



MACHALSKI, FRANCISZEK

MACHALSKI, FRANCISZEK, Polish Iranist (b. Braddock, Pennsylvania, 1904; d. Krakow, Poland, 1979). Machalski was born to a Polish peasant family that was working in the United States. When he was six his parents returned to their small farm in Żołyńia, near Łańcut in southern Poland.

In 1924, in spite of his family's very modest means, Machalski entered the Jan Kazimierz University of Lwów (now Lvov in Western Ukraine), at that time a major academic center of southeastern Poland. He first studied Polish and German literatures, then became interested in Sanskrit, taught by Professor Stefan Stasiak (1884-1962), and finally choose Islamic studies, headed by Professor Zygmunt Smogorzewski (1884-1931). In 1930, under the supervision of the latter, he defended his doctoral thesis on the prophecy of Muḥammad, at the same time (1929-31) being employed as a vice-assistant at the Chair of the History of Islam. In 1931-39, Machalski taught Polish literature at the schools of the provincial cities of Tłumacz and Tarnopol. He then published two works on the Oriental influence on Polish modernist poetry (Machalski, 1932a and 1932b), and one on Nāṣer Kōsrow's *Safar-nāma* (Machalski, 1937). As a result of his World War II experiences, he became seriously involved in Iranian studies.

Soon after Nazi Germany attacked Poland from the west on 1 September 1939, the Red Army entered its eastern provinces. Under Soviet occupation, massive deportations of Polish citizens to Siberia and Central Asia took place. Machalski was arrested by the Soviet secret police (NKVD) in June 1941, and passed through a long chain of detention camps and prisons, ending in



Verkhne-Uralsk in Kazakhstan. In the same month, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, which forced the Soviets to join the Allies. According to a treaty concluded between the Polish government in exile and the Kremlin (Sikorski-Majski Treaty of 30 July 1941), a Polish army was created on Soviet territory, and amnesty was announced for Polish prisoners and deportees so that they could enlist. A part of this army (of ca. 80,000), under the command of General Władysław Anders, together with some 40,000 civilians, was allowed to leave the USSR through its southern border to Persia in order to join the Allied forces operating in the Mediterranean region. As a member of the Polish troops, Machalski entered Persia through Bandar-e Pahlavi in April 1942, but was immediately sent to a military camp in Palestine. He came back to Tehran in the spring of 1943 under a scholarship granted to him by the Polish Society for Iranian Studies (*Polskie Towarzystwo Studiów Irańskich*), founded by a group of Polish exiled professors and intellectuals in Persia. During his three-year stay in Persia (1943-46), while working as a teacher and supervisor of Polish schools, Machalski was involved in the activities of the Society, first as its secretary, then its president, and board member of its bulletin (*Studia irańskie–Etudes iraniennes*), of which three volumes appeared in 1943-45. The activities of the Society included research on different aspects of Persian life and culture (for this, scholarships were granted to young scholars and students), cooperation with Persian cultural and educational institutions (most importantly the Tehran University), contacts with academics, writers, journalists, etc., as well as a program of introducing Persian culture to Polish refugees, and Polish culture to the Persians, through a series of lectures, publications, and meetings. Due to his knowledge of basic (literary rather than colloquial) Persian, acquired during his studies, Machalski eagerly took on the role of interpreter and mediator. In this capacity, he made many personal contacts (among others with Sa'īd Nafisi, Sayyed Moḥammad-'Alī Jamālzāda, Mojtabā [Minovi](#), and [Bozorg 'Alavi](#)), and acquired knowledge of everyday realities, and of intellectual and political life of Persia. In 1945 he became a member of *Anjoman-e Irānšenāsi* (Society of Iranian Studies) in Tehran. Machalski's book of memoirs, *Wędrowki irańskie* ('Iranian wanderings,' Machalski, 1960e), although affected by communist censorship, is an interesting testimony of his experiences. In Persia, Machalski published some translations of classical and modern Persian poetry (Machalski, 1944 and 1945b), a paper on the Persian language (Machalski, 1945a), and another on Persian borrowings in the Polish language (Machalski, 1946). At the beginning of 1946 Machalski left for Lebanon and for over a year worked in a Polish school and in the Polish Institute in Beirut, where his valuable research on



Polish-Iranian commercial and industrial relations was published in 1948 (Machalski, 1948b). His paper on Lebanese folk poetry appeared in 1957 (Machalski, 1957). In the summer of 1947 Machalski returned to Poland to join his wife and children, repatriated from the Soviet Union.

