of Oriental Manuscripts: Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Istanbul, March 28–30, 2001*, Beirut Texts and Studies 111 (Beirut: 2007) 67–82, 295–300, here 69.
- 11 Al-Jazūlī Muḥammad b. Sulaymān, *al-Kitāb dalā'il al-khayrāt wa-shawāriq al-anwār fī dhikr al-ṣalāt 'alā al-nabī al-mukhtār*, MS Smith 135, Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York fols. 1b–2a.
- 12 Frederike-Wiebke Daub's published dissertation casts new light on how these texts were intended to be read; Daub F., *Formen und Funktionen des Layouts in arabischen Manuskripten anhand von Abschriften religiöser Texte: al-Būṣīrīs Burda, al-Ġazūlīs Dalā'il und die Šifā' von Qāḍī 'Iyāḍ* (Wiesbaden: 2016).
- 13 See, for example, the percentage of prayer books contained in one thirteenth-century library: Hirschler K., *Medieval Damascus: Plurality and Diversity in an Arabic Library: The Ashrafiya Library Catalogue* (Edinburgh: 2016).
- 14 Abou-Khatwa N., "An Ode to Remember: The Burda of Al-Busiri in Cairene Ottoman Houses", in Kane B. (ed.), *Creswell Photographs Re-examined: New Perspectives on Islamic Architecture* (Cairo: 2009) 43–69.
- 15 Witkam, "The Battle of the Images" 70.

FIGURE 7.1 Anonymous, "The Prophet's grave and mosque in Medina" (18th century?). Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York, MS Smith 217, fols. 27b–28a

IMAGE © RARE BOOK & MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

transmission of knowledge (from master to student); rather, their circulation in part depended on – and reproduced – these very networks.

Thus, devotional book use was never an exclusively domestic phenomenon, but needs to be seen within a nexus of practices involving different – domestic and communal – sites of devotion, first among them educational and devotional institutions (mosque, *madrasa*, *zāwiya*). Book circulation connected communal and domestic spaces.

2 How to Approach Muslim Domestic Devotion?

To the best of my knowledge, spatial differentiation played in general a minor role in Muslims' choices of devotional spaces. While the observance of obligatory prayers at a mosque was recommended for all male adults, only

attendance at the Friday prayer should be seen as mandatory. This is reflected in Ibn Ṭawq's journal, as he frequently notes where he observed this prayer and who gave the sermon (*khutba*). He also tells us that on some days 'I did not go to the city today' or that his mentor Taqī al-Dīn spent whole days in his house after quarrels with his Egyptian wife.¹⁶ They would then observe their obligatory prayers (as well as other devotions) at home.

The distinction between the profane and the sacred was not constituted by way of spatial separation but rather by the deliberate pronunciation of words. The utterance of precise devotional phrases, embedded in strict ritual acts, 'shuts off the prayer-time as sacred, and makes unlawful all ordinarily right acts, only the acts and words of the set prayer being permitted'.¹⁷ Also, the Sufi practice of *dhikr* aimed at an individual 'state of inward recollectedness' through collective 'recitations of certain fixed phrases [...] in a given order'.¹⁸ The great mystic Ibn al-'Arabī's prayers for the seven days of the week (*awrād al-usbū*'), supposedly intended for 'private and intimate' devotion, were also to be recited, if only in a mutter.¹⁹

Supplicatory devotions were only valid if they built upon the 'pillars of the faith'. One intriguing case is related by the biographer Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī in two separate accounts. It revolves around the interpretation of a dream by the sixteenth-century Damascene polymath Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 1546). The following rendition switches between both accounts:

Ibn Ṭūlūn used to visit [shaykh Sulaymān] frequently and trusted him. One time a Sufi approached shaykh Sulaymān, asking him: 'Oh *sīdī* ('sir'), I have seen the Prophet in a dream and he had black skin'. Shaykh Sulaymān spoke: 'Here is our *mawlā* (teacher) shaykh Shams al-Dīn; he will interpret this dream for you'.

Ibn Ṭūlūn answered: 'This dream points out that the dreamer disagrees with the sunna [i.e. The Prophet's precedent], because [the Prophet] had white skin and the black colour contradicts his colour. Therefore, the dreamer contradicts the sunna'. The man sought protection from that and said: 'Not one thing of that is my belief'.

