



BĀZĪ

BĀZĪ (games). The word *bāzī*, Pahlavi *wāzīg*, probably comes from the OIr. stem **waz-* “to move, fly,” Pahlavi *wāzīdan* “to move, to play” (cf. N. Sims-Williams, “The Sogdian Fragments of the British Library,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 18, 1976, p. 82, n. 116; Hübschmann, *Pers. Studien*, p. 22; Nyberg, *Manual II*, p. 207). As a suffix *bāzī* combines with a number of words to signify various sports and games, e.g., *šamšīr-bāzī* “fencing,” *čowgān-bāzī* “polo” (see *Logāt-nāma*, s.v. *bāzī*).

The oldest reference to the Iranian games can be found in a Pahlavi text that probably dates from the 9th century a.d., *Xusraw Kawādān ud rēdag* “Kosrow, son of Kawād and the page.” In an answer to the king’s question about the most pleasant entertainers, the page, among other things, mentions games such as *rasan-wāzīg*, rope dancing; *zanjīr-wāzīg*, chain play; *dār-wāzīg*, pole climbing; *mār-wāzīg*, snake play; *čambar-wāzīg*, hoop jumping; *tīr-wāzīg*, arrow play; *tās-wāzīg*, throwing dice; *wandag-wāzīg*, rope walking; *andarwāy-wāzīg*, air play; *mēx ud spar-wāzīg*, ball play; *sel-wāzīg*, javelin play; *šamšēr-wāzīg*, sword play; *dašnag-wāzīg*, dagger play; *warz-wāzīg*, club play; *šišag-wāzīg*, bottle play; *kabīg-wāzīg*, monkey play (ed. Unvala, pp. 14,16, 27-29). In another part of this text, the page, recounting his achievements, makes a reference to three other games: *ud pad čatrang ud nēw-ardaxšēr ud hašt-pāy kardan az hamālān frāztar ham* “I am better than my equals in chess, backgammon, and eight-footed” (ibid., p. 16; see below pt. e). In the *Kār-nāmag ī Ardaxšēr ī Pābagān* games such as *čatrang* (chess), *čowgān* (polo), and *nēw-ardaxšēr* (backgammon) are mentioned (see Nyberg, *Manual II*, pp. 54, 56,



138). In this text mastery of such games appears as part of a princely education (*Kār-nāmag*, p. 10). The short Pahlavi text *Wizārišn ī čatrang ud nihišn ī nēw-ardaštr* (Explanation of chess and invention of backgammon) gives an account of these two popular games (see Brunner, “The Middle Persian Explanation of Chess and Invention of Backgammon,” *The Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 10, 1978, pp. 43-51).

Zoroastrianism appears to have been tolerant toward such activities, as none of the religious texts shows a negative attitude toward entertainment (for the popularity of games, sports, dance, and music in Sasanian Iran, see Christensen, *Iran Sass.*, pp. 416, 478). Islam, on the other hand, did not approve of all kinds of games. In the religious terminology the word *la‘eb* (play) is usually paired with *lahw* (amusement), and is considered by the devout to provide “the kind of emotional excitement (*ṭarab*) which distracts an individual from the good” (Abu’l-‘Abbās Aḥmad Šarīšī, *Šarḥ al-maqāmāt al-ḥarīriya* I, Cairo, 1306/1888-89, p. 20). The insignificance and instability of life in this world are metaphors in various passages of the Qur’ān for “play and amusement” (e.g., 6:32, 29:64, 47:36, 57:20). In other passages *lahw* and *la‘eb* are described as frivolous, unserious activity (7:98, 9:65, 21:2, 44:9). Commenting on such Koranic passages, Islamic theologians have admonished the faithful against occupying themselves with games. In the words of Abū ‘Abd-Allāh Moḥammad Šāfe‘ī (150-204/767-802) “Play (*la‘eb*) is not what Muslims do, and it does not go with true manliness” (F. Rosenthal, *Gambling in Islam*, Leiden, 1975, p. 10). Abū Ḥāmed Moḥammad Ġazālī (450-505/1058-1111) warned against the onset of a liking for such diversions as pigeon racing (*al-la‘b be’l-ṭoyūr*), chess (*šatranj*), and backgammon (*nard*), for once a person grows used to them he finds it hard to stop and to avoid their destructive consequences (*Eḥyā’ al-‘olūm al-dīn* III, Cairo, 1351/1933, p. 86). In another work, while condemning the Iranian New Year festival (Nowrūz), he considers the selling of toy swords and shields made of wood to be against Islamic law (*Kīmīā-ye sa‘ādat* I, ed. Ḥ. Qadīvjām, Tehran, 1361 Š./1982, p. 522). The famous Shi‘ite theologian Moḥammad-Bāqer Majlesī (1037-1110/1628-89) quotes a Hadith condemning “everything by which a Muslim amuses himself as worthless frivolity, except the shooting of arrows, the training of horses, and sex play with his woman folk” *Ḥelyat al-mottaqīn*, Tehran, n.d., p. 298). He also warns “Do not play polo, because Satan goes with you and the angels hate you” (ibid., p. 299), and, listing all the things prohibited by the Prophet, he mentions “playing backgammon, chess, and selling the instruments of such games” (ibid., p. 305). In spite of such negative attitudes, the games played in Iran



