



BAHĀRESTĀN-E ĠAYBĪ

BAHĀRESTĀN-E ĠAYBĪ, a detailed history in Persian of Bengal and Orissa for the period 1017-34/1608-24 composed by Mīrzā Nathan ‘Alā’-al-Dīn Eṣfahānī. ‘Alā’-al-Dīn’s father, Malek ‘Alī Ehtemām Khan, a Persian immigrant who had served as the castellan (*kūtvāl*) of Agra under Akbar, was promoted by Jahāngīr to the rank of 1,000 *dat* (personnel) and 300 *savārs* (horsemen) in 1607 and sent to Bengal as *mīr baḥr* (chief of artillery and flotilla; see *Tūzok-e jahāngīrī*, p. 68; *Bahārestān-e ġaybī*, ms., fol. 2b). In Bengal ‘Alā’-al-Dīn served in the contingent of his father and got closer to Eslām Khan Češtī, the governor general of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa. On Ehtemām Khan’s death in 1021/1612, ‘Alā’-al-Dīn entered the imperial service with the military rank of 500 *dat* and 250 *savārs* (*Bahārestān*, fol. 97b), later receiving the title of Šetāb Khan.

Bahārestān-e ġaybī, composed in 1034/1624, is ‘Alā’-al-Dīn’s only literary work and contains his memoirs. It is a significant historical work, written in a simple, unadorned style, but containing a first-hand, detailed account of the military, political, and social events of Bengal and Orissa in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. It provides detailed information about the military strength of the Nuhanī and Karranī Afghans in eastern Bengal, the Panī Afghans in Orissa, and the Mughal relations with the non-Muslim rulers of Kooch Behar, Assam, Orissa, Tippera, and Arracan (cf. *Bahārestān*, fols. 78b, 97b, 104b, 211a-212b). Oddly enough, the work does not seem to have gained much attention; no later Mughal historians quote it as a source of information. The reason for this may be the non-literary style of the work as well as the author’s desire to portray his father and himself as the heroes of every



military campaign in which they took part.

The work is divided into four *daftar* (books), each of which is further divided into *dāstāns* (narratives). The first part, entitled *Eslām-nāma*, deals with the events that took place in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa during the governorship of Eslām Khan Češtī; the second *daftar*, untitled, covers the governorship of Qāsem Khan; the third is entitled *Ebrāhīm-nāma* after the governor Ebrāhīm Khan Fīrūz Jang; the fourth, entitled *Wāqe'āt-e jahānšāhī* describes the arrival of the rebel prince Šāh-Jahān in Bengal and his usurpation of authority. *Bahārestān* exists in a single manuscript made during the lifetime of the author and preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. A rotograph copy of this manuscript is kept in the Decca University Library. A summary translation into English was made by M. I. Bohrah (*A History of the Mughal Wars in Assam, Cooch Behar, Bengal, Behar and Orissa during the Reigns of Jahāngīr and Shāhjahān*, Gauhati, 1936).

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