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“When Tark Tüten first visited our Center for Manuscript Studies, I could not have imagined that I would develop such a close connection with the Hafız Ahmed Agha Collection. What began as a formal institutional collaboration—and, admittedly, with a degree of reluctance—gradually came to occupy a meaningful place in my academic life. But the story did not end there; with my visit to the library and through the people I met, this relationship took on an even more personal and intimate character. It is not uncommon for historians, especially those whose research centers on a particular historical figure, to develop a sense of familiarity or even affinity with their subject. For me, that connection was established even before the research began, during my very first visit to the library. The hospitality and friendship I experienced on the Island and within the Library gave rise to a genuine sense of responsibility toward the legacy of Hafız Ahmed Agha, as if I had become part of his extended family. This article, a preliminary exercise related to my doctoral dissertation, was written with deep affection and gratitude for all the friendships the Hafız Ahmed Agha Library has brought into my life.”

Elif Derin

GÜLSÜM GÜLSEV ŞANVER completed her BA in 2016 at the Department of History at 29 Mayıs University with a thesis titled “*Scholars and Intellectual Life during the Reign of Murad II According to Şakâik-i Numâniyye*.” She earned her master’s degree at the same university in 2019 with a thesis titled “*Şeyhülislam Molla Arab (d. 1496) and an Analysis of His Fatwa Collection*,” under the supervision of Ertuğrul Ökten. She is currently pursuing her doctoral studies in the Department of History at Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University, working on a dissertation titled “*Kuyûdât as Historical Material: A Socio-Cultural Analysis Based on Notes in Ohrid Manuscripts*.” Since 2022, Şanver has been serving as a specialist at the Center for Manuscript Studies at the same university. Her research focuses on manuscript culture, Ottoman manuscript collections, the use of manuscripts as historical sources, and the socio-cultural history of the Ottoman Empire.

“Each manuscript copy (nüsha) contains unique examples of kuyûdât—notes, marginalia, and other handwritten records—that await discovery by manuscript researchers. Given the nature of their content, these materials hold the potential to serve as primary sources for historical research. In this article, as in my broader scholarly work, what I pursue is the effort to interpret the meanings expressed through these words and small phrases penned by individuals. One of the most important factors that enabled us to carry out this publication was the accessibility and examinability of Ottoman manuscript collections. I would like to specifically acknowledge Tarık Tüten’s efforts in increasing our curiosity about the Hafız Ahmed Agha Collection and in his dedication to constructing its historical background. Since the day we met, he has regarded even our slightest interest in the collection as meaningful. I sincerely thank him for the attention and support he has shown us throughout this research.”

Gülsüm Gülsev Şanver

Manuscript Notes as Sources

Tracing the History of a Library and Collection through the Rodosî Hafız Ahmed Agha Manuscripts

Introduction

In recent years, manuscript notes (*kuyûdât*)—including ownership statements, endowment notes and seals, colophons, and marginal annotations—have garnered increasing scholarly attention as valuable sources for understanding the social, intellectual, and material dimensions of manuscript culture in the Islamic world. While traditionally overshadowed by the primary texts they accompany, these paratextual traces have emerged as critical tools for reconstructing the lived histories of individual codices, their users, and the institutions that housed them. This shift reflects broader developments in manuscript studies and material philology, which have increasingly emphasized the codex not simply as a container of texts, but as a historical artifact shaped by usage, transmission, and context.

Among the various manuscript collections that lend themselves to such inquiry, the Hafız Ahmed Agha Library on the island of Rhodes stands out as a unique case. Founded in 1793 by Rikâbdâr Hafız Ahmed Agha and later sustained by his son, Fethi Pasha, the library represents a rare example of a provincial family waqf that has survived to the present day. Its holdings contain a wealth of manuscript notes that document not only the collection’s initial formation, but also its continued transformation through donations, repairs, and various forms of user interaction.

This paper asks how manuscript notes serve as historical evidence for the construction, transformation, and use of a family waqf library in the Ottoman world. It focuses on manuscript notes identified during the sample cataloguing phase of a digitization project conducted at the Hafız Ahmed Agha Library. The study situates these notes within broader trends in manuscript scholarship and examines them through selected examples—including endowment inscriptions, ownership entries, endowment notes, and *fâ’ida*—to explore the circulation of manuscripts, the development of the collection, and the profiles of its users. In doing so, the paper contributes to emerging methodologies that treat *kuyûdât* not as peripheral curiosities, but as integral historical data for the study of Ottoman book culture and library history.

This study examines the manuscript notes (*kuyûdât*) identified during the sample cataloging phase of the digitization project concerning the holdings of the Rodos Hafız Ahmed Agha Library. Established in 1793 on the island of Rhodes by Rikâbdâr Hafız Ahmed Agha and later maintained by his son, Ahmed Fethi Pasha, the library constitutes a rare example of a family endowment that has preserved its manuscript collection to the present day. The study seeks to assess the insights these paratextual notes offer regarding the history of the library and its collection. Focusing on various types of notes—particularly those pertaining to ownership, copying, reading, and endowment—it investigates the circulation of individual manuscripts, the processes of collection formation, and the profiles of users. Additionally, it discusses the methodological potential of such notes in reconstructing the intellectual and social contexts of manuscript culture.

The Place and Function of *Kuyûdât* in Manuscript Studies Literature

One of the primary ways in which *kuyûdât* are utilized in current literature is through their documentation in manuscript catalogues compiled by librarians and researchers. This approach has significantly enhanced the accessibility of such notes for scholars; however, it also draws attention to a critical limitation of conventional cataloguing practices: their predominant focus on textual content often comes at the expense of the manuscripts' material and historical dimensions. Yet, notes related to ownership, copying, reading, and endowment offer crucial insights into the circulation of individual copies, user engagement, and the formation of collections—elements essential for reconstructing the cultural life of manuscripts. In response to this gap, several catalogues have begun to integrate *kuyûdât* more systematically. Notable examples include those prepared by Ali Emre Özyıldırım and Sami Arslan for the Koç University Suna Kıraç Library, both of which foreground these paratextual elements.¹ Likewise, Sadık Yazar's catalogue of Turkish manuscripts housed in the Algerian National Library features a dedicated “Records” (*Kayıtlar*) section, in which such notes are compiled.² These catalogues represent a promising shift toward more research-oriented and contextually rich cataloguing practices, reflecting the broader methodological transformations currently underway in the field of manuscript studies.

