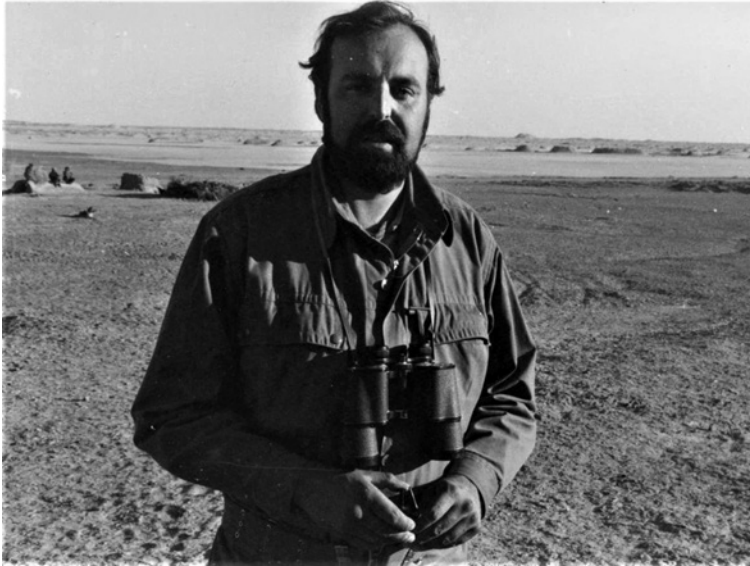


## Maurizio Tosi (1944–2017)



Talking about Maurizio Tosi has never been an easy task, and now that he is no longer living, we realize that these lines will open even more complex perspectives: emotions and passions provoked by the friend, the colleague, the scholar are inextricably linked.

Complex and contradictory has always been his life, in which existential aspects have always mixed with academic, professional and political ones. His friendship, often awkward, but always loyal, has been an essential reference point for many of us, and for the colleagues of all the Universities where he taught.

The strong contradictory nature of his personality contemplated brilliant scientific endeavour, but also some weaknesses, even childish behaviours, that revealed his rebellious instincts, sometime to the limits of temper issues.

Maurizio Tosi's life has been a particularly adventurous life; he himself loved to posture as a sort of academic hero, not only because of his countless archaeological undertakings, but also because of the elusive political ideologies often evoked.

If one would request different people who knew him to provide an overview of his life, one would be confronted with an overall picture ranging between two opposite ends: a great scholar, a brilliant researcher, but also a rude, aggressive and sometimes unpresentable fellow. We would like to outline here his standing of archaeologist and university teacher of the greatest international importance.

After the first archaeological successes in Iran (1968–1976), Maurizio joined L'Orientale University, Naples, at the suggestion of Umberto Scerrato—initially against Giuseppe Tucci's and Gherardo Gnoli's advice—, in a first phase (1975–1981) as adjunct professor of Prehistory and Protohistory of Asia, subsequently (1981–1994) as full professor of the same discipline (then a *unicum* in the Italian academic panorama).

In the early 1990s (1989–1992) he also served as cultural attaché in the Italian Embassy at New Delhi.

Feeling that in Central Asia new spaces were about to open for the Italian archaeologists, he found a new life (1995–2014) being called to the chair of Palaeoethnology at the University of Bologna, where (since 2007) he was for three years Director of the local Department of Archaeology. Up to a few months before his death, he also served as a special advisor to the Minister of Heritage in the Sultanate of Oman (2010–2016).

Maurizio Tosi had reached the peak of his reputation already at a very early age, by virtue of one among the greatest of his archaeological adventures: the excavation of an urban settlement in the Iranian desert of Sistan known by the evocative name of Burned City, Shahr-i Sokhta, probably from III millennium BCE on.

Anyone who was associated with Maurizio in those years will remember two notions, obsessively repeated as a mantra in his everyday life: innovation and competition. A third, related notion—at the time not so much popular in the Italian academy—was internationalisation of research, something strongly connected to his vital energy, between a call to Ann Arbor and a flight to Moscow, a mission to South America, Iran or Oman.

Many colleagues recognized increasingly the importance of those ideas, bound to change the way of dealing with the tortuous mazes of research. We know today that research either becomes international, or is not research at all, and that scientific projects either are innovative and competitive in methods and results, or do not exist in the eyes of the international scientific community.

