

An Introductory Analysis of *Dalā'il al-khayirāt*: LNS 3 MS from The al-Sabah Collection



Yasmine Al-Saleh

Presented in English
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There are three main themes that surround Dalā'il al-khayirāt: a prayer manual that venerates the Prophet Muhammad composed by Muhammad ibn Sulayman al-Jazūlī's (d.869/1465). First, the illustrations of the Prophet Muhammad's grave and mosque in Medina distinguish this manual. (figures 1, 2) Second, it is the historical context of al-Jazūlī's Sufi sainthood that one can illustrate the popularity of this manual. Lastly, in the context of the perpetual and personal readings of the Sufi worshipper who is repeating these prayers and becoming closer to the Prophet and God that one can begin to understand the illustrations and the manuscript in its entirety.

In folio 23b of *Dalā'il al-khayirāt* LNS 3 MS from Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah, The al-Sabah Collection, three tombs are represented by the three gold rectangles. (figure 1) The tombs are of the Prophet Muhammad and his two companions Abu Bakr and 'Umar: each identified by the inscription on top. The Prophet's tomb is diagonally placed above Abu Bakr's which is above Umar's. A gold lamp that hangs from the polylobed abstracted mosque arches that are framed within a red, gold, and blue background. The gold halo at the top marks both folios is perhaps a reference to a prayer niche (*mihrāb*). The adjacent folio 24a is also an abstracted depiction of the Prophet's mosque. (figure 2) A pulpit *minbar*, *mihrāb*, and lamp are set against an arched background.

The following will be an introductory analysis of the text that directly comes before the illustrations of LNS 3 MS. This is a preface to Professor Witkam research [presented at the DAI on 20 April 2009 and published in *Hadeeth ad Dar* # 30] on the various illustrations of the *Dalā'il al-khayirāt* genre.

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A physical description of LNS 3 MS

A brown leather binding with a stamped medallion and spandrels protects the manuscript. (Sharp, unpublished museum record) With no frontispiece to this manuscript, the text begins with the honorific invocation of the name of God and his Prophet Muhammad and his following, on folio 1b-2a. A heading is located on the third line written in gold Muhaqqaq script that was written on a blue and white abstracted floral background. The heading is enclosed in a rectangle with a white and gold vegetal border that extends into a gold scroll marginal medallion. (figure 3) It reads:

Qāl al-Sheikh al-'imām al-'ālim 'Abu Abdullah Sayyid Muhammad b. Sulayman al-Jazūlī al-Sharīf Al-Ḥasnī Radhiya Ala 'Anhu:

The scholar, master of knowledge 'Abu Abdullah Sayyid Muhammad b. Sulayman al-Jazūlī descendent of Hasan- the Prophet's grandson- peace be upon him said:



Figure 1

The manuscript contains a hundred and seventy-two folios that are written in large brown Maghrbi script with vowelings in maroon, blue, green, and orange-pink. Certain words in the text are in pale purple-pink, red, blue and gold. The folios measure 25.7 x 19cm and have been trimmed. There are nine lines per folio that are enclosed in a double red and blue margin. There are various headings in the manuscript that mark beginnings of sections and are either written in Muhaqqaq or floriated Kufic script.

Text of *Dalā'il al-khayirāt* in LNS 3 MS

The intention of *Dalā'il al-khayirāt*, as stated on the first couple of folios, is that prayers for the Prophet will increase ones closeness to God. The Prophet Muhammad is the intercessor for the reader of the manual and as al-Jazūlī states the angels will continuously pray for the person who prays for the Prophet. If one increases their prayers for the Prophet, especially on a Friday, then they will get ten *ḥasanāt* (merits). If one prays a hundred times on the same day then eighty years of sin will be forgiven. In addition, whoever needs anything from God then one should increase prayer for the Prophet and then ask God for his needs. It is in this realm of counting and the repetition of prayers for the Prophet, that one can become part of *ahl al-nūr* (the people of God).

According to al-Jazūlī's biographer Muhammad al-Mahdī al-Fasī (d.1108/1698), the person who reads the *Dalā'il al-khayirāt* forty times in a period less than forty days then gets what he/she has asked for. The person who forgets to pray for the Prophet has been misled from the way to Heaven. On Judgment Day, God will only know the person who has prayed for the Prophet.

These prayers are interesting because there is an element of charismatic fantasy. For example, the continuous prayer (approximately 100 times) for the Prophet is equal to five hundred years in Heaven and that God will build the person who has prayed for the Prophet a castle. In addition, if one keeps praying for the Prophet than a bird with seventy thousand wings is born from those prayers. Each one of the wings has seventy thousand feathers, and in every feather there are seventy thousand faces, and in each of the seventy thousand faces there are seventy thousand tongues. Each one of these tongues are saying "in the name of God" in seventy thousand languages and God is writing the *thawāb* (recompense in the good sense). In other words, the person who reads this manual is guaranteed a spot in Heaven.

The purpose is to show this deep love and veneration for the Prophet Muhammad. As it is elaborated on folios 16a to 17a, the Prophet Muhammad was asked which of your following should we honor and love and he responded those that have the signs of their love for the Prophet. They are people who are addicted to mentioning my name (*'alāmātihum idmān dhikrī*) and praying for me. Then the Prophet was asked who has the strength of faith (*'imān*) and that is the person that wishes to see me in everything that he owns and [the person's love for the Prophet] fills the ground with gold. The Prophet says that he knows the people who pray for him. And with this ominous statement, al-Jazūlī introduces the next section of the text the Prophet's two hundred and one names written in gold *muhaqqaq* script.

The section of the Prophet's names begins with Muhammad in gold Maghrbi script and Ahmad as the second name on the list. According to the Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān, the names Muhammad and Ahmad are the only two names of the Prophet mentioned in the Qur'ān. Through the *ḥadīth* (the Prophetic tradition) his names "become descriptions of his mission," such as *māḥin* (he

Pearls and the West: Jewels and Paintings



Marzia Cataldi Gallo

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Pliny the Elder, the well known Roman naturalist (23 BC - 79 AD), wrote in his Naturalis Historia that “the most perfect and exquisite pearls are those that come from the Arabian Gulf”. Just as he had done for silk and cotton, the export of pearls to European countries was initiated by Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) after he had journeyed to the East.

Pearls became abundant and popular in Rome towards the end of the 1st century AD. Despite their popularity, each high quality pearl was worth an considerable amount of money. The interior of the temple of Venus was decorated with pearls and the clothes of the wealthy were so covered with pearls that Pliny complained: “It isn’t enough for people to wear pearls; they must also walk and trample all over them”. Pliny also criticised women for wearing pearls in bed, which they did to be conscious of possessing beautiful jewels even while they slept.

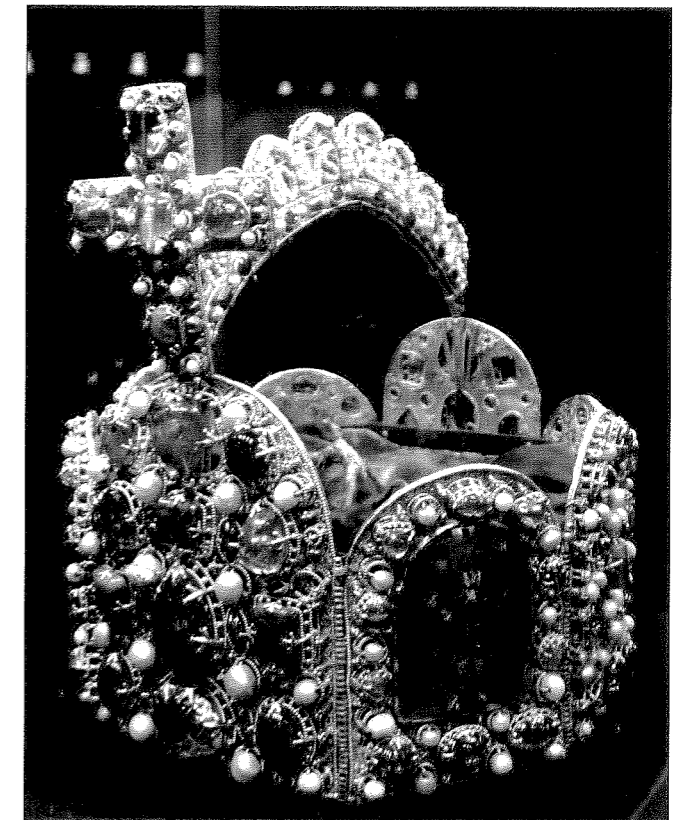
After Byzantium became the capital of the Roman Empire in 330 AD, it grew in wealth and luxury due to its control of trade between Asia and Europe. It became the capital of the arts and jewellery-making with pearls often used as a favourite ornament.

The popularity of pearls continued to grow and reached a zenith during the reign of Charlemagne (768-814 AD), as is shown by the crown with pearls and precious jewels now in the Schatzkammer in Vienna.

Around the same period, smaller pearls were discovered in the rivers of Scotland, Ireland and France. River pearls were not as beautiful as oriental ones, but they were easy to obtain and

so were popular, especially for ecclesiastical dress and decorations.

Up to the 8th century AD the primary use for pearls was ornamental. But after this, largely through Arabic influence, medicine had progressed



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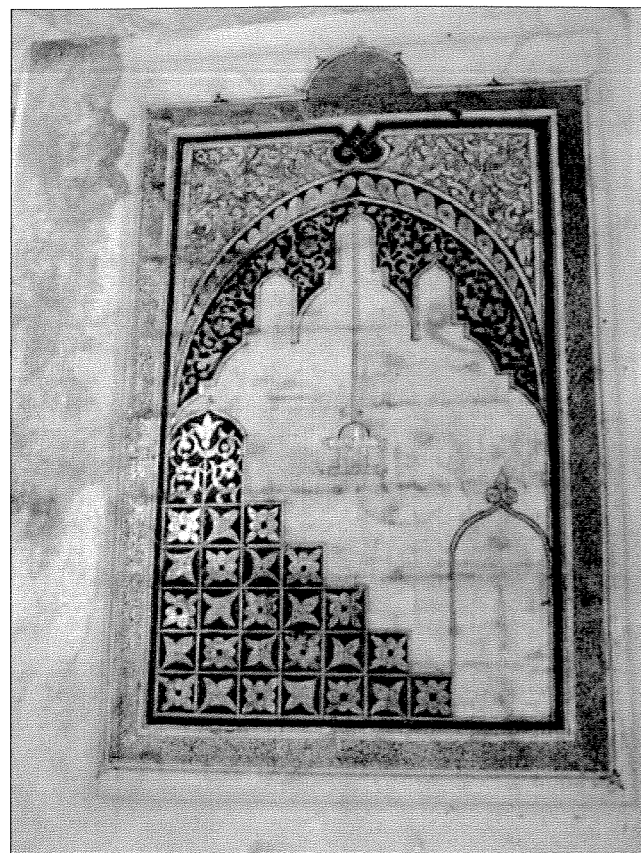


Figure 2

who erases infidelity). In devotional literature, lists of Prophet’s names are expanded and they are called *al-asmā’ al-sharīfa* (Declais 2008). The list of two hundred and one names in al- Jazūlī are taken from a variety of sources.

Some are from the Qur’ān such as *Abdullah* (servant of God) and then *Tāha* and *Yāsīn* that come from the beginnings of Suras 20 ad 36. (Schimmel 1985, 108) Others are descriptions of the Prophet and his mission such as *Rasūl* (LNS 3 MS) Through this textual reading, one begins to think about the Prophet Muhammad in a linguistic sense. The framework and structure of the Prophet’s names allows the reader to experience the next section’s



Figure 3

visuality: the depiction of the Prophet’s tomb and mosque. The heading reads: “This is the description of the Blessed Garden” and that the Prophet is buried in with his companions Abu Bakr and Umar. (Witkam 2001)

From this limited introduction to the text of *Dalā’il al-khayirāt*, one understands that through constant *dhikr* (remembering and recollecting) the presence of the Prophet is explicitly evoked. Through Professor J.J. Witkam’s research, one can get a taste of the complexity of the images found in a variety of *Dalā’il al-khayirāt* manuscripts that range from printed to hand-written manuscript that come from a diversity of geographic backgrounds.

Figure 1: al-Jazūlī, Muhammad. *Dalā’il al-khayirāt*, LNS 3 MS, Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah. Kuwait. Folio 23b. (Photo: by author Yasmine Al-Saleh)

Figure 2: al-Jazūlī, Muhammad. *Dalā’il al-khayirāt*, LNS 3 MS, Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah. Kuwait. 24a. (Photo: by author Yasmine Al-Saleh)

Figure 3: al-Jazūlī Muhammad. *Dalā’il al-khayirāt*, LNS 3 MS, Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah. Kuwait. Folio 1b. (Photo: by author Yasmine Al-Saleh)

About the journal





Hadeeth ad-Dar is a publication of the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah. Every year, the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah organises a series of lectures known as the *Cultural Season*. *Hadeeth ad-Dar* was created to share these lectures with academic and cultural institutions and Friends of the Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah around the world. Cultural Season 15 will get underway in October 2009 and, as with previous years, will present scholars in a wide variety of fields related to arts and culture in the Islamic world.

The Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (DAI) is a government cultural organisation based on a Kuwaiti private art collection. Since its inception in 1983, DAI has grown from a single focus organisation created to manage the loan of the prestigious al-Sabah Collection of art from the Islamic world to the State of Kuwait to become an internationally recognised cultural organisation.

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LNS577 C, LNS 848 C, LNS 531 C
(from left to right)
Bath Scrapers, Frit body, moulded
Two with turquoise glaze
Eastern Iranian world;
12th – 13th century
Largest: h. 4.7 cm, l. 8.4 cm, w. 4.5 cm