



## ČARK

**ČARK**, a common toponym all over the Iranian world. The following forms are attested in Iran and Afghanistan: Čark-e Binal (also known as Čarkāb), a village about 26 km north of Bālā Morgāb; Čark-e Falak, a small village in Tabādkān district northeast of Mašhad, a site 5 km east of Balk (with remains of a stupa), and a tributary valley branching off from the Kōst valley on the northern slopes of the central Hindu Kush; Čark Gawak, a village 7 km north of Lāš Jōwayn; Čark-e Lōgar, a large settlement 100 km south of Kabul (see below). Several compounds of different types occur, the most frequent being Čarkāb (= Čarkaw), which appears as the name of villages in Qaṭaḡan, Barā'ān district east of Isfahan, and Čamčāl district east of Kermānšāh, as well as of a peak and pass upstream from the Sanglēc valley in central Hindu Kush. Other types include Čarkbād, a village in southern Hazārajāt, and Čarkestān, a village in Borūjerd *šahrestān*. An older form Čaxra is attested in Avestan (*Vd.* 1.16), identifications of which have been proposed both with Sārī (q.v.), a city of Māzandarān (Christensen, p. 48), and, more convincingly, with Čark-e Lōgar (Gnoli, 1967, p. 74; 1985, p. 28). Various etymologies, all derived from Persian *čark* “wheel,” have been proposed by Nyberg (p. 321), Christensen (*op. cit.*, p. 47), and Melikian-Chirvani (n. 1). None is really convincing.

*Čark-e Lōgar*. Of all the known Čarks Čark-e Lōgar stands out because of its historical and geographical importance. It is located at an altitude of 2,000 m in an interior basin of the Altamūr chain that opens out in the northeast onto the Lōgar valley (q.v.). To the south the Karpēčak pass (2,600 m) gives access to the higher Karwār basin (q.v.). The old route between Kabul and Ġaznī ran



through it, and Čark-e Lōgar, located at the very foot of the pass, has served through the centuries as a major halting place on this route. The victory there of the Turk army of Sebüktegin (Saboktegin) over the Hendūšāhīs of Kabul and their ally Abū 'Alī Lawīk of Ġaznī in 366/977 opened the door of eastern Afghanistan to the Ghaznavids (Jūzjānī, *Ṭabaqāt*, tr. Raverty, p. 73; Bosworth, pp. 12-24; Rahman, pp. 133f.). Later, in Timurid times, Čark-e Lōgar was the main center of the entire Lōgar region, with contacts extending as far as India (*Bābor-nāma*, tr. Beveridge, p. 217).

In this context there developed an intellectual life that is poorly known but seems to have been active and strongly marked by Sufism, as evidenced by the eight *zīāras* (shrines) scattered throughout the Čark basin, an exceptional concentration. The most venerated is that of Mawlānā Ya'qūb-e Čarkī (Ya'qūb b. Otmān b. Maḥmūd b. Moḥammad Ġaznavī Čarkī), who died in 851/1447; he was the author of a renowned *tafsīr* (Qur'ān commentary) and an outstanding personality in the Naqšbandī *selsela*, having been a disciple of Bahā'-al-Dīn Naqšband Samarqandī (q.v.) himself and a teacher of the great Timurid shaikh Kṽājā 'Obayd-Allāh Aḥrār (Storey, I/1, p. 9). Another famous Sufi from Čark-e Lōgar in the Timurid period was Mollāzāda Mollā 'Otmān (*Bābor-nāma*, tr. Beveridge, p. 284). A still more astonishing remnant of the brilliant past of this locality is a *meḥrāb* of carved wood from the Ghaznavid period, ornamented with Kufic inscriptions, which adorns the mosque of Moḥyi'l-Dīn in Čark. Although it has been reused, the local origin of this remarkable work has been accepted by specialists (Melikian-Chirvani; Fischer, p. 315).

Today Čark-e Lōgar, bypassed by all major regional roads, is no more than a dead end. It has, however, preserved its agricultural prosperity, based on irrigation from the abundant waters of the Pengrām, a tributary of the Lōgar, and from several springs. As early as the 8th/14th century its orchards were well known (Ebn Baṭṭūṭa, III, p. 88). Today, in the entire central part of the Čark valley, vines, apricot trees, and almond trees grow side by side with annual crops in a rural landscape of great abundance, attesting to the deep roots of the peasantry.

The basic population is composed of long-sedentary Persian-speaking Tajiks. As is frequent in rural areas south of the Hindu Kush, they are organized in tribes. The author has collected among them the following tribal names: Baḳtak, Ayūmbēg, Mūhrōmbēg, Zay Ḥaydar. In the 13th/19th century they belonged to two rival political factions (Evan Smith, 1881, p. 6, abridged in *Gazetteer of Afghanistan* VI, pp. 133 and 519). Among them there is a small



nucleus of Sādāt notables claiming to have originated from the Paḡmān area west of Kabul twenty-eight generations ago, that is, in about the 6th-7th/12th-13th century.

The remainder of the present population includes an important Pashtun minority, settled at a fairly recent date along the edges of the valley. Its tribal affiliations are quite varied: Andar from neighboring Ḳarwār; Masūd (Mas'ūd) who arrived from Waziristan at the beginning of the 1930s; Ḳarōṭī; and Yūsufzī. One of the local Yūsufzay lineages, that of the *sepa(h)sālār* Ġolām Ḥaydar Khan Čarkī, belonging to the Čamārķēl clan, has played a leading role in the contemporary history of Afghanistan (see the genealogy and biography of its principal members in Adamec, 1975, pp. 94, 145, 147, 149f., 151f., and tables 82-83).

Čark functions as the commercial and administrative center of a district (*alāqadārī*) extending over its own valley, as well as that of Ḳarwār (758 km<sup>2</sup>). The population of the district was 34,600 in the census of 1358 Š./1979, with an average density of 46 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>. In 1880 it was estimated at 2,180 families, of whom a thousand lived in the Čark valley proper (*Gazetteer of Afghanistan* 6, pp. 133, 419). It can thus be concluded that the population has tripled in a century, partly owing to the immigration of the Pashtun.

The Persian dialect spoken at Čark presents several phonological, morphological, syntactical, and lexical peculiarities that distinguish it clearly from the Persian of Kabul. It is known thanks to the still unpublished studies of C. M. Kieffer (for some specimens see Kieffer).

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