And the shaykh [Sulaymān?] told him: 'Certainly you violated the sunna a bit? And it is not certain that you have to repent for it'. And [the

16 E.g. Ibn Ṭawq, *al-Ta'liq* vol. 1, 170.

17 Padwick C.E., *Muslim Devotions: A Study of Prayer-Manuals in Common Use* (London: 1961) 34.

18 Padwick, *Muslim Devotions* 14–15.

19 Ibn al-'Arabī, *Seven Days* 2.

Sufi] spoke: 'I myself know nothing about that except maybe I was too occupied to observe the prayer (*ṣalāt*)'.

And the shaykh [Ibn Ṭulūn] told him: 'Oh praised be God, but which divergence from the sunna could be greater than this one? Abandoning the prayer is one of the greatest crimes! This results in the black face. As it says in the *ḥadīth*: "he who prays at night has a beautiful face during the day, but he who abandons the prayer, his face blackens"'. Now, the man wept and the shaykh made him repent.²⁰

Whatever the historical accuracy of the account, it is certainly a powerful moral tale. The inquiring Sufi, who ranked mystic forms of devotion above the obligatory prayers, was harshly reprimanded not only by the shaykhs but also, in a way, by the Prophet himself. In contrast, a certain shaykh Ma'rūf had dedicated his whole life to devotion, the feeding of the poor and garden work (*'amal al-basātīn*), and would even climb the city gates to make sure he did not miss the obligatory prayers at the central Umayyad Mosque. His piety was rewarded when one night he was visited by the Prophet himself. Moreover, the Prophet licked from a bowl of honey in Ma'rūf's house. Miraculously, the honey remained, and henceforth Ma'rūf offered it to all 'Qur'ān reciters and jurists' who would call on him.²¹ The relevant hierarchy was thus not between communal and domestic sites of devotion but between obligatory and supplicatory devotions, and domestic practices would often have corresponded to communal rituals at other sites.

On the other hand, educational and devotional institutions (*madrasa*, Sufi convent, mosque) included somewhat 'domestic' spaces as well. Descendants of the founder and other beneficiaries might have their residence there, and in his influential manual on the conduct of scholars and students, Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a (1241–1333) ascribes certain 'domestic' qualities to the cells (*khalwa*) where teachers and students lived.²² They were also important sites of book circulation and book use, which are difficult to disentangle from domestic settings. Sessions of Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*) were frequently held in private

20 This version has been collated from both accounts in favour of a more lively description: al-Ghazzī, Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad: *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira bi-a'yān al-mī'a al-āshira*, ed. J. Jabbūr, 2 vols. (Beirut: 1945) vol. 2, 53, 148.

21 Al-Buṣrawī 'Alā' al-Dīn, *Tārīkh al-Buṣrawī ṣafaḥāt majhūla min tārīkh Dimashq fī 'aṣr al-mamālīk (min Sanat 871 H li-ġāyat 904 H)*, ed. A. al-'Ulabī (Damascus: 1988) 42.

22 E.g. Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta'līq* vol. 3, 1534; Ibn Jamā'a, Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad, *Kitāb kifāyat al-mutakallim fī adab al-ālim wa-l-muta'allim*, X-Series, MS X893.7 Ib65 (1), Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York fol. 48b.

homes, in particular when they were taught by female transmitters.²³ Ibn Ṭawq was present when one Ibn al-ʿUllāf was examined on works of grammar and Qurʾānic recitation in his mother's house (*qāʿa*) and received general approval and 100 dirham for his presentation.²⁴ Teaching and examination of students, in particular, seems to have followed set procedures, which allows us to close gaps that otherwise would remain obscure. Ibn al-ʿUllāf's examination might thus have resembled another in the Shāmiyya al-Barrāniyya madrasa. There, the above-mentioned Taqī al-Dīn posed forty questions on ḥadīth to his student ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Ṣaffūrī (apparently in writing), on which he would be examined the next day. The student would recite the questions and his answers from his notes (*kurrās/kurrāsa*) and comment upon them. Afterwards, the scholars present would examine his reading and answers.²⁵

Educational and devotional book use cannot be completely separated from each other since the search for knowledge (*ṭalab al-ʿilm*) was every believer's obligation (although books were not always perceived as the means to achieve it).²⁶ They also shared a sacralization of book use, both in reading and writing:

