

“MASTERS” AND “NATIVES”. DIGGING THE OTHERS’ PAST (BOOK DISCUSSION FORUM)

A BOOK with such a somewhat provocative title was published last year by the German scientific publishing house Walter de Gruyter GmbH, which specializes in the publication of academic literature and has existed since the middle of the 18th century. The publication was made possible by the support of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences (SAGW), as well as the Institute of Archeology and Ancient Sciences and the inter-faculty department of history and religions at the University of Lausanne.¹

Structurally, the collection is divided into five parts with rather eloquent titles:

1) Archaeology in the Time of Empires: Unequal Negotiations and Scientific Competition;

2) “Master” / “Native”: Are There Winners? A Micro-History of Reciprocal and Non-Linear Relations;

3) Taming the Other’s Past: The Eurocentric Scientific Tools;

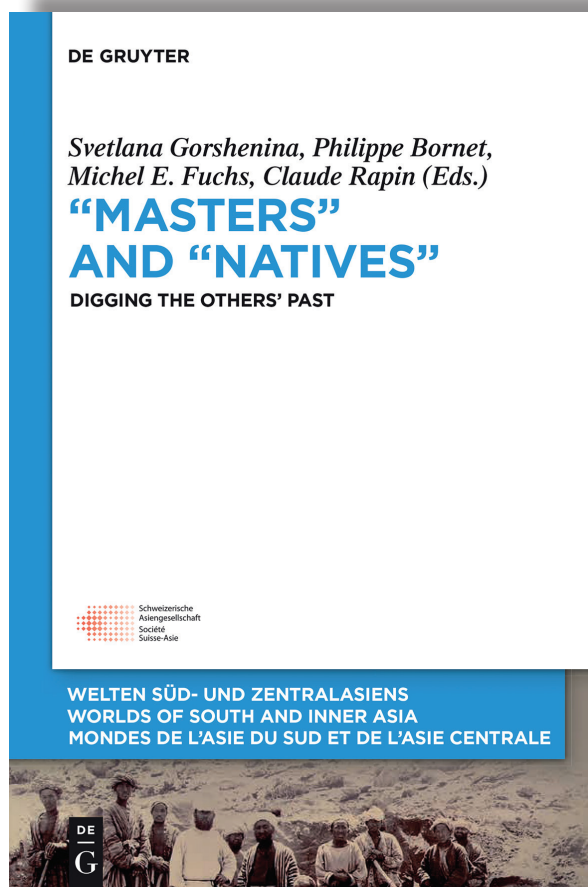
4) The Forging of Myths: Heroic Clichés and the (Re-) Distribution of Roles;

5) Reversal of Roles in Postcolonial and Neocolonial Contexts: From a Relation between “Masters” and “Subordinates” to “Partnership”?

“The essays collected in this volume,” says the French archaeologist and historian of science, Professor Alain Schnapp, in his brief introduction, “document the development of archaeology and the encounter of Asian societies with modern archaeology. This discipline is without any doubt a Western invention, but in the East as in America, Oceania, or Africa, humans have for millennia maintained multiple connections with monuments and the past, connections that modern archaeology tended to neglect or even ignore. It is to its credit that this book focuses on these questions in the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial world.”

The compilers of the collection clarify the motives and reason for its appearance: “The binomial opposition of ‘Masters’ and ‘natives’, spelled with and without a capital letter, is upsetting and unsettling. The formula’s unease and its negative connotation are intended, so as to draw attention to the equivocal re-

¹ “Masters” and “Natives”. Digging the Others’ Past. Svetlana Gorshenina, Philippe Bornet, Michel E. Fuchs, Claude Rapin (Eds.). Berlin: De Gruyter, Serie: Welten Süd- und Zentralasiens / Worlds of South and Inner Asia / Mondes de l’Asie du Sud et de l’Asie Centrale, 2019.



lations developed between archaeologists working for world powers on the one hand, and local populations from countries that have often been labelled in bulk – and arbitrarily so – as “Oriental” on the other. In the framework of the symposium that was held at the University of Lausanne in January 2016 whose title became that of the present book, we had set for ourselves the task of thinking about a type of relationship that is highly ambiguous, to say the least, and certainly constantly changing. This theme is generally not dealt with in the public square and has often remained limited to hearsay and rumour. The twenty specialists in archaeology, history, cinema, and literature whose essays are collected here share lengthy experience in extra-European contexts. As such, they are all well aware of the fact that these relations, going as they do beyond the personal sphere, have “deeply influenced the conduct of archaeological and historical research, and continue to do so.” (p. 4).

Nevertheless, the authors do not hide their opti-

mism and express the hope that sooner or later, within the framework of interdisciplinary projects, “members of international teams and local colleagues” will completely replace the “masters” and “natives” of the past.

The editors of the *Bulletin of IICAS* appealed to several European archaeologists who know Central Asia firsthand to express their opinion on the problem to which the published collection is devoted. We encouraged them to express themselves not in the genre of a review, but to freely express their thoughts that arose while reading the book. These are not the voices of outside observers, but of direct participants in the process, therefore their judgments and assessments are not only interesting in themselves, but complement and develop the picture drawn by the authors of the book.

THE DEEP INEQUALITIES IN THE STRUCTURES OF KNOWLEDGE

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THE INVITATION from Ruslan Muradov to write a response to the 2019 publication of *Masters and Natives* came towards the end of an academic semester fractured across the world by unprecedented upheaval. At the small liberal arts college of New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD) where I am based, the spread of Covid19 forced an abrupt mid-semester pivot in teaching, shifting from the traditional classroom to an online platform. The Covid19 outbreak was followed by global protests against the brutal death of George Floyd on the 25th of May, and in reaction to systemic racism in the US and across the world. Ramifications and reverberations of both of these events continue to be felt at both a local and a global level; they underline the deep inequalities in our society. In academia, these events present a much-needed catalyst to reconsider inequalities in the structures of knowledge, research, publication and teaching. Paradoxically, and almost perversely, these events intrinsically highlight issues of disparity and inequality that provide an urgency, and a critical platform to consider many of the issues raised in *“Masters” and “Natives”*, thereby underlining the importance of this volume.

“Masters” and “Natives” raises key issues about the roots and inequalities of archaeology, and about how the past is told. Intrinsically linked to colonialism, these issues are especially well known in the context of Near Eastern archaeology. Here the ties between archaeology, empire, nation-building and espionage are well documented (for the Near Eastern perspec-

tive see most recently Meskell 2020; see also Bahrani 1998); events in Syria and Yemen, for example, fuel ongoing currency to this discussion. More generally, as noted by Rapin, the global north-south divide has come to replace the inequalities engendered by colonial relations (*“Masters” and “Natives”* 2019: 336). At least in English language publications however, there has been much less discussion about these inequalities in the Central Asian context in comparison with the situation in the Near East. The contributions of the volume, especially those focusing on Central Asian archaeology, provide an important platform for raising awareness of these issues in a wider, Eurasian context. In Central Asia, however, the relationship between colonialism and archaeology is nuanced. Certainly, it often went hand in hand with Soviet nation building efforts (*“Masters” and “Natives”* 2019: 141), and it continues to privilege the white (predominantly Euro-American and Russian) male as the archaeologist. Indeed, it is the unfortunate construct of Indiana Jones that embodies for many outside the scholarly world of archaeology exactly who/what an archaeologist does (see for example: Hall 2004). But in Central Asia the term ‘colonial,’ as several contributors point out, has played a diminished role in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods (*“Masters” and “Natives”* 2019: 339). In many ways the practice of archaeology in Central Asia yields a complex yet surprising narrative. Racism is one of the hallmarks linked with colonial archaeology, as pointed out by Arzhantseva and Härke (*“Masters” and “Natives”* 2019: 136), and it certainly continues. But as they also note, a critical difference in colonial archaeology in Central Asia is that the region was often home to scholars and specialists who were political exiles; they note that “Soviet archaeologists from the metropolitan centres were as much victims of the political system as the natives” (*“Masters” and “Natives”* 2019: 136) – although surely the ways in which these two groups experienced the political system was rather different. Moreover, as Arzhantseva and Härke also point out in relation to this Expedition, there is a strong tradition of women archaeologists in Central Asia (*“Masters” and “Natives”* 2019: 153) – a tradition that continues, despite ongoing sexism, today. Soviet era expeditions, most notably the rather well funded Khorezm Expedition with its diverse, interdisciplinary teams working over some six decades, together with its prodigious outputs, continue to have a foundational impact on Central Asian archaeology (see, for example the discussion by Stride, Rondelli et al. 2009). It is therefore important to understand the political, social and intellectual frameworks in which they operated. Many of the points explored in the chapters of *“Masters” and “Natives”* resonate deeply with my own experiences in and knowledge of the region. In this short reflective

