



JAN JELÍNEK

HUMAN SACRIFICE AND RITUALS IN BRONZE AND IRON AGES: THE STATE OF ART

ABSTRACT: During last decades many new finds of human remains were discovered during the excavations of Bronze and Iron Age settlements. These remains do not represent normal burials but traces of complex events linked with human sacrifice, ritual feasts, cannibalism and other features. The author surveys the contemporary state of knowledge with possible interpretations. This article is a reprint of a previously published article (Jelínek J., 1990: Anthropologie (Brno) 28, 2–3: 121–128).

KEY WORDS: Eastern Central Europe – Human sacrifice – Cannibalism – Bronze Age – Iron Age

It was back in the year 1950 when in company of the archaeologist K. Tihelka I visited for the first time the Cezavy Hill near Blučina (Czechoslovakia). I was invited to take part in the research of this important Bronze Age locality as anthropologist. In the course of five years extensive stone ruins were discovered, which were interpreted at that time as remains of a hill-fort of the Early/Middle Bronze Age. Among the ruins and in their vicinity appeared human and animal bones, separately and in agglomerations, parts of skeletons, but also complete skeletons, and exceptionally also burials with funeral gifts. The finds involved rather complex and varied dealings with the mortal remains of humans, probably of human sacrifices, connected with eating animal and human meat,

as illustrated by the split human and animal bones, finds of fireplaces with food refuse, bones with traces of cuts, finding circumstances that can be interpreted only in the above way. There were, however, also two other alternative explanations, i.e., that it was the result of an armed clash ending with a massacre of the defeated, or that we have to do with the consequences of an epidemic, in which most of the population perished. In the light of a number of finds, and for a number of reasons the two latter theories appeared to be untenable already in the period of research (Jelínek 1957).

Besides the above interesting findings, however, the research on the Cezavy Hill left also a number of questions open.

This article is a reprint of a previously published article "JELÍNEK J., 1990: Human sacrifice and rituals in Bronze and Iron Ages: the state of art. *Anthropologie (Brno)* 28, 2–3: 121–128".

© 2013 Moravian Museum, Anthropos Institute, Brno. All rights reserved.

1. The stone ruins were regarded by the archaeologists as remains of the destroyed Věteřov fortifications used by the later Velatice population (younger Bronze Age) to bury the dead and the eventual sacrifices. Although this explanation seems to be very plausible, we should admit that it is not the only possible interpretation of the find situation.
2. As far as the Late Bronze Age finds are regarded, the hill was originally believed to have been a living site of a people belonging to the Velatice Culture (Tihelka 1951). The interesting thing is, however, that after so many years of research, with the exception of a few refuse pits and some rare traces of metal findings no reliable documents of continuous settlement were found. There is therefore also another acceptable theory: this was not a living site, but a sacral centre.
3. The unearthened human and animal bones cannot be interpreted in one single way. It seems that the human remains were subjected to diverse treatment. They appear among the boulders, on the fireplaces and in the ash-places and also as finds in the pits.

In all these cases we find in various positions entire skeletons, eventually parts of skeletons, and also individual bones of the postcranial skeleton or of the skull. Most animal bones are separated, but occur also parts of skeletons or entire skeletons (of piglets, dogs, parts of a cattle skeleton). The special positions, or the eventual dismemberment of human skeletons has not been caused by placing them among the boulders or by natural phenomena (e.g., a slight landslide). Many individual bone finds are split. The numerous spiral fractures indicate that the splitting took place at a time, when the bones were fresh and contained the corresponding organic matter. According to their position and damage these bones should be regarded as food remains. Burnt or charred bones are sometimes rare, sometimes appear in concentrations. Worth mentioning are the finds of several child skeletons buried in crouched position right on the fireplace, or on the extensive ash-places unearthened during a research in the year 1952; the latter bones had not been singed. Contrary to this the finds from the year 1985, made by M. Salaš much lower on the slope of the Cezavy Hill show traces of burning in 10% of the bone fragments. They belong to Late Únětice Culture (Jelínek 1990), and also to Velatice finds. Traces of defleshing appear rarely on some of the bones. Most of them are short, thin cuts inflicted by a sharp implement, by a knife or razor. We should add that K. Tihelka found three bronze razors during his research. The razors were among the bones in the Velatice layer. M. Salaš found in the year 1985 near

