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FIG

FIG (anjīr), the "fruit" of several species and subspecies of *Ficus* L. (fam. Moraceae) in the geobotanical area covered by K. H. Rechinger's *Flora Iranica* (q.v.). However, the edible varieties of *anjīr* (yellow, greenish, dark violet, *bī-dāna* "seedless," etc.) offered fresh on the market are produced mainly by the cultivated or improved fig tree, i.e., *Ficus carica* L. (or subspecies thereof; see below).

Taxonomy and vernacular names. Cultivation or natural hybridization of figs have resulted in a complex, confusing, intra-specific, and varietal variation (with a concomitant baffling terminology) in wild and cultivated *anjīr* trees all over the area. The following summary inventory is based on the earlier, somewhat simplistic, works of the Persian botanists Karīm Sāʿī (I, p. 245), Ḥabīb-Allāh Ṭābetī (pp. 358-60), and Karim Djavanshir (pp. 10, 27, 35, 50, 67, 145). For a later, more scientific, revision and interpretation of the relevant *Ficus* species, and details about their distribution in Persia and some adjacent regions, see K. Browicz, pp. 5-13.

1. *Ficus carica* L. var. *genuina* Boiss. (probably = *F.c.* subsp. *carica* in Browicz, pp. 7-8). Edible figs are thought to be produced by cultivated or improved specimens of this. Spontaneous or subspontaneous specimens thereof are scattered in most Caspian forests (from Arasbārān and Golīdāḡ to Gorgān); in western steppes and forests (Arāk, Kurdistan, Luristan); in Fārs, Khorasan, Tehran, Qazvīn, etc., as well as in places in Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. Whereas the general name for the genuine fig in Persia is *anjīr* (or dialectical variants, e.g., *anjīl* in colloquial Persian and in places in Gīlān, Māzandarān,

Luristan [Alīgūdarz], and so on; *enjī* in Ṭavāleš; *ha/enjīr* in Kurdistan; cf. also Pašto *indzar/injar*), there are pejorative vernacular appellations for wild figs of poor quality or which are almost inedible, or for those varieties naturally unable to mature, e.g., *gomšū* (Arasbārān), *ḵā/ayə -anjil* (Gilān; lit. "testis fig"), *dīv-anjīr* (Rāmsar; lit. "*dīv* [demon] fig"), *kaškal* (Rāmsar, Rūdsar), *vā-anjīr* (Nūr; lit. "wind fig"), *šāl-anjīr* (Āmol; lit. "jackal fig"), *dīna-anjīl* (Bābol; lit. "fool's/foolish fig"), *č/tesen-anjīr* (Sārī; indecent), and *ka/erra* (in Laki dialect, Luristan).

2. *F. carica* L. var *rupestris* Hausskn. ex Boiss. (=*F. c.* subsp. *rupestris* [Hausskn. ex Boiss.] Browicz). General distribution is in southeastern Anatolia, northern Syria, northern Iraq, and southwestern Persia (Isfahan, Arāk, Baḵtīārī, Luristan, Fārs). Local names (recorded only by Djavanshir, p. 145, and in personal communication to this author) include *henjir* (Kurdistan), *kerra* (Luristan), and *qara-hažīr* (southern Persia, between Bušehr and Dašt-e Aržan; lit. "black fig").

3. *Ficus carica* L. var. *Johannis* Boiss. (probably = *F. Johannis* Boiss. subsp. *Johannis* in Browicz). General distribution is in southern Afghanistan, southwestern Pakistan, and Persia (Isfahan, Baḵtīārī, Luristan, Fārs [Kāzerūn, Shiraz, Persepolis, Jahrom, Neyrīz, etc.], Kermān, Lār, Qešm island, Baluchistan, Sīstān, Yazd, Ṭabas [in Khorasan], etc.). Local names in Fārs (recorded only by Djavanshir, p. 145, and in personal communication) include *anjīr-e baš, kāčī, kar-anjīl, karatol,* and *katak*.

Browicz also has *F. Johannis* Boiss. supsp. *afghanistanica* (Warb.) Browicz (previously designated as *F. carica* L. var *afghanica* Popov, and so on), reported from many places in Afghanistan, and from some localities in Isfahan, Kermān, and Khorasan.

