

Gian Pietro Basello – Paolo Ognibene

A BLACK DOG FROM MARZIČ: LEGENDS AND FACTS ABOUT ANZOB PLAGUE*

The context

The events described below took place about six years ago, in the late spring of 2006, in the Uzbek city of Samarkand. At that time, the Dean of the Faculty of Preservation of Cultural Heritage of the University of Bologna was in Uzbekistan with some colleagues for a periodical check of the activities of our archaeological mission. Some months before, the mission directed by professor Maurizio Tosi had found the remains of old kilns in a locality called Kafir Kala and had begun to unearth them.

Our colleague, Abdulrauf Razzokov, a Tajik archaeologist, was in Samarkand in those days. Razzokov, at that time, was the head of the Penjikent's base of the Tajik Academy of Sciences and he was also the person in charge of excavations in Sarazm, a place that became a site protected by UNESCO some years later. Sarazm is not far from Uzbekistan and so, on a warm May afternoon, the Italian team in the company of Razzokov decided to cross the recently re-opened border to go to Sarazm and Penjikent. The group rented a car in Samarkand and soon arrived at the border; there they left the Uzbek car and after passport control crossed the 300 metres of no man's land. After another passport control they entered Tajikistan, where another car was waiting for them. They soon arrived in

* Paolo Ognibene (University of Bologna) wrote the main text. The commentary to the figures was written by Gian Pietro Basello ("L'Orientale" University of Naples).

The transliteration of Cyrillic script follows the system ISO/R 9 (1968).

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Sarazm. It was not only the desire to visit Sarazm and Penjikent that moved our group, but also the will to reach an agreement with the Tajiks and to have the possibility to work in the entire valley of Zarafšan, situated partly in Uzbekistan and partly in Tajikistan. For this purpose an authorisation of the Tajik Academy of Sciences issued by the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography Ahmadi Doniš was necessary.

The Italian team spent a day in Sarazm and Penjikent and then moved to Dušanbe on a very difficult road because after the collapse of the Soviet Union no systematic maintenance has been conducted. The valley near Penjikent is quite wide, but step by step it gets narrower and the road begins to rise; initially in an imperceptible way, but after some kilometres quite sharply. The valley is now narrow and both on your right and left hand side you can see high, threatening cliffs. Following the river Zarafšan, the road comes to a place where the ruins of the fortress of Mount Mugh, the last residence of the Sogdian ruler Devastič, can be glimpsed on the top of a mountain at the opposite side of the valley. They stopped there, crossed the river and climbed the mountain following a steep path until reaching the fortress of Mugh. Later the group continued along the road until the city of Ajni, the regional administrative centre. After Ajni the road leaves the Zarafšan, which flows in the direction of Matčo, and begins to follow the course of the Yaghnob. The road follows the river and leave it only once in a place where a mountain fell into the river at the end of 19th century. In this place the river does not flow on the surface, but at depth under the rocks. When the mountain fell, according to what people in the valley say, a whole village was crushed with all its inhabitants. Maybe this is only one of the numerous legends that people recount in these valleys, because no one could tell us the name of the buried village or how large it was. After this point the valley becomes wider and the road is again next to the river. Very often in the late spring, when the snow in the high mountains melts, the river overflows and sometimes it covers parts of the road. It was exactly here that in a spring night of 2009 some of us risked falling into the river together with our Tajik driver and car. Some kilometres ahead, at the foot of the famous Anzob pass (more than 3,300 metres high), is the village of Anzob (fig. 6). Before starting the ascent towards the pass, the road crosses the river near the only shop in the village. There the main road leaves the Yaghnob river and goes perpendicular in the direction of the pass. From that point the real Yaghnob valley begins.

Anyone who studies Iranian philology has heard about the Yaghnobis and their language, such a precious linguistic tradition for Iranian and Indo-European studies. The wish to enter the valley and meet some Yaghnobis was very strong and so the Italian expedition changed their car, because from here the terrible conditions of the road require a jeep, and then they went in the direction of the village of Marghib and from there, after about 20 km, to Marghtimayn. In Marghtimayn the dirt road ends and from here one can only go by foot or by riding horses or donkeys. The bridge over the river Yaghnob between Marghtimayn and Bidev, which is made of bound tree trunks, was a clear message: from here begins a completely different world.

Afterwards they returned to Anzob, changed car again, crossed the mountain pass and then they went down in the direction of Dušanbe following the river Varzob. Dušanbe is

the capital of one of the poorest republics of Central Asia and moreover the only one – excepting Transnistria – where a civil war began after the fall of the Soviet Union. But the Academy of Sciences of Dušanbe is the heir of a prestigious tradition. Almost all of the most famous Iranists of the schools of Moscow and Leningrad spent some time in Dušanbe. In the Academy, researchers still speak Russian and there are very close ties with colleagues in Saint Petersburg. The first talks in the Academy did not yield the expected results, but that is part of the game, and we had a reasonable conviction that at the end an agreement would be reached. So Antonio Panaino returned to Italy and began to plan our first expedition to be held the next summer (2007). Some months later the agreement with the Tajiks was signed in Dušanbe and Rome. This agreement gave us the possibility to study the valleys of upper Zarafšan and Yaghnob from several points of view: ethno-linguistic, archaeological, anthropological and whatever came to our minds.

The first expedition was successfully realised and after that we returned to Yaghnob every year. From the very beginning there was a humanitarian aim in conjunction with the scientific one and our doctors helped the population of the villages. When we arrived in the valley we were told that it had been more than four years since a doctor had been there. In Italy we began to upload information about Yaghnob on our web site and Gian Pietro Basello constantly looked for other sources of data on the Internet. Consulting the digital archive of the *New York Times* in 2009 we found a news report about a plague in Anzob village at the end of the 19th century (fig. 5).¹ We were impressed by this report and we decided to go to Anzob the following year to see if anyone remembered the plague, but unfortunately for personal reasons we could not take part in the expedition that year. In 2010 Basello read, on the web, that an antiquary of New York had a photo album entitled *Yagnob 1898-1900* for sale (fig. 1). Examples of the photographs were sent from New York and the photo album was then bought. It arrived on time and in good condition to our town, San Giovanni in Persiceto, near Bologna.

