Stefanie Brinkmann

Introduction: Reconstructing Agents, Places, and Methods through Manuscripts

Learning and teaching is bound to time and place, and before any transfer of knowledge can evolve, it is these external structures that represent the frame in which content was negotiated, debated, and adapted. Therefore, this first section in the present book is dedicated to the agents involved in learning and teaching, the locations, and institutions,¹ and the practical function manuscripts played within this framework.

The contributions of this section range from the Old Assyrian period of the second millennium BCE to the twentieth century and from Western Europe to Anatolia, the Middle East and West Africa. Each of these historical periods and regions reveal enormous differences at a local and individual level, and a variety of languages, confessions, and intellectual traditions. But as varied as they seem, these manuscript cultures frequently share common features, such as the many locations where teaching and learning may take place, the re-usability of materials (e.g., as a means for learning how to read and write), the usage of smaller formats or single quires for better portability (and for them, perhaps, to be loaned out between teaching locations and private study sites) as well as the many textual traces that provide evidence of dictation, oral recitation and lectures.

¹ There is no generally accepted clear-cut historical definition of the concept of ‘institution’. The social sciences, above all, have made it their task to bring significant focus to the term, providing various definitions ranging from narrow to broader distinctions. Implementing Jacques Revel’s definition (Revel 1997), one may distinguish between institutions as follows: ‘the strict and technical definition of institutions as legal-political entities prevalent in legal history and the traditional history of institutions; a more recent, somewhat broader concept referring to social bodies functioning according to rules and norms (such as schools or trade unions), and a truly wide definition which sees institutions wherever regular, recurring forms of conduct subject to norms and based on mutual expectations can be detected’ (Algazi 2014, 5). In addition, scholars distinguished between institutions as a type of entity and as an activity. Further problems arose due to concepts developed within European history being transferred to the Near and Middle East. See, e.g., Narotzky and Manzano 2014.

1 Textual evidence

Taking the textual evidence of manuscripts as a starting point for the reconstruction of teaching and learning in specific regions at given times, one is generally confronted by three main possible areas for analysis:

1. Texts describing schools (or other sites of education), teachers and students, including pedagogical texts, or images of school life.²
2. Manuscripts in which the main text(s) were of primarily educational purposes i.e., school-, or textbooks implemented for the direct purpose of teaching.
3. Manuscripts in which the main text is not a schoolbook, but any text that was part of the cultural heritage and was taught in different contexts. Here, paratextual elements can provide documentary information on how these texts were transmitted and taught.

Disregarding the occasionally fluid borders between these categories, the contributions primarily address examples relating to the second and third group. In the first category, however, M. Baldzuhn shows images reflecting studying contexts, and W. Beyer opens her contribution with so-called Edubba-literature, or ‘school-stories’, i.e. texts that report on the daily life of a student.

2 Agents and places

Although in theory all stages of learning are covered, from the elementary to advanced levels, and the transmission of knowledge among scholars (and non-scholars), only W. Beyer’s contribution examines material evidence of how to learn to read and write (Old Assyrian Aššur). Most contributions focus on a stage of higher learning, at a monastery (T. Hennings), cathedral school (S. Whedbee), university (M. Baldzuhn), or teaching sessions at various locations, conducted by a religious authority, or master (D. Ogorodnikova, J. Karolewski, W. Beyer). C. Colini broaches the issue of teaching a craft, namely ink making.

Taken this broad spectrum of educational settings, the term ‘teacher’ refers to private and schoolteachers as well as scholars. In most contributions, the identity of teachers could be revealed, and only in a few cases a teacher has remained

² See, for example, Günther 2005, 89–128; Dickey 2012.

anonymous. For the pre-modern period when the personal relationship between teacher and student was usually much more central than the institution, tracing such networks of educational relationships through the analysis of the main text, paratexts, and contemporary sources is of key importance. Teachers were either hired externally, teaching permanently within a given institution such as a monastery, or were members of the family, or the religious community. In all contributions to this section, the teachers happened to be male, as were probably also the students, with the exception of a female student in Old Assyrian Aššur (W. Beyer).