a group of human bones a bronze knife in vertical position, and a razor. But in view of the large number of human remains found on the site the cuts on the bones are relatively few. It is not so due to superficial inspection of the finds. The only acceptable interpretation is that defleshing occurred only exceptionally. One of the most important find circumstances is that besides remains found under the stones there appeared also skeletons in the free in the cultural layer, in a clayey environment, and also in pits, accompanied by a smaller or larger number of stones and sherds. Both stones and sherds are results of intentional human destructive activities.

If we try to interpret these finds, we should stress that many human and animal bones were broken and split. The best implement for such interventions is a suitable stone. But we must admit that so far no find situation illustrating clearly such a procedure has been found. If we try to find an answer to the question where does that amount of shattered pottery come from, we shall have to follow in the future carefully, whether the vessels were not used for the preparation of food and then destroyed. Both K. Tihelka (1957) and also M. Salaš found smaller or larger amounts of charred millet and other cereals, peas, etc. (Salaš 1987). But we lack conclusive finds documenting the contents of shattered vessels. As far as to finds of conclusive funeral gifts buried with the deceased, we have to add that most skeletons or parts of skeletons lack similar finds. Exceptionally ornaments of the clothing or body were discovered. They are very few to enable us to draw social conclusions. Very interesting were the finds of the so-called deposits of bronze artifacts; no doubt, they had considerable value in that epoch. Eight were found in earlier times, K. Tihelka found among the bones three such "deposits", M. Salaš also three. None of them can be of course regarded as a deposit in the proper sense of the word. They did not represent a treasure trove or a storage of artifacts. These finds had been thrown away and were scattered among the bones, forming part of the cultural layer, together with the pottery sherds and stones.

Quite exceptionally appeared on the fringes of the stonemass in 1952 also burials of children and of a woman. The skeleton of an elderly female was complete; it was buried in crouched position, on her left side. In front of her face there was a well preserved small jug belonging to the Middle Danubian Tumulus Culture (Middle Bronze Age). The find looked as a normal burial. At the knees of the female, however, there were remains of the skull of a child of about six years. The skull was positioned with its *occiput* upwards. After removing the female skeleton, the skeleton of a one year

old child was found. It was in crouched position, with its arms bent at the elbows, with the two hands positioned towards the face. Somewhat aside there was the skeleton of a further child, with its arms bent towards the face and with its legs crouched in unequal position. The advanced age of the female practically excludes that she might have been the mother of the children. Rather unclear is also the mutual relation of the three children, and it is not clear whether they were buried simultaneously. The important thing is that these skeletons were not situated among boulders, but in a clayey area on the fringe of the stones. The find position – in spite of the presence of the jug belonging to the Tumulus Culture – connects this find with the rest of the nearby finds belonging to the Velatice Culture (Jelínek 1957).

We should emphasize two facts. Firstly, the detailed archaeological system of various cultures and cultural groups usually create an impression that these populations are of various origin. But as a rule it is not so, in most cases we have to do with regional differences only, or with chronologically different development stages of the same population. The second thing is that changes in the material culture have an easier course than the changes in the spiritual culture and religious traditions. The latter often survived with slight changes through many generations and as a rule were more stable than changes in the material culture. My study has been based on these aspects and for this reason I paid due attention not only to the individual archaeological cultures, strictly defined both chronologically and geographically, but also to wider regions of Central Europe, and chronologically to the entire Bronze and Iron Ages.

