



## AḤMAD ČARMPŪŠ

**AḤMAD B. SAYYED MŪSĀ HAMADĀNĪ ČARMPŪŠ** (ČERAMPŌŠ), Sohravardī poet-saint of 14th century Bihar (d. 26 Šafar 755/22 March 1354). Aḥmad was educated at home in various branches of Islamic learning before he began his wanderings as a *vārasta qalandar* (“liberated mendicant”; *Mūnes al-qolūb*, a *malfūzāt* collection of Aḥmad Langar Daryā, grandson of Ḥosayn Mo‘ezz Balḵī). He adopted the *laqab* Čarmpūš as a mark of respect for his *pīr* ‘Alā’-al-dīn Čarmpūš, a Sohravardī saint of Multan who had come to Bihar and performed his *čella* (“forty day retreat”) at Puraini (Bhagalpur; see *Raḥīq al-‘ārefīn*, a *malfūzāt* collection of Ḥosām-al-dīn Manekpūrī, the Češtī successor to Nūr Qoṭb-e ‘Ālam Pandavī). Aḥmad himself tells us: “I am the little dog (*sagak*) of the hidewearer (*čarmpūš*).” Though held high in popular estimation, Aḥmad Čarmpūš was eclipsed by his younger first cousin, Šaraf-al-dīn b. Yaḥyā Manērī, who became the most famous saint of medieval Bihar. Aḥmad was both a gifted poet and an intense mystic; in the latter capacity, he displayed the awe-inspiring (*jalālī*) rather than the beneficent (*jamālī*) attributes of God. Occasionally his utterances were of the “theopathic” type (*šaṭḥīyāt*): “The self-existent God is in the form of Aḥmad, devoid of attributes, true or false”; “Do not expect to see Aḥmad in his own garb; the divine light shines through my woolen cloak.” Though he exposed himself to the charge of blasphemy and “spiritual insanity” (*majdūbī*) by such utterances, he was fully alive to the need for restraint and observing the *šarī‘a*. Like so many Sufis, he saw God reflected in all forms: “For swimmers in the divine ocean, love (*‘ešq*) gives Islam and *kofr* the same hue”; “Regard all religions as one and esteem them all: in reality divinity is limitless.”



Aḥmad Čarmpūš is known chiefly for his *dīvān*, which portrays his mystical experiences. Many of his odes are modeled on those of Rūmī, Aḥmad Jām, ‘Erāqī, Amīr Ḳosrow, Neẓāmī Ganjavī, Mağrebī, and Anwarī. A *malḡūzāt* collection is also extant, similar in tone to the *dīvān* and entitled *Ẓīā’ al-qolūb*. Its nine brief chapters, compiled by an immediate disciple, ‘Alā’-al-dīn ‘Alī b. Ebrāhīm Šūfī, are based on observations of and letters from the saint. In one passage, written in Hindi, Aḥmad discusses the distinction between *zāhed* (religious recluse) and *pārsā* (abstemious devotee); he states that the full import of this distinction must be obtained from Hindu sages, since nothing similar exists in Arabic. *Ẓīā’ al-qolūb* is devoid of personal references, pious frauds, and nonsensical miracles such as are frequently attributed to him in *Manāqeb al-aṣḡfā’* and other writings of the Ferdowsī order. Aḥmad’s tomb still exists in the town of Ambersharif, northeast of Bari Dargāh, Biharsharif, the tomb site of his illustrious cousin, Šaraf-al-dīn. It is a quiet, shaded place, housing the last remains of many relatives and disciples of the saint. It is regularly visited by local devotees, especially on the occasion of the saint’s ‘ors (death commemoration).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Of the mss. of *Dīvān-e Aḥmad*, those at Phulvarisharif and Oriental Public Library, Patna (wrongly attributed to Aḥmad Jām Žandapīl) are the best and the fullest. The lithograph edition from Lucknow, though alphabetically arranged, is unreliable. *Ẓīā’ al-qolūb*, lith. ed., Cawnpore, 1320/1902-03; ms., O. P. L., Patna. *Manāqeb al-aṣḡfā’*, lith. ed., Calcutta, 1895; ms. O. P. L., Patna. S. H. Askari, “Haẓrat Aḥmad Čerampōš, a 14th century Sufi Saint of Bihar,” *Patna University Journal* 7, 1954, pp. 20-32.