Introduction

In the fifteenth century, the Cairene scholar Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497) witnessed new entanglements across the western Indian Ocean that would change the future reach of Arabic learning. Educated in Mamlūk Egypt and Syria, he travelled to the Hijaz several times, not only to go on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, but also to take up residence for learned pursuits.[1] Much of his time would have been spent labouring over his monumental collective biographical work, entitled *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsi* ('The Brilliant Light Concerning the People of the Ninth Century'). He recorded the lives of thousands of people who he deemed important and who died during his lifetime – the ninth/fifteenth century (H/CE). In this regard, he very much emulated his teacher, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 852/1449), who had included biographies of people from North Africa to Egypt, Syria, the Hijaz, Persia, and India in his eighth/fourteenth-century prosopographical work, *al-Durar al-kāmina fī ʿayān al-miʾa al-thāmina* ('The Hidden Pearls Regarding the Notables of the Eighth Century').

Al-Sakhāwī also cast his geographical net wide. He looked towards the Maghrib (west) and the Mashriq (east). Importantly, it is the political changes playing out across the South Asian subcontinent (al-Hind) and their transoceanic implications which stand out in his work. Compared to his teacher, al-Sakhāwī documented many more 'Indians' (Hunūd, sg. Hindī) who travelled from the subcontinent to the Hijaz and further on.[2] Those Indians went on pilgrimage, participated in trade, but they also came to the cities of the Red Sea region to learn, collect teaching certificates, and copy texts from the great scholars, past and present. Many Indians studied with al-Sakhāwī, and thus, his biographical work also became an exercise in self-promotion demonstrating his large transregional discipleship.

[1] Here and in the following, Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 68: Petry, 'al-Sakhāwī'.
[2] See Chapter 1 in this book for a detailed study of al-Sakhāwī's *al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ*.

Map I.1 The early modern western Indian Ocean. Map based on John Meloy, *Imperial Power and Maritime Trade: Mecca and Cairo in the Later Middle Ages*, *Chicago*, IL: Middle East Documentation Center, 2010. Reproduced with the permission of the Middle East Documentation Center, the University of Chicago. Changes to the map by O. Nelson, chinooktype.com. Amended map reproduced from Bahl, Christopher, 'Transoceanic Arabic Historiography, Sharing the Past of the Sixteenth-Century Western Indian Ocean', *Journal of Global History*, 15, 2, p. 208, 2020 © Cambridge University Press, reproduced with permission.

At the same time, al-Sakhāwī recognised changes in how scholars, traders, artisans, and pilgrims from al-Hind identified themselves. As was often the case across the region, they used an element of their name, the *nisba* ('affiliation'), to express a sense of belonging, and the *nisba* al-Hindī continued to be important in this regard. However, the Indians that al-Sakhāwī came across went one step further by adding further nisbas denoting specific regions of the subcontinent, new political formations, and urban centres. While his teacher Ibn Ḥajar had 'only' encountered 'Indians', al-Sakhāwī engaged with Gujaratis, Bengalis, and Deccanis, referring to regions and their newly independent sultanic courts, as well as Gulbargis, Kanbāyatis, and Ahmadabadis, designating the urban centres of Gulbarga, Cambay, and Ahmadabad. Over the course of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries new Muslim courts had sprung up in Gujarat, Bengal, Jaunpur, and the Deccan. To staff their courts the newly crowned sultans and their courtly communities began to patronise learned groups, administrators, artists, and military experts, from western Asia, some of whom travelled to the Hijaz and met with al-Sakhāwī.

Al-Sakhāwī also documented people planning to venture out towards the East to look for new patrons and teaching posts. Many protagonists in al-Sakhāwī's *al-Dawʾ al-lāmiʿ* left the Red Sea region via Mecca and cities in Yemen, such as Zabid and Aden, from where they travelled across the Arabian Sea to such ports as Cambay and Dabhol and found patronage at courts such as Ahmadabad and Gulbarga, before they returned to the Hijaz to go to Egypt, Syria, and Anatolia. Transoceanic circuits which linked places from across the western Indian Ocean are prominent in al-Sakhāwī's prosopography, and apart from merchants, they were also used by people who offered their learned trades to patrons and students.

What al-Sakhāwī captured in his prosopographical sample was a new cast of protagonists repeatedly linking the same regions and places of the western Indian Ocean in their circulation for learned pursuits. Thus, a central notion that underlies his collective biographical work is that of an entangled world of Arabic learning stretching from the Red Sea region to the South Asian subcontinent. This world linked the regions of Egypt, the Hijaz, Yemen, Gujarat, and the Deccan. It was made up of ports, courts, and scholarly circles in mosques and *madāris* ('school of higher Islamic learning'), crisscrossed by scholars from different social backgrounds, and animated by the pursuit of study, the transmission of knowledge, and the exchange of texts.

Al-Sakhāwī points us to an emerging world of scholarly movements and the places, people, and practices involved in it. This world remained vibrant and interconnected over the following centuries. Alongside his

prosopographical record it is this period's fragmentary manuscript cultures that allow us to dive deeper into this transoceanic field of Arabic learning. In the following, I focus on the mobile manuscripts that delivered this learning. These mobile manuscripts can tell us many exciting stories about the transoceanic spread of Arabic learning and the shared social and cultural histories that it involved. Over the course of this Introduction, I will propose a method of how to make sense of these mobile manuscript cultures for the early modern western Indian Ocean.

Histories of Circulation

Al-Sakhāwī saw glimpses of a more dynamic and versatile maritime world of circulation. Transit shaped the early modern western Indian Ocean. Merchants shipped pepper from Malabar to the Red Sea, textiles from Gujarat to East Africa, and slaves from the Horn of Africa to the Deccan.[3] The *ḥajj* (annual Muslim pilgrimage) brought together an increasingly diverse community of Muslim pilgrims from the Red Sea region, Central Asia, Iran, South Asia, Southeast Asia and beyond in Mecca and Medina.[4] Shifting webs of port cities, from Aden to Jeddah, Hurmuz to Bandar Abbas, Cambay to Surat, Chaul and Dabhol to Masulipatnam also provided the learned the opportunity to sail the ocean (see Map I.1).[5] Ottoman and Portuguese competition drove the expansion of imperial interests across the ocean.[6] The monsoon winds dictated an annual schedule of transoceanic movements – going westwards during the early summer and eastwards during winter. Before the arrival of steam travel, this climatic phenomenon structured the exchange of human and material cargo to a great extent.[7]

Intellectual cargo travelled alongside people and goods. In the following, I study the spread of Arabic learning along those transoceanic movements, how it travelled, with whom it travelled, and how it shaped what people read and wrote, copied and studied, stored and exchanged, learned and discarded at old and new destinations. I argue that Arabic learning, facilitated by other transoceanic connections, shaped its own world of intellectual pursuits over the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. Patronage, thirst for knowledge, teaching opportunities, fame and

[3] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, 25–91; Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*, 105–28.
[4] Tagliacozza, *The Longest Journey*; Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*; Pearson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca*.
[5] Scholarship discussing some of those cities will be presented over the course of this book.
[6] Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 6–8. [7] Green, *Bombay Islam*, 10–11.

fortune, scholarly and Sufi networks, all enabled Arabic learning to different degrees. What emerges is a changing map of early modern Arabic knowledge transmission, sketched by an intellectual rationale and coloured by a range of professional groups who participated in the quest for learning in courts, study circles, mosques, schools of Islamic learning, and libraries.

Building on a transoceanic corpus of several hundred early modern Arabic manuscripts (and in the context of several hundred more which serve as quantitative indicators), this book makes three new points that diversify the scholarship on the social and cultural histories of the wider western Indian Ocean region. It places cultural mobilities beyond trade, commerce, and pilgrimage at the centre of the investigation and explores the transoceanic frameworks of such circulations. It studies learned encounters in Arabic and thus maps 'connected histories'[8] of knowledge formation among seemingly distant communities of learning. Finally, it considers Arabic as a crucial language of learning in 'multilingual'[9] South Asia. Mobile manuscripts and their histories of circulation offer a crucial venue to investigate the still largely uncharted territory of Arabic sociabilities in the subcontinent, and how they linked up with the wider western Indian Ocean in the early modern period.

'Mobilities' of different kinds are central to this transoceanic world of Arabic learning.[10] Whether they are of a commercial, environmental, or scholarly nature, they describe the *potential* for people to move around, but also for people to become enmeshed in transregional networks, and to experience movement and its effects. In the following, I am interested in the mobilities linked to Arabic learning, and in particular the social and cultural mobilities of Arabic manuscripts and texts. While I refer to the potential of those mobilities of learning, I endeavour to study the *actual* movement, exchange, and spread of Arabic learning through the historical trajectory that I can trace in the sources that this world of learning left behind: the mobile manuscripts. This actualised trajectory of mobilities is what I want to call 'histories of circulation' consisting of the different moments and processes that shaped the social and cultural lives of mobile manuscripts.[11] This analytical framework explores how

[8] Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories'. [9] Orsini/Sheikh, 'Introduction', 6–11.

[10] Conceptual and theoretical scholarship has elaborated on this repeatedly to capture flows, movements, and transformations in humans' pasts. See for example Greenblatt, *Cultural Mobility*; Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Mobility*; Freitag/Oppen, 'Introduction: "Translocality"', 2–7.

[11] This deliberately echoes notions put forward in the pioneering and influential work by Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*.

texts became socially and culturally mobile and how their mobility was generated by the communities they traversed.

Mobile manuscripts emerge as records of textual engagements through the marginalia, ownership statements, seals, reading and studying notes, and the composition and erasure of colophons. I analyse the changing social contexts and cultural significances of text transmission, in other words different social and cultural mobilities of texts and their historical manifestations. This methodological approach cross-references manuscript notes with each other and with other types of sources, such as narrative texts. In concert, this empirical constellation projects a new perspective on an early modern transoceanic 'field of cultural production'.[12] This conceptual framework of text circulation interconnects textual practices, the people who performed them, and the places where this happened. Textual practices, people, and places will be traced across the manuscripts that circulated as well as the prosopographical works that commented on the circulation of ideas and the written word. Historical protagonists reflected on forms of text transmission in chronicles and prosopographical works of the period. They also logged the circulation of a manuscript by inscribing documentary markers on its folios, in the form of various added notes and marginalia around the 'main text' (*matn*).

Social and cultural mobilities of Arabic learning circulated and spread multiple manuscript versions across communities of the western Indian Ocean world.[13] Early modern Arabic manuscript cultures captured a variety of textual practices. Andreas Görke's and Konrad Hirschler's collected volume on *Manuscript Notes as Documentary Sources* offers an important overview of analytical uses of 'reading notes' (*muṭāla'āt*), and 'certificates of transmission' (*samā'āt*), as well as other forms of glosses and marginal notes. Similarly, 'licences for transmission' (*ijāzāt*), 'ownership statements' (*tamlīkāt*), and 'endowment attestations' (*waqfiyāt*) provide markers to trace the circulation of manuscripts and the engagement with their texts.[14] Manuscript notes and the profile of different material and textual features of the manuscript such as the title pages, layout elements, colophons, and prefaces constitute the primary point of departure in order to track transmission and reception of texts across the western Indian Ocean.

