

Professor Anna Krasnowolska – Our Master

Professor Anna Krasnowolska is a highly valued specialist in the field of Persian literature and the culture of the Iranian world.

At the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Jagiellonian University (formerly the Chair and Institute of Oriental Philology at the Jagiellonian University) since 1972, she was its director from 1999–2002, and from 2000–2017 the long-time head of the Department of Iranian Studies. She is a member of the *Societas Iranologica Europaea* (Board member from 2003–2011, vice-president from 2007–2011), also of the Association for the Study of Persianate Societies, as well as the Orientalist Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Krakow branch (currently vice president) and the Committee on Oriental Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (president from 2003–2007).

The first of three children, Anna Krasnowolska was born in Krakow on January 19, 1949 to Danuta and Jan Józef Szczepański.

In 1967, after completing her studies at high school in Krakow, she enrolled in Iranian studies at the Department (later Institute) of Oriental Philology at the Jagiellonian University. One of her first research passions was cultural studies, which prompted the young researcher to undertake parallel studies in the Ethnography of the Slavs at the Jagiellonian University, where she completed 5 semesters (1969–1971). At the same time, as a philologist she began to study key texts for Iranian culture, including the Avesta

It is worth mentioning how Anna learned Persian. At the time of the Iron Curtain, due to there being a lack of textbooks and contact with Iranians, Persian was taught in Kraków in the same way as dead languages are. That's why, when her father, before leaving on a scholarship to the United States, asked her what present she would like him to bring her, she replied: ““Some Iranian newspapers.”” On his return, presented with a Persian-English pocket dictionary and, a priceless trophy; the “Jong-e Esfahān” magazine, she spent her summer holidays on its decryption.

She defended her Master's thesis in 1972 on the basis of her work entitled *Fargard 21 Videvdāt as a magical text (analysis of the Avestan text)* dedicated to a short and hermetic chapter of the Avesta.

In July 1970, she married physicist, Stanisław Krasnowolski, and shortly after defending her Master's thesis, gave birth to the first of three sons.

Her first direct encounter with the Iranian world took place in 1975 during an expedition to Afghanistan by what was called the Society of Explorers, in which Anna acted as a person facilitating contacts with the locals. At last, in 1977 when

it was on the eve of revolution, she undertook a trip to Iran on a scholarship to the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad.

After returning to Poland, she followed the revolution in Iran with avid attention. Friends, who used to visit the Krasnowolski family at that time, mention the evening ritual disappearance of the mistress of the house behind a “partition” in order to listen to reports broadcast through crackling and popping sounds by Tehran Radio.

At the same time, she wrote a doctoral dissertation on the Shahnameh, against the advice of her supervisor, prof. Franciszek Machalski (1904–1979), who said that “everything there is to say has already been said on the Iranian epic”. After the death of professor Machalski, the official supervisor of the work became the turkologist, prof. Włodzimierz Zajączkowski (1914–1982), and then the Arabist Prof. dr hab. Andrzej Czapkiewicz (1924–1990). None of them read her text. Written unassisted, her dissertation on the macro-structures of epic narration *Cykle epickie w Šāhnāme Ferdousiego* (*The epic cycles in the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi*) was defended in 1983. The work remained unpublished (435 pages of typescript, BJ Sygn, Doktor 22/83). Later, similar conclusions about the epic were drawn and published by her colleagues “on the other side of the Iron Curtain”, such as Olga Davidson, who did not have access to the work of the Polish young researcher.

In 1992, following the political changes in Poland, she received a grant from the Committee for Scientific Research, enabling her to spend a month-long research internship in Iran, and in 1994, she went on a three-month scholarship to Uppsala at the Institute of Afro-Asian Languages.

