



## ‘ĀLAM II, SHAH

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‘ĀLAM II, SHAH, Mughal emperor (1173-1253/1759-1806). Following the assassination of his father, ‘Ālamgīr II, on 4 Jomādā I 1173/24 December 1759, Mīrzā ‘Abdallāh ‘Alī Gowhar claimed the throne and adopted the name Abu’l-Moẓaffar Jalāl-al-dīn Moḥammad Shah ‘Ālam II. He was heir to a declining empire that was challenged by various ethnic groups in northern India and by the British in the east. His defeat at the battle of Baksar in Rabī‘ II, 1178/October, 1764, in his third attempt to dislodge the British from Bihar and Bengal resulted in the unquestioned supremacy of the East India Company over the eastern provinces. For many years he lived as a British pensioner in Allahabad, but in Ramaẓān, 1185/December, 1771 he managed to return to Delhi. In Rabī‘ I, 1210/July, 1803, General Lake took over Delhi under the pretense of ensuring Shah ‘Ālam’s personal safety, thus ending the myth of Mughal rule.

Various *taḍkeras* record that while in Allahabad Shah ‘Ālam kept himself busy with artistic and literary pursuits. With the *taḳalloṣ* of Āftāb, Shah ‘Ālam, and sometimes Ḳoršīd, he wrote poetry in Persian, Urdu, and Hindi. Among his known works are a Persian *dīvān* and *Nāderāt-e šāhī*, a collection of Persian, Urdu, and Hindi verses compiled around the year 1212/1797; its value extends to music, since most of the poetry is composed according to certain ragas and *tals* that are specified at the beginning of each poem. The many writings of Shah ‘Ālam, including *‘Ajā‘eb al-qeṣaṣ*, one of the earliest Urdu prose works, reflect a great interest in Sufism, especially the Češtī and Qāderī orders, an intimate knowledge of the Islamic sciences, and a rare linguistic versatility. In



his Persian poetry he prefers simple language and imagery to the *sabk-e Hendī* tradition.

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