Indeed, it is also worth noting the emergence of online catalogues that, recognizing this need, aim to make not only the works themselves but also individual manuscript copies more visible to researchers through digital cataloguing methods. One such example is the *Khizana* platform, which currently contains 68,496 entries in its “MS Notes” section. These entries include transcriptions of common types manuscript notes such as ownership records and seals, colophons, and endowment statements and seals, as well as less frequently encountered notes like purchase records and birth records. Each note is accompanied by the bibliographic citation of the manuscript in which it appears, along with a direct link to the holding library.³ Similarly, the “manuscript notes” section of the *Qalamos* platform provides access to a wide range of note types—ownership, endowment, reader, and birth-death records—alongside other relevant catalogue data pertaining to each manuscript.⁴

The second approach involves the direct academic study of *kuyûdât* found in manuscripts housed in various collections. For instance, marginal notes in the Carullah Efendi Collection have been used both to reconstruct Carullah Efendi's biography and to examine these notes within the broader context of manuscript culture.⁵ Building on this approach, colophons in the Fazıl Ahmed Pasha Collection have been analyzed to interpret the collection from the perspective of its copyists, thereby enabling the reconstruction of copyist profiles.⁶ Ownership notes in the same collection

have proven useful in shaping the identity of a library.⁷ In this context, a doctoral dissertation focusing on the Reisülküttâb Acem Bekir Efendi Collection, based on such records, can also be cited.⁸ Although methodologically distinct from the aforementioned works, another study centered on the Âşir Efendi Collection examines the *kuyûdât* found specifically on *zahriya* (1a) pages, with a particular focus on their spatial and functional significance within the manuscript.⁹

The third and final approach involves the independent study of specific types of *kuyûdât*, such as colophons, ownership notes, and audition certificates. The first comprehensive study employing this method is Sami Arslan's doctoral dissertation on copy records, in which each element of the record is meticulously analyzed—offering a model for future research on other types of manuscript notes.¹⁰ For example, Fatma Esmanur Koç's work attempts to understand the production and circulation of a hadith text through a focused analysis of ownership and copy records.¹¹ Similarly, Elif Sezer-Aydınlı's doctoral dissertation explores Ottoman reading culture in the 18th and 19th centuries through reader annotations found in *Hamzanâme* and *Ebu Müslimnâme* manuscripts.¹² Further examples include Tatjana Paić-Vukić's reconstruction of a Bosnian *qadi*'s biography using ownership notes,¹³ and Asim Zübčević's use of such records to examine patterns of book ownership in Ottoman Bosnia.¹⁴

In sum, *kuyûdât* have been utilized in manuscript studies through three primary approaches: as elements incorporated into cataloguing processes to enhance the visibility of manuscript-specific features; as subjects of scholarly inquiry within specific collections to reconstruct biographical, institutional, or scribal networks; and as independent research topics centered on a particular type of note, such as colophons, ownership statements, or audition records. Beyond these, a growing number of studies on waqf or madrasa libraries and private collections also make use of *kuyûdât* as supplementary sources. While such works—like Kyle Winter-Stoner's study of the Mahmudiye Library¹⁵ or Tülay Artan's exploration of knowledge production through the Şehid Ali Pasha Collection¹⁶—offer valuable insights, they typically do not place manuscript notes at the core of their analyses.

7 Tufan Kara, “Temellük Kayıtlarından Tarih Yazmak: Köprülü Kütüphanesi Örneği,” in *Osmanlı Tarihinde Köprülüler Dönemi (1656–1710): Yeni Kaynaklar, Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, ed. Fatih Çalışır (İstanbul: İbn Haldun Üniversitesi yay., 2024).

8 Ali Aslan, *18. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İlim Hayatından Bir Kesit: Sıdkî Mustafa Efendi'nin Günlüğü ve Mülâzemet Yılları* (PhD diss., İstanbul University, 2015).

9 Elif Derin, “Osmanlı Kitap Kültüründe Kuyûdât Mahalli Olarak Zahriye: Âşir Efendi Koleksiyonu Örneği.” *Yazmabilim* 1/1 (Eylül 2025): 159-184.

10 Sami Arslan, *Bilgiyi İstinsahla Çoğaltmak: Osmanlı İlim Kamuoyunda Bilginin Dolaşımı (İznik Medresesi–Süleymaniye Medreseleri Dönemi)* (PhD diss., Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University, 2019).

11 Fatma Esmanur Koç, *Yazma Eser Kültürü Bağlamında Bir Hadis Metninin Üretim ve Dolaşımı: Mebâriku'l-Ezhâr Örneği* (MA thesis, Marmara University, 2022).

12 Elif Sezer-Aydınlı, *A Manuscript Community in Ottoman Istanbul (18th-19th Centuries): Heroic Stories, Social Profiles, and Reading Space* (PhD diss., Freie Universität Berlin, 2022).

13 Tatjana Paić-Vukić, *The World of Mustafa Muhibbi, A Kadi from Sarajevo*, trans. Margaret Casman-Vuko, Tatjana Paić-Vukić ve Miroslav Vuko (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2011).

14 Asim Zubecevic, *Book Ownership in Ottoman Sarajevo 1707–1828* (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2015).

15 Kyle Winter-Stoner, *The Mahmudiyyah: The History of a Library, Its Books, and Its Readers*, (PhD diss, University of Chicago, 2022).

16 Tülay Artan. “On Sekizinci Yüzyıl Başında Osmanlı Bilgi Üretimi ve Dağılımı: Yazma Eser Koleksiyonları ve Koleksiyonerler Arasında Şehid Ali Paşa'nın Yeri”. *Müteferrika*. 58/2 (2020): p. 5-40.

1 Koç Üniversitesi Suna Kıraç Kütüphanesi Yazmalar Kataloğu 1, ed. Ali Emre Özyıldırım (İstanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2019). Koç Üniversitesi Suna Kıraç Kütüphanesi Yazmalar Kataloğu 2, ed. Sami Arslan (İstanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2021).

2 Sadık Yazar, “Cezayir Milli Kütüphanesi'ndeki Türkçe Yazmaların Kataloğu,” *Hikmet - Akademik Edebiyat Dergisi*, December 2018, 274–335.

3 <https://khizana.saw-leipzig.de/#>

4 <https://www.qalamos.net/content/index.xed>

5 *Osmanlı Kitap Kültürü: Carullah Efendi Kütüphanesi ve Derkenar Notları*, Ed. Berat Açıl, İstanbul: İlem yay., 2020.

