



BEKTĀŠ, ḤĀJĪ

BEKTĀŠ, ḤĀJĪ (d. 669/1270-71?), Khorasanian Sufi and eponym of the Bektāšī order (see [bektāšjya](#)), once widespread in Anatolia and the Balkans, with offshoots in Egypt, Iraq, and Western Iran. His life is still more thickly shrouded in legend than that of many other Sufis because of the multitude of extraneous influences that gradually penetrated the Bektāšī order and became anachronistically reflected in the accounts of its origins. The principal hagiographical work concerning Ḥājī Bektāš is the *Welāyat-nāma* (*Vilāyet-Nāme*) of Uzun Ferdowsī (also known as Ferdowsī-e Ṭawīl), written in Turkish prose some time between 886/1481 and 907/1501 (see Gölpınarlı, ed., 1958, pp. xix-xxv). It was composed on the basis of popular traditions at a time when the Bektāšī order was becoming suffused with elements of the folk Shi'ism that was rampant in Anatolia.

According to the *Vilāyet-Nāme* (pp. 1-4), Ḥājī Bektāš was the son of Sayyed Moḥammad b. Mūsā, a great-grandson of Mūsā al-Kāẓem (d. 183/799); this is impossible, given the fact that Ḥājī Bektāš lived in the 7th/13th century. Genealogies encountered in later sources and designed to fill the obvious gap in time are all questionable and may well have been inspired by a wish—analogueous to that of the fabricators of the Safavid genealogy—to give Ḥājī Bektāš, as the eponym of a nominally Shi'ite order, Imami descent.

Again according to the *Vilāyet-Nāme* (p. 1), Ḥājī Bektāš was born in Nīšāpūr. There is no independent confirmation of this, and a general tendency to



describe a whole range of sacred personages—particularly those with Malāmatī features—as *Horasan erleri* (the saints of Khorasan) can be discerned in Turkish hagiographical works of the period (see Köprülü, 1338/1919-20, p. 295). It is nonetheless highly probable that Ḥājī Bektāš did indeed form part of the westward migration that was occasioned by the Mongol invasion of Khorasan and that his origins were therefore Iranian.

As to the spiritual affiliations of Ḥājī Bektāš, legend has regarded him as a *kalīfa* of K̄vāja Aḥmad Yasawī (d. 562/1166-67), the eponym of the Yasawī order that had a wide following among Turkic nomads in Central Asia; supposedly Yasawī sent him to Anatolia to propagate his order there. This is chronologically impossible, and may be taken as reflecting the later absorption into the ranks of the Bektāšī order of Anatolian Yasawīs who had abandoned the Sunni affiliations of their order under the influence of Anatolian folk Shi'ism. The attribution of Yasawī affiliation to Ḥājī Bektāš was also accepted, however, by members of other orders, who wished to combine reverence for the figure of Ḥājī Bektāš with condemnation of the Bektāšīs for their antinomianism (see, for example, Lāme'ī Čalabī/Lāmi'ī Çelebī, 1289/1872, p. 691). Ḥājī Bektāš is also said to have been the disciple of Loqmān-e Paranda (*Vilāyet-Nāme*, pp. 5-7). Loqmān-e Paranda, one of the successors of Aḥmad Yasawī, is frequently confused with Loqmān-e Saraḳsī, a contemporary of Abū Sa'īd b. Abī'l-Ḳayr (d. 440/1048), the confusion being facilitated, no doubt, by the fact that Saraḳsī is related once to have fled (Jāmī, *Nafahāt*, p. 296, and Ma'šūm-'Alīšāh, n.d., II, p. 348).

It is historically verifiable that after his arrival in Anatolia—by way of Najaf and Mecca, it is said—Ḥājī Bektāš became a leading follower (*kalīfa-ye kāšš*) of a certain Bābā Rasūl-Allāh, also known as Bābā Elyās Ḳorāsānī. Bābā Elyās, who led the Bābā'ī insurrection of 639/1240 and was executed at Amasya in the same year, was the *kalīfa* of Dada Qarḡīn (or Ġarḡīn), himself the appointed representative among the Anatolian Turkmen of Tāj-al-'Ārefīn Sayyed Abu'l-Wafā' (d. 498/1105 in Baghdad), founder of the Wafā'ī order (see Elvân Çelebi, 1984, text, pp. 17-18, and introduction by Erünsal and Ocak, pp. xli-xlv). Bābā Elyās was able, however, to gather beneath his banner not only Wafā'īs but also members of many other loosely organized antinomian Sufi groups that can be designated collectively as Qalandarīs. It seems that Ḥājī Bektāš may also be regarded as a Qalandarī, neglectful as he was of his ritual obligations under the religious law (*šarī'a*). Aflākī, biographer of the earliest members of



