

In Memoriam



Prof. Gian Franco De Stefano

(Turin, September 3rd 1939 – Rome, January 1st 2016)

Professor Gian Franco De Stefano died suddenly on 1st January 2016. He was an outstanding supporter of Anthropology at international level in his life so we feel to share the bad news with anthropological community. He became Full Professor of Anthropometry in 1976 at the Faculty of Sciences of Sapienza University of Rome and he moved to University of Tor Vergata in 1981 where he taught Anthropology until his retirement in 2011.

After obtaining his degree in Biological Sciences in 1965 (University of Pavia), he received a specialized fellowship in Anthropology. From 1967 to 1971 he worked in the Department of Biology at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Nicaragua (UNAN). In 1974, he graduated with honors from the school of Biophysics in Pavia, where he gained a scholarship from the International School of Human Biology (International Center Ettore Majorana). The chair of Human Anatomy at the University of Pavia Medicine School appointed him an Assistant and, from 1974 until 1976, he worked as a Human Anatomy Lecturer for the Faculty of Sciences within the same university. In 1975, he received the Scientific Industriousness prize from the University of Pavia.

Gian Franco's career was very rich: from 1976 until 1981 he served on several advisory committees for the

Faculty of Sciences at Sapienza University. In 1976, he began directing numerous surveys on Central American populations. In 1977, he was invited as a visiting professor at the Universidad Nacional of Costa Rica and in 1984 at the University Rodrigo Facio of Costa Rica in San Jose.

In 1981, he moved to the University of Rome Tor Vergata where he helped the establishment of the Department of Biology and taught Anthropology. At the same institution, from 1982 to 1987, he served as the Board Director of the Biological Sciences Program of the Faculty of Sciences. From 1982 to 1986, Gian Franco was the National Coordinator of the research project, „Anthropometric Characterization of Italian Population”. In 1984 he planned the International Symposium »Auxology and Secular Trend: Methodological approaches and Applications« under the patronage of University of Tor Vergata and Centro Auxologico Italiano, and for ten years he coordinated the PhD program in auxology for the institution. In 1985, he served as the Organizing Leader of the International Symposium for »Genetic Diversity and its Maintenance in Tropical Populations« (University of Tor Vergata and International Association of Human Biologists). From 1983 to 1989 Professor De Stefano coordinated the bilateral CNR project (Italy-Germany) for »Ge-

netic Structure of the Italian Populations». In 1987, he organized the VII National Congress of Italian Anthropologists (Biodemography of Mediterranean populations), and in 2003 he organized the last meeting of IAHB. In 1986, the University of Tor Vergata appointed him the General Secretary of Interdisciplinary Center for Latin America, a position he held until his retirement. In 1987, the university also appointed him the coordinator of its Erasmus & Tempus programs until 1995. From 1985 to 1987, he was a member of the national ministerial committee for the reformation of the Degree in Biological Sciences. From 1986 to 1996, he led the program »Biology, Ethology, Evolution of Non Human Primates and Man«. From 1995 to 1998, he was a visiting professor at the University of Wien (Faculty of Sciences); and in the same years he coordinated »Biological Archive«, a sub-project of the CNR Cultural Heritage project.

Gian Franco De Stefano was an active member of a lot of scientific organizations at national and international levels, including the International Union of Biological Sciences (IUBS) and the Association Latino Americana de Biologia (ALAB). In 1974 he became a founding member of the Unione Antropologica Italiana (UAI), and in 1985 he became a member of the Executive Council of the same society. In 1976 he represented a founding member of the European Anthropological Association (EAA), and from 1981 to 1989 he sat on the board of directors for the same association—as the National Representative of Italian Anthropologists (an elected position). From 1986 to 1992, he served the association as the assistant secretary, and in 2005 he was elected president for two years. From 1981 to 1988 served as the general secretary of the Italian Primatological Association, and from 1989 to 1994 he served as the president of the same association.

From 1981 to 1983 he was the deputy secretary of the Istituto Italiano di Antropologia. In 1985 he became a member of the International Association of Human Biologists (IAHB); and subsequently elected as the general secretary, in 1992, and its president, in 2001. He was also a full, or honorary, member of other prestigious international scientific societies, including the American Association of Physical Anthropology (AAPA), the American Association of Human Biologists (AAHB), and the International Association of Anthropogenetics. In 2004, he was

awarded the International prize Fabio Frassetto by the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei.

Beyond to acting as Editor in Chief of the IAHB Newsletter, Gian Franco also worked with several scientific journals: *Anthropologischer Anzeiger*, *Collegium Anthropologicum*, *Human Biology*, *Human Ecology*, *American Journal of Human Biology*, *Biosocial Sciences*, *Antropologia Contemporanea*, *Rivista di Antropologia*, *International Journal of Anthropology*, *Acta Medica Auxologica*, and *Gene Geography*.

G. F. De Stefano authored more than 130 papers spanning morphological to molecular variations in humans. His textbook »Epigenetic Variants of the Human Skull« (1989) is still considered to be the reference on the topic. He participated in large population studies focused in Africa and Central and South America (1971, 1980, 1982, 1998, 2002, 2004, 2009). He performed several field-sampling activities for recruiting biological samples from peculiar populations. Because of his extensive promoting activity and his research on population models in Central and South America (from 1994 to 2014) and Africa (from 1998 to 2013), the leading fraction of his scientific production was devoted to the biological characterization of Amerindians and the mixed communities of Nicaragua and Ecuador. These samples were employed to dissect a huge number of biological factors spanning the peopling of Central/South America and Africa to genetic adaptation (2001, 2003, 2004). Gian Franco, along with his colleagues, also investigated European molecular patterns (1987–2013) at several levels.

Gian Franco was highly respected within the global scientific community. He was an inspiring teacher who could entertain people with his narrative style, his passionate curiosity for Nature, and his passion for sharing his extensive knowledge. We all could value his courtesy but also his firm presence in everyday life. We have all lost a distinguished scientist, a longtime extreme fan of Anthropology ranking in scientific world, and a very good friend for all of us.

There are no words to describe how sorry we are for his passing away.

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