[I]t is necessary that you are in a ritually clean state. Thus turn your face to the *qibla*, body and clothes clean, and write every book beginning with "*bi-smi-llāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*" ['in the name of God the all-merciful']. The book begins with a sermon to thank God and the prayer for the Prophet – write this after the *basmalla*. Only then write what the book is about. The same is done at the end of the book and at the end of each *juzʿ* [quire/section/volume], until the book is finished [...].²⁷

23 Sayeed A., "Women and Ḥadīth Transmission. Two Case Studies From Mamluk Damascus", *Studia Islamica* 95 (2002) 71–94.

24 Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Taʿlīq* vol. 1, 533. In one biographical work, Ibn Ṭūlūn mentions tens or even hundreds of other occasions of devotion and learning taking place in private houses; "Dhakḥāʾir al-qaṣr fī tarājīm nubalāʾ al-ʿaṣr", Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek Gotha, MS Orient A 1779.

25 Ibn Ṭūlūn Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, *Mufaḥḥat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān: Tārīkh Miṣr wa-l-Shām*, ed. M. Muṣṭafā (Cairo: 1964) vol. 1, 88.

26 Liebrecht B., *Die Rifāʿiyya aus Damaskus: Eine Privatbibliothek im Osmanischen Syrien und ihr kulturelles Umfeld* (Leiden: 2016) 4–11.

27 Ibn Jamāʿa, *Kitāb Kifāya*, fols. 39b–40a. Cf. Sadan J., "New Materials Regarding Purity and Impurity of Books in Islam in Comparison with Judaism. Al-Burzulī and Other Muslim Scholars on Defined Parchment, Papyrus and Paper", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 33 (2007) 193–218.

Texts were first to be studied under a master to ensure that they were understood in the right way, and even so, unsupervised book use could be a 'source of anxiety and censure'.²⁸ Ibn Ṭawq's account does not address this issue but it betrays a comparable veneration for the objects. Books that were left with him to be delivered to their owner he therefore kept in his cell (*khalwa*), where they were safer than in the buzz of his household.²⁹ Others he purposefully brought to his home, for they were valued for qualities beyond their content. His exclamation that 'may God be merciful to the authors and the donors' indicates that the collection and endowment of books was valued almost as much as the writing of new ones.³⁰

3 Book Circulation in Damascus

Book circulation rested on three pillars: the local book market east of the Umayyad Mosque – virtually absent from Ibn Ṭawq's journal, educational and devotional institutions, and private collections. As mentioned above, religious institutions were the heavyweights in the local production, transmission, and distribution of (devotional) books. In the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya, a thirteenth-century foundation dedicated to the teaching of Prophetic traditions, a librarian was tasked with the restoration of bindings and individual folios, and decisions about the acquisition and reproduction of texts lay with the highest offices: the shaykh and the supervisor. At specific times, copying by students was supported by provision of writing tools, paper, and even stipends and food.³¹ Even many smaller institutions had a librarian who took account of in – and outgoing books.³²

These institutions were also preferred repositories of books. One generation after Ibn Ṭawq, the polymath Ibn Ṭūlūn remarks that the important Abū 'Umar madrasa housed some of the most important endowed collections:

28 El-Rouayheb K., "The Rise of 'Deep Reading' in Early Modern Ottoman Scholarly Culture", in Pollock S. – Elman B.A. – Chang K.K. (eds.), *World Philology* (Cambridge – London: 2015) 201–214, here 201.

29 Explicitly: Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta'liq* vol. 1, 337; Implicitly: Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta'liq* vol. 4, 1556.

30 Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta'liq* vol. 3, 1098.

31 Ibn Ṭūlūn Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, *al-Lama'āt al-barqīyya fī al-nukat al-tārīkhīyya*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid (Damascus: 1929) 23–24.

32 Hirschler K., *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices* (Edinburgh: 2012) 138.

In this madrasa, a number of people have endowed their book cases (libraries), the most exalted of which are the books of the sayyid [Kamāl al-Dīn or ‘Izz al-Dīn] al-Ḥusaynī. Others are the books of shaykh Qiwām al-Dīn al-Ḥanafī, Shams al-Dīn al-Bānyasī, the traditionary Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn ‘Abd al-Hādī, Shihāb al-Dīn Ibn Manṣūr and the Dīwān al-Jaysh Badr al-Dīn. Among these books is the Qur’ān copy (*muṣḥaf*) in the handwriting of the Imām ‘Alī Ibn Abī Ṭālib [the Prophet’s son-in-law].³³

As this quote indicates, the importance of an endowed library to a large extent depended on private efforts of book collection. The individuals mentioned had first accumulated considerable collections before they endowed a library. Private initiative was also essential in transporting books between places. The introduction of a work from a distant place – or the distant past – was often celebrated by biographers as much as the publication of an original work. The above-mentioned Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī was thus credited for bringing a commentary by one of his Egyptian teachers to the attention of scholars in Damascus.³⁴ A certain Maḥmūd al-Shīrāzī introduced to Syria excerpts from commentaries of twelve East Anatolian scholars he had jotted down in his copy of Ḥusayn al-Baghawī’s (d. 1117 or 1122) *ḥadīth* collection *Maṣābiḥ al-sunan*: ‘All these works were in that period available in the lands of the Kurds but rarely in the Lands of the Arabs’.³⁵ One Aḥmad al-Kūrānī (b. 809/1406–7) endowed his own publications in Damascene institutions, even after he had migrated to Anatolia.³⁶ Ibn Ṭulūn’s own fame as a, if not *the* historian of his era, rested to a high degree on his rediscoveries and summaries of obscure works by almost forgotten scholars.³⁷ His works furthermore include hints that his research was not restricted to endowed libraries but took him into people’s private collections as well.

Judging by Ibn Ṭawq’s account, the local circulation of devotional texts rested to a considerable degree on privately owned copies, but they were not necessarily the individual user’s property. Rather, they would often be away

33 Ibn Ṭulūn Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, *al-Qalā'id al-jawhariyya fī tārikh al-Ṣālihiyya*, ed. M. Duhmān et al., 2 vols. (Damascus: 1949–56) vol. 1, 273–274.

34 For his biography, see Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* vol. 1, 40–46.

35 Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib* vol. 2, 249.

36 For his biography, see Ibn Ṭulūn Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, *al-Ghuraf al-‘Āliyya fī Tarājim Muta’akhhirī al-Ḥanafīyya*, Istanbul, Süleymaniyye Library, MS Şehid Ali Paşa 192 fols. 47b–48b.

37 Perhaps the best example is his work on governors of Damascus since the Mongol invasion (1260), more than half of which is an abridged copy of an earlier account: Ibn Ṭulūn Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, *I’lām al-warā bi-man waliya nā’iban min al-Atrāk bi-Dimashq al-shām al-kubrā*, ed. M. Duhmān (Damascus: 1984).

from their owner as long-time borrowings between the homes of friends and family members.

4 Ibn Ṭawq on Book Circulation

Ibn Ṭawq's journal is an exceptional text in that it is not exclusively concerned with the extraordinary or unexpected, but addresses some of the very secular practices that constituted the everyday. Book use and exchange were clearly part of this lived reality. Yet, his treatment of these affairs is often rather nonchalant and explanations are few. Ibn Ṭawq does not speak about reading experiences or devotional engagement but only mentions books when they are purchased, borrowed, copied, or delivered. Furthermore, the sample is uneven: sold books are only named when the author was present for the sale, nor does he always explain why he delivered a book – had he borrowed it for himself or did he return it for another peruser? Moreover, Ibn Ṭawq uses abbreviates titles for many works, often without giving an author, which repeatedly creates ambiguities about the works' identities and subjects. To give but one example, the title '*al-Tahdhīb*' (mentioned below) could refer to a collection of biographies by the thirteenth-century historian al-Dhahabī (*Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*) but also to a biography of the Prophet by the fourteenth-century scholar Ibn Kathīr (*Tahdhīb sīrat Ibn Kathīr*) or to a *ḥadīth* compilation by the fifteenth-century jurist Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (also *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*). My conclusions therefore have to depend on circumstantial information and might be faulty. In the following tables, a question mark indicates where I am uncertain about the identity of a work or author.

Within the twenty-year period covered by the journal, I have identified eighteen cases of book circulation, which include about thirty intellectual works and more than forty individual items. Among them are one entry on book confiscation, four on purchases (three of which are connected to inheritance); but ten on borrowing, only two of which were explicitly connected with making new copies (although more indicate the same aim). One entry refers to the compilation of a new work.³⁸ The pervasive presence of devotional texts attests to the scholarly and Sufi-inclined circles in which Ibn Ṭawq moved: in addition to the Qurʾān, the largest share of the sample is made up by a large number of books about the Prophet – his biography, discussions about his qualities, and praise poems for him, collections of prayers, legal texts that dealt with ritual and ablution, and biographies of pious and erudite people from earlier

38 Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Taʿlīq* vol. 2, 842.

generations.³⁹ In contrast, Ibn Ṭawq dismisses books sold from the inheritance of a deceased emir as of little worth: ‘Most of them are boastful epics (*fashārāt*). Among them was [even] the [historical epos] *Sīrat Antara*’.⁴⁰

While this sample might still seem meagre, it should be understood as the tip of the iceberg and allows for conclusions about the wider circulation of books. First, many of the books Ibn Ṭawq identifies circulated within a very exclusive circle of fewer than ten people who were connected to each other by kinship ties and/or teacher-student relations. Whereas the aural/oral transmission of knowledge established – sometimes lifelong – relationships, book loans apparently presupposed those. Such an exchange depended on close social contacts, both because of a book’s material value and because of the need to assess a user’s ability to comprehend a book. The central figure for the author’s network was the above-mentioned Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Qāḍī ‘Ajlūn who exchanged nine items in four entries, but through whom Ibn Ṭawq was connected to other important book owners: Taqī al-Dīn’s students Shams al-Dīn al-Kafarsūsi (1 entry/4 items) and Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ṣayrafi (1 entry/2 items), and his nephew Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī, who purchased another ten books for the large sum of 4680 silver dirham (*fiḍḍa*) [See table 1].⁴¹ Kamāl al-Dīn’s brother-in-law Abū al-Faḍl Ibn Imām had Ibn Ṭawq copy parts of the Prophet’s biography.⁴² Finally, after Kamāl al-Dīn had suffered some hardships by the hands of the governor, Ibn Ṭawq brought to his house his own copies of the Mantle Ode and the *Kitāb al-Shifā’*, two texts that should comfort him and give him strength to face these adversities.⁴³

Secondly, loans were an important means of gaining access to (certain) books, sometimes for months at a time, and so allowing for intense engagement with them. Overall, only in six entries can items be identified as the property of endowed libraries, and in nine as private property, six of them purchases, confiscations, and compilations of previous books to make a new one. In the remaining cases, all concerning book loans, ownership remains uncertain. In this context, possession of a book was more important for Ibn Ṭawq than ownership. Access to these books seems to have been curtailed along educational hierarchies, so that one might need an interlocutor (e.g. one’s shaykh)

39 Biographical literature ‘defends, and of course defines, the tradition’ that establishes correct devotions; Calder N., “Law”, in Nasr S.H. – Leaman O. (eds.), *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London: 1996) 979–998, here 982.

40 Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta’līq* vol. 1, 268. The other one is found at p. 289.

41 Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta’līq* vol. 1, 263–264.

42 Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta’līq* vol. 1, 350.

43 Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta’līq* vol. 2, 905.

TABLE 7.1 Books sold, based on Ibn Ṭawq, *al-Taʿlīq* vol. 1, 263–264; vol. 4, 1659

Title (author/copyist)	Subject	Seller	Buyer	Price (in dirham)
Tahdhīb [sīrat Ibn Kathīr?] (Ibn Kathīr?/ Ibn Raslān)	biographies of traditionaries	Ibrāhīm al-Qudsī	Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī	600
Mukhtaṣar sharḥ lāmiyyat al-ʿajam (al-Ṣafadī?)	Poetry, commentary, summary	Ibrāhīm al-Qudsī	Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī	100
5x Sharḥ al-Bukhārī (Ibn Ḥijjī/Shams al-Dīn al-Qudsī)	Ḥadīth, commentary	Ibrāhīm al-Qudsī	Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī	[sold in bulk for 3588]
Sharḥ al-Bukhārī (al-Barmāwī/Shams al-Dīn al-Qudsī)	Ḥadīth, commentary	Ibrāhīm al-Qudsī	Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī	[sold in bulk for 3588]
Sharḥ al-Bahja [of Ibn al-Wardī] (al-Anṣārī?/ Shams al-Dīn al-Qudsī)	Law, commentary	Ibrāhīm al-Qudsī	Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī	450
[Kitāb al-] Adhkār (al-Nawawī/Ibn Raslān)	Dhikr, prayers	Ibrāhīm al-Qudsī	Kamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī	150
Qurʾān	Qurʾān	[a young man from al-Bajadaliyya]	Muḥsin al-Turkmānī al-Qābūnī	121
Qurʾān	Qurʾān	-	Muḥsin al-Turkmānī al-Qābūnī	140

