

MAURIZIO GAETANI 1940 -2017

IN MEMORANDUM

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CIAO MAURIZIO

Last century, during up to 20 years we have shared the Subcommission on Triassic Stratigraphy (STS) adventures, the Himalayan Ladakh passion, the IGCP field meetings, the Tethys Program followed by the Peri-Tethys one and associated studies. In 1962, you started researches in Iran and 10 years later I went, reading your papers, also in this country, studying as you at Permian-Triassic sections in Elburz Mountains.

During summer 1977, immediately after the North India opening to foreigners, you went to Ladakh with Lia, your wife, for geological reconnaissance as separately I did as tourist with my wife and we discuss by letters of our new Himalayan experiences.

Our first meeting was at the 1979 Symposium you organized with Isabella Premoli Silva in memory of Riccardo Assereto and Julio Pisa in the famous Bergamo castle. A local newspaper wrote about this meeting the attendance of the “Elite culturale dell mondo”.

At that time, we both were appointed as STS active member. You ask me on organizing a common expedition in Lahaul and SE Ladakh Himalaya and you succeeded obtaining a grant from the Italian Research Ministry. I came during 1980 in your home in Segrate near Milano and in the spring of 1981, you went with your Milano team at our rented chalet in Swiss Prealps to finalize the preparation of the expedition. On August first 1991, we took a flight to Delhi, a bus to Manali and went to Darcha in Lahul. But to reach the Zangla nappe with his Triassic succession, we had, with horses and horsemen, to cross the Baralacha-La and the Phirtse-La passes up to the Kurgiak Valley. Due to health problem I was not able to participate to the sampling of the Jingshen PT



Figure 1 – Our camp in the Ichar Valley, S Ladakh, August 19, 1981



Figure 2 – Group photo of the participants in the Antalya Mountains, SW Turkey, Maurizio is in the middle, back.

sections with your team, Alda Nicora, Eduardo Garzanti and Andrea Tintori, but together, we could add and complete the main structural observations I started to collect with the Lausanne group in 1979. Some of our new results appeared in 1984 and we were among the first to describe in detail the nappe structure of the Tethys Himalaya.

With your PhD student Eduardo Garzanti and Georges Mascle teaching at Grenoble University, we were preparing during 1982, a second Ladakh expedition along the Spong tang klippe organized for 1983, as you were in charge of the 1984 expedition to be done with your Milano team to finish the stratigraphic studies started in 1981.

During these years of the eighty's, started a friendly spirit of competition on Himalayan studies between your strong and united Milano team, the French teams of Grenoble, Paris and Nancy and the Swiss teams from Lausanne and Zurich. This came with some successful collaboration, as you organized first with me and later with French colleagues and friends as Patrick Lefort. Your master was Ardito Desio, “il Padre” of Himalaya-Karakorum geologists and explorers. It is why, following your desire for a look at the other side of the Tethys Ocean, you chose, with a great ambition, to unravel the Karakorum story. Starting in 1986, during 22 years up to 2008, you were the kingpin of 10 expeditions between Chitral, Wakhan, Shimshal and Shaks gam areas surrounding the Karakorum Range. You admirably summarized this incredible successful survey in nowadays forbidden border regions, in your paper “Blank on the Geological Map” that came out two years ago in *Rendiconti Lincei*, 27-2, p. 181-195. The near forty published papers by all your team and a large geological map, testify the Karakorum happy ending story with a tremendous scientific contribution carried in great part by your team-leader soul.

As member of the IGCP project 203, you helped greatly to the organization of the Field conference on Permian and Permian-Triassic Boundary (PTB) of the South Alpine segment of the Western Tethys in Brescia, July 4-12, 1986 and you participated to the post-conference field workshop that Jean Marcoux and I organized in SW Turkey.

In 1987 you joined the field workshop of the IGC Program 109 on "Rare Events" with a conference in Islamabad on Dec. 8, and a workshop in the Nammal Gorge of the Salt-Ranges. This was a section that Jean Guex and I studied in 1975. As shown by the picture below taken in Nammal Gorge, you were in favor of a PTB level based on the first occurrence of the conodont *H. parvus*!



Figure 13– Maurizio showing his view on the Permian-Triassic Boundary (PTB) level. Sitting on the left I pointed the classical PTB and Tim Tozer, our master, is skeptic.