Maurizio Tosi's curriculum is one of those that speak for themselves. Thirteen major works (monographic and edited), including *Prehistoric Sistan*

(IsMEO RepMem. XIX, 1), Rome 1983; *The Archaeological Map of Murghab Delta*, Rome 1998 (together with A. Gubaev and G. Koshelenko, IsIAO RepMem. Series Minor 3); *Papers from the EAA Third Annual Meeting at Ravenna 1997*, II, *Classical and Medieval* (BAR International Series 718), Oxford 1998 (together with M. Pierce); *Papers from the EAA Third Annual Meeting at Ravenna 1997*, III, *Sardinia* (BAR International Series 719), Oxford 1998 (together with M. Pierce); *Murghab. A Civilization Heartland between River and Desert* (IsIAO Series Minor), Roma 1998; *In the Shadow of Ancestors The Prehistoric Foundations of the Early Arabian Civilization in Oman*, Muscat 2007 (together with S. Cleuziou); *Bruce Chatwin: viaggio in Afghanistan*, Torino 2000 (together with F. La Cecla); *Essays on the Late Prehistory of the Arabian Peninsula* (IsIAO SOR XCIII), Roma 2002 (together with S. Cleuziou and J. Zarins); *Le frontiere dell'Afghanistan*, Bologna 2005 (together with F. La Cecla). Moreover, 140 notes, articles, reviews, and an enormous quantity of national and international projects: Iran, Iraq, Peru, Egypt, Oman, Pakistan, Hungary, Yemen, Kuwait, United States, Mongolia, Russia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Bahrain, Abu Dhabi, Cambodia, Vietnam, Kazakhstan, Israel, Tunisia, and further Prague, Pyrgi, Cosenza, Viterbo, Trapani, Pantelleria ...

Full professor at 36 years, member of half-a-score of national and international scientific associations, visiting professor at Ann Arbor in 1987, Wellesley in 1978–1979, Harvard in 2002, Director of the Italian archaeological missions to Peru (1968–1970) and Iran (1967–76), Keeper of prehistoric antiquities at MNAOR (1977–1981), chargé de recherche at CNRS, Paris (1977–1978), collaborator of the Sapienza Institute of Paleontology (1966–1968), member of the Italian Archaeological Mission to Iraq (1974), Co-director of the Italo-French Mission to Oman (1985), of the Italo-German Mission to Pakistan (1983–1986), and of those to Turkmenistan (1989–1998) and Uzbekistan (since 1999), Maurizio Tosi has worked all over Europe, Asia, Africa, the Americas, financed by prestigious grants such as British Council Research Grant (1969); Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (1970–1973); Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc. (triennial grant no. 3070); G. Gulbenkian Foundation Research Grant (1981–1983); A. v. Humboldt-Stiftung Forschung-Stipendium (three periods: 1981, Frei Universität, Berlin; 1982 and 1985, Rheinische-Westfaelische Technische Hochschule, Aachen); Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Inc. (triennial grant no. 4636, since May 1985); National Geographic Society (grant for “Studies of Craft Organization and Labour Specialization at Mohenjodaro, Pakistan”, 1985).

Maurizio Tosi has always kept some precise priorities at the centre of his research; to recall his own words at the Workshop *Sull'archeologia*

*digitale dall'altopiano iranico* (Naples, 19 February 2014, in Memory of Umberto Scerrato), “what matters in science is application and objectivity, dissemination of data and friendly relations, and empathy ... towards the other researchers”. On that occasion he said about Umberto Scerrato: “this colleague ... introduced me to the positive essence of our work, without shadows, without duplicities, in the sunlight, without being in a condition of living one’s own life with an obscure object within oneself”.

In 2014, overcoming many problems, we have printed a volume on the occasion of his seventieth birthday, *My Life is like a Summer Rose. Maurizio Tosi e l’Archeologia come Modo di Vivere. Papers in Honour of Maurizio Tosi for his 70th birthday*, BAR International Series 2690, Oxford, 989 pp., C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, B. Genito (editors in chief), B. Cerasetti (editor).

The title of the volume, indirectly suggested by Maurizio himself, which may appear as a sort of catchy advertising slogan, only voices a synthetic combination of all the aspects—professional, existential, political—of his life which immediately struck anyone who approached him.

During the editorial work it became more and more clear that most of the contributors, as well as dealing with their different subjects, had also express their own feelings on their different (personal and/or professional) relationships with Maurizio. From the ninety-nine contributions of that volume one may obtain a survey of those very key concepts from which have drawn inspiration many pupils, friends and collaborators of Maurizio.

This further points to the fact that, much beyond learning, the true reference point in the relations with Maurizio have always been the personal dimensions, marked by personal feelings, misunderstandings, quarrels, insults but also sudden and sensational reconciliations.

In fact, Maurizio Tosi’s relationships with individuals and institutions have never been banal or easy. It was a very different time in Italy, at mid-1960s; a different time in Asia and in Iran, too, where Maurizio’s archaeological adventure had started with its tempestuous collaboration with Tucci’s IsMEO; Iran was still a monarchy.

His relationships with institutions and their top managements, Giuseppe Tucci *in primis*, Sabatino Moscati, Gherardo Gnoli, and more recently, after IsMEO’s rebuilding in 2012, Marco Mancini and Adriano Rossi, have been characterized by personal passions, divergent attitudes, and also by quarrels, removals and rehabilitations. It would be unfair to Maurizio if we would revisit those years in a hagiographical attitude.

Certainly things were not so rosy: we remember in mid-1970s, the atmosphere prevailing in the IsMEO Centre for ceramography (at Palazzo Brancaccio, in

the historic centre of Rome), where one had the impression to dip into the dark recesses of a group of conspirators, in which the visitors had to try to find out how friends and enemies were distributed. We were all younger than Maurizio, and it was normal that we all were vulnerable to the charm of his personality and the greatness of his task, but at the same time, we felt the weight of IsMEO tradition, *in primis* its archaeologists seniores Domenico Faccenna, Umberto Scerrato and Maurizio Taddei, forming all together a sort of establishment of that institution, while Maurizio Tosi mostly tended to represent the younger generations “in revolt”.

We will try now to outline his relationships with the institutions, focusing on IsMEO, with which Maurizio most identified himself, and dividing his activities into three main periods.

The first is the pioneering epoch (mid-1960s to early 1980s), till the years when the Islamic revolution abruptly stopped a continuity of well-established collaborations and extraordinary discoveries in a key country for archaeological research such as Iran. That breakup represented for IsMEO and many of us the realization that archaeology in Middle East and Asia could no more be managed according to traditional methods. L'Orientale University not yet appeared within Maurizio's horizon.

At that time there arose a feeling, in Maurizio and all of us, that something was gone forever and a new path was to open up. However, even factoring that initially Maurizio Tosi and Giuseppe Tucci liked each other, very soon the first friction did emerge. A few years after the 1968 student movement that misunderstanding became an open conflict (it is around mid-1970s that Maurizio Tosi was deprived of the direction of the Italian Archaeological Mission at Shahr-i Sokhta, a clear indication of the unavoidable generational conflict that such authoritative scholars as Scerrato, Faccenna, Gnoli and Taddei had only contributed to delay).

This is a period (1980 to 1995, the year of the incorporation of IsMEO into IsIAO), which profoundly marks the life of Maurizio, pressing him to reconsider—at least in part—his stormy behaviour, opening what could be called ‘the stage of maturity’, with new relationships with Gherardo Gnoli's IsMEO and a university such as L'Orientale at Naples. Maurizio and the new President Gherardo Gnoli devoted themselves entirely (even if Giuseppe Tucci always remained sceptical as to Gnoli's choice) to a dramatic increase of the scientific areas and archaeological activities, now projected to Oman, Pakistan, Hungary, and then Russia, India, Central Asia, particularly Turkmenistan and the Merv oasis, with the substantial sponsorship by L'Orientale; re-analyses and rereading of ancient Iranian history were experienced in a team spirit, see Gherardo

Gnoli's *Zoroaster's Time and Homeland* and Tosi-Biscione's *Protostoria degli Stati Turanici*, both published at L'Orientale Press.

This is the phase in which Maurizio's efforts at L'Orientale attracts a growing number of students, sometimes 70–80 per lesson, a number then unthinkable for courses of Asian Archaeology. With the benefit of hindsight, this phase appears now as a sort of reflection period. Not all did realize this at the time, but IsMEO was laying the groundwork for a new notion of archaeological research, no more based on long-term excavations, but also envisaging, in a (post-)modern vision, an archaeology without excavations, something whose effects only today can be fully appreciated.

All that would not have been possible if Gherardo Gnoli had not realized that Maurizio's potential could be better channelled into an institutional dimension, rather than get lost in a losing battle. This same was Umberto Scerrato's position, who had worked a lot in order that Maurizio could become full professor at L'Orientale, just in the conviction that his energies would have been better employed in everyday university teaching. The experiment didn't work very well, but it is undeniable that without Umberto Scerrato and Gherardo Gnoli's vision, Maurizio Tosi's role in the Italian academic institutions would have been considerably lower.

The third and last phase starts in mid-1990s, when Maurizio Tosi, following an agreement between the three Presidents (Adriano Rossi, L'Orientale, Naples; Fabio Roversi Monaco, Alma Mater, Bologna; Gherardo Gnoli, IsMEO, Rome) moved to Bologna-Ravenna. This phase is characterized by a series of initiatives, with several steps forward, but also restrictions in terms of skilled collaborations and scale of objectives. There were occasional collaborations in Iran, where anyhow Maurizio will never return, for reasons on which history will have the last say. To this phase one may allocate a strategic repositioning by Maurizio Tosi within the community of the Italian prehistorians, also dictated by the opportunities offered by the new geo-political realities in Asia. Many scientific initiatives channelled through IsMEO/IsIAO were conducted with the Superintendences and Museums of Lazio, Abruzzo, Sicily, Puglia etc.; but it was pretty clear to Maurizio that the time of the great IsMEO/L'Orientale archaeological missions was finally at an end.

If this is Maurizio Tosi's institutional profile, brief additional remarks can be conceded to colleagues having shared with him a more personal and affective dimension. Even if frequenting him was never easy to anyone, it cannot be denied that he has clearly managed to communicate to friends, colleagues and students his extraordinary human and cultural wealth.

An amazing ability must be recognised to Maurizio: to know how to be in touch with anyone dealing with him, from the most emeritus among the academicians to the youngest of the students and the humblest among the excavation workers. With all, Maurizio always acted in solidarity, sharing their joys and sorrows, sometimes even beyond good and evil—something that many have not been able to forgive him.

The last phases of Maurizio's life were unfortunately marred by painful vicissitudes. Now we know how much his faith in life has prevailed over his inner devils in these last phases of loneliness and distress.

We would like to conclude quoting some of the most touching words sent by Maurizio to friends in his last years, in the hope that colleagues and friends would listen and could understand:

5 June 2015

... laddove le ceneri del nostro amato figlio e fratello sono rimaste a presidiare la magione dei nostri sogni infranti, sui colli della Sabina, al centro dello stesso mondo antico, trasformata in mausoleo ... Una scelta coraggiosa che ho molto ammirato e sostengo fino in fondo ... La felicità ci è stata negata, da chi e perché non è dato capire. La ferita non si rimargina e il sangue di lui scorre dai nostri corpi e macchia i luoghi e gli oggetti toccati dai nostri sguardi.

14 June 2015

Stasera, due anni fa, in un momento della notte che non conosciamo, Luca ha preferito una morte atroce ... Il sole non è più risorto, per lui ma anche per noi ... rimasti. Quello che guardiamo nascere è tramontare, qui sulle sponde aride dell'Oceano Fiume, è una stella aliena che non riscalda né illumina. Il nostro sole si è spento con lui. Povere ceneri ... chiuse ancora nella casa perduta. Figlio mio, la dolcezza di queste sillabe rimbalza come un'eco profonda nel buio denso di questa caverna.

20 June 2016

Sono sveglio nella notte che si scioglie nelle prime luci, vigile e rilassato. Dopo tanto tempo i demoni sembrano spenti, i dolori assenti e i pensieri tornano a proiettarsi verso future opere e imprese di conoscenza. Il benessere si infila e con esso il desiderio di vivere, e soprattutto di fare. Il vostro affetto, la vostra fiducia, la dedizione con cui mi avete aiutato in questo ultimo anno di pena e paura sono stati la vera Medicina, innescata

da queste terapie intelligenti. Grazie con tutta la gratitudine possibile. Grazie per credere in me. Spero di passare questo tempo che mi resta come vostro compagno e di tornare a scrivere e studiare con voi e per voi. I progetti tornano a riempire il flusso dei pensieri, mentre sento il corpo rilassato. Nei prossimi giorni, mentre continuo le terapie, cercherò di comunicare con ognuno di voi per dare corpo a molti progetti ancora possibili.

La notte si va schiarendo in una luce tremula, e con essa forse il buio del mio lungo dolore.

Dear Maurizio, we thank you for all you have done and we give you a big hug wherever you are.

*B. Genito—A.V. Rossi*