CHAPTER 24

ZEMĀN SHĀH AND THE SIKHS, 1798

The Times, Monday, February 5, 1798 [p. 4, col. 1].

EAST INDIES. MADRAS, SEPT. 2.

Accounts received within these few days from the upper stations advise us of the prevalence of reports stating that ZEMAUN SHAW had a recent recontre with the principal body of the Seik army, in which he was worsted with considerable loss; and from which he had been compelled to retreat with precipitation.¹

NOTE

1. Zemān Shāh's third invasion commenced when he left Kābul in October 1796. He halted at Peshāwar for a month and opened negotiations with the Sikh chiefs, including the sixteen-year-old Ranjīt Singh, who had already begun to establish his reputation as a powerful independent chief. The battle reported here took place in Amritsar in January 1797 where approximately 50,000 Sikhs had gathered. A major portion of the Durrānī army was led in person by Zemān Shāh and the two forces commenced fighting early in the morning. The Shāh's camel artillery was pitted against the Sikhs' matchlocks until the afternoon, when the latter gave a signal for an attack, "and agreeable to their mode in close combat, flung away their turbans, let loose their hair, put their beards in their mouths, and dashed into the midst of the Abdallah [Ahamd Shāh Abdālī] army with sword in hand". The Durrānī army eventually gave way and were pursued up to Lahore by the victorious Sikhs. Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, 4: 474–5.