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The edited volume *Personal Manuscripts: Copying, Drafting, Taking Notes* is the outcome of a conference held in 2020 at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) in Hamburg. It brings together fifteen papers that explore manuscripts from diverse, predominantly non-Western cultures, ranging from Mesopotamian clay tablets of the second millennium BCE to nineteenth-century Ottoman and Iranian manuscripts. As indicated by the subtitle, the term "personal manuscripts" is used here in a restricted sense, referring mostly to manuscripts produced through the practices of copying, excerpting, drafting, and note-taking. With the exception of a Japanese diary, other types, such as memoirs, autobiographies, and diaries, are not included in the volume. This restriction has proven to be a well-considered choice, as it allows the focus to remain on a specific set of practices clearly distinct from those associated with the production of manuscripts belonging to the latter types. The reader is thus able to follow and compare the ways in which the authors trace and interpret various textual, paratextual, and physical features that signal the personal character of manuscripts from different cultures. This approach makes the book a significant contribution to comparative codicology. The numerous images illustrating features such as page layout, writing in different directions, and ductus considerably enhance its informative value.

In the "Introduction" (pp. 1–31), the editors define a personal manuscript as one produced and used by the same person, or by a group of persons, without being commissioned and paid for. Since many personal manuscripts do not contain explicit statements such as "he wrote it for himself," the authors discuss the features by which this purpose might be inferred. Among these, they mention sloppiness, illegible or barely legible ductus, and a lack of care in page layout, but rightly conclude that none of these can serve as reliable criteria. As they state, "we might say that 'untidy' manuscripts were probably written for personal use but, on the other hand, many 'tidy' (or 'regular') manuscripts were too" (p. 5). Several other contributors to the volume address the same question.

Frédéric Bauden's paper, entitled "Data Overload and Information Management in the Mamluk Period (1250–1517)" (pp. 33–83), examines manuscripts produced by scholars of the Mamluk period as tools that enabled them to cope with voluminous texts and manage an abundance of information. These tools include summaries, selections, abridgements, lists, indexes, and notebooks.

Bauden notes that such manuscripts were designated by various terms, often used interchangeably, by both the scholars who produced them and their contemporaries, which makes their precise classification difficult. While discussing manuscripts created through note-taking, he introduces a distinction between notebooks (referred to in the text as *maǧāmīʿ*), which contained summaries and excerpts used in preparation for composing original works, and *taḏkiras* (aide-mémoires), comprising "passages and texts the author particularly liked, which were not necessarily those he wished to exploit for his own compositions, although (...) some scholars did." This final remark points to a possible overlap between the two types. Indeed, the term "notebook" could apply to both, with the former being closer to a working notebook. Bauden also pays attention to material features indicating that these manuscripts were primarily intended for personal use, such as the use of paper of different dimensions, qualities, and colors within a single manuscript and a carelessly executed page layout. Some of these manuscripts, however, were also made available to others. As Bauden states, Ibn Mubārakšāh produced a *taḏkira* not only for himself but also for his son, while al-Maqrīzī explicitly instructs readers to consult his *maǧāmīʿ* for further information.

In the paper entitled "Between Reading and Writing: Manuscript Collections of Excerpts in Eighteenth-Century Germany" (pp. 85–115), Elisabeth Décultot provides an introductory overview of excerpting practices, especially in eighteenth-century Germany, and goes on to discuss collections of excerpts produced by J. J. Winckelmann and Jean Paul, as well as the ways in which copying selected passages related to their writing activities. These authors would group excerpts related to a specific theme and devise tools such as indices, catalogues, registers, and tables of contents to facilitate the retrieval of excerpts relevant to their own works. Examining how the practice of excerpting shaped Winckelmann's way of composing his own texts, Décultot finds that he sometimes incorporated excerpts into his work while explicitly indicating their sources, but on many occasions inserted them without reference to the original. She concludes that this latter practice, which might be regarded as plagiarism, should instead be understood within the framework of Winckelmann's artistic theory, particularly his views on imitation and originality in the fine arts.

In his paper "Raison d'être and Use of Stand-alone Formulae in Early Medieval European Legal Manuscripts" (pp. 118–137), Philippe Depreux examines the practice of adding stand-alone, anonymized templates for charters and letters (*formulae*) to early medieval collections of legal texts. He states that some scribes not only copied but also modified such *formulae*, or even created new ones, which leads him to conclude that they sought to produce original collections of legal texts for their own use. He interprets this practice as a form of "writing for oneself." However, throughout the paper, he repeatedly notes that nothing is known about the identities of the scribes and that some of these copies may have been produced for patrons as well.

