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In memoriam Anna Świderek (1925-2008)

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IN MEMORIAM
ANNA ŚWIDEREK (1925–2008)

A NNA ŚWIDEREK, PROFESSOR EMERITA of the University of Warsaw, and former head of the Department of Papyrology died in Warsaw on 16 August 2008. For the international scientific community she was a researcher and editor of Greek papyri, but in Poland she was generally known as a keen writer of popular books on history and culture of the Hellenistic world. In the last two decades of her life she wrote books on the Bible, making her main point of interest (but by no means an exclusive one) the Old Testament.

Anna Świderek (as she was styled in earlier or foreign language publications) or Anna Świderkówna (as she insisted to be styled in correct Polish, which respects feminine forms of family names), was born in Warsaw on 5 December 1925. Her father Marian Świderek was then a promising young scientist, a specialist in chemistry. Son of a modest family, he had a brilliant past as a soldier, one of those who defended the homeland in 1920. His wife, Halina *née* Borkowska, also worked in the field of chemistry. Her family possessed an enterprise specialised in electric equipment. The establishment 'Bracia Borkowscy' (Borkowski Brothers), also called 'Brabork', was very well known in pre-war Poland. Anna Świderek's maternal grandfather Edward Borkowski was the founder of the factory which continued to develop rapidly during Anna's childhood. Among

many electric appliances produced by the innovative Borkowskis, the first entirely Polish made refrigerator can be mentioned. In 1939 an advanced model of X-ray device, partly designed by Anna Świderek's mother, was sent by the company to be shown at the International Exhibition in New York.

Very early Anna Świderek took interest in Classics. In January 1939, as a young schoolgirl, she wrote an enthusiastic letter to Tadeusz Zieliński (1859–1944), a famous Polish classical scholar, the author of the monograph *Cicero im Wandel der Jahrhunderte* and of numerous other books on classical antiquity, and received from the old master a very serious answer. At that time Anna Świderek could not know that in the future she would become the head of a university chair located in the professor Tadeusz Zieliński's former flat at Warsaw University!

The German invasion of Poland in September 1939 put an end to the quiet existence of the Świderek family. They left Warsaw before the siege of the city, seeking a refuge in south-eastern Poland. In the city of Lwów, after the German siege, the refugees were surprised by the Soviet invasion. The odyssey of Anna and her family was not very long but full of adventures. From the Soviet-occupied part of Poland they managed to return to Warsaw. The city was already under German control. Anna Świderek's father was arrested and sent to the concentration camp in Buchenwald, where he remained until his unexpected liberation in 1943, due to the incessant efforts of his wife.

During the years 1939–1945 Anna Świderek and her family constantly had to cope with the new difficult and perilous situation. Universities and high schools were closed; all kinds of more advanced study were forbidden. Anna Świderek had at that time the experience of a dangerous attendance at courses of a secret Polish high school, under menace of death penalty inflicted by the occupant. Soon after graduating from a secret Polish school, she joined a patriotic conspiracy under the auspices of the underground Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*).

During the Warsaw Uprising against Germans (August–September 1944) Anna Świderek was a nurse in a Polish hospital in the fighting city. After the fall of the Uprising on 2 October 1944, the inhabitants were expelled from the city. Anna Świderek with her mother spent the rest of

the war time in a prisoners' camp in Germany. Only in June 1945 they could return to the ruined city of Warsaw.

The Świdereks were lucky enough to have a small flat in one of a few intact houses on the left bank of the Vistula river. Professor Marian Świderek, who had been wounded in the Warsaw Uprising, became the Director of the Chemical Research Institute and a professor of Warsaw Technological University. The Borkowski factory, the basis of the welfare of the family, was confiscated by the post-war people's government.

In the difficult post-war conditions, Anna Świderek began her study of Classics at Warsaw University under the direction of eminent philologist Kazimierz Kumaniecki (1905–1977) and papyrologist Jerzy Manteuffel (1900–1954), the editor of *P. Vars.* and *P. Edfou*. Anna Świderek was still a student when she was appointed an assistant (1 March 1946). Such exceptional nominations were possible in the understaffed post-war university.

A significant episode in Anna Świderek's life was an opportunity to accompany (in 1947) her father on a long service trip across the ocean. In New York at Columbia University Anna Świderek met papyrologist William L. Westermann. At that time in Poland it was a rare privilege to leave the destroyed country, which – for reasons conditioned by the new division of Europe – was gradually closing to the Western world. However, Anna Świderek did not think of staying abroad and was rather unhappy with the absence from the university, which was prolonged to five months. She urged her father to return to Warsaw as soon as possible. They abandoned a visit to France and England, which her father had planned, and Anna was at home in time to begin the academic year.