[12] Bourdieu, 'The Field of Cultural Production'. This term will be discussed in a later part of the Introduction.
[13] Görke/Hirschler, 'Introduction: Manuscript Notes as Documentary Sources'.
[14] Ibid., 9.

These documentary markers are 'paratexts' and, according to Gérard Genette, constitute culturally signifying additions made to the main text of a work.[15] With his studies of 'paratexts' and 'palimpsests' Genette provided a toolbox for the historical analysis of text circulation. Firstly, 'hypertextualities' and 'intertextualities' allow us to study the spread of a text by revealing the complex intellectual relationships between different texts.[16] Marginal glosses or stand-alone commentaries form such 'hypertextual' relationships with the texts they targeted. Secondly, 'epitexts' disclose the ways in which a text is referred to through other texts.[17] For example, *fahāris* (bibliographies, or 'lists of books') and *mashāyīkh* ('lists of teachers', which often include studied books) comprise the wider discursive field of a text and provide crucial clues of its dissemination. Thirdly, 'paratextual' elements (Genette calls these 'peritexts') are the most direct signs of a text's circulation and are inscribed in its immediate surroundings with the purpose of presenting a written text. 'Paratexts' are appendices (Fr.: *franges*), such as titles, chapter-names, dedications, and prefaces, which constitute a set of discourses and practices that present a written text.[18] Genette writes that,

> indeed, this fringe, always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author, constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that – whether well or poorly understood and achieved – is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies).[19]

Significantly for the current context, this zone of 'transaction' acted as a 'threshold' (*seuil*), where text and reader met, interacted with each other and where the reader left a trace, if the engagement happened in any written form.[20] Here, Genette's discussion of 'paratexts' for printed books will be applied to study historical aspects of manuscript notes: how they functioned, the time and place of their inscription, as well as their 'pragmatic regime', that is, how they inform about, interpret, command, and perform the reception of a manuscript.[21] While the following

[15] Genette, *Paratexts*, 1–14. His conceptualisation of 'intertextuality' is conducive to the study of reading notes, corrections, and other glosses on the *matn* (text) and will be considered in a different step of the examination, since these literary palimpsests produce different aural effects. See Genette, *Paratexts*.
[16] Genette, *Palimpseste*, 14–15. [17] Ibid., 14–18. [18] Genette, *Paratexts*, 1–14.
[19] Ibid., 2, and Genette, *Seuils*.
[20] Genette, *Paratexts*, 2; 'Reading notes' are necessarily a written documentation of an aural practice. See for example Hirschler, *The Written Word*, 33.
[21] Genette, *Paratexts*, 4ff.

is not a study of the historical emergence of the manuscript notes themselves, their inscription on manuscripts offers a diachronic perspective on the appreciation, circulation, and reading of Arabic manuscripts.

Recent studies of book cultures across the globe have underscored the heuristic strength of Genette's work. Scholars adapted and employed his work to shed light on the vibrancy of early modern European print cultures, the emergence of new reading practices in nineteenth-century Javanese manuscripts, and the affective nature of talismanic texts in Ismaili manuscripts in Baroda, Gujarat.[22] According to Helen Smith and Louise Wilson, 'paratexts' help us think about the authors, binders, editors, and publishers involved in the complex creation of printed books.[23] And 'thus, early modern paratexts had a variety of functions, and prompted very different readings, some literary or hermeneutic, some practical and physical'.[24] Contrary to a positivist reading of the analytical potential of paratexts, they underscore that 'the history of the paratext is as much one of obstacles and communicative failures as it is one of clarity and reader-management'.[25] In other words, paratexts are embedded in larger social and cultural worlds, their functions change, their aesthetics evolve, and readers interpret them differently over time. Written traditions were often resilient, and practices of reading and writing persisted and sometimes spread with only little change across time and space. It is this normative tension between historical change and continuities in the circulation of manuscripts that this book endeavours to explore regarding an almost unstudied Arabic manuscript circulation across the early modern western Indian Ocean.

Histories of circulation also throw into relief hierarchies of the social and cultural world, and perpetuate those hierarchies in textual practices. However, as Smith and Wilson noted about Arthur Marotti's intervention, 'paratexts are zones where multiple – and sometimes competing – authorities and sources are the norm, describing each piece of prefatory matter as "a site of contestation and negotiation among authors, publishers, printers and readership"'.[26] Early modern Arabic manuscript circulation across the western Indian Ocean region was not part of a print culture. However, manuscripts gathered scholarly writers, scribes, patrons, librarians, literate readers, and interested listeners among their audience. What linked this audience with the manuscript was different interests in an aspect of its history of circulation, be it the text itself, its

[22] Smith and Wilson, 'Introduction'; Ricci, 'Thresholds of Interpretation'; Akkerman, 'The Bohra Manuscript Treasury'.
[23] Here and in the following Smith and Wilson, 'Introduction', 3–5. [24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid. [26] Here and in the following Smith and Wilson, 'Introduction', 8.

chain of transmission, the authorities involved in it, a previous owner of the manuscript, the marginalia, the skill of the scribe, his biographical background, or the provenance of the textual artefact. I consider those individuals and groups as members of 'learned communities' and I do not presume that every interaction with an Arabic manuscript served only and principally a scholarly purpose per se. Instead, to learn more about their professional, social, and cultural backgrounds, I try to discern how individuals engaged with a manuscript. The main objective here is to flesh out the cultural diversity and social variety involved in histories of circulation of early modern Arabic manuscripts and what they can tell us about the complex world of early modern Arabic learning.

A growing body of scholarship has demonstrated the rewarding pursuit of reconstructing complex transtextual environments to achieve a historical understanding of Arabic texts. Stefan Leder analysed how notes on manuscripts document the social practice of transmission, the often networked exchanges of authors, patrons, readers, and scribes, and how these may contribute to an understanding of a manuscript's main text (*matn*).[27] Joel Blecher worked with manuscript versions to place Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī's contribution to the Islamicate commentary tradition, the *Fatḥ al-bārī* ('The Victory of the Creator'), in its political and social contexts.[28] The engagement with pupils, benefactors, and contenders among his peers shaped al-ʿAsqalānī's commentary and draws attention to the various social contingencies that signified textual composition. With respect to compilations of *ḥadīth* ('prophetic traditions'), Suleiman Mourad and James Lindsay provided a meticulous study of Ibn ʿAsākir's *The Forty Hadiths for Inciting Jihad* by building up a multi-intertextual environment.[29] Other than the author's background, the textual tradition, and historical context, it is the close reading of the manuscript notes, in particular the various colophons and ownership statements on the extant copy of the singular unique manuscript, which helped them determine the impact of this work and its respective social environment.[30]

Whereas previous studies have focused on one particular text, such as Ronit Ricci on *The Book of One Thousand Questions* and Jan Just Witkam on *Dalāʾil al-khayrāt* ('Proofs of Treasures'),[31] in the current context I chose an approach that sacrificed the depth of one case study for a micro-history of many case studies in transregional circulation. Apart from individual texts and manuscripts, new work on manuscript corpora

[27] Leder, 'Understanding a Text', 59, 62–72. [28] Blecher, 'Hadīth Commentary', 264.
[29] Mourad/Lindsay, *The Intensification and Reorientation*. [30] Ibid., 82–99.
[31] Ricci, *Islam Translated*; Witkam, 'Battle of Images'.

and library collections in the eastern Mediterranean and western Asia has repeatedly shown that expanding the textual genres of enquiry in combination with subtle readings of manuscript notes can grant access to more complex understandings of social and cultural histories of libraries and reading communities.[32] Most recently, Konrad Hirschler retraced the social and cultural lives of a library collection by reconstructing 'a monument to medieval Syrian book culture'.[33] The in-depth study of one corpus allowed him to locate lasting textual practices in an idiosyncratic medieval Syrian manuscript culture.

Manuscript notes and marginalia abound in Arabic (and other) manuscript cultures of the early modern western Indian Ocean world. They tell us a lot, but never everything for the same manuscript. One can neither trace all instances of perusal by readers or owners of manuscripts, nor reconstruct the entire spectrum of significances that a text produced in its circulation. However, it is possible to examine several documentary instances of textual engagement which have a *representational* value. Thereby I am referring to lasting and significant engagements with a manuscript version and to those instances in which readers left traces that were intended to be picked up by later readers as well, including a second engagement or a reading by the same person for the purpose of corroboration and so forth.

I conceptualise frameworks of reading and strategies of reception as recoverable instances in the 'enactment' of manuscripts. The term 'enactment' captures the practices of Arabic learning on early modern manuscripts and thereby clarifies how readers engaged with a given text – in the context of one manuscript version.[34] This builds on scholarship by Wolfgang Iser in the field of 'Rezeptionsaesthetik'.[35] Iser argued for 'a dialectic relationship between text, reader, and their interaction', which he called 'aesthetic response'.[36] Accordingly, the reading of a text has an effect on a reader, and the reading process produces significances which can change from reader to reader. Each significance is thereby generated through a reading enactment. Analogously, different manuscript versions can elicit different responses depending on the social environment in which they are read or reproduced. However, my aim is neither to

[32] See Heinzelmann, *Populäre religiöse Literatur und Buchkultur*; Liebrenz, *Die Rifāʾīya aus Damaskus*; and Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus*.
[33] Hirschler, *A Monument*.
[34] For a conceptualisation of this term see also Bahl, 'Arabic Philology at the Seventeenth-Century Mughal Court', 201–2.
[35] Iser, *The Act of Reading*.
[36] Ibid., x. I thank Rebecca Sauer for pointing this work out to me.

elaborate on approaches in literary theory, nor to 're-enact' performative or reading experiences.

Instead, I examine different enactments of a text, such as reading, studying, transmitting, and storing, which are traceable on manuscripts through manuscript notes and marginalia. Previously, I considered how marginalia throughout a manuscript constituted an 'enactment' of the main text, which offers specific insights into a reader's learning process.[37] These marginalia are the written traces with which a future reader could engage. Here, I expand this and look at a larger field of Arabic learning by studying multiple manuscript versions of a manuscript corpus of philological texts. Different manuscript versions constitute different enactments of the same text. Since not all readings leave traces, enactments are only partial reconstructions of reception. We can only see those marginalia which a reader purposefully applied in the margins of a manuscript. Thus, 'enactment' considers the fact that it is impossible to understand all the meaning-making processes that connected manuscripts to their creators and readers. Yet, representational documentary notes, for example reading certificates, transmission notes, and colophons, are audience-focused per se and justificatory in nature. They are meant to be seen and referred to again; they are meant to do something.