The photographs were good quality and shot in a professional way, but we could not understand their meaning. What were the men appearing in the photographs doing? Many of them wore military uniforms and were, without doubt, soldiers. The photo album was dedicated to a woman. The dedication was written in Cyrillic cursive script. For this reason Basello made a photocopy of this page and once, returning from Ravenna, gave it to me and told me to have a look at it. Several months passed before we remembered this page. On the occasion of a visit by Yuri Stoyanov to Bologna, we studied this dedication and translated it. The dedication is:

1 DE WOLF 1898 and 1900.

A v minuty duševnoj nevgody
 Pozabud'te pro zlo i ljudej
 I vzgljanite ljubja na prirodu
 Vsej dušoju otdavšis' liš' ej
 Èti čudnye gornye vidy
 Èto divnoe nebo – sapfir'
 pust' zaglušat v grudi vse obidy
 Prinesut pust' duše Vašej mir!

This short text does not help very much to discover who the protagonists of these photographs are, but I was struck by the signature. It was a very rare family name: Aframovič. In Russian you can find a lot of Abramovič, but only a few Aframovič.

We searched on the Internet and we found out that the name of doctor Kazimir M. Aframovič (1857-?) was closely linked to the 1898 Anzob plague. We understood immediately the meaning, previously unclear, of several photographs: the smoke came from the burnt clothes (fig. 14), the white dust was quicklime scattered on the graves (fig. 7), and the stones were put on the quicklime by the soldiers and so on (fig. 15).

We then decided to go to Anzob and Marzič (the place where, according to the medical reports, the plague spread) during the next expedition to see if the graveyards still exist and if the elders remember stories about the plague. In Dušanbe we would have to look for documents in the archives of the capital. This second point gave no results for obvious reasons, but the first one was even more successful than we expected.

1. Facts

According to initial reports written for the medical press by Aleksandr M. Levin (1861 or 1866-1932),² who personally went to Anzob, at the end of the month of August 1898 a 12 years old boy, whose name was Šukur, fell ill and died after four days in a village called Marzič (about 20 km from Anzob). Then his brother, called Šakir (age 9), fell ill and died some days later in the same way. A woman from Anzob called Ašur Bibi, a relative of the family of these children, helped to wash Šakir's body and took part in the funeral. Before going back to Anzob, her relatives gave her some of the children's clothes, a habitual gift for the help in such a difficult situation. After some days she fell ill and died at the third day of sickness. Then her relatives in Anzob fell ill and also some of the inhabitants of the village who had taken part in her funeral died. One of the inhabitants of Anzob, a man called Hassan Rakhimov, persuaded the other villagers that the people died because they forgot some precepts of *Šarī'a* when Ašur Bibi was buried. And so Ašur Bibi was exhumed, the ritual was adhered to and then she was buried again. Those who took part in this sec-

2 LEVIN 1899.

ond ceremony, including Hassan Rakhimov, also died in few days. From the death of Ašur Bibi until 3 October, the day Aframovič entered Anzob, 237 inhabitants died. The population of the village before the plague was 387.³ The authorities of Samarkand had been informed about the plague at the end of September and they sent a military expedition with a doctor to find out what was happening. The Aframovič's expedition also stopped in Marzič, but there no other cases were attested. Then Aframovič went to Marghib (fig. 3-4), a Yagnobi village (ca. 8 km from Anzob) where people only found out later and by chance what had happened in Anzob and there was no sign of the plague in the village. A sanitary cordon was created and all the villages of the area were alerted. The cordon extended to the south as far as Dušanbe.

2. Our research begins

In June 2011 we spent some days in Penjikent, where the Tajik Academy of Sciences had organised a meeting of archaeologists from the countries of the former Soviet Union, and then we moved to Anzob. There are no hotels in Anzob, but we found a room in our driver's house. Our driver "generously" included the hospitality in his house in the amount we paid to go from Penjikent to Anzob, no less than one month's salary of our Tajik colleagues. Among the photographs of the album, only one was easy to identify: it was a big geological formation similar to an enormous mushroom, called hoodoo or earth pyramid in geology. This formation is still preserved today. We began from there. We climbed along the slope and took a photograph nearly in the same position of the photograph in the album shot 113 years before (fig. 10). As you can see (fig. 11) the geological formation is changed a little, but not so much. This formation is near the village of Anzob, no more than a few hundred metres from the first houses of the contemporary village. Then we walked in the direction of the village and we tried to identify on our right hand side a bridge on the river. In a photograph of the album we could see a big rock near the bridge and it seemed to us that the outline of the mountains could also help. On our left hand side, we tried to identify where the plague graveyard was situated. When we crossed the village to go to our driver's house we paid special attention to the left hand side of the road and so we already had an idea of a possible location of the graveyard. There is, indeed, along the road an enclosed space without any buildings and that is not usual especially in a narrow valley. But before, we also tried to identify the exact position of a house frequently present in the photographs. There are several shots with a man, maybe Aframovič, on the veranda of this house. Maybe this house was the base for the officers of the expe-

3 CLEMOV 1899, p. 687. Cf. ANONYMOUS 1898b (219 dead out of 257 inhabitants) and Holloway in HOLLOWAY & PEIRCE 1898, p. 1495 (219 dead out of 357); it seems evident the presence of some gross mistakes referring the number of the inhabitants of Anzob. De Wolf (1898) speaks about three quarters of the inhabitants been infected.