Toponyms related to anjīr *species*. The rather large number of localities in Persia named in relation to various spontaneous fig trees (*deraḵt-e anjīr*) indicates the latter's importance in local economy in the past. Some fifteen such places are mentioned by Dehḵodā (culled from different volumes of Razmārā's *Farhang*): Anjīra (three places in Lārestān, Shiraz, and Zarqān provinces), Anjīrak (six places in the districts or provinces or Šāhābād, Kermānšāh, Dezful, Sīrjān, Zāhedān, and Ḳ^{v}āf), Anjīrān (in Marīvān), Anjīrāvand (in Ḵorānaq district, *ostān* of Yazd), Anjīrband (in Kangān, Būšehr province), Anjīrbūsa (in Kermānšāhān), Anjīrdān (in Lārestān), Anjīrābād (in Ḵorramābād *šahrestān*), and Anjīrkūh (a mountain in Luristan).

The *Gazetteer of Afghanistan* (I, p. 21; II, pp. 21-22; III, pp. 22-23; IV, p. 71; V, pp. 37-38; and VI, pp. 14-15) reports nineteen such place names (villages, mountain passes, valleys, etc.) in modern Afghanistan: Anjīr (6 places), Anjīra (a village), Anjīrak (4 localities), Anjīrak-e Bābā (a village), Anjīrān (4 localities), Anjīrbas, Anjīrī, and Anjīro (3 villages).

The fig in pre-Islamic times. The common fig is a fruit of great antiquity. There are indications of its culture on the Iranian plateau in ancient times. According to Strabo (II.1.14), in Hyrcania (q.v.; comprising the modern province of Gorgān) there were fig trees each annually producing sixty *medimni* (a *medimnus* being about a bushel and a half) of fruit. The discovery of figs in ruins from the neighboring kingdoms of Babylonia and Assyria, where the fig was called *tittu* (< **tintu*, akin to Ar. *tīn*), "warrants the conclusion that they were likewise known and consumed in ancient Persia" (Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*, pp. 411-12). The oldest extant name for the fig, however, is Middle Persian *anjīr* mentioned in the *Bundahišn* (16.26, tr. Ankelsaria, pp. 150-51) as one of the ten kinds of fruits of which both the "outside" and "inside" are edible. This may indicate that the fig was also cultivated in Sasanian Persia, and that—contrary to the statement that "the cultivation of the fig tree in India was introduced by the Mohametans" (Dymock et al., III, p. 343)—it was in Sasanian times, if not earlier, that fig cultivation moved eastwards from its vast Iranian habitat to India and as far as China. The fig is also called *anjīr* in several Indian languages (see Dymock et al., III, p. 342), and one of the old Chinese words for it, i.e. *a-ži* (< **a-žit/r*, as posited by Laufer) corresponds to an Iranian *n*-less name for the fig (Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*, p. 410, cf. Kurdish *ha/ežīr*, above).

In the Islamic period. References to several notable fig-growing places or regions in Persia are found in the works of some medieval Arab or Persian authors. For instance, Moqaddasī has mentioned Arrajān (pp. 421, 425), Sābūr (=Šā[h]pūr; p. 424), and Fasā (p. 443; cf. Ebn al-Balḵī, p. 130) in Fārs, and unspecified places in the region of Jebāl (p. 384). Concerning Arrajān figs, Masʿūdī (*Morūj* VII, p. 121) remarks that *wazīrī* figs (so called after the Qazīrīya quarter in Sāmarrā) surpass even those of Arrajān, Ḥolwān, and Syria in sweetness, thinness of the peel, and smallness of the seeds. Jorjān (Gorgān, q.v.) is mentioned by Ebn Ḥawqal (p. 382). Ḵᵛāja Rašīd-al-Dīn Fażl-Allāh (p. 8) reports "good figs in some districts in Transoxiana and Chorasmia." He (pp. 8-9) and the later agriculturist Abūnaṣrī Heravī (pp. 188-90) have described the cultivation and care of fig trees. The former reports that, although the fig tree

does not thrive in cold regions, he successfully propagated it in the capital Tabrīz "where it had never existed before." He also claims that "grafting it on the mulberry tree [from the same Moraceae family] was experimented, producing extremely fine figs." Abūnaṣrī speaks of four varieties of figs: "white, black, red, and yellow."

