

- Proceedings of the Epigraphical Society of India*, Third Annual Session held at Udupi (Mysore: Epigraphical Society of India).
- Mabberl, I.W. (1969), 'Deccan', *Journal of South Eastern History*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 202-23.
- Narayanan M.G.S. (1975), 'The Vedic-Sanskrit-Puranic Elements in the Sangam Literature', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 36th Session, Aligarh.
- ____ (1996), *Purnana of Kerala* (Calicut: published by the author).
- ____ (1977), 'The Ceremonies of Honour', in *Reinterpretations of South Indian History* (Tiruvannam: College Book House).
- Narayanan, M.G.S. and Kesava Veluthai (1978), 'The Bhakti Movement in South India: in S.C. Malik (ed.), *Indian Movements: Aspects of Dissent, Protest and Reform* (Simla: Institute of Advanced Studies).
- ____ (1981), 'The Temple in South India', paper presented at the symposium on 'The Socio-Economic Role of Religious Institutions in India', Indian History Congress, 42nd Session, Bodhgaya.
- Periyapurānam* (1974), edited by K. Sathyamanyam (Srivalkuntham: Kumarrapuram Saragam).
- Rao, T.A. Gopinatha (1973), *History of Srivishnavas* (Madras: Madras University).
- Sastri, K.A. Nilakanta (1953), *The Pandyan Kingdom* (London: Luzac and Co.).
- ____ (1955), *The Colas: Madras: University of Madras*.
- ____ (1972), *The Colas: Madras: University of Madras*.
- ____ (1978), *South India and Southeast Asia* (Mysore: Geetha Book House).
- Schwinder, Gary J. (1987), 'Speculations on the Theme of Śiva as Tripurānaka as it Appears in the Reign of Rājendra I in the Tanjavur Area, c. ad 1000', *Asi Orientalia*, Vol. 17, pp. 163-78.
- Sharma, R.S. (1991), *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass).
- Sivaramamurti, C. (1955), *Royal Congresses and Cultural Migration in South India* (Calcutta: Indian Museum).
- Spencer, George W. (1965), 'Religious Networks and Royal Influence in Eleventh Century South India', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 42-56.
- ____ (1984), 'Heirs Against Fiction and Function in Coja Mythical Genealogies', *Indian Economic and Social History: Review*, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 415-82.
- Srinivasan, K.R. (1991), 'The Peruvudaiyar (Brahadisvaras) Temple of Tanjavur: a Study in Indian Archaeological Heritage (Shri K. V. Soundararaja Perisetti)', Vol. II (Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan).
- Stein, Burton (1980), *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Subrahmanyan, T.N., ed. (1956), *Thiruv. Pallava Copper Plates* (Madras: Tamil Varalaru Kazhagam).
- Tanjimpuranudaiyar Kōṭai Kalvēṅgaṅgal* (1972), edited by R. Nagaswami (Madras: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamil Nadu).
- Veluthai, Kesava (1978), 'Royalty and Divinity: Legitimization of Monarchical Power in South India', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 39th Session, Hyderabad.
- ____ (1979), 'The Temple-base of the Bhakti Movement in South India', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 40th Session, Waltair.
- ____ (1997), *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India* (Delhi: Orient Longman).
- ____ (2002), 'The Temple and the State: Religion and Politics in Early Medieval South India', in R. Champakalakshmi, Kesava Veluthai and I.R. Venugopalani (eds), *State and Society in Pre-modern South India* (Trivisur: Cosmo Books).

Two Indian Theorists of the State Barani and Abū'l Fazl

Irfan Habib

The pre-modern Indian state has been the subject of discussion in numerous recent writings, the various theories ranging from the concept of Oriental Despotism to that of Segmentary State. The state's taxation capacities, the extent of centralised control, and the degree of systematic administration tend to be assessed and re-assessed. While these concerns were generally not present in medieval writings on the state (except for the role of despotic authority), there were at least two writers who, some two and a half centuries apart, provided reflections sufficient in scope and consistency to be given the designation of 'theories'. I propose to deal with them separately, since their premises and conclusions appear in sharp contrast to each other. At the end, I would try to sum up what these contrasts tell us about both the circumstances of the times and the intellectual traditions which produced them.