dition. We immediately worked out that to have the right perspective we had to leave the main road and to ascend for at least one hundred metres on our left. When we left the road there was a kind of gully on the left hand side and some water flowing down in the middle. Climbing up we found the exact spot from where the photos were shot, but there was not a trace of the house anymore. While we were looking for the house, contemplating if it was the case to ask for help, an old man stared at us curiously from the road. We went down, introduced ourselves, and this old man told us that he was the village doctor. He knew the story of the plague well and told us that people who died as a result of the plague were buried in two graveyards. One was near the place where we then stood. Without knowing it, we had passed near one of the graveyards, the one near the shrine of Jan-dapuš (figs. 7-8). We then went along the gully together and the doctor showed us that the water had dug the ground on the left hand side and we could see that, under the grass and some layers of soil, there were the stones put by the soldiers many years ago and under them the white quicklime (fig. 9). The burials were under the quicklime. The area was not fenced but there were no buildings and no one wished to walk on this ground. From there, the doctor showed us a path through several courtyards that lead to the second graveyard. We looked at this graveyard from above (fig. 17). Here there was a surrounding wire netting and no one entered. We went back and moved in the direction of the same graveyard following the main road, so to look at it from below. We noted that the road now is not at the same level as the path used by Aframovič. In fact, we tried to take the same photographs, but the outline of the mountains showed us that the original ones were made some metres lower, in a place where some houses have now been built (figs. 15-16). It means that now the road goes on a little part over the old graveyard.

Then we kept on moving along the main road and arrived to a place where the old men of the village usually meet, sitting near the road (fig. 20). It seemed to me that the youngest of the men sitting there was more than seventy, even if sometimes appearances are deceptive in these mountain villages. Here the story we knew about Anzob plague was enriched by some new elements: the legends.

3. Legends about the plague

3.1. Anzob version

The old men of the village were very interested in the photographs of Anzob at the end of 19th century and many of them tried to help us to find the places in the photographs. But especially when we told them the exact years when these photographs were taken, they began to be interested only in one person: the officer in a white uniform, doctor Aframovič. They all knew his name well even if none of them were even born at the time of the plague: they looked at Aframovič as if he was a devil. And then they began to tell us what they had heard from their mothers and fathers. The plague spread from Marzič and then reached Anzob. When people began to die systematically many went off to the mountains. When the military expedition arrived in Anzob, the doctor examined the survivors

and gave them a pill.⁴ All of them died very soon after. One of the old men of the village told us that his grandfather, 12 years old at that time, was given the pill three times, but every time he spat it out and in this way he survived. According to local legends, Aframovič's pills killed all the survivors and this was done to avoid the spread of the plague. Furthermore, the soldiers took away all the clothes and meagre belongings of the dead and burned them. They showed us the exact spot where those things were burnt and the position is compatible with the photograph of the album showing smoke rising from houses (fig. 14). All these interviews, part in Russian, part in Tajik were filmed and recorded. After these conversations with the old men of the village we went to the school building where we met the director. The director knew the territory well and he also helped us to find some of the places in the photographs that we were not able to locate. The next morning we left Anzob in the direction of Marzič.

3.2. Marzič version

After few kilometres in the direction of Ajni, we crossed the river and entered a lateral valley. The road climbs up for several kilometres before Marzič came in sight. The village is on both sides of a stream. We stopped on the left hand side where the director of the local school was waiting for us. Our driver had phoned him the day before and he invited the old men of the village and a descendant of the family killed by the plague to the school. When we arrived in Marzič schoolboys of the 10th class were celebrating the end of school. The Tajik education system is similar to the Soviet one even nowadays. At the end of the 10th class there is an examination, called *attestat zrelosti* in Russian, and then there is another examination to go to university. The director asked us to taste Tajik specialities and we spent some time with the schoolboys. Then we met the old men of the village in director's office. In the Marzič version, the plague came from Anzob. A black dog, that came along a

4 Note that the first effective vaccine against the plague had been developed by Waldemar Mordecai Haffkine and was tested during the outbreak of Bombay in 1896 (e.g. HAFFKINE 1897; see HAWGOOD 2007) that means just a few years before the outbreak of Anzob. Haffkine (Mordechai-Vol'f Chavkin in Russian), born in Odessa from a Jewish family and educated in Russian schools, being unwelcome at home, emigrated later to Paris. The Russian epidemiologists V.K. Vysokovič (Vysokovich) and D.K. Zabolotnyj (Zabolotny) had contacts with Haffkine in Bombay (probably in 1897), while the biographies of Levin (ANONYMOUS 1906; also Holloway in HOLLOWAY & PEIRCE 1898, p. 1494) point out that just in 1897 he was sent to Bombay to study the plague in India. In November 1898, in relation to the epidemic of Anzob, Holloway (in HOLLOWAY & PEIRCE 1898, p. 1495) reports that «the remedies of Haffkine have been brought from India, and are being prepared in the Imperial Institute of Experimental Medicine [of which Levin was a member since 1892] at St. Petersburg»; the *British Medical Journal* of 26 November 1898 (ANONYMOUS 1898a, p. 1648) is even more explicit: «Dr. Livine [= Levin], bacteriologist, who recently studied plague in India, has been sent to Anzob with a stock of Haffkine plague serum». On the proved efficacy of the vaccine of Haffkine, see WILLIAMSON 2009.

path and approached the house of Šukur, most likely playing with him, was probably responsible for the plague. All the inhabitants of this house died on the same night and after that there were no other cases in Marzič. We listened to this story and after that an assistant of the director showed us the place where the house in question was. We had to go to the opposite side of the stream to reach this place. The house does not exist now, since it was demolished after those tragic events and nothing was built in the same place again. In the neighbourhood we could see the path the black dog had run along. We went along the path in the direction of the graveyard. There was an unique and unsettling atmosphere, perhaps because along the path we came across another black dog. At a certain point on the path our guide stopped and asked for the key in a house and then he opened a gate. We walked about fifty metres, the grass was high and uncut. Our guide showed us the point where the seven dead of Marzič were buried. There were no stones and the grass did not grow on this grave, which is separated from the other ones. Our guide asked us for a little moment of prayer. We returned to our car and in the late morning we left Marzič in the direction of Dušanbe.