In Galenic and popular medicine. The numerous medicinal properties attributed to figs by the Islamic period medical writers derived mainly from Dioscorides and Galen's lengthy treatment of the subject. Ebn al-Bayṭār's quotations (I, s.v. *tīn*, pp. 146-48) from Ebn Māsūya/Māsawayh, Rhazes (Rāzī), Šarif Edrīsī, and an anonymous author together with those from the Greek masters may serve to evaluate the latter's influence on the former, to whom may be added Abū Manṣūr Mowaffaq Heravī (q.v.; pp. 77-78), Avicenna (I, book 2, pp. 446-48), Anṭākī (I, p. 87), Tonokābonī (pp. 224-25), and so on. Meanwhile, Aḵawaynī Boḵārī (q.v.), author of the oldest extant medical treatise in Persian (4th/10th century), deserves a special notice: Whereas the aforementioned authors and others usually deal with the nutritive and medicinal virtues of the fig in isolation, Aḵawaynī seldom recommends it, either simply *anjīr* or a variety thereof, *anjīr-e bostī* "figs from Bost" (q.v.; a town now in southwestern Afghanistan) by itself, but usually prescribes it with several other ingredients in complex preparations which seem to derive from his own experiments, e.g., complex decoctions to cure hemiplegia (p. 260), asthma (p. 326), kidney infection (p. 484), hysteria (p. 544), smallpox (p. 737), or tuberculosis (p. 339); enemas to cure laryngitis (p. 308), pleurisy (p. 328, 332), or colic (p. 433); and poultices as adjuncts in the treatment of jaundice (p. 467), inflammation or obstruction of the spleen (p. 476), hepatitis (p. 444), etc.

On the other hand, Imami Shiʿite traditionists have reported several traditions (*rewāyāt*) about the virtues of the *tīn* from the Prophet and three Imams (collected by Majlesī, LXIII, pp. 184-87), the most common of which is the following one reported from the eighth Imam ʿAlī al-Reżā (q.v.; recorded by Aḥmad b. Moḥammad Barqī [d. 274/887 or 280/893; p. 554] and repeated by Ḥasan b. Fażl Ṭabarsī/Ṭabresī [d. 547/1153; p. 198] and Kolaynī [VI, p. 358]): "The fig eliminates bad breath, strengthens the bones, makes the hair grow, and dispels the ailment [sic], so that with it, no [other] remedy is needed. It [i.e., the fig tree] is the most similar thing to the plants of paradise." The latter statement probably was suggested by Allāh's swearing "by the fig and by the olive" (Qurʾān 95:1). The fig's paradisaical provenance is affirmed in a Shiʿite

Hadith reportedly related by Abū Ḏarr Ḡefārī from the Prophet (Ṭabarsī, loc. cit.; Majlesī, loc. cit.): “It is a fruit descended from the Garden of Edeṇ.for it is a fruit without *ʿajam* (pit, stone). Eat it [for] it takes hemorrhoids away, and is useful against gout.”

Nowadays the only general medicinal use of figs is as a laxative. However, local medicinal uses thereof exist. For instance, among Kurds in Persia a decoction of dried figs is used as a laxative and to cure piles (Ṣafīzāda, p. 39).

Modern uses as food. In Persia there are about twenty-four edible varieties of fig, the best known of which, marketwise, are the *anjīr-e safīd* (white fig) and *anjīr-e siāh* (black fig). The former matures and reaches the markets in early summer, and the latter late in summer or in early autumn; but no systematic country-wide effort has been made to select, improve and propagate the economically important varieties; hence a gradual annual drop in the exportation of dried figs (Faršī, pp. 27, 28; Komīsīūn-e mellī, II, p. 1655). Dried figs (*anjīr-ḵoška*) are designated by reference to their provenances, e.g., *šīrāzī* (from Shiraz; the most common; produced mainly in fig orchards in Eṣṭahbānāt [q.v.] in Fārs), and *yazdī* (from Yazd). Figs are preserved in another way, too: half dried figs are first flattened, then pressed on top of each other, and finally strung on a thin cord. This is called *anjīr/l-rešta/ -rīsa/ -naḵī/ -bandī*, etc. (lit. “string [of] figs”). Fig jam and compote are also made both at home and on a commercial scale.

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