The locations in which teaching and studying took place, as well as the institutions participating in the manuscripts' distribution are numerous, ranging from dedicated educational institutions such as monasteries and universities, mosques, madrasas, (temple) schools, to locations of a multiple use, such as gardens or marketplaces. That the private house was a typical location where teachers provided lessons is well reflected in a number of the contributions. Some teaching institutions offered at times student accommodation, such as some madrasas in the Islamicate world, or individual Brahmins accommodating a student of Vedic instruction.³

3 Accessibility of manuscripts

The varied places of instruction are accompanied by a hybrid situation when it comes to the use and accessibility of manuscripts for students or scholars. Libraries were key in making knowledge accessible, for students did not necessarily possess a private copy of each text required for study. In medieval Europe, monastic and university libraries offered to different degrees access to books. In the Islamicate world, many teaching or research institutions such as the madrasa, or hospitals contained libraries, and there were public libraries that were often established as endowments (*waqf*).⁴ Beyond such private or institutionalised collections of manuscripts, the book market offered necessary material for studies. While a number of cities had specific areas for the trade with books, this activity also operated within loose personal networks.

³ Here, lessons were often conducted outdoors due to the hot climate. For an overview of education in Ancient India see Scharfe 2002, for Tamil education in particular see Ebeling 2010, especially 37–55. See Günther 2017, 31–32, about the Islamic education up to 1500.

⁴ Hirschler 2021; Liebrecht (forthcoming).

It is not always clear to what extent students were to bring their own manuscripts to the teaching sessions, or to what extent educational material was placed at their disposal by institutions, and/or by the teacher. At a more advanced educational level at universities for instance, students were at times expected to have their own copies, copied either from other manuscripts, or by dictation. The fifteenth-century university statutes of Leipzig, for example, declare that the students visiting a *lectio* had to bring with them their own, corrected texts (M. Baldzuhn). And in the beginning of the second millenium BCE in Mesopotamia, students had to form their own clay tablets (W. Beyer). The classroom notes taken in a Cathedral school by Robert Amiclas, student of the Parisian Comestor (Peter of Troyes, d. c. 1178), were added to his personal copy (S. Whedbee). In other cases, such as the Alevi religious education, it was usually only the teacher who had a manuscript (J. Karolewski), similar to South Asia, where students' private copies were an exception.⁵ In many of the manuscript cultures presented in this section, however, hybrid situations can be expected in which manuscripts were at the disposal of students or students took their own notes and copies for the purpose of text transmission and self-study, as well as the existence of opportunities to borrow or purchase manuscripts. Lending only parts of a manuscript, e.g. a chapter, facilitated multiple use. The manuscript culture of single leaves in West Africa facilitates the borrowing of parts of a complete text, or set of texts, to a student for them to copy the required, specific text passage. A similar phenomenon is witnessed in medieval Europe: From early thirteenth-century Bologna, the system of so-called *peciae* was implemented in North Italy, France, Spain, and parts of England until the fifteenth century: single parts of an entire manuscript that could be borrowed separately for copying.

4 Orality and the use of manuscripts in educational settings

Despite the many different contexts, one aspect was central to all of the manuscript cultures presented in this section: the importance of orality in teaching and studying.

⁵ Long 1868, 123. Despite the fact that few students prepared private copies, there are manuscripts showing notes on the margins taken directly while the teacher was talking, see Formigatti 2015.

Orality has been a fundamental and widespread method of any educational tradition, often representing a prior-ranking status, either due to the scarcity of writing material, the social status of scholars, deficiencies of scripts, or other reasons.⁶ But as a matter of fact, teaching and learning was often conducted through a combined process of orality and written culture. Within the educational settings presented in this section, though, manuscripts were apparently not used in equal measure within these teaching contexts. J. Karolewski demonstrates that in spite of manuscripts being considered a treasure trove for the Alevi religious tradition, memorization and oral teaching were of prime importance first, and this has barely left any traces upon the manuscripts. Hence, understanding the function of manuscripts within the teaching and learning context could only be gained through interviews in the contemporary Alevi community – serving as a reminder that a lack of written evidence in a manuscript need not signify their marginality in teaching and learning settings. Less certain in terms of the practical use of manuscripts is the situation in C. Colini's study of five medieval treatises on ink making that questions the function of manuscripts when teaching a craft. Only very few have evidence for practical use: added recipes in the margins, or some greenish fingerprints in the section of the book dealing with coloured inks.