Manuscript enactments shed light on different social and cultural significances that people attached to texts during their circulation. Colophons, prefaces, ownership notes, seals, reading notes, transmission statements, and other marginalia are enactments, which provide a record on manuscripts themselves of the revision, transmission, perusal, and storage of texts. They offer a view on how a text was disseminated and read among changing audiences, on the functions it could have in a community, and on the different historical meanings that were attributed to it. Significantly, by looking at the reproduction and transmission of texts over a longer period, it becomes possible to discover singular uses as well as to discern patterns in their circulation. I contextualise changing patterns to view how the dissemination of texts, frameworks of transmission, cultural practices of manuscript perusal, and the social composition of readership audiences changed over time.

Manuscript notes and marginalia offer a record of textual practices that allows us to broaden our social historical perspective while diversifying our views of the cultural pasts. Previous scholarship has already pointed out the prosopographical potential of manuscript notes.[38] Individual

[37] For this and the following see Bahl, 'Arabic Philology at the Seventeenth-Century Mughal court', 201–2.

[38] Hirschler, 'Reading Certificates (*Samāʿāt*) as a Prosopographical Source'.

studies have projected exciting pasts of individuals and groups on otherwise fragmentary empirical canvases of social history.[39] Here, I want to make a conceptual intervention. Based on the mobility of Arabic manuscripts and their potential to link individuals, connect places, and facilitate exchanges of ideas, such enactments take on the form of an 'archive in circulation'. Individual manuscripts, scholarly collections, and library corpora metamorphose over time. They reflect on the socio-cultural worlds around them. As Ann Stoler's contribution to the 'archival turn' phrased it, they provide an 'archive-as-source' for the researcher.[40] At the same time, her notion of the 'archive-as-subject' draws attention to the conscious shaping of this mobile world of manuscripts by learned professionals.[41] Documenting reading and transmission notes, inscribing signatures and colophons, scribbling marginal glosses on folios, and underlining important passages of the *matn* reflect on a 'social logic' that was expressed in a textual form.[42] By paying attention to those written traces, we gain an intellectual archive that can tell us something about Arabic learning and its learned community.

Arabic Textual Practices as Arabic Learning

To link textual practices to their social world, Bourdieu's notion of 'the field of cultural production' provides a heuristic framework. Here, it will serve to look at a 'field of Arabic learning' across the early modern western Indian Ocean. Bourdieu's field of cultural production interrelates the creation, transmission, and interpretive local reading of Arabic texts through the intertextual nature of these cultural processes.[43] Bourdieu formulated a 'radical contextualization' which focuses on the 'set of social conditions of the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic goods' by including all constituents of the process at the same time.[44] As a theory it redefines the analytical category of 'intertextuality' by ultimately relating the study of texts to the structure of their field and its agents.[45] Significantly, it takes into account the power relations, competition, conflict, and collaboration that shape the material and symbolic production, dissemination, and perception of Arabic

[39] See Heinzelmann, *Populäre religiöse Literatur und Buchkultur*; Hirschler, *The Written Word* and *Medieval Damascus*; Liebrenz, *Die Rifā'īya aus Damaskus.*
[40] Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 44–46. [41] Ibid.
[42] For the notion of the 'social logic of the text' see Spiegel, 'History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text'.
[43] Bourdieu, 'The Field of Cultural Production'.
[44] Johnson, 'Editor's Introduction', 9–11. [45] Ibid., 17.

texts.[46] In a similar vein to Brinkley Messick's notion of 'textual domination', I understand manuscripts and their marginalia as something more than the outcome of a textual pursuit.[47] As Messick phrased it, 'to investigate the role of texts in a specific state, however, requires a view of writing that stresses its cultural and historical variability rather than its universal characteristics, and its implication in relations of domination rather than its neutrality or transparency as a medium'.[48]

What were these 'relations of domination' that shaped a field of Arabic learning across the early modern western Indian Ocean? In the following, I argue that no single 'state' determined the transregional field of Arabic learning in the early modern period, although political formations certainly shaped its pursuits in different ways. Courtly patronage, scholarly traditions, the availability of paper, possibilities of promotion for scribes, career moves for teachers, access to social networks, and curricula, to name a few, all had a bearing on the field of Arabic learning. They created social and cultural mobilities of Arabic manuscripts. The more information we have about them the more we can fine-tune the analysis of Arabic learning in this period. Elaborating on Messick's work, I investigate a field of Arabic learning through early modern written artefacts and thereby foreground historical practice. I focus on mobilities that shaped this field, and how they were shaped in turn. Such a historical field of Arabic learning can only be reconstituted in an incomplete manner. This means that we will not have sufficient information on all the social and cultural mobilities of this field and we will not recover all the agents and their stories.

I argue in the following that over the early modern period Arabic learning became more important across early modern South Asia both as a vehicle for the Islamic disciplines and as an Islamicate textual tradition. While intellectual traditions in their own right, philological texts in grammar, rhetoric, and lexicography also constituted the 'auxiliary disciplines', meaning those texts which were of crucial importance to the study of the Quran, prophetic traditions, the exegesis of Islamic core texts, and thus a whole variety of other texts.[49] At the same time, philological texts were categorical not only for the acquisition of linguistic skills in literary Arabic. They also encapsulated wider Islamicate cultural traditions.[50] Since philological texts are central to Arabic

[46] I thank Polly O'Hanlon and Jo Van Steenbergen for raising this issue.
[47] Messick, *The Calligraphic State*, 1–2. [48] Ibid., 2.
[49] The term 'auxiliary disciplines' is taken from Ghorbal, 'Ideas and Movements in Islamic History', 59, and its application in this book builds on readings of Hirschler, *The Written Word* and *Medieval Damascus*, and Kohlberg, *A Medieval Muslim Scholar*.
[50] See for example Gully, *Grammar and Semantics in Medieval Arabic*.

learning, they offer a broad socio-cultural perspective on Arabophone groups and their intellectual endeavours beyond such fields as theology (*kalām*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and Quranic commentary (*tafsīr*). Works from different genres of the Islamic and Islamicate disciplines often travelled together and were transmitted along similar pathways of circulation.[51] The term 'Islamicate' stresses the cultural aspects of the Islamic heritage and its encounters with other cultures beyond but not excluding religious pursuits.[52] The essays in a volume edited by David Gilmartin and Bruce Lawrence on Islamicate identities in South Asia demonstrate how complex processes of religious identity formation can be analysed within the framework of the 'Indic' and the 'Islamicate', both denoting 'a repertoire of language and behaviour, knowledge and power, that define broad cosmologies of human existence'.[53]

Over the last years, philology has become a prominent venue of research across cultural arenas of the early modern world. To 'make sense of texts' over time and space, is what contributions to a volume on *World Philology* consider 'the lowest common denominator of philological practice'.[54] Here, I consider Arabic philology central to Arabic learning. Adam Talib incorporated Arabic philology's auxiliary purpose into a more holistic view and defined it as 'an attention to language and language practice that is based on the putatively ideal and uncorrupted form of Arabic known from the earliest recorded Arabic text'.[55] He considers philology as a 'cognitive model' and 'pillar of an Arabo-Islamic scholarly habitus' that was pursued with 'eclecticism' and 'encyclopaedic scope' during the Middle period (roughly 5th–9th/11th–15th century). Ultimately, he is concerned with the evaluation of a new aesthetic approach to Arabic commentarial culture within the current revisionist framework of Arabic literary study.[56]

I am not pursuing an enquiry into intellectual history approaches of this kind. Building on the recent scholarship I am interested in the historical processes that shaped and were shaped by Arabic philological pursuits across social and cultural contexts of the western Indian Ocean

[51] This point will be exemplified empirically in Chapter 3.

[52] The term 'Islamicate' was originally coined by Marshall G. S. Hodgson as part of a new vocabulary for the study of 'Islamdom', and principally denotes a 'culture centred on a lettered tradition … shared by both Muslims and non-Muslims', which distinguishes it from 'Islamic' as pertaining to the sphere of religious belief. The term emphasises the cultural elements of the Islamic traditions. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam, Vol. 1*, 56–60.

[53] Gilmartin/Lawrence, 'Introduction', 2f.

[54] Pollock, 'Introduction', 1.

[55] Here and in the following see Talib, 'al-Ṣafadī, His Critics, and the Drag of Philological Time'.

[56] For this revisionist framework see, for example Bauer, 'Mamluk Literature'.

world. However, I am centring my enquiry on the interstitial space of engagement between manuscript and reader, and the social and cultural histories we can draw from that with regard to Arabic learning. Especially because Arabic philology was such a fundamental – one might say omnipresent – practice in learned pursuits, it provides a crucial perspective on the subcontinent's intellectual entanglements with the western Indian Ocean.

A field of Arabic learning has to be situated within wider changes in socio-cultural configurations during the later medieval period. The study of the Middle Period (eleventh to sixteenth centuries) in the central Arabic lands has been recalibrated to argue against the paradigm of purported 'cultural decline'.[57] Hirschler investigated the written word and reading skills in the societal contexts of Egypt and Syria to reveal a 'drastic reconfiguration of cultural practices' observable along the lines of a growing 'textualisation' and 'popularisation'.[58] A more widespread and intense cultural affinity for the circulation and enactment of textual materials emerged across Islamicate societies into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In a similar vein, Thomas Bauer argued for a much broader participation of social groups in literary activities in terms of a process of the 'adabization of the *ʿulamāʾ* and the ʿulamāʾization of the *udabāʾ*'.[59] A 'higher degree of occasionality' reflected a social pluralisation of textual practices. The use of literature diversified beyond the courtly and panegyrical literature of the formative period and moved towards a more 'pragmatic communication'. Educated groups employed literary idioms for new social uses in Islamicate societies. This had a lasting effect on content and style of literature. Diverse forms of paratexts and intertextual references and practices epitomise this 'literary communication' with a pragmatic purpose and thus its greater societal relevance in Mamlūk Egypt and Syria.

Within the framework of these research paradigms, textual practices of manuscript circulation gather multiple instances of historical practice. It brings into view processes of reproduction and reception as fundamental aspects of Arabic learning. Recently, Muhsin al-Musawi's *Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters* synthesised a new view on the cultural production in Arabic across the Islamicate world from the twelfth to the eighteenth centuries.[60] He assembled elements that generated, sustained, and transformed the synchronic and diachronic conversations of Arabophone communities over these centuries, such as itinerant intellectuals,

[57] Hirschler, *The Written Word*, 2. [58] Ibid., 3–5.
[59] For this and the following Bauer, 'Mamluk Literature', 23–25, 52.
[60] For this and the following al-Musawi, *The Medieval Islamic Republic of Letters*.

cosmopolitan rulers, textual genres, sociabilities, and 'epicentres'. These made up a communicative sphere in which composers contributed to the proliferation of commentaries.

