The Historian of Islam at Work

Essays in Honor of Hugh N. Kennedy

Edited by

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BRILL

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CHAPTER 19

The Representation of the Barmakids in Bodleian Manuscript Ouseley 217 and Other Monographs

Arezou Azad and Pejman Firoozbakhsh

1 Introduction

In his 1990 article, 'The Barmakid revolution in Islamic government', Hugh Kennedy discussed the Barmakid legacy in Abbasid administration. His work on the Barmakids and related subjects made important contributions to the now-commonplace nuance to the "Islamic rupture" narrative with studies of, and appreciation for, the hybridity and coexistence of pre-Islamic and Islamic practice in the first centuries of caliphal rule. When studying the Barmakids, Kennedy and other scholars of Islamic history have focused crucially on medieval Arabic source texts, leaving Persian and later Arabic monographs largely untouched. In this chapter, we hope to complement these earlier studies by introducing some of the fascinating material that comes out of Persian monographs, about the Barmakids in particular, that were written from the time of the Samanids to the Muẓaffarids of Iran. Our chapter will show the original and important contribution that the Persian material makes to our understanding of the narratives on the Barmakids across traditions and periods.

1.1 *Organization, Approach, and Main Points of the Chapter*

At the core of our study lies Oxford's Bodleian Library manuscript Ouseley 217, consisting of 116 folios (232 *recto* and *verso* sides), known as *Akhbār-i Barmakiyān*.* We use it as a reference point from which we undertake a diachronic study of the representation of the Barmakids in Persian and Arabic texts pro-

* Arezou Azad wishes to thank the Bodleian Library's Bahari Fellowship, which enabled her to study this manuscript in depth from September 2019 to February 2020. Both authors thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council and European Research Council (grant agreement no. 851607) for funding the research that resulted in this chapter. An annotated translation of the full manuscript of Ouseley 217 is also currently in process. Dr Azad also thanks the participants at the School of Abbasid Studies and the Bodleian Art of the Persian Book Conference, both in July 2021, for their insightful comments that informed the contents of this

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duced between the tenth and eighteenth centuries CE throughout the Islamicate world in cities far apart from one another, including Baghdad, Cairo, Istanbul, Shiraz and Delhi.

Our approach is fundamentally historiographical, that is, rather than using texts as factual sources for history, we analyze the way in which they *represented* history, in this case, of the Barmakids, across time and space. Specifically, we look at the transmission history of texts, as well as editorial amendments, omissions, and additions to narratives, and try to understand the reasons for these authorial interventions. We trace how the early authors depicted the Barmakids primarily as historical agents whose powers were the highest and lowest during the time of the Abbasid court of Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170–193/786–809). We then mark out how the narrative emphasis tilts in later centuries (and until this day) toward portraying the Barmakids as embodiments, or apotheoses, of the principles of good rulership, social justice, and ethical behavior. In this light, the shadow of the Barmakids extends well beyond the relatively brief period of the Abbasid "golden age" in the eighth and ninth centuries CE.

1.2 *Background: Who Were the Barmakids?*

No article on the Barmakids would be complete without an overview of the key *dramatis personae* who arguably, according to Islamic historiography, belonged to the best-known family of the newly conquered lands, having risen the ranks up to the highest echelons of early Islamic state structures. Their ancestral home was the remote but prosperous province of Balkh, in today's northern Afghanistan. Their ancestors wielded much power in Balkh before the Muslim conquests. Their namesake, the "barmaks" (given as a personal name in the Islamic sources, although in its original use was a title coming from the Sanskrit *pramukha*, meaning "keeper" or administrator[1]) were the keepers of Balkh's famous Naw Bahār monastery and temple which was probably commissioned by a ruler of the Kushan Empire (first–fourth century CE). Naw Bahār was an important stopping place on Buddhist pilgrimage routes, on account of its immense wealth, high levels of scholasticism, and Buddhist relics held there.[2] The Naw Bahār institution was financed and maintained through the revenues

chapter. Most of the writing of the chapter and its historiographical and historical elements, as well as information on Ouseley 217, was done by Arezou Azad, while Pejman Firoozbakhsh led the research on parallel manuscripts and monographs and their transmission.

1 De la Vaissière, É., De Bactres à Balkh 529–530.

2 The Buddhist temple was remarked upon by the Buddhist pilgrim and envoy Xuanzang, who had been sent on a mission by the Tang emperor and visited the most important Buddhist sites. He qualified the Naw Bahār of Balkh as one of the richest and most bejeweled he had seen on his extensive journey, which had taken him from Chang'an in China, through the

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obtained from the vast agricultural lands it owned, which may have covered much of the Balkh oasis extending over an area of 5,000 km² from the foothills of the Hindukush to the south through the old city of Balkh and up to the Oxus River in the north that forms the border between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan today.[3] The barmaks administered the revenues from the estate, acting almost as *de facto* rulers of this prosperous and flourishing oasis.

The Barmakids entered the caliphal court in the last decades of Umayyad rule and, in the next generations, rose on the wave of the Abbasid revolution to political power and influence far away from their home in eastern Khurasan. The "barmak" appears in the Islamic sources as one of the local aristocrats who initially revolted in 86/705 against the Umayyad capture of Balkh by the general Qutayba b. Muslim (d. 96/715) in 90/708–709. The revolt failed, and this "barmak" was brought, together with other Khurasani hostages and at least one of his sons, to the court of Hishām (r. 105–125/724–743) in Syria. He converted to Islam as a *mawlā* (client), as did his son, a youth now called Khālid b. Barmak, who became a close friend of Hishām's son Maslama.

The first historical Barmakid is Khālid (90–165/709–781/2), who appears in al-Ṭabarī's annals as an active member in the Abbasid *daʿwa* (mission) by 124/742 and in the Abbasid revolution which came to an end in 137/749–750. This, together with Khālid's success as an administrator, and his family's close relationship with the Abbasid family from the outset, led to the Barmakids' preeminent role from the start of the new government. His son Yaḥyā b. Khālid b. Barmak (115/733 or 119/737–190/805) became one of the most powerful and influential men of his time. This was due to Yaḥyā's upbringing in the court beside his father and, especially, to his role as the foster father and tutor of Hārūn, the future Caliph al-Rashīd. Their wives nursed each other's sons, creating a bond practically equivalent, in Arab custom, to kinship. Yaḥyā oversaw

Karakorum and Himalayan ranges, to India, Afghanistan, and Central Asia in 633 CE, ca. 70 years before the settlement of the Muslims. See Beal (trans.), *Si-yu-ki*, i, 46; Fuchs (trans.), *Huei-ch'ao*s Pilgerreise 426–469.

3 Ibn al-Faqīh's ninth-century geographical account, especially in one important manuscript held in Mashhad, Iran, and published in facsimile edition by Fuat Sezgin, gives the dimensions (which are repeated in other contemporary geographies, too), but with the added information that many slaves tilled the land here. Ibn al-Faqīh, *Kitāb al-Buldān* 322–324; Sezgin (trans.), *Collections* 321–324; Azad Herzig, and Mīr Anṣārī, *Faḍāʾil-i Balkh* 251, 257. A Buddhist monastery managing massive estates might surprise those who are not familiar with the history of Buddhist institutions, but actually, this was also common in Tibetan Buddhist practice. The Tibetan term *chos gzhis* (monastic estate) refers to an estate or collection of villages that pay taxes to the monastery. On the relationship between monasteries and the state in eighth-century Tibet, see Dargyay, Sangha and state 122. On the early modern *chos gzhis* (monastic estate), see Travers, A compiled list, 5–6.

