



## BŪQALAMŪN

**BŪQALAMŪN** (in verse also *būqalmūn*), short for *abūqalamūn*, arabicized from Gk. *hupokálamon* (see Dozy, I, pp. 6-7, s.v. *abūqalamūn*), term applied to a variety of objects or animals exhibiting changing colors, such as (silk) fabrics, the gemstone jasper, the chameleon, and the turkey. The semantic evolution of the word in Arabic and/or Persian may be presented as follows.

The original sense in Arabic, corresponding to the Greek, is a cloth (*tawb*) that was made in Greece and showed various colors when “posed at different angles to sunlight, i.e., moiré (thus Yāqūt, IV, p. 166; see also Sīrāfi, quoted in *Lesān al-‘arab* XIII, s.v. *qalamūn*). Probably imitating the moiré technique of *abūqalamūn* cloth, Egyptian weavers, especially in Damietta and Tennis, produced moiré carpets (*al-farš al-abūqalamūn*, Yāqūt, I, p. 882, s.v. *Tennīs*, or *al-farš al-qalamūnī* “in all colors,” *ibid.*, II, p. 603, s.v. *Demyāt*), as well as multicolored cloths or garments (*al-tīāb al-molawwana*; *ibid.*, I, p. 882).

In classical Persian poetry, *farš-e būqal(a)mūn* was figuratively used in the sense of “multi-colored or mottled carpet or spread” in the description of the spring pageantry, e.g., “The breeze has spread a *farš-e būqalmūn* under the shade of the garden’s trees” (Sa’dī, *Golestān*, ed. K. Kaṭīb-e Rahbar, Tehran, 1348 Š./1969, p. 29).

By extension, the word in classical Persian came to signify Roman (i.e., Byzantine) multicolored silk cloth (*dībā-ye rūmī*) of changing hues (*Borhān-e qāte’*, s.v. *būqalamūn*, ed. Mo’in, I, pp. 318-19; cf. the new notions of “Roman” and “silk” in Fīrūzābādī’s *Qāmūs al-moḥīṭ* III, p. 683: “Roman cloth with



changing colors,” and in Šartūnī’s *Aqrab al-mawāred* II, p. 1035: “Roman silk cloth displaying various hues to the eyes”). The metaphorical use of this acceptance of *būqal(a)mūn* is frequent in classical Persian poetry, e.g., “In battle his sword is shiny and colorful like moiré silk cloth (*dībā-ye būqalmūn*)” (Manūčehrī, *Dīvān*, p. 65); “in the early spring we found better color variations (*būqalamūnihā*) than [those of] *būqalamūn*” (ibid., p. 170).

The changing colors of the *būqalamūn* fabric led to another figurative use, referring to the unpredictable vicissitudes of times and changes of fortune, as an epithet for *‘ālam* (the world), *ayyām* (days, times), *dahr* (time, fate), *sepehr* (the celestial sphere, heavens), and the like in classical Persian literature (for examples, see *Loġat-nāma*, s.v. *būqalamūn*, and especially Kāqānī’s expression *būqalamūnbāf-e šobḥ o šām* “the *būqalamūn* weaver of morns and eves,” referring to fickle Fortune, ibid., s.v. *būqalamūnbāf*).

In Arabic sources, *abūqalamūn* was later applied to a certain bird. Yāqūt (I, p. 885) quotes an historian of Tennīs as mentioning it among the numerous birds occurring there. The *Lesān al-‘arab* (loc. cit.) quotes a report by Sīrāfī from an inhabitant of Egypt that *abūqalamūn* was an aquatic bird displaying various colors and that the *abūqalamūn* cloth was named after this bird. The identity of such a bird, with a shimmering or multicolored plumage, is not certain (cf. *Borhān-e qāte’*, s.vv. (*a*)*būqalamūn*; which just states that it is also the name of a bird). Qazvīnī (p. 269) equates it with the fictitious *abū-barāqeš*, described by him as a melodious bird as large as a stork, with a long neck, long legs, and a red bill; whose colors varied between red, green, yellow, and blue, and mentions that the cloths called *abūqalamūn*, which were brought from Byzantium, were woven after the color pattern of this bird. Damīrī, who often quotes Qazvīnī’s descriptions of “wonderful” animals, however, describes *abū-barāqeš* as a passerine bird displaying various colors (I, p. 229). *Al-mawsū‘a* (a modern Arabic encyclopedia of natural science), while equating the *abū-barāqeš* with the common bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula* L.), the male of which has a multicolored plumage, makes *abūqalamūn* a synonym of *zommat*, the chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* L.), which has a very glossy black plumage with bluish glints, and red legs and beak.

In Arabic sources, jasper (*yašb/yašf*) was eventually referred to as *abūqalamūn*. According to Aḥmad Ġāfeqī (6th/12th cent., quoted by Ebn al-Bayṭār, pt. 4, p. 209, s.v. *yašf*), jasper was believed by some to be a varicolored (*molawwan*) Abyssinian ruby, called *abūqalamūn* in the East (cf. Tonokābonī, p. 41, who gives *abūqalamūn* only as a synonym of *ḥajar al-yašb/al-yašf* “jasper stone”; in



*Borhān-e qāte'* (ed. Mo'in, I, pp. 318-19) *sang-pošt*, properly the tortoise, said to be "called (*a*)*būqalamūn* by the Easterners," is but a misreading of Pers. *sang-e yašb* "jasper stone"). Mas'ūdī, too (*Morūj* II, pp. 437-38), mentions a variant of this term, namely *al-bāqalamūn*, as the name of a gem that changes color like the variable luster of peacock feathers and with which the bezels (*fošūš*) known as *al-bāqalamūn* were wrought, whose colors vary between red, green, and yellow depending on the limpidity of the gem's water, and on the observer's angles of vision.