Mélanie Dubois-Morestin's "The *Livre de Raison* of Jean Teisseire" (pp. 139–171) presents a detailed analysis of a manuscript produced by a hemp grower, craftsman, and merchant from fourteenth-century Avignon. The manuscript belongs to the genre of the *livre de raison*, a type of record book containing entries related to both the professional activities and the personal and familial life of its compiler. In the introduction, Dubois-Morestin discusses the history of scholarly engagement with the manuscript, tracing previous research from its first academic mention in 1889. This trajectory can also be seen as representative of the broader history of research into personal manuscripts—particularly notebooks, journals, and similar sources—from other cultural contexts: a history marked by selectivity and by the extraction of material deemed relevant to scholars' specific research interests. By contrast, Dubois-Morestin approaches the manuscript as an integrated whole of content and form, seeking to understand the ways in which Jean Teisseire composed, organized, and deployed his notes to structure his commercial and public activities. Beyond its practical usefulness in Teisseire's daily life, the *livre de raison* also functioned, as the author concludes, "in creating the memory and history of a family and of a workshop."

The contribution by David Durand-Guédy, "The *bayāḍ* of Hindūšāh Nahǧawānī: A Collection of Excerpts from Mongol Iran" (pp. 173–215), offers a detailed study of a voluminous manuscript that once belonged to the Iranian scholar Hindūšāh Nahǧawānī (13th/14th century). The manuscript is oblong in format, which leads the author to designate it as a *bayāḍ*, a term commonly used in the Persian cultural sphere for manuscripts of this type. Durand-Guédy further points out

that *bayāḍ* could also denote compilations more generally, irrespective of format, and could function as a synonym for terms such as *maǧmūʿa* and *taḏkira*. In the manuscript itself, as stated in the incipit, the designation *maǧmūʿa* is used. The author provides an exhaustive presentation of the manuscript's contents, identifying several distinct scribal hands, and subsequently seeks to determine which excerpts were copied by Hindūšāh himself. The fact that Hindūšāh signed as copyist in two colophons serves as a firm point of departure for the paleographical analysis, through which Durand-Guédy was able to identify Hindūšāh's ductus in other segments of the manuscript. In addition, he meticulously correlates dates and place names found in other, unsigned colophons with biographical data relating to Hindūšāh, thereby attributing to him those copies whose colophons do not explicitly bear his name. Finally, in support of the argument that the manuscript was produced for personal use, the author points to several factors: the page layout, which frequently features writing in different directions; the subject matter of the excerpts, reflecting Hindūšāh's individual intellectual interests; and the fact that, after Hindūšāh's death, the manuscript remained in the possession of his son.

The manuscript examined by Élise Franssen in her paper entitled "aṣ-Ṣafadī's *taḏkira* and its Holograph in Princeton University Library" (pp. 217–262) is a notebook (*taḏkira*) produced by the renowned Mamluk scholar aṣ-Ṣafadī. It contains complete texts or excerpts copied in the course of reading, alongside the compiler's notes, correspondence, and drafts of his own works. This manuscript forms part of a multi-volume *taḏkira* that reportedly comprised up to fifty volumes. Although conceived as a personal working tool, it was not used exclusively by aṣ-Ṣafadī. As Franssen points out, he would lend it to friends and colleagues and refer to specific volumes in his own works in order to instruct the reader where to find information. Furthermore, some of the volumes of his *taḏkira* were copied by other individuals. On this basis, the author concludes that "conventional categories such as 'personal working tool' vs 'published work' are far too confining in describing the reality of aṣ-Ṣafadī's *taḏkira*."