1

Barani has been much studied and commented upon as a historian, and since the work of Mohammad Habib and Afsar Khan in the 1950's,¹ his position as a political theorist has also been recognized. The following pages thus partly represent the re-visiting of explored ground; such verification may perhaps perform some service, even where it confirms what was previously known; and, therefore, one may proceed to one's task without a long apology. I begin with a brief reconstruction of Barani's life, and then go on to analyse his political ideas.

Ziyā Barani² was born in 1285, presumably at Baran (mod. Bahadurabad,

¹ Mohammad Habib and Afsar Umar Salim Khan (eds), *The Political Theories of the Delhi Sultanate*, Allahabad, n.d.

² I write Ziyā Barani because he uniformly styles himself thus. But Ziyā'uddin Hamid Kharrūd accordingly styles him Ziyā'ī Millī'ī wa' dīnī, cf. *Siyarī 'l-Akhbar*, Dhaka, Ann 1302, pp. 312-13. Apparently, the custom of the time inhibited one from using the full name, which would sound pretensions from one's own lips (Ziyā'v'ādh meaning 'I am Sultanate, the author of the *Zakā'at-i-Masrūf*, ed. 'Abdū'l Haq Habīb, Vol. I, Bahadur 1963, pp. 6, 64, 127, etc. calls himself *Mamlūk-i-Sūfī*, but Barani, *Tarikh-i-Lu'lu'ah*, ed. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, W. Nassau Lees and Kabir al Din, Dho had 1846, pp. 60, 61, pp. 20-21, calls him *Mīnḥān' dīn* Sūfī, as did, much earlier, no. 1, pp. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 253, 254, 255, 256, 257, 258, 259, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369, 370, 371, 372, 373, 374, 375, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 385, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 391, 392, 393, 394, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 486, 487, 488, 489, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 501, 502, 503, 504, 505, 506, 507, 508, 509, 510, 511, 512, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 520, 521, 522, 523, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 531, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 538, 539, 540, 541, 542, 543, 544, 545, 546, 547, 548, 549, 550, 551, 552, 553, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 570, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 582, 583, 584, 585, 586, 587, 588, 589, 590, 591, 592, 593, 594, 595, 596, 597, 598, 599, 600, 601, 602, 603, 604, 605, 606, 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 612, 613, 614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, 621, 622, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 628, 629, 630, 631, 632, 633, 634, 635, 636, 637, 638, 639, 640, 641, 642, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 648, 649, 650, 651, 652, 653, 654, 655, 656, 657, 658, 659, 660, 661, 662, 663, 664, 665, 666, 667, 668, 669, 670, 671, 672, 673, 674, 675, 676, 677, 678, 679, 680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 686, 687, 688, 689, 690, 691, 692, 693, 694, 695, 696, 697, 698, 699, 700, 701, 702, 703, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, 709, 710, 711, 712, 713, 714, 715, 716, 717, 718, 719, 720, 721, 722, 723, 724, 725, 726, 727, 728, 729, 730, 731, 732, 733, 734, 735, 736, 737, 738, 739, 740, 741, 742, 743, 744, 745, 746, 747, 748, 749, 750, 751, 752, 753, 754, 755, 756, 757, 758, 759, 760, 761, 762, 763, 764, 765, 766, 767, 768, 769, 770, 771, 772, 773, 774, 775, 776, 777, 778, 779, 780, 781, 782, 783, 784, 785, 786, 787, 788, 789, 790, 791, 792, 793, 794, 795, 796, 797, 798, 799, 800, 801, 802, 803, 804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 809, 810, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815, 816, 817, 818, 819, 820, 821, 822, 823, 824, 825, 826, 827, 828, 829, 830, 831, 832, 833, 834, 835, 836, 837, 838, 839, 840, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, 847, 848, 849, 850, 851, 852, 853, 854, 855, 856, 857, 858, 859, 860, 861, 862, 863, 864, 865, 866, 867, 868, 869, 870, 871, 872, 873, 874, 875, 876, 877, 878, 879, 880, 881, 882, 883, 884, 885, 886, 887, 888, 889, 890, 891, 892, 893, 894, 895, 896, 897, 898, 899, 900, 901, 902, 903, 904, 905, 906, 907, 908, 909, 910, 911, 912, 913, 914, 915, 916, 917, 918, 919, 920, 921, 922, 923, 924, 925, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 934, 935, 936, 937, 938, 939, 940, 941, 942, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947, 948, 949, 950, 951, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, 957, 958, 959, 960, 961, 962, 963, 964, 965, 966, 967, 968, 969, 970, 971, 972, 973, 974, 975, 976, 977, 978, 979, 980, 981, 982, 983, 984, 985, 986, 987, 988, 989, 990, 991, 992, 993, 994, 995, 996, 997, 998, 999, 1000).

