



ČARKĪ, MAWLĀNĀ YA'QŪB

ČARKĪ, Mawlānā Ya'qūb b. 'Otmān b. Maḥmūd (d. 851/1447), an early shaikh of the Naqšbandī order and author of several works in Persian. Born in the Čark area of the Lōgar district near Ġazna, he studied first in Herat, where he drew a stipendium from the endowments attached to the *kānaqāh* of K̄vāja 'Abd-Allāh Anšārī, and then in Cairo, where he was a classmate of K̄vāja Zayn-al-Dīn K̄vāfī, founder of the Zaynī order, and studied under Šehāb-al-Dīn Sayrāmī. It was the desire to pursue formal learning that, in 782/1380-81, first drew Čarkī to Bukhara, where he earned a license to deliver *fatwās*. Shortly before leaving Bukhara with the intention of returning to Čark, he met [K̄vāja Bahā'-al-Dīn Naqšband](#) and expressed the wish to join his circle. Bahā'-al-Dīn gave a temporizing answer but presented him with a skullcap (*ṭāqīya*) as a mark of favor. Čarkī thereupon proceeded to Balk where he found it necessary, as Bahā'-al-Dīn had foretold, to make an unexpected sidetrip to the Dašt-e Kūlāk. Čarkī renounced all plans of returning to Čark and made his way back to Bukhara. Fortified by a number of omens and a period of meditation at the tomb of the Kobrawī saint Sayf-al-Dīn Bākarzī, Čarkī again presented himself to Bahā'-al-Dīn to seek initiation. After an anxious night in which Bahā'-al-Dīn sought divine guidance on the matter, Čarkī was informed that he had been accepted and was assigned for his formal training to K̄vāja 'Alā'-al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār Bokārī, a senior companion of Bahā'-al-Dīn. Although Čarkī was thus initiated into the order by Bahā'-al-Dīn himself, his name generally comes after that of 'Aṭṭār in enumerations of Naqšbandī genealogy.

After the death of Bahā'-al-Dīn in 791/1389, Čarkī left Bukhara first for Keš and



then for Badakšān. There he received a letter from 'Aṭṭār, now established in the village of Čaġānīān, reminding him of Bahā'-al-Dīn's wish that Čarkī keep his company. He accordingly joined 'Aṭṭār in Čaġānīān, remaining there until the latter's death in 802/1400. Čarkī next moved to the region of ҲеҶār-e Šādmān in what is now Soviet Tajikistan. He spent almost half a century there, dying in the village of Halġatū in 851/1447, evidently at a quite advanced age. He left behind a son, Yūsof, and more significantly a spiritual successor, K̄vāja 'Obayd-Allāh Aḥrār (q.v.), who with his manifold accomplishments came to overshadow Čarkī in the development of the Naqšbandī order.

Best known among the writings of Čarkī is, perhaps, the commentary he wrote on the opening chapter of the Qur'ān and its last two sections (*joz*). Based on a wide variety of earlier commentaries it also includes quotations from Rūmī and Sanā'ī and some autobiographical references. Čarkī's next most substantial work is *Nay-nāma*, a commentary on the prologue to Rūmī's *Maṭnawī* and two of the stories contained in its first book. This is the second most ancient piece of writing in explication of the *Maṭnawī*. A shorter work, the *Resāla-ye onsiya*, offers an account of early Naqšbandī practices; another, the *Resāla-ye abdāliya*, concerns itself with questions relating to sainthood (*welāyat*); and yet another, *Šarḥ al-Asmā' al-Ḥosnā*, is a brief discussion of the Ninety-Nine Names of God. Finally we can mention *Ḥawrā'īya* or *Jamālīya*, an extended commentary on a quatrain attributed to Abū Sa'īd b. Abī'l-Ḳayr; and a few quatrains, of considerable quality, composed by Čarkī himself.

The fame of Čarkī continues down to the present. His tomb, now situated on the lands of the Lenin kolkhoz outside Dushanbe, is still an object of pilgrimage, being indeed the principal "holy place" of Tajikistan. His native village still contains a number of sites associated with him and his ancestors, and, at least until fairly recently, the people of Lōgar would gather there on the occasion of the mulberry harvest to celebrate his memory with both prayer and picnicking.



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