piece, I address some of the most prominent issues regarding these inequities based on both my current teaching and research. My discussion focuses on the chapters that pertain specifically to Russian and Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asia – those by Gorsheniina, Arzhantseva and Härke, Genito, and Rapin.

Language, Communication and Publication

One of the most immediately compelling chapters was Rapin's chapter on "Publishing an archaeological discovery astride the north-south divide"; it encapsulates many of the issues that lie behind pulling together an undergraduate course on almost any aspect of Central Asian archaeology. I am especially concerned here with the question of accessibility in the context of teaching and research, and the fostering of the next generation of archaeologists in Central Asia. The digitization of archives and libraries is certainly helping the problem of accessibility to many local and Russian journals.² But language remains a key concern. Language is an issue I have thought deeply about in the context of teaching: specifically, how to offer in a balanced, accessible and stimulating way the works of Soviet and post-Soviet era archaeologists, male and female researchers, as well as those from Russia, Central Asia, and Europe, the US and Australia – and, increasingly, China – to an undergraduate audience in an English speaking context?

Russian has been the primary language of scholarly communication in Central Asia in the modern period. Ultimately, it (and, in my opinion, French) is obligatory for serious research in the archaeology of Central Asia. Many of the foundational texts for the study of Central Asian archaeology are in Russian and only rarely have they been translated (for example *Andrianov* 2016; *Tolstov* 2005). Much critical literature is published in smaller, local journals, such as IMKU – earlier in Russian, but increasingly now in Uzbek. In addition, literature is published in various European languages. Yet, despite the diversity of national teams excavating collaboratively in Uzbekistan, and the generally highly complex linguistic situation in post-colonial Central Asia, English language publications are increasingly encouraged over other languages to ensure a wide readership. Certainly, this situation favours teaching across Euro-American universities, especially at the undergraduate level, but it remains a struggle to ensure that the diverse range of voices that have contributed to Central Asian archaeology are heard. The issue is important because such diverse voices are necessary in order to help overcome

the endemic prejudices that structure academia, and especially the imposed "master" narratives.

There are other concerns around language, which are of course mirrored across the post-colonial landscape. In Central Asia, as the Soviet era fades, and as modern political relations diversify, knowledge of Russian has decreased. Together with an increased push in Uzbekistan for Uzbek language publications and communication as noted above, one wonders how accessible the vast pre-Soviet and Soviet-era literature of Central Asia will be to younger scholars. One of the impacts of the linguistic barrier is the difficulty of attracting students to the serious, long term study of Central Asia. Although English has become hegemonic in elite scholarship across the globe since the mid-twentieth century, there is no easily justified solution to this debate, which must consider a range of voices.

There is another important point to be added regarding language and publications that directly affects scholarship: academic advancement, especially in the US tenure system, requires peer reviewed publications to a degree not yet practiced in Central Asia. As noted by Rapin, the scientific value of many locally published journals is not recognized in the western academic system. This top-down requirement from western academia reinforces the disparity – and clear differences in perceptions of prestige – in scholarly output in Central Asian publications. Unfortunately, this situation can serve as a deterrent to junior and even mid-level scholars to publish in these local journals, despite their intrinsic value in fostering scholarship and debate across the north-south divide. The disparity in scholarly requirements can also hinder collaborative scholarship. Again, this is an issue relevant to many other post-colonial contexts.

Historiography – and Whose Past?

Key to the discussion of "Masters" and "Natives" is the question of how the past is written: how it is accessed, by whom, and for what purposes. Historiography provides another critical structural framework for thinking about Central Asia. Genito notes some of the challenges inherent in the unequal relations engendered by archaeology, including the inability of local inhabitants to better understand their own past if archaeological artefacts are loaned out to western institutions ("Masters" and "Natives": 322) – or at least these pasts as framed by western traditions of archaeology. He advocates for measures to raise awareness of local communities of their past ("Masters" and "Natives": 322). Another important aspect concerns the academic frameworks which are often employed by scholars to think about the past, but which in many ways effectively write out these local perspectives.

² For example the Digital Central Asian Archaeology site: <http://dcaa.hosting.nyu.edu/>; and the recently digitized archive of Galina Pugachenkova: <http://pugachenkova.net/p/eng/>

Two such frameworks come to mind: Area Studies and the Silk Roads system. Area Studies has tended to maintain focus on the powerhouses of the Cold War period: Russia, China, India and Iran. Central Asia is of course centrally situated between these four powerhouses. In historical studies especially, the prioritizing of these ‘centres’ was systematized through a focus on Area Studies, in which modern nation states, and especially powerful nation states and key players in the Cold War, form primary areas of research and publication (Lockman 2016; see also Ludden 2003). As a consequence, Central Asia has remained largely outside the main academic institutional programmes of history that structured Euro-American scholarship (Van Schendel 2002, 648).

The impact of Area Studies on the study of Central Asia in many ways reinforced traditional approaches to the study of the Silk Road, and understandings of the functioning of exchange and migration routes that have structured life in this region over millennia (for discussion see Bentley 2006). As Christian noted, the privileging of textual sources in the study of the Silk Roads resulted in a ‘trans-civilizational’ approach to the past whereby urban centres, and the centres of agricultural empires formed the focus of study (Christian 2000). Research highlighted the cultures of literate societies because the availability of textual sources provides a more immediate means of accessing the past. Yet the tendency to focus on the empires at each fixed end of the exchange – on China and Rome – and the settled urban centres in between, together with more recent interests in comparative studies of empire, has diminished the critical role of mobile populations who have shaped this exchange throughout the history of Central Asia as the guardians and the protagonists of these routes. In the twentieth century the concept of the Silk Road, encompassing elite, long-distance trade of silk, has simultaneously promoted both a blinkered perspective on Central Asia, because it has encouraged an imperial / colonial perspective on this trade; and a predominantly east-west standpoint on history and geography (Rezakhani 2010). This increasingly criticised standpoint denied the region its essential role as a nexus – or a ‘crucible’ as stated by Rezakhani – linking north, south, east and west, and instead rendered it a transitional area in the imperial trade of luxury items (Rezakhani 2010. See also Selbitschka 2018). The traditional narrative of the Silk Road reflects in many ways the “masters” and “natives” theme by placing mobile populations in a subservient position, and by denying them agency.

Local and global – or better, macro and micro – connectivity is an important theme in Central Asia. Ideas of connectivity in the ancient world offer a tangible – and provocative – point of entry to Central Asia in both undergraduate teaching and research.

