

Tomasz Scholl

Time for the archaeologist is always a relative concept. In our everyday work we move freely between different epochs, hundreds, sometimes even thousands of years away from our times. Nevertheless, the passage of time also concerns us. We become aware of this when we reach the end of a next phase in our lives. All of us will one day reach the “*dolce far niente*” stage, that is, the end of active life at our *Alma Mater*.

Our dear friend Tomek Scholl – whom we call Mr Scholl – has also decided to change his lifestyle.

When I think back to my first moments in archaeology Tomek always appears in these memories. It seems as if he had always been in archaeology. He was king in the library, being our “alpha and omega”. He was the only one who could find his way around the complex maze of bookshelves at the iconic Krakowskie Przedmieście 1. He was the only one who not only knew what books we needed for our classes, but also suggested the necessary literature himself. Sometimes it was more complicated, because some books and magazines had to be brought from abroad as part of the famous interlibrary exchange. Now, in retrospect, I can see how patient, calm and kind Tomek had to be in order to make our studies comfortable. He treated this with a discreet sense of humour.

It is safe to say that without him, many of us archaeologists would not only have failed to complete our studies successfully, but would probably have made the wrong choice of speciality. He knew us and always, even though he had no classes with us, instinctively sensed our real abilities and interests. Like no one else he could direct us to the right path.

His teaching and tutoring talents were felt by many generations of archaeologists when he started to give regular classes. Thus, began the extremely interesting lectures and classes in archaeology and history of a seemingly peripheral part of the ancient world – the northern shores of the Black Sea we call ‘the Black Sea’.

Using the results of research carried out in this area by Polish archaeologists and first their, and later his own, scientific findings, he instilled in us an interest in learning new things, sometimes underestimated. It turned out that the ancient world is not only ancient Greece and Rome. We can capture real everyday life in the areas where cultures meet. This is where the most interesting and at that time still little researched processes took place. Not for nothing both



**Tomasz Scholl during the excavations at Tanais, 2010
(photo: M. Bogacki).**

Greeks and Romans interned in these areas. It is now obvious to us that it is difficult to understand ancient cultures without this civilisational context. At the time when Tomek pointed it out to us, it was not so obvious. As a result, Warsaw archaeology enriched itself with a completely unique specialisation. Nowadays very fashionable and appreciated. In those days mysterious and unknown.

Soon it also turned out that Tomek is an excellent field archaeologist, an expert in excavation methods, a great analyst and organiser. The principles of fieldwork in the former Department of Mediterranean Archaeology were a bit outside the mainstream of studies, it was the domain of the so-called ‘prehistorians’. After all, ‘classicists’, according to the views of the time, were for higher things. They were destined to discover entire buildings, temples, mosaics or ancient sculptures. Tomek made everyone realise that archaeology is not only about great, spectacular discoveries – yes, important and beautiful – but real life can be learnt by drawing and analysing arduously plans and profiles, working on artefacts. Then one gets to know and truly understands the ancient world.

It requires patience, diligence, sometimes long waiting for the results. I do not cause that suddenly all spotlights are directed on the “great explorer”. This patience, diligence, modesty, self-denial, consistency in the pursuit of “understanding” – are some of Tomek’s character traits. He effectively instilled them in all those who had the opportunity to work with him.

In his *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, Lucius Annaeus Seneca made this statement: “Great is he who uses clay ware as well as silverware” – *Magnus ille est, qui fictilibus sic utitur, quemadmodum argento*. To a certain extent it characterises Tomek, in the sense that for him all artefacts were equally important, regardless of their beauty or material value. Sometimes, from a scientific point of view, the less spectacular ones were more important. He taught us – I hope effectively – that every artefact is important and must be treated with due scientific reverence.

Fortunately for me, when I started my archaeological research at the famous Tanais site in the Don delta in the 1990s, I was able to work closely with Tomek and over the years he became the “Lord of the Tanais domain”, making extremely important discoveries. Equally importantly he taught numerous archaeologists how to conduct field research and new scientific questions. This won him not only the sympathy and respect of our hosts, but also a large number of colleagues and students.

We also had a lot of time to chat with each other on the excavations, which eventually turned into a friendship that has lasted for several decades.

One would be wrong who would think that Tomek’s scientific interests are limited only to Tanais and “Black Sea”. No, he has also worked with other teams both in the Middle East and in classical culture. As a result, he is not only an outstanding social scientist in the archaeology of the northern shores of the Black Sea, but also in the archaeology of ancient Greece.

Not only for me, but also for a large group of people, not only from the archaeology of Warsaw, “Mr Scholl” will always be simply a Good Man, a confidant, a friend on whom one can always rely. These opinions are unanimously expressed by his friends from abroad and from many scientific centres in Poland, with which Tomek cooperated and collaborated.

He is also gratefully remembered by the staff of the Department of the History of Material Culture of the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw, the newly created Chair of Classical Archaeology of the Faculty of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw, as well as the Centre for Research on the Antiquity of South-Eastern Europe of the University of Warsaw.

It is also impossible not to mention numerous important publications, scientific conferences, seminars, exhibitions, obtained grants and other research programmes, all the strenuous organisational work. With full commitment, he has contributed and continues to contribute to the development of science and its promotion both in Poland and abroad.

Life, every now and then, changes its form, and now the time has come for Tomek, when his position corresponds to that which, according to classical tradition, is prescribed for the King of Messenia, the well-known ruler of Pylos from Troy – Nestor. A time to give advice and assistance, to continue his research work, to realise under different conditions a way of life that we personify as – “Mr Scholl”.

What can we repay him for these decades of work? We have nothing more than what constitutes the greatest value of any scientist – our publications. That is why we are dedicating this book to Tomek.

*Gratus collegae et amici
Multos Annos!*

Piotr Dyczek