centuries before Islam survived in the Islamic period and continued to be important parts of Iranian cultural life.

The study of games in Iran. From the early centuries after Islam, various games are mentioned in lexicons and other sources. In his book *Hedāyat al-mota'allimīn fi'l-ṭebb* (Guide for medical students) **Abū Bakr Rabī' Aḥmad Aḳawaynī Bokārī** (second half of the 4th/10th century) discusses different sports and the merits of games and describes a few of them (ed. J. Matīnī, Mašhad, 1344 Š./1965, p. 779). The dictionaries *al-Sāmī fi'l-asāmī* by Abu'l-Faḥ Moḥammad Maydānī (comp. 518/1124; ed. M. Dabīrsiāqī, Tehran, 1355 Š./1976, p. 46); *Borhān-e qāṭe'* (comp. 1062/1651), and *Farhang-e Ānand Rāj* (comp. 1306/1888) all contain descriptions of games, showing their popularity in those days (see Kīā). In his book *Bāzihā-ye maḥallī* Moḥammad Parvīn Gonābādī (see bibliography) mentions an unpublished manuscript, containing a vocabulary of the Šūštar dialect, written by an unknown author in 1219/1804, which describes many games of that region.

The growing interest in Iranian folklore in recent decades has resulted in the publication of descriptions of many games played in various parts of Iran, often to be found in dialect glossaries (see examples in the bibliography), but no comprehensive effort has been made to record the games and their local and regional variants systematically and to classify them scientifically. This is all the more to be regretted since the popularity of modern sports such as volleyball, soccer, etc., and the spread of television have lessened interest in traditional games among Iranian children and young people.

Classification of games. In his article on games in the *Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* (New York, 1949, vol. 1, p. 433) Jerome Fried discusses games according to the season in which they are played; the places where they are played; the number of players involved; the sex or age of the participants, etc. Brian Sutton-Smith (*The Games of New Zealand Children*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1959, p. 7), on the other hand, takes into consideration the structural and developmental characters of games and divides the games into the following categories: singing games, informal games, leader games, chasing games, rhythmic games, games of chance, teasing activities, parlor games, games of skill etc. Others classify games on the basis of their psychological, historical, educational, or even structural characteristics.

This article adopts the following classification: (a) games for small children; (b) games for older children and adults; (c) ceremonial games; (d) theatrical



games; (e) games of intelligence. (Of course there is some overlap among these categories and each group can be further subdivided.)

(a) *Games for small children*. Games for small children are mostly conducted by adults and aim at entertaining them while keeping them busy. They are similar to nursery rhymes combined with simple movements. These include:

1. *Āftāb mahtāb čē rang-e* (what are the colors of the sunshine and the moonshine). Two children stand back-to-back and lock arms. One bends from the waist lifting the other onto his back to face the sky and asks *āftāb mahtāb čē rang-e?* Straightening himself, the other bends in a similar manner and the one looking at the sky answers *sork o safīd do rang-e* (two colors, red and white). The game continues in this way. See Boḳārī, *Hedāyat al-mota'allemin*, p. 779; Isfahan (Jamšād, p. 39); Lāsgerd and Semnān (*kārpoštak*, Sotūda, 1963, p. 165); Yazd (*keštak-poštak*, Parvīn Gonābādī, p. 75).

