

PREFACE

The volumes of *Studia Geomorphologica Carpatho-Balcanica* No. 53 and 54 are dedicated to Professor Leszek Starkel on the occasion of his 90th birthday, which falls on September 8, 2021.

These volumes are a collection of thirteen papers written by geomorphologists from the Canada, France, India, Romania, Ukraine, USA, and Poland. They are both dedicated to the subject of the Quaternary paleogeography of river valleys and fluvial geomorphology as well as present-day morphogenetic processes. These are all issues Professor Starkel examined almost throughout his entire life in science. Due to the large number of contributions submitted for this special publication, the papers were assigned to two separate special volumes. One volume concentrates on the problem of morphogenesis of mountains and uplands areas, while the second on the evolution of river valleys. The Editors would like to thank the Authors for their effort to produce this special collection of research papers.

The year of Professor Starkel's 90th birthday is also the year of the 70th anniversary of his first geomorphological mapping of the marginal zone of the Carpathian Foothills and a section of the Wisłoka river valley in the vicinity of Dębica town. The map was in print a short time later. Professor Starkel was a geography student at Jagiellonian University at the time. Two years later, he began his scientific work at the Institute of Geography at the Polish Academy of Sciences at the Department of Geomorphology and Hydrology of Mountains and Uplands in Kraków (current name: Department of Geoenvironmental Research). Professor Starkel was a researcher at the Institute until 2018.

Over the years Professor Starkel has studied a broad spectrum of scientific issues leading to the publication of more than 500 research publications. The Professor has also engaged in an array of other types of scientific activity including participation in domestic and international research projects as well as interdisciplinary teams and countless conferences in Poland and abroad. His scientific engagements were discussed in detail in publications in the year 2003 dedicated to the Professor's work on the 50th anniversary of his employment at the Institute of Geography at the Polish Academy of Sciences (Prace Geograficzne IGiPZ PAN no. 189) as well as on his 80th birthday in 2011 (*Geographia Polonica* vol. 84).



Prof. dr hab. Leszek Starkel (photo by Z. Rączkowska)

Professor Starkel's 90th birthday provides an occasion to showcase his scientific work after his official retirement in 2001 and also after his 80th birthday in 2011. The Professor did not stop working after his retirement. In fact, he remained scientifically very active in the 2010s by writing summaries and autobiographies, giving interviews, and participating in domestic and international conferences. While Professor Starkel was not able to take part in the most recent International Geomorphological Conference in his beloved India in 2017 due to health concerns, he was asked by the Conference organizers to write a memoir based on his many years of research in the country. The memoir was published in the *Journal of Indian Geomorphology* and distributed among all the participants of the Conference.

Over the last several decades, the Professor has received acclaim in Poland and abroad in areas such as relief evolution in young mountain areas, altitudinal zonation of geoecosystems, and the role of extreme phenomena in relief evolution in many regions of the world any many morphoclimatic zones (Carpathians, Himalayas, Meghalaya Upland in India, Khangai Mts. in Mongolia, Caucasus). Another key research area in the Professor's portfolio is his work on the Late Pleistocene and Holocene evolution of valley floors, alluvial sequences, and hillslopes. Particularly is the Professor's lifetime interest in paleogeography and stratigraphy of the Holocene. Other works produced by Professor Starkel include papers on applied geomorphology in the area of environmental assessment and natural resources management in agriculture. Other significant studies included his use of geomorphologic surveys.

The following are some of the most well-known and most frequently cited works written in the English language by Professor Starkel: *The role of catastrophic rainfall in the shaping of the relief of the lower Himalaya (Darjeeling Hills)* (1972), *The role of extreme (catastrophic) meteorological events in the contemporary evolution of slopes* (1976), *The reflection of hydrologic changes in the fluvial environment of the temperate zone during the last 15 000 years* (1983). Some of his most often cited works in Polish include the following: the textbooks *Paleogeografia holocenu (Paleogeography of the Holocene)* (1977) and *Geografia Polski. Środowisko przyrodnicze (Geography of Poland – the natural environment)* (1991, ed. L. Starkel), and monograph *Ewolucja doliny Wisły od ostatniego zlodowacenia do dziś (Evolution of the Vistula River valley from the last glaciation until the present-day)* (2001).

A book that may be best described as the summary of Professor Starkel's research work in the area of geomorphology was published in 2014 with the title: *O niektórych prawidłowościach rozwoju rzeźby gór i ich przedpola (na przykładzie gór Eurazji) (On some regularities in the evolution of relief of mountains and their forelands (exemplified by mountains of Eurasia))*. In his third and most recent autobiography, *Drogi mojego życia (The roads of my life)* (2019), Professor Starkel offers a review of his research interests and other professional interests since the earliest days of his scientific career.

Professor Leszek Starkel is the most well-recognized and appreciated geomorphologist from Poland. His accomplishments were recognized by the Queen of England, Elizabeth II, via the receipt of the Gold Founders Medal given by the Royal Geographical Society (2004). Professor Starkel was also recognized for exceptional service in the area of the geographic sciences and popularization of geography in Poland by the Committee for Geographic Sciences at the Polish Academy of Sciences with the awarding of the Wincenty Pol Medal in 2017.

Professor Leszek Starkel is always eager to discuss important issues and share his views on and extensive knowledge of geomorphology with younger colleagues and coworkers. When we asked to meet him, he would invite us to his apartment on Helclów Street in Kraków or to his office at the Department of Geoenvironmental Research. It was these types of research meetings, which were intertwined with the recollection of events in his family history and that of the Department, that made it possible for us to write several papers together and produce a team monograph of flood issues in Podkarpackie Province in Poland. Professor Starkel was to attend a meeting at Dębica High School on the 70th anniversary of his graduation in 2020. The meeting was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

For over 50 years Professor Starkel was part of the team at *Studia Geomorphologica Carpatho-Balcanica* (Editor in 1967–1990, Head of Editorial Board in 1990–2018), a scientific journal part of the Carpatho-Balkan Geomorphological Commission and the Commission on Geography at the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences in Kraków. The journal is currently an endeavor of the Institute of Geography and Spatial Management at Jagiellonian University and the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences. It is our intention to express our deepest gratitude to Professor Starkel for his efforts to maintain the high scientific reputation of the said journal.

Esteemed

Professor Leszek Starkel

*on the occasion of your birthday and anniversary,
the editors, authors, colleagues, friends, and coworkers
wish you a 100 years in good health*

Piotr Gębica

Guest Editor
of the Issues

Zofia Rączkowska

Editor-in-Chief
of *Studia Geomorphologica
Carpatho-Balcanica*

Kazimierz Krzemień

Head
of the Commission on Geography
Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences