



## BĀLAWĪ FAMILY

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**BĀLAWĪ**, prominent Nīšāpūr family of the 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd-Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Bālūya (whence the family name Bālawī) had five sons all named Moḥammad but with different *konyas*. What little is recorded about them establishes that their social origins were commercial. They are called brokers and clothing dealers, but Abū Bakr Moḥammad is also said to be from an old and wealthy family so the family’s commercial origins may have been a generation or more earlier. Abū Naṣr Moḥammad was a courtier of the Samanid that ruled Khorasan from Bukhara. The last brother died in 374/984 at the age of ninety-four. Two members of a collateral line of Bālawīs are also known in this generation.

In the next generation the Bālawīs became noted more for scholarship and involvement with Islamic legal matters than commerce. Abū Moḥammad ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān held the office of *mozakkī*, which maintained the list of legal witnesses who served as bailiffs and notaries. He was patronized by the more noted *mozakkī* Abū ‘Amr Baḥīrī, who arranged for him to hold *ḥadīṭ* classes, the ultimate sign of acceptance into the religious and scholarly elite. A similar indication of acceptance may be seen in the marriage between a cousin and the daughter of Abū Bakr Aḥmad Ḥarašī Ḥīrī, who was also called ‘Oṭmānī because of his descent on his mother’s side from the caliph ‘Oṭmān. Ḥarašī was a leading Shafe‘ite legal scholar. He served both as *mozakkī* and later as judge (*qāẓī*), being the last Shafe‘ite to hold the normally Hanafite-dominated post.

The Bālawī family continued for two more generations, and some members were called *mozakkī*. But little is known about them. One branch of the family



acquired the additional name Kayyālī (grain measurer) through intermarriage with a little-known family that appears to have similarly advanced from commercial origins to positions of wealth, land ownership, and acceptance by other elite or patrician families.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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