While al-Musawi based his analysis on the interactions of scholars, their Islamicate texts, and the debates sparked by their compositions, I will take his referential framework as a point of departure for a different empirical approach. I assembled a corpus of Arabic texts in their manuscript varieties, which learned communities had transmitted transregionally, with a view to studying historical practices in their circulation. Finbarr Flood applied a similar approach in his investigation of 'Muslim-Hindu encounters' through the framework of translation.[61] He stressed the importance of concentrating on 'the circulation of objects and processes of transculturation' to transcend the 'textual paradigm' that has dominated research on South Asian histories over the last decades.[62] He emphasised the need to read the 'semantic content' of texts together with their materiality as objects of circulation.[63]

Pluralising intellectual histories is an important step in the exploration of Arabic learning of the early modern period. Apart from the social references that manuscript notes entail, the reception angle also diversifies the intellectual histories of our period. Here, I engage with and depart from Ronit Ricci's work on 'literary networks'.[64] In a recent study on the transmission of *The Book of One Thousand Questions* from Arabia, via South India to Southeast Asia, she analysed 'translation' and 'conversion' linked to this one Arabic text in its transregional dissemination with 'tellings' produced in Tamil, Malay, and Javanese.[65] According to her, literary networks that linked texts, composers, readers, scribes, and so forth from Arabia across South India to Southeast Asia during the early modern period provide a view on the emergence of a shared canon of texts. In a similar vein, textual practices in Arabic learning shift the view from composition to enactment, from author to reader, and from transmission to circulation.[66] We can explore a larger array of intellectual engagements with texts and the ideas they transport. Thereby, I look beyond scholars and their compositions and include scribes, book owners, librarians, and readers among the intellectual audience of these Arabic texts. These learned individuals are important protagonists of intellectual debates and exchanges, and although they often did not

[61] Flood, *Objects of Translation*, 9–10. [62] Ibid. [63] Ibid.
[64] Ricci, 'Islamic Literary Networks'. [65] Ricci *Islam Translated.*
[66] For an exciting discussion of textual 'engagement' as practice see Krimsti, 'Arsāniyūs Shukrī al-Ḥakīm's Account'. For recent work on 'circulation' and 'transmission' from the perspective of 'global intellectual history' see Moyn and Sartori, 'Approaches to Global Intellectual History', 12–16.

express their ideas and critiques by writing texts themselves, they often added glosses, inscribed comments, and marked sections of texts they perused.

Of Networks and Entanglements

Manuscripts drew together a heterogeneous range of professionals: paper-makers and those who provided the basic elements of ink; students and teachers; scholars who composed and commentators who elaborated; scribes who copied and those who corrected the copies; artisans who carved the pens and seals of wealthy book owners; beneficiaries who patronised learning, be it sultans or wealthy merchants, scholars or military commanders who endowed places of learning, *madāris*, mosques, and libraries; and households of different sizes and power that organised gatherings (*majālis*) and readings of texts.[67] Enslaved individuals and dependents shared these spaces and listened;[68] they also enabled procedures of learning and storing by moving books around. Others destroyed books.[69] They burned them, washed them out, and recycled individual pages to use them as scrap-paper.[70] Chroniclers assigned moral blame by exaggerating the destruction of libraries.[71] This bookish world existed in complex societies in which individuals developed the social and cultural means to engage with a world of learning. Manuscripts give us an incomplete view of those people, but we can nevertheless explore further learned communities through the prism of their manuscripts.

One crucial pursuit in the study of early modern communities and societies has been the qualitative network approach which explains correlations and transactional activities between individuals, groups, and institutions.[72] Miriam Cooke and Bruce Lawrence consider networks as 'similar to institutionalized social relations … connected across recognized boundaries'.[73] With Arabic and Persian as linguae francae they contend the elite character of 'premodern networks' and underscore the importance of looking at how networks opened up spaces of contestation

[67] For this paragraph and the following see the case studies presented in this book. See also Bloom, *Paper before Print*, and Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts*.
[68] For the participation of slaves in reading sessions in medieval Damascus see Hirschler, *The Written Word*, 42–44.
[69] Ibid. [70] Hirschler, *A Monument*, 15–16, 70–72, 126.
[71] Hirschler, *The Written Word*, 129–31.
[72] Harders, 'Dimensionen des Netzwerkansatzes', 18–26; Emirbayer/Goodwin, 'Network Analysis, Culture and the Problem of Agency'.
[73] Cooke/Lawrence, 'Introduction', 1.

and flows of knowledge.[74] According to them, 'networked exchanges reinforce established norms and orthodoxies even as they submit them to constant scrutiny and challenge'.[75] However, for the study of manuscript circulation, the study of networks needs to be complemented with other levels of social interaction. I am not claiming that networks are the reserve of elite scholarly groups. Networks linked people from a whole range of different social and professional backgrounds.[76] However, in terms of empirical evidence, networks of high-standing scholarly families often seem far more consequential, because they appear in prestigious genres and in written media that were intended for their publication among peers.[77]

Manuscripts allow us to access a socially more diverse array of interactions, even if we only get to see glimpses of those interactions. To make sense of those glimpses we have to consider the many connections between manuscripts and people. Previous scholarship has invested much thinking and writing in the study of material culture, 'actor network theory' and 'figurations', to name a few results of intellectual efforts that conceived of social interaction and the place of objects in it.[78] With this book I do not intend to contribute to this debate. Instead, I found Ian Hodder's engagement with this scholarship and his own conceptualisation of 'entanglement' a very productive analytical category that helped me think through the 'histories of circulation' of Arabic manuscripts:

> There are problems with the idea of a total mixing of humans and things in networks or meshes. At certain historical moments and in certain contexts humans appear dominant over things, but at other places and times things seem to have the dominant hand (for example during global warming at the end of the Pleistocene and perhaps during our own current experience of global warming). In ANT [actor network theory] everything is relational and this insight is important. But it is also the case that materials and objects have affordances that are continuous from context to context. These material possibilities (whether instantiated or not) create potentials and constraints. So rather than talk of things and humans in meshworks or networks of inter-connections, it seems more accurate to talk of the dialectical tension of dependence and dependency, historically contingent. Rather than networks we seem caught; humans and things are stuck to each other. Rather than focusing on the web as a network we can see it as a sticky entrapment.[79]

[74] Ibid., 5–9. [75] Ibid., 9.
[76] Bahl, 'Reading *Tarājim*'; Leder, 'Understanding a Text'.
[77] Binbaş, *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran*, 8–9. This approach will be discussed further in Chapter 4.
[78] Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*; Elias, *The Court Society*; Latour, *Reassembling the Social*.
[79] Hodder, *Entangled*, 94. I thank Andy Wood for pointing Hodder's work out to me.

The multiple 'dependencies' between people and manuscripts emerge from the empirical materials in their social and cultural contexts. Hodder's notion of 'entanglement' is particularly conducive to the study of manuscripts because it 'bridge[s] the divide between materialism and social construction' and thereby 'aims to allow a materialism but embedded within the social, the historical, the contingent'.[80] Hodder argues that the 'source of transformation and constraint in human society is not in the material facts of existence but in the dependences between humans and things'.[81] Manuscripts and people are 'entrapped', to use Hodder's term, in the sense that they co-constitute each other as our empirical evidence. Marginalia and notes differentiate manuscript enactments as the 'effects and outcomes' of textual practices. Textual practices entangle manuscripts and people. Significantly, 'entanglement' captures the variety of protagonists that performed these practices and makes them relatable in histories of circulation on a synchronous as well as a diachronic level.

I will employ Hodder's notion of 'entanglement' as an analytical category to study the interaction of manuscripts and people. The traceable products of those interactions are *enactments*, which allow me to project the resulting *histories of circulation* onto a larger transregional field of Arabic learning in two ways: Firstly, I aim to delineate *networks* of Arabic learning and the different roles that people played in those social exchanges. Secondly, I consider the textual practices of those different networks cumulatively as shared culture – a *learned community*. Central to my argument is that manuscript enactments and their histories of circulation highlight the transregional entanglement of the early modern Red Sea region, Gujarat, and the Deccan across those different social scales.

A range of recent approaches in global history are conducive to the study of transregional and transcultural entanglements.[82] Sanjay Subrahmanyam's 'connected histories' are by now a widely employed global framework for historical enquiry.[83] Over the last decades he provided several empirically embedded exemplifications.[84] He writes political histories of early modern Eurasia, and especially across the Indian Ocean region, by tracing flows of ideas and reconstructing them from

[80] Ibid., 95–96. [81] Ibid., *Entangled*, 97.
[82] For a recent survey of this field see O'Brien, 'Historiographical Traditions'.
[83] Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories', 736–45.
[84] For the elaboration here and in the following see in particular the two volumes with essays on 'connected histories' in Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges* and *Explorations in Connected History: Mughals and Franks*. He expanded on a concept that Fletcher, 'Integrative History', 1, called 'integrative history'.

transregional and transcultural perspectives. According to him, 'ideological constructs' are disseminated globally through regionally adapted and reformulated ways. Subrahmanyam expands contexts and approximates phenomena and thus uncovers links which complicate our understanding of the connected processes in empire building across sixteenth-century Eurasia. New notions of 'universal empire', increasing 'voyages of discoveries', but also the ongoing trade links of 'monsoon Asia' created nodes and flows of knowledge.[85] 'Connected histories' raises the historical interest in individuals and communities in the way they transcend and encompass a variety of regional histories.

Here, I argue that manuscript enactments and their histories of circulation allow us to trace such entangled pasts in an empirically connected way. They provide a definitive point of departure to explore the transmission of learning, the spread of textual practices, and the emergence of similar reading strategies from a transoceanic perspective. Histories of circulation entangled members of networks and communities over the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries across the western Indian Ocean and thereby offer a possibility to trace different historical practices on an empirical and conceptual level.

The designation 'early modern' has become a much-discussed category of periodisation in South Asian historical scholarship. Recently, Meena Bhargava and Pratyay Nath engaged with its critics and proponents to reassess and defend the analytical value of this category. According to them it serves to advance the 'decolonization of the South Asian past', to understand historical processes in early modern South Asia in their different and changing transregional frameworks, and to consider 'early forms of modernity as a hybrid, shared historical condition, produced in various parts of the world around the same time through conjunctures of shared and specific processes'.[86] For the Indian Ocean world, scholarship had previously already employed the term 'early modern' to refer to quantitative changes in human movement and material shifts on a global scale which led to qualitative redefinitions in societies across its shores.[87] For different South Asian contexts, both Nile Green and Rosalind O'Hanlon identified the emergence of writing practices, texts as vehicles of knowledge transmission and communication, as well as the rise of institutionally anchored learned and scribal

[85] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*, 2. For the term see for example Mus [et al.], *India Seen from the East*; Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories', 736f. and Richards, 'Early Modern India and World History'.
[86] See the valuable survey in Bhargava and Nath, 'Introduction', and here, 32.
[87] Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories' and Richards, 'Early Modern India'.

communities as core features that heralded an 'early modern condition' in South Asia over the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.[88]

Those historiographical interventions offer a helpful framework in which to anchor a crucial empirical finding of this book: the increasing availability of Arabic manuscripts from the fifteenth century onwards, and their growth in numbers over the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries in South Asian collections.[89] I aim to explain this increase and spread of the Arabic written word. I argue that the period of the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries witnessed fundamental changes in the field of Arabic learning and knowledge transmission and those changes were linked with other early modern historical processes, such as human mobilities and the cultural flows they generated.[90] I will cross-read a range of different historiographies of West Asia and South Asia and show that communities across those regions shared changes in the field of Arabic learning on a social and cultural level. The first chapter will detail some political and economic developments that took off during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and how they shaped a transoceanic field of Arabic learning into the seventeenth century. The following chapters will then substantiate the argument of changing practices and sociabilities of Arabic learning as they occurred over the early modern period.

