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KASHKUL (BEGGAR'S BOWL), BRASS WITH LACQUER DECORATION

IRAN; 18TH-19TH CENTURY

H: 11.3; W: 18.7 CM

The Persian word *kashkul* denotes the oval or boat-shaped beggar's bowl made of wood, cocoanut, or metal that generations of dervishes have carried over their shoulder and used to collect alms. Since one of the five pillars of Islam is the duty to pay a special tax or alms to the needy, many dervishes have been able to live from alms alone.

A princely beggar's bowl like this one was hardly used to collect alms in the form of money or in kind. It might have been among the possessions of a revered holy man, perhaps a sheikh in a *khankah* (a Sufi monastery). Sheikhs who lived in monasteries could leave begging to the other dervishes, who turned over the alms they had collected to the community in the evening. The open-mouthed dragon heads on the points of the *kashkul* are typical of the Iranian cultural sphere, including India.

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