Guest Editors' Preface

Few texts are more ubiquitous in manuscript collections and libraries throughout the Sunni world than Muḥammad b. Sulaymān al-Jazūlī's (d. 870/1465) *Dalā'il al-khayrāt wa-shawāriq al-anwār fī dhikr al-ṣalāt 'alā al-Nabī al-mukhtār* (Proofs of Good Deeds and Brilliant Burst of Light in the Remembrance of Blessings on the Chosen Prophet). The exact date of the work is unclear; however, studies have shown that al-Jazūlī started compiling the *Dalā'il* and recruiting disciples either in the 1430s or, more likely, in the 1450s.¹ To this end, al-Jazūlī drew on renowned *ḥadīth* collections and devotional texts and prayers (*ṣalawāt*).² Over the following centuries, illustrations of the *Rawḍat al-Mubārak* (Blessed Garden) and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina, for which the work is known, were added to manuscript copies of the *Dalā'il*.³ These illustrations have become the most visible element of the work in scholarly and popular publications alike.

Despite its ubiquity and popularity, the history of the *Dalā'il*, its manuscript and print productions, its transregional circulation, and its diverse compositions have not been extensively studied and are not well understood.⁴ This state

- 1 Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Power and Authority in Moroccan Sufism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 173–177.
- 2 Hiba Abid, "Un concurrent du Coran en Occident musulman du x^e/xvi^e à l'aube du xii^e/xviii^e siècle: les *Dalā'il al khayrāt* d'al Jazūlī," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 19/3 (2017): 49; and Cornell, *Realm of the Saint*, 212.
- 3 Jan Just Witkam, "The Battle of Images: Mecca vs. Medina in the Iconography of the Manuscripts of al-Jazūlī's *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt*," in *Theoretical Approaches to the Transmission and Edition of Oriental Manuscripts: Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Istanbul March 28–30, 2001*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer and Manfred Kropp (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2007), 67–82, 295–300; and Sabiha Göloğlu, "Depicting the Holy: Representations of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem in the Late Ottoman Empire" (PhD diss., Koç University, 2018).
- 4 For a handful of studies on the *Dalā'il*, see Jan Just Witkam, *Vroomheid en activism in een islamitisch gebedenboek: de geschiedenis van de Dalā'il al-Khayrāt van al-Ġazūlī* (Leiden: Legatum Warnerianum, Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden, 2002); Farouk Yahya, "A *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt* Manuscript in the Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (MSS 1273)" (M.A. thesis, University of London, 2006); Heba Nayel Barakat, Amira Salleh, and Nurul Iman Rusli, *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt: Prayer Manuscripts from the 16th to 19th Centuries* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Art Museum Malaysia, 2016); Frederike-Wiebke Daub, *Formen und Funktionen des Layouts in arabischen Manuskripten anhand von Abschriften religiöser Texte: al-Būṣūrīs Burda, al-Ġazūlīs Dalā'il und die Šifā' von Qāḍī Iyāḍ* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2016); and Hiba Abid,

of affairs is not unique to al-Jazūlī's work: devotional texts—such as Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Būṣīrī's (d. ca. 695/1296) *Qaṣīdat al-burda* (Mantle Ode)—have been by and large overlooked by scholars of the Islamic tradition.⁵ The lack of academic interest in devotional texts is particularly intriguing when seen in the context of their prevalence in both past and contemporary Muslim societies.

The history of the *Dalā'il* is still somewhat patchy. The text seems to have circulated primarily in the Maghrib and, possibly, West Africa before it started gaining popularity in the Islamic East; it was already known in Ottoman lands in the mid-seventeenth century.⁶ Recently, Ahmet Snobar was able to attribute the transmission of the *Dalā'il* to the East to a scholar named 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn al-Sayyid Aḥmad al-Maknāsī (d. 1086/1675), who migrated from his hometown, Meknes, to the Ottoman lands.⁷ Nevertheless, it is difficult to point out other individuals or groups that transmitted the *Dalā'il*. In any case, by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* was copied and recited from West Africa through the Ottoman lands, South Asia, Western China, and Central Asia to Southeast Asia.

Devotional texts, as this double issue would like to suggest, merit attention precisely because of their ubiquity. Their spread across large territories and over long time periods offers a unique vantage point to explore often understudied connections between different parts of the Muslim (in our case, Sunni) world, from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from South Africa to Western China. They reveal an intriguing interplay between, to follow Sheldon Pollock, local and vernacular idioms and cosmopolitan ones.⁸ Devotional texts were not only copied for and read by rulers; people of all strata of society,

"Les *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt* d'al-Jazūlī (m. 869/1465): la tradition manuscrite d'un livre de prières soufi au Maghreb du x^e/xvi^e au xiii^e/xix^e siècles" (PhD diss., Ecole doctorale de l'Ecole pratique des hautes études, Paris, 2017).