religion). For such a task no wages or taxes could be too high, but 'just sovereigns do not take more than what suffices for their task and do not soil their hands by desiring more.'¹¹⁵

This doctrine justifies temporal sovereignty, but assumes two classes of sovereigns, just and unjust. How a just sovereign should be identified and how he should function are matters that Abū 'l-Faḡl takes up immediately at the beginning of the *Ā'in-i Akbarī*.

In this discussion, a third element enters, the influence of the *ishrāq* theory. Developed by Shihābū'd-Dīn Suhrawardī Maqṭūl (d. 1191), whose writings were universally read in the Islamic world, its origins went back to Plato's *Republic*, where the Good is presented under the symbol of the Sun. The Sun becomes for the *ishrāqīs* a symbol of God-derived spiritual lights, the *anzwār-i qāniya*, each of which 'from degree to degree, illumines the presence of each lower degree' (H. Corbin).¹¹⁶ Abū 'l-Faḡl uses the imagery, if not the terminology of the *ishrāq* tradition, when he puts temporal sovereignty at the highest station in the hierarchy of objects receiving spiritual light: 'To the Unique Almighty, there is no higher station than that of the King (*Pādshāh*). . . . Royalty is a light from the Inimitable Almighty and a ray from the world-illuminating Sun, the essence of the books of perfection, the assemblage of excellences. In the language of the day it is called *far-i 'izdī* (divine light); in the ancient [Iranian] language, *kāshān-khūwra* (world-illuminating light)'.¹¹⁷ Thus even if the office of sovereign is not a product of any religion, he yet has authority from God. Abū 'l-Faḡl refrains from using the conventional Muslim adjective for the ruler, *Zill-i Ilāhī*, 'God's shadow'. The sovereign is not a shadow, but rather a recipient of divine light, possessor of illumined wisdom, and the reflector of the light received.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ *Ā'in*, I, pp. 290-91, for the original text from which this and the previous paragraphs are drawn. The reader must be warned against depending for these passages on H. Jarrett's translation (*Ā'in-i Akbarī*, II, revised by Jadunath Sarkar, Calcutta, 1949, pp. 54-56), which is particularly inept here.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in R. Arnaldez, 'ISHRĀQ', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New ed., IV, Leiden, 1978, pp. 119-20. J.F. Richards has already drawn attention to the connection between the *ishrāqī* (Persian Neoplatonic) theory of illumination and Abū 'l-Faḡl's play on light (J.F. Richards, ed., *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, Madison, 1978, pp. 260-67; summarized in his *Mughal Empire*, Cambridge, 1993, pp. 45-47).

¹¹⁷ *Ā'in*, I, p. 2. Abū 'l-Faḡl surely has in mind here the passage in Shihābū'd-Dīn Suhrawardī's *Parwanānās* ('Book of Radiance', ed. and transl. Hossein Ziai, Costa Mesa, Calif., 1998, p. 84): 'Whoever knows wisdom and its assistance in praising and revering the "Light of Lights" (*Mā'ū'l Awṣā'ī*, as we have stated, they give him the "kingly light" (*Khūra-j Kayān*) and bestow upon him the "luminous ray" (*far-i nūrān*), and the "lightning-flashing (cloud) of God" (*bāzīg-i ilāhī*) clothes him in the robe of authority and status' (my own rendering). Can one say that Abū 'l-Faḡl has in fact inverted Shihābū'd-Dīn's assertion? Whereas the latter argued that the person with spiritual attainments achieves the supreme status, marked by the possession of 'kingly light', for Abū 'l-Faḡl it is the just king who possesses not only the 'kingly light', but also the highest spiritual attainments.