Different from these two examples is T. Hennings' presentation of texts which were certainly intended for reading and private study, namely texts that Notker of St. Gall (c. 840–912) collected for his pupils, the brothers Salomon II. of Constance (c. 860–919/920) and Waldo of Freising (c. 852–906). Possibly a parting gift for the two brothers when they left St. Gall, these texts reflect topics taught, topics to be applied in the future, personal interests – but do not reflect direct teaching situations.

Such direct teaching situations are, on the other hand, addressed in other contributions of this section: S. Whedbee and M. Baldzuhn refer to dictation sessions, Whedbee regarding a twelfth-century Parisian cathedral school and Baldzuhn in referring to the medieval European universities. *Reportationes* were notes taken by a student from a master's oral lecture. These notes may well have undergone corrections and extensions, quite probably under the master's supervision, resulting in a kind of polished report of a master's oral teaching. These *reportationes* may also include the teacher's name, thus providing an

⁶ In the case of the memorizing and studying the Vedas in South Asia, orality was the only method until shortly before the beginning of the common era and learning from written sources was even seen as a reproachable activity. Despite this proscription the actual education surely saw a combination of both practices, written and oral (Ciotti 2017).

important source for the reconstruction of scholarly networks and teacher-student-relationships. In his contribution, S. Whedbee compares a manuscript of such a polished *reportatio* from the Parisian master Comestor (Peter of Troyes, d. c. 1178) with a manuscript by his student Robert Amiclas which has notes from Comestor's lecture in the classroom.

In line with such classroom notes, D. Ogorodnikova presents marginal, or interlinear annotations with references to teachers in Islamic manuscripts from Senegambia. Even though she doubts that at least some of these notes were written during the teaching session due to their *mise-en-page* and the 'book hand character', they possibly reflect – directly or indirectly – oral teaching by introducing the text of the annotation with opening formulas such as 'from the mouth of our teacher' (*min fammi ustāḍinā*), or 'our Šaiḥ said' (*qāla šaiḥunā*).⁷ Whenever names or family relations are given, we can partly reconstruct student-teacher-networks and scholars' biographies.⁸

Certain paratexts in manuscripts from the Islamicate world are worthy highlighting here for their unique character as sources for teaching and learning contexts, and because they are not dealt with explicitly in this volume: certificates of transmission (sg. *iğāza*, pl. *iğāzāt*) and certificates of audition, or protocols of audition (sg. *samā'*, pl. *samā'āt*). *Samā'āt* function as registers of teaching sessions, usually naming the master, or shaykh, the work studied, all attendees, date, and place. These entries not only open a window onto concrete teaching settings, as well as networks of scholars, but also provide an insight into the social history by listing all participants, including women, children, and men with a variety of social backgrounds.⁹ *Iğāzāt*, correspondingly, are certificates awarded by a teacher to a student. This kind of text may specify educational methods, mentioning the subject and/or the text taught, the teacher's and student's names, as well as place and date. Such certificates, both *iğāzāt* and

⁷ But even in these cases one has to read these paratexts with caution for it is frequently not certain to what extent such entries reflect direct oral teaching contexts, or to what extent they follow certain (written) conventions. On the other hand, evidence has been found relating to written sources as in opening formulas such as 'from the writing of' (*min ḥaṭṭi*).

⁸ Early examples of West African manuscripts, from the seventeenth century on, show such annotations partly reflecting teaching contexts at different educational levels, Bondarev 2017, Ogorodnikova 2017.