Professor Marian Świderek was seriously ill as a consequence of war injuries. After his death in 1949, Anna Świderek continued to live together with her grandmother and mother. Having completed her MA study in 1949, she wrote rather quickly a dissertation on the aetiological legend in the poetry of Callimachus and in 1951 obtained in Warsaw her Ph.D. After that date she worked under the guidance of professor Jerzy Manteuffel. Thus began Anna Świderek's way to papyrology. After a long illness, Jerzy Manteuffel died prematurely in 1954. Anna Świderek continued to work in the Institute of Papyrology directed by Raphael Taubenschlag (1881–1958). Having learned the papyrological art from Jerzy

Manteuffel in Warsaw, she received her further experience in reading papyri in 1957 from André Bataille in Paris, at the Institut de Papyrologie of the Sorbonne, where she spent five months with a scholarship. She also learned from Eric G. Turner and Herbert C. Youtie (1963).

In 1959 within the framework of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology (a Warsaw University institution located in Cairo) directed by famous archaeologist Kazimierz Michałowski, Anna Świderek spent nine months in Egypt, working on the papyri of the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria. The result was published in 1964 in a volume *P. Alex. = Papyrus grecs du Musée Gréco-Romain d'Alexandrie*, Warszawa 1964, edited by Anna Świderek together with Mariangela Vandoni (Università Statale di Milano).

In 1959 Anna Świderek published her 'Habilitationsschrift' entitled *W 'państwie' Apolloniosa. Społeczeństwo wczesnoptolemejskie w Fajum w świetle archiwum Zenona* (*In the Estate of Apollonios. The Early Ptolemaic Society of the Fayum in the Light of the Zenon Archive*). This is a detailed study of the life in the *dôrea* of Apollonios, the dioecetes of Ptolemy II, based on the Zenon papyri. In 1960 she obtained her habilitation and in 1961 was appointed a head of the new Chair of Papyrology at Warsaw University. By 1961 the Institute of Papyrology had been divided into the Chair of Ancient Law (Henryk Kupiszewski) and the Chair of Papyrology (Anna Świderek). Those two units shared one library and edited together *The Journal of Juris-tic Papyrology*, which Raphael Taubenschlag had founded in 1946.

Anna Świderek, as the head of the only chair of papyrology in post-war Poland, received the spiritual inheritance not only of Jerzy Manteuffel and Raphael Taubenschlag but also of the earlier predecessors: Stanisław Witkowski, Stefan Waszyński, Ludwik Piotrowicz, Franciszek Smolka.

In 1961 Poland witnessed the Tenth International Congress of Papyrology (Warsaw and Cracow), an important event which was a common achievement of the protagonists of papyrology and classical scholarship in Poland (cf. *Actes du x^e Congrès International de Papyrologues. Varsovie – Cracovie, 3–9 septembre 1961*, Wrocław – Varsovie – Cracovie 1964).

Anna Świderek worked on some papyri from foreign collections. Among many institutions, she collaborated also with the Papyrussammlung of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin and published several items from

that collection in a few articles. She also established a close co-operation between the Warsaw Department of Papyrology and the Departement Klassieke Studies of the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium. That co-operation developed into a close friendship between the Warsaw papyrologists and classical scholars of Leuven.

Among the topics elaborated by Anna Świderek there were the problems of the Greek society in Egypt as represented in the Zenon archive, land registers and landed property in Egypt, including also the question of *anachoresis*, the religion of Sarapis and the Hellenomemphites.

Anna Świderek had a genuine taste for writing. She translated into Polish some ancient Greek lyrics: her poetic version of the idyl of Theocritus on the magic (*Pharmakeutria*) has been considered a masterpiece. As a young philologist she translated St. Augustine's *De vita beata* and her version found in 1952 the admiration of Tadeusz Sinko, the *doyen* of Polish classical scholars of the time. From that period dated her friendship and co-operation with Jerzy Łanowski. She also wrote texts on antiquity for the Polish Radio.

Her first book on papyri for a general reader appeared in 1959 (reprinted 1970): *Kiedy piaski egipskie przemówiły po grecku* (*When Egyptian Sands Began to Speak Greek*), the next one, *Historie nieznanne Historii* (*Stories Unknown to History*), was published in 1962. In 1967 she published a book on the political history of the Hellenistic world, *Hellada królów* (*Hellas of the Kings*), followed in 1974 by a panorama of the Hellenistic culture, *Hellenika. Wizerunek epoki od Aleksandra do Augusta* (*Hellenika. A View of an Epoch from Alexander to Augustus*). She never wrote a complete manual of papyrology for Polish readers. However, in 1975 she published a brief introduction to papyrology, *Papirologia i papirusy. Pięć odczytów* (*Papyrology and Papyri. Five Lectures*). Then in 1979 came a book on the Cleopatras, *Siedem Kleopatry* (*Seven Cleopatras*). In 1983 Anna Świderek published a study *Życie codzienne w Egipcie greckich papirusów* (*Everyday Life in the Greek Papyri from Egypt*). Some of her books were translated into Czech and Hungarian.