The published finds can be divided into three groups: to finds from the late 19th century and from the early 20th century, and to finds after the nineteen-fifties. The principal earliest finds come from three localities: from the Býčí skála Cave, the hill-fort in Obřany (Moravia), and Knovíz in Bohemia.

J. Wankel, a physician in Blansko, described the finds of human skeletal remains found in the Býčí skála Cave, in the central part of the Moravian Karst (Wankel 1882). The layer with limestone rocks on places with big boulders, in the large ante-chamber of the cave was perceptibly thin and disappearing in two places near the northern wall. Below a thin layer of stones there was a layer of burnt lime, covering among other things also considerable amount of charred cereals. There were two large fireplaces. The smaller of about 30 m² and twelve metres distant from the entrance to the cave. It contained among other things also two bronze axes, shattered pottery and a few burnt glass beads. The larger fireplace

followed next to the smaller one, towards the inside of the cave, and was roughly twice as large as the small one. There were also charred animal bones, sherds and diverse bronze artifacts and parts of a chariot, and other iron and bronze objects and also an incomplete charred human skeleton. Along the circumference of the fireplace there were other rich finds: cereals, bronze jewellery, glass beads, remains of fabrics and of wickerwork, amber, whorls, etc. Besides these two fireplaces according to Wankel's report there were scattered skeletal remains of about forty persons on the floor of the cave, below the stones, alongside with parts of skeletons thrown there haphazardly. These skeletons were accompanied by parts of clothing, various ornaments, pins, bracelets, clips, glass beads. Other skeletons came without accompanying artifacts. At some places there were also scattered cereals and jewels – some of them made of gold – among the skeletons. From the incomplete skeletons missed one or more limbs and sometimes the skull, in other places appeared separate skulls. A complete skull was found in a copper cauldron and it was tinted with verdigris. Closer to the centre of the cave there was a sort of stone desk: a stone plate put horizontally on two big stones. There were the skeletons of two arms and the left-half of a skull on it. On the left arm there were four bronze bracelets, on the right there were bracelets and two golden rings. The arm bones show no traces of cutting, although Wankel writes that both have been cut off. The incomplete *humeri* end in irregular fractures. I mention this fact, as in Cezavy near Blučina the incomplete arm skeletons also lacked traces of cuts, they ended in irregular fractures. Wankel recognized among the skeletal finds 35 females, 5 males, and also the skeletons of a 3–4 years old child and of a 10–12 years old girl.

Most archaeological finds were damaged, the metal artifacts were deformed or broken, the pottery was shattered. It is evident that the artifacts had been damaged on purpose. Very interesting is the find of a human skeleton opposite the large fire-place, near the opposite wall of the cave, on a pavement made of flat stones. Next to the skeleton there was the skeleton of a young pig. I would like to call your attention to a similar case in Cezavy site. Here, in the year 1951 a male skeleton was found on a pavement made of pebbles (manuports), and not far from the skeleton there was a complete skeleton of a piglet alongside with several fragments of a human braincase.

Wankel interpreted this unique find situation in Býčí skála Cave as remains of a funeral ceremony celebrated on the occasion of the death of a chieftain (a charred

male skeleton was found between remainders of a chariot, buried together with two horses whose heads and extremities were missing). On the Cezavy site near Blučina appeared besides individual animal bones also parts of the skeleton of a bull or ox dismembered and incomplete, the same as some of the human skeletons. The human skeletons in the Býčí skála Cave were regarded by Wankel as remains of human sacrifices that had to follow their deceased lord. The remains of the funeral ceremony then were covered with stones heaped over them. Interesting is the remark by J. Havelka, Wankel's son-in-law: "Relatively few pieces of bronze armour and bronze weapons were unearthed in the Býčí skála Cave ... more iron weapons appeared but neither was in general the number of iron weapons too significant" (Havelka 1886).

