



CRANE

CRANE (*kolang* < Mid. Pers. *kulang*; Orm. and Par. *kolang*; Morgenstierne, pp. 266, 398; cf. Kurmanji Kurdish [*gāz*] *qoleng*, *qoreng*, etc.; Mokri, pp. 102-03; Širāzī *gāz qolang*; *dornā* < Turk. *turna*; Doerfer, *Elemente* III, pp. 199-200; Figure 1), any of the large migratory wading birds of the family Gruidae.

Three species of cranes migrate to Persia for the winter (Hüe and Étchépar, pp. 233-37; Scott et al., pp. 116-17). First are two subspecies of *Grus grus* L., the common crane (*dornā*; Figure 1), which averages 112 cm from beak to tail: *G. g. grus* (L.), which winters in southwestern Persia, and the second, *G. g. lilfordi* Sharpe, which winters mainly near the Caspian, in southern Persia, in southeastern Afghanistan, and in isolated colonies in Transcaucasia. The second species, *Anthropoides virgo* L. (the demoiselle crane, *dornā-ye kūčak* “small crane”), 95 cm long, is not very common in Persia and in recent years has been seen only in the Caspian region, Azarbaijan, and central Fārs (Scott et al., p. 117). Finally, *Grus leucogeranus* Pallas, the Siberian white crane (*dornā-ye safīd* “white crane”), winters from the Caspian area down to Sīstān (but cf. Scott et al., p. 111, where this species is considered “accidental” in Persia). Judging from at least one 19th-century report, cranes were probably more abundant in Persia in the past (Zell-al-Soltān, pp. 347-48) than they are today. Since the 1970s they have been protected by Sāzmān-e ḥefāzāt-e moḥīt-e zīst (Department of the environment), and hunting them (p. 6: *qaṭār-kolang* [?]) is prohibited.

Crane meat is licit (*ḥalāl*) according to Islamic law (Damīrī, II, s.v. *korkī[y]*, p. 247), and cranes were hunted for both food and sport with specially trained



falcons (*qūš-e kalān-gīr* “big-[game]-catching falcons”; see *bāz*; *bāzdārī*). Tīmūr Mīrzā, a professional falconer of the Qajar period, reported that cranes would often unite to kill the falcon and that, “if a king had five thousand cavalymen as zealous and bold as cranes, he could conquer the world if he wished so” (pp. 122-23). M. Şarrām, a modern hunter, believes that hunting cranes with a shotgun is the most challenging but exhilarating hunt because of the birds’ extreme vigilance.

The *kolang* is mentioned in the *Bundahišn* as one of 110 species of birds (tr. Anklesaria, 13.22). In classical Persian poetry the crane’s ability to fly high and far; its order, discipline, and characteristic whooping sounds in flight; and its vulnerability to intrepid falcons are mentioned (Dehḡodā, s.vv. *kolang*, *korkī*). The palace built by the tyrant Żaḡḡāk in Babylon was said to have been called *Kolang-dīs* because it was shaped like a crane (Ḥamza, p. 32; *Mojmal*, ed. Bahār, p. 41), possibly reflecting an ancient myth about cranes in Persia and Mesopotamia.

The learned Şahmardān b. Abi’l-Ḳayr, in his *Nozhat-nāma-ye ‘alā’ī* (ca. 490-95/1097-1102; p. 136), described the migrating pattern of cranes, which fly in large numbers and in single file. Each flock is led by one bird, which at intervals is outdistanced and replaced by the bird immediately following, so that each bird in the file “might enjoy the honor and prestige of leadership.” When the flocks rest at night, always far from people and such predators as foxes and jackals, the birds take turns keeping watch, and the watching bird stands on one leg in order not to fall asleep. Şahmardān also mentioned a medicinal use for crane gall (*zahra*): If inserted into the nostril, it was supposed to cure migraine (*dard-e šaqīqa*) or palsy (*laqwa*) of the face (for other medicinal uses of the crane, see Şarīf Edrīsī [d. ca. 560/1165] apud Ebn al-Bayṡār, II, pt. 4, p. 66; Zakariyā’ Qazvīnī, apud Damīrī, II, p. 284; Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfī, text, p. 120, tr., pp. 86-87). According to Dā’ūd Anṡākī (d. 1008/1599; I, p. 236), crane meat “is digested slowly and is not nutritious.” Żell-al-Solṡān (pp. 347-48) considered crane meat, like that of geese, good only for making *halīm*, a kind of meat porridge.



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