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BĀZ

BĀZ (Mid. Pers. *bāz*; for the controversial etymology of this word, see Schapka, s.v.), a common name formerly applied to some diurnal birds of prey (*eškaragān-e paranda* or *morḡān-e šekār-konanda*, the terms used by the 5th/11th-century Persian scholar and professional falconer ʿAlī Nasavī in his authoritative *Bāz-nāma*, pp. 79, 81), particularly from the genera *Falco* (falcons) and *Accipiter* (hawks), which were traditionally prized and trained for hunting game birds and some other animals (for other genera of raptors that were occasionally trained for that purpose, see bāzdārǰ).

Definitions of *bāz* in early Persian lexicons do not permit identification of this bird; they usually consist of such vague phrases as "a (well-known) predatory/hunting bird" or "a well-known bird with which kings and high dignitaries hunt." Nor are the numerous references to *bāz* in classical Persian literature (there are, e.g., ca. 25 in Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma*; see Aḏkāʾī, p. 9) any more precise. This vagueness is also characteristic of the oldest known source in which the word *bāz* is used, the *Bundahišn* (tr. Anklesaria, chap. XXII, par. 28): In the chapter on "the nature of the noxious creatures," it is stated that Ahura Mazdā created the *bāz*(*-e spēd*), the (white) *bāz* (see below), to destroy "the feathered/winged serpent" created by Ahriman. Classical literary evidence, however, indicates that, whatever its earlier identification may have been, in the Middle Ages *bāz* was distinguished from other, related birds of prey like the *bāša* (sparrow hawk, *Accipiter nisus*), the *šāhīn* (Barbary falcon, *Falco pelegrinoides*, according to Scott et al., p. 104; peregrine falcon, *F. peregrinus*, according to Maʿlūf, p. 104, and Viré, "Bayzara," in *EI*[2]), the

čargˌ/čarḵ (saker, *F. cherrug*, according to Maʿlūf, p. 103, and Viré), and, of course, the *ʿoqāb*, traditionally considered to be the eagle (for literary references demonstrating these early distinctions, see Dehḵodā, s.vv.).

More concrete information about the *bāz* is provided in *Nowrūz-nāma* (pp. 56-59), an opuscule on the origin, history, and ceremonies of the Iranian new-year festival that has sometimes been attributed to the mathematician and philosopher ʿOmar Ḵayyām (d. first quarter of the 6th/12th century). The author, who seems to have had a personal interest in the *bāz* and in hawking, begins by praising the bird: ". . . It is loved by kings . . . . It has kingly traits such as magnanimity and cleanliness. The ancients have said that the *bāz* is the king of carnivorous birds, as the horse is the king of herbivorous quadrupeds . . . . It is endowed [by nature] with a majesty (*ḥešmat*) that is lacking in other birds; though the eagle is larger, it lacks the *bāz* 's majesty . . . ." Then, in a short chapter on selecting a *bāz*, he becomes more matter-of-fact: "The *bāz* is of numerous kinds, but the best are the white one and those with plain red or plain yellow plumage. The white one is the greediest for hunting, but it is prone to disease and ill-tempered; the yellow one is both greedy and healthy; the red one is larger and healthier than the other two kinds, but it is ill-tempered." As for the other preeminent factors in selecting a *bāz* for training and hunting, the author of *Nowrūz-nāma* relies on the authority of the Ziyarid ruler "Māhān-Mah Vošmgīr [lit. quail catcher] . . . who knew about *eškara* (trainable birds/beasts of prey) better than anybody else, whose occupation was hunting twelve months a yeaṛ . . . and who was the author of a great book entitled *Šekara*, written in the Kūhī language [the old Caspian dialect of Ṭabarestān]": "In the case of any animal, the unicolor (*yak-rang*) [species/variety] is better than the variegated one (*āmīḵta-ye nā-tamām*) . . . . As for the *bāz*, it has to have [in addition] tough flesḥ . . . and well-proportioned body parts, namely a small short head; a broad forehead and eyes; a broad crop; a wide, low (*past*) breast; a thick rump and thighs; thick, well-rounded legs; good talons; strong toes; and black claws that are green at the base. This combination of features is found mostly in a white *bāz*, a plain yellow, or a plain red one. Such a rara avis is worth any price." Nasavī (pp. 88-91) lists in detail the ornithological features that indicate "the intelligence, natural trainability, and usefulness of [various] *bāz*es." These qualities are indicated, for instance, by a large skull, small eyes, a well-proportioned body (he provides actual measurements based on breast size), and an aquiline beak (*aloh-šavā*, in contrast to a psittaceous, or parrot-like, beak, *ṭūṭak-šavā*, an undesirable feature). It should be noted that modern scientific inventories of