⁹ Thus far, the only systematic collection of a larger scale of *samā'āt* has been carried out by S. Leder, Y. as-Sawwās and M. aṣ-Ṣağarǧi (1996). They collected audition notes from Damascus for the years 1155–1349. At the moment, Konrad Hirschler and Said al-Ġumāni (Berlin) have begun to catalogue *iğāzāt* and *samā'āt* in manuscripts of different holdings, for future online accessibility.

samāʿāt alike, may be added to the margin of a manuscript, after a chapter, or on a separate page in the manuscript, however, they may also appear as independent texts.¹⁰ As such entries may register date and place, the setting of the teaching session(s) can partly be reconstructed in detail, including methods applied during the session (such as the recitation of a text before the master, *qirāʿa*, or dictation, *imlāʿ*). While many *igāzāt* evidence direct contact between teacher and student, they may also be given without direct contact, at times even to children despite the advanced level of the subject matter. Such cases were highly disputed within the Muslim communities.¹¹

5 Material and format

Beyond the analysis of texts, the material aspects and layout of manuscripts may narrate their own story and add crucial information to the reconstruction of teaching and learning contexts.

In general, less material evidence exists for elementary education as that of advanced education and the scholarly transmission of knowledge. Some exercise fragments, books, or cuneiform tablets may have survived, but in general writing surfaces for such exercises were not made to last and were often re-used. Practices of re-using material involved wooden tablets¹², wax tablets¹³, and clay¹⁴,

10 Gacek 2012, 51–56, Davidson 2020, 108–151, Seidensticker 2015.

11 Two other genres that have been transmitted through manuscript copies and function as some kind of diploma supplement in modern terms are the *mašyaḥa* (or *muʿḡam aš-šuyūḥ*) and the *ṭabat* (or *fihrist*). In the former, an author (or person in charge) would list all transmitters from whom he (or she) had taken and learned a Prophetic tradition (*ḥadiṯ*). While here, the teacher is the point of departure, *ṭabat* works usually take the book that has been taught and learnt as key reference: The mentioning of the book was followed by those from whom the author had listened and studied the book. See Davidson 2020, 241–275.

12 Wooden tablets are known from images in manuscripts (Hirschler 2013, 82–90, Plates 2–6; Baer 2001), descriptions in texts, and remain in use to a certain extent today, for instance in West Africa (Brigaglia 2017).

13 Wax tablets were a typical material during Antiquity and the Middle Ages the early stages of learning how to read and write (but also for notes and drafts). A wooden tablet filled with wax from second-century Egypt for Greek writing exercises is mentioned in Turner 1971, 32, Plate 4.

14 Although the material evidence of clay tablets as surface for learning how to write seems not have to survived in other manuscript cultures than the Ancient Near East (at least to our current knowledge), clues exist indicating the use of clay as a means for children learning to write in the medieval Islamicate world (See Colini p. 103, referring to Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad

while other materials such as papyri¹⁵ or (palm) leaves were usually not meant to be stored when used for writing exercises. The practice, common in South Asia, of writing in sand with a stick was, naturally, even more ephemeral.¹⁶ The introduction of paper was a decisive break. But paper was not necessarily cheap, at times even expensive and, different from the material mentioned above, barely re-usable. However, the reuse of paper from manuscripts, letters, or other documents was not uncommon at children's schools or among scholars. It is not known, though, just exactly when paper became of common use at children schools.¹⁷ But there is a difference in terms of the surviving evidence of writing exercises: Clay tablets have survived from the second half of the fourth millennium BC, fragments actually of thousands of school tablets – contrast starkly to manuscript cultures from which only snippets of writing exercises on papyri, parchment, or paper have survived. At a more advanced level and far more for the purpose of text transmission and circulation, different materials were used, such as parchment, papyri, palm leaves, and paper. Aside from clay (W. Beyer) and parchment (W. Baldzuhn, S. Whedbee) all other contributions in this section present paper as the writing surface.

