

Professor Danuta Madeyska

Professor Danuta Madeyska, nee Bobrowicz, was born in Vilnius, on January 8, 1936. Having passed her high school finals in Lidzbark Warmiński in 1953 r., she moved to Sopot, where started to study economics. In 1959 r. she graduated from the Sopot School of Economics (Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomiczna w Sopocie), but this did not satiate her hunger for knowledge. She moved to Warsaw, where she became a student of the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw. Her MA thesis on ‘Antara Ibn Šaddād marked a beginning of Danuta Madeyska’s interest in the literary genre known as *sīra*. Following her graduation in 1965, she became a teaching assistant at the Department of Arabic Studies. The 1960s was a time when her tutor, Prof. Józef Bielański, was working on a book which would provide Polish readers with basic data regarding the history and culture of the Arab Middle East. Danuta Madeyska, then a young and promising scholar, naturally became one of the co-authors of this pioneer work (*Mały słownik kultury świata arabskiego* / “The Concise Dictionary of Arabic Culture”, Warszawa 1971).

In 1969 Danuta Madeyska went on a scholarship to Cairo. Back in Poland, in 1972 she received a post of assistant at the Department of Arabic Studies, where she taught Arabic. In 1974 she again went to Cairo, where she spent a year working on her Ph.D. thesis. The thesis, dealing with Arab folk literature and written under supervision of Professor Bielański, was titled *Ideał kobiety arabskiej w świetle eposu Sirat Dat al-Himma a rzeczywistość historyczna* (“Ideal Women in Sirat Dāt al-Himma and Historical Reality”). She defended it on June, 22, 1978. Reviewers were Prof. Maria Kowalska (Jagiellonian University) and Prof. Edward Szymański (Polish Academy of Sciences).

Studies in folk literature, to which Danuta Madeyska has been faithful throughout her academic career, led to her interest in history. First her fascination focused on broadly understood Middle Ages, as it had been in this period that the *sīra* genre had flourished. With time the interest in history grew broader and broader and history became as important to her as medieval folk literature, and Danuta Madeyska started to teach history. She started with a lecture in the history of the Arab lands under the Ottoman rule and then, in the late 1970s, she became responsible for the entire three-year course in the history of the Arabs, from pre-Islamic times up to her own days. Since 1971, for many years she acted as a students’ counselor.

As a lecturer in history, and as a tutor of students interested in history, she was quite demanding, both towards students and herself. Considering the scarcity of books on the history of the Arab world, students' position was particularly difficult. To make it easier for them, Danuta Madeyska decided to write a handbook which would cover the history of the Arab world under the Ottoman rule. In the late 1980s she published *Historia świata arabskiego: okres osmański 1516–1920* ["History of the Arab World: The Ottoman Period"] (Warszawa 1988), a book which presented the events of the period in an exceptionally detailed manner.

With the martial law introduced in 1981, and the first free parliamentary elections held in 1989, the 1980s proved to have been a turning point in the history of Poland. In this very special decade one could hardly avoid being involved in political events. Always very sensitive about politics, and always very down-to-earth as far as Polish political arena was concerned, Danuta Madeyska became an active member of the "Solidarity" trade union.

As far as her research work is concerned, she never ceased to be passionately dedicated to Arab folk literature. Therefore, the texts of medieval *sīras* became her natural choice when it came to decide the subject of her *Habilitationsschrift*. The thesis, titled *Poetyka siratu: studium o arabskim romansie rycerskim* ["Poetics of the Sirah: A Study of the Arab Chivalry Romance"], was completed in 1993. The same year she passed her examination and received her professorial degree. The English translation of Danuta Madeyska's thesis, titled *Poetics of the Sīrah*, was published in 2001. The book, which was highly appreciated by many European arabists, contributed to her fame as an internationally renown specialist in the medieval Arab *sīra*. Danuta Madeyska also translated some pieces of this literary genre: her Polish translation of a story of *Sīrat Az-Zīr Sālim and Abū Laylā and Al-Muhalhil* (*Opowieść o Az-Zirze Salimie Abu Lajli i Al-Muhalhilu*) was published in „Literatura arabska: dociekania i prezentacje” (Warszawa 1997). Danuta Madeyska also translated modern literature. A number of Arab short stories translated by her into Polish were published in various anthologies as well as in the periodical „Przegląd Orientalistyczny”.

In the late 1990s Danuta Madeyska published another book on the history of the Arab world, *Historia świata arabskiego: okres klasyczny od starożytności do roku 750* ["History of the Arab World: The Classical Period from Antiquity to 750"] (Warszawa 1999), which covers events from the pre-Islamic times to the so called "Abbasid Revolution." Just four years later, in 2003, she published yet another book in history. Her *Liban* ("Lebanon", Warszawa 2003) is a mine of information about Lebanese history from 1920 to the end of the twentieth century. Danuta Madeyska's latest book, titled *Historia współczesna świata arabskiego* ["Modern History of the Arab World"] (Warszawa 2008), covers events from World War I to the end of the twentieth century. Apart from publishing and lecturing on history of the Arab World, Danuta Madeyska tutored many students. Over ten of MA and Ph.D. theses were written under her supervision.

In 2007 Danuta Madeyska received the title of Professor of Humanities. She is a member of Polish Oriental Society.

Barbara Wrona



D. Madeyska receives her Professor title from the President Lech Kaczyński