

Obituarium

Krystyna Łyczkowska (1933–2018)

“A scribe who does not know Sumerian – what kind of scribe is he?” says a Sumerian proverb.¹

Professor Krystyna Łyczkowska was perfectly aware of a scholar’s obligation to know the language of any culture he or she wishes to study. Assyriology and more specifically Akkadian was her specialty.

Her life adventure with the languages and culture of ancient Mesopotamia started in 1952, when she enrolled as a student in the Chair of Ancient Near Eastern Philology of the Oriental Institute of the University of Warsaw. Four years later, still pending her Master’s degree, she was already in a position to teach Akkadian to younger colleagues, supervised in her work by Professor Rudolf Ranoszek. Climbing the ladders of an academic career, she worked as an assistant and senior assistant. In 1967 she was awarded a doctoral degree based on the dissertation “The court protocols of the city of Kanesh”. Her next dissertation, which earned her in 1978 her habilitation degree, was also framed on texts left by the inhabitants of this vibrant Old Assyrian trade post. Łyczkowska was named to a full professorship in May 1990. She worked in the Ancient Near East Department until the end of 2008 despite retiring in 2003.

A lifetime of professional activity – 52 years – were equally divided between research and didactics. Not only with her undergraduate and graduate students, but with all and sundry expressing an interest in Mesopotamia. It was her passion to make ancient Mesopotamian literature popular among reader, hence her inspiring role in establishing the *Antologia Literatury Mezopotamskiej* [Anthology of Mesopotamian Literature] series.

¹ B. Alster, *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer*, vol. I., Bethesda, Maryland 1997, p. 54.

From the start Professor Łyczkowska was involved in many different tasks at the University's Oriental Institute: for two decades she shaped the content of the Department Library, supervised the students' scientific clubs and the dormitory student groups. She headed the Department and in 1981, memorable for the political events transforming Polish reality, she undertook the position of Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Modern Language Studies. It will be remembered that studies in 1981 were disrupted first by the student strike and then by the imposition of martial law. During the strike, Professor Łyczkowska warned students against staying on the ground floor of the building of the Institute – she had fresh in her memory still the dramatic events of March 1968. Under martial law, for the few he knew, her Vice-Dean's Office was turned into a classroom; we would go there at her explicit request to continue learning. She was a demanding teacher, but those of us who persevered in our studies understood over time that she expected from us as much as she demanded of herself. She maintained a kindly interest in the fortunes and misfortunes of her former students, and was a source of continuous support for those of us who stayed on to work at the Department.

Professor Łyczkowska sat on a number of University Senate committees on university development, university youth, and the legal status of higher education. She was also a member of the Committee of Oriental Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences and a permanent member of the Polish Oriental Society. She was honored repeatedly with the University of Warsaw Rector's Award and the Award of the Minister of Higher Education for her research, teaching and organizational involvement. And yet she was always so unassuming. Her embarrassment could not have been greater when she was presented with a jubilee volume *Here & There across the Ancient Near East*, prepared by colleagues and students. She was deeply moved as those gathered at the ceremony emphasized her role in educating successive generations of Assyriologists.

One should end with yet another Sumerian proverb: "The schoolmaster's pupil (is) like carnelian whose side has been pierced: he is indeed a scribe."² This mark shall remain on her students forever.

² Ibid, p. 54.

A complete bibliography of Krystyna Łyczkowska

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