



BESTĀMĪ FAMILY

BESTĀMĪ, leading family among the Shafe'ites of Nīšāpūr from the late 4th/10th through the early 6th/12th century. The first important family member was Abū 'Amr Moḥammad Bestāmī who was chief judge of the city from 377/987 to 392/1002. Nothing is known of his antecedents though his name suggests he may have come from the town of *Bestām*. Abū 'Amr married the granddaughter of the outstanding scholar and Sufi Abū Sahl Moḥammad Ṣo'lūkī, another pillar of the Shafe'ite school in Nīšāpūr. Twin sons were born of this marriage. Their grandfather gave them the nicknames they are usually known by: Mowaffaq or Emām Mowaffaq for Abū Moḥammad Hebat-Allāh and Mo'ayyad for Abū Ma'ālī 'Omar.

Emām Mowaffaq was the leader of the Shafe'ites when the Saljuqs took control of Nīšāpūr in 1039. He had at that time a protégé of undistinguished background named *Abū Naṣr Manṣūr Kondorī*. With Mowaffaq's backing, Kondorī rapidly rose in the service of the Saljuqs to become vizier of Sultan Ṭoḡrel Beg. He then prompted the sultan to launch a fierce persecution of everyone who adhered to the Ash'arite theological doctrine. Most Ash'arites were Shafe'ites, and at the outset of the persecution one of their leaders was Emām Mowaffaq's young son, Abū Sahl Moḥammad Bestāmī, who had succeeded to his father's position. Abū Sahl Moḥammad evaded an arrest order and gathered a band of armed supporters from his family lands. By warfare and diplomacy he gained the freedom of other imprisoned leaders and went with them into exile after failing in an appeal to the sultan and suffering a brief imprisonment and confiscation of his lands. Abū Sahl



Moḥammad's only son died young. Of the several collateral branches of the family, all quite distinguished, the one that supplied the next leader was the offspring of a marriage between Emām Mowaffaq's daughter and his nephew. His name was Abū Moḥammad Hebat-Allāh Bestāmī Sayyedī.

Abū Moḥammad Hebat-Allāh married the daughter of the great Shafe'ite and Ash'arite scholar Emām-al-Ḥaramayn Jovaynī, who had also been victimized in the persecution. The last known prominent member of this family is a grandson of this union named Mo'ayyad Mowaffaqī. He was the leader of the Shafe'ite faction in the middle of the 6th/12th century when factional conflict and nomadic depredations combined in the destruction of the city of Nīšāpūr. He died in 556/1161 as the fighting raged.

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