There is no doubt that Wankel's description and interpretation bears the hallmark of its period. In fact it was the first big archaeological research realized in Moravia, and the description contains often romantic passages, but also inaccuracies and errors (Wankel 1882). These features of Wankel's work were recently subjected to the criticism of contemporary specialists (Nekvasil, Stloukal 1981), nevertheless I am convinced that Wankel's basic interpretation – although written one hundred years ago – was correct. The human remains comprised complete and incomplete skeletons, or also individual bones and skulls, the same as in Cezavy near Blučina, and the positions of the skeletons were also analogous. Similarly the animal osteological material was also represented by individual bones, eventually by parts of skeletons. The find situations at the two sites also showed a number of common basic characters; the bones were situated between and beneath big stones and were accompanied with sherds and other artifacts. The deceased, at least some of them, wore the ornaments of their body and garments, including golden ornaments, well illustrating that the survivors were not interested in this property. In the vicinity of the skeletons there were extensive fireplaces, both in Býčí skála and in Cezavy.

The interesting thing is that both localities show traces of foundry activities. All these facts show that we have to do with rather complex finds requiring careful comparative analysis. The basic difference between the two sites is chronological. While the finds from Cezavy belong primarily to people of the Velatice culture of the Late Bronze Age, the finds from Býčí skála are younger, belonging to the Hallstatt Period.

The importance of chronological difference, of course, is influenced by the archaeological system of the prehistoric cultures; it is generally hold that these

cultures correspond to various populations. In most cases, however, we have to do with regional and chronological differences in the culture of the same population. No wonder that changes in material culture are not synchronized with changes in ritual traditions.

On the northern fringes of Brno, i.e., geographically more or less halfway between the Cezavy and Býčí skála sites is situated the Hallstatt hill-fort Obřany, with significant finds of Horákov culture. Back in the years 1880–1882 F. Koudelka, later J. Filla and J. Hladík – all amateur archaeologists, found there besides rich archaeological material also numerous individual human bones. But this important site was thoroughly studied somewhat later.

From the late 19th century, besides the sites at Býčí skála and Obřany near Brno there is also a third group of similar finds. It is described by Schmidt (1893–1895) and Matiegka (1893–1895) from the Knovíz site in Bohemia. Schmidt and Felcman found in Knovíz, in pits of a Late Bronze Age living site, besides numerous bronze artifacts, bone implements and moulds also animal and human bones, and also complete skeletons. The animal bones were found in the individual pits, their amount varied, most were split, some also charred. Some bones showed also traces of gnawing, presumably by dogs. It suggests that in fresh state the bones lay some time scattered on the surface, i.e., they were not buried. Some bones had also traces of cuts. In pit No. 5 among other things there was at the bottom a complete skeleton of a 4–5 years old child in crouched position, with its hands between the knees, and below the knees there was a ceramic cauldron. The skull was on two sherds of a bowl-type vessel and around the skeleton there were numerous other sherds of various vessels. In pit No. 33 Schmidt and Felcman discovered in a layer of ashes "... a crouched skeleton of an infant of the earliest age ... the body of the child was dumped into the pit, or buried without funeral rite, and without interrupting the use of the pit as a waste dump ... The skeleton of the infant was complete, in contrast to parts of other human skeletons, found in the same pit..."

Human skeletal remains were found in Knovíz in eleven pits, i.e., human skeletal remains were frequent at this site. The bones were split, crushed, broken and charred. They were scattered among other things in the pits, among animal bones, sherds, etc. J. Matiegka (1892–1895) mentions that besides the complete skeleton of a child the rest of the bones belonged to at least eight people, and that real anthropophagy (not a partial or symbolical one) was practiced here. According to Matiegka the anthropophagy at the Knovíz

site was not caused by shortage of food. He concluded this from the numerous finds of animal bones, indicating that the Knovíz people did not suffer from hunger.

So much about the finds discovered by the end of the 19th century at Býčí skála, Obřany and Knovíz.

