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Author: Farhad Daftary

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Anjudan

Dr Farhad Daftary

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Anjudan is a village located 37 km east of Arak (former Sultanabad) in Markazi province. A relatively large and prosperous market in medieval times, Anjudan is chiefly associated with the revival of Nizari Isma‘ili activities in the post-Alamut period. Following the Mongol destruction of the Nizari state in 654 AH/1256 CE, the Persian Nizaris survived for a time in the guise of Sufism. In the second half of the 9th AH / 15th CE century, the Nizari imams re-emerged in Anjudan. Regarded as Sufi pirs by outsiders, they benefited from the advent of the Safavids (907/1501) and their patronage of certain Shi‘i dervish organisations to act more openly. Thus the imams were able to re-establish their authority over the outlying Nizari communities and intensify their religious activities in Persia, India, and Central Asia. In the second half of the 11th AH / 17th CE century, the imams moved to the neighbouring village of Kahak, and Anjudan rapidly lost its earlier importance, especially after the Afghan invasion of 1135 AH / 1722 CE.

Architectural remains in Anjudan include two mausoleums containing the tombs of several Nizari imams. These date back to 885 AH / 1480 CE and 904 AH / 1498 CE and are known locally under the names of Shah Qalandar and Shah Gharib (W. Ivanow, “Tombs of Some Persian Ismaili Imams,” *JBRAS*, N.S. 14, 1938, pp. 49-56). In 1976, these antiquities were found by the present writer to be rapidly deteriorating. A 1036 AH / 1627 CE epigraph, uncovered at the same time, records the granting of certain tax exemptions to the Nizari imam Shah Khalil-Allah by the Safavid Shah ‘Abbas I.

The population of Anjudan today is Ithna‘ashari Shi‘i and Persian-speaking. The main economic activity is orchard cultivation, but in recent years there has been a trend of migration to surrounding towns in search of better employment opportunities.

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