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Hārūn's education and administered his princely affairs. Yaḥyā's sons Faḍl (148–193/765–808) and Jaʿfar (150–187/767–803) were appointed to high offices. Like their father, they were both considered generous and able administrators. But in 187/803, al-Rashīd had Jaʿfar executed, and his corpse divided and exposed in various parts of Baghdad for a year. Yaḥyā and Faḍl were incarcerated, and it was in prison that they died.

The family history, as we have just described it, is well-known to Islamic historians.[4] But perhaps the most remarkable thing about the Barmakids' rise and removal from power by Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd was that their story has been told and retold so many times, over the centuries and until this day. It is to this aspect that we now turn.

2 Textual Transmissions in Arabic and Persian of Texts on the Barmakids

2.1 *The Long Story of Ouseley 217* (Akhbār-i Barmakiyān)*: Makers, Copiers, and Exporters from the Delhi Sultanate to the Victorians*

Our story starts with Ouseley 217. This manuscript has eluded modern scholarly interest since it entered the Bodleian Library in the eighteenth century CE and its catalogue in the 1850s.[5] This chapter offers, therefore, the first study of the manuscript. On the first folio of Ouseley 217, the author introduces himself as the well-known chronicler Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī (d. ca. 758/1357), and he explains that he produced this work for his patron, the Delhi Sultan Fīrūzshāh Tughluq (r. 752–790/1351–1388). The work was completed in the early years of Fīrūzshāh's reign in the 750s/1350s. The author adds that he translated the book from Arabic to Persian ("*Kitāb-i akhbār-i barmakiyān ki banda Ḍiyāʾ-i Baranī az ʿibārāt-i ʿarabī bi-pārsī tarjuma karda ast*").[6] Baranī, before he was banished from the court of Fīrūzshāh, also wrote the better-known *Tārīkh-i Fīrūzshāhī*.[7]

But Ouseley 217 is not an autograph copy: it was made ca. 300 years after Baranī had produced it, and thus, for a much later royal patron. We know

4 This is a summary of accounts is found in: Bouvat, *Les Barmécides*; Sourdel, *Le vizirat ʿabbāside*; Barthold and Sourdel, al-Barāmika; Abbas, Barmakids; van Bladel, Barmakids; van Bladel, Bactrian background; de la Vaissière, De Bactres 531; Meisami, Masʿūdī on love; Sajjādī, *Tārīkh-i Barmakiyān* 51–187.

5 Sachau and Ethé, *Catalogue* i, 162 (entry no. 308.)

6 Ouseley 217, fol. 1v.

7 Hardy, Baranī; Baranī, *Tārīkh*.

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this because, although the manuscript lacks fine illuminations that one would expect from a royal commission, it has a wonderfully executed frontispiece, with striking lapis lazuli and gold paint work (see fig. 19.1), including golden wavy dividers between the 15 lines on the opening folios, while the *nastaʿlīq* script is penned by a well-trained scribe. There is no colophon, nor incipit, in which the scribe may have indicated the name of the specific royal personage for whom he had executed the copy. Inside the flyleaf, though, there are plenty of seals of which the Bodleian's cataloguer Hermann Ethé deciphered one that is dated 1124/1712.[8] The earliest seal is dated 1121/1709, which gives us a *terminus post quem* for the copy. This, together with the particular *nastaʿlīq* style that is typical of the seventeenth century, allows us to narrow down the dating of the copy to the latter half of the seventeenth century. This is a period that followed the Mughal "golden age" (of which Emperor Akbar, r. 1556–1605, was the prime representative). The manuscript was made in a period of Mughal downturn, and this also explains the lack of fine illuminations in it.

Ouseley 217 was acquired by the diplomat and linguist of Georgian and Victorian England Sir Gore Ouseley (1770–1844), who traveled with his brother Sir William (1767–1842) to the east. It came to the Bodleian's cataloguers and archivists along with many other items in Sir Gore's collections, including a highly prized *Shāhnāma*. What could possibly have interested the Ouseleys and the Bodleian Library in *Akhbār-i Barmakiyān*? The manuscript had no stunning imagery, and its production postdated the eighth-century events it described by nearly a millennium. *Akhbār-i Barmakiyān* was also not one of the famous Persian universal histories. Was it a random coincidence that it found itself among an illustrious group of Persian manuscripts?

Before answering the question, it is worth exploring why we ask it in the first place. At the root of our judgement (i.e., that Ouseley 217 was a "lesser" text) lies what has become something of a truism in the field of Islamic history, but one that is increasingly being proven false: namely, that Persian texts were secondary to Arabic ones as sources for studying early Islamic history. This modern scholarly bias is particularly pronounced toward Persian texts that are said to derive from "Arabic originals." There was, in fact, a trend in Arabic-to-Persian translations in the tenth–twelfth centuries CE, and more often than not, these purported Arabic originals have not survived. This has led some scholars to suggest that medieval Persian authors fabricated the existence of such Arabic originals, as a way to add authenticity and credibility to their accounts.[9]

8 Sachau and Ethé, *Catalogue* i, 162 (entry no. 308.)
9 See, for example, Ahmed Asif, *Book of conquest* 20.

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کتاب اخبار برمکیان که بنده ضیاء برنی از عبارات عربی بپارسی
ترجمه کرده است و دیباچه را بخطاب همایون سلطان فیروزشاه خلد الله
ظلال جلاله زیب و زینت داد حمد و ثنا مر خدای را که نفس خویش کرم و خلق و سخاوت
را قبله اهل کرم مقاصد بندگان ساخت و دوستی کرم و محبت سخا
را در دلهای خواص و عوام خلق منقش گردانید و شکر و سپاس پروردگاری را
که بذل وجود را پیرایهٔ پادشاهی و سرمایهٔ ساخت و آنانرا که خواست تا بدین جاه
بزرگی سربلند گردانید و محامد و مآثر ایشانرا تا دامن قیامت در
السنه و افواه جاری دارد تا صفت قابلیت ایشانرا بلباس سخای جبلی و کرم
غریزی بیاراست و [illegible] ایشانرا خیر عاقبت و حسن
خاتمت ارزانی داشت و بهشت و ادین دخول دار البقا گرداند و صد

FIGURE 19.1 Frontispiece on fol. 1v
OUSELEY 217, BODLEIAN LIBRARY PERSIAN MANUSCRIPT

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Setting aside the question of whether purported or lost Arabic originals were real or not, and if we assume that Arabic source texts did form the basis, then we need to appreciate that such Persian texts were never mere derivatives, and they were neither direct nor exact translations of the Arabic. The editors of the recently published edition and translation of *Faḍāʾil-i Balkh* found this to be the case in the text that was written in the thirteenth century CE. The Persian text was based on a purportedly lost twelfth-century Arabic original and sometimes included new material in, and usually embellishments to, the *ḥadīth*-related anecdotes. This suggests to the editors that some material was either lost in the Arabic historiography and preserved in Persian, while other Persian material was new.[10]

Why would Arabic texts lose material? It seems highly plausible that the early Arabic-writing authors were deliberately shedding material they encountered in their sources, simply because the information did not fit within the bounds of the genre in which they were writing, notably *tārīkh* (chronicle), *rijāl* (biographies), and *naṣīhat al-mulūk* (mirrors for princes). Conversely, Persian texts did not (need to) follow the Arabic genre strictures and, instead, delivered a mix and compilation of excerpts from Arabic genre works. The result was a hybrid Persian text, of which the organizing principle was often a locality or region, or in this case, a family.[11] The aim and audience of these Persian hybrid texts is very different to those of the Arabic works, and what might have been considered irrelevant (e.g., "human interest") in the more *ḥadīth*-based or administration-based texts ended up finding a home in the Persian versions.[12]

