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Categories of Beggars
according to Al-Bayhaqī's *Kitāb al-mahāsīn wa-āl-masāwī*

The new Abbasid reality, growing refinement of the culture of life make literature, in the beginning mainly poetry, propagate not only a new style, but also new subjects advocating an easy life-style, full of entertainment and pleasure. As Mez puts it, literature has discovered the present again, enjoying colourful, though not too much sublime existence in which it was set. A nation, the illiterate city dwellers in the first place, appear proudly in the Arabic literature both to render everything they perceive in verses sounding their rhythms and to use prose to express everything what is new.¹ In fact, the prose developed in the first centuries of the Abbasid reign surpasses eventually poetry in its popularity and reaches outstanding artistic quality in short time. Just in the 9th century the Arabic prose comprised subjects connected with the poor. A lot of writers took a liking for subject matter connected with the social fringe, the scarce number of survived works testifies authors' unrefined interests.² They focused on vagabonds and beggars' way of living before the Banū Sāsān³ term spread in the

¹ Mez 1922, p. 221.

² Chronologically by the Al-Bayhaqī times, the following writers were interested in literature on rogues, beggars and vagabonds: Al-Ġāhiz (d. 868-9), Aṣ-Ṣaymarī (d. 888-9) and probably Abū 'Aqqāl (?); with reference to works of particular authors see: Pellat ("Arabica" 1956), pp. 147-180; Ibn an-Nadīm 1348H., pp. 216-217; laconic information about the *Kitāb fī ahlāq al-'awwām*—the work of a certain Abū 'Aqqāl al-Kātib which did not survive till our times and informed about customs of the masses, see Al-Mas'ūdī 1863-93, vol. V, pp. 88-89.

³ The term Banū Sāsān appears in Abū Dulaf's *Qaṣīda sāsāniyya*, verse 10 (in: Bosworth 1976, p. 191); Ibn Dāniyāl's (1992) *'Aḡīb wa-Ġarīb*, p. 57, Al-Ġawbarī's (1302 h.) *Kitāb al-muḥtār fī kaṣf al-asrār wa-hatk al-astār*, p. 44, Ṣafī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Qaṣīda sāsāniyya*, verse 4 (in: Bosworth, op.cit., p. 295); the majority of the *maqāmas* is inspired by the Sasanian folklore and main heroes of the *maqāmas* by Al-Hamaḍānī and Al-Ḥarīrī—Abū 'āl-Faḥ al-Iskandarī and Abū

society and literature. It designated a vivid group of clever and not seldom eloquent frauds, who deceived either the rich or the poor. They formed a multi-ethnic group roaming about the world continuously and spoke their own jargon. Among typical beggars there were quacks, astrologers, alchemists, jugglers, trainers of animals, wandering preachers, relics traders, false prophets, hoard seekers, charlatans, black marketers, etc.

Many religious systems, particularly Christianity, proclaimed and affirmed poverty.⁴ Charity based on the high-minded religious attitudes was to narrow a gulf between the rich and the poor. Nevertheless, on the social ground a beggar and a vagabond was treated as an individual causing disturbance, received with feelings of suspicion and hostility. Their appearance—a negative qualifier—triggered ambiguous reactions: curiosity about suffering and pain, often repugnance in the first place, then compassion. Contrary to the medieval and Christian Europe, beggars were socially accepted in the Islamic world. A Muslim was aware of evanescence of the success and material wealth. Some theologians denied the existence of the natural course of life and that God dispenses justice.⁵ Hence a Muslim was prepared for sudden changes both of the political power and their own fate. He willingly gave alms having in mind the possible vicissitude. On the other hand, the absence of any ethical system

Zayd as-Sarūḡī bring to mind Sāsān's clever 'son', the Banū Sāsān term appears instead in: *Šarḥ maqāmāt Badī' az-Zamān al-Hamaḍānī* 1926, *Al-Maqāma as-sāsāniyya*, p. 106, Al-Ḥarīrī 1981, *Al-Maqāma at-tāsi'a wa-āl-arba'ūn—as-sāsāniyya*, pp. 407 ff.

