

THE GOLDEN JUBILEE
OF PROFESSOR IGNACY RYSZARD DANKA'S DOCTORATE

On Thursday, 5th December 2019, the Senate of the University of Lodz held a special session in the exquisite Biedermann Palace. The purpose of the meeting was to renew three doctoral titles the university had conferred fifty years previously. The celebrated title holders (two in chemistry and one in philology) have become important figures in their respective disciplines. This paper reflects on the academic career and achievements of the philologist, Professor Ignacy Ryszard DANKA, a distinguished specialist in Indo-European studies and classical philology.



Fig. 1. Prof. Danka thanking the assembled audience after receiving his “renewed” doctorate
Phot. by Adam Wróbel

Born on 26th June 1937 in Łódź, Ignacy Ryszard DANKA studied classical philology as well as Indian philology at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Warsaw from 1956 to 1962 graduating with an M.A. in classical philology. He completed his Ph.D. in 1969 at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Lodz for his dissertation *Pierwotny charakter Apollina i Artemidy. Studium na temat pochodzenia Letoidów i ich związków z innymi bogami* [“The original character of Apollo and Artemis. A study on the genesis of the Letoides and their relations with other gods”], supervised by Prof. Stefan OŚWIECIMSKI. The work was published in book form in 1987 by the Ossolineum Publishing House (Wrocław). In 1983 he received the habilitation degree from the Faculty of Philology of the Jagiellonian University for his study *Stanowisko języków anatolijskich w rodzinie indoeuropejskiej i ich wzajemne związki* [“The position of the Anatolian languages in the Indo-European family and their mutual relations”]. He was elevated to the title of *Professor ordinarius* (full professor) in 2010 for his monograph *Pelazgowie. Autochtoni Hellady. Pochodzenie – język – religia* [“Pelasgians. The indigenous people of Hellas. Origin, language, religion”], published in 2007, as well as his whole academic output.

Professor DANKA worked at the University of Lodz for 45 years, with a one-year break (1973–1974) spent in Germany. He rose through the academic ranks starting as a research assistant (1962–1963) and then going on to become senior assistant (1963–1969 and 1974–1975), assistant professor (1969–1973 and 1975–1983), associate professor (1983–1990) and, finally, university professor (1990–2007) – all affiliated with the Chair of Classical Philology. After his retirement in 2007, he started to work at the International Studies Academy (2008–2014).

His academic output comprises more than 150 publications (of which about 20 are co-authored), including four books (one in Latin) and eight edited or co-edited volumes. Among others, he is a co-author of the influential two-volume textbook *Języki indoeuropejskie* [“The Indo-European languages”], in which he presented the languages of the archaic Anatolian branch. His works are cited in numerous articles and studies on linguistics and religious studies. He has contributed to a variety of international journals including “Linguistique Balkanique”, “The Journal of Indo-European Studies”, “Orpheus. Journal of Indo-European and Thracian Studies”, “Thraco-Dacica”, “Vox Latina”, “Živa Antika”. His works have also appeared in valued Polish journals (e.g. “Acta Baltico-Slavica”, “Eos”¹, “Meander”, “Biuletyn Polskiego Towarzystwa Językoznawczego”, “Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny”, “Rozprawy Komisji Językowej ŁTN”). Despite having retired, Professor DANKA is still active academically and has recently prepared a manuscript of a historical grammar of Spanish.

¹ Note especially two articles by Prof. DANKA published in “Eos”: I.R. DANKA, *De Feralium et Lemuriorum consimili natura*, Eos LXIV 1976, pp. 257–268; IDEM, *De Larum cultu rustico et familiari*, Eos LXXI 1983, pp. 57–71.

While DANKA's scientific interests have been wide and far-reaching as well as interdisciplinary (combining the perspectives of literary studies, religious studies as well as linguistics), the main field of his research remains comparative historical linguistics. He is one of the leading Polish scholars in Indo-European linguistics. In the domain of literary studies, he has published articles on the comparison between Homer's works and Babylonian epics (*Gilgamesh*). As for religious studies, he has attempted to reconstruct the Indo-European creation myth and identify counterpart deities within the indigenous religions of Indo-European peoples (esp. in the Greek, Roman, Vedic, Baltic and Paleo-Balkan religions), and investigated the genesis and original properties of Greek deities, esp. those of Apollo and Artemis, the Roman religious festivals (Lemuria, Feralia) and lesser deities (Lares, Penates). Professor DANKA's accomplishments in the field of Indo-European linguistics are at least as rich. The languages investigated in his works are numerous, ranging from the Anatolian languages (the habilitation thesis), to Romani (several articles, as well as a fruitful collaboration with the movement for the creation of a standard language and spelling), Sanskrit, Greek and Latin (numerous studies), Pelasgian (the 2007 monograph), to the Baltic and Slavic languages (mainly lexicographic works). The range thus far is impressive, yet DANKA has also made contributions to the study of Oriental languages and other language families (e.g. in his paper on the names of the days of the week). Respected for the analytical and thorough approach, DANKA's works have offered new insights and interpretations. Some of them propose new perspectives on important and controversial issues, e.g. the laryngeal theory or the question of three series of dorsal plosives. He has not shied away from addressing interdisciplinary topics and combined the findings of linguistics, archeology, anthropology, ancient history, religious studies and other humanities – his 1966 study on the Indo-European homeland is a case in point². Moreover, DANKA has conducted detailed research on the Indo-European lexicography, preparing an Indo-European etymological dictionary. The conclusions of this comparative research have not, as yet, resulted in the publication in book form; however, the work has produced a number of detailed articles published by DANKA and his colleagues.

