



AHMADNAGAR

AHMADNAGAR, a major city and province in the state of Maharashtra in western India, founded about 900/1495 by Malek Aḥmad Neẓām-al-molk, a Bahmanī governor, on the site where he had earlier won a battle against his sovereign's forces. He liked not only its strategic importance for military campaigns but also its moderate climate, exuberant greenness, and fertility of soil. With the dismemberment of the Bahmanī kingdom, Malek Aḥmad assumed independence (901/1496) and made the newly founded city his capital; it was named after him and also his minister Malek Aḥmad Gojārātī, entitled Naṣīr-al-molk (A. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Borhān-e ma'āter*, Hyderabad, 1936, p. 216). Under his rule (901-16/1496-1510), the city attained its highest prosperity, but only during the long reign of his son, Borhān (916-60/1510-53), did it become a great center of learning and culture, dominated by the Persians in all spheres of life and letters. Borhān, who in early life leaned toward the Mahdawīs, a sect founded by Sayyed Moḥammad of Jaunpur (d. 910/1504-05), was converted to Shi'ism under the influence of a Persian emigré from Kāšān, Shah Ṭāher Ḥosaynī, an acknowledged Shi'ite apostle to south India who maintained close contacts with his fatherland and the Safavid court. Borhān made Shi'ism the state religion; shiploads of treasure, carpets, tents, and other offerings were often sent to Naḣaf, Karbalā, and other Shi'ite shrines. Ambassadors were exchanged with the Safavids, Persians found employment in high offices from the post of *wakīl* and *pīšvā* downwards, and the *koṭba* was even read in the Safavid monarch's name. Borhān's successor, Ḥosayn I (961-73/1553-65), also embraced the Shi'ite creed, together with almost the entire royal household, courtiers, slaves, and others. Warm relations with



Persia continued to mark the foreign policy and public life of Ahmadnagar, with few interruptions, till the kingdom's downfall.

The city itself, however, seldom enjoyed tranquility; it was besieged time and again and ransacked on a number of occasions by hostile neighbors, even during the height of its power (Ferešta, Kanpur, 1884, II, pp. 116, 125). During the turbulent times marking the last few years of Ḥosayn I's successor, Mortaẓā I (973-96/1565-88), the city's law and order deteriorated drastically. Bloody internal strife resulted in the massacre, more than once, of Ahmadnagar's Persian population, engulfing the elite, officials, merchants, and laymen alike. At Mortaẓā's death the capital was plunged into anarchy and civil war. It braved the first Mughal attempt at intimidation and siege in 1004/1595, but fell to Akbar in 1008/1600. Thanks to the efforts of Malek 'Anbar, the able Abyssinian commander-in-chief, formal annexation of the Neẓāmšāhī territories did not take place till almost four decades later. Both the city and territories thereafter became part of the Deccan province, first under the Mughals and later under the Āṣaffāhīs or Neẓāms of Hyderabad.

Ahmadnagar was the scene of great literary and cultural activities. It gave its name to a distinct school of painting, characteristic features of which, e.g., the landscape, flowering shrubs, trees and golden sky, were inspired by Persian miniatures. The main surviving specimens include an illustrated manuscript named *Ta'rif-e Ḥosayn Neẓāmšāh*, a poem composed by Āftābī during the reign of Ḥosayn I or shortly thereafter; Ragīnī paintings, the earliest of which form the most important and charming examples of the Ahmadnagar school; and a few portraits of the Ahmadnagar rulers (that of Borhān II being the first and perhaps the most distinguished of Deccan portraits) and of their generals (see D. Barrett, *Painting of the Deccan, XVI-XVII Century*, London, 1958, pp. 3-16; H. K. Sherwani and P. M. Joshi, eds., *History of Medieval Deccan, 1295-1724*, Hyderabad, 1974, II, pp. 206-09). Among the numerous Persian inspired buildings of Ahmadnagar is the tomb of Ṣalābat Khan II, the most picturesque of the city's outlying monuments, with its typical Persian octagonal structure, its domed hall rising from an octagonal plinth and surrounded by a three-story veranda. The palace of Faraḥbāg, begun in 984/1576 and completed in 991/1583, also conforms to Persian design; though only a shadow of its former glory, it may have inspired the Mughal buildings in the north, including Shah Jahān's Tāj Maḥall (see *Annual Report*, Archaeological Survey of India, 1925-26, Calcutta, 1928, plate IV, c, d, e).



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