



## AḤMAD 'ALĪ HĀŠEMĪ SANDĪLAVĪ

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**AḤMAD 'ALĪ HĀŠEMĪ SANDĪLAVĪ**, Indo-Persian litterateur, b. 1162/1748-49 in Sandila, a town near Lucknow; d. after 1224/1809. He is remembered for his voluminous *taḍkera* of Persian poets, *Maḳzan al-ġarā'eb* (partial ed., about one-sixth of the whole work, by M. Baqir, Lahore, 1968). He wrote poetry under the pen name Kādem, but none is known to be extant (see *Maḳzan*, p. 4). Of a poor and obscure family, Aḥmad 'Alī received scant education (*ibid.*, p. 6, the sole biographical source). Later, through the good offices of Du'l-faḳār-al-dawla Naḳaf Khan, he enrolled in the cavalry of the Mughal ruler, Shah 'Ālam II. The date of Aḥmad 'Alī's arrival in Delhi is not known, but he probably stayed there until at least 1782, when his patron Naḳaf Khan died. Since *Maḳzan al-ġarā'eb* was compiled in Lucknow, it is assumed that Aḥmad moved there from Delhi. Though he lacked formal schooling, Aḥmad 'Alī harbored a keen desire to learn the Persian language and its literature, and after his arrival in Delhi, he was able to have "intimate contact with people from Iraq, Khorasan, and Fārs" (*Maḳzan*, p. 8).

Aḥmad 'Alī compiled *Maḳzan al-ġarā'eb* at the urging of his teacher, the poet Mīrzā Moḥammad Ḥasan Qatīl (d. 1233/1817). It includes accounts of 3,148 Persian poets from classical to modern times, alphabetically by *taḳalloṣ*. Only *Šoḥof-e Ebrāhīm* by Nawwāb 'Alī Ebrāhīm Khan (completed in 1205/1790) boasts a larger number of entries. In his introduction Aḥmad 'Alī cites twenty-two *taḍkeras* as his sources, but his notes on individual poets do not always



specify sources or record dates of birth and death. The length and style of narration and the number of examples of verses selected vary from poet to poet, but the language is usually simple and the narration focused. Like most other *tadkeras* the *Maḳzan* derives its importance from the author's accounts of his contemporaries; it provides a valuable survey of Persian poetry in India during the 18th and early 19th centuries, including verses of lesser known poets. It can be used profitably to reconstruct the socio-cultural life of Delhi and especially Lucknow during the late Mughal period. For instance, in the published section of the *Maḳzan* there are several references to poets connected with the court of the *nawwābs* of Awadh, including allusions to party politics and court intrigues (*ibid.*, pp. 859-61).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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See also: Storey, I, pp. 880-81.

For a list of biographies with epitomes of some, see *Cat. Bodleian*, coll. 317-96.