If we return to the question of what might have interested European collectors and archivists in Ouseley 217, the answer crystallizes when consulting the most important and comprehensive modern study of the Barmakids. Although Lucien Bouvat's *Les Barmécides d'après les historiens arabes et persans* is more than a century old, no other single scholar has captured the full extent of the known sources on the Barmakids. In what is essentially a bio-bibliographical

10 Azad, Herzig, and Mīr Anṣārī, *Faḍāʾil-i Balkh* 10–17.

11 Storey's bibliography of Persian texts and Bregel's continuation list local histories that were written between the eleventh and the nineteenth centuries CE for Qum, Isfahan, Nāʿīn, Kāshān, Yazd, Fārs, Shabānkāra, Khurasan, Herat, Kirmān, the Caspian provinces (Ṭabaristān, Rūyān, Ṭabaristān-Rūyān-Māzandarān, Gīlān, Gīlān-Daylamistān), Sīstān, Khūzistān, the Bakhtiyārīs, Azerbaijan, Bukhārā, Badakhshān, Nīshāpūr, Khīwa, Marw, Samarqand, Ferghāna, and Kashgar. Storey, *Persian literature* i, pt. 1, 348–393; Storey and Bregel, *Persidskaia literature* ii, 1,008–1,208.

12 A number of these themes are touched upon in the literature on Persian local histories, such as those enshrined in a special issue on the topic edited by Charles Melville in *Iranian studies*; see also in Daniel, Historiography 331–348.

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study, Bouvat surveys all the major Arabic and Persian texts that are either entirely dedicated to the Barmakids or devote significant sections to them.[13] He goes further to offer a separate bibliography on European-language sources that dealt with the Barmakids: these are romance novels, plays, novellas, and so on. It seems there was an early modern European obsession with the Barmakids.[14] The story of Jaʿfar and the caliph's half-sister ʿAbbāsa—which made its rounds in Islamic historiography, and which may have come to Europe via links with the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires—seems to have captured the imagination of the post-Enlightenment European elite in particular:[15] versions and spin-offs of the story were circulating in French, Spanish, and German. The Barmakids were powerful, rich, glamorous, and clever and became embroiled in intrigue and illicit love affairs. What was there not to love about them? Moreover, the popularity of the Barmakids came on the heels of the immense draw in Europe of the *Arabian nights* (in which the Barmakids feature as well, of course) after the stories were translated into French by Antoine Galland in 1730. The wider European fascination with "the Orient" in the arts, which had already found its expression in Shakespeare's plays, operas of Puccini and Mozart, paintings, and more, was also part of this backdrop.[16] With this cultural context in mind, we can understand the Ouseleys' interest in a Persian history of the Barmakids.

Almost tangentially, we find a growing interest in postclassical Arabic literature in the stories about the Barmakids. The most extensive and popular seems to have been *Iʿlām al-nās bi-mā waqaʿa li-ʾl-barāmika maʿa bani ʾl-Abbās* (Informing people concerning what happened to the Barmakids together with the Abbasids) written by the virtually unknown al-Itlīdī (d. ca. 1100/1689).[17] It is possible that by the time al-Itlīdī was writing, he was using cross-translated works from Persian Mughal manuscripts, and these were then recycled into the *Arabian nights* (and vice versa).[18]

13 Bouvat, *Les Barmécides* 3–43.

14 Bouvat, *Les Barmécides* 127–131.

15 Bouvat, Barmécides, 20–21; Sadan, Death of a princess; Hámori, ʿAbbāsa bt. al-Mahdī; Hámori, Going down in style.

16 For a fine study of the use of the Persian Turandot story by the opera composer Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924), see Mogtader and Schoeler, *Turandot*; and the review of the book by Paul. W.A. Mozart's opera, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, was based loosely on Turkish music and inspired by contemporary interest in the "exotic" culture of the Ottomans.

17 We thank Julia Bray for pointing us to multiple editions produced since the mid-nineteenth century under various titles that seem to emanate from this text by al-Itlidī. Personal email communication, November 2020.

18 Marzolph, Leeuwen, and Wassouf credit *Iʿlām al-nās* for stories that made it into later ver-

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An unpublished postclassical Arabic collection of anecdotes on the Barmakids is *Aḥsan al-masālik fi akhbār al-barāmik* (The best paths for [knowing] the history of the Barmakids) compiled by Yūsuf b. Muḥammad al-Mīlawī, known as Ibn al-Wakīl (fl. 1131/1719).[19] In his preface, he (wrongly) claims that no one before him had attempted to compile the notices or anecdotes relating to the Barmakids into one book.[20] He attributes his sources mostly to well-known authors, the latest of whom was al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).[21] It has survived in two manuscripts: Or. 4642 at the British Museum, copied before 1196/1782; and Arabe 2107 at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, copied in 1119/1707–1708 or 1219/1804–1805.[22]

2.2 *The Stemma of Baranī's Book on the Barmakids*

Ouseley 217 is not the only Persian manuscript on the Barmakids. Bouvat, though not aware of Ouseley 217, knew about a lithograph of Baranī's text that had been published in Bombay in the nineteenth century.[23] The Iranian scholar Garakānī mentioned the same lithograph in his introduction to an edition of another work.[24] And more recently, Sajjādī used the lithograph, together with two other manuscripts, for his edition of Baranī's work.[25] Our research enabled us to extend the list to seven manuscripts (in addition to the lithograph of Baranī's text).

The seven manuscripts have considerable differences, such as varying numbers of anecdotes, dissimilar prefaces, and divergent phrasings. Based on these differences, the manuscripts can be grouped into two versions. Version 1 is a text with around 69 anecdotes, and version 2 includes at least ten more stories than version 1 (see stemmatic diagram and table in appendix 19.2). Ouseley 217 belongs to version 1, together with two more manuscript: Ms. no. 1961 of the Library of India Office, copied in 1097/1686,[26] and Ms. 3072/67 in Lahore's Shir-

sions of the *Arabian Nights*, totally leaving out the directly Barmakid stories. Marzolph, Leeuwen, and Wassouf, *Arabian nights* 606.

19 For further information about him, see Rosenthal, From Arabic books and manuscripts 452–454.

20 Or. 4642, fol. 1^{v}–2^{r}.

21 Rieu, *Supplement* 828–829.

22 Misread as 1019 AH perhaps first by Baron de Slane (*Catalogue des manuscrits arabes* 374) and elsewhere since then. For example, in Bouvat, *Les Barmécides* 15, n. 2.

23 Bouvat, *Les Barmecides* 10, n. 1.

24 Garakānī, *Tārīkh-i Barāmika* 4–5, 14–19, 43–48, 80–84, etc. (introduction).

25 Sajjādī, *Tārīkh-i Barmakiyān* 31–41.

26 Ethé, *Catalogue*, 223–224.

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ani Collection at Punjab University, copied in 1266/1849–1850.[27] The latter was consulted by Sajjādī for his edition of the history of the Barmakids.

The remaining four manuscripts belong to version 2:

1) Ms. no. 282 of the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, which is attributed to the fifteenth century, making it the oldest of the seven.[28] It was consulted by Sajjādī for his edition;
2) Or. 151 of the British Museum, copied in the seventeenth century; and
3) Ms. 14244/1 held at Mortazavi Library in Mashhad, copied in the eighteenth century. Neither of the last two manuscripts has been used in an edition.
4) We recently discovered a fourth manuscript, which distinguishes itself significantly for including finely executed illuminated paintings showing the Barmakids in scenes known from Baranī's book (see fig. 19.2). This manuscript, now dispersed, was a real show piece that seems to have been commissioned by the Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605). We were able to identify it as resembling other manuscripts in version 2 based on the few lines of text that have survived on these painted sheets.[29]

Finally, also in version 2 is a lithograph, entitled *Ikrām al-nās fī tārīkh-i āl-i barmak dar ahd-i banī ʿabbās*, which was published in Bombay by Mīrzā Muḥammad Malik al-Kuttāb in 1889. The editor did not state which manuscript(s) he used for the lithograph copy.