the birds of the Near and Middle East, including Iran, do not mention any "plain white," "plain red," or "plain yellow" falcon, hawk, or the like (see Scott et al.; and Hüe and Etchécopar). In fact, the "white *bāz*," which, according to some lexicographers, is the same as *šāh/šāh-bāz* "king/royal *bāz* " (see, e.g., *Borhān-e qāṭeʿ*, ed. Moʿīn, and *Farhang-e fārsī*, s.v. *šāh-bāz*), seems to have been extremely rare, for Nasavī (p. 76) declares that, during the sixty years of his professional career, he had owned "every kind of *šekara/šakara* save the *sonqor* [gerfalcon; see below] and the white *bāz*." Masʿūdī (d. 345/956) reports, however (*Morūj* II, p. 27), a kind of white *bāz* caught in "the Caspian islands [actually peninsulas] facing the coastline of Gorgān" that was "the quickest of all [trained] raptors to respond [to the hunter's call or order] and the least sociable of them" (for *bāz* hunting in Dahestān, see below). It is quite probable that the white *bāz* was nothing more than the albino variety (*tīqūn*) of the goshawk, as specified by the 19th-century Persian professional falconer Teymūr Mīrzā Ḥosām-al-Dawla in his *Bāz-nāma-ye nāṣerī* (pp. 9-11; see also bāzdārǰ).

Probably on the basis of Arabic sources, Maʿlūf (p. 102) and Viré equate *bāz* or *šāh-bāz* with the goshawk, *Accipiter gentilis*. Maḷʿūf, however, refers to *A. albidus* = white goshawk = *bāz ašhab* (lit. "gray *bāz* "), whereas Viré considers *A. albidus* a subspecies of *A. gentilis*, claiming that the entire genus is "the bird [of prey] which has enjoyed the greatest favour since remote antiquity and in every country of the Orienṭ . . . because they do not belong to the avifauna of the Arabic countries, [these birds] were imported by merchants from Greece, Turkestan, Persia and India . . . . The Persian name *bāz*, passed into Arabic before Islam, was applied apparently through ignorance to every sporting birḍ . . . ." In Iran and Afghanistan *A. albidus* and *A. gentilis* ssp. *albidus* are no longer known (see Hüe and Etchécopar, pp. 167-69; Scott et al., pp. 79-80).

Whatever its species, the *bāz* was highly esteemed by connoisseurs, as is clear from both factual reports and frequent references in belles-lettres. In the *Nowrūz-nāma* (p. 18), in a description of the Nowrūz court ceremonies "from the time of Kay Ḵosrow down to the time of the last Iranian king, Yazdegerd," it is said that on that day the *mūbad-e mūbadān* (high priest) used to present the king with valuable gifts, including a *bāz*, about which he said: "Sire, may your *bāz* be a good hunter (*gīrā*) and auspicious (*ḵojasta*)." (On the auspiciousness of the *bāz*, See bāzdārǰ.) The custom of offering *bāz*es, horses, and other gifts was still followed by petty Shiʿite rulers in Gīlān and Māzandarān in the 9th/15th century. The local historian Ẓahīr-al-Dīn Maṛʿašī reports several