4. *Legends and facts: the circle closes*

When we arrived in Dušanbe we looked for documents about the plague, but we could not find any. At that time Dušanbe was not the administrative centre responsible for the region of Anzob.⁵ There was also nothing, by now, about the sanitary cordon. The story of the plague made our colleagues curious; many of them did not believe that there had been a plague only 113 years before not so far from Dušanbe. But, in fact, this is a quite well-studied case. There has always been a certain interest for the Anzob plague both in Soviet (the studies done in the 1950s are at the origin of Dušanbe Epidemiological Observatory)⁶ and post-Soviet times. The first medical reports tried to explain the origin of the plague supposing that it arrived in Anzob from Baghdad, carried by pilgrims. Doctor Levin examined several men, women and children who did not fall ill on that occasion, but he noted that many of them had signs left from the plague some years before and in some cases also twenty years before. The illness was characterised by headache, fever and swelling lasting between three and five days. He came to the conclusion that in these places there was an endemic disease which he called *lymphadenitis femoralis suppurativa*. He supposed that this disease existed in these lands in a latent way, appearing sometimes in a more or less severe form.⁷ Recent articles about the Anzob plague underline the role of marmots at the origin of those events.⁸

5 MELIKISHVILI 2006 (for Anzob plague see p. 30).

6 BEN OUAGRHAM-GORMLEY & AL. 2008, p. 71.

7 CLEMOW 1899, p. 687.

8 POLE 2003, p. 14 with further bibliography. See also, recently (August 2013), the news – to be verified – about a young man who died of bubonic plague after having slaughtered a marmot in the region of Issyk-Kul' in Kyrgyzstan (LASSERRE 2013).

Our research continues now in the archives of the Russian institutions which have inherited documentation of the Tsarist period. In particular the Institute of Experimental Medicine in Saint Petersburg, where Levin worked and which still exists today, may have retained administrative and scientific reports, medical tests and photographic documentation⁹ of the anti-plague imperial commission that dealt with the Anzob emergency. Certainly substantial military documentation was collected, relating both to the troops sent to Anzob and to the implementation of the sanitary cordon. These documents could be used to clarify who the people portrayed in the photo album were. It would be also possible to contextualize in a better way the Russian health and military intervention in a remote mountain valley in the broader historical context of political control of Turkestan. The area of Anzob had been annexed to the Tsarist empire only a few years earlier during the military expedition of general Aleksandr Konstantinovič Abramov (1836-1886) in the regions of the upper Zarafšan and Iskander-kul' (1870), while in large cities such as Taškent and Samarkand (annexed respectively in 1865 and 1868) the Russian conquerors had to deal with ethnic tensions that led to riots on several occasions. In 1892, one of these was the result of the restrictive measures imposed following the spread of a cholera epidemic.¹⁰ Events such as Taškent cholera epidemic or the less well-known Anzob plague represent the most striking cases of daily contact between conqueror and conquered in which health and hygiene were sensitive issues touching on principles that are considered the hallmarks of civilisation. And in such a way they could be exploited in the complex game for control of the territory and ethnic groups. It is, therefore, inevitable to look at those photographs in the album that show Russian officers posing, with their eyes fixed on the camera, while dozens of locals, seemingly unconcerned, are engaged in hard work, as a product of colonialism and orientalism in the manner intended by E.W. Said.

In this first part of our research, visiting the sites of the plague and collecting local evidence, we wanted to collect the stories that these dramatic events have generated and all the traces that they have left in the collective memory. Different parts of this story are still missing. We want to close the circle that brought the photo album into our hands. Aframovič devoted this album to a woman. It is clear, also from her clothes, that this was not a woman from Central Asia. In the military reports that we hope to find in Saint Petersburg, Samarkand or Taškent, the list of participants of the expedition would be included. So it appeared possible to find her name. In this way we could try to find out how and when the album arrived in the hands of the New York antiquary. As you already know, from there these photographs arrived to Italy and, brought by us, they returned to the Yaghnob valley where they were taken more than a hundred years ago.

9 The primary purpose of the photographer who took the photos of the album, probably a military man, should have been to document the symptoms of the plague. Perhaps the negative plates, including those of the printed photos in the album, still exist in some Russian or Uzbek archives.

10 SAHADEO 2005 and 2007, pp. 79-107 (Chapter 3, *Unstable Boundaries: The Colonial Relationship and the 1892 "Cholera Riot"*). For the situation in the early decades of the 20th century see Buttino 2003, passim and pp. 238-240 for the cholera epidemic of 1918.

Commentary to the figures

The album consists of 24 sheets of stiff cardboard (ca. 26 × 18 cm, including the large binding) up to a total of 48 pages, each containing a glued on photo (17 × 12.5 cm), except the title page and the back of the title page where text is added next to one or more smaller photos. The pages are numbered in pencil (probably in recent times) from 44 to 91 and, for convenience, we have kept these numbers preceded by the letter «Y» in the references. The numbering follows that of a previous, similar album, entitled *Po Turkestanu 1900 g.* «Through Turkestan 1900», which we could only see in picture. We do not know the current owner. The last trace of the «Turkestan» album is at the auction house Kedem in Jerusalem where it was sold on 22 March 2012 (lot 564). The technical realization (with the initial of the main element of the title in relief) and the calligraphy of the title pages of the two albums are the same, but the monograms are different.

The majority of the photographs were taken in Anzob and its surrounding area. A less conspicuous amount was taken near the upper settlement of the village of Marghib and along the path between Marghib and Anzob; some photos were shot in Takfon and along the valley between Anzob and Takfon. There appears to be no photos of the village of Marzič.

Besides the documentary reasons related to the health care, the album falls within the tradition of the photographic collections made by the military for cognitive purposes of the new conquered territories (SONNTAG 2007), such as the famous *Turkestanskij al'bom* of 1871-1872 (accessible at <www.loc.gov/rr/print/coll/287_turkestan.html>, 12/06/2013) which the orientalist Alexander L. Kuhn (Kun in Russian) also collaborated on. It is therefore very likely that the photographic equipment used for the photo album is the one developed and used by the military.