2.3 *Other Persian Monographs on the Barmakids that Have Survived*

Besides Baranī's work, there are four Persian monographs on the Barmakids that have survived. Where it is mentioned, each monograph calls itself a translation from an Arabic "original," and some specifically state that their translation is new, and/or the "definitive" or "superior" translation. Like Baranī in

27 Sajjādī, *Tārīkh-i Barmakiyān* 41.

28 Sajjādī, *Tārīkh-i Barmakiyān* 41.

29 Illustrated leaves from this manuscript were sold by Sotheby's London rooms on July 1, 1969, lots 83–98. Two others were in the Warren Hastings Album (subsequently Phillipps MS. 14170) and sold on November 26, 1968, lots 376 and 377. Two illustrated leaves were sold in Sotheby's New York rooms on April 15–16, 1985, lot 445, and March 21–22, 1990, lot 8, the latter formerly in the collection of Ed. Binney, 3rd. Another was sold at Christie's London, October 14, 2003, lot 146. Some sold for £15,000 and £26,000. Owned and catalogued by: San Diego Museum of Art's Edwin Binney Collection; Harvard University Library; and the Aga Khan Museum (formerly Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan collection) in Toronto (AKM 126, 127). Publications in Falk, Smart, and Skelton, *Indian painting*, no. 7; Auer, Pen 169; Aga Khan Trust for Culture, *Architecture* 302; Welch and Welch, *Arts of the Islamic book*, no. 53, 155–157; and Canby, *Princes, poets and paladins*, nos. 87–88, 119–121.

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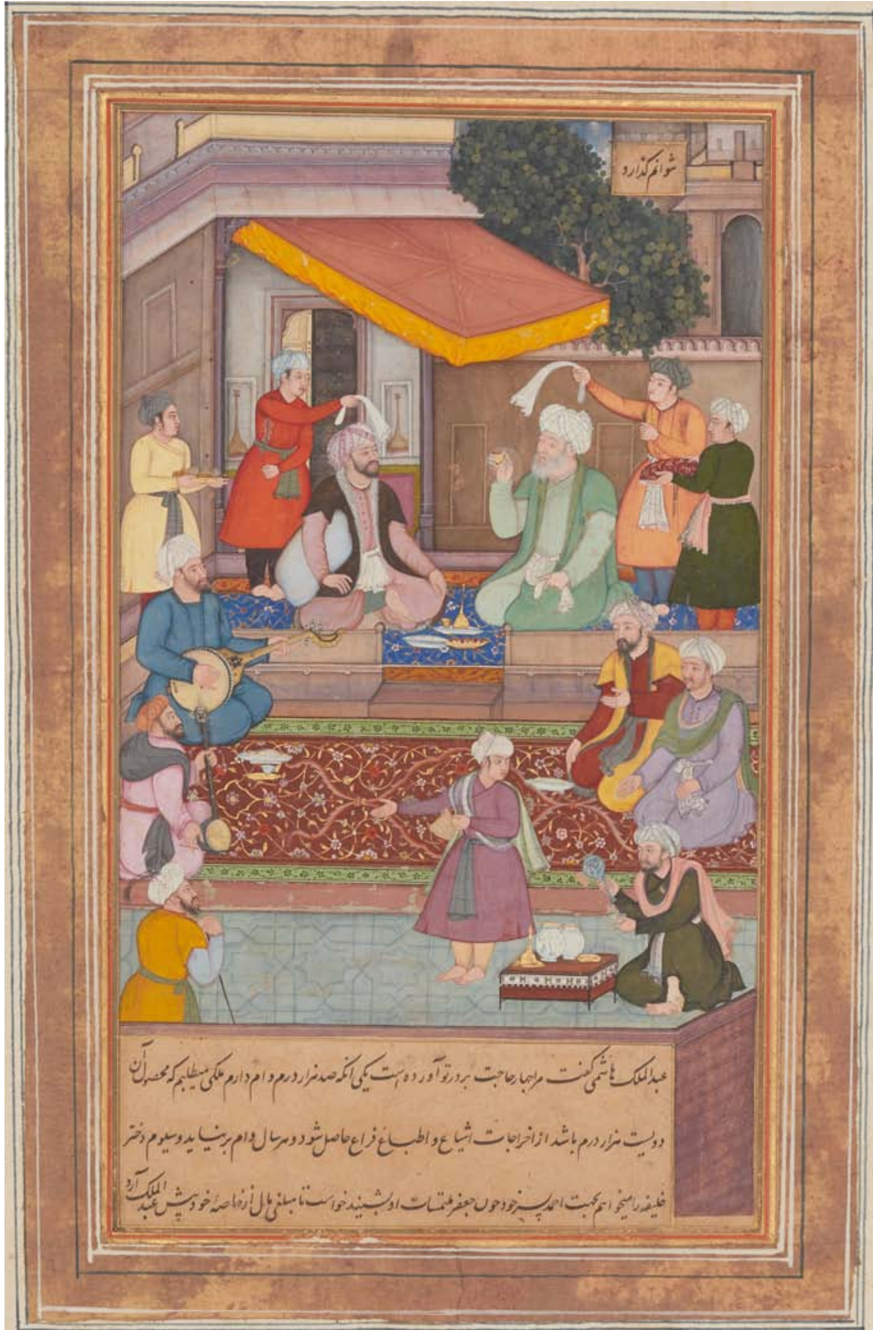

FIGURE 19.2 Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn Baranī, *Akhbār-i Barmakiyān*
AGA KHAN MUSEUM MANUSCRIPT FOLIO AKM 126

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Ouseley 217, who states that he had other translations available to him but had decided to make his own (presumably based on one or more Arabic texts he had on hand), and that he would leave it to his readers "to judge whose is best,"[30] the authors of the other four surviving monographs wrote their own translations, too.

Only one of the surviving monographs has received some western scholarly attention, and it goes back to the nineteenth century. It is ʿAbd al-Jalīl Yazdī's *Aḥwāl-i āl-i Barmak*, begun in 762/1360 and dedicated to the Muẓaffarid ruler in Shiraz, Jalāl al-Dīn Abu l-Fawāris Shāh Shujā (d. 789/1384). This text was studied by French scholar Charles Schefer. Schefer included significant chunks of it based on his readings of manuscripts 1342 and 1351 at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in his *Chrestomatie persane*.[31]

Yazdī's work cannot be called a recension of any versions of Baranī's translation described above; it is a different book altogether. The interval between the two translations is very short, which probably means they were executed independently of one another. Yazdī's chapter organization and content is different to Baranī's, and there are anecdotes and transmitters mentioned in it that do not appear in Baranī's book, and vice versa. Yazdī's text is written in difficult literary prose with full poems, while Baranī's is less eloquent. Yazdī quotes the Arabic transmitter ʿUmar al-Kirmānī (on him, see below) once in his work,[32] while Baranī never mentions this Kirmānī.