instances that took place, not on Nowrūz but on occasions like the return to power of a fellow ruler (p. 191, referring to a special envoy sent with greetings and gifts of a horse, a *bāz*, and a *ḵeḷʿat* "robe of honor"), reconciliation with a foe (p. 231), a fellow ruler's recapture of a province (p. 123), and the peaceful settlement of a conflict (p. 154; Sayyed Mortażā, "King of Māzandarān," offered "numerous horses and *bāz*es, along with suitable textiles and goods," and Sayyed Moḥammad, "king of Gīlān," reciprocated with "Arabian horses, hunting *bāz*es, greyhounds, retrievers, many textiles, and innumerable goods").

Speaking professionally, Nasavī (p. 79) extols the *bāz*'s merits: "of all flying and hunting birds the *bāz* is the best, the most receptive to training, and the most free from defects and foulness. Although the peacock, the pheasant, and so on are superior to it in coloring [of the plumage], their body parts are not so well proportioned as those of the *bāz*. Further, in the case of the other birds, the male is prettier than the female, but both sexes of the *bāz* are alike. The *bāz* is one of the good things that the Almighty has created under the lunar sphere." Nasavī (p. 150) recognizes no difference between the *bāz* and the *bāša*, stating simply that "the *bāz* is a large *bāša*." He declares that all the colors of plumage found in *bāz*es also occur in *bāša*s "more often and better, save the white variety, seldom found in the latter." He adds, "In all my life, I have seen [only] two white *bāša*s and a single piebald one." Because Nasavī (p. 154) specifically characterizes the other trainable raptors—the *ʿoqāb*, the *sonqor*, the *čarḡ*, the *šāhīn*, the *yūha* (kestrel), and the *ṭoḡrol* (crested hawk eagle)—as "black-eyed" (*sīāh-čašm*), it follows that the *bāz* and the *bāša* have eyes (more exactly, irises) of another color (probably "yellow," as in the traditional eastern classification). It seems that Nasavī's minimal *bāz-bāša* category corresponds to the category *ṣofr al-ʿoyūn bozāt* ("yellow-eyed" *bāz*es) traditional in the Arabic-speaking world, whereas his larger category of *sīāh-čašm* falcons corresponds to *sūd al-ʿoyūn ṣoqūr* ("black-eyed" sakers; for these Arabic categories, see Qalqašandī, p. 52; Maʿlūf, p. 102).

Nasavī (p. 83) mentions "the habitats of *bāzān* [plur. of *bāz*] in the world: woods, seasides, or mountains in Turkestan, Ḵᵛārazm, Gorgān, Māzandarān, Daylamān, Gīlān, Azarbaijan, Darband-e Ḵazarān [Caspian Gates], Rūm [Anatolia], Fārs, Kermān, and so on," but he adds that these birds migrate seasonally. It was during these migrations that the *bāzān-e goḏārī* ("*bāz*es of passage") were captured by means of various snares and ruses. These birds were considered "preferable to *bāzān-e āšīānī* [nestlings, or eyases], for they