6 Sami Arslan, “Metin İçinde Metin: Müstensihlerinin Gözünden Fazıl Ahmed Paşa Koleksiyonu,” in *Osmanlı Tarihinde Köprülüler Dönemi (1656–1710): Yeni Kaynaklar, Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, ed. Fatih Çalışır (İstanbul: İbn Haldun Üniversitesi yay., 2024).

One final category—though not easily fitting into the previous classifications—includes important theoretical contributions on *kuyûdât*. Notably, Andreas Görke and Konrad Hirschler have defined *kuyûdât* as ‘manuscript notes,’ emphasizing their historical value due to their diversity and richness of information.¹⁷ The number of related studies has steadily increased, and with growing scholarly awareness, further substantial contributions to this body of literature are likely to emerge. Indeed, the range of papers presented at the 2024 symposium organized by the FSMV University Center for Manuscript Studies on the theme of *kuyûdât* clearly reflects the richness of data these manuscript notes offer.¹⁸ Furthermore, it is important to mention *Keshif*, a digital journal project that focuses particularly on documents and manuscript notes—such as poetry, prescriptions, biographical narratives, or records of daily life—aiming to present these in micro-edition format. By accumulating these records in a digital environment, *Keshif* aspires to pave the way for a broader understanding of the “big picture” through the aggregation of these micro-histories.¹⁹

Examples of *Kuyûdât* as Paratextual Elements in Manuscripts

In this section, various types of records such as endowment records, ownership records, *fâ'idâs* (useful notes) records, and repair records found in selected manuscripts from the Hafız Ahmed Agha Library are discussed under separate headings. These records are then evaluated together in terms of the information they provide about the library and the collection. Thus, a narrow-scope, applied example of the aforementioned research methods is presented.

Endowment Notes

Since Ahmed Agha’s library is an endowment institution, the first notable type of paratextual notes in this collection are waqf records. An endowment note signifies that a book has been removed from private ownership and made available for communal use. In the Islamic world, the practice of endowing books to mosques, madrasas, dervish lodges, and public libraries has been widespread for centuries. In such cases, a waqf record is written on each manuscript individually. On the other hand, in cases where a large number of manuscripts are endowed, the record can be standardized by applying a seal directly to the manuscripts.²⁰

The endowment of manuscripts is a controversial topic from the perspective of Islamic law, but according to François Déroche, endowment notes for manuscripts can be found from the 3rd century AH onwards.²¹ The most basic indication that a book has been endowed is the appearance of the term “waqf” written on various pages, along the top or side margins of the book. In addition, notes indicating that the book has been donated for the sake of Allah are usually placed at the beginning of the book, often on the *zahriya* page, or in rarer cases, on the *khatima* (end) page. These notes sometimes simply indicate that the manuscript has been endowed, while at other times, they include the name of the place where it was endowed or the name of the endower. Over time, endowment seals also appeared on manuscripts, often found alongside written records.

In Ahmed Agha’s collection, the only handwritten records encountered are the words of ‘waqf,’ and the manuscripts’ endowment status is validated by Ahmed Agha’s personal endowment seal. Although there are no handwritten endowment notes in the manuscripts, the seal specifically created for the library itself serves as a form of record. The text of the seal includes the name of the endower, the location of the endowment, and the date: “*Sâbikan rikâbdâr-ı hazret-i şehriyârî Rodosî Hafız Ahmed Ağa’nın cezâire-i mezbûrda bina eylediği kitâbhanesinin kütüb-i mevkûfesidir 1207*.”²² This seal has been stamped on the *zahriya*, final pages and some occasional pages of the manuscripts (FIGURE 1).



FIGURE 1: The endowment seal of Hafız Ahmed Agha

Importantly, the seal of Ahmed Agha does not represent the sole form of waqf-related evidence within the library’s holdings. Although an endowed manuscript is generally expected to remain permanently in the location to which it was donated, this is not always the case in practice. The books of foundations that have become inactive or dysfunctional were donated again to other libraries or institutions, thereby continuing their lives within different waqf contexts. At least in the case of the Hafız Ahmed Agha Library, this phenomenon can be clearly observed. Some manuscripts originally endowed to different locations in Rhodes appear to have been transferred to this library under the title “Donated Collection.”²³ The most effective and definitive way to identify such transfers is by examining the earlier waqf records still present on the manuscripts themselves.

Further supporting this observation, several manuscripts in the collection include detailed information about earlier endowments. For example, a book endowed by Murabıtzâde Hasan Beg to a new cell in the *Teymurî* Madrasa includes not only the name of the endower but also the name of the trustee, Karacazâde Mustafa bin Hacı İbrahim.²⁴ Similarly, in the waqf record of the *Lugat-ı Ahterî* endowed by Hacı Yûsuf to the İçhisar Madrasa, one finds heartfelt expressions written with

17 Andreas Görke and Konrad Hirschler, eds., *Manuscript Notes as Documentary Sources* (Beirut: 2011).

18 https://www.fsm.edu.tr/resim/Dosya/Kuyûdât_Sempozyumu_Program_Akisi2024-05-10-02-43-11pm.pdf erişim: 27.04.2025.

19 <https://journals.univie.ac.at/index.php/keshif/index>

20 Orhan Bilgin, “Temellük ve Tesâhüb Kaydı”, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/temelluk-ve-tesahub-kaydi> (25.04.2025).

21 François Déroche et al. 2006. *Islamic codicology: an introduction to the study of manuscripts in Arabic script*, London, p. 330.

22 Translation: “These are the endowed books of the library established by the former stirrup-holder of his Imperial Majesty, Rodosî Hafız Ahmed Agha, on the aforementioned island, 1207 [1792–93].”

23 The Donation Collection comprises 898 works contained in 459 volumes.

24 Mevd ed-dîn Abd er-Rahmân b. Ömer İbn Ebû Cerad, *el-Alîm ve'l-Müte'allim*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1312, 1a.

the hope that those who benefit from the book will pray for the endower.¹ In some manuscripts, the waqf record appears in the form of a seal—for instance, the seal inscribed with “*Rodosî Ser’azeb es-seyyid Mustafa Ağa’nın kütüb-i mevkûfesidir 1228*” appears in multiple copies.² (FIGURE 2)



FIGURE 2: The endowment seal of Serazeb Mustafa Agha (Hafız Ahmed Agha 2172)
Photos: T. Tuten

1 Muslih ed-dîn Mustafâ b. Şems ed-dîn Karahisârî, *Ahteri-i Kebîr*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1289, 1a.
2 Celâl ed-dîn Abd er-Rahmân b. Ebî Bekr es-Suyûtî, *ed-Dureru'l-Muntessire fi'l-Ehâdisi'l-Müştehire*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library, 2172, 151a. Translation: These are the endowed books of Rodosî Ser'azeb al-Sayyid Mustafa Agha, dated 1228 AH.