The second group of published finds comes from the period between the two World Wars, namely from the nineteen-twenties. The research at the Obřany hill-fort was restarted by F. Adámek in the year 1923 (Adámek 1961), and his publication contains a complex list of the individual human bones.

In object No. 72 in pit Fr. Adámek found an almost complete skeleton of a 10–12 years old girl. Most bones belonging to this skeleton were at the bottom of the pit, in the ashy layer, but the skull and the distal part of the arm was higher up; between them and the rest of the skeleton there was a layer of firmly compacted undisturbed gravel. The skull and part of the arm were buried separately. It is illustrative that from the skeleton of the arm the carpus, metacarpus and phalanges are missing. But the lower limbs at the bottom of the pit were also incomplete; the foot bones were missing. The individual phalanges of the feet, together with the phalanges of a smaller ungulate (sheep or goat) and with the phalanx of the big toe of another adult individual were found scattered in the pit filling. At the skeleton on the bottom of the pit there was also an animal bone (exactly not determined) and an arthritic lumbar vertebra of an elderly individual. The left temporal bone of the girl's skull has been smashed, but the fragments remained on the spot.

I deal with Adámek's find in such detail because of its significance and rather illustrative character.

In the late nineteen-twenties appear further important finds, published by authors from Thuringia (Lehman 1929, Lieman 1928) and from other parts of Germany (Engel 1928), and also from Slovakia (Kriegler 1930). Similar finds were published by Fr. Dvořák from the surroundings of Kolín in central Bohemia (1920–1928, 1932).

Although most of these finds are fragmentary, some of them were rich enough and were documented with sufficient details (Lehman 1928) to show that they belong to the same period, and that they illustrate the same ritual traditions. From Blučina and from Cezavy Hill we have the first reports by A. Melichárek from the year 1929. Excavations on the Cezavy site were realized by A. Dvořáček, P. Ondráček and J. Teplý. In 1940 started his excavations in Cezavy J. Dezort, a lawyer from Židlochovice, and in 1944 J. Poulík led a survey research here. His research proved that the rich Bronze

Age finds belong to the Věteřov and Velatice cultural groups, already found there by J. Dezort.

These were the finds, discoveries and research preceding the archaeological research started in the third period in the nineteen-fifties in Cezavy. It is evident that Tihelka's discoveries, both as to their extent and number, and also as to their informative value far exceeded all previous finds. Nevertheless the similarities with earlier finds – no matter how fragmentary – were so striking, that it was impossible to neglect them.

The situation was then complemented and further clarified by further finds, to which I have been invited to cooperate as anthropologist. In the nineteen-fifties V. Spurný realized his archaeological research in the Kroměříž region (Spurný 1952, 1954).

In Hradisko near Kroměříž he found in the filling of a Middle Bronze Age ditch an agglomeration of human bones (Jelínek 1954); it comprised the bones of at least twelve sub-adults and of three adults, but detailed study of the remains suggests that the total number of individuals is between 15 and 17. We have found there parts of bodies and individual bones, and also animal bones mixed with human bones (cows, pigs, rarely also sheep, goat, deer and horse). V. Spurný found an isolated human skull right in the rampart, and at the bottom of a cultural pit on the site numerous human and animal bones of various individuals were found. The bones were smashed and split. The human bones belonged to individuals of various age, to adults and also to adolescents. All these finds belonged to the Middle Bronze Age and strongly reminded of the situation found in Cezavy near Blučina.

In the year 1952 Spurný found on digging in a destroyed fortification the skeleton of a male aged 30–35 years. Stratigraphically the find corresponds to the break of the Middle and Young Bronze Age. The circumstance that there were found two bronze arrowheads at it warns for caution. Although killing with arrows does not necessarily means that it is the result of a fight we would bear in mind that finds of human remains buried without due reverence may illustrate wider phenomena and events, not only rituals connected with sacrifices.