Combining his various interests, Ignacy Ryszard DANKA has undoubtedly contributed significantly to the development of the fields in which he specialises. He remains an authority on comparative historical linguistics, Indo-European phonology and etymology in Poland and internationally. In the 1980s, he established the Łódź school of Indo-European studies.

Professor DANKA has also been striving for years to promote the active use of the reconstructed Indo-European language, which perhaps most spectacularly

² I.R. DANKA, *Problem praojczyzny Indoeuropejczyków* ["The problem of the homeland of the Indo-Europeans"], *Rozprawy Komisji Językowej ŁTN XII* 1966, pp. 83–122.

illustrates his devotion to linguistics. Thanks to him, a number of scholars not only from Łódź (including his former students) are able to communicate in the reconstructed Indo-European language both spoken and written. This championing of the Indo-European language was also characteristic of Klan Ausran [“The Clan of Ausrans”], a group attempting to recreate the rituals of the Indo-European religion (named after the goddess of the dawn, Ausra), which DANKA co-founded in 1954 and has led ever since. One of the main advances made by the group was the composition and delivery of religious hymns in the reconstructed Indo-European language.

DANKA collaborated closely with other well-established names throughout his career, notably Prof. Andrzej Piotr KOWALSKI (University of Gdańsk), Prof. Robert ZAWADZKI (Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa), Prof. Henryk ZIOMEK (University of Georgia), Prof. Krzysztof Tomasz WITCZAK, Dr. Stanisław JURKIN, Dr. Józef MACJON and Dr. Tamara ROSZAK (University of Lodz). Co-authored studies created in the units he headed (mainly the Research Group for the Indo-European Dictionary and the Department of Linguistics and Indo-European Studies) were usually either inspired by him or created under his patronage. Noted for his supportive approach, DANKA welcomed the suggestions of his fellows and assessed the advantages and disadvantages of their proposals objectively, encouraging both collaborators and their teams to pursue their own work, pointing to the interpretational possibilities and discussing problematic issues. His contribution to the co-authored works and inspiration for the works of his disciples were fundamental.

Professor DANKA has participated actively in numerous national and international conferences (in Belgium, Czechia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania, among other places). As a supporter of Living Latin, he has over the years been an enthusiastic participant at a number of Neo-Latinist conferences. He was himself an organiser of two large international conferences (2000, 2004) as well as a number of sessions and national conferences (in Łódź and Ożarów, among others). He chaired the sessions very often, an ideal man for the role thanks to his good command of numerous languages.

Since the very start of his career, DANKA has delivered language courses of Greek and Latin and, over his time at the University of Lodz, he has taught, at one point or another, nearly all the subjects in the curriculum of classical philology. Recognised for his animated delivery and engaging manner, he had and has the ability to make difficult matters accessible and comprehensible to students. He always favoured the diachronic (comparative historical) approach and the etymological method in teaching foreign languages, which is clearly apparent in his publications as well. Apart from the regular classes, he taught optional courses, most notably a course in Sanskrit attended by both students and university colleagues (not only from Classical Philology). During those classes Professor DANKA, a qualified Indo-Aryan philologist, shared his knowledge

of the ancient sacred language of India and its script, *devanagari*. At the meetings of the Indo-European section of the Polish Classical Association, held every month, he taught the reconstructed Indo-European language or gave lectures on grammatical and etymological issues.

Having been elevated to a professorship, he started teaching M.A. seminars which focused on a wide range of topics: etymology, Greek and Latin lexicology, religious studies, comparative linguistics, Italic dialectology and interpretation of the Iguvine tablets. Along with the seminars he supervised about forty master's theses.

