

Gocha R. Tsetskhladze (1962-2022)

As the scientific community of classical archaeology was planning to celebrate the upcoming 60th anniversary of Prof. Gocha Tsetskhladze, honouring his exceptional achievements in classical studies with a Festschrift, the shocking news of the death of Gocha was reported on September 11, 2022.

Gocha Revazi Tsetskhladze was born in Georgia, then one of the national republics of the USSR. In 1988 he graduated from the Faculty of History, Maxim Gorky State University of Kharkov, Ukraine (today V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University). In 1993 he defended his first thesis titled *'Greeks in Colchis: Economic and Cultural Relations in the 6th-2nd Centuries BC'* and received the

degree of 'Candidate of Historical Sciences' from the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. In 1998 he received his DPhil in classical archaeology from Oxford, successfully defending his second thesis titled *'Cultural History of Colchis (6th-2nd Centuries BC)'*.

Long before his academic career, during his school years Gocha actively participated in the excavations of the Colchian sites near Kobuleti in western Georgia, and then became a member of the archaeological teams working at such ancient sites as Mtskheta (Georgia), Chersonesus (Ukraine), and Phanagoria (Russian Federation). Later on, he headed the archaeological team of the University of Melbourne excavating the ancient cultic centre at Pessinus in east-central Türkiye.

Gocha's publications, numbering several hundred titles, were generally devoted to the Black Sea region, including topics on Greek colonization in the 8th-6th centuries BC, investigations on the nature of relations between the local population and the Greek colonists, on the local ethnic groups like the Scythians, as well as on the impact of great powers of the time, like the Achaemenid empire, on local societies. The publication of an Achaemenid inscription from Phanagoria (AWE 18: 113-151) was the last one that he shared with me, remembering my interest towards the ancient societies of Armenia during the post-Urartian and Achaemenid periods.

Much less visible was the second aspect of his scientific activity, that is, his editorial work. A work that requires enormous efforts and time, infinite patience, being in itself, let it be said, a thankless job. Being a person of great organizational



Photo: Prof. Gocha R. Tsetskhladze

talent, Gocha did it with dedication, without hesitating to go deep into details, to have better academic publications. Until his last days, he held the position of the Editor-in-Chief of 'Ancient West & East' and the monograph series of the same periodical, the 'Colloquia Antiqua' (formerly: 'Colloquia Pontica'), both printed by Peeters Publishers. A number of books printed in this series have been edited by Gocha himself, including 'The Black Sea, Greece, Anatolia and Europe in the First Millennium BC' (CollAnt 1, 2011), 'Pessinus and Its Regional Settings', vols 1-2 (CollAnt 21-22, 2018-2019), 'Phrygia in Antiquity: From the Bronze Age to the Byzantine Period' (CollAnt 24, 2019), 'Ionians in the West and East' (CollAnt 27, 2022) and 'Archaeology and History of Urartu (Biainili)' (CollAnt 28, 2021). Another set of publications appeared within the frames of conference series called 'International Congress on Black Sea Antiquities', established by Gocha himself in 1997, a worldwide scientific event otherwise known as the 'Pontic Congress' that brings together hundreds of researchers from across the world, actively involving on editorial works of the conference papers: 'The Danubian Lands between the Black, Aegean and Adriatic Seas (7th century BC - 10th century AD). Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress on Black Sea Antiquities, Belgrade, 17-21 September 2013' (Edited by G. Tsetskhladze, A. Avram and J. Hargrave. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2015) and 'The Greeks and Romans in the Black Sea and the Importance of the Pontic Region for the Graeco-Roman World (7th century BC - 5th century AD): 20 Years On (1997-2017). Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress on Black Sea Antiquities' (Edited by G. Tsetskhladze, A. Avram and J. Hargrave. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2021) are a few among them.

I first received Gocha's e-mail, an announcement of the first circular of the international conference on Paphlagonia and Pontus to be held at Izmir from May 31 to June 4, 2008, on 15 May, 2007, but the true friendship had begun from 2015 onwards with an exchange of publications and ideas. I had a chance to meet Gocha only twice, during his visits to Yerevan, but these two meetings and talks that lasted hours gave an opportunity to know each other better, to discover commonalities that are typical for representatives of two fraternal peoples of Georgia and Armenia. The last talk at the hall of the Armenia Marriott Hotel Yerevan ended with his following words: 'You are a lone wolf, like me'. He said these words as a person who unconditionally devoted his life to the science, without hobbies, without a personal life, who had very difficult period of his life in Melbourne, in an academic environment so unfriendly towards his person.

I cannot forget Gocha's help to aid me while I search for a new publisher for our periodical 'Aramazd: Armenian Journal of Near Eastern Studies'. It was he who put me in communication with David Davison from Archaeopress, and I am forever grateful to Gocha for that, and colleagues at Archaeopress to undertake the publication.

It is somewhat consoling that he was fortunate to see the publication of the collection of papers of his colleagues and friends from all over the world, the voluminous 'Connecting the Ancient West and East. Studies Presented to Prof. Gocha R. Tsetskhladze' (Edited by J. Boardman, J. Hargrave, A. Avram and A. Podossinov. Vols 1-2. Leuven - Paris - Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2022).

Rest in Heaven, dear Gocha.

Ənd aysr hařaç'anac' t'axcut'ean vołboc'
I bazmac' kerpic' řarakargeloc',
Ew amenic' hogwoc' volormea,
Goveal ew erkaynamit t'agawor,
Naew aynoc'ik ařawel,
Voroc' hateal ē aknkalut'iwn p'rkut'ean kenac',
Vork' nnjec'in anpatrastabar`
řijeal lapterawk' iwłoyñ pakasut'ean:

*Have mercy, praiseworthy and long-suffering king,
Upon all souls through these prayers
Of grieving lamentation,
Composed on various themes,
And have mercy especially on those souls
Who are cut off from the hope of salvation
Who have died unprepared,
With lamps extinguished for lack of oil.*

St. Gregory of Narek, *Book of Lamentations*,
Prayer 86.1:1-8.

Yervand Grekyan

*Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, NAS RA
Charents Str. 15, 0025 Yerevan, Armenia
Institute of Oriental Studies, NAS RA
Marshal Baghramyan Ave. 24/4, 0019 Yerevan, Armenia
ervandgr@yahoo.com*