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This paper presents a study of oriental manuscripts. The study focuses on the life of famous scholar al-Zamaḥṣārī and one of his most important writings, Atwāq al-ḍahab, or Golden Necklaces of Exhortations and Sermons.

Al-Zamaḥṣārī’s work is analyzed from the point of view of style and grammar. Three different copies of the manuscript are compared, two of which come from the collection of the Oriental Department of Gorky Research Library of St Petersburg State University and one from the collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Refs 8. Figs 12.

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has experienced a steady increase filling private and public collections. The spread of writings prompts their proper storage and systematization.

Russian scholars had already studied al-Zamaḥṣarī’s writings, e.g. B. Z. Khalidov, Al-Zamahṣarī (zhizn i tvorchestvo) (Al-Zamahṣarī: His Life and Writings) and B. Z. Khalidov & A. B. Khalidov, Biografía al-Zamahṣarī, sostavlennaya ego sovremennikom al-’Andarasbānī (Al-Zamahṣarī’s Biography Compiled by His Contemporary al-’Andarasbānī). This study will go beyond the famous scholar’s personality and also focus on one of his most important pieces, Atwāq al-dḥahab, or Golden Necklaces of Exhortations and Sermons.

Maḥmūd al-Zamaḥṣarī was the author of seventy works. He was born in 467 AH/1075 AD, and died in 538 AH/1144 AD. The future scholar was born in a small place called Zamakhshar in Khwarezmia, which is now part of Turkmenistan, and grew in a poor but educated and religious family [1, p. 210]. ‘Abd al-Tawāb ‘Auḍ mentions these facts attributing them to al-Zamaḥṣarī himself [2, p. 10]. Adventurer and scholar al-Muqaddasi noted that Khwarezm attracted a lot of scholars and literary figures of the time [3, p. 284–285]. Initially, al-Zamaḥṣarī’s father taught him. Later, he went to school and traveled a lot when he grew up to increase his knowledge. Yaqūt al-Ḥamawi mentions ‘Abū al-Ḥasan al-Muẓaffar al-Nisābūrī and ’Ibn Ğarīr al-Ḍabbi — among al-Zamaḥṣarī’s teachers. The latter not only taught al-Zamaḥṣarī but supported him financially. Later, al-Zamaḥṣarī had a lot of disciples too [4, p. 1142].

Al-Zamaḥṣarī traveled to Bukhara, Khorasan, Isfahan, Baghdad, and Mecca, where he met outstanding people of his time. Some researchers noted that al-Zamaḥṣarī continued to study all his life. His good handwriting helped the young scholar to make his living.

Al-Zamaḥṣarī was married but had no children. He divorced his wife to dedicate his life to scholarly activities. ‘Abd al-Tawāb ‘Auḍ says that the failure in his personal life made a great impact on his beliefs [2, p. 31]. He even made this the subject of some of his beits:

tazawaḍḏu lam ‘a’lam wa ‘aḥṭa’tu lam ‘uṣib
fa yā layṭani qad muttu qabla al-tazwiḡ

I married, not knowing what marriage was.
I wish I could have died before the wedding!

The scholar had two nicknames: Faḥr Ḥwārizm the Pride of Khwarezm and Ğār Allāh God’s Neighbor. Arab scholar and writer al-Ziriklī suggested that the latter name was given to al-Zamaḥṣarī, because he lived in Mecca for quite some time [5, p. 76-77].

Al-Zamaḥṣarī had a physical impairment that he received as a child, he had lost his foot and used a wooden artificial leg. Several explanations are know of this impairment. Some historians believe that he lost one of his feet to a frostbite. B. Z. Khalidov points out that al-Zamaḥṣarī’s disability was the result of him falling off the roof and breaking his leg, which had to be amputated [6, p. 548]. However, Yaqūt al-Ḥamawi referred to an explanation allegedly given to him by al-Zamaḥṣarī himself that stated that the disability was his mother’s curse who saw al-Zamaḥṣarī’s cruel treatment of the bird he had caught and wished that he would suffer the same. According to contemporaries al-Zamaḥṣarī always carried a document as legal proof of his impairment [4, p. 2688].

As a young man, al-Zamaḥṣarī wrote several works that brought him fame. He sent his scholarly pieces and praising poems to various rulers including high-ranked officials with the court of Seljuq Sultans, to receive remuneration and a government position.
While he received money for his writings he never reached a high position protesting that the road to power was open to the ignorant but closed to scholars.

Al-Zamaḥšārī was the author of geographic and Arabic-Persian dictionaries, a collection of maqamas, a collection of proverbs and sayings as well as numerous theological writings. Al-Zamaḥšārī’s Qur’an commentary, al-Kaṣṣāf fī al-Qurān, which he completed in 1134, is the most debated of this works. Al-Zamaḥšārī followed the Hanafi Madhab and subscribed to the Mūtazilite theological doctrine. This work fully reflected his ideas. Despite the fact that al-Kaṣṣāf has often been called heretical, it remains one of the most serious scholarly works of this kind as the first example of scholarly textual analysis.