Following the Salt-Ranges workshop, you joined as friend and expert our small party with Jean Marcoux and Tim Tozer for a look at the Permian-Triassic Kashmir sections. Taking a flight in Lahore, we went to Srinagar through Delhi and rent rooms in a houseboat on Dal Lake. As temperatures fall down, each of us bought a fur's hat and we were proud to show it on the Houseboat balcony (picture below)! The days after, we sampled the Guryul Ravine and the Pagham sections. Six month later, all this area fell to terrorism, imposed curfew and during 25 years became closed for foreigners and scientists.

Between 1989 and 1990, we discussed together on the discovery of recycling fossils done by V. J. Gupta with his invention of fossiliferous localities in some azoic rocks of Himalaya. These fake data's in paleontology made you very



Figure 4 – On the houseboat balcony, Maurizio, Tim, Jean and I, Dec. 14, 1987.

angry, and you actively collaborated with John Talent and other colleagues to publish the detail of the Gupta's recycling fossils method (Journal of the Geological Society of India, 35(6), p. 569-585). Another serious alert was the work of J.B Waterhouse on the Lower Triassic Ammonoid of Nepal, an area you actively studied with your Milano team. It is why you published with your colleagues in *Albertiana* 15, 1995, a qualifying statement how to work correctly in paleontology and stratigraphy, that was apparently not the case of Waterhouse, as you wrote.

In 1999 began the Tethys project led by Jean Dercourt and Emmanuel Ricou, both from Paris VI Jussieu University, with a financial support of some interested Petroleum companies. Our friend Jean Marcoux was in charge of the Triassic paleogeographical and paleoenvironmental maps working group (Anisian and Norian), me of the Permian (Murgabian map) working group, and during the following 4 years, you helped us greatly, participating to numerous working meetings for publishing the first three maps and the explanatory notes. At the end of 1993, all these three maps were coming out in the Atlas Tethys, each with an expanded explanatory note.

Due to your strong diplomatic and scientific abilities, you get an opportunity to start, at an higher level, a six years project named Peri-Tethys Programme, that you carefully prepared with Jean Dercourt and co-led with him. Responsible of 4 maps from Wordian to Norian, you finally were, with 8 colleagues, in the editorial charge of 24 paleogeographical



Figure 5 – Our first breakfast in the House-Boat, Maurizio, Tim, I and Jean, Dec. 14, 1987



Figure 6 –Maurizio on the left seems not convinced by my talk at the Augusto Gansser session during the Kyoto IGC, August 29, 1992

and paleoenvironmental maps with explanatory notes from Moscovian to Langhian that came successfully out in 2000. Your 2003 Foreword, in PPP (volume 196), resume very well the amazing accomplished task. Along a similar leader line, you opened in 2003 with Eric Barrier a new four years Middle-East Basins Evolution Programme (MEBE) with the same sponsors who helped greatly many active research teams with low institutional financial support. You followed with great attention the production of 15 palaeogeographical maps of the MEBE area, from Norian to Piacenzian and published in 2008.

Coming back to Subcommittee on Triassic Stratigraphy (STS), it is on July 12, 1989, during the International Geological Congress (IGC) held in Washington, that you were elected as STS vice-chairman, just at the time I became chairman.

In 1991, with Jean Marcoux, you helped me and my colleague Jean Guex in the organization of a Symposium on Triassic stratigraphy held at Lausanne University, October 20-22 and for preparing the STS meeting with an important vote on Triassic stage name. On October 23, acting as vice-chairman and secretary, you went in charge of the Triassic stage boundary working group. You also participated to the editorial Committee of the Symposium Proceeding edited in 1994.

In 1992 you participated to the Kyoto IGC, August 22-31 and wrote a report on the 1992 STS activities, with a description of the Olenekian-Anisian, Anisian-Ladinian and Ladinian-Carnian potential boundary localities and sections.

You also announced a 1993 field meetings in Italy followed by Hungary to look at the Anisian-Ladinian boundary (ALB) proposals in both countries.

The report you published in *Albertiana* (Vol. 12, p. 5-9) on this 1993 ALB successful meeting was very detailed and significant.

At the next STS meeting held in Albrechtsberg near Vienna Sept. 10, 1994, you made the state of advancement of your stage boundary working group.

In 1995 you got an unanimous vote by the STS members to be chairman, and this election was confirmed by IUGS general



Figure 7 –Maurizio, future chairman and me, chairman in charge, at the STS meeting held in Albrechtsberg near Vienna Sept. 10, 1994

assembly during the Beijing IGC, Aug. 4-14, 1996.

Also in 1995 you accepted to be Editor in chief of the *Rivista Italiana di Paleontologia e Stratigrafia* belonging to the Milano University and you asked me to join your scientific Committee. During the twenty years of this responsibility you perfectly fulfilled, you asked me to do some paper review and to give my advise on some conflicting manuscripts.