2. *Atal matal tūtūla*. The children sit in a row with their legs stretched before them. A rhythmic song about “the cow of Ḥasan” is sung by an adult, who with each syllable taps each child’s foot. With the last syllable of the last word in the song *vaṛčīn* “tuck,” the child tapped must tuck his foot behind his outstretched leg. The adult continues the same song and the tapping until only one foot, that of the loser, is left. The losing child must then play *tap tap-e kamīr*, by hiding his head in the skirt of the leader and guessing which of the children gathered around has his hand raised. If he guesses wrong three times, the others tap on his back while singing a song and end by tickling him. Gīlān (*pāpā palangī*, Sotūda, 1953, p. 31); Isfahan (Jamšād, p. 41); Kermān (*atalak tī tatalak*, Vahman, p. 43); Lorestān (*akal-matal*, Īzadpanāh, p. 5); Sarvestān (*hakal-makal*, Homāyūnī, 1969, p. 470); Shiraz (Faḳīrī, p. 71, Homāyūnī, 1974, p. 44); Tehran (Hedāyat, p. 16). See also A. Šāmlū, *Ketāb-e kūča* I, Tehran, 1361 Š./1982, pp. 107-19.

3. *Jom-jomak barg-e kazūn*. The children stack their fists on top of each other’s in the form of a minaret, and while moving the hands faster and faster sing a song about the beautiful hair of mother Sīmīn Kānom. The child whose fist first slips out is the loser and must do what the other children tell him to do. Isfahan (*jom-jomak*, Jamšād, p. 91); Kermān (*jīmu jīmu havīza*, Vahman, p. 44); Sarvestān (*habīza o habīza*, Homāyūnī, 1969, p. 442); Shiraz (*jombūn jombūn habīza*, Homāyūnī, 1974, p. 50); Tehran (Hedāyat, p. 19).

4. *Līlī līlī ḥawżak*. A game in which the palm of the hand is imagined to be a



pond of water, *ḥawż*, into which a sparrow falls; each finger, symbolizing a different personality, helps to catch, prepare, and cook the bird until it is eaten. In another version the bird is caught, dried, kissed, and released by each finger in turn before the thumb gets hold of it. Isfahan (Jamšād, p. 61); Sarvestān (Homāyūnī, 1969, p. 442); Shiraz (Faḡīrī, p. 69); Tehran (Hedāyat, p. 17).

5. *Ūssā (ostād) bedūš* or *kalāḡ par*. The children and the master (*ūssā*) each place the index finger of one hand on a central spot on the floor. The children raise their hands to imitate the master when his actions are appropriate to his words, for example, raising the finger for the words “sparrow fly,” “pigeons fly” and avoiding movement should the words describe an animal or object unable to fly. If a child incorrectly raises his hand he loses the game. The loser is usually punished the same way as in *atal matal*, Gīlān (*par par*, Sotūda, 1953, p. 35); Isfahan (*tap tapū*, Jamšād, p. 58); Lorestān (*tap tapū*, Īzadpanāh, p. 26); Mašhad (*tap tap kamīr*, Gonābādī, p. 49); Sarvestān (*qalāḡ par* or *berḡū berḡū*, Homāyūnī, 1969, p. 469); Shiraz (*qalāḡ par*, Faḡīrī, p. 72, Homāyūnī, 1974, p. 57); Semnān (*kalāka*, Sotūda, 1963, p. 309).

Other games in this category are *Ḥamūmak mūrča dāra(d)*, *Das o das noḡod o ‘adas*, etc.

(b) *The games for older children and adults*. There is no typological distinction between the games for children and those for adults. Generally these are games of skill or chance, which show physical or mental strength, agility, and endurance.