In Persian, the chameleon (q.v.) was also named *būqalamūn* on account of its ability to change color.

Lastly, the imported turkey was baptized *būqalamūn* in Persian. Domesticated turkeys, derived from their wild Mexican and North American ancestor (*Meleagris gallopavo*), were introduced into Europe about 1500 and thence into Persia in the mid-11th/17th century. The French traveler Tavernier (1605-89), who made several trips to Persia between 1632 and 1668, has described the first introduction of the turkey, which he calls *poulet d'Indes* "Indies chicken," into Persia as follows (pp. 380-81; Pers. tr., p. 371): The first "India chickens" that he saw in Europe were brought from West India by the Dutch, who took the turkey first to Holland and then to other European countries. The Armenians of Jolfā, Isfahan, who went to Venice for trade, brought turkeys to Isfahan (these had been brought to Europe from the West Indies). The king (probably Shah 'Abbās I or Shah Šafī) liked turkey meat so much that he ordered turkey eggs to be distributed to the wealthiest Armenians of Jolfā to take care of the breeding and to give him a certain number of turkeys annually; but the Armenians, noticing that raising turkeys would become a new imposition on them, like producing capons, neglected this job, and all the turkeys perished. Later the turkey was again introduced into Iran, this time probably from Russia via Azarbaijan. Russian provenience is indicated by Schlimmer (p. 366), and one may also compare the Turkish names of this bird in Iranian Azarbaijan, *hendūškā* (from Russ.), and particularly *haštarkān* (*toyōgū*) "Astrakhan (fowl)" and the obsolete Gīlakī name *ūrūsī morġ* "Russian fowl" recorded by Maṛ'ašī (s.v.).

The domestic turkey cock typically has an iridescent black plumage that is better displayed when it fans its tail and wings like a peacock, and its featherless head, front, and upper neck are covered with erectile caruncles that change color with the bird's mood, going from red to blue and violet. These two features explain why it was called *būqalamūn*. The turkey in turn



gave its name to the *gol-e būqalamūn*, the sweet William, *Dianthus barbatus*, various colors of which, according to E'temād-al-Salṭana (I, p. 137), were introduced into Iran during the first forty years of the reign of the Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah Qājār (r. 1264-1313/1848-96) and which is sometimes confused with the (*gol-e*) *qaranfol*, China/rainbow pink, *D. chinensis*. The flower was probably called so because its small white to purple mottled or concentrically striped flowers with fringed petals and borne in roundish corymbs were fancied as the fanned tail feathers of a turkey-cock.

Other Persian names recorded for the turkey in some sources (including modern dictionaries, e.g., Handjéri, I, s.v. *dindon*) are: *korūs-e hendī* “Indian rooster” (translation of Ar. *dīk hendī*, itself a calque of Fr. *coq d’Inde*), a misnomer no longer used today; *pīrūj* (*sic*; e.g., in *Farhang-e Nafīsī*, s.v. *būqalamūn*; alteration of Hindi *pīrū/perū*. Itself from Port. *peru*, an indication that very probably this bird was introduced by the Portuguese from America into the East Indies; see also Yule and Burnell, pp. 944-45, s.v. *turkey*); and *fīl-morġ* “elephant fowl” (recorded, e.g., in the *Dā’erat al-ma’āref-e Āryānā*, p. 3258 s.v. *būqalamūn*), used in Afghanistan and probably referring to the snout-like fleshy outgrowth that hangs on the forehead of the turkey cock at the base of its beak like a small elephant trunk, especially when it swells its wattles and erects its feathers. Kurdish dialects are particularly rich in names for the turkey (Mokrī, pp. 22-23, etc.): alterations of *būqalamūn*, e.g., *būqlamūn*, *baqlamūt*, *baqla* (Sanandaj), *qalamūna* (Mokrī), *būq/būqalam* (Kalhor, Zangena); names indicating confusion about the provenience of the turkey: *merīškā/merežkā meṣrī* “Egyptian hen” (Kurdish dialects in Turkey), *hendū* “Indian” (Kurmānjī dialect of Vān in Turkey); probably onomatopoeic names: *alīšīš* (in Kurmānjī and the dialect of Qaṣr-e Šīrīn), *alū-alū* (in Turkey, Syria, Lebanon; cf. Eng. *gobble-gobble* and Fr. *glouglou*).

Turkey raising on a commercial scale is a rather new enterprise in Iran. It is carried out in a nonindustrialized way mainly in the provinces of Mīāndoāb (in Azarbaijan), Mahābād, Sanandaj, and Kermānšāh (Mošīrī, pp. [4-5]). The common indigenous breed of turkeys is greatly degenerated and does not produce any significant quantities of meat and eggs; therefore turkey breeding for commercial purposes is not economical (Malja’ī, p. 14).

Because of its relative scarcity and high cost the consumption of turkey meat has not reached a nationwide level. In Iranian cookery turkey meat is considered an expensive delicacy; it is sometimes substituted for mutton in *halīm* or chicken meat in some dishes (e.g., pilaf).



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