



From Khorasan to the Court of the Abbasid State

The Barmakids excluded the Arabs from the joints of the state and enabled the Persians

The Barmakids remain an exception in the Abbasid history as a Persian family that had a profound influence on the structure of the state, as it passed through the domination of the Abbasid rule and passed. However, the most prominent title in the Barmakid experience is that they were the result of a diligent Persian action that began from an early age and was active in penetration since the fall of the Umayyads, as the latter were not favored by the Persians. They considered them an extension of the Arab state that overthrew their Sasanian kingdom. Thus, they became an anti-Umayyad movement and they found in that an opportunity to draw closer to the Abbasids, work with them to overthrow the Umayyad rule, then penetrate the new state and rule through. That is how the Persian Barmakids were able to penetrate the Abbasid system of government, spread their political tricks in the palace, deepen the differences between the governors and the crown princes, bring the Persian element closer and expel the loyal Arabs.

The Barmakids acquired the only ladder to ascend to glory, wealth, status and influence, so the Arabs no longer had a way to develop and advance on the ladder of the Abbasid state except through the Barmakids; flattering them, getting close to them and submitting to their authority.

The actions of the Barmakids in the Abbasid state were not inconsistent with the Shu'ubi climate that dominated the joints of the state and its culture. Rather, most of their actions and practices were consistent with the Shu'ubi, anti-Arabism tendencies and entrenched hatred. Perhaps one of their most prominent actions in this regard is the revival of the foreign culture, celebrating Persian history and literature, encouraging the translation of Persian works into Arabic, and embracing translators and writers with Shu'ubi tendencies, especially from the Persians, with a view to elevate the status of Persian civilization. At the same time, they worked on degrading the status of the Arabs, their role and culture, by writing books denouncing them and ridiculing their customs and traditions.

Further, the Barmakids embraced poets with Shu'ubi tendency to promote for them and their culture among the people. They also worked very hard to shake the concepts of Islamic faith under the banner of freedom of opinion, gatherings of drinking and socialization, in addition to soliciting elements accused of heresy and atheism and carrying out secret activities of an ethnic nature through gatherings that only Persians could enter. Further to the above, they recruited Persians in all key positions in the state and had no problem showing their support to the Magi doctrine, which exposed them to accusation of heresy.

Barmaki planning began early to penetrate the Abbasid rule. Khalid bin Barmak laid the foundations for the relationship with the Abbasids and consolidated it with joining the Abbasid call against the Umayyad state. After the announcement of the establishment of the Abbasid state, the Barmakids began their first steps towards power and influence, as the name of Khalid ibn Barmak emerged from the first day of the pledge of allegiance to Abu al-Abbas al-Saffah for the caliphate. With his cunning and tact, he became close to the Caliph and favored thereby, who appointed him to critical positions in the state, until he was assigned the Ministry after the removal of Abu Salama al-Khalal.

A secret political movement such as the Barmaks movement cannot rise and increase its power and influence without the power of money. Therefore, they harnessed state funds to serve their purposes and spent generously on their followers, ignoring the interests of the state and the common people and their rights. They also worked to weaken the unity of the Abbasid state by causing discord and dissension among the sons of the caliph, in order to serve their ethnic interests

They falsely played the role of the strong and trustworthy, infiltrated the palaces and controlled the sons of the caliphs

The Barmakids worked hard to exclude the Arabs from the palaces of the caliphs, accusing them of negligence in their actions and questioning their loyalty to the caliph, in order to gain his trust for themselves only and, hence, be able, to tamper with the state. This included all Arab leaders and thinkers who were suspected of being dangerous to them, i.e., everyone who did not serve their agenda and constituted a threat to their position in the heart of the Abbasid state.

Among the most prominent opponents of the Barmakids was Muhammad ibn al-Layth, who was famous for his non-inclination towards the foreigners and Persians, hence the Barmakids hated him and conspired against him, in addition to their endeavor with Harun al-Rashid to entrap military commander Yazid ibn Mazyad al-Shaibani, the performer of great achievements, who was well-reputed in the Abbasid state for courage and achievements. Yet, the Barmakids accused him of negligence in fighting the Kharijites.

Barmakids' plans would not have been completed except by infiltrating the joints of the state and then seizing it by approaching the caliph and his sons, after which they used to stick themselves to the candidate for the caliphate later, to become his eyes, ears, and hands. Once their goal is attained, they excluded the Arabs and expanded the influence of the Persians and transformed the state into a Persian one with an Arabic title.

After the death of Caliph Abi Ja'far al-Mansur, the influence of the Barmakids expanded and dependence on them increased. In the year (161 AH), al-Mahdi ordered that Yahya ibn Khalid take over the affairs of his son Harun instead of his Minister Aban ibn Sadaqa. That was an opportunity to acquire the heart and mind of the young prince, especially that he was associated with them with breastfeeding brothers. Most importantly, they supervised his preparation for the future caliphate position, so as to ensure their continued influence and control.

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