



FEREŠTA, TĀRĪḲ-E

FEREŠTA, TĀRĪḲ-E, popular title of *Golšan-e ebrāhīmī*, a general history of Muslim India by M oḡammad-Qāsem Henduśāh Astarābādī (b. Astarābād ca. 978/1570), the celebrated historian of the Deccan known by the pen name (*takalloṣ*) of Ferešta. As a child, he emigrated to India with his father, Ġolām-‘Alī, who sought service at the court of the Shi‘ite Neẓāmšāhī sultans of Aḡmadnagar (q.v.). Here, the father was employed by Sultan Mortaẓā (973-96/1565-88) as tutor to the heir-apparent, Mīrān Ḥosayn, with whom the historian-to-be grew up. Following his father’s death, Ferešta was appointed to the bodyguard of Sultan Mortaẓā, and when a struggle broke out between the ruler and his heir-apparent, Ferešta took the father’s part. When Sultan Morteẓā was murdered by his son in 996/1588, Ferešta removed himself from Aḡmadnagar to Bījāpūr (q.v.), the ‘Ādelšāhī capital, where he entered the service of Sultan Ebrāhīm ‘Ādel Shah II (988-1037 /1580-1627). Over time, he won the sultan’s trust and favor. In 1012-13/1604, he was a member of the entourage which accompanied the sultan’s daughter, Bēgam Saṭṭana, to her marriage with Akbar’s son, Dānyāl. In 1604, he was sent to Lahore to congratulate Jahāngīr upon his succession, and it may be this embassy to which Jahāngīr alludes in his memoirs, when he writes of the gift from Bījāpūr of a horse of exceptional swiftness (*Tūzok*, I, 110).

These were perilous times for the Deccani sultanates, with the Mughal juggernaut relentlessly pursuing its aggrandizement against neighboring Aḡmadnagar, facts which would have been well known both to Ferešta and Sultan Ebrāhīm. The latter, however, continued to maintain a sumptuous



court famous for its taste and patronage, with the sultan, himself the author of the *Ketāb-e Naraus*, laying out a new capital at Nauraspūr, perhaps in emulation of the Qoṭbšāh's recent foundation at Hyderabad. According to Ferešta, who boasted a lifelong interest in historical writing, it was Sultan Ebrāhīm who urged him to write his celebrated history, *Golšan-e ebrāhīmī*, commonly known as the *TāriḲ-e Ferešta*. There is no possibility of knowing whether or when *Golšan-e ebrāhīmī* was completed. The Mughal section ends with Akbar's death (1014/1605) and Ferešta's account of his own master, Sultan Ebrāhīm, is clearly incomplete, suggesting that he died while in the course of writing it and with the intention of completing the section on Bījāpūr last. No record survives of when Ferešta died. John Briggs, his translator, could find no reference to him beyond 1612 and, surprised at finding in Bījāpūr no mausoleum to so eminent a figure, supposed him to have died when the court was at Nauraspūr, where he may have been interred in that soon-to-be-abandoned site. Others have suggested that he lived until 1033/1623. Ferešta relates that Sultan Ebrāhīm asked him to compose a narrative account of the fortunes of the Muslims in India, and that is what Ferešta gave him. Significantly, there had appeared just before two works embodying a new genre of Indo-Muslim historical writing: Neẓām-al-Dīn Aḥmad's *Ṭabaqāt-e akbarī* (comp. 1592) and 'Abd-al-Qāder Badā'ōnī's *Montakab al-tawāriḲ* (comp. 1595). These were not histories of kings and prophets in the tradition of Ṭabarī, of which, in the Indian sub-continent, the classical example was Jūzjānī's *Ṭabaqāt-e nāṣerī*, nor were they simply accounts of a single dynasty or region. Rather, they, and the *Golšan-e ebrāhīmī* after them, set out to incorporate within their narrative the entire Muslim experience of conquest and state-building in India. Ferešta himself naturally expresses a Deccani perspective, but he is generally a fair and reliable chronicler, although often derivative and, in the case of areas with which he was not very familiar, such as Telingāna, he relied upon hearsay. Naturally, much of his material was drawn from older writers such as Jūzjānī, Baranī and Yaḥyā b. Aḥmad Serhendī, but for the Deccan itself, his account is often based upon first-hand knowledge and word of mouth. His style is direct, plain and unadorned, and remarkably free of unctuous eulogy. The first British historian to utilize his work extolled him for his positive attitudes, remarking that "he seems as much divested of religious prejudices, as he is of political flattery or fear. He never passes a good action without conferring upon it its own reward of praise, nor a bad one, let the villainous actor be never so high, without stigmatizing it with infamy." The *Golšan-e ebrāhīmī* is arranged in twelve sections (*maqālas*) as follows: (1) the Ghaznavids; (2) the sultans of Delhi, from Mo'ezz-al-Dīn



Moḥammad Gūrī to Akbar; (3) the rulers of the Deccan, divided into six *rawzas* or sub-sections thus: the Bahmanids, the Ādelšāhīs of Bījāpūr, the Neẓāmšāhīs of Aḥmadnagar, the Qoṭbšāhīs of Golconda, the ‘Emādšāhīs of Berār, and the Barīdšāhīs of Bidar; (4) the sultans of Gujarat; (5) the sultans of Malwa; (6) the sultans of Khandesh; (7) the sultans of Jaunpur; (8) the rulers of Multan; (9) the rulers of Sind and Thatta; (10) the sultans of Kashmir; (11) the Muslims of Malabar; and (12) the lives of famous Indian saints. In relation to other Indo-Muslim chroniclers, Ferešta acquired fortuitously a posthumous fame as a result of the keen interest he aroused on the part of the pioneering European historians of the sub-continent in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. A century and a half after his death, his reputation was resuscitated when an East India Company official, Alexander Dow, mined the first two *maqālas* of the *Golšan-e ebrāhīmī* for inclusion in his *History of Hindostan* (1768-72). The eleventh *maqāla* provided the basis for an account of Malabar published in *The Asiatick Miscellany* of 1786, and the third was translated by Captain Jonathan Scott in *Ferishta’s History of the Dekkan* (1794). Then General John Briggs published a four-volume translation of all but the last *maqāla* in 1829, which thereafter served as the basis for European writing on pre-17th-century India throughout much of the 19th century, as exemplified in G. R. Gleig’s *History of the British Empire in India* (1830) and Mountstuart Elphinstone’s *History of India* (1841). Thus, through his adoption by these writers, Ferešta long reigned as the preeminent “authority” on Indo-Islamic historiography, a state of affairs which was only modified following the subsequent editing and translating into English of other chronicles in the *Bibliotheca Indica* series and elsewhere.

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