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Fig. 1. The title page of the album (Y44). At the centre one can read the words *Po r. Jag-nobu 1898-1900* «Along the river Yagnob 1898-1900». At the top, on the right hand side, there is the monogram KA of Kazimir Michajlovič Aframovič, whose last name (preceded by the initial of the name) is given in full below the poem on the next page (Y45) of the album. On page Y45 there is also the date 28 April 1900 (Friday, 11 May in the Gregorian calendar). According to Clemow (1899, p. 687), Aframovič (written «Aphramovitch») is a «medical man» who reached Anzob on 3 October 1898 (15 October Gregorian). According to the dates on the title page («1898-1900») the photos do not refer to a single journey, although at present we do not know how many times or for how long Aframovič stayed at Anzob; a hint of Annette Meakin (1903, p. 249, quoted here in the comment to fig. 3) suggests that there have been several journeys. Later, Aframovič would be included among the deputies of the second State Duma of the Russian Empire (February–June 1907) for the district of Samarkand. Thanks to the biographical documentation of the deputies, we know that

Aframovič was born in 1857 (so Boiovič 1907, p. 499) and he was thus more than forty years old when he went to the Yaghnob valley. The second Duma had a very short life and we know nothing of Aframovič after 1907.

In the picture at the centre of the page one can see a woman dressed in Western style, surely a member of the medical mission, along with a man in a turban riding on a donkey. The picture vividly shows the contrast between Russians and mountaineers and it is not difficult to imagine the consideration that the former had of the latter, only partially sublimated by ethnological interest. In the picture at the bottom on the right hand side, one can see a man riding a horse on the background of a gorge of the river Yaghnob; the shot is similar to that of Y82 (fig. 18); the horseman is too small for identification.

Fig. 2. Along the path to Marghib (Y54). Clemow (1899, p. 687) mentions the village of Marghib (written «Margif») implying that it had been visited by Aframovič's medical mission. Marghib is located 8 km east of Anzob up the river; the central part of the route goes through a picturesque canyon. It was not possible to identify the precise point at which the photograph was taken. In the album, the photograph is within a series of images in which the recognisable ones were taken in Upper Marghib (Y47-49) and then on the path between Marghib and Anzob (Y52 and Y55).

First of all we tried to ascertain who Aframovič was among the many people photographed in the album. Thanks to the portrait published in the biographies of members of the second Duma (Boiovič 1907, p. 499), although dating from the decade following his mission in Anzob, it seems possible to identify Aframovič in this and a few other pictures (Y74 and Y76, here fig. 14, and perhaps Y71 and Y75). Aframovič is at the centre of the photograph, with a white piebald horse. To the left and above, two female figures in Western clothes which we will generically call nurses, although it is possible that they were doctors as can be inferred from the travelogue of Annette Meakin (1903, p. 249; see here the comment to fig. 3), stand. The woman on the left appears often in the photo album and also in the only picture (Y67) with a person in the foreground. We conventionally call her "lady in black" (although she is not always dressed in dark). Among the many people and forces mobilised to cope with the epidemic (soldiers, doctors, nurses, interpreters etc.) and probably organised into well-defined groups (even if only for logistical reasons in the absence of proper accommodation), there is no doubt that the photographer was closely linked to the group of nurses, present in at least 17 photographs of the album.

Fig. 3. Along the path to Marghib (Y55). The group of nurses on the path along the river Yaghnob. The photo was taken at the entrance of the canyon (locally called Kand-i Khurak) for those coming from Anzob, although in the picture the group was on its way back from Marghib, just a couple of kilometres to Anzob. Three nurses are visible, with the horses at their side and the reins in their hands, including the lady in black (the first in the line). The third nurse is dressed in the best fashion of the time required for a walk outdoors (compare the portrait of Mrs. Isaac Newton Phelps-Stokes made in 1897 by John Singer Sargent, now at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, <www.metmuseum.org/toah

/works-of-art/38.104>, 12/06/2013). Three bodyguards, at least in part military, followed on horseback; one holds the reins of another horse, maybe the photographer's one. The traveller Annette Meakin, on a visit to Samarkand in 1901, recounts what to our eyes seems to be a piece of gossip:

The Russian lady doctors who attended the women of Anzob got so accustomed, through their constant journeys thither, to the difficulties of the route that they actually began to take it at a canter! But when this reached the ears of the authorities it was put a stop to, as being an unnecessary risk of human life. (MEAKIN 1903, p. 249).

Fig. 4. The stretch of the path to Marghib shot in Y55 (fig. 3) in June 2008 (photo by G.P. Basello). At a distance of over one hundred years from the photo Y55, one can see the heavy human intervention in the morphology of the rock: the path was raised with an embankment protected by large boulders and expanded to allow the passage of vehicles, cutting the bottom of the rocky outcrop characterized by large horizontal layers.

Fig. 5. Panorama of the village of Anzob (Y78). In the foreground, work goes on to seal the burials of the lower graveyard. The main settlement of Anzob is in the background; behind, one can see the piles of white quicklime (or other reflective substances) placed on the burials of the upper graveyard, crowned by the structure of the shrine of Jandapush (barely visible in the photo); to the left of the upper graveyard, along the contour of the slope, the great earth pyramid of Anzob stands. In the foreground, there are about 70 people (plus a couple of soldiers) engaged in the construction of the lower graveyard, perhaps in the act of setting up the stone covering. The action is unanimous and each person is caught in the middle of work on the left, a person is immortalized in the act of bending over to pick something up; only a few are looking at the photographer. One sees wicker stretchers (or similar material) being used, although it is not obvious from this photo, to bring the stones. From this photo and from those of the upper graveyard (Y71-75), it seems that the bodies were buried under a small mound of piled stones covered by a layer of quicklime; the whole area was finally delimited and uniformly covered by a layer of stones of appreciable size, so as to level the ground. Dead bodies, as well as sick people, are never visible in the photo album: it was a deliberate choice (the primary duty of the photographer had to be to document the disease and its symptoms) probably related to the function of the album, i.e. the memory of a great adventure through the (relatively) more enjoyable aspects.