Horikawa Yasufumi, in his study "The Diary of a Shintō Priest in Medieval Japan" (pp. 263–285), offers an introductory overview of diary-keeping practices in medieval Japan. Diaries functioned as repositories for family records and precedents, and their purpose was to instruct the authors' descendants in

political customs and ceremonial practices. Over time, they became accessible to readers beyond the family, serving as didactic manuals, and were copied, edited, and systematically indexed. Yasufumi then examines in detail a diary written on scrolls by the Shintō priest Yoshida Kaneatsu (d. 1408). Although it was preserved as a family treasure until the mid-nineteenth century, the diary transcended the boundaries of the Yoshida lineage and was copied outside the family circle. Despite this openness to the eyes of others, this diary, more than any other manuscript discussed in the volume, contains remarkably intimate accounts by its author. It reveals his emotions and dreams, as demonstrated in the appendix, where Yasufumi provides a translation of a particularly vivid entry. This translation lends a notably personal dimension to the contribution, as it allows the reader to hear the voice of the historical individual whose manuscript is under discussion.

Mohammad Karimi Zanjani Asl, in his paper entitled "The Autograph Manuscripts of Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1045 AH / 1635 CE): Classification and Preliminary Study" (pp. 287–333), presents twenty-four manuscripts that belonged to the prolific Iranian philosopher and mystic Mullā Ṣadrā. They comprise both drafts and final versions of Mullā Ṣadrā's works, as well as collections of excerpts and verses by other authors copied by him. Although the author describes his contribution as a first overview of these manuscripts, he nevertheless provides an abundance of insights and outlines the methodological approach that he intends to develop in forthcoming research, which aims to reconstruct the path from note-taking, excerpting, and drafting to the final versions of Mullā Ṣadrā's works. It is unclear, however, why nine manuscripts comprising copies made by Mullā Ṣadrā of works authored by others are included in the group of his autographs. They undoubtedly contribute to our knowledge of his intellectual predilections, but they do not conform to any established definition of an autograph.

In her contribution entitled "User-Production of Hebrew Manuscripts Revisited: The Case of Manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, Huntington 200" (pp. 335–357), Judith Olszowy-Schlanger discusses an exceptional Hebrew-script manuscript produced in Egypt in 1279. In its colophon, a certain Ezra ben Nathanael explicitly states that he copied the work for himself. Although such statements suggest that the scribe made the copy for personal use, a meticulous

textual, codicological, and paleographical analysis undertaken by the author reveals six scribal hands. Ezra ben Nathanael copied a major part of the text and also collated and corrected the work of other scribes. The author concludes that the manuscript was most probably made in a workshop specializing in producing books for sale. In support of this conclusion, she mentions the existence of other fragments of the same text copied by Ezra ben Nathanael, which could indicate that he was professionally involved in book production. She interprets the expression "copied for himself" as "more of a workshop trademark than a proud reader's announcement that he copied the book for his private library, study, and enjoyment." If this is the case, the manuscript does not fit into the category of personal manuscripts. I would cautiously add that, in her conclusion, the author could have left open the possibility that Ezra ben Nathanael, whether a *warrāq* or not, may have made this manuscript for himself with some help from other individuals whose contribution he did not consider significant enough to merit the inclusion of their names. This is the possibility she herself raises in her question on p. 351: "Was he a private patron and an avid reader who asked family members and friends to help him copy a book he desired for himself?"

Jürgen Paul's "Mufti Notebooks: Two *ğung* Manuscripts from Late Nineteenth-Century Bukhara" (pp. 359–394) examines two *ğungs* from Muslim Central Asia, produced by jurisconsults (muftis). These manuscripts combine legal texts with materials from other fields, including medicine, astronomy, and poetry. With regard to the term *ğung*, the author explains that, in Central Asia, it refers to compilations made primarily by muftis and other individuals employed within the legal system. Unlike several other manuscripts discussed in the volume, which were produced as practical tools to manage "data overload," the motivation behind these compilations lay in the muftis' need to assemble important legal materials, such as fatwas, into a single collection that could function as a manual when they were assigned to small towns where they had no access to law books. Through the inclusion of non-legal materials, such as recipes, prayers, and charms, these manuscripts gradually developed into personal notebooks with heterogeneous contents. In Paul's view, such additional materials may have been connected to the muftis' daily work beyond the strictly legal domain and may have contributed to their ability to earn a livelihood.

In his paper entitled "Legal Consultants in the Time of the Severan Dynasty: Papyri and the Emperor's Law" (pp. 395–409), Patrick Sänger examines a papyrus originating from Egypt that contains a transcript of thirteen imperial rulings (*apokrimata*) from the time of the Severan dynasty (193–235 CE). He discusses this source in the context of other related texts from the same period, which attest to an increased interest in collecting and summarizing imperial rulings. Unlike earlier scholars, who assumed that the transcript in question constituted a memorandum made by a notary, Sänger argues that it was most likely produced by an individual interested in legal matters—such as a professional scribe acting as a legal consultant—to serve as his own memorandum.