are better, bolder, and swifter" (p. 85). The author describes (p. 88) a *bāz*-catching technique used in Fārs, "in the regions known to be on the migration route of *bāz*es": The trapper made a *kūma* (hut/hide/blind) of stones, with an opening just wide enough to reach through. In the morning and early in the evening, he would thrust a pigeon through the opening with one hand; when a *bāz* swooped down to take the pigeon, the hunter would deftly capture it in his other hand. It seems that capturing *bāz*es and the like, either to train or to sell, gradually developed into a highly profitable pursuit. One of the earliest references to this occupation in Iran is by the 4th/10th-century author of the geographical work *Ḥodūd al-ʿālam* (pp. 23-24), who reports that a Caspian "island" called Dahestān-e Sar facing the old coastal district of Dahestān was "inhabited by a few people engaged in catching *bāz*es, *ḥawāṣel* [herons], and fish." Rašīd-al-Dīn, the vizier of Ḡāzān Khan (r. 694-703/1295-1304), reported the operation of a vast network for capturing *šekara*s (sporting birds) and *yūze*s (cheetahs) for the central administration in Il-khanid domains before Ḡāzān's accession (pp. 1097-1101). Government-sponsored *qūščī*s (*qūš* catchers, falconers; from Mong. Turk. *qūš* "bird") and *pārsčī/bārsjī*s (cheetah catchers; from Mong. Turk. *bārs*, "cheetah") in every province captured *jān(a)var*s (Pers. "animals," by extension *bāz*es) and cheetahs, which they delivered to the *omarāʾ-e qūščī o pārsčī* (chief falconers and cheetah keepers). As government agents, these hunters held *yarlīg*s (licenses); in addition to their *jāmagī* (wages, stipend), they were provided with allowances for food and fodder for the donkeys that carried their catch. Nevertheless, because of inadequate governmental control, they had gradually become indiscriminate plunderers, tyrannizing the peasantry to extort donkeys, forage, sheep, and fowl (ostensibly to feed the beasts of prey, but actually for their own consumption) and "despoiling anybody whom they met on their way." In order to intimidate the local people, they would occasionally punish a village headman by shaving his beard; they also secured the complicity of local ruffians (*fattān*s "troublemakers") in attacking uncooperative governors and landlords with sticks. Furthermore, they fraudulently concealed the real numbers of their catch from the government authorities, so that the latter were always short of birds and beasts of prey. The situation was so profitable that anyone who had caught, or bought, a *jān(a)var* would be tempted to apply for a *yarlīg*, so that he could claim to be an appointed *jān(a)var-dār* (*bāz* catcher/keeper/trainer) or *tarḵān* (prince or grandee enjoying some hereditary privileges). Ḡāzān's general policy of restoring order and prosperity in his realm led to strict regulations to protect the peasantry from oppression by these trappers. The new law fixed the "sufficient" number of animals to be supplied annually:

1,000 *jān(a)var*s and 300 cheetahs. The *omarāʾ* (chiefs) were ordered to identify in each province qualified men, so that no one else could pose as a *qūščī*, a "gold-sealed" (*āltūn-tamḡā*; Mong.) license was issued to every appointee. In it the number of trained (*āmūḵta*) and untrained (*nā-āmūḵta*) birds or beasts to be supplied by the licensee and proportional allowances for forage, donkeys, provisions, and the like were specified. These new measures and appointments were to be announced publicly in every province. As for the *qūščī*s in attendance on "the king of Islam," their wages and allowances for feeding the animals in their charge were to be precisely determined and paid annually, through their chief, in gold coins (*zar-e naqd*) from the treasury. When moving between summer and winter quarters (*qūšlāmīšī*; Mong.), they were issued "gold-sealed" *barāt*s (drafts) for their food and fodder, so that they need make no further requisition on their way. After these new regulations were first promulgated, however, one or two violations by *omarāʾ-e qūščī* were reported; a trusted envoy was dispatched to investigate, and, when the abuses were confirmed, each culprit was sentenced immediately to receive seventy-seven blows with a stick. Rašīd-al-Dīn reports that, as a result of the new measures, trappers "readily bring in annually 1,000 *jān(a)var*s and 300 head [*qelāda*; lit., "collar"] of *yūz*." It is unlikely, however, that these strict regulations survived Ḡāzān Khan and his famous vizier.