to obtain a book. Endowed libraries seem to have granted loans of their books only to a restricted circle:

I delivered to Zayn al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Baʿalī the last [part] of *Maqbūl al-manqūl* which he had borrowed for me [last year] from the shaykh of the *zāwiya*, al-Bānyāsī’s son, and along with those two other volumes. I had quickly sent them back to Zayn al-Dīn, but this one stayed with me. I returned it to him today; this shall be known!⁴⁴

44 Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Taʿlīq* vol. 4, 1556.

Likewise, Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Qāḍī ‘Ajlūn, who held an important teaching post in the Umayyad Mosque, was in the position to permit the loan of a two-hundred-year-old Qur’ān.⁴⁵ In another case, he loaned a book from a Sufi convent that Ibn Ṭawq delivered to the stepson of shaykh Ibn Dāwūd (whose daughter had married his cousin) when they met in Kamāl al-Dīn’s house.⁴⁶ Thus, the exchange of books relied on and, at the same time, reinforced networks of kinship and hierarchies of knowledge. Although it is not explicitly stated, this practice served to control who was allowed to read what and who was not deemed ready. Domestic use of books thus depended on earlier mastering of these texts in a more controlled educational setting.⁴⁷

TABLE 7.2 Borrowed works (Titles as found in the text plus additions to identify them)

Title (author)	Subject	Items	Vol./Page
Qur’ān	Qur’ān	bound vol.	II/906
Sīrat Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (Muḥammad al-Ya’mūrī)	The Prophet’s biography	parts (1st)	III/1098
al-Sīra al-nabawiyya (Ibn Hishām or Ibn Kathīr)	The Prophet’s biography	parts (4th, 5th, 8th)	I/171, 223
Kitāb al-anwār [fi shamā’il al-Nabī al-Mukhtār?] (al-Baghawī?)	The Prophet’s biography	part	III/1090
Daf‘ al-Shubbah (al-Ḥuṣnī)	Qualities of the Prophet	part	I/223
Kitāb al-Shifā’ (al-Nawājī)	Qualities of the Prophet	complete?	II/905
Qaṣīdat al-burda al-sharīfa (al-Būṣīrī)	Praise poem for the Prophet	complete	II/905
-	Prayers for the Prophet	part	I/223
-	[sayings by the Prophet’s companion Tamīm al-Dārī]	part	IV/1556
Notes on Hadiyat al-aḥyā’ li-l-amwāt (al-Hakkārī, d. 1163)	Prayers for the dead	small notebook/ part	IV/1556
Faḍā’il sayyidnā Khalīl al-raḥmān (Ibn ‘Asākir)	Merits of Abraham/Hebron	part	IV/1556
Faḍā’il al-Quds al-sharīf (Ibn al-Jawzī)	Merits of Jerusalem	part	IV/1556

45 Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta’līq* vol. 2, 905–906.

46 Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta’līq* vol. 1, 337.

47 Cf. El-Rouayheb, *Deep Reading* 217.

TABLE 7.2 Borrowed works (Titles as found in the text plus additions to identify them) (cont.)