Social and cultural mobilities of learning allowed entanglements to form on local as well as transregional levels. Here I build on another strand of research that has investigated the history of transregional cultural formations through the notion of the 'cosmopolis'. Sheldon Pollock's 'Sanskrit cosmopolis' set this debate in motion by presenting a model of a transregional space in which Sanskrit's 'political aesthetic' constituted a 'communicative system' during the first millennium CE.[91] Pollock paid close attention to the nexus of the cultural production and political dimension, especially through the genres of *kavya* ('poetry and literary prose') and *prashasti* ('inscriptional royal panegyric').[92] Elaborating on his concept, Ronit Ricci argued for an 'Arabic cosmopolis' as 'a translocal Islamic sphere constituted and defined by language, literature and religion' across the early modern Indian Ocean.[93] Multiple dimensions of Arabic culture provided a cosmopolitan framework of interaction, 'as in South and Southeast Asia both Sanskrit and Arabic have served, in closely parallel ways, as generative

[88] See the discussion in Bhargava and Nath, 'Introduction', 19 and 21. For the referenced studies see Green, *Making Space*, and O'Hanlon, 'Contested Conjunctures'.
[89] This increase will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.
[90] For conceptual work along those lines, see De Bruijn and Busch, *Culture and Circulation*.
[91] Pollock, *The Language of the Gods,* 12–19 and Ricci, *Islam Translated,* 4.
[92] Pollock, *The Language of the Gods,* 2 and 13. [93] Ricci, *Islam Translated,* 4.

cultural nodes operating historically in conflated multilingual, diglossic, and "hyperglossic" environments'.[94] Whereas a vernacular order of regional languages superseded the Sanskrit cosmopolis, Arabic percolated into local contexts and became a 'vernacularised' language itself with a whole set of cultural and literary traditions transferred along the lines of conversion from Arabic into regional vernaculars.[95]

While Arabic's sacred Islamic aspect informed Ricci's Arabic cosmopolis, both Richard Eaton and Emma Flatt emphasised the more political, imperial, and cultural configuration of the 'Persian cosmopolis'.[96] These recent discussions were preceded by a huge field that explored many facets of Persian and the 'Persianate' which linked the South Asian subcontinent with western and Central Asia.[97] Muzaffar Alam stressed the importance of Persian as a lingua franca among the elites and literati of northern India from at least the fourteenth century onwards.[98] A 'convergence of factors' established Persian as a dominating cultural idiom through the long-term patronage by the Mughal court.[99] In particular, Alam argued for an intellectual engagement and spread of Perso-Islamic traditions based on a variety of Persian *akhlāq* texts from the thirteenth century onwards. Those ethical treatises transcended the legalistic horizon of the *sharīʿa* in the articulation of norms of conduct in the field of 'statecraft, political culture, and philosophy', which had an enduring effect on the political application of Islamic law in early modern North India.[100] Implicit in this argument are sustainable connections among political elites, scholars, and groups of other literati across West, Central, and South Asia, which participated in the evolution of a complex Indo-Persian idiom that became thoroughly rooted in the socio-cultural fabric of the subcontinent. As the following chapters will show, Persian tended to appear close to practices of Arabic learning in the early modern period. Both languages often complemented each other and served a range of different, sometimes overlapping purposes.

I do not wish to elaborate on the concept of the cosmopolis further here. Instead, I intend to contribute a case study in the vein of Green's recent 'persographic' reorientation.[101] He departs from Marshall

[94] Ibid., 13–15. [95] Ibid., 15–17; Pollock, *The Language of the Gods*.
[96] Eaton, 'The Persian Cosmopolis' and Flatt, *Living Well*.
[97] For the discussion of the 'Persianate' see Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam. Vol. 2*, 293–94; Kia/Marashi, 'Introduction: After the Persianate'.
[98] Alam, 'The Pursuit of Persian', 39–40. [99] Ibid., 39–41.
[100] For this and the following see Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam*, 12–13, 61–68, and 75–80.
[101] For this and the following see Green, 'Introduction: The Frontiers of the Persianate World', 4–8.

Hodgson's concept of the 'Persianate' and Bert Fragner's notion of *Persiphonie*, which distinguished between the use of Persian as a 'mother-tongue' and as a 'second language'. Green's 'Persographia' shifted our attention towards 'the scribal practices and manuscript-based exchanges that expanded and sustained the Persianate world across the length of Eurasia'. He refined the study of Persian by taking seriously the many historical contingencies that shaped Persographic practices across a transregional terrain: Firstly, studies of the volume look at where Persian 'continued and ceased to function as a "transregional contact language"' (*Kontaktsprache*). Secondly, Persian is not considered solely as a language of Muslim power, but instead, Green employs a larger analytical net, which posits the political as one of many different expressions. Thirdly, he problematises the assumption that 'the reach of learned lingua francas is geographically broad but socially shallow'.[102] Finally, he employs another approach recently put forward by Brian Spooner and William Hanaway, who consider Persian's central role as a 'written contact language'. As 'written language [it] has had a dynamic that is distinct from that of spoken language'.[103] In Green's formulation, the '[Persianate] is conceived as a set of specific skills and practices belonging to small, often professionalized, groups of people who were not connected by an immaterial common language or "culture", but whose contact and communication was based on tangible written documents and often limited to specific topics'.[104]

Here, I build on Green's elaboration to consider the written dimension of Arabic learning through the surviving manuscript cultures. At the same time, I highlight broad similarities and differences between Arabic and Persian across the early modern western Indian Ocean world. Firstly, the following chapters will demonstrate that the use of Arabic for learned pursuits changed over time and I will explain the changing social, cultural, and political contexts that spread Arabic learning over the fifteenth century and over the seventeenth century across western India and the subcontinent more broadly. Secondly, Green's broader analytical scope also helps to capture the range of uses that Arabic could have. Arabic continued to serve as the central language of Islamic expression across a wide field of human experiences in this period. However, here I will not follow Shahab Ahmed's all-consuming view of the 'Islamic',[105] but instead I find Hodgson's term of the 'Islamicate' more suited to the 'multilingual' and multicultural environment of South Asia and the western Indian Ocean world.[106] This transoceanic region harboured

[102] Ibid., 2. [103] Quoted through ibid., 5. [104] Ibid., 5.
[105] Ahmed, *What Is Islam?* [106] Orsini/Sheikh, 'Introduction'.

both a variety of Islamic and a range of Islamicate communities. While such binary models are problematic, I have to disclose my conceptual and empirical bias in this study, which approaches the role of Arabic learning from an angle of Islamic learning. And I contend that many cases that I looked at have to be studied in an Islamic context, while others only make sense in an Islamicate environment. For example, this has to do with the fact that manuscript collections contain Islamic legal treatises, collections of prophetic traditions, and theological commentaries which readers engaged with for what they would describe as an Islamic pursuit. Nevertheless, while philological treatises, texts on Arabic grammar and rhetoric, lexicographical works, and commentaries engage with Islamic texts such as *ḥadīth* and the Quran, their consumption opens up other intellectual endeavours, too.

'Arabic learning' is a conscious terminological choice, which parallels Green's focus on the written media by focusing on Arabic manuscripts. This also has practical reasons, for it is the written media which we can still study, even if we know that they would have been used to support oral and aural practices of transmission. Based on previous scholarship, I argue that Arabic was a cosmopolitan idiom of learning across the western Indian Ocean. It opened up opportunities for mobile and local learned groups, and it brought people from different social backgrounds together.[107] And an engagement with Arabic could mean different things to different people. Yet, importantly, they forged different and changing connections among each other, from scholarly networks to professional acquaintances, to social groups and textual communities based on their shared Arabic learned pursuits. The chapters of this book will explore some of those different Arabic learned pursuits in detail.

At the same time, the following chapters will show that Arabic complemented Persian and formed an additional transregional idiom across the western Indian Ocean.[108] While the importance of Arabic was evident and widespread across the early modern Red Sea region, its usage in

[107] Ricci employed the term 'Arabicised' to refer to communities beyond the Arab Middle East who acquired Arabic to participate in the reading of such texts. See Ricci, *Islam Translated*, 15. Throughout this book, I will use the more common term 'Arabophone' as a shorthand for locally grounded as well as transregionally mobile communities of scholars, scribes, sultans, and others who contributed to the perpetuation and proliferation of Arabic learning by sharing cultural practices, such as transcribing texts, patronising commentaries, teaching reading sessions, studying texts, and preserving manuscripts. The idea that 'circulation can also contribute to the making of that community' has recently been stated by Eaton in 'The Rise of Written Vernaculars', 112.

[108] The complementarity of Arabic and Persian textual practices has also been pointed out in Szuppe, 'Circulation des lettrés'.

early modern South Asia was uneven and varied from region to region. The history of Arabic learning in medieval and early modern South Asia remains a desideratum, although recent work has also started to explore the role of Arabic texts in community formation, and Arabic print cultures in South Asia.[109]

Previous scholarship has often contrasted the uses of Arabic and Persian in South Asia.[110] And when we look at numbers of texts and their disciplinary labels, then 'Islamic' themes are the most common denominator of Arabic manuscript collections in South Asia today. Persian dominates the genres of poetry, history writing, and belles-lettres. However, such comparative exercises hide historical particularities. Vivek Gupta, Simon Leese, and James White have recently shown that Arabic poetry was a widespread pastime among scholarly communities across the subcontinent and that such literary forms allowed littérateurs to find employment and ways to identify with, imagine, communicate with, and migrate eastwards from the Arab lands.[111] In addition, surveys of manuscript holdings and literary contributions in Arabic put this language on the map empirically as a cultural and scholarly medium some decades ago.[112] Zubaid Ahmad's bibliographical surveys of Arabic writings from various regions of the subcontinent went beyond the religious spheres and indicated the extent of intellectual pursuits in Arabic across various genres, such as history, literature, and philology.[113] His survey is an indispensable starting point in this book.