The second and third alternative texts are *Akhbār-i Barmakiyān*, written by Afḍal Kirmānī, probably Afḍal al-Dīn Abū Ḥāmid Kirmānī, a well-known Seljuq historian (d. ca. 615/1217–1218),[33] and an *Aḥwāl-i Barmakiyān* produced by an anonymous author and translator in 597/1201. Both the latter works were edited by the Iranian scholar Muḥaddith in 2011–2012.[34]

We have identified a fourth text, called *Tārīkh-i Barāmika*, written by an unknown author, which was edited by the Iranian scholar Garakānī (based on his privately owned manuscript). We were able to identify Garakānī's lost copy, as well as a later copy of it in Ms no. 9541 held in Tehran at the Library, Museum and Documentation Centre of the Islamic Consultative Assembly. Garakānī contended that the text he was editing was a lost translation from Arabic into Persian by a certain Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. ʿUmar Hirawī written

30 Ouseley 217, fol. 3ᵛ.

31 Blochet, *Catalogue* i, 367–368. Schefer, *Chrestomatie* ii, 3,013. This two-volume compilation also included the first two sections of the local history of the Barmakid home of Balkh, the *Faḍā'il-i Balkh*. Schefer, *Chrestomatie* i, 66–103.

32 Supplément Persan 1342, fol. 7ᵛ.

33 Bastani Parizi and Negahban, Afḍal al-Dīn Kirmānī.

34 Muḥaddith (ed.), *Aḥwāl-i wa Akhbār-i Barmakiyān*.

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in the Samanid era.[35] The text exhibits archaisms,[36] but Garakānī's specifically Samanid claim cannot be substantiated at the current stage of research. The monograph itself contains 23 anecdotes, all of which are attributed to a certain Abū al-Qāsim b. Ghassān (on him, see below).

2.4 *Persian Monographs on the Barmakids that Have Not Survived*

There are, based on references in later sources, three more Persian monographs on the Barmakids that predate the Delhi sultans by centuries and have not survived. Baranī mentions two that would be near-contemporary with the Arabic classical texts.[37] One is the abovementioned Samanid text by Hirawī, which Garakānī claims his manuscript to be. In Baranī's words: "*Chunīn gūyad Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh b. Muḥammad ki mutarjim awwal-i akhbār-i barāmika būd, baʿd az Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. ʿUmar Hirawī.*"[38] The second of Baranī's sources is a certain Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh b. Muḥammad L'BRY (i.e., Lābarī?), who Baranī says was the "first translator" (*mutarjim*) from Arabic. Baranī also tells us he was commissioned to produce this work by Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna (r. 388–421/998–1030): "*Wa īn ʿAbdullāh-i mutarjimī gūyad ki akhbār-i karam wa sakhāwat wa dastgīrī-yi barāmika chandān-ast ki dar dafātir nagunjad, ammā ān-chi rawāyāt-i mashhūr wa maʿrūf būda, yakī az fuḍalā-yi Baghdād bi ʿibārat-i ʿArabī jamʿ karda-ast, wa man* [*Lābarī*] *ān rā bi ḥukm-i farmān-i aʿlāʾ bi-pārsī tarjuma karda-am.*"[39]

The third lost Persian text is mentioned as a collected work by an anonymous author who also wrote the well-known *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa al-qiṣaṣ* (ca. 520/1126–1127). The anonymous author notes: "[…] *akhbār-i Barāmika bisyār ast az ʿahd-i Barmak tā ākhir-i dawlat-i īshān. Wa man ān rā kitābī mufrad sākhta-am wa tartībī nahāda rūzgār-i dawlat-i īshān rā wa ānchi karda-and dar ḥaq-i mardum wa rūzgār-i miḥnat wa sabab-i ān wa ānchi bar sar-i īshān āmad.*"[40]

2.5 *"Original" Arabic Monographs on the Barmakids*

None of the medieval "original" Arabic texts seems to have survived, and therefore, we cannot check how closely the purported translations are to the origin-

35 Garakānī, *Tārīkh-i Barāmika* 255–263 (introduction).
36 Discussed in Garakānī, *Tārīkh-i Barāmika* 263–270 (introduction).
37 Sajjādī, *Tārīkh-i Barmakiyān* 311, 337, 422.
38 Sajjādī, *Tārīkh-i Barmakiyān* 337; citing Bombay lithograph, entitled *Ikrām al-nās*.
39 Sajjādī, *Tārīkh-i Barmakiyān* 337; citing Bombay lithograph, entitled *Ikrām al-nās*. It is clear from the context, that the high order (*farmān-i aʿla*ʾ) was given by Maḥmūd of Ghazna.
40 Anonymous, *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa al-qiṣaṣ* 508.

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als. Often these texts are only mentioned in passing by the Persian authors, and without reference even to authors' names or titles. The one known exception is the Arabic transmitter (*rawī*) of a narrative of significant length on the Barmakids called ʿUmar b. Azraq (var. ʿAbd al-Razzāq) al-Kirmānī (fl. ca. 185/800).

ʿUmar b. Azraq al-Kirmānī was a contemporary of the Barmakids, and his surviving excerpts focus on the early family history of Barmak and Khālid. Edmund Bosworth, and Ihsan Abbas before him, identified al-Kirmānī as a *rāwī* who was cited by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) for his accounts of the Barmakids, and who, in turn, collected the accounts of ʿAbbās b. Bazīʿ, Bashshār b. Burd, Ayyūb b. Hārūn b. Sulaymān b. ʿAlī, Bakhtishū and his son Jibrail, Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad b. Ḥakīm al-Kūfī, Ibn Shāhik al-Sindī, Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl b. Sufyān, Mūsā b. Yaḥyā, Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī, Zubayr b. Bakkār, and Jaʿfar b. al-Ḥasan al-Lahbī.[41]

However, now, through our study of the Persian monographs, we know of a second Arabic *rāwī* and compiler of a book on the Barmakids. His name is (Abū) al-Qāsim Muḥammad b. Ghassān al-Ṭāʾifī. He probably lived some decades after ʿUmar b. Azraq al-Kirmānī, and his account covers the full period of the Barmakid family history, all the way up to their time in the Abbasid court, their golden age, and downfall, as well as the aftermath. In Baranī's translation, al-Ṭāʾifī is identified as either "the original compiler" or "the Arabic author" of this book. We only know about al-Ṭāʾifī what he writes himself, namely, that he transmitted from his father who had lived during the time of the Barmakids.[42] Al-Ṭāʾifī's name seems not to appear in the Arabic sources, other than on one occasion in what looks like a fourteenth-century Arabic manuscript called *Akhbār al-barāmika wa dhikru ayyāmihim wa iḥsānihim*.[43] This manuscript refers to the *rāwī* as "al-Qāsim b. Ghassān,"[44] much like in Garakānī's manuscript (instead of Abū al-Qāsim b. Ghassān, as it appears in the other texts).[45]

2.6 *The Barmakids in Works that Are Not Monographs*

The best-known historians to mention the Barmakids in significant excerpts are those who wrote in the Arabic *tārīkh*, *tadhkīra*, and *rijāl* traditions, such as Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), Ibn Wāḍiḥ al-Yaʿqūbī (d. 284/897–898), al-Ṭabarī

41 Bosworth, Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar al-Kirmānī; ʿAbbās, *Shadharāt* 11–17.

42 Ouseley 217, fol. 12^{r}, 13^{v}.

43 Ms. 4828 in the Fatih collection, Süleymaniye Library, fol. 24^{r}. We thank John Nawas for drawing our attention to the publication of this manuscript as *Akhbār al-Barāmika*, edited by Jalīl al-ʿAṭiyya.