Remembering that part of the life of a manuscript involved being carried to teaching sessions, for notes (e.g., by dictation), or for copying, it appears obvious that such manuscripts, if codices, had to have been in portable formats meaning they would have been of a medium or smaller size. This applies to the two manuscripts with texts written and arranged by Notker of St. Gall (c. 840–912) for two of his students (T. Hennings), as well as to the manuscripts with ink recipes (C. Colini). Of a slightly larger size are most of the manuscripts kept in Ali Dede's private collection which were not meant to be used and carried around by students (J. Karolewski). Evidently, the trimming of books, e.g., for new bindings, has to be taken into consideration, but in general, small, or medium sized

al-Qalalūsī al-Andalusī's [d. 707 AH / 1308 CE] *Tuḥaf al-ḥawāṣṣ fi ṭuraf al-ḥawāṣṣ*; compare, though, Hirschler 2013, 87).

¹⁵ Papyri that were used for school exercises in Antiquity (and beyond) give evidence of the training of single letters, complete words, or longer text passages, but they were not necessarily intended for storage or maintenance in a library (Cribiore 1996 and 2005). For fragments of writing exercises in Hebrew see also see Taylor-Schechter Collection of the Cairo Geniza at Cambridge University Library (<<https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/taylor-schechter-genizah-research-unit/>>, accessed on 7 January 2021).

¹⁶ Scharfe 2002, 80–86.

¹⁷ Based on the evidence of illustrations, some scholars suggest a period from the fourteenth to fifteenth century in the Middle East, Hirschler 2013, 86–87.

manuscripts *may* signify portable personal manuscripts used for studying (and teaching) purposes.¹⁸

Publications dedicated to multiple text manuscripts have pointed to the many intentions for the collection and organisation of selected texts, ranging from personal interests, professional needs, and educational purposes.¹⁹ As the description of the manuscript collection of the Alevi authority Ali Dede in Anatolia shows, collections of religious texts, poetry, epics, and narrations alike, are quite common in the Alevi manuscript tradition (J. Karolewski). These encompass different types, such as the *buyruk* ('the command'), containing dogmatic texts of the Alevi community to which only the religious specialists had access; the *cönk*, an oblong shaped booklet usually containing religious poetry; or collections of documents featuring genealogies (*şecere*, or *silsilename*), or certificates (*icazetname*). Notker of St. Gall's text compilation for his two students also had educational purposes, it went beyond a concrete curriculum, however, collecting that which is deemed useful for a cultivated and cultured future life (T. Hennings). In return, those composite or multiple-text manuscripts including recipes for inks show a clear, professional profile: Most of the texts on ink production are bound together with other scientific texts from alchemy, medicine, astronomy, or mineralogy (C. Colini).

In terms of layout and script, manuscripts may give evidence of the production context and the purpose of the object. W. Beyer illustrates how analysis of the shape of clay tablets, layout and cuneiform handwriting can provide new insights into writing and teaching traditions. In West African manuscripts, ample space layout can be seen as a sign of manuscripts planned for glosses, often in local languages and partly reflecting different educational levels (D. Ogorodnikova).²⁰ M. Baldzuhn presents chosen examples for layouts from the field of Latin grammar ranging from shorter interlinear explanations to longer commentaries organised in text blocks. Such carefully organised marginal annotations appear even more lavishly planned, in Robert Amiclas' de-luxe copy of the Gospel of Luke (S. Whedbee). Such exegetical annotations are addressed in the following section on *Exegetical Practices: Annotations and Glossing* (Stefano Valente).

¹⁸ Another example of portable books in fourteenth- to sixteenth-century Europe, but not included in this edited volume, are girdle books. These small-sized books had covers that continued loose on one side and could be fixed at the girdle. See Smith 2017.

¹⁹ Friedrich and Schwarke 2016; Bausi, Friedrich and Maniaci 2019.

²⁰ Bondarev 2017, Ogorodnikova 2017.

By examining, to varying degrees, the aforementioned categories of textual elements, material, format, layout and script, the contributions of this section on *Teachers, students, and their manuscripts* offer exemplary insights into teaching and learning contexts in different regions, cultural environments, and at different historical periods. The section starts with the Ancient Near East and continues with the Islamicate World and Europe. The contributions within these groups have been organised according to a chronological pattern.

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