Anna Świderek directed the Chair of Papyrology as an associate professor (docent). Early in 1969 she became a professor. Only in 1986 she received the long expected promotion to the rank of full professor. The Chair of Papyrology was a research unit, without regular students. Anna

Świderek, however, had a real vocation for teaching. She educated a number of specialists in Greco-Roman Egypt. Among her university disciples and collaborators in those times were Marta Piątkowska, Zbigniew Borkowski (1936–1991), Jan Krzysztof Winnicki (1942–2009), Adam Łukaszewicz, and others. Warsaw papyrologists were always known as a kind of ‘family’.

In the mid-1980s, when Anna Świderek was still the head of the chair, a new generation of successors (disciples of Zbigniew Borkowski) appeared in the Papyrology rooms in the person of Tomasz Derda, followed soon by epigraphist Adam Łajtar.

Anna Świderek often mentioned her desire which was to read Homer with her disciples. That dream never came true. However, we were reading other Greek authors with her.

Anna Świderek’s seminar was a meeting point of papyrologists and archaeologists, lawyers (Maria Zabłocka, Tomasz Giaro, Jan Zabłocki *et alii*), historians and philologists (suffice it to mention Małgorzata Borowska, Helena Cichocka, Mikołaj Szymański).

The informal scholarly society whose members worked in the small library of the Warsaw Papyrology included not only the direct collaborators or disciples but also such outstanding Warsaw scholars as Iza Biezuńska-Małowist, Henryk Kupiszewski (who was a successor of Raphael Taubenschlag), Cezary Kunderewicz, Hanna Geremek, Benedetto Bravo, Ewa Wipszycka-Bravo, Maria Nowicka and many others.

Renowned foreign visitors were not infrequent – suffice it to mention, *e.g.*, Eric G. Turner, John R. Rea (three months in 1975), Günther Poethke, Dieter Hagedorn, Edmond Van’t Dack, Julie Vélissaropoulos-Karakostas, Jean Straus, Itzhak F. Fikhman, Heinz Heinen, Peter J. Sijpesteijn, Jean Bingen, Roger S. Bagnall, Ludwig Koenen, Willy Peremans, Willy Clarysse, Hans Hauben, Dorothy Thompson, Étienne Bernand, Gerhard Thür, Alfons Wouters, Joseph Méléze-Modrzejewski (who had been a disciple of Raphael Taubenschlag).

Anna Świderek was fond of travelling, which was not easy in Poland in the 1950s and 60s (although after 1956 it was certainly easier than in the period 1948–1954). Travelling to the Eastern Mediterranean for scholarly purposes was facilitated by the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeo-

logy. In Egypt Anna Świderek enjoyed not only her stay in Alexandria but also a visit to the Fayum, which she mentioned many times. She also visited many other archaeological sites on the Nile, including for example Tell Atrib. However, after the sojourn in 1959 Anna Świderek never returned to Egypt, a country whose Hellenistic past meant so much to her. The reason was her full engagement in work at home and perhaps also her moderate interest in archaeology.

In 1977, as a result of a tendency to create large units in all fields, also the small Chair of Papyrology, which formerly had been an exclusively research unit, had to join a bigger structure. Papyrology was incorporated as a department into the Institute of Archaeology of Warsaw University. Papyrologists were now to teach numerous students. Professor Anna Świderek enthusiastically approved the new situation. She enjoyed the opportunity to impart historical knowledge to her new audience (although she had no real inclination for archaeology). However, soon after the opening of the activities of the new department in the Institute (and after the death of her mother), Anna Świderek experienced an ultimate evolution of her scientific interests, which focused now on the study of the Bible. That aspect of her scholarly life was not entirely new and resulted from her profound religious feelings. Due to her literary bent, she became soon a renowned writer on biblical matters, who, however, continued at the same time to touch upon classics and papyrology.

In 1982 *Słownik pisarzy antycznych* (*Dictionary of Ancient Writers*) was published under Anna Świderek's editorial care. In 1991 she published a book on the Hellenistic religion, *Bogowie zeszli z Olimpu* (*The Gods Descended Olympus*). Later, she wrote almost exclusively on the Bible; suffice it to mention a series of *Rozmowy o Biblii* (*Talks on the Bible*) published in the years 1994–2006. These books were widely read and made her famous in Poland.

A few years ago, in 2003, a very personal interview with Anna Świderek was published, accompanied by a set of interesting photographs from her entire life.

Anna Świderek never married. She considered her disciples her 'children'. In the complex 20th century the goddess Fortune was rather propitious to Anna Świderek. Unlike many Warsaw civilians, she was not killed

or wounded during the war and the Uprising. In the difficult post-war times she lived a rather undisturbed life and had for a long time enjoyed good health. That may be also considered a confirmation of the words of the Scripture: *ἰλαρὸν γὰρ δότῃν ἀγαπᾶ ὁ θεός* (II Kor. 9:7).

Until her late years as a *professor emerita* she continued to lecture at Warsaw University, where she spent 63 years of her life.

Anna Świderek was buried together with her parents at the cemetery of Stare Powązki in Warsaw.

[*Adam Łukaszewicz*]