In 1998 she obtained her post-doctoral degree on the basis of her book entitled *Some Key Figures of Iranian Calendar Mythology* (Universitas, Kraków 1998, 260 pp.). In this study she carried out a systematic analysis and synthesis of the beliefs and practices in Iranian folklore, covering an area from Kurdistan to Pamir and dealing with the agricultural and pastoral counts of time and their patrons (winter and spring). The main body of the work is devoted to the origin, typology and ritual functions of calendar figures such as Rapihvin and Siyāvush, Forefather Farmer (Bābā-ye Dehqān), the Prophet Khezr (Khazrat-e Khezr), Kuse, the New Year King (Mir-e Nouruzi) and the crone (Ajuz, Ajuze, Pire-zan etc.). This in many respects innovative and impressive work, due to the richness of its source material, geographic scope and conclusions, is not only an important source in studying the continuity of Iranian but also of Indo-European folklore, which includes the Iranian-Slavic parallels.

In 2015, she was awarded the title of professor for all her scientific achievements and for her book entitled *Mythes, croyances populaires et symbolique animale dans la littérature persane* (“Studia Iranica”, Cahier 48, Paris 2012), published on the basis of a series of five lectures delivered as part of Conférences d’études iraniennes Ehsan et Latifeh Yarshater in 2010 in Paris (CNRS, Mondes iranien et indien, Sorbonne Nouvelle, INALCO, EPHE).

As part of her scientific and didactic activity, she has published to date more than 150 scientific and popular science publications and has also promoted approximately 90 MA theses and 3 doctorates.

Anna Krasnowolska's interest in the literature and culture of the Iranian world traces the issues and phenomena of this branch of civilisation rather than its literary epochs. These include issues such as the continuity of ideas, themes and forms from pre-Muslim to modern times, the durability, evolution and changes in the functions of Iranian national myths throughout history, the continuation and transformation of religious, social and aesthetic concepts, the relationship between verbal and written communication as well as folk and high culture. Her research is based on a knowledge of source texts fundamental to Persian culture, including Iranian mythology and Persian epics. In the field of Iranian epics, she pays particular attention to the verbal sources of written literature: the issue of authorship, individualism and tradition. She is also interested in the issue of intertextuality in classical and contemporary Persian literature, the presence of epic-mythical themes in contemporary Persian literature and the image of the stranger in Persian literature (including Poles in Iran during World War II and the clash of cultures). She has also devoted a great deal of attention to the history of Polish and Iranian research and the problems of Polish Orientalism. She is likewise the author of translations from Persian literature into Polish and Polish poetry into Persian.

Finally, it should be added that Anna Krasnowolska, as our Master and Professor, is not only a versatile researcher, but also a highly innovative educator who is entirely devoted to her students and colleagues, willingly sharing her vast knowledge and supporting every scientific passion, research project or fledgling career as well as supporting young Iranians, Kurds and Afghans who wish to study in Krakow. Undoubtedly, the academic output of our Professor would be far greater if she did not devote most of her free time to the meticulous improvement of student essays, assignment papers and graduate work. She also does her best to participate in all the readings of her students and graduates and all the Iranian-related events which she is invited to.

Her stays in Iran are highly intensive: from dawn to dusk she gives interviews and consultations, then bravely sets off for Enqelāb Street in Tehran to browse the bookstores there, bookstores she always feels drawn to and where she could probably spend eternity. Once she confessed that she imagined paradise to be among books.

Visits to her wooden house, tucked away in the forests on the slope of Mount Lubogoszcz, are an annual ritual for scientific camps organised by students and the Iranian studies university staff. It is here that you discover a new dimension to your professor; her close relationship to the countryside and nature in which she grew up. In the garden with its giant azalea and soaring clumps of bamboo, she grows herbs, vegetables and flowers, exotic ones imported from across the seas and those saved from destruction by Krakow's bulldozers. She creates beautiful bouquets of leaves and flowers and delicious salads from the herbs. In the evenings, everyone gathers around the fireplace, the perfect idyll only marred by the fact that the host insists her students play games to improve their linguistic ability. After all, life is for her a constant mission of perfecting the self and service to others.

And it will probably remain so even though our Professor is going on to a well-deserved retirement. It is hard to imagine the Iranian studies department at Krakow's University without "Anula". That is why we wish you, dear Professor, in order to be able to fully realise your scientific passions, a long and happy life!

Ad multos annos!
Renata Rusek-Kowalska