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DAḴĪL

DAḴĪL "interceder," a piece of rag or cord or a lock fastened (*daḵīl bastan*) on a sacred place or object, for example, the railing around a saint's tomb or grave or a public fountain (*saqqā-ḵāna*), the branch of a tree considered sacred, or another plant (e.g., Šahrī, V, p. 113, VI, p. 10; Šakūrzāda, pp. 91-92; cf. Dehḵodā, s.v.), in order to obtain a desired benefit. The practice has always been particularly popular among women.

The supplicant takes a piece of cord or cloth from her personal effects (the *čārqad* "head scarf" being preferred) and ties it to the sacred object, while making a wish and taking an oath (*naḏr kardan*) to give alms in cash or kind or to perform some other meritorious act upon the granting of her wish. The *daḵīl* is left in place until the wish is granted, at which time the supplicant unties it and fulfills her oath. Some believe that the *daḵīl* will untie itself spontaneously upon the granting of the wish (Massé, *Croyances*, p. 219; Šahrī, V, p. 113); Sir Percy Sykes' account (*History of Persia* II, p. 184), in which he connects this practice with animal sacrifice, is erroneous, even ludicrous.

*Daḵīl*s may be new or old. They are usually narrow and colorful, but it is not unusual to see simple pieces of white cloth or modest pieces of string used for this purpose. At holy sites strips of cloth are tied and locks are fastened to the railing surrounding the tomb (*zarīḥ*). Sometimes the supplicant may throw money or a personal treasure inside the fence; these offerings are later collected by the attendants of the tomb to be used in charitable enterprises, as well as to maintain the tomb and its staff. At the tomb of Imam ʿAlī al-Reżā in Mašhad, in addition to the *zarīḥ*, there are two other railings, one of steel and

another of silver, to which *daḵīl*s are also fastened. Younger Muslim intellectuals often find this practice abhorrent; at the tomb of Zaynab near Damascus the author has seen a group untying the *daḵīl*s.

A more extreme practice is found among those suffering from serious diseases or deformities. The supplicant ties himself or herself to the sacred object by means of a rope or a chain (*ḵod-rā daḵīl bastan*). Thus connected to the sacred space, the supplicant sits for some time in expectation of a cure.

In Persia sacred trees are among the favored sites for tying *daḵīl*s. The reverence for such trees, known by such names as *deraḵt-e naẓar-karda*, *deraḵt-e morād*, and *deraḵt-e fāżel*, is well attested in the classical sources (e.g., Baḷʿamī, ed. Bahār, p. 995; Saʿdī, p. 151; see deraḵt). Aside from those believed to be of direct heavenly origin (cf. de Gubernatis, II, p. 117; Porteous, p. 258), such trees owe their sacred character to a variety of causes connected with holy personages, who may have planted them, rested in their shade, partaken of their fruits, or otherwise blessed them. There is hardly a town or village in Persia that does not boast one or more such sacred trees. The fruit of these trees may be eaten and their leaves taken for medicinal or other purposes, but no one may break off a branch (Massé, *Croyances*, pp. 219-20, 222; Francklin, I, p. 74; Ouseley, I, p. 313, III, p. 435; Hedāyat, p. 169; Balāḡī, II, pp. 178-79; Donaldson, p. 142). Often small mirrors are fastened to these trees and candles lighted. Sometimes, especially if a tree is very large or old, so that the branches are out of reach, nails are driven into its trunk and *daḵīl*s fastened to them, rather than to the tree itself (Massé, *Croyances*, pp. 219-20, 222). Often trees that have grown in graveyards or that stand alone in an otherwise barren landscape are considered sacred, and legends about a saint's special relation to a given tree frequently reinforce its sanctity.

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