But the Kroměříž region has yielded not only the Hradisko finds. In the nearby Bezměrov, Rataje, and also in Hulín – all these sites yielded finds from the Middle Bronze Age. V. Spurný found in the cultural pits and cultural layers of the settlements fragments of human remains, sometimes charred, in other cases with well perceptible cuts or traces of blows – i.e., traces of violence. The way of breaking out the skull base, to gain access to the brain, gives special importance to the find.

Part of a ritual or sacral place was researched in southern Moravia, in the vicinity of Přítluky. At the beginning, due to the small extent of excavations, it seemed, that the finds came from an extensive pit, containing Tumulus Culture finds of the Middle Bronze Age, but later it was recognized as a circular sacral object (Trnáčková 1954). The circular place was enclosed by a ditch. The ditch yielded small limestones – brought from elsewhere – the flood valley of the Dyje River and the sand dunes of the local environment did not contain any stones. Among the stones there were sherds, scattered human and animal bones and parts of skulls. Unfortunately in consequence of sudden floods it was impossible to complete the research, thus only a part of the circular area was excavated. The rest is waiting for future excavation.

J. Říhovský led the excavation of the Hallstatt site on Stolová hora ("Table Mountain") near Mikulov in southern Moravia. He found parts of skeletons in the cultural layer, single human bones among the stones, alongside with animal bones and sherds (Říhovský 1955). These finds were far from being so numerous as was the case in Cezavy near Blučina, but they constitute a very good comparative material, proving that the phenomenon was not of local character, or an isolated episode, nor was it limited to a short period only.

Roughly in the same years took place two excavations also in Slovakia. The first in Nitriansky Hradok, where C. Ambros found among numerous animal bones, archaeologically classed as food remains, also separate human bones and entire human skeletons looking as if dumped with the refuse (Ambros 1974). Surprising was the amount of sherds accompanying these finds of the Middle Bronze Age. The other locality was Smolenice in Western Slovakia, near the Moravian border. Once it was a fortified Hallstatt living site. It is situated on a steep rocky slope, the other side of the rocky hill was formed by high cliffs. The Iron Age builders of the settlement broke horizontal galleries into the rocky slope. The galleries look like streets of the living site. There too, in the local fortification and among the houses there were scattered human bones. A human skull was found in the foundations of a house. M. Dušek interpreted it as a sacrifice meant to protect the house. In this densely occupied area a large free area was found, with traces of a few isolated poles in the ground, and with remains of human skulls. M. Dušek characterized the site as an offering place and dated it archaeologically into the La Tène Period (Dušek 1968).

A geographical comparison of finds of human remains not buried in graves and pointing to the

existence of a special ritual brought me to the neighbouring regions. The find of human skeletons found in a cultural pit of the Early Bronze Age in Schleinbach, Lower Austria was published in the year 1954, and its almost exact duplicate was found in the year 1984 in Velké Pavlovice in Southern Moravia. In Schleinbach the remains of 8 individuals were found: one adult man, two women and five children. The skeletons were complete and represented one burial event. The reason of their death has not been explained in a plausible way (Breitinger 1980, Felgenhauer *et al.* 1989). The Velké Pavlovice find discovered by Stuchlík (Stuchlíková *et al.* 1985), belongs chronologically to the Early Bronze Age (Věteřov Culture). In Velké Pavlovice the find comprised the skeletons of an adult male and female, and of six children of various ages, ranging from three to nine years. The find was anthropologically studied by M. Stloukal – according to a number of discrete characters he concluded that all belonged to the same family. The interesting thing is that no traces of violence were found on the skeletons, and the meaning of the dumping of their bodies into the refuse pit without any sign of reverence can be only speculated. I consider the explanation that they died in consequence of epidemy rather improbable for the following reasons:

1. The object has the shape of a typical pit, known from the Early Bronze Age (Únětice Culture). In Bílovice appear side by side Věteřov living site with finds of Věteřov pottery (e.g., the above-mentioned find of eight skeletons), and also Únětice cemetery and Únětice settlement. Here on the Únětice settlement, in pit No. 10 there was also a male skeleton lying face downwards and with his legs crouched to the chest. This find of an irreverently buried skeleton found already in the Early Bronze Age (Únětice-type) living site makes it necessary to proceed with caution on interpreting the Bílovice (Věteřov culture) finds.
2. The finds dumped in waste pits appear also in other sites, not only in localities belonging to the Věteřov culture: in Knovíz culture finds in Bohemia and in Thuringia, and in exceptional cases also in the chronologically preceding Early Bronze Age sites besides the above-mentioned Bílovice also in Černá Pole (Tihelka, Hank 1966), but also in Bohemia, e.g., in Měly near Nymburk (Smrž 1911). All these facts rebut the epidemy theory and suggest that the real causes for irreverent burials were social or ritual.

We know a considerable number of the Middle Bronze Age skeletal finds or parts of skeletons coming from cultural pits of living sites, but they cover such a vast area and space of time that epidemy as the cause

for dumping these skeletons is not plausible explanation and can be discarded as unrealistic.

Behm Blancke published his finds of human remains from the Kyffhäuser site in Thuringia in the year 1958 (Behm Blancke 1958). The finds come from the Hallstatt Period, and the author holds that they are the remains of human sacrifices with traces of anthropophagy. In the year 1881 a preliminary report was published by H. Grimm on human remains from the Bronze Age in Zauschwitz (GDR). Among other finds H. Grimm mentions three skulls and an isolated parietal bone bearing numerous traces of violence. In the year 1976 G. Farkas and A. Marcsik studied the remains of 76 individuals from the Iron Age (Gomolova site of Besarabi Culture), found in three layers. Most skeletons (39 of them) belonged to children, 12 were sub-adults. The finds included also the skeletons of 7 adult males and of 18 adult females. The authors were well aware of the extraordinary significance of the find, and they did not exclude epidemic as possible cause of death of the group. Nevertheless they mentioned also another not yet published find from northern Yugoslavia, belonging to the Bronze Age, and regarded it as possible remains of ritual sacrifices.

Another interesting find from the Early Bronze Age (Otomani culture) comes from Spišský Štvrtok, in eastern Slovakia. An archaeological research started in the nineteen-seventies discovered human and animal bones and numerous bronze and golden artifacts in a shallow pit. Skeletons were found in two groups: in one group five and two, in the other two skeletons. They were found in a large but relatively shallow pit. In view of the special position of the pit inside the Otomani living site it was interpreted as an sacrificial place (Vladár 1972, 1975, Jakab 1978). On skulls Nos. 1, 2 and 4 traces of cuts can be seen; skull No. 1 was evidently inflicted with an axe, as indicated by the characteristic shape of the lethal injury. The archaeological situation and stratigraphy indicate that the killing of these individuals was a single event, after which the pit was filled up.

Chronologically later finds come from Bavaria, from the La Tène site Manching. There too, numerous human remains with traces of bone crushing, splitting and burning can be found mixed with animal bones. These relatively late finds, with traces of anthropophagy are rare. The explanation by R. Lange (1983) that they represent normal burial rite, is untenable.

But let us return to the territory of Bohemia. From the nineteen-fifties onwards numerous new finds have been added to the finds from the late 19th century, anthropologically studied by J. Chochol, who discovered

frequent damage and lethal injuries in the postcranial skeletons and finds of separate skulls, showing that some of these individuals were simply knocked down and finished off. The finds of individual human bones or their fragments, as well as cranial fragments found together with animal bones, are regarded as food remains, and the pits containing this refuse are called refuse pits by the archaeologists. Chochol writes about these finds (1973); "... the bones were cut or split, in order to gain the marrow, they show traces of cuts that occurred on dismembering the body and on removing the flesh. Sometimes we can see also heat processing ..." (charred or singed bones, note J.).