Florian Sobieroj, in his paper "Autographic Manuscripts of the Arabic-Speaking World Created for the Scribe's Own Use" (pp. 411–446), systematically examines Arabic manuscripts featuring expressions such as *katabahu/ʿallaqahu/nasaḫahu/istansaḫahu li-nafsihi*, as well as other elements indicating that a scribe made a copy for himself. However, there is occasional vagueness in his explanations of the terms. It is unclear why the expression *ʿalā yad muʿalliqihi li-nafsihi* is translated in the section title as "by the hand of one who glossed it for himself," whereas the examples given by the author clearly indicate that it was used to denote copying. Likewise, in the title of another section, the verb *istansaḫa* is followed by the question "he dictated [it]?," while in the text the author renders its meaning as copying. If Sobieroj intended to indicate different meanings of a single term, this should have been explained explicitly. In the section devoted to expressions such as *bi-ḫaṭṭ mālikihi*, which specify that the same person was the copyist and the first owner of the manuscript, the example given on p. 429 does not seem well chosen. Sobieroj states that the name of the person who was both the scribe and the owner is written on the title page and in the colophon. However, the scribe uses the term *bi-rasm*, thereby indicating that he executed the copy for the owner (*bi-rasm* does not mean "in the handwriting," as the author states, but "for," "by order of"). In the codicological description of this manuscript, features such as rashness, avoidance of the use of colors, and carelessness are presented as confirmation that the copy was made for the scribe's own use. However, since this was clearly not the case, this manuscript can instead illustrate the unreliability of such features as criteria for distinguishing personal manuscripts from those commissioned or produced for

the market. This unreliability is also illustrated by Sobieroj through the example of a flawlessly executed manuscript that nevertheless features the scribal expression "by the hand of its copyist and owner." As a final remark, I would add that the term "autographic" in the title of this contribution is misleading when applied to the manuscripts under discussion. These manuscripts are copies, not texts penned in their authors' own hands.

In her paper "A Collector's Edition of the Past: Personal Collections of Mesopotamian Royal Inscriptions from the Old Babylonian Period" (pp. 447–476), Szilvia Sövegjártó discusses clay tablets originating from second-millennium BCE Mesopotamia, which comprise compilations of royal inscriptions copied from monuments in local temples. The author suggests that the compilers were apprentice scribes, who may have undertaken the task of copying as part of their school assignments. She further argues that these were advanced apprentice scribes, as evidenced by the freedom of selection of the inscriptions and the level of their scribal practices. They did not simply copy the texts but sought to preserve the original layout of the inscriptions, adding captions to clarify the identities of the figures depicted in the reliefs on the monuments. The author states that these collections were most probably compiled with the aim of studying local historical events as well as stylistic and linguistic features of the inscriptions. They therefore belong to a group of manuscripts produced as personal learning tools.

Ilona Steimann's contribution "Jewish Exemplars and Hebraist Copies of Hebrew Manuscripts" (pp. 477–507) deals with manuscripts comprising Hebrew texts, produced around 1500 by German monastic scholars. These manuscripts are collections of copies, drafts, and annotations, created under conditions marked by the scarcity of such texts, since many Hebrew manuscripts were destroyed after the expulsion of Jews from Germany. Hebraist friars sought to collect and copy the texts available to them and to employ them in the process of writing their own works. The author's examination reveals that they did not faithfully copy the texts but instead adapted them for Christian readers by adding interlinear translations and marginal comments, as well as inserting interpolations into the original texts. Special attention is given to the monks' practice of copying paratexts from exemplars—such as colophons and notes by previous owners—which enabled them to reconstruct both the chain of

earlier versions of a given text and the chain of its successive users. Steimann concludes that these collections of texts were conceived by monastic Hebraists as personal manuscripts produced primarily for their own scholarly use but also intended for circulation within limited groups of scholars.