Title (author)	Subject	Items	Vol./Page
Faṭḥ al-Bārī (Ibn Ḥajar)	Ḥadīth, commentary	parts (1st, 2nd)	I/427
Sharḥ mukhtaṣar ṣaḥīḥ muslim (al-Ḥuṣnī)	Ḥadīth, commentary	part (1st)	II/1030–31
-	refutation of Abū Ḥanīfa	part	I/223
Maqbūl al-manqūl (al-Sībānī?)	Law	part (last)	IV/1556
[Bidāyat al-muḥtāj fi] Sharḥ al-Minhāj (Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba)	Law, commentary	part (1st)	III/1090, 1098
‘Ujālat [al-muḥtāj ilā tawjīh] al-minhāj (Ibn al-Mulaqqin)	Law, glosses	part (1st)	III/1098
Ṭabaqāt [al-shāfi‘iyyāt] al-Kubrā (al-Subkī)	Biographies	10 quires (karārīs) of part 2	I/350
-	Genealogy (ansāb)	part	I/223
al-Qāmūs (al-Fīrūzābādī)	Lexicography	part	I/337

The relevance of personal ties is also visible in Ibn Ṭawq’s descriptions of books. For most of the items purchased by Kamāl al-Dīn the copyists Shams al-Dīn al-Qudṣī and Ibn Raslān⁴⁸ are identified. In another book loan, he mentions a volume ‘in the handwriting of the late Sarī al-Dīn Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, his father’s *Sharḥ al-Minhāj*’ and the ‘*Kitāb al-anwār* in the handwriting of the author’s son’. Direct transmission within a family appears to have contributed to a work’s devotional value. Yet, these connections mattered beyond faithfulness to an original text:

I delivered the first *juz*’ (part, volume, quire) of the *Sharḥ mukhtaṣar ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (commentary on an abridgement of a *ḥadīth* collection) by the Sufi shaykh Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥuṣnī [d. 829] – may God return some of his *baraka* to me, my children and whom else I love – in the handwriting of shaykh Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Ḥuṣnī’s son, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad to the

48 Perhaps identical with Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Arslān (d. 1440), an important Sufi *shaykh* in Mamluk Syria; Ephrat D., ‘The Shaykh, the Physical Setting and the Holy Site: The Diffusion of the Qāḍirī Path in Late Medieval Palestine’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 19, 11 (2009) 1–20.

zāwiya at the Khān al-Ḥuṣnī close to the Muṣallā [square]. It was with me for almost ten months.⁴⁹

Not only was this book written by one and copied by another member of the Ḥuṣnī family, it also rested in the Sufi convent founded by one of its members. Ibn Ṭawq valued the book highly not only for its content but also as a host of *baraka*, a term which comprises both a person's continued spiritual presence and the blessings that presence could bestow upon other people. The devotional value of a book was thus not only enshrined in the text but in the object itself. The transmission of *baraka* depended on direct interaction between people – and apparently between people and books. Much as with shaykh Ma'rūf's honeypot, a book could store *baraka* of its creator (either author or scribe). A much earlier example of this belief is that of Abū 'Umar (d. 1210), eponym of the above-mentioned madrasa. He would perform prayers on his doorstep to safeguard his neighbours' houses, and the Qur'ān copies he produced 'were known to convey *baraka* [blessings] into the homes of those who held them'.⁵⁰ Ibn Ṭawq's admission that he had kept this commentary for several months indicates that a similar value was still ascribed to books as carriers of *baraka* by his time.

Thus, even fragmentary books could become precious items, and loans seem to have concerned mostly partial works. Ibn Ṭawq usually uses the term *juz'*, which could mean anything from a quire to a full section (chapter: *bāb*, *faṣl*) of a text to a complete manuscript or a volume of a larger work [see table 2]. In contrast to the items sold, these appear not to have been bound (*mujallad* or *bi-jild/julūd*) but circulated in smaller units of either quire or section, in response to a widespread demand for these materials, which, as we have seen, was not exhausted with reading. Circulation by *juz'* allowed one book to be spread out among a larger number of (domestic) users and even enabled the joint investigation of one subject in several works:

I lent from the Turābiyya *zāwiya*: the beginning of the *Sīrat Ibn Sayyid al-Nās* [...], the beginning of the *Ujālat al-minhāj* until the commandments (*waṣāyā*), the beginning of the *Sharḥ al-minhāj* by Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, may God be merciful to the authors and the donors!⁵¹

49 Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta'liq* vol. 2, 1030–1031.

50 Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety* 97.

51 Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta'liq* vol. 3, 1098.