These local and global pivot points are critical in many ways, even if thanks to the so-called Silk Roads narrative. Recent shifts in research – both in praxis with the turn to archaeo-science (which in many ways provides an intrinsically grass-roots perspective) – and intellectually with the ‘global’ turn – are allowing much greater accessibility to the region, and facilitate deeper understandings across the elite / non-elite divide. The reformulation of the impact of the contested colonial and Soviet pasts on both the development and the historiography of Central Asian archaeology, and the necessity of Central Asian voices in this reformulation, is intrinsic to any discussion of this broad region, as is so clear in the discussions throughout “*Masters*” and “*Natives*”.

Terminology

Linked to the concerns of historiography, but also separate, is the issue of terminology. Genito’ raises some of these issues in relation to the documentation of ‘the other’ from the eighteenth century (“*Masters*” and “*Natives*” 2019: 323). The terminology used in these accounts to document these ‘others’ is of course in relation to difference (from the western observer), and carries with it important overtones whose unacknowledged implications often remain in our own vocabulary. Othering is embodied in academic structures. Gorshenina et al (p. 9) note that “it was out of the question to let the “natives” express themselves freely about their own past and its material remains without imposing on them a European vocabulary and European grids of analysis” in their introduction to the volume. In my own work, I have noted that the traditional Euro-American academic vocabulary can scarcely account for, and is unevenly applied to, for example, the diversity of agro-pastoral lifestyles across Central Asia attributed to the term “nomad”. In fact the imposition of an academic terminology and the constraints of academic disciplines has often served to the detriment of understanding Central Asia at the grass roots. For example, the blurred line between sedentary and mobile lifestyles is reflected materially, in architectural space, and the built environment. The strict division between mobile and sedentary populations has led scholars to link permanent architecture with sedentism but this is not always the case. Three references to housing encapsulate the issue: in the bitter winter of 921-922 CE, in Khorezm, Ibn Fadlan reports sleeping “in a house, inside which was another, inside which was a Turkic felt tent”. Nineteenth century travel accounts describing mobile populations in the region of Khiva clearly link both clay architecture and yurts or tents with mobility. Nikolai Murav’ev reports in 1820-21 that most of the Uzbeks (i.e., the people of Khiva) live in nomadic

houses made out of felt (Russian: *voylok*) and travel all year around. Even rich people who own several houses live in tents (Russian: *kibitka*) because they are used to it. Permanent houses they own are made of clay and do not have any specific architectural features. The houses are cheap and constructed very quickly. Even though such structures are very fragile, due to rare occasions of rain, they can stay for a long time.³ This description is reflected, finally, in Khazanov's observation that "permanent town-dwellers of any origin" in Central Asia use yurts in the summer months to escape the summer heat. This conflation of 'town dwellers' sleeping in yurts, and mobile and immobile architectural spaces, underscores the difficulties of dividing groups practicing different lifestyles into academic terminology. Evolving historical and archaeological/anthropological conceptions of how mobile populations actually lived is expanding academic understandings of these populations, demonstrating that they were often deeply integrated. Local, grass-roots contributions have a critical role to play here in fostering a more inclusive terminology to capture lifestyles.

Conclusion

Archaeology has much to contribute to conversations about inequalities in the structures of knowledge, research, publication and teaching not least because of its ability to incorporate diverse – material and non-material – sources into the understanding of the past. Many of the comments here echo those of the contributors to "Masters" and "Natives" in advocating for Central Asian voices to re-align its past. From a completely different perspective, in the coming years it will be important to have a better understanding of the increasing interest of China and East Asia in Central Asia. Understanding the historiography of the discipline, and the dynamics in which research is carried out, is important because it facilitates a deeper understanding of the dynamics in which historical narratives are developed – trends in academia are always linked with wider geo-politics, after all. The grass roots perspectives on archaeological research in Central Asia provide an important means of accessing and understanding these voices. Rightly or wrongly, the English language medium of "Masters" and "Natives" ensures that this research can be made available to a large, and specific group of students at the undergraduate (and graduate) level. The choice of the language of publication inherently targets an intended audience. More specifically, the work offers a critical springboard to raise awareness of the com-

plexities of 'colonial' archaeology in Central Asia, and to reconsider the deep inequalities in the structures of knowledge, research, and publication of Central Asian archaeology.

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³ Murav'ev, N. (1822), part II, chapter 5: <http://kungrad.com/history/biblio/mur/>

THE DIVERSITY OF APPROACHES ON THE WAY A BALANCE MAY ARISE BETWEEN PARTNERS

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THE BOOK “*Masters*” and “*Natives*”. *Digging the others’ past*, edited by S. Gorshenina, P. Bornet, M.E. Fuchs, and C. Rapin offers a rare and valuable opportunity for collective reflection on the relationships and issues of international cooperation in contemporary world archaeology, particularly between European and extra-European institutions. Although the decolonisation marked a turning point in political cooperation and management of archaeological work carried out by Western archaeologists in ex-colonial countries, nevertheless the ways of working have changed little and inequalities remain.

This contribution rests on my experience as a European female archaeologist working in Central Asia for 15 years, approximately half the amount of time since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Trained by French archaeologists and currently working in Germany, I have also had the chance to spend large blocks of time in Central Asia, where the help of local archaeologists was invaluable in my training. I am currently conducting a research project in partnership with colleagues from Samarkand State University and the Akhmad Donish Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan. I also collaborate on several international projects in Kyrgyzstan, in partnership with Manas University, and in Turkmenistan, in collaboration with the National Administration for the Study, Preservation and Restoration of Historical and Cultural Monuments of Turkmenistan. Although situations vary in the different ex-Soviet countries, I generally agree with the sentiments put forward by the authors of “*Masters*” and “*Natives*”.

First of all, the impact left by the Soviet monopoly on the archaeology of these countries is still clearly visible in various forms (geographic, institutional, linguistic, methodological, technical, and cultural). As recounted by the authors, Soviet archaeology has gone through various phases which have allowed significant progress, but the crisis which marked the end of the Soviet period has also deeply degraded the functioning of local archaeological institutions and reinforced the relations of dependency. As Frantz Fanon⁴ so acutely described, societies liberated from

colonialism emerge emaciated, and time is needed to develop resources and creativity again. It seems to me that Central Asia have passed this window. Colleagues and students are very enthusiastic and willing to acquire new skills for the development of modern archaeological tools and techniques, to integrate into the digital world and to access knowledge. However, the economic, and sometimes administrative, constraints they face are real and strong. The technical and methodological gaps between local and foreign collaborators, brought about by differential access and skill sets, could quickly be bridged particularly by an eager upcoming generation, if the strong obstacles of neo-colonialism can be eliminated. The so-called postcolonial system, based on an inequitable world order with a Western monopoly, is in fact no more favourable than the Soviet system to local archaeologists, nor is it based on an equal collaboration between scientific partners. The economic, financial, cultural, and symbolic domination exercised by Western states and (to a certain extent) by China over the rest of the world is also manifest in archaeology. For instance, it must be recognized that archaeological research in Europe is only carried out by European nations, while a large internationalization is represented in the vast majority of the “Southern” countries that pursue previously established colonial patterns. In addition to the obvious economic and financial domination, it is also necessary to recognize cultural and symbolic domination as well as an old but still very powerful Eurocentrism.⁵ A perhaps trivial but revealing example: it is not uncommon to meet people in Central Asia with knowledge of European history and literature, while Western Europeans’ general knowledge on Central Asia is largely lacking, simply ask them to point out the ex-Soviet states on a world map.

Moreover, contrary to a general anti-imperialist awareness and a reshuffling of the cards at the time of Soviet decolonisation, international scientific cooperation relations are now suffering the harms of an economic ultra-liberalism, which maintains and further increases inequalities between local and foreign collaborators. For instance, it promotes scientific competition between researchers and/or laboratories, in which extra-western terrain tends to become the location of “scientific” confrontation between so-called centers of excellence largely located in the West. Paralleling the issues concerning publications mentioned by C. Rapin, despite the professional and friendly ties built over years between the different partners, international archaeological projects in Central Asia are widely proposed and carried out by researchers based

⁵ Goody, J. (2010). *Le vol de l’histoire. Comment l’Europe a imposé le récit de son passé au reste du monde (The Theft of History)*, Paris, Gallimard.

⁴ Fanon, F. (1961). *Les damnés de la terre*. Paris, François Maspéro.

in one of the major world leading powers (Europe, the United States, China, Japan, etc.), while in Central Asia, there is no money locally to support projects, nor the same possibilities for getting Western funding.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, cultural domination thus seems to have been displaced rather than removed. For example, the predominance of the Russian language has been replaced by that of English, with the dangers of such a new monopoly presented in the article by C. Rapin. Though the younger generation of archaeologists have now more educational opportunities in English, it is obvious that language learning remains an obstacle to the global visibility of results and to the impact of various scientific points of view. The academic uniformity imposed by the Western world also moulds minds and formats careers, simultaneously inhibiting the freedom, diversity and (re)construction of local archaeologies.

The linguistic question is particularly relevant for the advancement of knowledge and raising the quality of research. On one hand, the diffusion of information is now worldwide enlarged thanks to open social networks. Concerning my own research topic of the Bronze Age Oxus Civilization, it is only recently that knowledge of this major cultural entity, which was discovered more than 50 years ago and followed social processes similar to those well-known from Mesopotamia, has spread to general audiences outside Central Asia itself. Only this year (2020) has a detailed English-language, book-length synthesis specifically dedicated to this culture appeared,⁶ addressing various archaeological points and referring to data available only in Russian; previous treatments were often integrated into volumes dealing with specific cultural aspects (art), a larger geographic or chronological frame. Yet, on the other hand, there remains a risk of seeing the linguistic gap widen over time. It is not uncommon to see data or theories previously advanced by Russian-speaking archaeologists resurface in English-language writings with little or no mention of the Russian literature. This probably has several causes: the difficulty of access to much of the Russian literature, a lack of language training, an indifference for or bias against older publications, and the race for publications that often curtails the necessarily long engagement with previous data. It is therefore important to make the results of international projects accessible to all. In this regard, we can congratulate the efforts of several researchers including V.I. Sarianidi, who published several works reporting the results of his excavations at Gonur Depe in three languages (Turkmen, Russian and English), and N.A.

Avanesova, who translated her book devoted to the excavations at Bustan into English. Notwithstanding the extra costs and time, these initiatives would be most welcome in the reciprocal for Western publications.

Even if the perpetuation of asymmetrical patterns in cooperative relations is related to a past for which we are not directly responsible, it is also largely part of the contemporary economic and political system in which we now operate. As promoted by B. Genito in the book, something will have to change to overcome these imbalances. It is indeed high time to ask ourselves when it will be permitted and possible, for Central Asians to individually and collectively appropriate the means of local archaeology by acquiring full independence, and for Westerners, to renounce their interests and privileges based on asymmetric relationships.

This is all the more urgent when the dominant model of economic development encourages the disengagement of governments and the shrinking of public funds toward various fundamental research projects (that were formally considered key national symbols of prestige and cultural influence). Such a trend largely threatens international collaborations and research independence. For instance, national research centers abroad, such as the French Institute for Central Asian Studies with which I was affiliated during my doctoral research, are places of meeting and exchanges between international researchers and principal nodes for multilateral links. The disappearance or reduction of such centers, for political and financial reasons, is undoubtedly a great damage to the development of dialogue and the promotion of international cooperation.

We all, local and foreign, have an important role as initiators and actors of reflections and solutions for the future. They must be necessarily engaged by the locals to develop an essential economic and scientific independence making it possible to assert their role in the conduct of projects and the writing of history, while avoiding the temptation of a nationalist withdrawal which is always done at the expense of science. This evolution also involves defending and acting for an ideological turning point and a major change in economic models on the part of Western powers, leaving equal space and means for various cultural constructions and identities. It is from the diversity of approaches that a balance may arise between different partners, reflecting the plurality of the world and the wealth of a “global” history.⁷

⁶ Lyonnet, B. and N. Dubova (Eds.) (2020). *The World of the Oxus Civilization*. London, Routledge.

⁷ Chakrabarty, D. (2000). *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

SOME REMARKS ON THE MARGINS OF THE BOOK

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THE BOOK offers valuable insights and sometimes colorful comments on the development of archaeology in countries which embrace monuments of ancient civilizations from Greece to India. For reasons of interest I focus on selected articles.

A typical case of an amateur archaeologist in dependent and colonized countries is described in an article by Karl Reber on the “Theft” of the Eleusinian “Goddess” by E.D. Clarke in Eleusis near Athens in 1801. With the permission of the Turkish governor of Athens, Clarke brought the “Eleusinian” Goddess to England where it is still part of the collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge. Its acquisition was made against the will of the Greeks from Eleusis who venerated the image as that of Saint Dimitra. Karl Reber points out the “English masters”, but here it is about Clarke’s cooperation with Turkish “masters” - the Ottoman officials.

Irina Arzhantseva and Heinrich Härke devoted a chapter to the figure of Sergei P. Tolstov (1907-1976), the famous archaeologist known for his discoveries in Khorezm and the adjacent regions (“The General and his Army”: *Metropolitans and Locals on the Khorezmian Expedition*). With the consent and support of Stalin’s regime, Tolstov established the Khorezmian Expedition of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR which worked in Central Asia from 1937 to 1991. The countries of Central Asia were heavily devastated and their population decimated by the terror of the Bolshevik Revolution and the war of resistance conducted by native peoples. Then came the terror of Stalin’s times. Under such circumstances, S.P. Tolstov began his career as a major figure of Central Asian archaeology in 1937. Without losing sight of Tolstov’s political entanglements, we must admit that he did a lot for the archaeology of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and partly of Kazakhstan, and also created promotion opportunities for local researchers. The authors rightly state that “the Khorezmian expedition became a pathway for Central Asian students into the upper ranks of Soviet archaeology, either directly by working on the expedition, or by encouragement from Tolstov to attend academic institutions in the centres. This aspect was instrumental in creating the foundations of a Central Asian school of Soviet,

and ultimately post-Soviet, archaeology.” One of such cases was Khemra Yusupov (1932-2018), a Turkmen archaeologist, not named in the study. Almost absent from the book is Vadim N. Yagodin (1936-2015), linked to Nukus and the archeology of Karakalpakstan (one of his achievements is the excavations of the the Mizdahkan cemetery). He started his fieldwork in the Tolstov’s expedition. The authors explain that “quite a few Russian and Ukrainian historians, antiquarians, and archaeologists who were active in Central Asia had been exiled there by the Soviet regime for political reasons.” By and large, while the activities and agenda of the Khorezmian Expedition showed features of a “colonial” pattern, it was instrumental in the establishment of national schools of archaeology and ethnography in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan. It may be added here that there was a kind of rivalry between the Tolstov’s school and the circle around M.E. Masson (1897-1986) who, based first in Samarkand and then in Tashkent, played a decisive role in the development of archaeology of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, just like his (second) wife, Galina A. Pugachenkova (1915-2007), and son Vadim M. Masson (1929-2010). M.E. Masson and G.A. Pugachenkova were, in turn, the masters of E.V. Rtveladze.

Claude Rapin addresses the topic “Publishing an Archaeological Discovery astride the ‘North’-‘South’ Divide (On an Example from Central Asia)”. He demonstrates problems with publishing research results in Uzbekistan in the Soviet period. Currently there are new difficulties and obstacles in the circulation of scholarly information, created by western corporations, which are willing to consume scientific publications dealing with the archaeology of Central Asia, but lock them up in paid systems. Rapin stresses the significance of a decision by Paul Bernard who decided to hand over all the artifacts discovered at Ai Khanoum to Afghan museums, thus “abandoning earlier practices that, for the Begram treasure for example, reserved half of the discoveries to French property.”

Svetlana Gorshenina addresses the issue of “Russian Archaeologists, Colonial Administrators, and the ‘Natives’ of Turkestan: Revisiting the History of Archaeology in Central Asia.” She stresses that the first European or Russian scholars and explorers in Central Asia were not able to carry out any studies of old sites and monuments without the help of local guides. According to her, “local scholars appropriated Western approaches to patrimonialization while denigrating the attitude of their own Central-Asiatic milieu towards the past.”

Agnès Borde Meyer offers an overview of the developments of archaeology in Iran and Afghanistan (“From Supervision to Independence in Archaeology

⁶ *Lyonnet B. and Dubova N. (ed.), The World of the Oxus Civilization, London, Routledge, 2020.*

gy: The Comparison of the Iranian and the Afghan Strategy”). The author provides many interesting details on the interplays between academic circles in Iran and Afghanistan, and respective policies of western powers. The author states that “Iran used its capacities of negotiation to build an ultra-nationalist archaeology”. The term “ultra-nationalist” is quite odd in this context which deals with Iranian efforts to create an effective system of protecting cultural heritage. The first European organizer of institutional archaeology in Iran was E. Herzfeld (in the 1920s). Afghanistan is ascribed a policy “to consider archaeology an international affair and to widen its institutional and scientific network”.

Bruno Genito devoted his article to the archaeology developments in Iran and Central Asia (“Excavating in Iran and Central Asia: Cooperation or Competition?”). In his article, the term “nationalism” is repeatedly used. In Genito’s view, nationalism, colonialism, and archaeology have long been in close relationship. The native archaeology in Iran experienced a crisis in the 1980s, due to the sudden break with western scholars and other priorities of the new state. In 1985, the Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization (ICHO) was founded which embraced archaeological sites and research activities in Iran.

In recent decades, cooperation with scholars from Europe has been revived. Concerning Soviet Central Asia, Genito rightly points to the rivalry and lack of collaboration during the Soviet era between the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow and the branch of the Institute in Leningrad, as well as their partners and collaborators in Central Asia.

Thierry Luginbühl demonstrates a “Role Reversal: Hindu ‘Ethno-Expertise’ of Western Archaeological Materials”. The University of Lausanne has organized “ethnoarchaeological research programs” in Nepal and Northern India with the aim of documenting various religious, craft, and domestic phenomena. According to the author, this research develops “a new approach described as ‘ethno-expertise.’” This consists of presenting archaeological documents to native “specialists”, for example to “Brahmin priests for religious questions or to traditional potters for questions about pottery.”

Overall, the book reveals important stages in the developments of archaeology in Asia. At the same time, it demonstrates how some clichés have been used referring to both the developments of local schools of archaeology and national archaeological systems of protection, and Western approaches to archaeology.

THE LANGUAGES OF CENTRAL ASIAN ARCHAEOLOGY

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I WOULD like to offer some thoughts and reflections on Claude Rapin’s valuable discussion in this volume about the employment and hierarchy of various languages in Central Asian archaeology.⁸

Rapin rightly alerts us to the dangers of the increasing domination of English. In this sense, Central Asian archaeology is part of the global change affecting all the humanities (in the natural and exact sciences, it seems that English has already eliminated all other languages, rendering this debate irrelevant). It is equally true that we can often observe the unfortunate tendency to rely on English summaries instead of original publications in other languages, which also characterizes many areas of the Humanities. Perhaps the example that Rapin chooses in order to illustrate this issue is not the most successful one, since the language hierarchy does not seem to be the cause of disagreement between himself and Edward Rtveldze and Jeffrey Lerner over the ancient name of Ai Khanum (“Masters” and “Natives”: 342-343). Still, I agree with Rapin that “...one would immediately note the pre-eminence of a unique Western language for the most diffused publications, despite the fact that their quality should not be systematically considered as superior to that of “Eastern” publications” (“Masters” and “Natives,” 344). I would stress it even more; not only are the publications in Russian often “superior,” they are in fact essential for Central Asian archaeology, and a lack of knowledge of Russian most often results in constructing an incomplete and defective picture of the studied problem. As an example, we can take the debate over the nomadic origin of the Parthian Arsacids (247 BCE – 224 CE), the longest-ruling dynasty in Iranian history and the creators of one of the greatest empires in the ancient world, one that rivalled Rome. As argued by Valery Nikonorov, those Western scholars who downplay the presence and the

⁸ Rapin, C. (2019), *Publishing an Archaeological Discovery astride the ‘North’-‘South’ Divide (On an Example from Central Asia)*, in Gorshenina, S. et al. (eds.), “Masters” and “Natives”. *Digging the Others’ Past*, pp. 336-360.

Nikonorov, V. (2010), *K voprosu o vklade kochevnikov tsentralnoi Azii v voennit delo antichnoi tsivilizatsii: na primere Irana (On the question of the contribution of the nomads of Central Asia to the military affairs of ancient civilization: on the example of Iran)*, in: *Rol’ nomadov evraziiskh stepey v razvitii mirovogo voennjogo iskwsstva, Nauchnye chteniya pamyati N.E. Masanova (The Role of Nomads of the Eurasian steppes in the Development of World Military Art. Scientific Readings in Memory of N.E. Masanov)*. Almaty, p. 45.

importance of nomadic elements and their influence on Parthian culture, probably do so because they are unfamiliar with the results of the archaeological investigations in the Parthian homeland (in modern Turkmenistan), which are published in Russian.⁹

In their introduction to the volume, the editors write that Rapin's article shows that "unequal relations were (and are still) perpetuated in scientific publications. New studies that are considered 'valuable' are essentially redacted by reference to Western publications, leaving works published 'on-site', in vernacular languages, largely outside of the sphere of analysis" ("*Masters*" and "*Natives*," 13). This problem is also not unique to Central Asian archaeology, but rather pertains to the academic world in general and its current evaluation system. However, for professionals, no publication on the archaeology of the former Soviet Central Asia can be considered serious and "valuable," if it does not take into account relevant studies in Russian.

The basic and the most important "raw material" of every archaeologist is excavation reports. If one wants to conduct meaningful and professional research, there can be no alternative but to work with these reports in whatever language(s) they are published. Summaries in English cannot fully reproduce the wealth of information contained in them. These summaries can be sufficient in some cases for scholars working in other fields, but not for the specialists of Central Asian archaeology themselves. The majority of the publications of excavations results in the Central Asian republics, both preliminary and final, still appear in Russian (in addition to the most welcome trend of a steadily growing number of publications in Central Asian national languages) and this will undoubtedly remain the case for the years to come. Moreover, despite any possible developments in the future, fundamental Soviet publications will obviously not be translated into English, and thus, Russian will always remain *the* essential language for anyone willing to engage in an in-depth and direct study of Central Asian archaeology. Russian is the language that all Central Asian archaeologists, regardless of their affiliation and origin, must be able to read. It is also the *lingua franca* of the field, since many scholars from the Central Asian republics, especially from the older generation, do not have a good command of English. Moreover, Russian is the exclusive language of communication between the scholars from Central Asian republics themselves. One of the main reasons why the Uzbek-French archaeological Missions – MAFOuz – were so successful and the French school of Central Asian archaeology is rightly considered the leading one in the West, is that the French archaeologists always had a command of Russian. The standing and the achievements of the French school also mean

that in addition to Russian and English, French is indispensable for many periods, such as the Hellenistic and Sogdian ones. Ideally, a scholar of Central Asian archaeology should also possess a reading knowledge of a state language of the Republic that he/she is working in, since more and more preliminary excavation reports and articles appear in local journals in Tajik, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kazakh or Turkmen.

However, there is no doubt, that in order to achieve a higher visibility of ancient Central Asia among specialists of other areas, to make the latter conscious of the region and to include our findings in their research, we must publish in English. Since independence, a growing number of bilingual or trilingual publications have begun appearing in the Central Asian Republics. This is a welcome trend, since it has the potential to reach a wider audience, but this does not always seem justified. One often gets the feeling that the English translations for some of these publications are done purely for the sake of "prestige." They are difficult to read and understand, rendering them practically useless. The wider visibility of Central Asian archaeology will be achieved not by simply producing more texts in English, but by producing more original and good texts in good English.

Rapin indeed dedicates several pages in his article to the inadequate level of many publications ("*Masters*" and "*Natives*," 350-353). In contrast with the Soviet period, when the publishing opportunities were limited and strongly regulated, today there are many options and places in which to publish one's research. In theory, today every scholar with internet access can submit his/her work to any journal in the world, while platforms like academia.edu allow everybody to share their work. In practice, however, Central Asian scholars face numerous difficulties, which significantly hinder their ability to benefit from the new "digital world" ("*Masters*" and "*Natives*," pp. 353-354).

In my opinion, an important aspect of the above-mentioned problems is that Central Asian archaeology lacks a specialized, authoritative journal that would define the field and establish it as an area of research in its own right. As Rapin observes, "topics such as the Hellenistic studies of Central Asia are less favoured because they are scattered in types of publications too varied to give a satisfactory overview of their production and therefore lack visibility" ("*Masters*" and "*Natives*," 342). The closest to such a journal was *Silk Road Art and Archaeology: Journal of the Institute of Silk Road Studies*, whose publication was regrettably discontinued after just 10 volumes, but

⁹ Rapin, C. (2019), "Publishing an Archaeological Discovery astride the 'North'-'South' Divide (On an Example from Central Asia)", in Gorshenina, S. et al. (eds.), *Masters and Natives: Digging the Others' Past*, Berlin, 336-360.

the articles that they contain remain among the most cited and influential in the field. Perhaps, it is time to establish a flagship international journal dedicated to Central Asian Archaeology that would provide a suitable platform for the publication of new fieldwork and research. I think that this would contribute to the consolidation of the field, its visibility, and to the setting of the highest academic standards. In order to ensure that the articles meet these standards, the editorial board should consist of leading Central Asian, Russian and Western specialists. I suggest that the journal would publish articles in English, Russian and French.

For the professional meetings and verbal communications, the recent conference *Cultures in Contact: Central Asia as Focus of Trade, Cultural Exchange and Knowledge Transmission*, organized by the University of Bern and The Society for the Exploration of EurAsia in Switzerland in February 2020 (in which Rapin also participated), may serve as an example of successful coping with the language obstacles. The simultaneous Russian-English and English-Russian translation provided with the support of IICAS, allowed every participant of the conference to follow the presentations in both languages and to participate in the discussions in real time.

The visibility of our field also depends on larger global trends. If the political, economic and cultural importance of the Central Asian region continues to increase in the future, one can certainly expect also the growth of interest in Central Asian archaeology and cultural heritage. As an example of a project currently contributing to this task, we can cite the “Cultural Legacy of Uzbekistan in the World Collections” (<https://legacy.uz/en/>).

Our duty as scholars is to promote the region and the discipline among the academic and non-academic public, to train more brilliant students and to strive to establish more academic programs, fellowships and positions in the field of Central Asian archaeology. The priority for the collaboration between Western, Russian and Central Asian scholars and institutions should be investment in people. Here again, MAFOuz has led the way and set an example that should be followed by other international projects and expeditions. We cannot hope for a major change to various disadvantages faced by scholars from Central Asia, until the profession of archaeologist becomes attractive again for young people in the Central Asian countries (both in terms of salary and prestige). For-

tunately, some countries are already taking steps in this direction, and all people with an interest in the archaeology of Central Asia and a passion for its rich ancient heritage, should join forces in order to improve the situation described by Rapin’s timely contribution.

ASIA ISN’T WHAT IT USED TO BE

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IT WAS WITH great pleasure and, ironically, in the perfect circumstances for pondering its contents, that I have received a copy of this book during my Covid-related quarantine period in Moscow. As an Italian archaeologist active in the field mainly in Uzbekistan, member of a joint Karakalpak-Australian expedition (Nukus and Sydney), but currently working in Russia, I thought it appropriate to begin this short note with this modest autobiographical annotation, as I could myself might be considered as a good example of how much Central Asia has changed in the last decades, and of how the already international scientific and collective endeavour which is archaeological research (involving “locals and metropolitans”, to employ an apt expression used by Irina Arzhantseva and Heinrich Härke in the book) has generally increased further its degree of “internationalization.” The most obvious reason for this change is the demise of the USSR. On the one hand, this ended the extensive Soviet ventures in the area and allowed the establishment of new joint projects (there had been a few exceptions of Soviet-European cooperation starting in the 1980s, see Claude Rapin’s article in the book). On the other hand, it caused a fragmentation of field activities, with local and international teams often forced to operate on much reduced scales, with more limited means than in the past, with more deontological dilemmas to work with (and rightly so) and lacking the same level of coordination or dialogue with each other, sometimes not even sharing the same excavation methodology (but I will not digress on this point).

As Claude Rapin rightly underlined in his contribution, economic development is the dividing line between the so-called First World (a term that accordingly changed its original definition) and those countries living in their post-Soviet and post-colonialist eras. Therefore, researchers involved in joint-projects in which “western” institutions are peers of the host

⁹ Никонов В.П. К вопросу о вкладе кочевников Центральной Азии в военное дело античной цивилизации (на примере Ирана) // Роль кочевников евразийских степей в развитии мирового военного искусства. Научные чтения памяти Н. Э. Масанова: Сб. материалов междунауч. конф. Алматы: 2010.

bodies, have the responsibility of fully comprehending, and somehow adapting, to the situations of their colleagues who have different possibilities for gaining access to resources that researchers take for granted, for instance, in Europe. The language barrier and lack of infrastructures (which cause difficulties in gaining access to the web, make research materials unavailable etc.) are sometimes what an archaeologist from the west might see as personal anachronistic romantic challenges while, in truth, they are obstacles to achievement and reveal current structural differences among colleagues from the so-called First World and the others. Most of these factors do not depend on, and may be only slightly influenced by, (sometimes underfunded) archaeological expeditions. Joint projects, however, are still very positive, highly informative, cooperative experiences. They offer a chance not only for study but also for the transfer of knowledge and skills between partners, facilitating those from a less advantageous economic context to access material and know-hows (both technological and academic) that might otherwise be difficult for them to get at home. In addition, a young student of archaeology will always, as I did myself many years ago in Pompeii, greatly benefit from the contact with foreign colleagues from different backgrounds, while a country which used to be a “source country” such as Italy (as noted in the contribution by Luca M. Olivieri), “has afterwards always been the subject of various foreign archaeological activities” (Bruno Genito) and, I may add, that it is now unimaginable without them, free from any nationalistic agenda. That is the first thing which came to my mind in reading the subtitle of the book, “digging the others’ past”: even though what the editors here wanted to express is clear, that is, a criticism of appropriation, I wondered about the definition of the term *others’ past*; it is difficult to contemplate the expression without slipping into a nationalistic perception of it.

There are two subjects that, in my opinion, could have fit in very well with the various themes discussed in the volume and would further expand the preeminently historiographical approach of the discussion to the point of actuality. One is the current effect of the demand for artifacts by the “First World”, which is a major cause of the utter destruction of heritages in countries already scourged by humanitarian catastrophes (but not only, and again Italy is unfortunately one “source country”). The second is the highly debated issue of the restitution for pillaged objects and monuments. It comes to mind, especially in this period of renewed debate about symbols related to co-

lonialism and slavery, the case of the Stele of Axum, once a dictator’s trophy in Rome, given back to Ethiopia in 2005. If the latter subject is probably too vast (and perhaps of marginal impact in the former Soviet Republics) and involves archaeologists more generally as individuals and members of a community, the former is, in my opinion, something that we should deal with more, since quite relevant to archaeology and its ethics. This theme might be one to choose for an ensuing second volume, pursuing further the interesting discussion, because it is an element of the relations between economically advanced parts of the world and the *others* that are still under development for reasons including the interference of the former (or newly aspiring) “masters”. Even today, some scholars seem not to care much about the provenance of a *beautiful piece* that would be good to publish or exhibit, although all scholars are fully aware that the item has entirely lost its context or, in other words, most of its historical importance. The archaeological context, the site, has quite probably been badly damaged or even destroyed during the looting process by individuals actually *digging their own past*, albeit for the wrong reasons, which are too often driven by external demand. If the scale of looting has much increased in the recent decades (this issue is not, of course, a recent phenomenon [see, e.g., L.M. Olivieri in this book] but its dimension has become global in/as our times), it is evident that such “work” as a source of revenue for “natives” in economically disadvantaged countries is another effect of “post-colonialist” exploitation (or, in the case of Daesh, of opportunistic vandalism in violently subjugated territories or, in the case of Italy, of sheer trafficking).

The book presents an array of contributions, including very insightful narrations done by scholars directly involved with, or with an expertise in, the history of some of the major archaeological expeditions of the twentieth century in western and eastern Asia. These were not only of the “colonial type” but were, especially after World War II, also examples of alternative patterns of cooperation between equal nations. Some of them are still continuing, a fact that marks their scientific and diplomatic success to this day. The critique approach chosen by the book’s editors, beyond the usual tales about the history of archaeology, has to be praised. It delivers a fresh account of archaeological ethics and the developments in and influences of “western” archaeological exploration and organization on Asian countries that were formerly haughtily identified as “natives”, addressing the politics that emerged in this relation.

**EXPLORING CENTRAL ASIA
WITH THE LOCALS:
MAURIZIO TOSI
IN TURKMENISTAN
AND UZBEKISTAN**

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PRIMARILY one “quote”: “Central Asia is one of the worst places to live on the entire planet, because of its climate, the environment, the beasts! But its locals... locals of the glorious past and charming present, with their genius, intelligence and incredible dexterity, have turned it into gold and honey. I don't like to stay in Central Asia, but I love to stay with its locals” we don't know exactly if Maurizio Tosi, a worldwide recognized “Master” in Central Asian Archaeology, said these words but something similar was in his heart.

Maurizio was our teacher at the university and during our first field training experiences. In a way he was also a friend and even much more. We met him in the mid-90's when he had the Chair of Palaeoethnology at the University of Bologna, including the Campus in Ravenna where he spent most of his time since 1999. Most people who met Maurizio were struck by his boundless energy and charisma and we were no exception. Central Asian archaeologists, historians, drivers, workers, and anyone who descended from the great tribal and military leaders Genghis Khan and Tamerlane, were fascinated by this “giant of archaeology”.¹⁰ His exceptional scientific mind and curiosity led him through the remote lands of America, Asia, Arabia and India to follow a truly unique career, a tapestry of work, love affairs and politics, which became such an inextricable tangle that even his closest friends were hard put to extricate themselves from it.

Both in Turkmenistan, visiting the Meana-Chaacha region and Altyn-depe or Ilgynly-depe and in Margiana, and travelling along the Middle Zeravshan Valley from Sarazm (Tajikistan) to Samarkand and

further West in the Kyzyl Kum desert, the locals had the opportunity to appreciate Maurizio Tosi's “unofficial lectures” on many topics, either his scientific or his personal view of the world. He always enriched these conversations with his deep knowledge of the specific territory he was investigating and Central Asian culture in general. Like a detective, Maurizio was used to considering very carefully every evidence, detail, and whatever information could add some illuminating and unexpected result to the research process. He was always ready to share discoveries and new information with those who were by his side, regardless of whether it was the Dean of the University in Ashgabad or Samarqand, the Director of the Institute of Archaeology of Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan or just a local student or car driver. This is why locals were so fascinated by the intellectual dynamism of Maurizio. For many years, a photo of Maurizio was on the wall of the corridor of the Institute of Archaeology in Samarkand together with a few other famous archaeologists, like Carl Lamberg-Karlovsky, James Mellaart and Ahmad Hassan Dani.

His multi-interdisciplinary methodological approach to problems of the past was enriched by a formidable knowledge of ancient and modern history of those countries where he worked. Everyone had the impression that he knew much more than anyone else, even the local historians and archaeologists who had studied and worked on certain sites and topics for decades. They were immediately impressed by his ability to engage with a wide range of both archaeological topics as well as the latest concepts, both theoretical and methodological, from a range of other disciplines.

Local scholars immediately recognized and appreciated not only his skill and scientific value, but also his immense humanity despite his often strong and unfriendly personality. As Maurizio stressed several times, the beginning of his most important expeditions in Central Asia must be seen in the strong and deep-rooted friendship with local people such as Timur Shirinov, archaeologist and Director of the Institute of Archaeology, in Samarkand (Uzbekistan; now Samarkand Institute of Archaeology of the National Center of Archaeology, Uzbek Academy of Sciences); Vyacheslav Moshkalo, a Russian philologist, who worked in Margiana in the early nineties, and Meret Orazov, former Rector of the Turkmen State University and then Ambassador of Turkmenistan in the US. Sometimes, we ourselves have questioned whether the research campaigns in Central Asia were organized to spend time with old friends and col-

¹⁰ Frenez, D. (2017). In *Memoriam. Maurizio Tosi, 1944-2017*, in: *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 47: xxiii.

leagues rather than searching for traces of the human past in those regions.

As frequently happened in Italy, conversations concerning Central Asia with Maurizio took place in the most varied locations, such as among the watermelons and beside the butcher in the bazaar, the waiting rooms of doctors, or inside the airports during the endless wait for flights that are usually at a very inconvenient times in Ashgabat and Tashkent. One never forgets the time that Maurizio spoke at length about the construction of the Karakum canal with the secretary of the Faculty of History of the Turkmen State University, Mrs. Tatyana, inside the waiting room of his dentist.

Maurizio's relationship with the telephone, not only Central Asia, is also an interesting chapter of his life. His apparent hatred of the phone was proportionate to his need for it. He made a limitless use of it to reach those he sought. However, phone lines in Central Asia were not always functioning or as fast as he desired so that he was forced to sit and wait at the communication office. One day the wait exceeded expectations at the Ashgabat Post and Telegraph Office but he could not allow his colleagues in Ashgabat to skip dinner. He therefore asked the restaurant nearby to arrange a table and five chairs in the waiting room of the Post and Telegraph Office. Typical "shashlik" meat skewers, vegetables, "lavash" bread, and black and green tea arrived shortly afterwards. As usual, the office worker was also invited. Dinner ended around eleven in the warm night of Ashgabat and after a while communications was re-established – exactly when at dinnertime in Italy.

Maurizio always appreciated the flavours and tastes of the Central Asian cuisine and encouraged his local colleagues with words of praise concerning certain traditional dishes and food such as "plov", pigeons, vegetable soup, honey, and even the small cheese ball "kurt," in an attempt to further improve and make the dishes as if to make them on the level of a five-star restaurant. When a colleague invited Maurizio to their home, he always went to the bazaar to buy gifts and food for the whole family, from smallest children to elderly members of the family. When delivering the gifts, he always generously dispensed advice and recommendations on the best ways to cook food in the western manner. At the same time, he was clearly aware that he did not have the same knowledge regarding the cooking techniques of lamb, goat meat or bull testicles.

Maurizio Tosi must be credited with the merit of having aroused interest towards archaeological

and historical contexts little known to date. After the time of the interdisciplinary expeditions promoted by the Soviet regime in Khorezm and Turkmenia in the middle of the 20th century, Tosi launched vast regional projects and introduced the information technology to archaeology in such a crucial region of the ancient East.¹¹ The expeditions he directed in Margiana and Samarkand involved hundreds of people, including scholars, researchers, students, drivers, cooks, workers, etc. He brought with him his vast experience achieved in the previous decades in Arabia and Iran. Although Maurizio's main research involved the societies of prehistory, his approach covered a wide range of interests. Emblematic in this sense is the site of Kafir Kala, near Samarkand. The first excavations in the early 90's by the Institute of Archaeology of Samarkand already revealed the existence of an important pre-Islamic/early Islamic settlement. However, Maurizio intuitively recognised the great importance and the potentiality of Kafir Kala in connection with the Islamic conquest of Samarkand in the early 8th century. Explaining the site and the excavation of Kafir Kala to either local people or the scientific community, Tosi emphasized every aspect of the research as he was a specialist of that field.

The "Master" Maurizio Tosi had the ability to think ahead, and to understand the importance of certain places as well as certain events before others did. In the same way, he understood that some scholars and students could have an important role in archaeological research. Nevertheless, he was always ready give words of appreciation, affection, consideration, and thanks for the help of all whether they were local scholars or simply workers. In the same way, Maurizio never denied anyone the opportunity to participate in his research projects and, above all, to pursue their dreams.

Maurizio loved Central Asia and everything about it. He felt like a child when in front of ancient maps and reading chronicles of travelers who crossed the desert, the fertile valleys and the steppe of this remote region. During his first seasons in Uzbekistan, Maurizio spent a long time in search of books concerning Central Asia in the areas of history, archaeology, geography, nature, etc. The amount of books acquired by the Uzbek-Italian expedition amounted to 1,500

¹¹ Mantellini, S. (2018). *Landscape Archaeology and Irrigation Systems in Central Asia: A View from Samarkand (Uzbekistan)*, in: D. Domenici, N. Marchetti (Eds.), *Urbanized Landscapes in Early Syro-Mesopotamia and Prehispanic Mesoamerica. Papers of a Cross-Cultural Seminar held in Honor of Robert McCormick Adams*. Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz Verlag, p. 173.



Maurizio Tosi drinking tea on the road to Sazagan, near Samarkand (2007)

volumes, which were donated to the Samarkand Institute of Archaeology, NCA. Together with the present and former directors of the Institute, Dr. Farhod Maksudov and Amriddin Berdimuradov, it has been decided to include the volumes in the newly established “Maurizio Tosi Library” inaugurated last year.

Anecdotes on Maurizio are countless. And, honestly, some of them are better not being reported here. Experiences involving Maurizio are so many that they cannot be recalled in a short period of time. However, even some situations that happened two decades ago can be recalled as if it was yesterday. Although selective and incomplete, all these accounts highlight the genuine attitude and generous behaviour of the “Master” Tosi toward the “local” Central Asian archaeologists (and friends). Listening to his worldwide experiences and travel stories (be they on Samarkand,

the foothills north of the Kopet Dag, the Zeravshan valley or the sand dunes of the Karakum and Kyzylkum) immediately stirred a longing to go there and get busy so as not to miss the opportunity of a profound journey. We have studied, worked and traveled with Maurizio along with shielding ourselves from his desire to “be” the journey in and of itself, and we believe we have learned to travel minding our own business alongside him.

This is, very briefly, the story of Maurizio Tosi. Nothing was “normal” in Maurizio’s daily life according to the common standard. But, he would have argued about this, wondering what is “normal,” or “common,” without easily accepting any given assumption. Although his life was marked by extremes, he taught us that never life is never “black” or “white” and we must investigate every shade in between.

PERSPECTIVES

**ON THE EAST AFTER
ALEXANDER THE GREAT**

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ONE OF THE most compelling historical periods is certainly the one that follows the conquest of Alexander the Great in the eastern regions. In its gestation phase (6th century), Greek civilization took a great deal from Egypt and the Near East. Subsequently, especially after 330 BC, an inverse phenomenon occurs that sees Greece imprinting a strong cultural influence first of all on Anatolia, Phoenicia, Egypt, Persia, and secondly on Mesopotamia and Central Asia.

However, in contact with the strong local traditions of the East, this “cultural influence” is transformed and deepened by creating new artistic languages, respecting local traditions, religions, and ideologies; a process that will last for a millennium in Syria and Central Asia up to India. This phenomenon is, therefore, not to be read as the outcome of the imposition of the civilization of the winners (as once maybe read, according to the “Mediterranean or western” point of view). However, it must be admitted that the miracle performed by Hellenistic greek art in the eastern territories was to open up to a fertile dialogue, knowing how to satisfy the needs of other cultures and civilizations, as well as one’s own (A. Invernizzi).

Further on, it is also necessary not to forget the local and specific aptitude to actively re-elaborate this new artistic language. A language that, understood as an expressive means of the (new) dominant groups, will be used by Parthians, Sakas, and Kushans to express their new political prestige, identity, and their forms of religiousness.

Having abandoned the initial colonialist point of view with the division between civilized centers (i.e. colonies) and the barbarian periphery, we have more recently focused on a multicultural mosaic made up of interconnected elements. Reciprocal and alternating influences (*cultural transfers*) have been in these last decades at the center of a large series of studies, aimed at understanding the role of material culture in this process of “acculturation”.

And, it is often said that the Macedonian conquest (especially during the Seleucid and Lagidian kingdoms) led to a general phenomenon of *acculturation*, manifested through the sharing of a cultural *koinè* (P. Leriche). “*Acculturation*” is a post-colonial concept, not yet completely neutral as it still implies the superiority of one culture over the other in a unidirectional sense (therefore, a diffusionist dynamic). At the same time, the concept of “*Hellenization*” remains questionable today, at least for some regions of the ecumene. The notion of *Orient hellénisé* coined by D. Schlumberger, in one of his masterly essays, functioned in grouping and replacing problematic definitions such as “Greco-Roman art”, “Greco-Buddhist art”, “Roman-Buddhist art”, “Gandhara art”, “Parthian art”, etc ... This great scholar invited us to abandon the historiographic perspective of a Macedonian conquest seen as an “ephemeral overflow of the civilized world”, but he did also underline the indisputable personality and originality of this important phenomenon called “non-Mediterranean Hellenism” (note: with a double reference, once again, to the western world).

The most recent studies aim to start from new perspectives: the first is that of the very strong connectivity that, since the Bronze Age, has linked the Near East and Central Asia to the Mediterranean. The cultural dynamics, in this perspective, must be studied starting from these millennial contacts and connections, rather than from the historical point of view of a “conquest” (both military and cultural).

The second point (as M.J. Versluys recently stated) is the proposal to abandon the concept of “acculturation”, which presupposes those of “*Self*” and “*Other*”: both cultural categories that could not always (especially for the late Hellenistic era) be “*oppositional*” one to each other. Furthermore, the concept of acculturation, starting from the assumption that a certain style/type is characteristic of a specific culture/group and therefore that there is a style-ethnicity or style-identity link, today is no longer considered reliable in the study of the material culture.

The suggested line of research, for years now, is therefore not to investigate the artistic and architectural results of the colonizers (rulers or “masters”), but rather the outcome of interconnections and intercultural exchanges, whose factors (local or external) have equal weight and importance, to highlight the socio-cultural dynamics that led to fertile local reworking processes of the ancient and the new traditions.