In her paper, "The Types of Text Compiling as Practiced by Ṣaḥḥāflarşeyḫi-zāde Esʿad Efendi (1789–1848)" (pp. 509–531), Nazlı Vatansever examines personal compilations (*mecmūʿas*) belonging to the Ottoman scholar, court historian, and bibliophile Esʿad Efendi. These manuscripts constitute part of a wider group of *mecmūʿas* compiled by him. Vatansever distinguishes between his "personal *mecmūʿas*" and "other types of *mecmūʿas* he personally compiled." The first group encompasses Esʿad Efendi's compilations of mixed content, while the *mecmūʿas* in the latter group comprise texts belonging to a single genre. Through this distinction, the author seems to offer an approach to the notion of personal manuscripts different from the one applied by other contributors to the volume, who treat any manuscript produced by the scribe or author for his own use as personal. In the remainder of the text, she examines two *mecmūʿas*. The first is characterized as "disordered" because it lacks any clear principle for organizing its entries. It served as a notebook comprising copies of diverse texts, drafts of Esʿad Efendi's own prose works, and other diverse notes. The author states that "the *mecmūʿa* was in no way taken by the author as a medium of self-expression." However, in my view, the family tree Esʿad Efendi drew, the note related to his father's tragic death, the list of poets with whom he had conversed, and the lists of books he possessed and those authored by him can indeed be seen as forms of self-expression. The second *mecmūʿa*, described as "partially ordered," exhibits a stricter organization. Most of its contents are excerpts from other authors' works, occasionally accompanied by Esʿad Efendi's comments. As Vatansever concludes, these *mecmūʿas* served different purposes, thereby offering different avenues for studying the relationship between the ways in which they were compiled and the reading and writing practices of their compiler.

Concluding remarks

This admittedly extensive review has aimed to present the diversity of manuscripts discussed by the contributors to the volume, as well as the variety of scholarly approaches to the practices of producing manuscripts for personal use. Before concluding, I would like to briefly address several terminological issues.

In the Introduction, the editors state that "according to the definition adopted by the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures, a manuscript is a material object, and therefore it is 'produced' (not 'copied' as Gacek wrote)" (p. 2). Yet, throughout the volume, both the contributors and the authors of the Introduction use expressions such as "to copy manuscripts," "to write manuscripts," and "copied manuscripts." Likewise, in the Introduction, a clear distinction is made between copies and excerpts, with the explanation that "excerpts summarize the content of a text, copies render it faithfully" (p. 12). By contrast, the authors of the contributions dealing with excerpts rightly present them as copies of selected parts of other authors' texts, thereby distinguishing them from summaries.

In the paper authored by F. Sobieroj, the opposition between tidy and untidy manuscripts is replaced by a categorization into display and scholarly manuscripts, on the basis of a suggestion made by the reviewer. The introduction of new terms warrants explanation, but such a choice would be difficult to justify convincingly. These two distinctions are by no means equivalent, because manuscripts made for scholarly purposes do not necessarily have to be untidy, as demonstrated by a number of examples presented in the volume. Likewise, among so-called untidy manuscripts there are those that were neither produced nor used for scholarly purposes. For instance, Ottoman personal anthologies of poetry were created by individuals from diverse professions and levels of education, sometimes with care, at other times with little concern for layout or ductus. It also remains unclear whether this new categorization implies that scholarly manuscripts were personal, and the display ones were not. In any case, it imposes a clarity that conflicts with the author's well-balanced conclusion, in which he states that features such as sloppiness are not entirely reliable for determining whether a manuscript was made for personal use. He uses the word "spectrum," which appears more appropriate than any binary division.

The same applies to the somewhat sharp distinction between personal manuscripts and those made for a patron or for the market, which is also evident in the volume. Manuscripts were also produced, sometimes carelessly, sometimes neatly, at the request of a person who did not necessarily have to be a wealthy patron or a bookshop owner, or for donation to a library, among other purposes.

Finally, with regard to the reasons for producing personal manuscripts, aside from the desire to possess a personal copy of a text, to create collections of excerpts as tools to help the compiler navigate an abundance of texts and use them in composing his own works, and other motivations discussed in the volume, one particularly important motive deserves mention. It can rarely be corroborated by contextual sources, yet it remains significant: the cognitive benefit of copying as a means of assimilating the text. This is the point to which Décultot draws particular attention in her study of German collections of excerpts.

Taken as a whole, this volume is the first comprehensive publication devoted to personal manuscripts produced through drafting, copying, and note-taking. It provides a state-of-the-art overview and constitutes a valuable reference for future studies on the subject. The editors, contributors, and publishers are to be commended for this achievement.