5 On mantle odes, see Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych, *The Mantle Odes: Arabic Praise Poems to the Prophet Muhammad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

6 Guy Burak, "Collating the *Signs of Benevolent Deeds*: Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Fāsī's Commentary on Muḥammad al-Jazūlī's *Dalā'il al-Khayrāt* and Its Ottoman Readers," *Philological Encounters* 4/3–4 (2019): 137.

7 Aḥmad Ṣnūbar, "Dirāsa fī taṭawwur riwāyat al-mashāriqa li-kitāb *Dalā'il al-khayrāt* 'an al-maghāribā, wuṣūlan ilā maṣāb Shaykh al-Dalā'il fī al-Ḥaramayn," in Aḥmad bin Sulaymān al-Simlālī al-Jazūlī: *Rā'id al-tajdīd al-ṣūfī fī Maghrib al-qarn al-tāsī' al-hijrī*, ed. Aḥmad Bīlqāḍī (Agadir: Jāmi'at Ibn Zahd, Kulīyat al-Ādāb wa-al-'Ulūm al-Insāniyya, 2013), 490–497. On al-Maknāsī, see Muḥammad Amīn b. Faḍl Allāh al-Muḥibbī, *Khulāṣat al-athar fī a'yān al-qarn al-hādī 'ashar*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Ismā'īl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2006), 2:337–339.

8 Sheldon I. Pollock, "Cosmopolitanism and Vernacular in History," *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (2000): 591–625.

including those considered “commoners” and those who were members of the “learned” classes, interacted with and read these texts. Therefore, these works cast light on devotional, textual, and visual sensibilities on multiple registers across Muslim societies.

The study of the *Dalā'il* corpora across registers, periods, and vast geographies, we hope, will also allow for a study of the Islamic world that moves beyond dichotomies such as “core versus peripheries” and “elite versus commoners.” The *Dalā'il* corpora reveal numerous temporal and geographical focal points: the Prophet, Mecca and Medina, authoritative transmitters and manuscripts, and al-Jazūli himself, who spent most of his life in the Maghreb. Due to the innumerable *Dalā'il* copies, the corpus also offers diverse study corpora to assess processes of manuscript production, be they in court workshops or in smaller non-courtly ones and Sufi lodges (tekke).

The majority of the papers in this double issue were presented in a workshop held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (May 17–18, 2019), co-organized by The Met and The New York University Libraries.⁹ The workshop was made possible by The Barakat Trust, New York University Center for the Humanities, New York University Libraries, and The Met's Department of Islamic Art. The Faculty of Historical and Cultural Studies at the University of Vienna provided funds for the publication. We are extremely grateful to these supporting institutions and various individuals involved, including Brill, the *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts*, and Jan Just Witkam for realizing the publication of this special issue on the *Dalā'il*.

The essays in this double issue approach various *Dalā'il* traditions from North Africa, the Ottoman lands, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia in terms of codicology, layout, visual idioms, production, recitation, and the textual apparatus. By bringing together scholars familiar with different manuscript traditions, we sought to demonstrate how the idioms and conventions employed in the *Dalā'il* corpora have changed in conversation with already-existing local manuscript traditions and in relation to manuscript traditions elsewhere. Admittedly, many aspects still remain to be addressed. These include the particularities of the *Dalā'il* text, commentarial traditions on the *Dalā'il*,¹⁰ the

9 For the full program, see <https://www.metmuseum.org/-/media/files/about-the-met/curatorial-departments/islamic/research/dalail-program-final.pdf?la=en&hash=B31BC8AAD82AE188705FBFB3E35BB633>. Fatima Quraishi and Sana Mirza, whose works are not present in this volume, contributed to the workshop with their papers on *Dalā'il* manuscripts from Sindh and Ethiopia.

10 Guy Burak, “Prayers, Commentaries, and the Edification of the Ottoman Suppliant,” in *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450–c. 1750*, eds. Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 232–252; and Burak, “Collating the Signs of Benevolent Deeds,” 135–157.

particularities of its reception in different parts of the (Sunni) Muslim world, the impact of the transition from manuscripts to print on the *Dalā'il* corpus, practices of recitation, the text's transmission channels (be they individuals, Sufi orders, or institutions), and the relationship between the *Dalā'il* and other devotional texts. Moreover, numerous manuscript traditions, such as the various West and East African, South Asian, and Western Chinese ones, are not represented in this issue. We hope that the papers in this volume will inspire scholars to further explore the history of the *Dalā'il* in these traditions and the connections among them.

The main goal of this collection of studies is to bring scholars working on different parts of the *Dalā'il*'s story into conversation. We believe that, since the study of devotional texts (the *Dalā'il* included) often requires multiple languages and familiarity with numerous local traditions, it is almost impossible for a single scholar to narrate a full history of any text's circulation and reception. Each of the contributions in this volume illuminates specific corpora or particular connections. Taken together, the essays in this issue are important strides towards a more comprehensive study about the history of al-Jazūlī's work. More broadly, we hope that this collection of essays will serve as a model and inspire future research on devotional texts across the Islamic world.

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