1 . *‘Amū zanjīrbāf* (uncle chain-maker). Players stand in line, holding each others’ hands; one master stands at the head and one at the end of the line. In rhythmic sentences one loudly asks the other whether he has made the chain and has thrown it behind the mountain. The answer to each question is *bale* (yes). Then he informs him of the arrival of his father with chick-peas and raisins. He is then instructed by the chain maker to eat them and move while making the noise of an animal (donkey, horse, cow, etc.). Following this leader, all the players start moving while making the appropriate animal noise. They pass under the hands of the chain-maker and the child next to him. All but one of the players return to their places in the line; the odd man out has to remain turned, thus making the first link of the chain. The game continues in this manner. Each time the voice of a new animal is imitated until all the players, still holding hands, look in one direction while the two leaders look in the



other. Now both leaders start to pull. The chain must not break, and each player must hold fast to both sides. The losers are the two whose link breaks, and they are punished in various ways. Dāmḡān (Ṭāherīya, p. 82); Gīlān (*Zanjīr zanjīrbāz*, Sotūda, 1953, p. 126); Golpāyegān (*ūstā-ye zanjīrbāf*, Parvīn Gonābādī, p. 60); Lāsgerd (*šotor šotorū*, Sotūda, 1963, p. 253); Mašhad (Parvīn Gonābādī, p. 20); Sarvestān (*oštor oštorū*, Homāyūnī, 1969, p. 471); Semnān (*zanjīrbāf*, Sotūda, 1963, p. 218).

2. *Ata-tal tūta matal* or *atak matak* or *gorg-am be-hawā* (similar to tag). A game played in group in which a *gorg* (wolf) is chosen to chase the others and catch them. To chose the “wolf” children stand in a circle and the leader sings a song beginning with the words *ata-tal tūta matal*. With each syllable he points to a child. The one indicated on the last syllable goes out of the circle and stands aside. The leader continues until two children remain, whereupon he repeats the song. The one who is not pointed at with the last syllable is the wolf. He chases the children, and whoever he catches becomes the wolf and must in turn chase the others. In some versions it is enough to be hit by the “wolf” to lose. In other versions, if a child can reach a special point (usually a height), he is safe from the wolf. Dāmḡān (Ṭāherīya, p. 81); Gīlān (*an dere ūn dere*, Sotūda, 1953, p. 12); Golpāyegān (Gonābādī, p. 29); Isfahan (*atūta tūt-o matal* and *gorg dar mīān*, Jamšād, pp. 47, 191); Lāsgerd (Sotūda, 1963, p. 10); Lorestān (differently *ātaš bīār*, Īzadpanāh, p. 1); Mašhad (Parvīn Gonābādī, p. 22); Shiraz (*ā gorg-e*, Faqīrī, p. 71, Homāyūnī, 1974, p. 58); Semnān (*atak matak* or *dabbāl-bāzī* or *pata pata*, Sotūda, 1963, pp. 10, 91, 108).

3. *Gāv, gūsāla yā fīngīlī* (cow, calf or the little one). The master chooses three pebbles of three different sizes. The biggest is *gāv* (the cow), the middle one is *gūsāla* (the calf), and the smallest one is *fīngīlī*. He hides one of them in his fist and asks a child to guess which it is. With the right guess the winning child stands aside. The master continues until one child, the loser, is left. The master covers his eyes with his hands and the rest of the children run and hide. Then the master calls each child; the one called must make a noise either by clapping his hands or by whistling. The losing child, his eyes shut, must guess the place in which the child making the noise is hidden. When all the children are called the ones whose hiding places are not discovered jump one by one onto the back of the loser. They point to a part of his body and ask him to guess which part of his body is being pointed at; if he guesses correctly he is replaced by another, if not, the child on his back continues to point to different parts of his body until he gets the right answer. In some regions all those



whose hiding places are not discovered jump on the back of those whose places are revealed. Gīlān (*gāv-gūsāla* and *gāv o gūsāla mengīlī*, Sotūda, 1953, pp. 209-10); Isfahan (*gāv gūsāla panīr*, Jamšād, p. 185), Kermān (*gow gūsāla fengelī*, Vahman, p. 50); Sarvestān (*gow gūsol fengel panīr*, Homāyūnī, 1969, p. 477); Shiraz (*gāvgūsālapanīr*, Faqīrī, p. 72); Semnān (*gāv gūsāla bengīlī*, Sotūda, 1963, p. 377; also *attarī mattarī*, *ibid.*, p. 270).