While working as a schoolteacher in Bytom in Upper Silesia, Machalski lectured on Persian language and literature at the Jagellonian University in Krakow from 1951, and obtained a formal post in 1956, thus initiating specialized Persian studies at this University. Prior to that, classical literary Persian had been taught by Professor Tadeusz Kowalski (1889-1948), as a part of the Islamic studies curriculum, and some Old Persian and Avestan—at the Department of Indology—by Professor Helena Willman-Grabowska (1870-1957), but no separate Iranian studies existed in Krakow. In 1969 Machalski became Associate Professor, and since that time up to his retirement in 1974, he was the head of the Department of Iranian Studies at the Institute of Oriental Philology of Jagellonian University. For many years, he chaired the Krakow branch of the Polish Oriental Society (*Polskie Towarzystwo Orientalistyczne*), was a member of the Oriental Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and a board member of the periodical *Folia Orientalia*, published in Krakow since 1959.

Under the communist regime, Machalski had few possibilities to visit Persia. He only went for short visits on the occasion of conferences or celebrations in 1966, 1971, and 1976, so his research and teaching were chiefly based on the knowledge, experience, and books collected in Persia during the war. Machalski was a teacher to subsequent generations of Krakow Iranologists, the first to teach Persian as a live, modern language, and to promote Iranian studies as an independent discipline in Poland.

Machalski's scholarly interests were numerous. While his works on classical Persian literature bring little new and are generally aimed at introducing great Iranian names (*Avicenna*, *Ferdowsi*, *Ḳayyām*, *Sa'di*, *Hafez*, *Jāmi*) to the Polish public, his most important works are those concerning the literature of the Qajar and early Pahlavi periods: *Modern Persian historical novel* (Machalski, 1952); *Shams and Toghra by M. B. Khosrovi of Kermanshah* (Machalski, 1956 and 1959d); and, most importantly, *La littérature de l'Iran contemporain. La poésie persane* in 3 volumes published in 1965, 1967, and 1980, the last one post mortem (Machalski, 1965-80). Machalski's further works concerning literary developments of the same epoch are "Le roman sur la vie de Nāder Šāh Afšār" (1960d); "Principeaux courants de la prose persane



moderne” (1961c); “Āk-ond Mollā Fath ‘Ali (1962a); “Persian Poetry of the Revolution” (1963a); “Persian Court Poetry of the Kāgār Epoch” (1964); and “Persian Literature of the 20th Century” (1971b). He also published a number of monographic papers on modern poets such as ‘Ešqi (1959b), Nimā Yušij (1960b), Nāderpur (1963b), Bahār (1970b), and others.

Some of his best papers are devoted to cultural and political life in Pahlavi Persia: “Materiaux pour la g n se du th atre moderne en Iran” (Machalski, 1959a); “Political parties in Iran in the years 1941-46” (Machalski, 1961b); “Vaḥid Dastgardī and his Armaġ n” (Machalski, 1962b); “La presse en Iran sous le r gime des Alli s” (Machalski, 1966); “Notes on the Intellectual Movement in Iran 1921-41” (Machalski, 1967c), and “Iranian Magazine  K veh’ ” (Machalski, 1971a). A number of Machalski’s works concern Polish-Iranian cultural relations: “Persian borrowings in Polish” (Machalski, 1946); “Polish influences in Persian industry” (Machalski, 1948b); “Contemporary Polish Novel in Persian Translation” (Machalski, 1953b); “Les motifs iraniens dans la litt rature polonaise,” (Machalski, 1965); “La litt rature de l’Iran en Pologne” (Machalski, 1974); “AHis other field of interest was Persian onomastics, both toponyms (Machalski, 1953a) and personal names (Machalski, 1967a, 1967b, and 1970d). Machalski translated some pieces of classical and modern Persian literature into Polish, most importantly *D st n-e Z l-o Rud ba*, which he rendered in prose and commented on (Machalski, 1961a). His translations of modern authors (Bah r, Jam lz da,  Oej zi, Hed yat, Mo tafawi, and others) were regularly published in *Przegl d Orientalistyczny*, a quarterly of the Polish Oriental Society. A selection of Bozorg ‘Alavi’s prose, translated by Machalski together with J zef Bielawski, came out in Warsaw in 1955 as a book *Jej oczy* (‘Her eyes,’ Persian original title *  smh -ya *).

Machalski was not only a scholar, but also a fervent popularizer of knowledge about Persia. Some of his works, such as a popular history of Iran (Machalski, 1960c), a large entry on Iranian religions (Machalski, 1968), and a number of articles in newspapers and magazines, were addressed to the general public. He compiled a Persian Reader in two volumes (Machalski, 1953c), which includes samples of classical and modern Persian literature, and on which several generations of students were educated.



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Abbreviations: *FO* – *Folia Orientalia*; *PO* – *Przegląd Orientalistyczny*; *RO* – *Rocznik Orientalistyczny*; *SI* – *Studia irańskie*

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