the Mawlawī (Mevlevī) *selsela*, describes him as “a man of gnostic and illumined nature who failed to follow the *šarīʿa* (*dar motābeʿat nabūd*)” (Aflākī, 1953, I, pp. 381-82). He also reports the account given to Mawlānā Jalāl-al-Dīn Rūmī by Nūr-al-Dīn Jijā, governor of Kırşehir, of Ḥājī Bektāš’s refusal to pray and his transformation of the water intended for ablution into blood (*ibid.*, I, pp. 497-98; see, also, *Vilâyet-Nâme*, p. 30).

Ḥājī Bektāš began his activity on behalf of Bābā Elyās in Sivas, together with his brother Menteš. From there they moved in turn to Amasya, Kırşehir and Kayseri. From Kayseri Menteš returned to Sivas where he was put to death, while Ḥājī Bektāš went to settle in Suluca-karaöyük, a village near Kırşehir that later came to bear his name (Aşıkpaşazade, 1332/1916, pp. 204-05). Never involved in the Bābāī insurrection as militantly as his brother, Ḥājī Bektāš spent the rest of his life there, peaceably engaged in preaching to a small group of followers. It is unclear whether they had a formal initiatic relation with him; as a pure *majdūb* (ecstatic) he referred all who sought disciplined spiritual training to an adoptive daughter, Kātūn Anā.

The date of Ḥājī Bektāš’s death is given on the frontispiece of a collection of Bektāšī treatises now in the Ankara library (ms. A. I. 132) as 669/1270-71. The same date is given in the *Selsela-nāma* of Darviš Moḥammad Šokrī, an early twentieth-century writer (ms. Hüdayı 122). The epithet *al-marḥūm* used after the name of Ḥājī Bektāš in a *waqf* document dated 691/1291-92 indicates that he must at all events have died some time before or during that year (Birge, 1937, pp. 40-41). The first tomb built over his grave was erected by Sultan Morād I (r. 763-91/1362-89).

Bektāšī tradition is in general agreement that Ḥājī Bektāš left behind adoptive, spiritual offspring. There is division of opinion on whether he also left behind natural offspring. What is certain is that the Bektāšī order acquired most of its distinctive characteristics—close identity with folk Shiʿism, an enthusiastic interest in Horufism, and an openness to certain Christian influences—considerably after the death of Ḥājī Bektāš.

A record of his own teachings and beliefs is contained in the *Maqālāt* (also known as *Küçük Vilâyet-Nâme*), the only book reliably attributed to him. It seems to have been written originally in Arabic, although based on Ḥājī



Bektāš's dicta in Turkish; it survives both in an Arabic version and a more widely read Turkish recension made by one of his followers, Sa'd-al-Dīn (see Coşan, ed., pp. xlili-lij). Illustrated with frequent Koranic quotations and a variety of vivid if fanciful anecdotes—many of them not encountered in earlier Sufi writings—the *Maqālāt* is dominated by an emphasis on the fourfold structure of religion (*šarī'at*, *ṭarīqat*, *ma'refat*, *ḥaqīqat*) together with its correlates in the material world (the four elements), man (four distinct spiritual types), and sacred history (the four Rightly Guided Caliphs). Particularly noteworthy as preparing the way for the later absorption of Horufi influences by the Bektāšīya is Ḥājī Bektāš's assertion that man was created according to the pattern of the letters forming the name Moḥammad (*Maqālāt*, ed. Coşan, p. 77). Ḥājī Bektāš includes formal adherence to the Sunni creed among the ten stations (*maqāmāt*) of the *šarī'a*, as well as performance of the prayer, despite his own neglect of it (*ibid.*, pp. 20-21); in these respects, his work is at variance with the later practice of the Bektāšī order.

Two Persian treatises have been attributed to Ḥājī Bektāš: *Fawā'ed* and *Maqālāt-e ḡaybīya wa kalemāt-e 'aynīya* (copies of both in ms. Osman Ergin, İstanbul Belediye Kütüphanesi, 1948). Both consist of unacknowledged borrowings from the writings of Sufis who lived either before or after Ḥājī Bektāš and must therefore be regarded as inauthentic. Also incorrect is the attribution to Ḥājī Bektāš of a brief *šaḥīya* in Turkish, written by a certain Anwarī, a name wrongly taken to be the *maḥlaş* of Ḥājī Bektāš.

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