Another endowment note that clearly states the name of the trustee and the location of the endowment also highlights another important aspect of cultural history: the contributions of women to waqf activities. In one manuscript, it is understood that the book was endowed by a woman named Aîşe Hatun, and the note includes both the name of the endower and the trustee: “*Bu şerh Talamânî Aşçı Saran’ın ehli Aîşe Hatun vakfetmişdir, mütevellisi ise Nalıncızâde Molla Mustafa’dır medrese-i İçhisar*”.³ (FIGURE 3) This note provides critical evidence of women’s participation in the establishment of waqfs and their contributions to cultural heritage, highlighting the significant role played by women in the educational and cultural spheres of the period.



FIGURE 3: The endowment record belonging to Aîşe Hatun (Hafız Ahmed Agha 1381)
Photos: T. Tuten

3 Alî Sadrî Kônâvî, *Şerh-i Vasiyet-i Birgivi*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1381, 1a. Translation: This commentary was endowed by Aîşe Hatun, the wife of chef Saran from Dalaman; its trustee is Nalıncızâde Molla Mustafa, [for] the İçhisar Madrasa.

These examples demonstrate that the Ahmed Agha Library not only possessed a formal institutional waqf structure but also functioned as a rich archival resource, incorporating books from various periods and diverse endowment networks.

Ownership Notes

Notes indicating the ownership of manuscripts vary widely, ranging from simple inscriptions such as *min kutubi* (“from among my books”) to elaborate and ornate ownership medallions.⁴ These types of ownership records not only document who owned a manuscript in the past but also play an important role in understanding the material and cultural value of the work, and even in tracing the historical trajectory of the copy. Typically, these records include verbs or adjectives that explicitly express ownership and intent to claim possession, and they sometimes provide biographical information about the owner, such as their profession or place of origin.⁵ When a date is included, the record offers more concrete information regarding both the manuscript and the owner’s historical context. Additionally, some ownership notes may explain how the manuscript was acquired—through purchase, inheritance, or other means.⁶ The language used in such inscriptions often reflects not just factual data but also the owner’s personal, emotional, and spiritual relationship with the book. Especially when books are referred to with phrases like “a blessing from God” or “a trust,” these expressions reveal the deeper meaning and reverence attributed to them by their owners.

In addition to written ownership inscriptions, seals were also commonly used to mark possession, adding another layer to the documentation of manuscript history. However, unlike waqf seals, these ownership seals were generally simpler and more personal in nature rather than detailed. In addition to explicit records directly stating ownership, there are also other types of notes that, while not primarily intended to document ownership, nonetheless imply it. For example, when a scribe indicates that they copied a manuscript for himself, this can be interpreted as an indirect declaration of ownership. Similarly, *ijâzât* written on a manuscript often indicate that the recipient of the certification was the owner of that particular copy. Likewise, *mukâbala* (comparison) and *tashih* (correction) records can provide clues as to who may have owned the manuscript.⁷

In this context, purchase records also stand out as a significant category. These records, which document the acquisition of a manuscript through purchase, are typically found on the first page (*zahriya*) and include details about who bought the work, when it was purchased, and sometimes even the price. A number of these records can be found in the manuscripts of the Hafız Ahmed Agha Library, offering concrete examples of how such notes reveal the evolving ownership, circulation, and institutional affiliations of the manuscripts. For instance, the note by Zeynelabidin Efendi, the preacher of Kirkuk, goes beyond a simple ownership statement and is enriched with a highly personal and supplicatory tone. Zeynelabidin Efendi states that he acquired the *Akhtarî-i Kebîr* through *bay‘-i shar‘î*—a lawful Islamic sale—and emphasizes that he obtained it as “a poor servant of

God,” declaring his reliance upon the Almighty.⁸ Similarly, a note by Hâfız Muhammad, a judge of Amed (Diyarbakır), explicitly states that he purchased a copy through lawful means, providing clear information about the process of acquisition.⁹ Another example is a record by Judge Abdurrahman, who noted that he bought a manuscript from its previous owner in the year 1045 AH (1635/36 CE).¹⁰ This entry not only documents a transfer of ownership but also reflects the legal practices of the time. (FIGURE 4)



FIGURE 4: Purchase note by Judge Abdurrahman (Hafız Ahmed Agha 957)
Photos: T. Tuten, A. Bostancı

Such records provide critical evidence of both individual and institutional ownership of manuscripts. Moreover, they serve as key historical documents, offering insights into the mechanisms of manuscript transfer, the intentions underlying these exchanges, and the evolving relationships between manuscripts and their owners over time.

4 Adam Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts: A Vademecum for Readers*, Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 1 The Near and Middle East, vol. 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p. 174.
5 Sa‘deddin Mes‘ûd b. Ömer b. Abdullah et-Taftazânî el-Horasânî, *et-Telvîh ilâ Kesfi Hakâ‘iki’t-Tenkîh*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1332, 1a.
6 Zeynüddin el-Merginânî, Ebu’l-Feth Abdurrahîm b. İmâdüddin b. Ali el-Merginânî es-Semerkindî, *Fusûlû’l-İhkâm fî Usûli’l-Ahkâm*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 472, 1a.
7 Sa‘deddin Mes‘ûd b. Ömer b. Abdullah et-Taftazânî el-Horasânî, *et-Telvîh ilâ Kesfi Hakâ‘iki’t-Tenkîh*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1332, 33a-37a.

8 Muslihuiddin Mustafa b. Şemseddin el-Karahisârî, *Ahterî-i Kebîr*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1289, 1a.
9 Zeynüddin el-Merginânî, Ebu’l-Feth Abdurrahîm b. İmâdüddin b. Ali el-Merginânî es-Semerkindî, *Fusûlû’l-İhkâm fî Usûli’l-Ahkâm*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 472, 1a.
10 Ebu’l-Fazl Celâleddin Abdurrahman b. Ebû Bekir b. Muhammed el-Kâhirî el-Hudayrî eş-Şâfi‘î, *Hem‘u’l-Hevâmi’ fî Şerhi Cem‘i’l-Cevâmi’*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 957, IIa.

Fâ'ides

The brief notes found on the blank pages or margins of manuscripts—often no longer than a few lines¹¹—not only reflect traces of personal interest or reading experience but also offer highly valuable insights into the social, cultural, and scientific life of their time. Among these are short texts known as *fâ'ides*, which record useful information compiled from other sources or derived from personal experience, thereby reinforcing the notion of manuscripts as “living documents.” These notes may include a recipe for a medicinal remedy, an explanation of an astronomical term, or practical knowledge relevant to daily life. While their sources are sometimes cited, they are more often anonymous. In some cases, they preserve traces of now-lost works; in others, they offer rare glimpses into the worldview of the person who read or owned the manuscript. In this sense, *fâ'ide* records shed light not only on the text itself, but also on the mindset that formed around it.

Among the manuscripts held in the Ahmed Agha Library, there are also striking examples of such records. One of them is a medical prescription intended for treating physical ailments such as pain. The recipe, which involves the use of the herb *muhallasa*, recommends a specific mixture to be taken in measured doses both in the morning and evening, particularly in cases where the pain shifts within the body. (FIGURE 5)

“Şol sancı ki insânın a‘zâsında devrân üzere olup ahyânen hareket eylese, muhallasa didükleri devâdan alup süfûf olunup ahşâm ve sabâh iki dirhem mikdârı isti‘mâl oluna, bi-izni’llâh def‘ ola.”¹²



Figure 5: Prescription for pain (Hafız Ahmed Agha 1289)
Photo: T. Tuten

11 Orhan Bilgin, “Fevâid Kaydı”, *TDV İslâm Ansiklopedisi*, <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/fevaid-kaydi> (25.04.2025).
12 Muslihuddin Mustafa b. Şemseddin el-Karahisârî, *Ahterî-i Kebîr*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1289, 1a. Translation: “That pain which moves around the limbs of a person and occasionally shifts from place to place — let the medicine known as muhallasa be taken, prepared as a powder, and used in the amount of two dirhams, morning and evening. With God’s permission, it will bring relief.”

Another beneficial note pertains to the method used by *helvacıs* (confectioners) for boiling syrup.¹³ This type of record holds significance not only for the history of gastronomy but also for advancing our understanding of how artisanal classes produced, transmitted, and preserved technical knowledge. Another *fâ'ide* concerning the transmission of scientific knowledge highlights the significance and versatile use of *zîjs* (astronomical tables). In this note, attributed to Nimetullah, it is stated that *zîjs* are described as tools employed in warfare, celestial observation, and various practical or technical fields of knowledge.

“Zîc güften ve bir âlet-i cengdir ki ceng gününde ederler ve bir ‘alemdir ki rasd ‘alemine mukârin ve zirih ve bennâ ipi ve bir kitâbdır nukilehu min ni‘metillâh.”¹⁴ (FIGURE 7)

These examples reveal that *fâ'ida* notes extend beyond the main textual content of manuscripts, offering valuable insights into the informational needs, intellectual curiosities, and cultural context of their historical readership. The records found in the Ahmed Agha Library reveal the richness of manuscript culture and highlight the role of these works as living repositories of memory.

Repair Notes

Repair records, a relatively rare type of paratextual elements, are among the notes that are noticed in manuscripts but seldom encountered. It is quite common for manuscripts to undergo repairs over time, such as the restoration of their spine or the re-binding of their cover; however, it is not always possible to come across documented examples of such interventions. Similar to endowment notes, if the repair was carried out for the sake of Allah’s approval, or if the person performing the repair expected a prayer in return for their service, this can be documented with a note on the manuscript.

The library’s donation collection provides particularly rich data in this regard. In the donation collection, multiple works that were repaired in 1280 are observed. However, these repairs were carried out by different individuals but were documented in a similar manner. These repair records typically request prayers for the endower first, followed by the person who commissioned the repair. In one of the records, the person who commissioned the repair is referred to as Faralyalı-zâde Hafız Hüseyin Agha¹⁵, in another record as el-Hâc Omer Agha¹⁶, and in yet another record as Dökmeci-zâde Mustafa Agha¹⁷, and so on.

13 Şemseddin Ahmed b. Hayreddin el-Güzelhisârî el-Aydîni, *Aksâ'l-Ereb fî Tercemeti Mukaddimeti'l-Edeb*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1103, 420b.
14 Muhammed Turgay b. Şahruh b. Timur el-Azerbeycânî er-Riyâzî, *Zîc-i Uluğ Bey*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1186, 1a. Translation: “a zij is both a device used in times of war and an instrument employed in astronomical observations; it also serves as a tool for armorers and architects. Ultimately, it is a book that encompasses all these functions”
15 Ebû'l-Kâsım Abd el-Kerîm b. Hevâzin el-Kuşeyrî (376-465/986-1072) *er-Risâletül-Kuşeyriye*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1344, 1a.
16 Sadr eş-Şerîa es-Sânî Ubeyd-Allâh b. Mes'ûd el-Buhârî, *Şerhu Vikayeti'r-Rivaye fî Mesaili'l-Hidaye*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1328, 1a.
17 Ebu'l-Hüseyin Ahmed b. Muhammed el-Kuduri, *Muhtasari'l-Kuduri*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1324, 1a.



FIGURE 6: Repair note belonging to el-Hâc Omer Agha (Hafız Ahmed Agha 1328)
Photos: T. Tuten

Manuscript Notes as Sources for the History of a Library and Its Collection

In his endowment deed dated 1208 AH (1793 CE), Hafız Ahmed Agha states that he built, on a 1,500-*zira*¹⁸ plot in the İmaretönü neighborhood of Rhodes, a masonry library, a classroom, and six rooms, all from his own property, and that he also donated books to this complex.¹⁹ Through this endowment, Ahmed Agha's book collection was transformed into an institutional entity. Importantly, the date of the foundation does not mark the beginning of the manuscripts' histories; rather, in line with the logic of waqf institutions, it represents the culmination of their individual trajectories. Each manuscript, bearing its own provenance, was unified into a collective corpus through Ahmed Agha's endowment. In subsequent periods, the collection continued to grow through donations from various individuals across the island. Understanding how Ahmed Agha acquired his books, the nature of later donations, and the collection's evolution after his death requires close examination of the manuscript notes.