Setting Sail: Historiographies of Maritime Connections

With a focus on manuscript circulation, this book speaks directly to a growing field of studies on knowledge exchanges across the Indian Ocean world.[114] A recent volume by Sujit Sivasundaram, Alison Bashford, and David Armitage on *Oceanic Histories* has set a research

[109] Akkerman, *A Neo-Fatimid Treasury of Books*; Green, 'Introduction: Arabic as a South Asian Language'.

[110] Here and in the following, see Qutbuddin, 'Arabic in India'.

[111] Gupta, 'Arabic in Hindustan'; Leese, 'Longing for Salmá and Hind'; White, *Persian and Arabic Literary Communities in the Seventeenth Century*.

[112] Ahmad, *The Contribution of Indo-Pakistan* and al-Kilānī, *al-Akhar fī al-thaqāfa al-ʿarabīya*.

[113] See for example Ahmad, *The Contribution of Indo-Pakistan*, 168–94, on historical literature.

[114] The field of Indian Ocean studies is vast and diverse. For a recent synthesis on exchanges across the Indian Ocean from the perspective of world history see Alpers, *The Indian Ocean*. For a recent emphasis on cultural practices see Vink, 'Indian Ocean Studies'.

agenda to engage with the historical and historiographical pasts of the world's oceans and relate them to a vision of 'the world ocean' as a 'singular sea'.[115] They aspire to integrate the study of oceans and their communities into the framework of world history via their transoceanic passageways of the past, and suggest 'plac[ing] alongside each other a series of terraqueous zones which have not previously been brought together'.[116] With specific regard to the Indian Ocean, Sivasundaram developed Sugata Bose's 'a hundred horizons' further to argue for a 'revisionist pluralism' that opens our view on the Indian Ocean's many pasts and historiographies.[117] He also pointed to knowledge formation and exchanges which have been the focus of some studies on the early modern Indian Ocean in particular.[118] Most recently, Mahmood Kooria's *Islamic Law in Circulation* contributed to our understanding of the spread of the Shāfiʿī legal school among societies of the medieval to early modern Indian Ocean.[119] With a methodological approach to the 'textual longue durée' of legal compendia and their commentarial elaborations over the centuries he analysed their local application by communities from Damascus to Cairo, Mecca to Zanzibar, Yemen to the Malabar Coast, and further on to Aceh and Java.[120] Sohaib Baig added a study of the Ḥanafī school of law and the peregrinations of its proponents and texts over the early modern period.[121] Here, Arabic learning casts its net wide to catch central and marginal changes in manuscript-based knowledge transmission.

Transoceanic approaches make it necessary to cross chronological divides in the different historiographies that have for a long-time separated histories of western and South Asia. Some of those histories have to be read in conjunction with each other and often regional histories make more sense from a transregional perspective. The political disintegration of the Delhi sultanate in the subcontinent over the fourteenth century – and Timur Tamerlane hammered the final nail into that coffin with his defeat of the sultanate's armies in 1398 – paved the way for the emergence of a regional sultanate.[122] Gujarat emerges as a crucial region, which harboured communities that engaged with Arabic textual

[115] Armitage [et al.], 'Introduction', 3. [116] Ibid., 24.
[117] Bose, *A Hundred Horizons* and Sivasundaram, 'The Indian Ocean'.
[118] Sivasundaram, 'The Indian Ocean', 53–54. He refers to Ho, *The Graves of Tarim* and Ricci, *Islam Translated*, whose studies will be introduced in the course of this Introduction.
[119] Kooria, *Islamic Law in Circulation*. See also Kooria, 'Texts as Objects of Value and Veneration'.
[120] Kooria, *Islamic Law in Circulation*, 9–13.
[121] Baig, 'Indian Hanafis in an Ocean of Hadith'.
[122] Digby, 'Provincialization'; Sheikh, *Forging a Region*.

traditions. Jyoti Gulati Balachandran explored processes of community formation guided by learned men in medieval Gujarat through Arabic and Persian prosopographical works.[123] Samira Sheikh argued for the emergence of Gujarat as a 'region' and its sultanate as a political project that mustered a range of military, pastoralist, scholarly, and merchant groups to underwrite it.[124] In a more religiously connotated context, Muhammad Ishaq offered an overview of what he called the 'renaissance of ḥadīth learning in India' during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which was based on transregional networks of scholarship linking South Asia with the Hijaz.[125] Olly Akkerman has projected a *longue durée* of Islamic sectarian textual traditions with an anthropological study of an Ismaili manuscript collection from Baroda, Gujarat.[126] She takes into account the transmitted quality of textual practices and socially embodied frameworks of scribal activity.

Closely intertwined regional and transregional historical processes shaped the evolution of the Deccan during the late medieval and early modern periods. The supra-regional political formations of the Bahmani and Vijayanagara kingdoms gave way to the emergence of the regional Deccan sultanates in the late fifteenth and into the sixteenth centuries, namely Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, and Golkonda, besides the smaller principalities of the ʿImād Shāhīs, Barīd Shāhīs, and Nayakas in the south.[127] While exhibiting continuities with models from the previous polities, regional languages such as Marathi, Telugu, and Dakhani received stronger patronage in these new political realms.[128] Courtly patronage amplified vernacular cultures, which became deeply enmeshed with a Persianate culture. Persian served as a mode of courtly expression, but also trickled down into local administrative and fiscal procedures. Bilingual administrative practices were characteristic of all the Deccan sultanates, featuring Persian side by side with one of the regional languages.[129]

Iran played a crucial role in the transoceanic entanglements of the western Indian Ocean that shaped human migration and knowledge

[123] Balachandran, *Narrative Pasts.* [124] Sheikh, *Forging a Region*.
[125] Ishaq, *India's Contribution,* 80–101.
[126] Akkerman, 'The Bohra Manuscript Treasury'; Akkerman, *A Neo-Fatimid Treasury of Books*.
[127] For this paragraph Asher/Talbot, *India before Europe*, 163–75; Fischel, *Local States*, 237–44.
[128] Here and in the following, Eaton, 'The Rise of Written Vernaculars'.
[129] These bilingual practices can be observed on the Arabic manuscripts themselves which feature Marathi notes in Modi script. Quraishi, 'The Royal Library of Bijapur' and Loth, *A Catalogue*. This will be discussed in chapter 2 of this book.

exchanges. In its double role as a local language and a transregional idiom, Persian exemplified the crucial aspect of immigration from the western Asian regions, which carved out the social composition of the Deccan sultanates during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[130] New studies have explored the political and cultural histories of the early modern Deccan, mainly based on narrative and normative Persian sources from the period. Persian served to sustain wider connections with the early modern Indian Ocean world and the Deccan formed one of its core regions. Emma Flatt studied the court culture in the Deccan sultanates and the acquired pastimes such as letter writing and martial skills which embodied it.[131] She employed the prism of the 'Persian cosmopolis' to emphasise the transregional dimension of the Persian-mediated cultural practices. Roy Fischel offered a social and political history of group dynamics in the 'local states' of the Deccan. The movement of elite groups from western Asia to the subcontinent underscored that the refinement of Persian was important as a communicative medium at the Deccani courts and a vehicle for transregional communication at the same time.[132] Keelan Overton's edited volume *Iran and the Deccan* has expanded and substantiated scholarly conversations about the 'circulation of talent' between these two regions during the early modern period.[133] The rulers of the Deccan had made efforts to attract Persianate elite groups from various professional backgrounds in western Asia from the first half of the fifteenth century onwards.[134]

Besides the over-reliance on narrative sources, scholarship emphasised Persian sources and concentrated on Persian Islamicate court cultures. Corresponding to the Persian pre-eminence in the field, studies that have investigated the role of Arabic in South Asia generally relegated this cultural idiom to the sphere of religious rituals and as a tool for the purpose of studying Islam.[135] As pointed out above, this was reinforced by juxtaposing Arabic's allegedly sole religious significance with the cultural importance of Persian.[136] Arabic as a cultural idiom has largely been ignored as an element of the multilingual fabric of the Deccan. Apart from Zubaid Ahmad's survey, M. Konkani provided a starting point for its empirical reintegration. According to him, Arabic had a scholarly and a literary relevance in the Deccan from at least the period of Bahmanis onwards.[137] What stands out in his investigation is the

[130] Overton, 'Book Culture'; Fischel, *Local States*; Flatt, *Living Well*, 55ff.; Subrahmanyam, 'Iranians Abroad'.
[131] Flatt, *Living Well*. [132] Fischel, *Local States*.
[133] Overton, 'Introduction to Iranian Mobilities and Persianate Mediations in the Deccan'.
[134] Eaton, *A Social History of the Deccan*, 60–63. [135] Qutbuddin, 'Arabic in India'.
[136] Ibid., 337. [137] Konkani, 'Language and Literature: Arabic', 1–15.

prominence of Islamicate groups, such as Sufis and *ʿulamāʾ* ('religious scholars') among the transregional agents, their literary productions in the various fields of Islamicate commentary traditions, as well as the continuous links with the Hijaz.[138]

Over the early modern period, the Red Sea region – including Egypt, the Hijaz, Yemen, and the northern part of the Horn of Africa – constituted an arena of social and intellectual circulation itself which linked up with larger transoceanic movements. Prosopographical studies of the medieval and early modern period have repeatedly underscored the professional trajectories of scholars and military figures who linked Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz.[139] At the same time, Yemen and the Horn of Africa constituted trans-shipment points that linked the Red Sea traffic with the Arabian Sea and beyond.[140] Over the Mamlūk and Ottoman periods, Egypt, the Hijaz, and Yemen were repeatedly integrated into larger transregional formations – these also included Syria and later Anatolia – through the circulation of administrative and scholarly personnel.[141]

Here, the main aim is to bring the subcontinent's transoceanic connections with the Red Sea region into focus, a historical link which still remains largely unstudied. Yet, there is a strong argument to be made about the entangled histories of Arabic learning during the early modern period. Some research has already pointed out these transoceanic connections. Nile Green referred to a historically contingent circuit with his reference to 'Arabophone' cultures that brought the Deccan and Gujarat closer 'to the arenas of Arabic learning just across the sea to the west than to Hindustan or northern India, with its closer ties of texts and persons to Khurasan and Central Asia'.[142] The early modern western Indian Ocean inhabited various shared Islamic and Islamicate cultural trajectories. For the sixteenth century, Subrahmanyam investigated courtly cultural exchanges in terms of 'incommensurabilities' and 'commensurabilities'.[143] He discussed 'Eurasian states and empires', such as the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals, that 'were obviously genealogically related or belonged to overlapping cultural zones' and, even more so, 'formed a single sphere of elite circulation for calligraphers, painters, Sufi mystics, warriors, and poets'.[144] This notion built on Francis Robinson's

[138] Ibid. [139] Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo*.
[140] Lambourn, *Abraham's Luggage*; Margariti, *Aden and the Indian Ocean Trade*; Ho, *The Graves of Tarim*.
[141] Pfeiffer, 'Encounter after the Conquest'; Casale, *The Ottoman Age of Exploration*, 25–29.
[142] Green, *Making Space*, 12.
[143] Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters*, 2–6, 23; Carey, 'Questioning Incommensurability'.
[144] Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters*, 6. Stephan Dale examined the emergence of the Ottoman Empire, the Safavid state, and Mughal India in a comparative perspective,

idea of 'shared knowledge and connective systems' between the three above-mentioned empires.[145] Robinson chiefly focused on scholarly exchange between Safavid Iran and Mughal India in the seventeenth century. Thereby, he also pointed to scholarly exchanges between western India and the Red Sea region.[146] For the nineteenth century, Seema Alavi elaborated on Muslim transnational networks, which originated in the subcontinent and spanned the Hijaz, Istanbul, Burma, and Aceh. She contended that those connections were derived from older forms of 'Islamic connectivity'.[147] However, as set out previously, scholars are only beginning to explore early modern forms of cultural exchanges within the western Indian Ocean region.[148] This book contributes a case study, which traces such transoceanic social and cultural mobilities through circulating Arabic manuscripts.

