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Charity, Property and Kinship in the premodern Islamic Iran

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In this paper, I will explore how the language of kinship was used in the mobilization and organization of charitable giving and endowments in the premodern Islamic period in Iran (622–1500 CE). With the formalization of the Zoroastrian religion in the Sassanid Empire (224–650 CE) the administration of charitable activities and foundations are not only governed by religious laws and religious institutions but also by state laws and regulations (Arjomand 1998; János 2004; Macuch 2013). After the arrival of Islam in Iran in the 7th century and the fall of the Sasanian Persia (Daryaee 2013), endowments and charitable institutions grew slowly and with the rise of various Persian Muslim dynasties became central to the organization of legal courts, educational centres and the economic and cultural development of Iranian society (Lev 2005, 2007; Ahmadvand 2015; Jokisch 2017). Iranian legal and religious authorities have played an important role in this development. For instance, the formation of the endowment court/office (*diwān-e awqāf*), which supervised the endowment property, was the result of such development that can be seen in the Samanid Empire (819-999 CE), the first native dynasty arose in Iran after the Muslim-Arab conquest. The objective of this paper is to show how writers and various religious and legal authorities used kinship terms and relations to address charitable activities and endowments. Analysing such religious-legal documents (Messick; 1993; van Berkel, Buskens and Sijpesteijn 2017,) can provide a useful understanding of the commercial and legal challenges of everyday life as well as a better understanding of kinship relations and family law, inheritance practices and perceptions of property and political order. On the theoretical level, the paper deals with charity and charitable organizations in the premodern Islamic period in Iran according to paradigms of ownership, giving, kinship, gender, capitalism, regulation and governance. This paper is based on my current research project that investigates the culture and politics of charitable giving in Iran from the viewpoint of legal and social history.