⁴ Giving alms was also wrapped by a religious aura in the Muslim society. There were two kinds of alms; the *zakāt* and the *ṣadaqa*. The former, the obligatory alms that 'purifies' a worshipper by supporting others and is a sort of a tax imposed on each grown-up Muslim to maintain the poor and orphans. The latter is the voluntary one. Its amount, manner and time of giving have not been determined by the Muslim law as in the previous case, the *zakāt*. There is no distinction in the *Qur'ān* between these terms, see the *Qur'ān*, II, 261-2, 264-5, 267, 270-4; IX, 60; LI, 15-19.

⁵ Al-Aš'arī proclaimed a theory of atomistic universe. An atom was to be the moment of existence and not an element of matter as the Greek put it. Such atomization makes the world to be solely a potentiality or appearances. There are no laws of nature, the cause and effect principle does not exist. What is more, if there is no natural course of spiritual, physical and moral development but a series of isolated moments, there is no responsibility, duty and law. Everything that exists in the world is possible, not necessary. However, the potentiality needs some necessary principle. This principle, according to Asharites, was to be God who creates matter and time at every moment and supports all existence. The absolute God's will, resistant to laws though, is the only cause for atoms to come to existence and to be annihilated.

that would emphasize hard work and fighting idleness facilitated the emergence of groups that lived by begging. When the sanctioned forms of beggary became vagrancy and living off others, it is difficult to track down in the history of the Muslim society.

The work *Kitāb al-maḥāsīn wa-āḥl-masāwī* (The Book of Virtues and Vices) by Ibrāhīm Ibn Muḥammad al-Bayhaqī illustrates the existence of widely developed beggary⁶ in the 10th century. There is scarce information about the author's life. The work is supposed to have been written during the reign of caliph Al-Muqtadir (908-932). This assumption places Al-Bayhaqī at the turn of the 9th and the 10 century or in the first half of the 10th century. An extract of the *Kitāb al-maḥāsīn wa-āḥl-masāwī*, essential in this respect, tells the story of a ring with a seal owned by some Chinese general who took part in the Turkish khan's army invasion on Samarqand.⁷ The governor of those days, certain Ṣabīḥ Ibn Ismā'īl, defeated the Turkish army and the Chinese general was taken prisoner. Ṣabīḥ Ibn Ismā'īl sent the ring to Abū Muslim⁸ who sent it to Abū āl-'Abbās (750-754). As no one was able to estimate its real value the ring remained in the treasury till the Caliph's death. It experienced the vicissitudes of fate. Al-Bayhaqī describes precisely how the jewel changed hands of the subsequent caliphs. Al-Musta'in (862-866) was the first to have his name engraved on it. Other rulers followed him till it lost its value. Al-Bayhaqī closes his tale with the sentence that indicates the approximate time the author of the *Kitāb al-maḥāsīn wa-āḥl-masāwī* lived: Now it is owned by caliph Al-Muqtadir.⁹

⁶ Al-Ġāhiz 1900, quotes more conservative list of beggar categories at the end of the chapter *Ḥadīṯ Ḥālid Ibn Yazīd* in: *Kitāb al-buḥālā'*, pp. 47-61.

⁷ Samarqand, from the 6th century A.D. till the year 712, after having been conquered by the Arabs, was in power of the Turkish khaganate (551-744). At the end of the 7th century the Turks subjected China again, hence the presence of the Chinese general in the ranks of the Turkish Army. More on the Turkish khaganate and the seizure of Samarkand by the Arabs see Gafurov 1978, pp. 229-239, and pp. 323-341.

⁸ Abū Muslim—the Persian freedman of the unknown descent, one of the leading agents of the Abbasid revolution. He ruled the secret revolutionary movement in Khurasan, assembled a mighty army, brought about the revolt and overthrow of the Umayyad reign. Merv, the capital of Khurasan, surrendered in the year 749. On 30th October of the same year the official homage was paid to Abū āl-'Abbās as the first Abbasid caliph in the main mosque of Merv. Abū Muslim became the governor of Khurasan and ruled almost independently, was killed in 755 at the command of Al-Manṣūr (754-775), Abū āl-'Abbās brother and heir to the throne.

⁹ See Al-Bayhaqī 1902, p. 501, verse 18; p. 504, verse 8.

