

## NECROLOGY



### TUDOR ARNĂUȚ, OR THE PASSION FOR ARCHAEOLOGY (1958 – 2012)

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*The* disappearance of a person does not compare with any other life experiences. In the turmoil of a very active existence, we are caught into its whirl, imposing us a more and more alert lifestyle. Thus, we cannot find the proper time to see the existence of the people beside us (friends, colleagues), except when we have mutual interests, when we occasionally meet, or when we have common activities at the office. Just after Death takes them away from us, it seems that the time stops a little, thus making way to the memories, evocation of the gestures and words that, piece by piece, create the real image of the person who was beside us for years and whom we really understand just now, when things cannot be changed any longer. What a sad consolation...

The same feeling we all experienced when we heard the terrible news of the passing of our

colleague and friend Tudor Arnăuț. The mystery of death, the same as the one of life is not given to humans to be understood; but the instant death of a person who was in full ascension of his professional and scientific career shocked the entire university community, and all the people who knew him. In a moment, a number of projects and initiatives promoted by Tudor Arnăuț have been crushed down, while those involved in them have suddenly found themselves in the position of missing the one who had the capacity of moving things, of establishing communication bridges, of taking the tasks to their proper end.

Maybe the best highlight of Tudor Arnăuț was his ability to communicate and to convince people, to gather them around an idea, no matter if it was connected with the research, the teaching activities or the administration (in his capacity of Pro-rector of the State University of Moldova in Chișinău),

as he treated each of them with the same dose of respect.

He was born on December 24 1958, in the Giurgiulești commune, Cahul region, in the Republic of Moldova, in a family of farmers. As his parents wished for a better fate for their children, they were all encouraged to study. Tudor Arnăuț attended the local school, afterwards continuing his studies at the Pedagogical School from Cahul (1974-1978), which he graduated with Excellency, being one of the best and promising students. In 1981 he accomplished his dream of studying in one of the most prestigious universities of Republic of Moldova – the State University of Chișinău, Faculty of History, where he was accepted with very good results.

Due to his passion for archaeology, ancient history and classical languages, during the years of study (1981-1986) he specialized in ancient history and archaeology, under the coordination of the university professor Ion Niculiță, who would later be his coordinator for the graduation thesis. Even starting from those years, he attended the archaeological excavations carried out in different sites – Hansca, Butuceni, Pojorăni, improving his skills in research, which are usually demanded from an archaeologist.

After the graduation, in 1986, he was appointed assistant at the Chair of Archaeology and Ancient History of the Faculty of History in the Republic of Moldova State University. The working capacity and sustained interest of the young assistant for the aspects of the ancient history, especially those regarding the commercial connections between the local Getae population and the Greeks in the north-west Pontic colonies made him ardently desire to deepen his university studies in an elite academic milieu, like the one existing in the Faculty of History from the *Mikhail Lomonosov* State University of Moscow, Russia. The studies for this speciality would have lasted for years, but the historical events that occurred at the end of the '80s – namely the fall of the former Soviet Union – completely turned the things upside down. Everything seemed to become unchangeable. His freedom of expressing the option was valued in a doctoral stipend, offered by the Romanian State, in 1992, through which Tudor Arnăuț had continued his studies at the Faculty of History within the Bucharest University.

He sustained his doctoral thesis in 1998 with *Magna cum laudae*, the title of his contribution being “*The Geto-Dacians from east of the Carpathians in*

*the 7<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> c. BC, in the light of the archaeological and numismatic findings*”, coordinated by the late Romanian numismatist Constatin Preda.

The documentation stages and trainings that followed the stipend, which were carried out in different specialized institutions from Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Bulgaria, Turkey, France, Italy, helped him to reach a level of excellent knowledge in distinct fields, which he used in several courses and seminars that he held at the Faculty of History from the State University of Moldova.