With one biography of the Prophet, Ibn Ṭawq borrowed, allegedly for his own use, two legal works, or at least those parts which dealt with issues of 'purity, prayer, fasting, alms, pilgrimage (the essential acts of worship, *'ibādāt*, and invariably the first five books of [any jurisprudential work])'.⁵² It is impossible to say whether he used these works only for himself or also to instruct other members of his household. However, it becomes clear that devotional engagement did not require a whole work, nor for a work to be read in a specific order. Here, the works were approached and collated thematically. It is difficult to assess whether this should be ascribed only to the advanced levels of these specific users or whether it is indicative of wider cultural practices. The practice of borrowing ensured wider access to written materials, albeit under controlled conditions. Within this context, books moved slowly but surely from hand to hand (and from house to house).

5 Conclusions

Ibn Ṭawq's reports on book circulation thus allow a glimpse into practices that connected domestic and other forms and sites of devotion. Books provided believers with access to prayers, praise poems, and debates upon the validity of devotions and ablutions, and at the same time could themselves become venerable objects which connected their users and owners to admirable figures from past generations and offered their blessings upon the new possessor and his household. As has been argued elsewhere, books also became more important as a source of authority on questions related to devotion during this time.

Ibn Ṭawq's reports on book use attest to the importance of Prophetic devotion in his time, a phenomenon that encompasses the above-mentioned dreams and *mawlid* festivities as well. Books might have been used for recitations of those supplicatory prayers, resulting in an apparition of the Prophet, as well as for the recitation of a *mawlid* on a festive occasion. And much like an invitation to a *mawlid* or a wedding in another person's home, the loan of a book relied upon close ties between the people involved. Loaning books allowed for a control similar to that of choosing one's guest list and adhered to established social hierarchies. A book had first to be studied with a master before being used alone correctly: 'if the text remained in the mind, it was a constantly available solace and pleasure'.⁵³ Only then, domestic devotional book use would, for Ibn Ṭawq, become an accepted practice.

⁵² Calder, "Law" 981.

⁵³ Calder, "Law" 989.

In contrast, al-Jazūlī's *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* enabled a different dimension of devotional book use, in which the book could stand on its own and even include advice about its perusal. This may have 'authorized' domestic book use to a new degree. At the same time, this work often became the core of new collections of texts.⁵⁴ Yet, it should be seen as the most successful proponent of a wider phenomenon. Likewise, those quires that circulated in Ibn Ṭawq's circles would eventually be codified as a compiled volume (*majmū'a*). These books could take the form of a prayer book, a notebook or a commonplace book, and often also served as a family archive.⁵⁵ One example is a manuscript codex which contains, among other fragments, a partial biographical work by Kamāl al-Dīn's father, a list of his own children and their birth dates, and a teaching certificate for his great-great-grandson.⁵⁶ As several ownership annotations of other descendants of Kamāl al-Dīn indicate, this book – it was hoped – would perpetuate the memory of the family even after their library might be sold (as a whole), dissolved or endowed. In the face of the borrowing practices described by Ibn Ṭawq, a book was not necessarily out of reach after it was endowed. It did not necessarily mean that one could not read or even keep them in one's home. 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. Another pious or scholarly owner's or user's inscription on its pages would prove the worth of its contents as well as add to the *baraka* – and thus the value – of the book.

Not only with regard to their importance for domestic devotion, books should therefore be studied as material objects embedded in diverse practices, not purely as texts. The thousands of collective manuscripts which survive in the Arabic language alone bespeak the widespread investment of time, money, and knowledge that went into the selection and compilation of collective manuscripts in Islamicate societies – and while the preservation of

54 See, for example, Tokyo, Daiber Collection, MS 334: several prayers and a list of al-Jazūlī's teachers are added to the *Dalā'il*.

55 These books often seem to have had similar purposes as early modern English household books; cf. Marotti A.F. – May S.W., *Ink, Stink Bait, Revenge, and Queen Elizabeth: A Yorkshire Yeoman's Household Book* (Ithaca – London: 2014) in particular 7–12.

56 Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, MS Völlers 678 <http://www.refaiya.uni-leipzig.de/receive/RefaiyaBook_islamhs_00003007> (last accessed 16 Oct. 2015).

knowledge was one important goal, the compilation of older 'original' texts also attests to a person's creativity and originality in his own engagement with God and the world. Through systematic explorations of these textual corpora, investigations into the exciting domain of domestic devotions could thus bear additional benefits for the field at large, making these sources accessible to a wider scholarship.

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