The first phase centers on Ahmed Agha's efforts to assemble his personal collection, embodying a cultural ideal rooted in the waqf tradition: the transformation of private intellectual resources into a public good, laying the foundation for the library.

The layered history of the Ahmed Agha Collection can be analyzed in two main phases. The first centers on Ahmed Agha's efforts to assemble his personal library, reflecting a cultural ideal embedded in the waqf tradition: the transformation of private intellectual resources into a public good, laying the groundwork for the library. While the initial formation of the library was shaped by Ahmed Agha's personal initiative, its transformation into a dynamic corpus occurred in the following phase. Manuscripts incorporated over time not only increased the library's size but also reshaped it thematically and functionally. Works arriving from various endowments, individual contributions, or donations added multiple layers to the collection, transforming it into a historically and culturally rich entity. As a result, the Ahmed Agha Library should be understood not merely as a repository of books endowed by a single individual, but as a living collection that bears the traces of multiple forms of ownership and successive acts of donation over time.

User Profiles

Ownership notes inscribed in the margins of manuscripts do not merely identify past owners; they also offer valuable insights into the social structure, scholarly networks, and user profiles of the period. Within the Ahmed Agha Collection, such notes—bearing the names of individuals from diverse social and professional backgrounds—illuminate the collection's layered history and highlight the diversity of its users. For example, manuscript no. 1289 bears the seal of Zeynelabidin Efendi, the preacher of Kirkuk, indicating the manuscript's circulation within religious scholarly circles.²⁰ Similarly, manuscript no. 1103 contains an ownership note belonging to Fehim Süleyman, a professor (*müderris*) at the Ali Pasha Madrasa,²¹ offering a window into the intellectual networks of the period.

18 *Zira*: an Ottoman unit of length roughly equivalent to 68–75 cm.
19 General Directorate of Foundations Archive 743/79/26.
20 Muslihuddin Mustafa b. Şemseddin el-Karahisârî, *Akhtarî-i Kabîr*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1289, 1a.
21 Şemseddin Ahmed b. Hayreddin el-Güzelhisarî el-Aydınî, *Aksâ'l-Ereb fî Tercemeti Mukaddimeti'l-Edeb*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1103, IVa.

One particularly revealing example is manuscript no. 1186, a *zîj* (astronomical table) once held by Emrullah bin Ahmed, the timekeeper (*muvakkıt*) of the Yeni Cami in Edirne, and later by Süleyman Dürri, the timekeeper of the Fatih Mosque.²² This case illustrates how such works circulated across different hands and institutional settings, reflecting the dynamic transmission of religious and scientific knowledge. These manuscripts were not confined to single owners but moved within networks of religious specialists, demonstrating their practical value and symbolic importance.

Crucially, these examples highlight that manuscripts functioned not only as texts to be read but also as social objects intertwined with personal, professional, and religious identities. Over time, they became material repositories of memory, linking individuals, institutions, and intellectual traditions. The Ahmed Agha Library, therefore, should be understood not merely as a static book collection, but as an evolving site of social memory that encapsulates broader dynamics of religious authority, scholarly interaction, and knowledge transmission in Ottoman society.

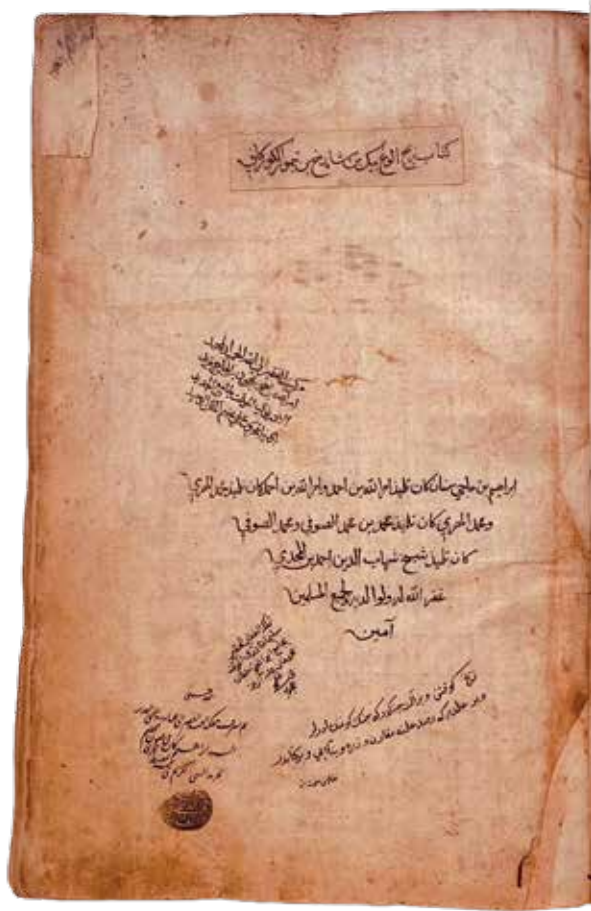


FIGURE 7: Zahriya page of *Zîc-i Uluğ Beg* (Hafız Ahmed Agha 1186)
Photo: T. Tuten

22 Muhammed Turgay b. Şahruh b. Timur el-Azerbeycânî er-Riyâzî, *Zîc-i Uluğ Bey*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1186, 1a.

Circulation of the Manuscripts

In addition to seals and purchase records, extra-textual notes provide valuable insights into the circulation of these works across time and space. The geographical mobility of the books in the Ahmed Agha Collection indicates that the collection was not confined to a single individual or location but moved through various cultural and scholarly centers.

For example, manuscript no. 1103 was copied at the Muradiye Madrasa in Bursa, one of the major intellectual hubs of the Ottoman Empire.²³ Similarly, manuscript no. 1332 originated from the Karatay Madrasa in Konya.²⁴ These examples suggest that manuscript production often took place in prominent urban centers, but also that books circulated well beyond their points of origin.

Another revealing case involves a manuscript of unknown provenance, transcribed in Dhul-Qa'dah 1055 (December 1645/January 1646), which was acquired about a century later, in 1743/44, by Zeynelabidin b. Abdullah Efendi, a preacher in Kirkuk, as recorded in the ownership note. This trajectory illustrates the considerable distances manuscripts traveled within Ottoman lands, passing through multiple hands and regions.²⁵

Collectively, these examples demonstrate that the books in the Ahmed Agha Collection were not confined to individual or local use but formed part of a broader regional network of circulation, embedding them within a multilayered cultural heritage. Tracing their geographical movements sheds light not only on the historical context of the collection but also on the social, institutional, and intellectual networks that facilitated the transmission of knowledge across the empire.

Manuscript Notes in the Cataloging Process

In the cataloging process of manuscripts, it is essential to record manuscript notes (*kuyûdât*) as part of the data, as they play a vital role in establishing the identity and provenance of each copy. Therefore, in addition to major entries such as colophons and endowment notes, attention should be paid to other types of annotations, including reader's notes and *fâ'ide* records, which preserve a wide range of information. It is equally important to identify additional types of notes, such as price records and birth and death entries.

To accurately document *kuyûdât*, manuscripts must undergo a systematic survey and examination process. This includes observing the physical condition of the manuscript, recording the precise locations of the notes, and analyzing details such as the number of hands involved, variations in ink, and chronological indicators. These steps are crucial for the accurate classification and interpretation of the records.

The specific information included in catalog entries often varies depending on the institution, project timeline, and intended purpose. While incorporating manuscript notes into the cataloging process may initially slow progress, the resulting catalog ultimately becomes significantly more useful and accessible to researchers. For this reason, as resources allow, it is highly recommended to include as many types of records as possible. Whenever feasible, each piece of information should be accompanied by details such as language (e.g., Arabic, Ottoman Turkish), date, and physical location within the manuscript (e.g., page numbers or section headings).

23 Şemseddin Ahmed b. Hayreddin el-Güzelhisarî el-Aydinî, *Aksâ'l-Ereb fî Tercemeti Mukaddimeti'l-Edeb*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1103, 419b.
24 Sa'deddin Mes'ûd b. Ömer b. Abdullah et-Taftazânî el-Horasânî, *et-Telviḥ ilâ Keşfi Hakâ'iki't-Tenkîh*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1332,
25 Muslihuddin Mustafa b. Şemseddin el-Karahisârî, *Ahterî-i Kebîr*, Rhodes Hafız Ahmed Agha Library 1289, 1a-515b.

To enhance both the usability and clarity of the catalog, it is beneficial to provide sample entries supported by example records and visual materials. Demonstrating how to describe an ownership note, formulate colophon data, or transfer manuscript notes into the catalog entry not only improves the quality of documentation but also promotes best practices in manuscript studies. By emphasizing the integration of manuscript notes, such practices not only enhance catalog quality but also contribute to the broader goals of preserving cultural heritage and facilitating interdisciplinary research across the fields of codicology, paleography, and intellectual history (FIGURES 8, 9).

Conclusions

This study has demonstrated that manuscript notes (*kuyûdât*)—often dismissed as marginal or incidental—constitute essential sources for reconstructing the historical formation, development, and circulation of Ottoman library collections. By focusing on the Hafız Ahmed Agha Library in Rhodes, the paper has shown how such records offer detailed insights into the lifecycle of manuscripts: their acquisition, use, repair, endowment, and eventual incorporation into an institutional archive. The examined examples, ranging from endowment seals to personal annotations and purchase records, reflect a multiplicity of actors—scribes, patrons, owners, and endowers—whose individual engagements collectively shaped the library as a cultural and intellectual institution.

The Ahmed Agha Library serves as an apt case study that intersects all three methodological approaches discussed earlier in the article—namely, the inclusion of manuscript notes in cataloguing practices, collection-based historical analyses, and focused studies on specific record types such as colophon or ownership. Its layered structure and diverse corpus of manuscript notes exemplify how microhistorical readings of manuscript notes can illuminate broader patterns of knowledge transmission, social networks, and institutional memory in the Ottoman world.

By demonstrating the analytical potential of *kuyûdât*, this study calls for greater attention to paratextual material not merely as supplementary evidence but as a distinct category of primary source material. In doing so, it contributes to the growing body of scholarship that seeks to recover the material and social dimensions of manuscript culture—one manuscript note at a time.

Bibliographic Details	
Collection No	1289
Former Collection	Donated Collection-1
Title of Book	Ahterî-i Kebîr
Author	Muslihuddin Mustafa b. Şemseddin el-Karahisârî (968-1560)
Copyright Date	952 / 1545
Language	Arabic - Turkish
Subject	Lexicon
Date of Copying	Dhul Qadah 1055 (December 1645/ January 1646)
Scriber	Emîn bin Yûsuf
Bibliography about the author	“Ahterî”, Hulusî Kılıç, <i>DİA</i> , İstanbul:1989, c. 2, 184-185. “Ahterî Mustafa Efendi’nin Hayatı ve Eserleri”, Mustafa Güneş; Ed. Bilal Kemikli, Ahmet Türkan. Ankara, 2018. <i>Ahterî ve Dönemi Bilgi Şöleni Bildirileri</i> , Kütahya, 7-9 Kasım 2013, 53-61.
Publications of the Work	The work was printed for the first time in 1242/1827 in Dârü’t-tibâ’a in İstanbul, and many editions followed. There is also a Latinized edition prepared by İbrahim Ulaş and Abdülkadir Dedeoğlu. (İstanbul 1979).
Copies	There are more than three hundred manuscript copies of the work in libraries in Turkey.
Content	The work contains approximately 40,000 words. It alphabetized Arabic words according to their spelling rather than their roots, gave Arabic synonyms of the words along with their Turkish equivalents, and reinforced the meaning by exemplifying them in sentences. These features have been effective in making the work highly preferred.
Physical Description	
Leaf	458 (jumped from 239 to 300 during the numbering of the leaf)
Line	25
Dimensions	300x180-225x11mm
Calligraphy	Nash. The titles, the redactions and leaf numbers are in red.
Paper	Watermarked paper, worm-eaten in places
Binding	Brown binding with round medallion with pendants, edges and corners damaged, worm holes. The flap has fallen off and the spine is torn. Edges repaired with red leather.
Manuscript Notes / Kuyûdât	
Endowment seal of the Fethi Pasha Foundation [1a]	<i>Fethi Paşa Evkafı Hafız Ahmet Ağa Kütüphanesi Rodos</i>
Ownership Notes of Yûsuf bin Ahmed [1a]	<i>min mütemellikâti’l-fakîr ileyhi subhanehu Yûsuf bin Ahmed ‘ufiye ‘anhümâ</i>
Purchase note belonging to orator of Kirkuk Zeynel Abidin Efendi [1a]	<i>lekað de hale fî silk-i milk-i el-hakîr el-fakîr kitâb-ı Ahterî bâ-bey’-iş-şer’î ve ene’l-hakîr ila’l-lâhi’l-ganî Zeynel’âbidîn bin Abdullah Efendi el-hatîb bi-Kerkûk gaferallahu lehümâ ve’l-cemî’ul-müminîn ecmaîn sene 156 (1743/44)</i>
Endowment note of el-Hâc Yûsuf’s endowment of the manuscript to the İçhisar Madrasah [1a]	<i>El-hâc Yûsuf’un İçhisâr Medresesine vakf eylediği lugat-i Ahterî’dir her kim isti’mâl ider nef’alanırsa sâhibini du’âdan unutmaya her kim du’â iderse âhir nefesde Allahu te’âlâ imânıyla hatm eyleye</i>
Fâ’ide: Recipe for the use of <i>muhal-lasa</i> herb for pain [1a]	<i>Şol sancı ki insânın a’zâsında devrân üzere olup ahyânen hareket eylese muhallasa didükleri devâdan alup süfûf olunup ahşâm ve sabâh iki dirhem mikdârı isti’mâl oluna bi-izni’llâh def’ ola Diğer sancı için çıkmak kâvî bir mikdâr yudalar def’ ola bi-izni’llâhi te’âlâ</i>