But in Bohemia there are not only finds of the Knovíz culture. Rarely appear also finds from the Early Bronze Age, and also from the Early and Late Iron Ages (Buchvaldek, Zeman 1954, Chochol 1954a, b, 1970, 1974, Šneiderová 1954, Mašek 1957, Koutecký 1970, 1973 and Hrala 1970).

These rich finds indicate that anthropophagy was more of an accompanying phenomenon. The finds of skeletons in the pits on the living sites show both with their position, and also with the entire find situation that the deceased were not placed in the soil as one would expect in case of burials. The dealing with human remains in various ways suggests that we have to do with a complex phenomenon, requiring careful and detailed analysis. The situation is evidently more complex than one would expect in a time when such finds were not too numerous.

Three excavations worth mentioning took place in Moravia and Bohemia in the nineteen-eighties, namely at the Cezavy, Velim near Kolín and Hradisko near Obřany. Work at the first two sites still continues and they bring important new results every year.

The research of the well-known Hallstatt hill-fort near Obřany (Horákov culture) started anew in the year 1981. In the year 1982 within the framework of the advancing urbanization of the villages surrounding Brno a ditch for a gas main was opened in the area. It crossed the hill-fort, cutting the mighty fortification construction. At its base two human skeletons were found dumped without any accompanying artifacts. Their clear stratigraphic position made the dating easy. The skull and one leg of one of the skeletons were missing. Farther inside the fort in a small pit (80 cm in diameter) there were two child skulls, a human humerus, anatomically connected vertebrae of a young cattle and a large Hallstatt sherd. One skull belonged to a seven years old child, the other to a child of two years of age. The mandibles of both are missing. There are no traces of

violence (blows, cuts) on the skulls. The archaeological material in the pit and in the surrounding layer dated the skulls to 1000–800 B.C. A bit farther, among scattered animal bones there were four human bones (Jelínek 1984).

The second research will take us back to Cezavy near Blučina, where the excavations restarted in the year 1983. M. Salaš, in charge of the research invited me to anthropological co-operation: local finds from the year 1985 showed that the broken, split and often charred human bones belonged not only to the Middle and Late Bronze Age, but also to the Early Bronze Age (late phase of Únětice culture) (Jelínek 1985, 1990).

The third extensive research of a Bronze Age site containing a large number of human bones, parts of skeletons, and also complete skeletons continues since the year 1984 in Velim near Kolín. The research group formed by J. Hrala, M. Vávra, Z. Sedláček discovered there large areas yielding human and animal bones, and also numerous human skeletons. Similarly to Cezavy near Blučina we shall have a chance to explain there certain social problems that remained untouched in other localities excavated in the past. We are interested namely in the ritual and social background of these remarkable finds.

Both localities suggest that in the Late Bronze Age they were neither usual burial grounds, nor living sites. They formed part of extensive sacral heights serving not for a single settlement, but for the whole region. Such a function would better correspond to the overall demographic-geographical situation of the contemporary living sites. Plotted on a map they clearly reveal the character of regional concentrations (Podborský 1980). This brings us to important questions of the way of life and development of the prehistoric society.

1. Geographically seen human remains dumped without any traces of reverence can be found over a vast territory reaching from Bavaria through Bohemia, Thuringia, Moravia, Lower Austria to the Carpathian Basin (including the entire territory of Slovakia and northern parts of Yugoslavia) in the east. Reports from Switzerland, eastern France and elsewhere suggest that this phenomenon had been widespread also in other parts of Europe.
2. Chronologically these finds cover the entire Bronze and Iron Ages, i.e., roughly one and a half thousand years between 2000–500 B.C.

The whole territory and the above mentioned period had some common, or at least very similar features: the economic development was based on agriculture, but was particularly marked by the discovery of metals and by the

subsequent flourishing of metallurgy, with the related development of trade and accumulation of wealth, construction of fortified settlements (hill-forts), accommodating larger agglomerations of people and resulting in rapid differentiation of the social structure. