



Obituary: Professor Jan Strzałko (1943–2016)



Professor Jan Strzałko – physical anthropologist, longtime Editor-in-Chief of *Anthropological Review*, scholar and academic of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland, author of numerous articles and textbooks, authority on human biology and ecology and a key figure in Polish anthropology, died August 15, 2016 in Poznań.

Jan Strzałko was born January 31, 1943 in the Eastern borderlands of the former Polish territory – in Kleck, Nowogródek Voivodeship (now part of Belarus). His family repatriated to Poland in 1945 from Strzałkowo and settled in Poznań.

He studied biology and anthropology at the Faculty of Biology and Earth Sciences, Adam Mickiewicz University during years 1960–1965. As a 4th-year graduate student, he received a scholarship – in the form of an intern assistantship. He completed a master’s degree in 1965 (and joined the AMU’s Faculty of Biology), his doctoral degree in 1968, and a post-doctoral degree – habilitation – in 1974. The academic title of Professor was conferred on him in 1989 (after seven years’ delay, due to unfavorable opinion of the communist authorities of the time).

Professor Strzałko was the first Dean of the newly established Department of Biology Adam Mickiewicz University (1984–1985) – his term of office, as well as those of the Rector and Deans of other Faculties at AMU and other Poznań universities, was interrupted by “adequate committees” and the then Minister of Science and Higher Education. Between years 1984–1987 he was head of the De-

partment of Anthropology at the Faculty of Biology, founder and head of the Department of Human Population Ecology at the Institute of Anthropology (1987–2012), and from 1990–1996 Vice-rector for Research at Adam Mickiewicz University.

Since 1962 he was a member of the Polish Anthropological Society, from 1969 held various positions on the board of the Poznań branch of the society, and from 1974 – on the Main Board. After several years working on the editorial body of the Society's journal – *Przegląd Antropologiczny (Anthropological Review)*, he was appointed member of the Editorial Committee in 1973 (serving as *Editorial Assistant*). In 1978 he became Deputy Editor, and in 1986 Editor-in-Chief of the journal – a position he held for 25 years.

Professor Strzałko conducted excavations at various anthropological and archeological sites in Poland (including the cemetery of Lusatian culture at Sobiejuchy, Żnin district [1970–1974]). In 1974 he participated in a field research expedition to the Ruwenzori Mountains (Uganda) and Mount Kenya (Kenya).

In the first years of his scientific career, Professor Strzałko interests were mainly the morphology and morphogenesis of the human skeleton, including the factors affecting the variability of the skeleton. He then went on to investigate the research methodology of prehistoric populations – studying bone material obtained from excavations. The third sphere to which he devoted attention was human population ecology and the relationships between biological and cultural evolution. A fourth interest was physical attractiveness – the research being as much anthropological as psychoevolutionary – then a new field, now

being addressed by many researchers. Last, but not least, was the problem of so-called human races, racial stereotypes and xenophobia.

Professor Strzałko was editor and co-author of several books, including university textbooks “*Antropologia fizyczna*” (Physical anthropology) and “*Antropologia*” (Anthropology), for which he received the awards of the Minister of Higher Education and Technology (1981) and Minister of National Education (1990). He was also Chief and Managing Editor of the 1st Polish translation of the American textbook “*BIOL-OGY: Campbell, Reece*” (2012). For his outstanding achievements in the fields of education and science, and in recognition of the importance of his work, he was awarded the Medal of Commission of National Education (1981) and Knight's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta (1990).

Jan Strzałko was not only an eminent and creative researcher, but also a gifted and inspiring academic teacher. He taught courses in various subjects: Human anatomy, Physical anthropology, Paleoanthropology, Primatology, Human ecology, Mechanisms of evolution, and others. He was a guest lecturer in Poland, and abroad – as Visiting Professor at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria, in 1993. During his long career at Adam Mickiewicz University, he supervised over 150 masters students and mentored 9 PhD students (the first of which being Professor Maciej Henneberg [1976], now at the University of Adelaide, Australia).

Professor Strzałko had broad interests (from biology and statistics to literature and classical music) and enormous knowledge. He was extremely well-read and one could engage him about almost

anything. He admired Mozart. He popularized the science of evolution, gave comments to the press, radio and television, shaped and directed the scientific development of young researchers, and was a keen debater and reviewer of high academic standards. At the same time, he was an extremely warm and cultured man – a true gentleman of great intellect. His shining mind, curiosity about the world and people, passion, competence and openness, won him sympathizers in

his professional life, and in his private life – friends.

At the end of 2011 he took ill (which he bore with great courage and serenity), and yet, his death was sudden and unexpected. He passed away, leaving his wife, daughter, son and grandson. Jan, you are sorely missed.

Katarzyna A. Kaszycka

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