FIGURE 8: A sample entry from the preliminary catalog of manuscripts in the Ahmed Agha Library.

Bibliographic Details	
Collection No	1186
Former Collection	<i>Nücum</i> /Astronomy - 1
Title of Book	Zic-i Uluğ Bey
Author	Uluğ Bey, Muhammed Turgay b. Şahruh b. Timur el-Azerbeycânî er-Riyâzî, (853/1449)
Copyright Date	1437-1440
Language	Persian
Subject	Astronomy
Date of Copying	-
Scriber	-
Bibliography about the author	Unat, Yavuz. “Uluğ Bey.” Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi, vol. 42 (2012): 127–129.
Publications of the Work	Uluğ Bey’in Astronomi Cetvelleri: Zic-i Uluğ Bey (trs. Atilla Bir – Mustafa Kaçar), Ankara 2012, I-II. Ulugh Beg’s Catalogue of Stars (ed. E. Ball Nobel), Washington 1917.
Copies	There are more than twenty copies of the work in libraries in Turkey.
Content	The work was prepared based on the results of observations and research conducted at the Samar-kand Observatory in the 15th century. The work is also known as <i>Zic-i Gürgânî</i> , <i>Zic-i Hâkânî</i> , and <i>Zic-i Cedîd-i Sulţânî</i> . The work was first written in Persian (allegedly in Tajik) and later translated into Arabic and Turkish. It consists of four books and includes tables on trigonometry, astronomy, geography and astrology. The first part is devoted to chronology and different types of calendars. The second part is about astronomy, the third part about planets and stars, and the last part about astrology. The <i>zîj</i> , which is very close to today’s calculations in terms of both trigonometry and the annual movements and positions of the planets, was considered the most perfect of the ast-ronomical catalogs prepared until the seventeenth century and was used as the basic book of positional astronomy until this time. Flamsteed, the founder of the Greenwich Observatory, also made use of Ulug Bey’s <i>zîj</i> while preparing his catalog of fixed stars (Historia Coelestis Britanica, London 1725).
Physical Description	
Leaf	183
Line	Varying number of lines and tables
Dimensions	343x235-260x168mm
Calligraphy	Ta’liq. Titles and tables in red ink.
Paper	Paper watermarked, with moisture stains and ink burns.
Binding	Burgundy oak binding. Covered in red leather with a marbled cover.
Manuscript Notes / Kuyûdât	
Ownership note of the timekeeper of Edirne New Mosque [1a]	<i>min kütûbi 'l-fakîr ila 'llâhi 'l-hamîdû 'l-mecîd Emrullâh bin Ahmed bin Mahmûd bin el-hâcc Mürîd el-Edirnevî el-muvakkît el-câmi 'ü 'l-cedîd bi-Edirne-i mahrûse 'ufiye 'anhûm el-mülkü 'l-vahîd</i>
Ownership note of timekeeper of Fatih Mosque [1a]	<i>temellekehu el-fakîr el-hakîr Süleymân Dürri el-muvakkît bi-câmi 'Ebu'l feth Sultân Mehmed Han 'aleyhi 'r-rahme fî sene gkmh [1148 (1735/1736)] hicriyye</i>
Ownership note and seal of Seyyid İbrahim [1a]	<i>Allahu hasbî sümme şerrefe bi-temlikihi el- 'abdü 'l-fakîr ilâ 'inâyeti rabbihi 'l-ganî [...] es-seyyid İbrâhîm kâne fî sene 'aft -- has a seal under the record</i>
<i>Fâ'ide</i> on the value of the of zîj [1a]	<i>Zic güften ve bir âlet-i cengdir ki ceng gününde ederler ve bir 'alemdir ki rasd 'alemine mukârin ve zirih ve bennâ ipi -- nukilehu min Ni'metullâh</i>
Ownership seal [1a]	Two identical seals of Monla Muhammad in octagonal form, one of which is erased
Ownership Record of Muhammed Said (1a)	<i>sümme teşerrefe ve temellekehu hazihi 'n-nûsha-i şerîfe el fakîr Muhammed Sa'id el-ma'rûf yazıcı-zâde mine 'l-medreseyn 'ufiye 'anhümâ fî sene-i grb [1202(1787/1788)] hicri</i>
Endowment seal of Hafız Ahmed Agha	<i>Sâbikan rikâbdâr-ı hazret-i şehriyârî Rodosî Hafız Ahmed Ağa 'nın cezîre-i mezbûrda bina eyle-diği kitâbhanesinin kütüb-i mevkûfesidir 1207</i>

FIGURE 9: A sample entry from the preliminary catalog of manuscripts in the Ahmed Agha Library.

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200b-201a. *Aksā al-Arab fī Tarjamat Muqaddimat al-Adab*, a Turkish translation of *al-Zamakhshari's Muqaddimat al-Adab* by Ishak Hodja. Copied in 1715 (1127 AH) in Bursa by Fakhr al-Dīn ibn Sharaf al-Dīn, then professor at the Muradiye Madrasa. The colophon notes that it was transcribed directly from the autograph manuscript. Photo: T. Tuten