Fig. 6. Panorama of the western settlement of the village of Anzob in June 2011 (photo by G.P. Basello). The village consists, roughly speaking, of two settlements which have been developed in correspondence with two recesses of the mountain separated above by a rocky outcrop. The two settlements were already established in 1898 (the lower graveyard was prepared in the space immediately to the west of the eastern settlement), although they were then separated by a large space, while today they merge together with the strip of houses along the driveway. These buildings make it impossible to take photographs from

the same perspective of Y78 (fig. 5). The driveway crosses Anzob at the feet of those who were the two settlements of the late 19th century village; probably, the passage of the road urged the construction of new houses in the area closer to the river Yaghnob, shifting the social and commercial centre. Judging by the number of people walking on it in Y77 (fig. 15), the main path ran above the village, circumventing the rocky outcrop. The photograph reproduced here was taken from the same rocky outcrop, a bit higher than the old path that today is lost among the modern buildings. The area of the upper graveyard, unkept and characterised by tall grass, is clearly visible below the shrine of Jandapush (recognizable by its metal roof). Just above, the earth pyramid of Anzob can be seen.

Fig. 7. The village of Anzob (detail of Y56). One can see the area of the upper graveyard with the burial mounds covered with quicklime and the shrine of Jandapush. The mosque (see also fig. 12), now completely rebuilt, stands out among the houses with the portico open on three sides.

Fig. 8. The upper graveyard in June 2011 (photo by G.P. Basello). The photograph was taken from the rocky outcrop mentioned in the comment to fig. 6.

Fig. 9. The layer of quicklime that seals the upper graveyard (photo by G.P. Basello). A steep dirt road, that is in fact a gully which is filled by water when it rains, runs at the foot of the shrine of Jandapush along the bottom edge of the upper graveyard. The action of erosion has brought to light a layer of quicklime (or other disinfectant) about 10 cm high; below one can see stones (only guessed in the photograph), probably the mound of a burial. The friendly doctor of Anzob who accompanied us in a part of the survey is portrayed in the photograph.

Fig. 10. The earth pyramid of Anzob (Y86). It is a geological formation due to erosion, also known as «fairy chimney» or «hoodoo», of which there are other examples above the village and along the bank of the river Yaghnob near the village of Marghib. The pyramid of Anzob, locally called *Manora* «Minaret», is characterized by its large size. In the photograph, immediately to the left of the pyramid stands the lady in black while in front there are two men in Western clothes, probably military. On the formation of these pyramids, with reference to that of Anzob, see CAPUS 1884, pp. 344-346 (kindly pointed out by Jean-Claude Muller).

Fig. 11. The earth pyramid of Anzob in June 2011 (photo by G.P. Basello).

Fig. 12. The mosque of Anzob (Y59). The mosque is easily recognizable in Y56 (fig. 7) from which it is possible to deduce its location in the village. The inhabitants of Anzob told us that the current mosque was rebuilt in the same place as that of the late 19th century.

Fig. 13. A house of Anzob in June 2011 (photo by G.P. Basello). Among the buildings that we have seen, only one is old enough to have already been in existence in 1898. It is a house in the eastern settlement of the village, east of the lower graveyard. The construction technique of the side wall, with a frame of vertical and diagonal posts filled with stones, is identical to that recognizable in some of the buildings photographed in the album, in particular in the mosque (Y59, here fig. 12).

Fig. 14. Burning houses (Y76). Several articles and reports on the epidemic of Anzob report that the houses and belongings of the infected people were burned:

The following measures have been taken at Anzob: The inhabitants of the village who are in health have been removed to a neighboring village. Infected houses have been destroyed by fire; also all effects which belonged to patients dead of the plague. (Annex to ZAVITZIANO 1898, p. 1580; see also ANONYMOUS 1898b).

In front of the houses, one can see two men with turbans, maybe local authorities, then in the background, from left, two nurses (the one on the left is the lady in black), a soldier and Aframovič. In the background, beyond the smoke, the layer of stones is now disposed to seal the upper graveyard; note also the workers with wicker stretchers used, probably, to bring stones (stones are visible on the first stretcher on the right, the only one carried by two men). The photo was taken at the foot of the shrine of Jandapush, not far from the river bank.

Fig. 15. The lower graveyard (Y77). On the right, one can see the houses of the eastern settlement of the village. The lower graveyard lies just below, splitted in two seemingly distinct sectors (the rock in between is still recognizable); the work seems to be coming to an end, with the surface layer of stones now disposed on almost all the fenced area. On the left runs the old path with some human figures on it. Closer one can glimpse a house that also appears in Y68, perhaps used by some members of the mission as accommodation. The inhabitants of Anzob recount that the mission house was located above the village. Probably more than a house was needed to accommodate all the mission personnel. The articles and reports on the plague talk also of a hospital that was set up on site.

The photo was taken from the northeastern margin of the western settlement of the village of Anzob. A very similar shot is attested in the drawing of Anzob published by Capus (1892, p. 267, fig. 44; reprinted in MULLER 2013, p. 354, fig. 5) that faithfully reproduces every detail, including the verandas of houses and the place of the lower graveyard that was then occupied by crops.

Fig. 16. The eastern settlement of the village of Anzob in June 2011 (photo by G.P. Basello). The lower graveyard corresponds to the green space visible through the trees just right of the centre of the photo. We note the expansion of the urban area, which has surrounded the old graveyard. The layout of the driveway today runs above the lower limit of the graveyard. The shot roughly corresponds to that of Y77 (fig. 15).

Fig. 17. The lower graveyard seen from above (photo by G.P. Basello). On the ground there is a clearly visible patch where the grass has not grown, corresponding to a part of the area covered with stones to seal the burials. The western part of the graveyard (on the right in the photo, covered by the canopy of trees) has been reused to erect a monument to the fallen of World War II. The photo was taken from the rocky outcrop (mentioned in the comment to fig. 6) that overlooks the graveyard.

Probably the photo Y78 (fig. 5) was taken from the south-east corner of the graveyard, today at the intersection of the driveway and the stream that marks the eastern boundary of the graveyard itself.

Fig. 18. A gorge between Anzob and Takfon (Y82). The photo is facing west, with the silhouette of the mountain Zamin Qaror (the mountain that dominates the village of Marghib, not visible in the picture) in the background, far beyond Anzob. On the right there is a group of three men on horseback, probably military, which move in the direction of Takfon (Tokfan in the reports), the only other significant centre in the lower valley of the river Yaghnob, not far from the confluence with the river Fan.