4. *Gorgam o galla mī-baram* (wolf and flock). From a group of children, one child is chosen as wolf and one as shepherd. The rest of the children stand in a line behind the shepherd, each holding the clothing of the one in front. The wolf and shepherd sing opposing songs while the wolf tries to catch a sheep by running into the flock. The shepherd must try to prevent it. Whoever is caught by the wolf is out, and the game continues until all the sheep are taken. In some versions the shepherd sits sadly and cries for having lost all his lambs. One of the children, pretending to be a passer-by, asks him what he would give for the return of his lambs. Whatever the shepherd says is refused until he offers him a *šalawāt* (praise of the Prophet and his followers). The man accepts, and by this means all the children cheerfully flee the wolf's captivity and flock around the shepherd. Golpāyegān (*gorg-am be galla't mīzanam*, Parvīn Gonābādī, p. 21); Isfahan (*gorg o galla*, Jamšād, p. 193); Lorestān (*gorg-am galla*, Īzadpanāh, p. 122); Mašhad (Parvīn Gonābādī, p. 21); Shiraz (Homāyūnī, 1974, p. 60), Tehran (Hedāyat, p. 20, recorded as *gorg-am be hawā* [?]).

5. *Joftak čārkoš* (leapfrog). Primarily a boys' game, in which a line is drawn, and one boy, placing himself a foot away from the line, bends over placing his hands on his knees. Taking turns, the rest of the children must vault over him, putting their hands on his back. They are not to cross the line, and only their hands may touch the body of the vault. The game continues, as the distance from the line is lengthened. If a child is unable to jump or touches the body of the other one, he has to start the game all over again, and the rest of the children jump over him in like manner.

Joftak čārkoš-e kīābūnī. A variation of the same game, in which the players stand in a line, and the children at the end of the line jump over all the ones in front of them and take their place at the head of the line, which thus moves ahead all the time. Gīlān (*anzalī dī* and *sappa*, Sotūda, 1953, pp. 13, 132); Golpāyegān (*jassan jassanak* or *jassanak-bāzī*, Parvīn Gonābādī, pp. 36, 37); Isfahan (*Šah o voley, jast o kīzak*, Jamšād, p. 163); Lāsgerd and Semnān (*koškos*, Sotūda, 1963, p. 168); Mašhad (*āv poštak*, also *dūr jastanāk* and *tūp jostanāk*,



Bahār, pp. 647, 712); Shiraz (*kowš[kafš]-bāzī*, Homāyūnī, 1974, p. 58).

6. *Kabūtar-bāzī* (pigeon racing). A widely played game with a large number of technical terms. Pigeons were used from ancient times to carry messages. Keeping pigeons and racing them became very popular in the time of Safavids, when huge pigeon towers (*kabūtar-kāna*, q.v.) were built around Isfahan (M.-J. Maḥjūb, “Yāddaštā-ī dar bāra-ye kabūtar o kabūtar-bāzī,” *Soḡan* 19/2, 1348 Š./1969, pp. 129-40, 19/3, pp. 281-99; Ī. Sepahbodī, “Kabūtar o kabūtar-bāzī,” *Rāhnamā-ye ketāb* 14/1-3, 1971, pp. 39-46).

7. *Nūn bīār kabāb bebar* (bring bread and get the kebab). A game played by two players, one holding his hands out palms-up, over which his opponent places his hands palms-down. The object is for the player with his hands on the bottom to slap the hands of the one on top. The name of the game is the same in most regions, e.g., Isfahan (Jamšād, p. 219); Tehran, etc. (Parvīn Gonābādī, p. 23).