While linking recent social and cultural historical trends in these historiographies, it makes sense to ground them in the growing field of premodern Indian Ocean studies. For a long time this field has been dominated by a focus on trade and pilgrimage with narratives of a cosmopolitan commercial seascape and the *longue durée* of economic structures and transactions.[149] Accordingly, three interlinked subsystems structured forms of human interaction from Cairo to Aden, to the west coast of India and its hinterland, northwards through western Asia, into eastern Anatolia.[150] Within the boundaries of the Indian Ocean region Kirti Chaudhuri concentrated on economic issues of the 'long chain of trans-oceanic trade' stretching across the diverse regions of the Indian

demonstrating similarities between all three imperial formations. See Dale, *The Muslim Empires*.

145 Robinson, 'Ottomans-Safavids-Mughals'. With regard to South Asia Sheldon Pollock recently edited a collected volume with articles which deal with 'Forms of knowledge in early modern Asia', marking directions for future research in this area; Pollock, *Forms of Knowledge*.

146 Robinson, 'Ottomans-Safavids-Mughals'. An important case study with respect to Islamic learned culture was advanced by Jamal Malik focusing on the region of Awadh in North India from the early modern to the colonial period. The first part of his monograph comprises several interesting lines of investigation relating to the *qasbah* as the focal space of urban learned Islamic culture, in addition to the analysis of curricula and traditions of learned Islamic culture as well as its proponents. Malik, *Islamische Gelehrtenkultur*.

147 These networks were mainly used by Muslim political outlaws who fled to the fringes of imperial formations in the aftermath of the 1857/58 uprising in India. Alavi, 'Fugitive Mullahs' and *Muslim Cosmopolitanism*.

148 See for example most recently Kugle, *Hajj to the Heart*.

149 For a recent synopsis of the field Indian Ocean history see Prange, 'Scholars and the Sea' and Sivasundaram, 'The Indian Ocean'. See also Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*.

150 Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony*, 32–35.

Ocean from the rise of Islam until the eighteenth century.[151] André Wink looked at the medieval period of the Indian Ocean region from a geographical perspective in order to define changing material conditions that accompanied the emergence of the 'Indo-Islamic world'.[152] Seminal studies by Michael Pearson and Suraya Faroqhi emphasised the early modern pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) as a crucial transoceanic link.[153] Most recently, Sebastian Prange zoomed in on merchant communities on the Malabar Coast in South India, their transoceanic endeavours, and local interactions with other communities.[154] *Monsoon Islam* captures the sociocultural histories of the medieval Indian Ocean by looking at the interplay of institutions in Malabari ports, religious sociabilities of mosques and Sufi orders, scholarly networks, and transoceanic forms of political patronage.[155]

In sum, these diverse studies emphasised the point that the Indian Ocean should be seen as an area of maritime connections, which existed as a complementary structure to the well-established overland routes between western, Central, and South Asia.[156] This is where my research departs from to explore histories of circulation in Arabic learning. Maritime networks played a crucial role for Arabic exchanges linking the Red Sea with the wider western Indian Ocean region as well.[157] Thereby, I do not intend to carve out a separate transregional space and impose new cultural boundaries. Instead, my research will argue that it makes sense to study these seemingly disparate regions as a transoceanic and transregional space of Arabic learning over the early modern period because of the heightened mobilities that linked its communities.

Although I agree with the argument implicit in previous scholarship that the monsoon structured and scheduled social and economic movement and that those movements enabled other intellectual and cultural exchanges, too, I contend that economic incentives were not the sole determinants of those cultural exchanges and intellectual flows. Arabic manuscript circulation provides another hitherto largely unstudied

[151] Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilisation*, 1–6, 34.
[152] Wink, *al-Hind*. For studies concerned with trade networks and diasporas in the modern period see Clarence-Smith/Freitag, *Hadhrami Traders*; Dale, *Indian Merchants* on Indian merchants in the wider early modern Eurasian context; and Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*, for Armenian networks across the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean.
[153] Pearson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca* and Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*.
[154] Prange, *Monsoon Islam*. [155] Ibid.
[156] Wink, 'From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean', 420–26.
[157] Gommans, 'Continuity and Change', 202–5; Kooria, *Islamic Law in Circulation* and Miran, 'The Red Sea', 168.

transoceanic trajectory which allows us to examine social and cultural mobilities that integrated the early western Indian Ocean. Markus Vink recently redirected our attention to the study of 'the spread of ideas and cultural practices' as a possible focus for Indian Ocean studies.[158] Scholarship on the link between 'culture and circulation' has provided historical depth to mobile phenomena of the past that shaped the social and cultural fabric of the South Asian subcontinent.[159] Gagan Sood demonstrated how the idea of Islamicate Eurasia as a 'regional constellation' within the early modern world serves as a research paradigm in order to engage with the 'arena of circulation and exchange' in the eighteenth century.[160] He stresses the 'collective of structures' that connected the Middle East and South Asia on different levels during this time.[161]

Empirical Troves: A Corpus of Manuscripts Assembled across Continents

My main empirical objective is to build on and go beyond narrative sources to study Arabic learning through surviving manuscripts of the period. Therefore, the following research centres on Arabic texts mediated through manuscripts, marginalia, and notes.[162] Several of those Arabic texts have already been studied with regards to their intellectual contribution to Islamic and Islamicate cultures. Here, the approach differs insofar as it does not presume the significance of a scholarly text primarily in terms of its ideas, teachings, and the background of its composer. Instead, it takes the historical trajectory of circulation and reception of the respective work as a crucial indication of social and cultural significance.

I assembled a transcontinental corpus of Arabic manuscripts from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries during several fieldwork trips to libraries across India, countries of western Asia, and Europe. Each library had its own restrictions on access to the manuscripts regarding the possibility of studying the manuscripts in situ and acquiring reproductions. Due to the vast quantity of potential specimens, I had to delineate several sub-corpora of manuscripts.

[158] Vink, 'Indian Ocean Studies', 61.
[159] Markovits [et al.], *Society and Circulation*; De Bruijn and Busch, *Culture and Circulation*, 2–4.
[160] Sood, 'Circulation and Exchange', 113–21. [161] Ibid.
[162] For recent examples of the study of manuscript transmission see for example Hirschler, *Medieval Damascus*; Liebrenz, *Die Rifā'īya aus Damaskus*; and Schwarz, 'Writing in the Margins of Empires'.

I searched for manuscripts which had circulated among communities that inhabited the western Indian Ocean from the Red Sea to western India (Egypt, Hijaz, Yemen, Gujarat, Deccan). Egypt, as part of the Red Sea region, and the Deccan in the subcontinent represent the core regions for this study due to the availability of sources and their prominent position within this transoceanic framework. Hence manuscript collections from these areas have been surveyed more intensively. Since Arabic texts and manuscripts are of significance to this project, I began with a survey of manuscript collections across South Asia, where Arabic texts are significant per se. This helped me to gain an understanding of the profiles of these libraries in terms of textual quantities and diversity of genres. Moreover, I could trace pathways of transmission from regions across the western Indian Ocean into South Asia.

I identified links between the Deccan and the Red Sea region, forged during the early modern period, which were not exclusive but became established trajectories of cultural exchanges. However, today not all the surviving evidence is necessarily found in these areas. Therefore, it became necessary to combine findings from various libraries across Europe and the Middle East in order to reconstruct a fragmentary counterpart on the side of the Red Sea that could be brought into conversation with the Deccan and other collections in India.

The Asar Mahal (or Bijapur) collection among the holdings of the British Library offered a crucial starting point to engage with forms of manuscript circulation to and across the South Asian subcontinent. Otto Loth meticulously catalogued the manuscripts in the nineteenth century and logged their extensive codicological details, which I built on to navigate and engage with them.[163] As Chapter 2 will demonstrate, the collection is particularly rich in manuscripts with transoceanic histories of circulation. This manuscript collection provided the sole extant historically grown corpus of Arabic manuscripts in South Asia for the current project and period. The profile of this corpus makes it most conducive to the reconstruction of histories of circulation. Both colophons and library notes furnish these manuscripts with a start and an end point in their movements. It will be referred to in the following as the *Bijapur corpus*. The corpus itself consists of the entire spectrum of the

[163] See Loth, *A Catalogue*. I give the catalogue number of those manuscripts in the Bibliography to facilitate finding information catalogued by Loth. Still, Loth's catalogue builds on previous work in Bijapur, first by a French scholar, C. D'Ochoa, who created a first catalogue, then local preservation work and material inspections, and then an Urdu-language catalogue by a physician from Hyderabad, named 'Humeed-ood-deen Hukeem', who produced a 'catalogue raisonnée', with help from local learned men. See *Extracts from the Proceedings of the Bombay Government*, 216–218.

Islamic and Islamicate disciplines: Quranic Sciences (43 manuscripts), Prophetic Traditions (28), Principles of Ḥadīth (4), Ḥanafī Law (37), Shāfiʿī Law (9), Principles of Jurisprudence (24), Prayers and Charms (16), Scholastic Theology (58), Philosophy (51), Sufism and Ethics (76), Biography and History (3), Mathematics and Astronomy (13), Medicine (1), Poetry and Elegant Prose (11), Grammar (34), Rhetoric (20), Lexicography (5), Encyclopaedia (1), and Miscellanies (6).[164] These will offer a variety of case studies to exemplify different forms of circulation across the Deccan and beyond.