Within the STS activities, one of your task was to get advancement on the Olenekian-Anisian boundary (OAB) studies, and, from 1989, you restudied in great detail with your German and Italian colleagues the sections of Chios Island (Greece) but, after 6 years, the main results were showing a gap in the sedimentary succession close to the expected boundary. You found similar problems on the OAB of the Kçira section that you were studying with your team in Albania. It is why you took a great interest in our Olenekian -Anisian researches in Romania undertaken within the Peri-Tethys project on the Triassic of the North Dobrogea. Especially the Desli-Caira section rich in ammonoids and conodontes edited in the Scientific Report of the Peri-Tethys Programme published in Lausanne (1997) kept your attention. From 1995 to 2000 we both corresponded by webmail on the opportunity to propose a GSSP at this Section. But after 5 years of endless argue with some colleagues, we had to postpone this proposal due to internal Romanian problems and the absence of a free GSSP access guaranteed for all scientists.

The GSSP proposal of the Anisian-Ladinian boundary (ALB) you initiated in 1993 with the excursion in Bagolino (Italy) and in Feldsôors (Balaton, Hungary) was more successful with a final meeting in 2002 at Veszprém, (Hungary) and a positive vote in 2003 by the STS members for the Bagolino section proposed by Peter Brack and colleagues, and finally ratified by the IUGS executive Committee in 2005. This was the first approved, GSSP within the Triassic System.

During the Rio de Janeiro IGC, August 6-17, 2000, you presented the main achievement of the Peri-Tethys Programme and with the Italian delegation you obtained a positive vote for the next IGC organization in Florence. Concerning the STS, Mike Orchard was elected as new chairman, and you became past-chairman.

Just before the 2004 Florence IGC, you had the honor to



Figure 8 –Maurizio, center, surrounded by friends, colleagues and participants of the 1987 Salt Range workshop

lead, with our friend Jean-Pierre Burg, with A. Zanchi and Q.M. Jan, an unique IGC Prestige Field Trip on “A geological transect from the Indian plate to the East Indu-Kush, Pakistan”. We were envious of you!

When you came back, we met us during the Congress, August 20-28, 2004, as you were in charge (chairperson) of 2 sessions, one the “Triassic in the Tethys realm” with a poster on the Triassic of the Karakorum Range and the other on the “Geology of Caspian and Aral seas regions” of the MEBE Programme.

In March 2007, just at the time you went into teaching retirement, your close colleagues organized a friendly party and invited me in Milano to your honor’s dinner and colloquium. I was deeply touched by this nice thought.

End of June 2008 you heard that our close friend Jean Marcoux just passed away. Affected by this sad news and being about to leave for your farewell Karakorum expedition you wrote me, as always in French: “Je parts demain au Karakorum pour dire adieux a ces magnifiques montagnes” and “Je penserai a notre ami Jean dans ces montagnes”. This sentence touched me a lot.

From this 2008 time up to last year we, as old friends, kept in touch, and, as you and me went back after forty to fifty years to our lovely Iran sections we had still a lot to discuss.

Your messages described also your Piano Rancio second home, your cross-country-skiing passion, your every year participation to the “Marcialonga di Fiemme” end of January and you told me about your travel to Finland with a 400km cross-country-skiing marathon, but “only” 300km for Lia as you wrote to me! You both, among your plenty of personal qualities, were really great

sportsman and women.

Our last meeting was in Perugia, at the International Congress on Paleozoic Stratigraphy of Gondwana, Perugia, April 14-16, 2016. With your happy mood you appear me and to my wife still young and elegant as forty years before, and we spent time to discuss on our recent researches. You asked me about the possible continuation of the Triassic succession you discovered on Socotra Island on the Oman side of the Gulf of Aden, and you were interested by the lower Triassic brachiopod accumulation we found in the Batain area of SE Oman. During 20 years, I told you: “please come join one of our field studies in Oman” and just end of 2015 you foresee an opportunity to come in 2017 but apparently it was no more possible. This was a dream for me to introduce you in this geological paradise. We miss it, and we still had more souvenirs and experiences to share, me, modestly, studying remote places of our whole wide world and you, with a such exceptional international career, taking large responsibilities at European wide research programs and at the same time taking care and giving encouragement at your close research team as you always did at your family level.

“Tout ce que tu as reçu, tu l’as distribué généreusement”

We will all miss you, Ciao Maurizio

Postscript: Maurizio’s comprehensive biography with the connected publication list will be published soon by his Milano close colleagues and friends.