Al-Bayhaqī's work belongs to the *adab* literature and is divided into chapters presenting both positive and negative features of specific social groups, good and bad aspects of certain phenomena, events, and manners (f.e. Good sides of (telling) the truth, ~ keeping secret, ~ keeping silent, ~ cowardice; Good and bad sides of poetry, ~ proverbs, ~ sermons, ~ correspondence; Good and bad sides of teachers, ~ fools, ~ eunuchs, etc.). It contains a lot of historical information, quotations from the Arabic poetry of different periods, from the Umayyad times to the author's contemporary one.

Friedrich Schwally, once Associate Professor of Semitic languages at Giessen University, prepared publication of the work on the basis of the two existing manuscripts.¹⁰ Another work, attributed to Al-Ġāhiz, entitled the *Kitāb al-maḥāsin wa-āl-aḍḍād wa-āl-‘aḡā’ib wa-āl-ḡarā’ib* and containing extracts convergent with Al-Bayhaqī's¹¹ work, was of great help in the groundwork.

A chapter of the *Kitāb al-maḥāsin wa-āl-masāwī* entitled *Maḥāsin as-suwwāl* (Beggars' good sides) and its sub-chapter *Aṣṇāf al-mukkādīn wa-af‘āluhum* (Categories of beggars and their activities) is particularly interesting and helpful in research into the literary picture of this wide class of the society: the beggars-frauds. The second sub-chapter *Min nawādirihim* (Anthology of anecdotes [from beggars' life]) includes material in the form of funny stories from the life of this class, however, not very interesting in respect of the society.

Al-Bayhaqī grounded most likely the part bringing closer categories of beggars and their activities on the Al-Ġāhiz text included in the *Ḥadīṭ Ḥālīd Ibn Yazīd*, but his list of beggars is extended significantly. New characters appearing on the pages of the *Maḥāsin as-suwwāl* are: *makkī*, *saharī*, *šaḡawī*, *ḍarārīhī*, *ḥāḡūr*, *ḥāqānī*, *zūkaym al-muḡālaṭa*, *ākān*, *mufalfīl*, *zūkaym al-habasa*, *zūkaym al-marḥūmat al-makāfīf*, *muṭayyin*.¹² In the chapter *Maḥāsin as-suwwāl* Al-Bayhaqī tells the story of some aged

¹⁰ From the first one kept in the library of the Leiden University, incomplete, approx. 30 sheets are missing; the second one, later and complete, a front page included, comes from the library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in Calcutta.

¹¹ See Pellat, op. cit., p. 165; edited by Van Vloten in Leiden, 1898, entitled *Le livre des beautés et des antithèses*, translated by O. Rescher (Stuttgart-Istanbul 1922-1926).

¹² In both authors' works the following categories overlap: *kāḡānī*, *qarsī*, *muša‘ib*, *filawr*, *kāḡān*, *‘awwā’*, *iṣīl*, *mazīdī*, *musta‘riḍ*, while *m-ḥṭ-r-nī*, *bānuwān*, *mukadd(in)*, *ka‘bī*, *zakūrī* are characteristic solely of Al-Ġāhiz, see footnote 6, p. 110.

beggar who tries to convince young man coming from the same circle about advantages and virtues of the beggar profession. He gives the reasons for the beggar's existence enumerating the following: total freedom, unhampered wandering all over the world, well-being, enjoying all the goods offered by the earth, detachment from people, places, wealth and property. To justify his words he tells the story he experienced during his roaming across the province Al-Ġibāl (the ancient Media) where the crowd surrounded him in one of the major mosques. He introduced himself as the citizen of the town Al-Maṣṣīša in Cilicia. He was to be one of the *ribāt* dwellers and to fight for faith. Together with his father he waged fourteenth battles, seven at the sea and seven on land. He stood by the side of many famous heroes of the war against the Byzantine, not to mention 'Abd Allāh al-Baṭṭāl Ibn al-Ḥusayn called the warrior of Islam, the guard chief of Maslama Ibn 'Abd al-Mālik during the seizure of Constantinople from August 717 to September 717 A.D. He introduces himself as Ibn al-Ġuzayyil Ibn ar-Rakkān al-Maṣṣīšī. His speech and behaviour remind illusively later heroes of the *maqāmas* by Al-Hamaḍānī and Al-Ḥarīrī. The gathering is moved by his words. When he asked them for help having said he was mugged, a huge amount of money showered down upon him. He went away with 100 dirhams on him.

