Viktor Ivanovich Sarianidi  
*September 23, 1929-December 23, 2013*

Just before Christmas 2013 the shocking news spread, that our friend and colleague Viktor Ivanovich Sarianidi, after a brief illness, passed away in the night from 22nd to the 23rd December.
Born on the 23rd September 1929, as son of Iannis and Athena Sarianidi, a family of Pontos-Greek origin, who had emigrated to Tashkent in 1920, he began his studies in the city of his birth at one of the best universities for archaeology in what was then the Soviet Union. With B. A. Litvinski, M. E. Masson, A. A. Semenov and V. A. Shishkin as teachers, who created a veritable Central Asian school of archaeology, he graduated in 1952 and began working in the Historical Museum Samarkand. Since 1954 he was engaged in Moscow at the Institute for the History of Material Culture (Институт Истории Материальной Культуры). From 1959 up to his retiring in 2003 he worked in the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. During retirement he lived in Moscow and in Greece, in close contact with his three daughters.

Already as a student, and later in the frame of the South-Turkmenistan Interdisciplinary Archaeological Expedition (Южно-Туркменистанской Археологической Комплексной Экспедиции – ЮТАКЭ), he participated in many excavations, among which, for example, Yaz Depe, Merv, Meshed-Misriana, Nisa, Sultan-Kala, Takhirbai and Togolok.

As early as 1959 he himself headed excavations on different sites of the Chalcolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age in Turkmenistan (Kopet-Dagh foreland and Margiana), many of which had been discovered by him, especially in the area of the inland delta of the river Murghab. The better known sites are Geoksyur, Togolok and Ulug Depe, whose exploration will remain associated with his name. One of his most important excavations in Turkmenistan is Gonur Depe, where he headed research from 1974 until his death.

Shortly after the beginning of communist rule in Afghanistan in 1978 Viktor Sarianidi was also engaged in archaeological studies there, mainly in the northern part of the country. It was he, who excavated large urban settlements of the Bronze Age there, amongst which especially Dashly 3 will again remain tied to his name. Of his work in Afghanistan, however, his success during the excavations at Tillya Tepe is probably even more well-known, where, besides Early Iron Age layers, he uncovered several very richly furnished Royal burials, the extraordinarily artistic materials of which have become known as the “Bactrian Gold”, achieving worldwide fame.

His realisation of the cultural coherence of the Bronze Age between the foreland of the Kopet-Dagh, Margiana and Bactria (North-Afghanistan, South-Uzbekistan, parts of Tadjikistan) led to the concept of the "Bactro-Margiana Archaeological Complex", coined by him and still generally used (abbreviated as “BMAC”, also known as “Namazga VI”, “Sapalli culture” [a component part] or “Oxus Civilization”).