44 Ms. 4828, fol. 24^{v}.

45 Garakānī decided to "correct" the manuscript rendering of the name to "Abu ʾl-Qāsim,"

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(d. 310/923), al-Masʿūdī (d. 346/957), al-Jahshiyārī (d. 331/943), Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. ca. 362/973), and Ibn Khallikān (d. 681/1282).[46]

The Barmakids feature in a variety of genres in Persian medieval texts as well, including in mirrors for princes (*naṣīḥat al-mulūk*), such as, *Siyar al-mulūk* by Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092) and *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* by Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). Two other genres in Persian writing where the Barmakids appear frequently is *tārīkh*, such as *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī* (470/1077), *Zayn al-akhbār* of Gardīzī (written ca. 442–443/1050–1051), *Rawḍatu uli -l-albāb fī maʿrifat al-tawārīkh wa l-ansāb* of Banākatī (d. 730/1330), and *Tajārib al-Salaf* by Hindūshāh Nakhjawānī (d. 730/1330), as well as in works of poetry and *ḥikāyāt*, or the collections thereof, most notably *Jawāmiʿ al-Ḥikāyāt* by Awfī (d. after 640/1242).

3 What the Texts Tell Us about the Barmakids

Having considered the transmission routes of the accounts on the Barmakids, we now turn to the content. We limit our discussion here to version 1. Baranī's account in Ouseley 217 (and other manuscripts in version 1) includes around 70 stories: two are about Barmak, one about Khālid, 21 about Yaḥyā, 16 about Faḍl, 20 about Jaʿfar, and around ten about the Barmakids in general. The stories are sequenced, broadly in chronological order, starting with Barmak and ending with Jaʿfar and the few surviving Barmakids who purportedly lived in poverty after the Barmakid disgrace. Baranī, in his anecdotes, mentions many political and administrative court officials known from the historical records of the Abbasid court. To mention only a few star characters in the stories: al-Faḍl b. Sahl (d. 202/ 818), al-Ḥasan b. Sahl (d. 236/850–851), al-Faḍl b. Rabīʿ (d. 207/822–823 or 208/823–824), ʿAlī b. ʿĪsā b. Māhān (d. 196/812), and ʿAbdallāh b. Mālik, the provincial governor of Khurasan under the Abbasid Caliph al-Mansur (r. 754–775).[47] Other courtiers include musicians and poets, also known from the historical record, such as, Muslim b. al-Walīd al-Anṣārī (d. 208/823), Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (155–235/772–850), Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn, Abū Zakariyyāʾ (158–

but the manuscript actually uses "al-Qāsim b. Ghassān." See Garakānī, *Tārīkh-i Barāmika* 2, 9, 14, 19, 26–28, 32, ff.

46 See Bouvat, *Les Barmecides* 5–9 for details.

47 For further information about these officials, see Sourdel, al-Faḍl b. Sahl b. Zadhānfarūkh; Sourdel, al-Ḥasan b. Sahl; Sourdel, al-Faḍl b. al-Rabīʿ; Sourdel, Ibn Māhān; Kennedy, *Early Abbasid caliphate* 80–81.

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233/775–847), Abū Yūsuf b. Ibrāhīm al-Anṣārī al-Kūfī (d. 182/798–799), Yaḥyā b. Muʿādh al-Rāzī (d. 258/872), and Abū ʿAmr Kulthūm b. ʿAmr al-ʿAttābī (d. ca. 220/835).[48]

The aim of the book is not to give a terse historical account but to build the historical characters into stories that have a narrative arc: the message being cautionary and aimed at rulers as much as subjects. The main message is that good rule must come, above all, with generosity and grace. Storytelling is, therefore, a narrative device in which fiction and nonfiction come together. Baranī explains it best when, citing a *Maʿāthir Maḥmūdī* by Imām Qaffāl, explaining why Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna (r. 388–421/998–1030) was interested in the stories of the Barmakids. Baranī writes: “Maḥmūd loved the stories of the prophets and the first saints, but in the next tier of importance to him were the stories of the *generous people* [emphasis added].”[49] Then, Baranī inserts himself, stating that the reason why he wrote his book on the Barmakids was to warn rulers to “heed the lesson not to kill the generous ones.” The not-so-veiled reference was to the Barmakids, who were, in Baranī’s worldview, the apotheosis of generosity.[50]

While, above all, Baranī’s is a book of advice literature, he also was set on entertaining his readers and listeners. His stories are often embellished with fantastical tales about exotic lands, kings, miracles, and travels. The narrative arc reaches its climax in the cruel acts of Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, who toppled his trusted Barmakid advisors—so the narrative goes—turning against them in a cowardly act of envy and spite. Another laudable trait highlighted frequently in the text is the Barmakids’ exceptional hospitality, including as hosts of some of the best parties in eighth-century Baghdad.[51] But all this goodness became the reason for their downfall: Hārūn al-Rashīd and his close circle, envious of Barmakid fame, orchestrated their downfall. In an interesting twist, the postscript in the text is that Hārūn felt deep remorse for these acts, but that his pride kept him from doing the right thing, which would have been to reinstate them in their state functions.[52]

Some of the stories (*ḥikāyāt* or *akhbār*) in the text are well-known, such as that of the nominal marriage and its illicit consummation by the caliph’s half-

48 Kratschkowsky, Muslim b. al-Walīd; Wright, Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī; Leemhuis, Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn; Schacht, Abū Yūsuf; Forūzandi, Siyrī dar zindigī; Blachère, al-ʿAttābī.

49 Ouseley 217, fol. 2^{v}.

50 Ouseley 217, fol. $3^{r–v}$.

51 E.g., see Ousely 217, fols. 33^{r}–234^{v}.

52 On Hārūn’s purported remorse, see Ouseley 217, fols. 25^{v}, 27^{v}.

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sister ʿAbbāsa and the Barmakid minister Jaʿfar. This story is often depicted as setting in motion the beginning of the Barmakid decline (and by extension that of the Abbasid realm).[53] Other stories are less known but have parallels in further surviving sources. Baranī injects humor in some stories and embellishes well-known events with direct speech and details that could not possibly have happened in that exact way. Some are clearly fictitious but, at the same time, give a wonderful and entertaining glimpse into how courts must have functioned—if not in the Abbasid times, then surely in the Delhi Sultanate or Mughal court in which these manuscripts were copied. We get a sense of how people vied for power, and how the general populace attained access to the court in ways that surely resonated with premodern audiences, just as it did in the nineteenth century. These accounts, and an analysis of what in them is original versus later redaction, could provide interesting research material for court historians.

If Baranī's account, and those in the other monographs on the Barmakids, belong to a hybrid genre of historical fiction, what is their value to the historian? Can historians treat them as serious historical sources? We would argue that, while the stories in these texts should not be accepted wholesale, they still offer details on the administrative culture and the way premodern administrators lived that are not mere coincidences or fabrications but represent a worldview that existed either at the time of writing or at the time about which the authors were writing. And beyond this, the texts, being numerous as they are and consistently copied, are a testament to the lasting Barmakid legacy throughout the Islamicate realm.

