



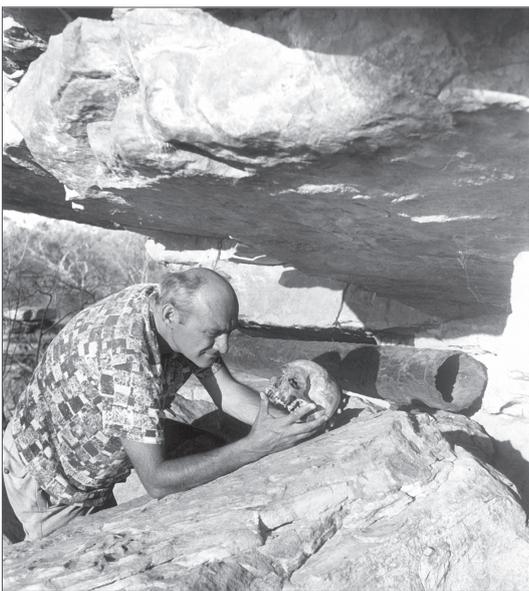
OBITUARY



Professor RDr. Jan Jelínek DrSc. (6. 2. 1926 – 3. 10. 2004)
Editor of Anthropologie (1962–1996)

Jan Jelínek, professor at Masaryk University in Brno and Brno University of Technology, was a world renowned anthropologist and museologist.

He was born in Brno, where he lived his entire life. He graduated in natural sciences, option anthropology, in 1949. However, his professional career began in 1948 at the Moravian Museum, where he worked until his retirement in 1986. He established and developed there the Anthropos Institute, with well-equipped laboratories, and extensive collections. He also built the Anthropos Pavilion – at the time of its origin a museum unique in Europe, famous both for its exhibition on the origin and evolution of humans, and for numerous research projects in Czechoslovakia and abroad. Well-known are especially his expeditions to northern Australia and Central Sahara.



Excavating in Australia, 1970

In 1958 he became director of the Moravian Museum and launched a systematic reconstruction of the institution's premises, as well as purposefully steered museum policy, balancing scientific research and cultural activity. In order to reinforce museum work in general, Jan Jelínek founded a department of museology at Brno university (one of the first in Europe), and lectured there for many years. Since the early 1960s, his museological activities got him involved in the world organisation of museums – ICOM (International Council of Museums, affiliated to UNESCO): he was chairman of the international regional organisation in 1962–66, he chaired the Advisory Committee in 1964–71, and in 1971–77 he was president of ICOM.

Along with his exceptional museum activities, Jan Jelínek never lost sight of his great love, anthropology. He did not consider it to be narrowly oriented towards only the physical characteristics of man, but thought of it as the science of humans and their works. He liked to involve in his research specialists from various branches of science, from both his homeland and abroad and his perspective was always a broad, not narrow one.

In 1962, Jan Jelínek resumed publication of the journal Anthropologie (discontinued by the Second World War and subsequent political events), which soon achieved a worldwide distribution and recognition. The revived edition of the Anthropos Series enjoyed similar acclaim. As scientific editor, he applied his broad perspective, but also had a major influence on the directions taken by scientific anthropological research in general.



Opening of Mendelianum (Gregor Mendel Memorial),
Moravian Museum, 1964

Jan Jelínek's professional anthropological work was focused on three main fields. He initially concentrated his research attention on the Holocene epoch, later extending his interest to the Upper Pleistocene, and subsequently the Middle Pleistocene. The evolution of *Homo sapiens*, and especially the question of its formation, i.e. the taxonomy of Middle Pleistocene hominids, including evolutionary position of Neandertals became a central focus of his work in paleoanthropology. A thorough acquaintance with the evidence, visits to important sites, and contact with leading world anthropologists led him to the view that *Homo erectus* is only a subspecies of *Homo sapiens*. Like others he argued for the continuity of *Homo sapiens* in various regions of the Old World. He came to the conclusion that the basic character of the speciation of the polytypic *Homo sapiens* is its cerebralisation process, and that no speciation occurred in the Middle Pleistocene. This is the reason why he argued that there was only a single species – *Homo sapiens*, and that there were no fundamental genetic barriers between its populations.

Another lasting interest was Jan Jelínek's research on the Bronze Age (and also other pre-historic populations, e.g. Neolithic ones), where one of the major topics was the study of rituals and social stratification, based on discovered human remains. He documented evidence for cannibalism and was interested in the social dynamics of Bronze Age Central Europeans.



Nobel Symposium, 1978

The third of Jelínek's interests included the rock art, mainly from the regions of Sahara and Australia – another great love to which he returned over and over again. He studied it in the general context of the oldest art and beginnings of artistic creation, i.e. issues dealing with symbolic thinking and pictorial communication. In his works, he has analysed artistic creation as one of the fundamental human expressions, representing analogous adaptative trends anywhere in the world, characteristic of the behaviour of extant hominid species. For him, this behaviour was analogous in its basic features, however different it might be due to the impact of diverse environments, and therefore the rise of different cultural traditions. In all his studies, he strongly supported his concept of biological and cultural evolution being parts of one and the same process.

Jan Jelínek's immense creative activity has resulted in the publication of some 250 original research works in paleoanthropology, ethnography, cultural anthropology and museology. Among these are several monographs: *Anthropologie der Bronzezeit* (Anthropology of the Bronze Age – 1959), *Anthropologie der Ungerer Steinzeit* (Anthropology of the Younger Stone Age – 1964), *The Great Art of the Early Australians* (1989), *Société des chasseurs* (Society of Hunters – 1989), *The last hunters* (1989). His *Great Pictorial Atlas of Prehistoric Man* has been translated into 14 languages, and published in 36 editions in 17 countries to date.

In 2004 he has finished a large book on Saharan rock art: *Sahara. Histoire de l'art rupestre libyen* (Editions Jérôme Millon, Grenoble) and for the Brno University of Technology VUTUM Press he has written a book on early architecture titled: *A House to Live in*.

In recognition of his work in anthropology, Jan Jelínek was elected president of the Czechoslovak Anthropological Society under the auspices of the ČSAV (Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences) in 1973. In 1981–84 he was president of the European Anthropological Association. He was on the editorial board of several journals and a member of many scientific societies. In 1991, he was appointed Professor of anthropology at Masaryk University in Brno.

The professional life of Jan Jelínek included research, museum management, lecturing at universities and for the public, writing and editorial work, museological activities, organising international congresses, expeditions to remote parts of the world, museum exhibitions, and a wide range of various popularising activities. Considering all that he accomplished, one might get the impression that a single lifetime would not be sufficient to achieve everything. Jan Jelínek lived his life, a life of action, filled with creative and fruitful activity, unique and sometimes difficult. A stirring and captivating life, whether in the most immediate of daily orders "let's get down to business", or in the fantasy of the vision "per aspera ad astra".

Jan Jelínek passed away after a long and painful period of illness on 3 October 2004. We miss him so much.

Marta Dočkalová
Editor-in-Chief

and
Editorial Board