Ibn Ḥallikān and al-Suyūṭī noted Al-Zamaḥšārī’s breadth of knowledge and talked of him as a specialist in many fields.

In 1130, the scholar went on his second hajj to Mecca despite his physical disability going around Kaaba one hundred times [7, c. 66]. According to contemporaries, after each circle al-Zamaḥšārī writes a chapter or, as he called them, maqāla (article) of his piece Aṯwāq al-ḏahab. The work was written in the traditional Arab style of sağ (rhymed prose). We should remind our readers of al-Zamaḥšārī’s mastery of Arabic. His works are characterized by high style, imagery and rich language. Aṯwāq al-ḏahab is written in the style not accessible to every scholar. This is another evidence of his command of the language. In Aṯwāq al-ḏahab, the author describes positive and negative aspects of society as a whole and of some of its members.

Al-Zamaḥšārī died in his home town of Khwarezm and was buried in Gurganj. Famous traveler Ibn Baṭṭūṭa wrote that he had visited that place and personally seen the scholar’s grave.

How important was Al-Zamaḥšārī’s Aṯwāq al-ḏahab is manifested by the fact that a number of pieces have since come out that imitated this work. Al-‘Iṣḥahānī wrote a piece with the similar name of Aṯbāq al-ḏahab (Golden Dishes). The piece is written in a similar style on a similar subject. It also describes public morals but is longer than Al-Zamaḥšārī’s work. Despite the fact that both writings were complete pieces, they complement each other in some parts [7, p. 67]. Famous Egyptian poet ʿAḥmad Šawqī wrote a piece in 1951 that had reference points with Al-Zamaḥšārī’s work both in content and in form called Aswāq al-ḏahab (Golden Markets).

We studied three copies of Al-Zamaḥšārī’s Aṯwāq al-ḏahab, or Golden Necklaces of Exhortations and Sermons. No. 834 and No. 797 from the Oriental Department of Gorky Research Library of St Petersburg State University and A-584 from the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St Petersburg.

First of all, it must be noted that the title of Aṯwāq al-ḏahab was not given by the piece’s author. Al-Zamaḥšārī wrote two pieces with similar titles: the collection of maqam, Kitāb al-naṣāʾiʿ al-ḵibār (The Book of Important Exhortations) and Kitāb al-naṣāʾiʿ al-ṣīgār (The Book of Small Exhortations). Later, the latter became known as Aṯwāq al-ḏahab.

Both copies from the collection of the Oriental Department of St Petersburg State University belonged to Sheik al-Ṭanṭawi’s collection [8, c. 28]. There is an inscription on page 2 in No. 834 made by the copy owner:

ṭāla’ haqihī al-risāla mālikuhā Muḥammad al-Ṭanṭawi wa huwa fi bitrībīrī fi yaum al-ṣabt 3 ḡumādī aḥar sanat 1256

Its owner Muhammad al-Ṭanṭawi read this treatise, St Petersburg, Saturday, 3 Jumādī, end of the year 1256.
Copy No.834 (sheets 1–13) is in a convolute; it is in good condition. The copy size is 22 cm × 14 cm. The paper is European, with water marks. The text is written in black ink, with headings highlighted in red ink. There comments on the margins in Arabic. The text includes carry-over words and an introductory basmalah. Neither the date nor the copyist’s name are mentioned. Part of the text is vowelled.

The size of Copy No.797 is 21,5 cm × 15 cm. The copy is in good condition despite the yellowed paper. The paper is European, with water marks. The text is written in black ink, with headings highlighted in red ink. The text is inside a box drawn in red ink. Some sheets have comments in Arabic; the text has carry-over words. Neither the date nor the copyist’s name are mentioned. The text is fully vowelled.

Copy A-584 from the collection of the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St Petersburg has the following size: 17,5 cm × 13 cm. The cover is made of cardboard. The text is written in black ink, with headings highlighted in red ink. There are grammatical and lexical comments in Arabic with corrected mistakes on the margins. The text of the piece starts with the back side of sheet 2. Articles, or chapters, are numbered till sheet 5. The text is fully vowelled.
The three copies start with the author's words:

allāhumma 'innī 'aḥmaduka 'alā mā 'anzalta 'alayya min ni'matika wa 'alā mā 'azalta 'annī min ni'qmatika 'alā 'annī lam 'akun ahlan li-al-'ūlā kunt bi-al-ţāniya 'awlā

God, I thank you for giving (me) of Your mercies; (for) removing Your wrath from me, although I did not deserve the former (i.e., Your mercy) but deserved the latter (i.e. Your wrath).