DANKA also collaborated internationally in academic tutoring. In cooperation with the University of Uppsala (Sweden) he organised and taught in 1993–1994 a course entitled *Peoples of the Baltic* with a final exam (participants received diplomas for completing the course). He also cooperated with the University of Vilnius and the Polish University in Vilnius, mainly in the fields of the culture of the Baltic peoples and the teaching of their languages.

A dedicated pedagogue, Professor DANKA took care of the Classical Philology students' society in Łódź for 30 years, where he actively encouraged contributions from participants, ensured the continuity of the society along with the scientific level of the presentations during the society's meetings. He organised student tours and participated in two epigraphy camps in Lower Silesia. He was a patron of the Living Latin Section and for many years taught optional classes for students.

He has supervised six doctoral dissertations: by Prof. Krzysztof Tomasz WITCZAK (1996), Dr. habil. Idaliana KACZOR (1997), Prof. Elwira KACZYŃSKA (1999), Dr. habil. Joanna RYBOWSKA (2000), Dr. Anna MACIEJEWSKA (2002) and Dr. Tamara ROSZAK (2006).

Moving on to his didactic and organisational accomplishments, DANKA has received the Rector's Award in this field twice (1985, 1999). His work is continued by his colleagues both in Łódź (the above mentioned as well as Prof. Zbigniew DANEK, Prof. Joanna SOWA, Prof. Hanna ZALEWSKA-JURA) and in other academic centres, e.g. Jan Długosz University in Częstochowa (Prof. Robert ZAWADZKI, Dr. habil. Katarzyna CHMIELEWSKA). One of his former students, Prof. Elwira KACZYŃSKA held the prestigious scholarship of the Foundation for Polish Science twice (2001, 2002).

In the early 1980s, Professor DANKA cooperated with the Esperanto Society at the University of Lodz. Together they created the Interdisciplinary Research Group for International Linguistic Communication, which he presided over for many years. The meetings of the Group (usually on a monthly basis) involved scientific presentations by experts from various fields. As the head of the Group, DANKA organised conferences together with student organisations, thus pioneering a new forum for exchange of thought, open to scholars of various fields, students and anyone interested in the issues of international linguistic communication.

DANKA is no stranger to organisational matters having held a number of administrative positions in the University, including Head of the Chair of Classical Philology in 1996–2005, a period noted for the unit's most vibrant development, and overseeing the Research Group for the Indo-European Dictionary in 1983–2002, and then in 2002–2007 the Department of Linguistics and Indo-European Studies. In 1986–2007 he presided over the Interdisciplinary Research Group for International Linguistic Communication affiliated with the Chair of Classical Philology.

In 1994, he was one of the founders of the journal *"Collectanea Philologica"* and has been its editor from 1995 to 2002 (he co-edited volumes I, III, V and VII and assisted in the editing of the others). Then, in 1997, he created the journal *"Studia Indogermanica Lodziensia"*, whose editor he was until 2008. Since 2002 he has been a member of the editorial board of the Mycenaean journal *"Do-so-mo"*.

Ignacy Ryszard DANKA has been an active member of the Polish Classical Association. He co-founded the Indo-European Section in the Łódź Division of the Association, served as its deputy president and from 1980 to 2005 headed the Indo-European Section. From 1962 to 1973 he was secretary of the Łódź Division of the Association. From 1984 to 2007 he was a member of the Scientific Society of Łódź. Since 1982 he has been involved in the organisation of the Latin Language Competition for Secondary Schools. In 1995, he was nominated to be president of the Qualifications Committee supervising the professional development and specialisation of Latin teachers in four voivodeships (Łódź, Sieradz, Skierniewice and Piotrków).

Professor DANKA's rich activity has been acknowledged on a number of occasions. He received ministerial awards – in 1987 as a co-author of an academic textbook, in 1988 for his own publication. In 2002 he received the Medal of the Commission of National Education. DANKA's own university has recognised his work as well. In 1984, he received the Golden Award of the University, in 1985 the Medal *"The University of Lodz in the Service of the Society and Science"*. He was also given the Rector's Awards for scientific achievements in 1984, 1987 and 2000. In 2007, both he and his team received the Rector's Award for cooperative achievement, a series of publications on Indo-European linguistics.

As an academic at the University of Lodz for 45 years, DANKA enriched the institution not only with his scholarly insights, but also with his ebullient supportive nature, motivating students and colleagues alike. Highly-regarded as an expert on ancient and contemporary languages, he was and is devoted to popularising the knowledge of linguistics, religious studies and classical philology as well as the use of Living Latin and the reconstructed Indo-European language. He has been a much-valued mentor for many younger scholars and throughout his teaching career he delighted his own students, but also inspired specialists in other fields with his kindness and passion for research.