After this story Al-Bayhaqī specifies categories of beggars. It is worth emphasizing that the basic determinant of affiliation to particular groups is beggary connected with fraud. We do not deal here with banditism, robbery, criminality or violence.

The *makkī* (no information in the text says that the Arabic word *makkī*—a Meccan is used in this meaning)—wears wide *dabīqī* or *narsī*¹³ trousers, ties an Armenian cord, which is worn round the waist, at his neck. He appears in a mosque claiming his descent from the Cairo merchant family. His father is to send him to trade in Merv, in Khurasan. He pretends to have had goods 10 000 dirhams worth. Mugged and robbed depends on people's generosity.

The *saḥarī* (Arab. *saḥar*—dawn, time before daybreak; the one who turns up at dawn to ask for offerings). He comes early in the morning to a mosque before a *muezzin* calls for the morning prayer.

The *šaḡawī* (Arab. *šaḡw*—sadness, distress, despair; the one who imitates affliction and gloom)—first he hurts his right hand and leg in such

¹³ Arab. *dabīqī* and *narsī*— fabric names of very good quality, highly estimated in the Arabic-Muslim world of that time (from the town of Dabīq in Lower Egypt, and Nars near Al-Kūfa in the Iraq).

spots to make people believe his wounds are of manacles. He plaits trouser belt to suggest he was one from Al-Ḥuldiyya¹⁴ and spent fifty years in the underground prison.

The *darāriḥī* (Arab. *ḍurrāḥ/ḍarāriḥ*—a Spanish fly, cantharis;¹⁵ the one who (in his beggary profession) uses a Spanish fly)—attaches cantharises to the chosen spot on the body and leaves them overnight. The place where cantharises are fixed gets covered with pussy blisters. In the morning he strews his back with ash and appears naked on the street simulating a burn.

The *hāḡūr* (Arab. *ḥiḡr*—lap)¹⁶—takes the animal trachea and lung. He introduces the trachea into the anus, tears the lung into tiny pieces and sprinkles it with dracena¹⁷ resin feigning hemorrhoids.¹⁸

The *hāqānī* (Arab. *hāqān* ruler, the Turkish monarch; the one who pretends to be the Turkish king)—blackens his face with ink and myrrh.¹⁹ His face seems to be swollen and reminds a face of the Turkish king.²⁰

¹⁴ Plaiting a trouser cord (Arab. *tikka/tikak*) was—according to Schwally—a prisoner occupation. He justifies his point quoting Ibn al-Mu‘tazz who says: *ta‘allamtu fi-ās-siḡn nasḡ at-tikak*, Al-Bayhaqī, op.cit., p. 571, cf. Schwally 1912, p. 33, footnote 3; the Arab word *ḥuld*—residence in certain place (*Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. III, p. 164)—let us suppose that Al-Ḥuldiyya designated probably the group of people who were life sentenced.

¹⁵ The cantharis—Lat. *Lytta vesicatoria*, a beetle of the lytta species, 12-21mm long, metallic green; cantharises’ blood contains substance called cantharidin that causes skin irritation and tissue congestion, once used in medicine; mixed with lentil seeds that were to weaken its toxic action was used medicinally in treatment of the people bitten by the mad dogs, see *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. II, p. 441, Lane 1863-93, p. 960.

¹⁶ Interpretation of the fraud character on the basis of the word *ḥiḡr* is sensible in the case of a beggar (a member of the Banū Sāsān) called by the same name and appearing in the *Qaṣīda sāsāniyya* by Abū Dulaf. *Hāḡūr* breaks an egg and pours it on his lap (*ḥiḡr*). Yolk soaks through the garments and reminds pus illusively dripping out of open wounds, see Bosworth, op. cit., p. 45 and 193, verse 35, see also Schwally, op.cit., p. 34, footnote 5.

¹⁷ The dracena resin called the dragon blood is red.

¹⁸ Al-Ġāḥiḡ attributes this kind of practices to *filawr*, cf. Al-Ġāḥiḡ, op. cit., p. 55, verse 12-13.