4 Case Study: Story of the King of Ṭabaristān, the Ring, and the Fish

We will now test our hypotheses of transmission, shedding, and authorial intervention discussed above through one of Baranī's most charming anecdotes. The main gist of the story, which is embedded in the very first *ḥikāyat* of Ouseley 217, is this:[54]

Barmak arrived in the court of the Umayyad Caliph ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65–86/685–705) in Syria. In his attempt to win the caliph's ear, Barmak woos him with exciting stories about his journey from his homeland in Balkh to Syria. One is a story about a ruler from Ṭabaristān (in today's Māzandarān

53 Meisami, Masʿūdī on love; Hámori, ʿAbbāsa bt. al-Mahdī.
54 Ouseley 217 in fols. 4^{r}–5^{v}.

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province, Iran), which the Barmak would have passed on his way. The king (*malik*) and Barmak were at the Caspian shores when the king removed his stone-studded ring from his finger and offered it to Barmak as a present. When Barmak refused to accept such a generous gift, the king threw his ring into the sea. This saddened Barmak, who asked the king why he had done such a thing. At this point, the king ordered one of his retinue to bring a chest. From it, the king brought out a magical fish. The king lobbed the fish into the sea while Barmak and the king's entourage watched in amazement, for the fish re-emerged from the water, with the ruler's ring around its head![55]

The story is also mentioned by Ibn Isfandiyār (fl. early thirteenth century CE) in his *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, who in turn, cites a *Tārīkh-i Barmakiyān* as his source on the *malik*, whom Ibn Isfandiyār refers to by the name of Māhiya-sar (Fish-head). Ibn Isfandiyār inserts himself here, adding that he will not expand on the story because of its fictitious nature. Ibn Isfandiyār further states that there are other fantastical sources that he has read in a book by a certain Yazdādī, but that these are beyond belief, which is why he has not "translated" them in his book.[56]

Baranī, like Ibn Isfandiyār, acknowledges that the fish story is not believable but makes it clear that his purpose is not to convince us, his readers, of its veracity. He, rather, marvels at the Barmakid capacity to convince the caliph of the veracity of such a story. He attributes it to the Barmakids' exceptional tact, intelligence, and mild manner. Baranī also takes from this story the advice, which he passes on to his readers, that "wise people have said that stories that are not believable should not be told in the presence of kings."[57] Thus, the message is: do not try this at home; only a Barmakid can get away with telling a powerful ruler fantastical stories without reprimand or punishment!

From the story we learn three important things: first, that Ibn Isfandiyār's source (*Tārikh-i Barāmika*) was written in Arabic; second, that a similar sequence of stories exists in Ibn Isfandiyār's source and Baranī's work. A third point is that Baranī and Ibn Isfandiyār may have used a common source on the history of the Barmakids, but while the former used the story to support a point

55 Ouseley 217, fol. 6v–6r.

56 Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* 85. On Ibn Isfandiyar's sources, see Melville, Ebn Esfandiyar. Iqbāl, the editor of *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān*, also thinks the story is fabricated on account of the fact that the Ṭabaristān ruler lived at the time of the Prophet and not at the time of ʿAbd al-Malik (Ibn Isfandiyār, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* 85, n. 3). Niẓam al-Mulk Ṭūsī also relates part of the story in his *Siyar al-Mulūk* 210–216.

57 Ouseley 217, fol. 7r.

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of advice, the latter had no use for it in a *tārīkh* genre piece, thus considering it unworthy of translation. Ibn Isfandiyār shed the material; Baranī kept and embellished it.[58]

5 Conclusion

We have drawn two important conclusions from our study. First, is that the Persian histories of the Barmakids are at least as important as the Arabic ones. They draw on contemporary or near-contemporary sources, just like the Arabic ones do. We have seen that the earliest Persian monographs are an earliest extant text written in the twelfth which was preceded by a lost tenth century text that was written when Abū ʿAlī Balʿamī (d. ca. 363/974) was translating al-Ṭabarī's *History*. Al-Ṭabarī, in turn, was using al-Kirmānī (who is also cited by Yazdī, the author of a fourteenth-century work on the Barmakids). That there was a second *rāwī* called al-Ṭāʾifī is plausible, too; and this transmitter has survived mainly in the Persian sources, although we have also found him mentioned in one Arabic source so far. Thus, no history of the Barmakids is complete without the Persian texts of *tārīkh*, advice literature, Barmakid family histories, or collections of stories (*ḥikāyāt*). We hope that further scholars will follow suit to conduct more detailed studies of the contents of the Persian and later Arabic texts on the Barmakids to capture the full extent of Barmakid accounts. In this regard, we encourage scholars working in both western institutions and Persian-speaking and Arabic-speaking academic circles to collaborate and take note of each other's findings so that a more comprehensive and balanced picture can be drawn up of the Barmakids.

The second important conclusion is that the Barmakid legacy in Islamic historiography is long and deep, and extends beyond the divides of language, ethnicity, tribe, region, or a particular dynasty. Once ensconced in the caliphal court in the eighth century CE, the Barmakids were part of an imperial project of Islamization. Their appeal to authors lay in their perfection of the universally accepted qualities of generosity, good thoughts, and good deeds. Whoever judged them for being inferior on account of their origins was of a small mind. Thus, Baranī delivers this story attributed to Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī

58 The story is also omitted from the *Akhbār-i Barmakiyān*, while it is included in *Aḥwāl-i Barmakiyān*, both edited by Muḥaddith, *Aḥwāl-i wa Akhbār-i Barmakiyān* 143–144.

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(d. 235/850), who was "one of the most eloquent speakers and exceptional singers of his time".[59]

The singer describes his encounter with ʿAbdallāh b. Mālik al-Khuzāʿī,[60] a well-known senior official at the Abbasid caliphal court. Al-Khuzāʿī was drunk on evening wine and ordered, somewhat brazenly, for Isḥāq to "[p]ick up an instrument and sing a song, so that I may become even jollier than I am already!" Isḥāq was insulted by this rude manner and sang without his usual joy and passion. Al-Khuzāʿī noted to his boon companions that, "When Isḥāq sings for the Barmakids it warms the heart and is beautiful; why is he not doing the same now?" Al-Khuzāʿī laments sarcastically that, "[t]hese Barmakids were originally infidels (*gabr*). It was only the commander of the faithful who elevated Khālid; whereas, we Arabs have great genealogies (*nasab*). What do the Barmakids have that is greater or better than us?"

Isḥāq was deeply perturbed by al-Khuzāʿī's utterances, feeling distraught and irritated by them, "so much that I felt like each of my hair follicles was on fire!" Isḥāq replied: "You are my superior and should not speak in this way. You shouldn't compare your generosity or charity with that of the Barmakids, for no one can reach the hights of their deeds. No one today—neither amongst the Arabs nor the people of ʿAjam—can reach their levels of generosity and beneficence!"[61]

Isḥāq's emotional outburst reveals what must have lain at the root of the Barmakid appeal: they represented all that was good in Islam, to Arab and non-Arab Muslims alike, to speakers of Persian, Arabic, and other languages. It was the Barmakids' universality in a multi-ethnic and multilingual environment of the Islamicate world that must have accounted for the retelling of their stories over the past millennium in all parts of the Islamic world. In Mughal India, where Muslim rulers were grappling with majority Hindu and other Indian religionists, this message would have rung true. In these narratives, the Barmakids were everyone's Muslims. They were not Arabicized, as some scholars have contended, but a democratizing and diversifying force of Islamization.

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59 Isḥāq (155–235/772–850) son of Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (d. 188/804), illustrious court musician of the early Abbasid period, known for his scholarly prowess and musical expertise. Fück, Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī; minor alterations in Wright, Isḥāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī; on the accounts about the Barmakids attributed to him, notably in *Kitāb al-Aghānī*, see Bouvat, *Les Barmécides* 8, 10, 52, 64–66.

60 ʿAbdallāh b. Mālik al-Khuzāʿī belonged to the Khuzāʿa, as ancient Arabian tribe. Some Khuzāʿīs who went to Khurasan "were among the ʿAbbāsid agents who paved the way for the new dynasty." Kister, Khuzāʿa.