8. *Qāyem mūšak* or *bāšak* (hide and seek). A child chosen by counting, hides his face in the hands of the master, so that he cannot see where the other children hide. When the master calls the name of each child, the one with his eyes closed must identify that player’s whereabouts. Gilān (*čamīn čelar o bardār o boro*, Sotūda, 1953, p. 78); Gonābād (*qāyem-bāzī* and *sarmā šūrak*, Parvīn Gonābādī, p. 19); Isfahan (*qāyem bāšak*, Jamšād, p. 173); Kerman (*sar gorīz kū*, Vahmaṅ, p. 49); Lāsgerd (*gol qolak*, Sotūda, 1963, p. 283, with some variations: *gow gozal pandār* and *mollā mollā*, *ibid.*, pp. 336, 366); Lorestān (*qāyem qāyem konī*, Īzadpanāh, p. 104, with some variations: *kaškela štra*, *ibid.*, p. 114); Mašhad (see Parvīn Gonābādī); Sarvestān (*češ begīrak*, Homāyūnī, 1969, p. 457).

9. *Ossokūn-mahtāb* (bone-moonshine). This game is played only when the moon is shining. The master throws a bone as far as he can, and the rest of the players run to find it. The finder, on showing the bone, must be carried back to the master by another player he manages to catch. Lorestān (*gol zerr*, Īzadpanāh, p. 124); Shiraz (*amsokūn matāb*, Faqīrī, p. 71; Ḥ. Ḥātāmī, *Payām-e novīn* 2, 1338 Š./1959, pp. 10-21). The Prophet Moḡammad as a child is said to have played this game, which in Arabic is called ‘*aẓm* (‘*oẓaym*) *wazzāḥ*; see *EI*² s.v. *la‘eb*.

10. *Qāb-bāzī* (knucklebones). Most probably an ancient game of chance which owes its origin to the pastoral life and the amusements of the nomads of the



Iranian plateau. The square knucklebone in the foot of sheep is used for this game, which, like *kabūtar-bāzī*, uses a wide range of terms. Each face of the knuckle-bone has a special name: *būk*, *jīk*, *asb*, *kar*, as does each of its curves: *šāk*, *kom*, *qūz*, *dīvāra*. The *qābs* are further divided into two categories, *sāda* “simple,” if pristine; *bārdār* or *por* if secretly loaded with lead or quicksilver. Knucklebones can be played by two to ten players. The names of the games vary according to the number of the *qābs* thrown, thus *se-qāb* (three-bone, the most usual one), *čār-qāb*, *panj-qāb*, etc. The value is determined according to the position of the bones after the throw. There are complicated rules which decide the outcome, with six winning positions and five losing ones. Ḥ. Jahānšāh, *Qāp-bāzī dar Īrān*, Tehran, 1350 Š./1971; A. Goļčīn-e Ma’ānī, “Bāzīhā-ye bord-o-baḳtī-e qarn-e sīzdahom,” *Honar o mardom* 164, 1355 Š./1976, pp. 28–39, Lāsgerd (*kīta*, *šak o vāzī dekārandan*, Sotūda, 1963, pp. 173, 250); Semnān (*čār qāf*, *yā qāf*, Sotūda, 1963, pp. 144, 423).

11. *Qaḷ’agīrī* (capturing the stronghold). A large number of children are divided into groups of four or five, each of which forms a circle, *qaḷ’a*, by holding hands. A child stands inside each circle, while one stands outside. The children who stand inside exchange places, and the child outside tries to get inside one of the empty circles. The one who then is left out tries the same thing and the game continues in this manner. Lāsgerd and Semnān (*qaḷ’a qaḷ’a*, Sotūda 1964, p. 281); as an indoor game with five players using the corners of a room: Isfahan (*gūša gīr gūš-eš-o begīr*, Jamsād, p. 214); Mašhad (*gūša-bāzī*, Parvīn Gonābādī, p. 22).

12. *Tīla-bāzī* (marbles). Played by two to four players, each of whom digs a small hole of 3-4 cm depth called a *kāna* (house) and places (*kāštan*) his marble close to it. The other player puts his marble on the ground and tries from a distance to hit his opponent’s marble (or occupy his house) by shooting his own marble with his two index fingers. The object is to win as many marbles or houses as possible. Gīlān (*Tīrra-zaney* and *zie-zienī*, Sotūda, 1953, pp. 60, 127).