As hunting with cheetahs and falcons was always the costly pastime of a privileged ruling class, the fortunes and activities of purveyors of *bāz*es and *yūz*es, like those of *bāzdār*s (falconers, hawkers) and *yūzdār*s (cheetah keepers), have naturally reflected the vicissitudes in the lives of their rulers. In 1865 J. E. Polak reported only that "the best falcon trainers are from the clan of Zergeri [*sic*] nomads who claim descent from the Macedonians" (p. 181). In our own time, Mokrī says that "the profession of most men of the Bāzger [Kurd.; lit., "*bāz* catcher"] clan of the Qalḵānī tribe in western Iran is hunting, capturing *bāz*es, and selling various hunting (i.e., trained] *bāz*es" (p. 25).

Partly because of its ornithological imprecision, the word *bāz* fell into disuse in the late Middle Ages (save in poetry and probably in some dialects, as well as in Kurdish; see Mokrī, p. 24); it was replaced by Chaghatay Turkish *qūš* (cf. *qūščī*, which superseded Persian *bāzdār/bāzyār*). The new term, which originally meant simply "bird," proved as ambiguous as *bāz*, and some species and varieties came to be specified by local or foreign names, for example, *Accipiter gentilis* (formerly *Astur palumbarius*), *tarlān/ṭarlān* (Kurd. *tallān*; Mokrī, pp. 24, 53); *A. brevipes* (Levant sparrow hawk), *pīḡū/pīqū*; *A. badius*

(shikra), *šekara*; *qezel*, a variety of *tarlān* (?) or *Milvus milvus* (red kite) (?); *A. nisus* (sparrow hawk), *qerqī*, *Falco biamarcus* (lanner falcon), *lāčīn*; *F. peregrinus*, *baḥrī*; *F. subbuteo* (hobby), *leyl*; *F. columbarius* (merlin), *toromtā(y)/ṭoromtāyī* (Kurd. *toromta*; see Mokrī, loc. cit.); *F. tinnunculus* (kestrel), *dalīča/dalīja*; *F. cherrug*, *bālābān* (see, e.g., Scott et al., s.vv.; Teymūr Mīrzā, pp. 12ff., and bāzdārǰ). Many of the later names, like *tarlān*, *toromtāy*, *qezel*, *qerqī*, *dalīja*, and *bālābān*, are of Turkic provenience (see Schapka, s.vv.). They probably reflect the influence of the Turkish, Mongol, and Turkman dynasties that ruled Iran down to the end of the Qajar period (1925); these rulers were generally fond of hunting and especially hawking (cf. Nasavī, pp. 90, 114, citing the "*Bāz-nāma* of the Turks" as one of his authorities; and Teymūr Mīrzā, p. 11, "the people of Turkestan are past masters in this art [falconry]"). Indeed, Teymūr Mīrzā no longer uses *bāz* as the technical name for a genus or species in his *Bāz-nāma*, which is the last well-known work on this subject published in Persian.

The gradual decline of falconry in the Safavid period, owing mainly to the rising popularity of Western hunting guns (See bāzdārǰ), brought about an inevitable sharp reduction in the inventory of traditional *qūš*es: whereas Teymūr Mīrzā (pp. 8ff.) discusses, among other trainable raptors, six "yellow-eyed" accipiters and eight "black-eyed" falcons, in 1907 the French traveler H.-R. d'Allemagne observed (IV, p. 229) only the following species: "[In Persia and even in Turkestan] two types of falcon are distinguished: yellow-eyed falcons, which attack small game, especially partridges, and black-eyed falcons, which can be launched against larger birds like wild geese, bustards, or herons and which are fearless in attacking even young gazelles. The most sought-after yellow-eyed falcons are the *tarlans*, which are imported from Astrakhan, and the *ghezals*, which come from Gīlān and Māzanderān. Among the black-eyed falcons they distinguish the *balabans*, which come from Kurdestān; the *bahris*, which are used for hunting ducks in Māzanderān; and finally the small *touroun-taï*, which are used for hunting *teihous*, a kind of gray partridge, and snipes (*bécassines*)."

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For depictions of the *bāz* in art see also *Survey of Persian Art* (repr. Tehran, 1977, index, p. 22).

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