61 Ouseley 217, fols. 49ʳ–50ʳ.

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TABLE 19.1 Stemmatic Diagram of Baranī's *Akhbār-i Barmakiyān*

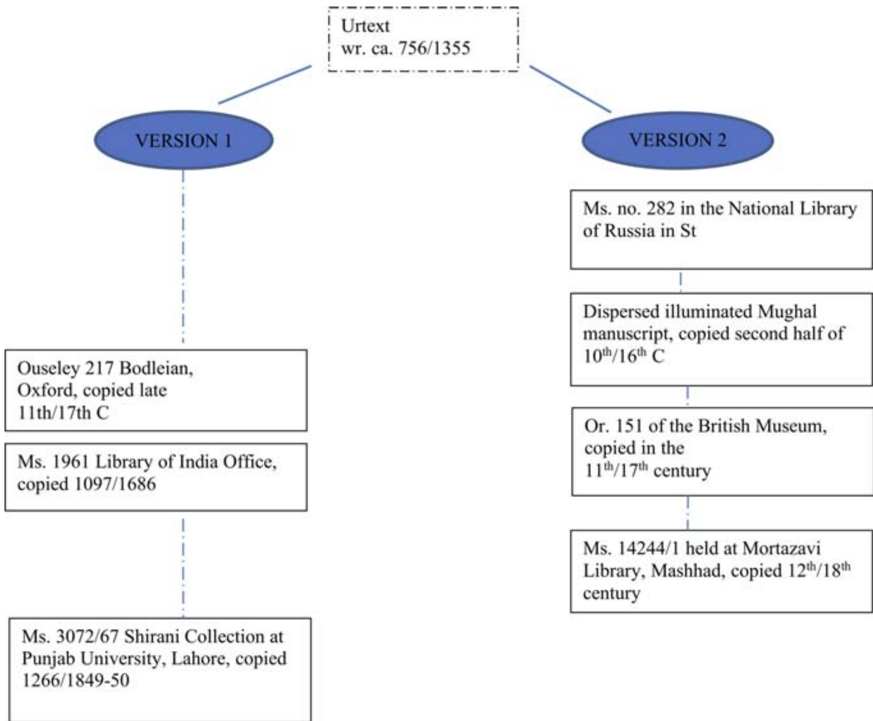

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TABLE 19.2 Table of Premodern Persian Monographs on the Barmakids (Lost and Surviving Manuscripts and Published Editions)

Name	Persian translator/ compiler	Date (CE)	Dedication/ commission	Transmitter	Manuscripts (copy dates in CE)	Edition (see bibliography for full reference)	No. of anecdotes
Unknown	Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn b. ʿUmar Hirawī	Presumably at the time of Samanids	Unknown	Unknown	Lost (reported by Baranī)	N/A	Unknown
Unknown	Abū Muḥammad ʿAbdullāh b. Muḥammad Lʾ BRY/al-ʾBRY (?)	Between 998 to 1030	Commissioned by Maḥmūd of Ghazni	Unknown	Lost (reported by Baranī)	N/A	Unknown
[*Tārīkh-i Barāmika*]	Attributed to Hirawī (see above) by the editor	tenth or eleventh century	None	Abū al-Qāsim b. Ghassān (for all anecdotes)	Ms 5138, Library, Museum and Documentation Centre of Islamic Consultative Assembly. Copied sometime between 1617 to 1640. Ms 9541, Library, Museum and Documentation Centre of Islamic Consultative Assembly. Nineteenth-century copy.	Garakānī, *Tārīkh-i Barāmika*.	23
Unspecified	Anon. author of *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa al-qiṣaṣ*	Before 1126	Unknown	Unknown	Lost (reported in *Mujmal al-tawārīkh wa al-qiṣaṣ*)	N/A	Unknown

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TABLE 19.2 Table of Premodern Persian Monographs on the Barmakids (Lost and Surviving Manuscripts and Published Editions) (*cont.*)

Name	Persian translator/ compiler	Date (CE)	Dedication/ commission	Transmitter	Manuscripts (copy dates in CE)	Edition (see bibliography for full reference)	No. of anecdotes
[*Aḥwāl-i Barmakiyān*]	Anonymous	1201	None	A few anecdotes by Abū al-Qāsim b. Ghassān	Ms 8959, Library, Museum and Documentation Centre of Islamic Consultative Assembly. Copied in August 1612.	Muḥaddith, *Aḥwāl*	54
[*Akhbār-i Barmakiyān*]	Translated by Afḍal Kirmānī (probably Afḍal al-Dīn Abū Ḥāmid Kirmānī, d. ca. 1218)	Late twelfth or early thirteenth century	ṣadr-i ᶜālī … nasīb wa ḥasīb-i Khurāsān wa Kirmān Abū Bakr bin ᶜAlī	A few anecdotes by Abū al-Qāsim b. Ghassān	Ms 8959, Library, Museum and Documentation Centre of Islamic Consultative Assembly. Copied in August 1612. Ms 4936, Malek National Library and Museum Institution. Copied in January 1895.	Muḥaddith, *Aḥwāl*	73
Akhbār-i Barmakiyān/ Aḥwāl-i Āl-i Barmak	Ḍiyā al-Dīn Baranī (d. ca. 1359)	Early 1350s	Fīrūzshāh Tughluq (r. 1351–1387)	Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad [b. Ghassān] Ṭāyifī (named as “original compiler, compiler of the Arabic book”)	Version 1: Ms Ouseley 217, Bodleian Library in Oxford. Copied in seventeenth century. Ms 1961 at the Library of India Office. Copied in 1686. Ms 3072/67, Shirani Collection, Punjab University Library in Lahore. Copied in 1850.	Partially in Sajjādī. *Tārīkh*.	71

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TABLE 19.2 Table of Premodern Persian Monographs on the Barmakids (Lost and Surviving Manuscripts and Published Editions) (*cont.*)

Name	**Persian translator/ compiler**	**Date (CE)**	**Dedication/ commission**	**Transmitter**	**Manuscripts (copy dates in CE)**	**Edition (see bibliography for full reference)**	**No. of anecdotes**
					Version 2: Ms 282, National Library of Russia in Saint Petersburg. Probably fifteenth-century copy. Ms Or. 151, British Museum. Copied in seventeenth century. Ms 14244/1, the Mortazavi Library in Mashhad. Eighteenth-century copy. Scattered folios from a lost Ms. Copied ca. 1595–1600.	Malik al-Kuttāb, *Ikrām al-nās* (lithograph copy). Sajjādī, *Tārīkh*. Only Ms 282 and lithograph copy of Malik al-Kuttāb.	82
[*Aḥwāl-i Āl-i Barmak*]	ʿAbd al-Jalīl b. Yaḥyā b. ʿAbd al-Jalīl b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Yazdī	1360	Jalāl al-Dīn Abu ʾl-Fawāris Shāh Shujāʿ (d. 1384)	One by ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-Razzāq Kirmānī Ten by Abū al-Qāsim b. Ghassān	Supplément Persan 1342 in BNF. Copied ca. 1400. Supplément Persan 1351 in BNF. Copied in 1519. Ms 522, Maktabat Shaikh al-Islām ʿĀrif Ḥikmat. eighteenth-century copy.	Partially in: Charles Schefer. Paris 1885.	84

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Personal Note

A final personal word from us authors: Hugh has been working with us on the Invisible East program in Oxford since 2019, and specifically with Arezou since she was a doctoral student. We have both benefitted immensely from Hugh's breadth of knowledge on Abbasid history, his infectious good humor, and his always constructive comments. We can probably speak for the whole team when we say that Hugh has been a colleague and a friend. We are honored to be able to present a chapter in this wonderful collection celebrating his immensely influential work.

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