13. *Tokm-e morġ-bāzī* (the game of [dyed] eggs). A game between two or a few more children one of whom holds a dyed, hard-boiled egg in his fist so that the top of the egg is visible. Another child hits the egg with the top of his own egg. The winner is the one with the hardest egg, and the broken egg goes to the winner. This game is mostly played at Nowrūz. Lāsgerd (*marġana-vāzī*, Sotūda, 1963, p. 360); Lorestān (*tormaġ-bāzī*, Īzadpanāh, p. 28).



14. *Ye qol do qol* (jacks). From two to six children take turns tossing five pebbles in the air and try to catch them on the back of their hands. The one who catches the most pebbles starts the game and the others follow in order. The object of the game is to add a pebble with each round. Thus *ye qol* is when one pebble is thrown up and the remaining four are collected one by one; *do-qol* when one pebble is thrown up and two pebbles at a time are collected; *se-qol* (three pebbles), *čār-qol* (four pebbles). The game continues with more demanding tests like *beškan* (break it), *naškan* (do not break it), *jārū* (broom), *pārū* (shovel), *toḱm kon* (egg it), *darvāza* (gate), *golābpāš* (rose-water sprinkler). Gonābād (*rīg-gozal*, Parvīn Gonābādī, p. 47); Isfahan (Jamšād, p. 225); Sarvestān (*qotūr* or *haštak*, Homāyūnī, 1969, p. 464); Shiraz (Homāyūnī, 1974, p. 53); Semnān (*ārīsīka* with some differences: *māl-māl*, *marḡana marḡana*, *var čīn var čīn*, Sotūda, 1963, pp. 269, 355, 360, 396).

Of the other games in this category the followings might be mentioned: *Alak-dolak*, *Dovālak-bāzī* (see A. Bolūkbāšī, “Dovālak-bāzī wa taḡqīq-ī dar vāža-ye dovālak,” *Honar o mardom* 89, 1348 Š./1969, pp. 28-45; *Gerdū-bāzī*, game of walnuts (similar to *tīla-bāzī*); *Ley ley* or *Aker doker*, hoping.

(c) *Ceremonial and seasonal games*. A number of ceremonial games have come to us from ancient times with elements of ritualistic songs and magical ceremonies. Such games, although performed at special occasions or seasons, proceed like all games according to definite rules, requiring special instruments.

Invoking rain. In Sarvestān in Fārs, children play a game called *kos-angalū*, by going around from house to house collecting ingredients necessary for making bread and gathering wood for a fire. The bread is made at a communal fire; each participant eats some bread, and puts a piece on a stick which is held up while they march about, half of them singing *Ka čī mīḱāt?* “What does Ka want?”, and the rest answer *az ḱodā bārūn mīḱāt* “He asks God to make it rain.” Similar ceremonial games are used to stop the rain. Homāyūnī, 1969, pp. 395-96; A. Šakūrzāda, *Aqāyed o rosūm-e āmīāna-ye mardom-e Ḳorāsān*, Tehran, 1346 Š./1967, p. 270; A. Faḡīrī, “Marāsem-e do‘ā-ye bārān dar ḡūša o kenār-e Fārs,” *Honar o mardom* 182, 1346 Š./1967, pp. 36-40; F. Vahman and G. Asatrian, “Invoking the Rain,” in *West Iranian Dialect Materials from the Collection of D. H. Lorimer I: Materials on the Ethnography of Baxtiārīs*, Copenhagen, 1987, pp. 31-33.

In this category many games performed at Čahāršanba Sūrī (q.v.: the evening



before the last Wednesday of the year), such as *parīdan az rū-ye ātaš* (jumping over small fires), *qāšoqzanī* (tapping with a spoon in a metal bowl), etc., can be mentioned.

Games such as *tāb-bāzī* (swinging), *allā kolang* (see-sawing), *ṭanāb-bāzī* (skipping rope), are played all the year round but on the day of *sīzda be dar* (the outdoor picnic on the thirteenth day of Nowrūz) such games are played by everyone. During Nowrūz and in the early spring it is common to play *tokm-e morḡ-bāzī*.