The sheer number of surviving manuscripts across the South Asian archives and collections made it impossible to survey the entire stock of books. In a second step, I approached several modern collections in the Deccan and the wider subcontinent to distil an early modern corpus of Arabic philological manuscripts based on material aspects and dateable colophons. I conducted surveys in two collections in Hyderabad, India: the Arabic manuscript collections of the Salar Jung Museum and Library (SJML) – previously the manuscript collections of Nawab Mir Ali Yusuf Ali Khan, Salarjung III; and the holdings of the former Asafiya Library (and former Hyderabad State Library) – founded in 1885 by the sixth Nizam Mir Mahboob Ali Khan – which are today integrated into the Telangana Governmental Oriental Manuscript Library and Research Institute (TSGOML).[165] This was important in order to bring the *Bijapur corpus* into conversation with other crucial collections in the Deccan. Due to the political trajectory of Hyderabad since the eighteenth-century takeover of the Asaf Jahī dynasty, both institutions had a centralising function with regards to manuscripts in the Deccan and India, but they also contain manuscripts from the wider western Indian Ocean world.[166]

I focused on manuscripts of texts on Arabic morphology and grammar (*ṣarf wa-naḥw*), rhetoric (*balāgha*), and lexicography (*lugha*), which are often referred to as central philological disciplines of Arabic learning.

[164] Quraishi, 'The Royal Library of Bijapur', and Loth, *A Catalogue*.

[165] At the time of research, the TSGOML was called Andhra Pradesh Oriental Manuscript Library. For general information about these libraries see Khan, 'Salar Jung Museum and Library'; Burhanuddin/Taher, 'State Central Library'; and Venkatappaiah 'Andhra Pradesh Government Oriental Manuscript Library'.

[166] For a historical background see Faruqui, 'At Empire's End'. However, those institutions probably only represent the tips of many icebergs. Omar Khalidi mentioned a few museums, archival and private collections in Hyderabad, such as the Saidiya Library, some of which have not been catalogued and there are many more shrines and small manuscript holdings in the Deccan which preserve manuscripts vulnerable to the furies of time and nature. See Khalidi, 'A Guide to Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu Manuscript Libraries in India'.

It meant that after treating Bijapur as an exemplary case for the broad spectrum of Islamic and Islamicate disciplines I was able to narrow the survey down to Arabic philological texts. In the *Bijapur corpus* the following number of manuscripts survived: grammar (34 manuscripts), rhetoric (20), and lexicography (5).[167] Of these 59 manuscripts in total, 6 manuscripts can be dated conclusively to the fifteenth, 6 to the sixteenth, and 6 to the seventeenth century.[168] In the SJML, the quantitative amounts for each discipline can be broken down accordingly: grammar (85 manuscripts), rhetoric (45), lexicography (13), and mixed manuscripts (6).[169] Of these 149 manuscripts in total, 8 can be dated to the fifteenth, 12 to the sixteenth, and 47 to the seventeenth century.[170] The TSGOML holds 335 Arabic manuscripts: 154 in grammar, and 23 in morphology, 93 in rhetoric, and 65 in lexicography in total.[171] Since the collections of the TSGOML have not been fully catalogued I conducted a survey of all surviving manuscripts grouped in the three philological disciplines. Based on their colophons and material aspects I narrowed them down to an 'early modern corpus', that is, fifteenth- to seventeeth-century specimens: 86 for grammar and morphology, 38 for rhetoric, and 32 for lexicography. Of these 156 manuscripts, the following can be dated conclusively: 4 to the fifteenth century, 11 to the sixteenth century, 46 to the seventeenth century.[172]

In contrast to Bijapur, the collections of both libraries in Hyderabad do not represent a historically grown corpus of manuscripts in one location. More research is necessary to assess their historical evolution, and the profile and different temporal layers of acquisitions of these libraries. Yet, as the catalogues and the manuscripts show, many of the philological texts from both libraries (SJML and TSGOML) were transcribed and collected by a wide variety of sultans, courtiers, and scholarly figures over the early modern period, both from within South Asia and beyond. When it is possible and of significance to the argument, the provenance of the respective manuscripts will be determined in more detail. For the current focus, the early modern collections of these libraries mirror manuscript circulations across the subcontinent and its transregional links with the Red Sea region and western and Central Asia over the

[167] Loth, *A Catalogue* and Quraishi, 'The Royal Library of Bijapur'.
[168] See Loth, *Catalogue*. These dateable versions are listed in Table A.4 in the Appendix.
[169] These numbers are based on the catalogue by Ashraf, *A Concise Descriptive Catalogue*.
[170] See Table A.5 in the Appendix.
[171] These numbers are based on the handlist of the Asafiya, which is available at the TSGOML. This handlist gives the name of the author, title category, language, volume, and shelfmark.
[172] Dateable manuscript versions are listed in Tables A.6 a, b, c, and d in the Appendix.

centuries. Especially because these modern collections reflect on a variety of textual practices by different social and professional groups over the centuries, their manuscripts furnish a substantial empirical base to advance arguments on text transmission and manuscript circulation.

Together with the *Bijapur corpus*, the manuscripts of the Salar Jung and the TSGOML will be studied as the *Deccan corpus* and can provide a broader view on the circulation within the region of the Deccan and its links with the wider western Indian Ocean. The profile of the famous Rampur Raza Library in Rampur (Uttar Pradesh) offers a complementary view from North India in Chapter 3 to contextualise the numbers of the *Deccan corpus*. Manuscripts of the Rampur Raza Library were arguably derived to some extent from the Imperial Library of the Mughals, and some of those also ended up in the so-called Delhi collections.[173] While some parts of the Delhi collections ended up in the collections of the Nawabs in Awadh over the eighteenth century, others were looted during the uprising of 1857 and thereby partly made their way to the Nawabs of Rampur.[174] Many manuscripts of this collection initially came from early modern libraries across the eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea region, and South Asia, collected by courtiers and scholars.[175]

As will become clear over the chapters of this book, Gujarat played a crucial role as a nodal point in the transoceanic circulation of texts and also as a hub for itinerant scholars and mobile elites. Again, private collections and shrine libraries abound in Gujarat, and more research on those places will hopefully shed light on how these collections were built.[176] In terms of manuscript collections, I had to restrict myself to the collections of the Pir Muhammad Shah Dargah Library, Ahmadabad, because other collections were either not accessible, or they have a very specific sectarian profile.[177] For the Dargah Library in Ahmadabad, the catalogues give a general overview.[178] I also collected a few specimens during a visit to the library and complemented this with reproductions

[173] For this collection see the handlist in the British Library in Hand-list of Arabic Manuscripts in the Delhi Collection, MSS (IO Islamic 4604–4606), British Library, London. See also, Bahl, 'Arabic Philology at the Seventeenth-Century Mughal Court'. For a recent study of manuscript provenance of the Delhi collections, see Sobers-Khan, 'Muslim Scribal Culture in India'. See also Seyller, 'The Inspection and Valuation of Manuscripts'.

[174] Siddiqi, *Rampur Raza Library*, 10–19. I thank Nur Sobers-Khan for pointing this out to me.

[175] Siddiqi, *Rampur Raza Library*.

[176] For recent advances in this area see Balachandran, *Narrative Pasts*.

[177] For an important collection of Arabic manuscripts from the Bohra Ismaili community in Baroda see Akkerman, 'The Bohra Manuscript Treasury'.

[178] Ḥaẓrat Pīr, *'Arabī, Fārsī, Urdū*.

provided by the Noor Microfilm Center in the Iranian Culture House in New Delhi. Apart from these individual cases, however, Gujarat will mainly feature as a connective link in the transregional circulations of manuscripts and texts and I am not going to advance larger arguments concerning the Arabic manuscript cultures of this region.

Similar to the Deccani collections, those of the Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library evolved until the second half of the nineteenth century (the library was opened to the public in 1891) from a variety of South Asian contexts, and manuscripts are still added today.[179] As later biographers of Khuda Bakhsh (1842–1908) pointed out, parts of the Arabic manuscript holdings developed due to extensive collecting practices across West Asia in this period. However, the Khuda Bakhsh Library also offers versions which were copied and circulated in South Asia over the early modern period, and these are the manuscripts which I will use in selective case studies.

Leaving the South Asian collections, the next step was to bring the *Deccan corpus* into conversation with collections from the other side of the western Indian Ocean, namely with manuscripts from the al-Azhar Mosque Library, in Cairo, Egypt, and individual versions from the Dār al-Kutub collections of the National Museum of Egypt, also in Cairo. The collections of both institutions are too numerous to survey in their entirety for this kind of project. Therefore, I restricted myself to the sample of those texts and titles which I had located in India, and which became significant for my argument in Chapters 4 and 5. Although restrictions on access limited my research at the Dār al-Kutub to a few dozen specimens, the online research facilities at al-Azhar Mosque Library made it possible to survey and reproduce large numbers of digitised manuscripts. This assembled corpus of important Arabic philological texts will be especially important in Chapter 5 and will also be included in Chapter 3 for a comparative perspective.[180]

In order to build a tangible case study around one scholar and his texts, I traced manuscripts of Muḥammad al-Damāmīnī's grammar commentaries, initially written at the beginning of the fifteenth century in South Asia, in collections across India, Cairo, Istanbul, and libraries in Europe. Details of those manuscripts will be dealt with in Chapter 4 and especially in Chapter 5 and will be provided in full as part of the

[179] For this and the following See Bukhsh and Sarkar, *Khuda Bakhsh*, 35–38. For the catalogue of the Arabic and Persian manuscripts see the Catalogue of the Arabic and Persian manuscripts in the Oriental Public Library at Bankipore. This was accessed online.

[180] See Tables A.7a and b in the Appendix.

Appendix.[181] To give an idea of the prominence of his texts and their suitability for an in-depth study of textual transmission and transregional Arabic scholarship, manuscripts were brought together from the *Deccan corpus*, the collections in Cairo, as well as libraries in Patna and Kolkata. Importantly, a research trip to Istanbul uncovered dozens of manuscript versions from different holdings in the Süleymaniye Library collection.[182] The manuscripts of al-Damāmīnī's texts in Istanbul circulated between the regions of the eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea region and have their origins in circulation histories that began in fifteenth-century South Asia. Together, these specimens form the transregional *al-Damāmīnī corpus*.

Plan of the Book

The book offers five empirical chapters that pursue the historiographical and conceptual interventions set out in the Introduction. The first chapter builds on prosopographical sources to set the scene for a world of Arabic maritime mobilities from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries and how it changed over time. The second chapter studies the early modern library collection of Bijapur as a locality that attracted mobile manuscripts and people. The third chapter broadens the view to engage with Arabic philological practices across the early modern Deccan and its transregional links more broadly. The fourth chapter studies mobile learning through the figure of the fifteenth-century scholar al-Damāmīnī on the move between Egypt and the Deccan. The fifth chapter then traces the afterlife of his texts through the practices of transregional manuscript circulation and what this can tell us about changes in knowledge transmission from the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries from the subcontinent to western Asia. The Conclusion draws the findings together to elaborate on the complex world of transoceanic early modern Arabic learning, and how it needs to be further studied as part of the subcontinent's multilingual landscape.

[181] See *al-Damāmīnī corpus* in Tables A.1, 2, and 3 of the Appendix. These tables differ in the details they provide because I am employing manuscript versions of each text in Chapter 5 to advance a different argument.

[182] This search was conducted through the online catalogue at the Süleymaniye, Istanbul.