There were memorable lectures of the Associate Professor Tudor Arnăuț at the disciplines like the *Ancient History of the Romanian Area, Funerary Practices of the Populations in South-East Europe in the 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium BC, Sacred Spaces and Collective Memory, Colonization as a Historical Phenomenon, The History of the Ancient Orient, The History of the Ancient Greece, Numismatics, The History of the Ancient Historical Thinking, Ethnicity, Nationalism, Identity*, all proving, beyond any doubt, his vocation as a professor. He coordinated about 100 graduation theses, during the same time, teaching a large number of seminars for training the future graduating students.

With his competence and devotion for the teaching act he didn't miss any occasion of evoking the personality and contribution of those who helped him in his professional progress, thus bringing them over the years the proof of his deepest respect. Among these personalities were the university professors Ion Niculiță, Vladimir Potlog, Mircea Babeș, Constantin Preda, Gheorghe Postică, Silvia Teodor, and academician Alexandru Vulpe. This is an attitude of high moral and spiritual substance; the one of honouring his professors, which should be a behaviour norm for any society. He also respected his disciples who, in return, offered him their devotion. This is why professor Arnăuț never lacked students for the archaeological practice. A number of student generations grew on his excavation sites, some of them becoming archaeologists after graduation. What other bigger achievement could be obtained by a professor, than to see his own disciples following his path!

Yet, his greatest passion was always the archaeology. He had an innate sense for it, he could smell the earth and read it, like a book. Every time he started a surface survey, he came with “*trophies*”. I have never been able to explain to myself how he could see so many things where others could not find anything and how he could be so sure when

he was saying: “*You have no idea what is here, you will see!*” And he was never wrong! The researches carried out in the fortresses of Mășcăuți, Potârca, Pojorani, Hansca, Saharna Mică, Stolniceni are connected with the name of Tudor Arnăuț. But, behind this innate sense, it was his impressive training experience, as nothing from the literature was unknown to him. He quite instantly obtained in a rather mysterious way almost everything that was new in the field of archaeology from Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, thus gathering one of the most valuable libraries of ancient history and archaeology in the Republic of Moldavia. He established cooperation relations and good friendships with archaeologists from all corners of Romania, especially with those sharing the same interest - in the Getic civilization. He was respected and appreciated for his serious scientific endeavours. His printout of the doctorate thesis, “*Vestiges of the 7<sup>th</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC in the east of the Carpathians*” became within a short time one of the reference papers in this regard.

Between 1998 and 2006, in parallel with his activity at the Chair of Archaeology and Ancient History, he was also the manager of the Pedagogical College “Alexei Mateevici” from Chișinău. Since 2010 he was elected as a Pro-rector of the State University of Moldova, being responsible with the student activities. He was involved in several research projects, like “*Funerary practices and customs of the Thracians, in the first millennium BC*” (in collaboration with the Romanian Cultural Institute);

“*Students without frontiers*” (in collaboration with the “Spiru Haret” University from Bucharest); also being part of the organizing committees for national and international conferences. His prodigious scientific activity materialized in dozens of studies and articles, monographs and reports, the last one – his habilitation thesis being programmed to be sustained in the spring of 2012. Unfortunately, it was not to be...

We are convinced that, beyond the high appreciation and controversies, the contributions of Tudor Arnăuț to the understanding and clarity of several important aspects of the civilization belonging to the Septentrional Thracians, will remain real working instruments, both for his disciples and his colleagues, in the field of archaeology. Being based upon strong documentation, they offer the example of an academic research, structured upon a deep and nuanced interpretation of the data, which opened the path to new connections and influences in the cultural and chronological space that he dealt with. Moreover, the preparation and printing of his habilitation thesis is a moral duty for his colleagues and friends, same as the research completion in the archaeological site of Stolniceni. This would be a last homage that we could bring to the one who was a professor, archaeologist, colleague and friend, Tudor Arnăuț, for whom the idea of life identified with the one of doing **ARCHAEOLOGY**.

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