¹¹⁸ We have seen above how Abū 'l-Faḡl calls the just sovereign, *pazīrānda-i far-i 'izdī* (*Ā'in*, I, p. 290).

But not all worldly sovereigns receive such light. We have seen that Abū 'l-Faḡl, in speaking of just rulers, implies another category, that of unjust sovereigns. He now blames the simple-minded ones (*salīm-dīlān*) for not distinguishing the 'godly ruler' (*farmānfar-mā-i haqīq*) from the self-seeking aspirant for authority (*pesht-i-ū-i khwūd-kārm*), since both have at their command treasure, army, subjects, scholarly servants, numerous craftsmen, and personal attendants. Only the enlightened ones could discriminate between the two: the rule of the 'godly' rulers is long-lasting and marked by peace, justice, etc.; that of the selfish ones is short-lived and marked by terror, cruelty, theft, etc.¹¹⁹

It was clearly the just ruler to whom the title of *Pādshāh* was appropriate and who could be the recipient of God's light. As a courtier and, perhaps, sincere admirer, Abū 'l-Faḡl held Akbar to form a class by himself, and when he speaks of *Pādshāh* and accords him a special station near God, he surely has Akbar as a unique ruler in mind. The concept of 'Perfect Man' in the Ibn 'Arabī tradition could certainly be invoked here, as Badā'ūn suspected,¹²⁰ but there was another possible source for justifying the exaltation of a particular individual, namely, the doctrines of Mahmūd Pasikhwānī (d. 1427-28), the originator of the *Wahidīya* or *Nuḡawīya* sect.¹²¹ These doctrines certainly had reached Akbar at the critical moment when he was fashioning his new ideas in association with Abū 'l-Faḡl. In 1577 Sharīf Anulī, after a chequered career, joined Akbar's court, and he was a follower of Mahmūd Pasikhwānī.¹²² Mahmūd believed in a kind of metempsychosis through the meeting of the physical elements of a former body or bodies to create a new one, this being in his case, 'a more perfect being' than Muhammad, whose elements came together in him.¹²³ One could similarly claim for Akbar an eminent status on the basis of these speculations.¹²⁴ It is, however, fair to say that if Mahmūd's theory of great spiritual souls born at particular periods exercised any influence on Abū 'l-Faḡl, he does not himself either directly or indirectly give any evidence of it, though he seems to have maintained good relations with the Iranian Nuḡawīs.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ *Ā'in*, I, p. 2.

¹²⁰ Badā'ūn, II, pp. 258-9. The central position of *al-insān al-kāmil* in the realm of existence was particularly defined and elaborated by Saḡrū'd-Dīn Qūnawī, the major disciple of Ibn 'Arabī (W.C. Chittick, 'Saḡr al-Dīn Qūnawī', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., VII, Leiden, 1993, p. 754, col. 2).

¹²¹ A fairly extended account of the founder and his sect is given in Mokḡd (c. 1600), *Dabīstān-i Mazāhib*, ed. Qazī Ibrahim, Bombay, at 1292, pp. 243-47. See also H. Algar, 'Nūḡawīyā', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed., VIII, Leiden, 1995, pp. 114-17.

¹²² See Badā'ūn, II, pp. 247-8. Badā'ūn claims to have read, and been revolted by, Mahmūd's tract, thirteen in number. For *nuḡawīs* at Akbar's court other than Sharīf Anulī, see ibid., III, pp. 204-07, 378-79.

¹²³ *Dabīstān*, p. 244.

¹²⁴ Saḡrī Khān Hirawī, for example, is said to have invoked Mahmūd Pasikhwānī's, yet he took for fixing on AH 990 (AD 1582) as the year when 'the promised person' (*shākh-i mā'ḥūd*) would appear (Badā'ūn, III, pp. 206-7). This would have suited Akbar.

¹²⁵ In a *farmān* to the Nuḡawī scholar Saḡrū'd-Dīn Ahmad Kāshī, Akbar refers to Abū 'l-Faḡl's favourable opinion of Darwish-Khūstān, the principal Nuḡawī Jew in Iran.