(d) *Theatrical games*. These are the games usually played by the women in private female gatherings. Islamic traditions prohibit the exhibition of women's song and dance when men are present.

1. *Gol-e gandom*. Songs and dances performed by men in mixed company, demonstrating sawing, irrigation, harvesting, and threshing. Arāk, Kermān, Tehran, Yazd (Enjavī, pp. 74ff.).

2. *Ḳāla row row*. Song and dance telling the story of a woman who has become pregnant prior to her marriage. Through singing and dancing she pantomimes giving birth to her child, as other women sing and answer her questions. Isfahan (Jamšād, p. 113); Sarvestān (*ḳāla mow mow*, Homāyūnī, 1969, p. 446); Kāzerūn, Šahr-e Kord, Tehran, Yazd, Zanjān (Enjavī, pp. 1ff.).

3. *Kī-e kī-e dar mīzana* (who is knocking on the door?). A dialogue between a girl and her permissive mother who allows her to open the door and accept gifts from such different men as the butcher, baker, tailor, shoe-maker, etc. Borūjen, Kermān, Ṭabas, Tehran, Yazd (Enjavī, p. 93).

4. *Qanbar sīmā*. A dialogue between a woman and her black servant about the second wife soon to be added to the household. Hamadān, Tehran (Enjavī, p. 24).

On such games see also A. Bolūkbāšī, "Namāyeshā-ye šādīāvar-e zanāna dar Tehrān," *Honar o mardom* 27, 1343 Š./1964, pp. 26-28.

(e) *Games of intelligence*.

1. *Čīstān* (riddles; lit. "what is that?"). A riddle is asked in a poetic form and the answer has to be guessed.



2. *Dūz-bāzī*, lines and angles are drawn on a piece of paper and different sets of pebbles (or marbles) are moved on them according to different rules. Golpāyegān (*davāzda dūz*, Parvīn Gonābādī, p. 95); Isfahan (Jamšād, p. 132); Lāsgerd (*davāzda kaṭṭ dūz dūz*, Sotūda, 1964, p. 195); Lorestān (*dūz*, Īzadpanāh, p. 62); Semnān (*čār-tappa*, Sotūda, 1963, p. 142).

3. *Haštpāy* (eight-footed). Like chess and backgammon, a board game, played today in Sangesar under the names *rač ī rač* (side against side), *qaḷ'a be qaḷ'a* (stronghold against stronghold), *sī o šaš rača* (36 pebbles in row). A design with eight stands is drawn on a flat surface. Two contestants, each having thirty-six pieces or men in two different colors (or employing beans, peas, or pebbles), put the men on seventy-two points of the design where lines meet or cross. The game is a battle which ends by conquering a castle with four walls and eight towers. Ch. A. Azami, "Hašt Pāy," *Studia Iranica* 14/1, 1985, pp. 105-07; *Āyanda* 12/5-6, Tehran, 1365 Š./1986, p. 200; Bailey, *BSOAS* 9, p. 233.

4. *Mošā'ara* (poetical contest or play on verses) is a kind of play or parlor game, in which one person recites a line of poetry whereupon the next person has to cite a verse beginning with the last letter of the verse and so on. In olden times a whole *gāzal* was to be quoted by heart in a form of contest (as it is still regularly held in India and Pakistan). The late poet Mahdī Sohaylī organized a weekly *mošā'ara* contest which was broadcast on Tehran Radio and was very popular in the mid-sixties.

5. *Nard* (backgammon) is by far the most popular board game in Iran. The name of this game in Pahlavi texts is *nēw-ardašīr* "noble is Ardašīr." It is unclear to which Ardašīr it is attributed (see Brunner, p. 44). The Persian and Arabic term *nard* is a contraction of the Middle Persian name (Nyberg, *Manual* II, p. 138). See *nard*.

6. *Šatranj* (chess) was played in Iran from ancient times. Originally an Indian game, it was introduced to Iran in the sixth century and was brought to the west by the Arabs. N. Blandi, "On the Persian game of Chess," *JRAS* 13, 1980, p. 7; H. J. R. Murray, *History of Chess*, London, 1962. See *chess*.

See also [ās](#); [card games](#); guvy o Āčowgān.



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