According to the memoirs of writer Sergej Mstislavskij (1876-1943), a kind of quarantine was established in Takfon where all those who came and went from Anzob had to stop (excerpt from the memoirs in Savel'ev 2006). Mstislavskij went to Anzob along with the epidemiologist Aleksandr M. Levin, probably towards the end of October 1898 (before the middle of November in the Gregorian calendar) at the request of prince Aleksandr Petrovič Ol'denburgskij (1844-1932), president of the Imperial Anti-Plague Commission (*Protivočumnoj komissii*) and administrator of the Institute of Experimental Medicine (*Institut éksperimental'noj mediciny*, <<http://www.iemrams.spb.ru>>, 12/06/2013) of Saint Petersburg.¹¹ Mstislavskij was chosen for this mission because he had visited the valley of Yaghnob a short time before; according to his memoirs, his help was decisive to localise Anzob when the first news of the outbreak came to the anti-plague commission. Thanks to the memories of Mstislavskij, we know that he was accompanied by cavalry colonel Bernov (most likely Evgenij Ivanovič Bernov, 1855-1917) and lieutenant colonel Ryžov (perhaps Petr Nikolaevič Ryžov, 1864-1936). It is not easy to tell if Mstislavskij appears in the photos of the album; Aframovič had come to Anzob on 3 October 1898 (15 October in the Gregorian calendar) (CLEMOW 1899, p. 687). Mstislavskij wrote that when he left Anzob there were only two sick men in the "hospital"; according to the table in HOLLOWAY & PEIRCE 1898, p. 1496 this occurred on 2 November 1898 (Tuesday, 14 November in the Gregorian calendar); the stay, however, seems too short. In Y69 an officer on whose shoulder is clearly visible the insignia of colonel is portrayed.

11 The prince Ol'denburgskij arrived in Samarkand on Monday, 26 October (7 November in the Gregorian calendar) to oversee the health emergency. A part of his journey can be reconstructed thanks to the diary of Barbara Doukhovskoy that, for personal reasons, made the journey from Saint Petersburg to Samarkand with the medical expedition (Doukhovskoy 1917, pp. 506-508).

Fig. 19. The gorge shot in Y82 (fig. 18) in June 2011 (photo by G.P. Basello).

Fig. 20. Some old men on a bench along the main street of Anzob (photo by G.P. Basello). To the right of Paolo Ognibene, there is the doctor of Anzob who accompanied us during part of the survey; the second old man from the left was presented to us as the grandson of the man who at the time of the plague refused the vaccine.

Until the inauguration of the tunnel of Anzob in 2006, the main street of Anzob was part of the highway M34, a dirt road for long stretches, being deprived of the maintenance of the Soviet period. Even if the tunnel has kept the name of the pass and then of the village that one met after the descent, the new highway reaches the old route near Takfon, cutting Anzob off. The full implementation of the tunnel has prevented the inhabitants of Anzob to see again those “friends” who, passing regularly, were also a source of income. According to one hypothesis on the origin of the infection, the plague was brought to Anzob¹² by Muslim pilgrims in transit between India (where there was an epidemic in Bombay from 1896 to 1897) and Bukhara (Levin according to CLEMOW 1899, p. 687).¹³ With the opening of the tunnel, the village of Anzob was beyond the network of “Silk Roads” that made it so important at the end of the 19th century.

Fig. 21. In search of the view in a late afternoon of June 2011 (photo by G.P. Basello). Some residents of Anzob huddle discussing the reproductions of the photos in the album. From our first day of work in Anzob, we benefitted from the kindness of the villagers who looked at their past and at such a dramatic part of their history with great interest and curiosity. They can all be considered “survivors”.

12 Note that the village of Marzič (where the first cases of disease were observed) was along an alternative route which connected Takfon to Anzob through the southern side valleys and the passes across them. This route represented the only way to get to Anzob when the Yagnob river flooded the valley bottom (BONVALOT 1885, pp. 61-65; CAPUS 1892, pp. 240-243). This event happens even today submerging some small stretches of the road.

13 The sea travel from Bombay or Surat to Gedda was the cheapest way to perform the *hajj* for the Muslim subjects of the Tsarist empire (MORRISON 2008, pp. 63-64). The Russian authorities tried to discourage the transit of pilgrims through British India, fearing that it could have subversive influences; in the years 1897 and 1898, the Bombay plague epidemic was one of the adduced reasons (MORRISON 2008, p. 65).

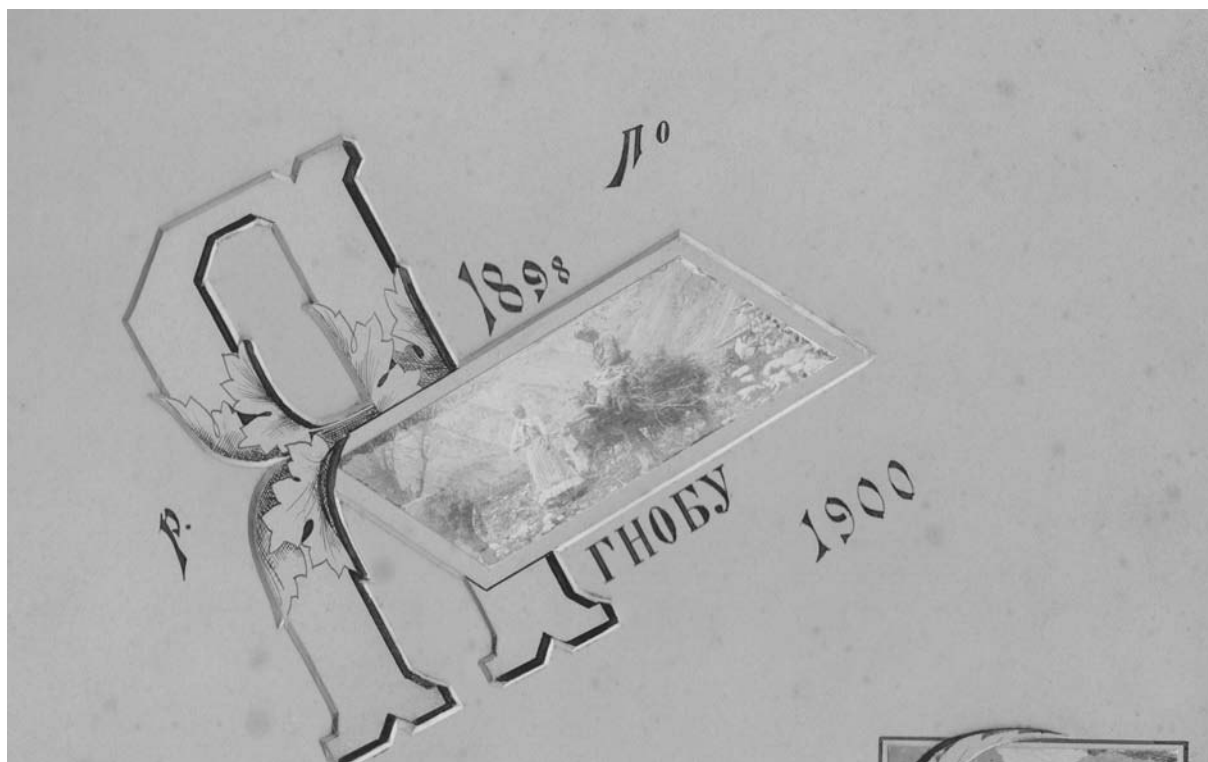


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

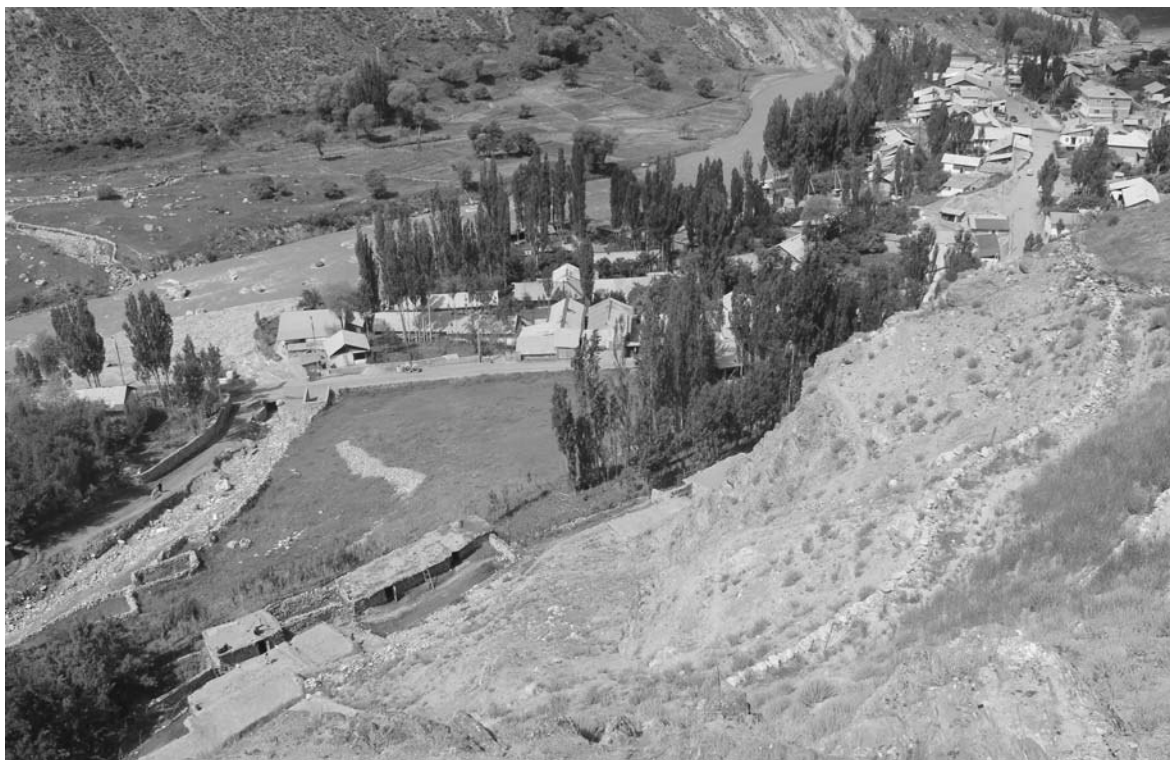


Fig. 17



Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20



Fig. 21

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YAGHNOBI STUDIES

I

Papers from the Italian Missions in Tajikistan

Edited by

Antonio Panaino, Andrea Gariboldi, Paolo Ognibene



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In memory of
Maurizio Missana

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The present volume collects some contributions about the Yaghnob Valley inspired by or directly developed in the framework of the various scientific missions of the University of Bologna in Tajikistan (2007-2012). The articles here collected follow, as far as it is possible, a chronological order, starting with the studies concerning the history of the Yaghnobis considered in the framework of the Upper Zarafshan region, beginning from the Sogdian period to the early Islamic age, up to those essays focusing on ethno-linguistics and related political aspects. Thus, old questions have to face new problems and social needs, in a very delicate and politically complex area, which now is experiencing a deep economic crisis, but that holds important energetic and mining resources. Both the researches aiming to clarify which were the political and economic role of the Yaghnob Valley during the Sogdian period, and the studies that try to explain the peculiar use and development of the Yaghnobi language, in the light of the socio-cultural politics of the Republic of Tajikistan, deserve great attention. From different point of views it has been deeply discussed the problem of the Yaghnobis' isolation and uniqueness: the results seem to be very innovative. Also particular historical cases, such as the terrible Anzob plague (1898), have been analysed as a case-study in order to better understand the Czarist policy towards minorities in Central Asia, a relevant theme in Soviet and post-Soviet time, too. The strong humanitarian profile of these missions is well represented by some pharmacological and medical contributions. Finally, useful and detailed maps of the Yaghnob Valley, created with the GIS technology, were included at the end of the volume.

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