



## BĪDAR

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**BĪDAR**, a city in the state of Karnataka, India (17° 55' N, 77° 32' E, elev. 2,330 m), about 80 miles northwest of Hyderabad, and also the surrounding district. It is built on the edge of a plateau, with a panoramic view and a comfortable climate; the temperature rarely rises above 105° F (40.5° C). In the 9th/15th and 10th/16th centuries, under the **Bahmanid dynasty**, Bīdar was an important center of Persian cultural influence in the Deccan.

Oloḡ Khan (who in 725-52/1325-51 took the name Moḡammad b. Toḡloḡ) seized Bīdar from the Hindu rulers of Warangal (722/1322; Baranī, p. 449) but lost it in 748/1347 to Ṣafar Khan, who in the following year founded the Bahmanid dynasty and adopted the name 'Alā'-al-Dīn Ḥasan Bahman Shah (748-59/1347-58). Bīdar remained a provincial town, however, until Šehāb-al-Dīn Aḡmad I (825-39/1422-36) made it his capital in 827/1424, changing its name to Moḡammadābād in honor of his son (Yazdani, 1947, pp. 54-56).

The central position of Bīdar and its natural defenses, combined with the pleasant climate and green landscape with abundant fruit trees, must have influenced Šehāb-al-Dīn's choice. Ten Bahmanids ruled from Bīdar and were succeeded in 934/1527 by the **Barīdšāhīs**, who controlled the city until 1028/1619, when Ebrāhīm 'Ādelšāh II (987-1036/1579-1626; see 'adelšāhīs) defeated Mīrzā Amīr Barīdšāh and annexed the kingdom to **Bījāpūr**. In 1067/1656 the Mughal Awrangzīb conquered it and renamed it Ṣafarābād (Yazdani, 1947, p. 15). In 1137/1724 Neṣām-al-Molk Āṣafjāh of Hyderabad took control of the city.



The Bahmanid rulers were active patrons of art and literature, and, owing to their tireless endeavors and keen interest in Persian culture, poets, historians, and other men of letters, as well as musicians, dancers, story tellers, and reciters of the *Šāh-nāma* flocked to Bīdar from Lahore, Delhi, Khorasan, and other parts of Persia (Ferešta, II, p. 535). It was there that Shaikh Ādarī Esfarāyenī composed his *Bahman-nāma*, a dynastic history in verse on the model of Ferdowsī's *Šāh-nāma*. Aḥmad Shah I, who was noted for his erudition in arts and sciences, also invited the famous Sufi Šāh Ne'mat-Allāh Walī (d. Rajab, 834/April, 1431) to court; instead, however, the latter sent one of his grandsons, Mīr Nūr-Allāh, who received the title *malek al-mašāyeḳ* (king of the shaikhs; Ṭabāṭabā, p. 54). Šāh Ḳalīl-Allāh, the only son of Šāh Ne'mat-Allāh, came to Bīdar himself in 834/1431, after the death of his father (See [bahmanid dynasty](#)).

In the Bahmanid period every sphere of life at Bīdar came under the direct influence of Iranian culture, as is apparent from surviving architectural monuments decorated with glazed tiles, arabesque designs, and elegant Persian calligraphy. Particularly noteworthy are the polychrome tile decorations in the Rangīn Maḥall (polychrome palace; Yazdani, 1947, pp. 44-49, pls. X, XII, XIV) and the Taḳt Maḥall (throne room, a modern name for the royal palace) within the Bahmanid fortress (Brown, pp. 69-70); in the Taḳt Maḥall the emblem of a lion (sometimes designated as a tiger) and rising sun occurs on the spandrels at the entrance to one of the royal apartments (Yazdani, 1947, pp. 24, 66-70, pls. XXXVI-XXXVII). All these features attest the strength of Persian influence at Bīdar. The inscriptions in Kufic and *tolṭ* at the tomb of Aḥmad Shah were written by Šokr-Allāh Qazvīnī (Yazdani, pp. 125-26). The inclusion of the name of the fourth caliph, 'Alī, with those of God and the prophet in these inscriptions may reflect Shi'ite sympathies among the Bahmanids (Yazdani, 1947, pp. 118-19, but cf. pp. 115-16). At the tomb of Shah Ḳalīl-Allāh (d. ca. 864/1460 or 854/1450; Begley, p. 59; Yazdani, pp. 141-46) the long inscription carved from black basalt in monumental *tolṭ* was designed by the Persian calligrapher Moḡīṭ Qārī Šīrāzī; it is regarded as one of the masterpieces of the calligraphic art in medieval India (Begley, pp. 58-59).

During the reign of 'Alā'-al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shah II (839-62/1436-58) Maḥmūd Gāvān of Gīlān (d. 886/1481) made Bīdar his home. As minister, royal adviser, and man of letters, he left his mark on the history of the Deccan and further strengthened the cultural bonds with Iran; according to one contemporary, in this period the Deccan became the envy of Rūm itself (*Enšā-ye Jāmī*, fol. 36). It



is clear from Maḥmūd's letters (*Rīāz al-enšā'*) that he was eager to attract the most learned men of Iran and Iraq to lecture at the *madrasa* that he built at Bīdar in 877/1472 (Yazdani, 1947, p. 92; Brown, p. 70). This enormous two-story building consists of a large open court surrounded by lecture rooms, prayer hall, library, and living quarters for professors and students. A pair of minarets originally flanked the entrance facade of the *madrasa*, though only one remains, and the entire exterior surface of this huge building was faced with glazed tiles patterned with floral designs and inscriptions in vivid colors. Both the structure and the decoration of Maḥmūd Gāvān's *madrasa* have been compared to those of a *madrasa* that survives at Kārgerd, Khorasan, built in 848/1444-5 by officials of the Timurid Šāhroḡ (807-50/1405-47), and of the famed Rīgestān at Samarqand, built by Šāhroḡ's son Oloḡ Beg in 825/1425 (Diez, pp. 72-76, pl. XXXI; Yazdani, pp. 91-100). Other evidence of the impact of Iranian culture is Bīdari ware, blackened metal vessels and objects inlaid with gold and silver, in a technique that appears to have been imported from Iran (Gairola).

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