



BEGGING I. IN THE EARLY CENTURIES OF THE ISLAMIC PERIOD

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In early Islam, begging must have arisen in the first place from sheer economic necessity, but its continuance was soon buttressed by religious motives and, in particular, by the Sufi stress on *tawakkol* and *toklān*, utter dependence on God, which might mean resorting to mendicancy in order to survive. The early mystics state that begging is allowable from three motives: (1) for the sake of mental liberty, giving freedom from anxiety about one's daily sustenance; (2) for the soul's discipline, since begging is humiliating and shows a man's worthlessness in other people's eyes, hence is an antidote to self-pride; and (3) because begging from men is an act of reverence for God, Who regards all men as His agents, and a servant who petitions an agent is humbler than one who makes petition to God Himself (E. Schroeder, *Muhammad's People. A Tale by Anthology*, Portland, Maine, 1955, p. 727, citing Hojvīrī, Neffārī, and Kalābādī). From the standpoint of the donor, giving money was regarded as above all good for the donor's soul rather than as a social relief measure for the recipient (see further "Charity, Almsgiving" in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* III, pp. 382ff., and darvjš).

We have little information in the sources specifically relating to begging in the



Iranian lands, but it should be noted that one of the standard words in early Arabic usage for “beggar” is *mokaddī* (abstracts: *takdīa*, *kodya* “begging”), found in *adab* literature (e.g., in Jāḥeẓ, with his *Ketāb ḥīal al-mokaddīn*, cf. Ch. Pellat, “Nouvel essai d’inventaire de l’œuvre ḡaḥīẓienne,” *Arabica* 31, 1984, p. 149, no. 148) from the 3rd/9th century onwards, and this is clearly derived from Persian *gadā* “beggar, begging” (see C. E. Bosworth, *The Mediaeval Islamic Underworld. The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature*, Leiden, 1976, I, p. 40, II, p. 244; Pellat, “Mukaddī,” in *Et*); while the post-classical Arabic verb *darwaza* “to wander round, beg,” whence *motadarwez* “beggar,” goes back either to Persian *darvāza* “gate” with the idea of going round begging from door to door (see Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, I, p. 438) or to Persian *daryūza* from (Parthian) *yūz-* “to seek” (Persian *jūy-*). Moreover, among the Banū Sāsān, the generic name for the beggars, rogues, quacks, tricksters, etc., who formed the lowest levels of society, we find certain types of beggar denoted by Persian names, e.g., the *felawr* or self-mutilator (Persian *pīla-var* “peddler of drugs”) and possibly the *kāḡānī* or feigned epileptic or madman (perhaps from Persian *kāḡ(a)*, defined by Asadī Ṭūsī as “a person with an afflicted body”); see Bosworth, I, pp. 36, 38, II, p. 220). Certainly, the beggars who roved all over the Islamic lands must have included in their ranks many Iranians; the Kurds, in particular, were notorious for their rapaciousness and violence in extracting money (see further [banū sāsān](#)).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text. For a derivation of Ar. *kodya/takaddī* from Pers. *gadā*, see W. Eilers, “Iranisches Lehngut im Arabischen,” in *Actas dos estudos árabes e islâmicos*, Coïmbra and Lisbon, 1968 (Leiden, 1971), pp. 581-656; idem, “Kult und Sprachform in Iran,” *ZDMG*, Suppl. 2, 1974, pp. 476f., 494.