The special session of the Senate which prompted the creation of this article celebrated the achievements of three distinguished scholars who gained their

doctoral titles at the University of Lodz. Professor DANKA was the first to be introduced and honoured in the course of the ceremony. Fulfilling his role as the honorary supervisor of the doctorate renewal, Prof. Krzysztof Tomasz WITCZAK presented Professor DANKA's academic accomplishments and contributions, which we briefly described above. At the end of his address, he read out the text of the diploma awarded to Professor DANKA:

Q. F. F. F. Q. S.

SUMMIS AUSPICIIS
SERENISSIMAE REI PUBLICAE POLONORUM

NOS
ANTONIUS ROZALSKI
SCIENTIARUM NATURALIUM DOCTOR
MICROBIOLOGICARUM DOCTRINARUM PROFESSOR ORDINARIUS
UNIVERSITATIS LODZIENSIS
H. T. RECTOR MAGNIFICUS

IOANNA JABLKOVSKA
HUMANIORUM ARTIUM SCIENTIAEQUE LITTERARUM DOCTRINAE
LIBERALIUM DOCTRINARUM PROFESTRIX ORDINARIA
FACULTATIS PHILOLOGICAE
H. T. DECANA

LECTURIS OMNIBUS SALUTEM DICIMUS

EIUSQUE REI ADMONEMUS QUOD
UNIVERSITATIS LODZIENSIS SENATUS AUCTORITATE
CONSTITUTUM EST
UT DIGNITATES UNIVERSITATIS STUDIORUM
ARGUMENTIS INVESTIGATIONUM PER DECIES LUSTRA ACTARUM
CONFIRMATAE RENOVENTUR ET COMPROBENTUR

ITAQUE CUM VIR CLARISSIMUS ATQUE ILLUSTRISSIMUS

IGNATIUS RICHARDUS DANKA

HUMANIORUM ARTIUM SCIENTIAEQUE LINGUARUM DOCTOR
PROFESSOR ORDINARIUS

ABHINC DECIES LUSTRIS ANTE IN UNIVERSITATE NOSTRA
DOCTORIS EXCELLENTIEM GRADUM DIGNITATEMQUE ASSECUTUS
DOCTORALI SACRAMENTO DICTO DIGNISSIMUS APPARUERIT
QUOD RITE CONSTITUTUS

PROMOTOR CHRISTOPHORUS THOMAS VITCZAK
HUMANIORUM ARTIUM SCIENTIAEQUE LINGUARUM DOCTOR
LIBERALIUM DOCTRINARUM PROFESSOR ORDINARIUS
CONFIRMAVERIT

NOS POTESTATE ATQUE LEGE NOBIS DATA
EIDEM CLARISSIMO ET VALDE MERITO DOMINO
HANC DIGNITATEM RENOVAVIMUS ET COMPROBAVIMUS

IN EIUSQUE REI FIDEM ET IN AETERNAM REI MEMORIAM
HOC DIPLOMA NOSTRAE UNIVERSITATIS SIGILLO SANCIENTIUM
CURAVIMUS ET EIDEM DOMINO TRADIDIMUS

DATUM LODZIAE DIE V MENSIS DECEMBRIS ANNO MMXIX

PROMOTOR

RECTOR MAGNIFICUS

DECANA

At this point, and to a round of applause from everyone present, the diploma was presented to Professor DANKA by His Magnificence the Rector, Prof. Antoni RÓŻALSKI, who congratulated him.



Fig. 2. Prof. Danka receiving the diploma from the Rector, Prof. Antoni Różalski
Phot. by Adam Wróbel

The floor was given to the Professor himself, who thanked the audience for their warm appreciation and shared some memories from his career, as well as the principles and ideas he believes in, explaining why he has never considered other Indo-European languages such as Latin, Greek, English, German or Russian as foreign ones for speakers of Polish, as they all stem from one source and have a single ancestor language, Indo-European. As a tutor, he has endeavoured to emphasise the undeniable common patterns linking all of the Indo-European family and postulated the use of etymological methods in language teaching. He declared that he would always feel a strong emotional bond with the University of Lodz, even in retirement, and rounded off by warmly thanking those assembled for coming to celebrate his life and scholarly contributions, and expressing his appreciation for the kind words given in his honour by Prof. Krzysztof Tomasz WITCZAK.



Fig. 3. Prof. Danka's lively and expressive way of speaking.
Phot. by Adam Wróbel

The event was attended by a number of guests, including his daughter Dominika and his grandson Piotr. Among those gathered in the Biedermann Palace were also numerous students, former colleagues and friends of Professor DANKA. After the official ceremony, the guests congratulated him, expressed their appreciation and, accordingly, sang *Plurimos annos*.

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