¹⁹ Arab. term *ṣabir* designating aloe was used to name myrrh, e.g. resin *Commiphora abyssinica*, one of the balsam trees species occurring in Abyssinia, Eritrea, Arabia, well known in the ancient times, applied in corpse embalmment, as incense and medicine, myrrh was in the form of the yellow and brown substance, smelt specifically and tasted spicily, see Dozy 1927, p. 815, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. IV, p. 442.

²⁰ Dozy, op. cit., p. 336 points out that some young Turkish slaves serving in the army were abused sexually by caliphs who appeased their intimate needs this

The *zukaiym al-muġālaṭa*²¹—keeps silence and pretends to be dumb.

The *kān*²²—at early night enters into a contract with a popular story-teller (Arab. *qāṣṣ/quṣṣāṣ*)²³ promises him a half or one third of the sum he manages to collect from people and goes away. He turns up the next day, waits for the *qāṣṣ* to finish his preaching, makes his appearance and asks for offerings.

The *mufalfil* (Arab. *falfala*—to pepper; the one who throws sand at eyes)—always works with his mate. On arriving in a town they head towards the most distinguished mosque where one takes places in the first row, the second stands in the back row. When an imam starts a prayer, they enter into a loud conversation, quoted by Al-Bayhaqī:

‘Tell them!’

‘It is you to tell them who I am!’

‘Tell and you will be sorry if do not tell them! Don’t be ashamed!’

Such a conversation continues and attracts attention of the people gathered in prayer. While they are looking forward to the end of the dialogue, the cheats start talking about their financial situation. As the trade partners were to carry cotton fabrics from Al-Fuṣṭāṭ in Egypt to Iraq. Having been

way. Hence *hāqān*—according to Dozy—designates a youth courted by men, lover, favourite. The above suggestion contradicts with the explanation given by al-Bayhaqī; see as well Bosworth, op. cit., p. 45.

²¹ Etymology unclear; Arab. *muġālaṭa*—fraud, misleading; *zukaiym* might be linked with Arab. word *zakma* denoting progeny or *zukma* the last child born to parents (*Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. XII, p. 269).

²² Etymology unclear, Schwally, op. cit., p. 35, footnote 5, suggests that a term *kān* might be derived from the Aramaic—*ke’n*: fair, just, right, in this context with ironic undertone, likewise *muṣa‘ib*, see p. 116, footnote 32.

²³ In the first centuries of the Islamic civilization three terms describing popular preachers who brought people closer to religion in public places and mosques, Friday excluded, coexisted. There were not only *wu‘āz*, but *muḍakkirūn* and *quṣṣāṣ* also. As the theologian thought was out of reach for the majority of people, the popular preachers’ activity was of particular importance. It was practically impossible to make exact distinctions between those three terms. The *qāṣṣ*, for instance, dealt with interpretation of various stories and popular legends of educational value from religious point of view. With time, the common frauds impersonated the popular preachers perverting religious truths. In Abū Dulaf, one of the members of the Banū Sāsān, pretends to be a *qāṣṣ* telling the Jewish apocryphal legends, another works with his mate and shares profits with him (Bosworth, op. cit., pp. 192-183, verse 32, p. 195, verse 41). ‘Aġīb ad-Dīn al-Wā‘iz, as a preacher and a popular story-teller, was Ġarīb’s copartner in the play ‘*Aġīb wa-Ġarīb* by Ibn Dāniyāl. He used religion in raising money, op. cit., pp. 61-63. Al-Ġawbarī, op. cit., pp. 22-38 dedicates the whole chapter, *Fī kaṣf al-wu‘āz*, in his book to describe frauds of the false preachers.

robbed they lost everything. However, they are far from begging and make people believe they would die of shame if they devoted themselves to beggary.

The *zukaiym al-ḥabaša*²⁴—wears woollen, quilted dress characteristic of the *ḡāzī*, knee-length or longer, torn out in the front and at the back. He does not wear trousers and is in characteristic, military shoes. As a warrior coming back from the front, where he fought for faith, he asks for alms.

The *zukaiym al-marḥūmat al-makāfif*²⁵—works in a group of about five or six people headed by man called the *iṣṭīl*,²⁶ who sees only at night and at short distance.²⁷ He asks loudly for alms—others echo his words.

