



BAKTAK

BAKTAK, a folkloric she-creature of horrible shape, personifying a nightmare. Baḳtak was believed to have been one of Alexander's slave girls who accompanied him on his expedition in search of the water of life (*āb-e ḥayāt*; see [āb ii](#)). According to the legend, after the water was found, it was poured into a goatskin; but, before it could be carried away, a crow punctured the skin with its beak, spilling the contents onto the ground. Baḳtak then quickly scooped the water into her hands and drank it; thus both she and the crow are said to have become immortal. Alexander, enraged, ordered her nose cut off and replaced with a nose of clay.

Baḳtak is reputed to know where all the treasures of the earth are hidden. A nightmare occurs when Baḳtak throws herself upon the sleeper who, in the dark, must try to grab the creature's nose. Lest she lose her nose, Baḳtak will reveal one of the treasures to him; but, if the sleeper wants to stop the nightmare and make Baḳtak go away, he must wiggle his finger (Ş. Hedāyat, *Neyrangestān*, Tehran, 2536 = 1356 Š./1977, pp. 123-24; cf. H. Massé, *Croyances et coutumes persanes*, Paris, 1938, II, pp. 366-67). Baḳtak has also been described as a massive, perspiring black bundle which falls upon the sleeper and tries to suffocate him. She also answers to *Bīnigelī* (clay-nosed) or *Ġūl* (Donaldson, *The Wild Rue*, London, 1938, pp. 175-76). Other names include: Barḳafj, Būšāsb, Estanba, Faranjak, Gūšāsb, Ḳorḳojivan (M. Moʿīn, *Farhang-e fārsī* III, p. 2778 s.v. *Kābūs*).

Baḳtak resembles the *Āl*, another "female devil" of Iranian folklore "whose attack can be neutralized by grabbing its nose." Other Baḳtak-like creatures,



which appear in local folklore, are: *Taptapo* (in the Rāmhormoz region) who has a necklace (*nābanda*) which it hangs on a nail or a tree; *Ševlī* (in the Arāk region) “which weighs like a mountain on the chest of the sleeper and prevents him from moving or shouting;” and *Šavah* (in the Komeyn region, probably a variant of the word *šabah*, ghost), who like *Taptapo* has a necklace (*galūband*) on which its life depends and which, before throwing itself on the hapless sleeper, it hangs on a drain spout (Archives of the Markaz-e Farhang-e Mardom, Tehran, communication from A. Enjavī).

The name Baḳtak also appears in the Safavid period romance *Romūz-e Ḥamza*, as K̄osrow II Anōšīravān’s evil vizier. M. J. Maḥjūb believes Baḳtak in this context to be a misreading of Boḳtag or Boḳtak, the father of Bozorgmehr, K̄osrow’s wise counselor (M. J. Maḥjūb, oral communication).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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