



BARĪDŠĀHĪ DYNASTY

BARĪDŠĀHĪ, a dynasty of Indo-Muslim kings of the Deccan plateau that ruled from 897/1491-92 to 1028/1619 in one of the five successor states to the Bahmanid kingdom (748-944/1347-1538, see [bahmanids](#)). Though their state was small compared to their successor states, especially the [ʿĀdelšāhī](#) dynasty of Bijapur, the Neẓāmšāhī dynasty of Ahmadnagar, and the Qoṭbšāhī dynasty of Golkonda, the Barīdšāhī rulers enjoyed one advantage and strength, which was their inheritance of the former Bahmanid capital, the city of [Bīdar](#), to whose rich heritage of Indo-Muslim monuments they added a number of important ones of their own. The sequence of their rule is shown in [List 1](#).

The dynasty was named after Qāsem Barīd, a Persianized Turk from the Caucasus who in his youth had been sold as a slave to Sultan Moḥammad Bahmanī III (r. 867-87/1463-82). Having distinguished himself in suppressing several Maratha rebellions, Qāsem rose steadily in power and prestige even as the Bahmanid state underwent serious decline. In 897/1491-92, a time when other Bahmanid nobles were declaring independent kingdoms in their respective fiefs, Qāsem acquired de facto control of the capital city by virtue of his elevation to the office of Bahmanid prime minister (*amīr-e jomla*). Although he never styled himself king, Qāsem did assume the kingdom's regalia, and permitted only nominal sovereignty to continue in the hands of weak Bahmanid successors. His transition from an imported slave to the founder of a new dynasty is both a legacy and an illustration of a pattern of political evolution typical of early Islamic Iran.

After Qāsem's death in 910/1504-05, his son Amir Barīd inherited his power,



and like his father declined to crown himself king. Instead, he placed the last four Bahmanid kings on the throne, promptly murdering those he felt might form alliances that would threaten him. In his foreign relations Amir Barīd shrewdly curried the favor of his more powerful neighbors, but he failed to stay clear of the expanding ‘Adelšāhīs of Bijapur, against whom his military efforts generally proved unsuccessful, and occasionally humiliating. The kingdom’s last moment of political glory occurred in 972/1565, when Barīdšāhī troops under the command of Amir Barīd’s son and successor, ‘Alī, played a distinguished role in the battle of Talikota (where a confederacy of the four Deccani sultanates overthrew the Hindu kingdom of Vijayanagar). But after ‘Alī’s death in 988/1580-81 a succession of rulers, two of whom usurped power by force, watched the kingdom dwindle as its three neighbors steadily encroached upon Barīdšāhī domains. Finally, in 1028/1619, after a feeble resistance from the Bīdar commanders, Sultan Ebrāhīm II of Bijapur annexed the city and its adjoining territories, thus finally extinguishing the Barīdšāhī dynasty.

Sectarian tensions affecting Barīdšāhī relations with its neighbors were greatly influenced by contemporary developments taking place in Iran. As a result of the socio-religious movements that had carried the Safavid dynasty to power in the beginning of the 10/16th century, many Iranian adventurers, soldiers, Sufis, and literati migrated from Iran to the Deccan. Some of them, such as Šāh Ṭāher of Qazvīn, brought to India the same Shi‘ite fervor that had figured so prominently in the Safavid revolution. Having acquired a reputation in Iran as a learned Shi‘ite scholar, Šāh Ṭāher had been appointed by shah Esmā‘īl I Ṣafawī to teach in Kāšān. His patron, however, soon grew jealous of the scholar’s great popularity, and, when suspicions arose concerning his alleged Isma‘ili affiliations, Šāh Ṭāher was forced to flee Iran for India in 926/1520. There he sought royal patronage at the courts of the new successor states of the Bahmanids, and eventually settled in Ahmadnagar where he played an important role in expanding the Shi‘ite sect. In 950/1543-44, when ‘Alī Barīd was crowned king of the Barīdšāhīs in Bīdar, the new king’s uncle made derogatory remarks respecting the Shi‘ite sect to Šāh Ṭāher in the presence of the Neẓāmšāhī envoy from neighboring Ahmadnagar. Upon returning to Ahmadnagar the angered diplomat urged his own patron to punish the new Barīdšāhī king, who as a consequence was forced to surrender three forts to his more powerful neighbor.

The Barīdšāhī dynasty achieved its greatest cultural splendor in the middle of



the 10th/16th century, under the thirty-seven-year rule of ‘Alī Barīd. The first Barīdšāhī to adopt the title king, ‘Alī presided over the apogee of Barīdšāhī architecture, the most important specimens of which were his own tomb and the Rangīn Maḥal, a lovely palace splendidly adorned with wood carving and mother-of-pearl work. Both monuments reflect considerable Persian influence and were important in establishing the transition from the heavy fort-like style so characteristic of the earlier Bahmanid kings to the lighter and more graceful style that later culminated in neighboring Bijapur and Golconda. The upper story of ‘Alī’s tomb, for example, is decorated with many small niches, a style evidently imported by architects from Iran. There, the motif can be found in the palace of ‘Ālī Qāpū in Isfahan and, prior to that, in the mosque of Ardabīl.

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