The *kāḡānī* (Persian *kāḡa*—an idiot; the one who pretends madness)—pretends to be a madman, foams at the mouth so convincingly that no one doubts either about his state or his health incurability.²⁸

The *‘arsī* (Arab. *‘ars*—binders that are put on neck and front legs of the camel while he is lying down;²⁹ the one who binds his limbs)—bandages tightly either both legs or arms, leaves bandages overnight bringing about swelling. On the next day he smears his swollen limbs with a mixture of soap and dragon blood, sprinkles butter and covers with a cloth. He discovers only a small part of the body simulating gangrene.³⁰

The *muša‘‘ib*³¹ (Arab. *ša‘‘aba*—to mend, repair, put into a right or proper state, but also: to corrupt, render unsound, impair;³² the one who

²⁴ Etymology unclear; Arab. *ḥabaša*—the Abyssinian, Abyssinia.

²⁵ Etymology unclear; Arab. *marḥūm*—deserving compassion, pitiable, *makfūf/makāfif*—a blind; Rescher (“Zeitschrift für Semitistik” 1924), p. 88, suggested that *al-makāfif* might belong with *al-marḥūma*, hence *zukaiym al-marḥūmat al-makāfif* is translated as the *zukaiym* of the pitiable, blind ones, after: Bosworth op. cit., p. 46, footnote 124.

²⁶ See p. 116.

²⁷ Literally: reminds the eye of a bat; the Arab. designation of a bat—*huffāš* is a derivative from a noun denoting a day-blindness when a sick sees on a clouded day or at night, but does not see in the light of day, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. VI, p. 299.

²⁸ Cf. Al-Ġāhiz, op. cit., p. 54, verse 14-17.

²⁹ *Lisān al-‘Arab*, vol. VI, p. 137, a term *qarsī*, appearing in the edition of the *Kitāb al-maḥāsin wa-‘l-masāwī*, is deprived of its sense in the context of the above trick description; Schwally in his article, op. cit., p. 37 settles upon the correct, meaningful recording of *‘arsī*, present in the manuscript of Leiden.

³⁰ Cf. Al-Ġāhiz, op. cit., pp. 54-55, verse 18 and 1-4.

³¹ Naḡīb Maḥfūz, in one of his novels, creates a character called Zayta, who seems to be a modern counterpart of the medieval *muša‘‘ib*. His profession was to injure people with several tools. He made people blind, hump-backed, lame or without legs or arms; see Naḡīb Maḥfūz 1982, *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*, chap. VII and chap. XVI.

³² See Lane, op. cit., p. 1555; Schwally, op. cit., p. 38, footnote 3, suggests the ironic implication of a term *muša‘‘ib*. Zayta’s words seem to confirm that: But I

beautifies (beggars))—harms permanently, (blinds among others) new born children brought to him by parents who use their child's cripplehood in asking people for support. Sometimes a child is lent to the other beggar. If parents do not trust him they will ask for a deposit.³³

The *filawr*³⁴—hurts his testicles to simulate inguinal hernia, one can see a cut or a wound on them. To attain this objective men might use their anus while women their vagina.³⁵

The *kāhān*³⁶—a beautiful youth from beggar's circles earning his living by being both active and passive sexual partner.³⁷

The 'awwā' (Arab. 'awwā'—a howling dog; the one who wails loudly)—sings and by this tries to collect offerings. He does it between a prayer at sunset and the evening one.³⁸

The *isfīl*³⁹—pretends to be a blind or suffer from cataract.⁴⁰

The *mazīdī* (Arab. *mazīd*—increase, excess, superabundance; the one who wants to have more and more) has some cash, it is said he saved it by himself and asks for help to raise the sufficient amount of money to buy a robe.⁴¹

The *musta'riḍ* (Arab. *ista'raḍa*—to act, to behave towards someone or something thoughtlessly, without any clear purpose, to do something at

improve people and not uglify. Haven't you noticed that a beggar who is not a lame is worth no millim. When I make him a cripple he is worth as much as he weighs (ch. XVI). There is another possible, but contradictory, translation: the one who uglifies people.

³³ Cf. Al-Ġāhiz, op. cit., p. 55, verse 4-10.

³⁴ Arab. *filawr* can derive from Persian *pīla*, a noun denoting among others a blotch rising in the midst of a boil, pus of a sore, a purse. The suffix *-ūr* added to a noun has a formative function, indicates an owner, a person possessing some thing or being in some state, see Steingass, p. 269, p. 1461.

³⁵ Cf. Al-Ġāhiz, op. cit., p. 55, verse 10-12.

³⁶ Etymology unclear.

³⁷ Bosworth, op. cit., p. 39, points out the euphemistic character of the Arab. expression 'amila ḍal-'amalayn—to do both works. Cf. Schwally also, op. cit., p. 39, footnote 4.

³⁸ Cf. Al-Ġāhiz, op. cit., p. 55, verse 15-16.

³⁹ Etymology unclear; Abū Dulaf and Šafī ad-Dīn al-Ḥillī used in their *qaṣīdas sāsanīyya* a verb *saṭṭala* and a noun *isfīl*, translated by Bosworth as: to blind someone, pretend to be a blind, and a blind; op. cit., p. 196, verse 102, p. 209, verse 137, p. 299, verse 57.

⁴⁰ Cf. Al-Ġāhiz, op. cit., pp. 55-56, verse 16-18, 1.

⁴¹ Arab. *qaṭīfa*—a thick, square fringed robe serving as kind of clothing and a sleeping coverlet, see *Tāğ al-'arūs*, vol. VI, p. 224; the whole description cf. Al-Ġāhiz, op. cit., p. 56, verse 2-4.

random; the one who accosts somebody by chance)⁴²—a man dressed decently, who is ashamed of begging. For fear of being recognized he pretends he comes across someone and asks for alms in a low voice.⁴³

The *muṭayyin* (Arab. *ṭayyana*—to smear oneself with clay; the one who smears himself with clay) - he covers the whole body with clay. He has cashew nuts on him. He pretends to be a madman in this manner.⁴⁴

In the Arabic literature about the beggar world the description of the structure of the fringe society was done by enumeration of the various beggar categories. It was practically a constant method. Descriptions of this type are valuable not only for a researcher of literature. Being categorized as ‘an ethnologic report’, a personal witnessing description, they might function as a document that presents either events and historical facts or the social awareness, e.g. the individual’s body of knowledge about the world of poverty in those days, its perception and subjective evaluation.⁴⁵

⁴² See Lane, op. cit., p. 2006.

⁴³ Cf. Al-Ġāhiz, op. cit., p. 56, verse 4-12.

⁴⁴ Persian *balādūr*—cashew (Lat. *Anacardium*), species belonging to the Anacardaceae, the cashew family, comprising about 15 species of trees or tropical bushes. A Persian *baladur* denotes a nut of the *A. Semecarpus* species. Ibn an-Nadīm, op. cit., p. 164, writes that a grandfather of the Arabic historian of the Persian descent, Abū Ġa‘far Aḥmad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Balāḍurī (d. 892), spent his last days in the asylum where he died. According to the author of the *Kitāb al-fihrist* he died of food poisoning having eaten unconsciously too many cashew nuts. Al-Ġawbarī, op. cit., p. 44 writes that Jewish doctors, at women’s wish, make a medicine for their husbands. When they take it they become dazed and do not understand what they are told about. The medicine recipe consists of cashew seeds among others. The *muṭayyin* is going to have his nuts what, associated with his would-be madness, suggests that nuts are supposed to be toxic and dangerous for human health.

⁴⁵ The identical pattern of the beggar society description existed in the European literature. It resulted from the way of thinking about the world. Phenomena arrangement in the frame of the complete series was the method of the reality study and description in the Middle Ages. This pattern was also adopted by a popular culture of our age, not to mention the German works like *Basler Bertrügnisse*, or *Liber vagatorum*, the English ones: *The Fraternite of Vacobondes* (J. Awdeley), or *A Caueat or Warening for Commen Corsetors* (Th. Harman), the French ones *Histoire et recherches des antiquités de la ville de Paris* (H. Sauval), the Italian ones *Speculum cerretanorum* (T. Pini), *Il Vagabondo* (Giacinto De Nobili) and others.

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