



## ANJOMAN-E OḲOWWAT

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**ANJOMAN-E OḲOWWAT** (or OḲŪWAT) “The Society of Brotherhood,” a non-political Sufi-type society officially founded on 15 Šab‘ān 1317/21 December 1899 by Mīrzā ‘Alī Khan Ḡahīr-al-dawla to promote the ideals of equity and brotherhood in Iran. The society, modeled after Masonic lodges and following, at least in its general outline, a socio-religious approach similar to that of the medieval *Eḵwān al-Šafā’*, had its roots in the Sufi order founded by Mīrzā Moḥammad-Ḥasan Ešfahānī, Šafī-‘Alīšāh (1251-1316/1835-99), who had among its devoted followers many from the ranks of princes, the nobility, and court officials (see, e.g., M. Ḥ. E‘temād-al-saltāna, *Rūz-nāma-ye kāṭerāt*, ed. Ī. Afšār, 3rd ed., Tehran, 2536 = 1356 Š./1977, p. 1059). Under Šafī-‘Alīšāh the order held general weekly meetings on Thursday evenings as well as private sessions, which later were attended by only a few close devotees such as Ḡahīr-al-dawla and prince Sayf-al-dawla who formed the nucleus of the future Anjoman-e OḲowwat (Rā‘īn, *Farāmūš-kāna* III, pp. 487-88). Šafī-‘Alīšāh died on 24 Du‘l-qa‘da 1316/6 April 1899 and was succeeded, in accordance with his own wish, by Ḡahīr-al-dawla, now called Šafā-‘Alīšāh. Using his personal influence at the court—he had married the shah’s sister—and being helped by the then prime minister Mīrzā ‘Alī-Ašḡar Khan Amīn-al-soltān, Ḡahīr-al-dawla succeeded in obtaining a royal decree on 15 Ša‘bān 1317/19 December 1899 which gave official sanction to the activities of the Anjoman-e OḲowwat. Thus the foundation of the Anjoman-e OḲowwat was formally announced, and its first official meeting held in the hall of Ḡahīr-al-dawla’s residence, which was adorned by a bust and a portrait of its real founder Šafī-‘Alīšāh. The 110 members who attended the meeting were all carefully picked by Ḡahīr-al-



dawla himself for the occasion from among people known for their integrity and reformist ideas, many belonging to the Masonic lodge of Bīdārī-e Īrānīān. (The figure 110 apparently was significant since it represents the numerical value of the name 'Alī according to the Abīad [q.v.] system.) A board of advisors (*hay'at-e mošāwer*), composed of twelve members, formed the ruling body of the Anjoman (for the first board members see Rā'īn, op. cit., pp. 495-96), and new members, upon initiation, were given a copy of a code of conduct (*marām-nāma*) drawn up by Ṣahīr-al-dawla himself.

Although the society professed a non-political philosophy, many of its members held high political offices and many more, including Ṣahīr-al-dawla himself, were politically active during the constitutional movement. With the accession of Moḥammad-'Alī Shah in 1324/1906, members intensified their revolutionary activities. After the coup d'état of 23 Jomādā I 1326/23 June 1908 the residence of Ṣahīr-al-dawla (at that time the governor of Gīlān), which served as the headquarters of the Anjoman, was stormed and looted, and many priceless manuscripts and objects of art were destroyed. This, however, was just a temporary setback for the Anjoman which prospered again under Aḥmad Shah (r. 1327-42/1909-24) whose brother, the Crown Prince Moḥammad-Ḥasan Mīrzā, joined the Anjoman in 1329/1911 on the 12th anniversary of its official foundation. The Anjoman continued to hold its weekly meetings on Thursday evenings up to the 1357 Š./1978-79 revolution; even under Reżā Shah Pahlavi (r. 1304-20 Š./1925-41), who seriously restricted any group activities while in power. It celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1327 Š./1948 on which occasion the names of the members of the board of advisors and a number of other notable members were published (Rā'īn, op. cit., pp. 503-05). In 1338 Š./1958 the Anjoman started rebuilding its old headquarters where, according to Rā'īn (loc. cit.), the Masonic lodges of Mehr, Āftāb, Ṣafā, and Wafā had held their meetings in recent years.

The society was responsible for at least three philanthropic events: 1. When in 1318/1901 fire destroyed much of the city of Āmol, Ṣahīr-al-dawla and his brethren arranged a successful fund-raising party, the proceeds of which were entirely donated to the rebuilding of Āmol. 2. In Ša'bān, 1327/August-September, 1909, after the defeat of Moḥammad-'Alī Shah by the Nationalists, the brethren held a victory celebration (*jašn-e noşrat-e mellī*) in the much-ruined headquarters of the Anjoman, using all the funds raised to assist the families of those who had fallen for the cause of the constitution. 3. Staging a play (in itself an innovational event) with marked political overtones, the



proceeds again being donated to charity.

Every year the Anjoman celebrated the birth of Imam ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭāleb with great festivity. In warm weather, it was celebrated in a garden capable of holding a large number of people, who participated without any distinction of wealth, birth, rank, or office. Festivities, which usually went on for several hours, started with the playing and singing of the Anjoman song and were highlighted by the performance of great masters of the time such as Darviš Khan, Montazem-al-hokamā’, Samā’ Ḥozūr, Mošīr(-e) Homāyūn, Ḥ. Esmā’īlzāda, Y. Forūtan, ‘A. N. Wazīrī, etc. (for a photo see Mo‘ayyer-al-mamālek, *Rejāl*, p. 113).

The Anjoman does not seem to have been much involved in publishing books. Its only such endeavor, besides the leaflet containing the brethren’s code of conduct meant only for them, seems to have been a book published on the occasion of the Anjoman’s 50th anniversary. In 1323/1905 the Anjoman published in Tehran a bi-weekly periodical called *Majmū‘a-ye aklāq* (Ethical miscellany) under the editorship of Mīrzā ‘Alī-Akbar Khan Moṣawwer. It aimed, as stated in the first issue, at promoting ethics and the refinement of manners among its readers and drew heavily on poetry, history, and religious and Sufi literature. The first page bore the Anjoman’s emblem set in a circle, a pair of crossed battle-axes from which hung a rosary and a *kaškūl*, actually an adaptation of the level, compasses and chipaxe used in Masonic emblems (M. ‘Erfān, apud Najāt, *Jam‘iyathā-ye serrī*, p. 319). Its publication lasted for only eighteen issues, the last two of which were published every ten days. Two other such publications are credited to the Anjoman: a weekly paper in Shiraz which survived only five issues (1326/1908-09), and a monthly magazine in Kermānšāh (1307-08 Š./1928-29), only twelve issues. The first issue of the latter contains a biography of Ṣahīr-al-dawla and specimens of his poetry (M. Ṣadr Hāšemī, *Tārīk-e jarāyed o majallāt-e Īrān*, Isfahan, 1327-32 Š./1948-53, I, pp. 79-80; IV, pp. 190-91).

The Anjoman expanded considerably after World War II, with branches in almost every major city and over 30,000 members. Its leaders (*ra’īs*) after Ṣahīr-al-dawla were Mīrzā Sayyed Moḥammad Entezām-alsaltāna, Esmā’īl Marzbān Amīn-al-molk, Faṭhallāh Ṣafā’ī Ṣafā’-al-molk, and ‘Abdallāh Entezām (d. 1982). No information is available of the Anjoman’s activities since the 1357 Š./1978-79 Islamic revolution.



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