The word 'anzalta is replaced by its synonym 'azlalta in Copy A-584. Meanwhile the text is rhymed, e.g.: 'anzalta — 'azlta; min ni'matika — min niqmatika.

The back of sheet 2 says:

'innaka mawlâ kull ḥayr wa muwlîh wa ḥāfîd kull šay' wa mu'lih

You have all goodness, You give goodness. You elevate and bring down.
Copy No. 797 has a colophon on sheet 1, which is generally found at the end of a piece. There is a verse by scholar ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Marḥūmī in the colophon:

maqālāt Maḥmūd Ḵakīm niẓāmuhā
lahā maṯtaq ‘aḏb wa ma’nā bādī’
‘iḏā ‘aql ‘awmat ‘ilayh bi-ṭārīḥā
tayammamhā wa huwa al-samī’ al-muṭṣī’
wa laḥā dāhil ẓähīd li-muṣṭiqīhā
bi-maḏḥab ḳaqq lā ‘iṭāl ẓanī’
‘afā allāḥ ‘an ḡāk al-ḡanāb fa-kam ‘atā

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1 Died in 1712.
The rhymes in Mahmud’s articles are wonderful,
They have sweet language and marvelous meaning.
If these articles are given to a reasonable man,
He immediately washes himself with sand. He is obedient and humble.²
These articles have obvious proof that the man, who has written them,

² It means “obedient to and humble before” God, since some chapters have religious content.
Adheres to the right religious doctrine,
Not to the horrible Mu’tazilite teaching.
May God forgive this man. How many times God has protected him!
He is the best protector in the world!
He3 is given countless blessings.

3 Reference to al-Zamañšari
We can derive from the above fragment that despite many sources some scholars, including al-Marḫūmī, believed that al-Zamaḫšāri was not Muʿázilīte.
The colophon on sheet 21 of Copy No.797 reads:

*tamma Aṭtwāq al-dahab li-qudwat al-‘fādil fī al-‘aḡm wa al-‘arab Ḥabī al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Zamaṭhayb Allāh maṭwāh

The piece Golden Necklaces is completed to become an example for worthy (people) from Arabs and non-Arabs. (Written by) Ḥabī al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn Ṣalāḥ al-Zamaṭhayb. May he rest in peace!
Praise God, the Lord of the Worlds! May God bless the best of prophets and (God’s) messengers, angels close to Muhammad — the chosen prophet — his noble family and kin. He (God) blessed him immensely.
The text of the last sheet number 16 of Copy A-584 is different from that of the other copies:

tammat al-risālat al-mawsūmat bi-Ąṭwāq al-ʤahab li-al-Zamaḥšārī

Al-Zamaḥšāri’s treatise entitled Golden Necklaces is completed

Besides, there is the copy owner’s seal on sheet 2, the back of sheet 7, the back of sheet 12, and the last sheet 16 that says:
It is worth noting that al-Zamaḥšari’s work is not free from contradictions or statements we could hardly agree with.

Article number 23 in Copy No.797 has the following text on the back of sheet 7:

\[ 'iḥḍar min al-ḥusūf wa al-kusūf wa lā tastami' li-qawl al-faylasūf lā ya'lū 'an yataḥammāq wa 'an yağlū wa yata'ammaq \]

Fear a sun or moon eclipse and do not listen to the philosopher’s speeches, for he behaves like a fool.

In other instance, al-Zamaḥšari urges to refrain from treatment and totally rely on God instead who can cure any ailment. For example, the author of the treatise writes in article 48 on the back of sheet 13 and on sheet 14:

\[ ṭiqatuk bi-qawl al-ṭabīb marāḍ 'ašadd min marādk \]

Your belief in the doctor is more serious an illness than you own illness...

And later:

\[ fa-'akṭaruhum 'immā 'abd al-ṭabī’at wa 'immā 'ābid al-ṣalīb fī al-bay’at \]

Most doctors are slaves of nature or Christians that worship the cross in the church.

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4 Then whoever changes the bequest after hearing it, the sin shall be on those who make the change. Truly, Allah is All-Hearer, All-Knower. (Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow), ayat 181).
At the same time, al-Zamaḥšārī calls on people to act in a thought-through and weighted way, e.g. in article 21:

\[ \text{halumma 'ilā istiṣārat 'aqlík fa-tabaṣṣar wa 'ilā istiṣārat ḍiḥník fa-tadabbar} \]

*Use your reason, think, act consciously...*

Fig. 12. Fragment of Copy No. 797

Al-Zamaḥšārī's *Aṭwāq al-ḏahab* continues to interest scholars not only from the point of view of content but as a brilliant literary piece. This gives us reason to state that al-Zamaḥšārī is rightly considered to be a talented and unique scholar of his time.
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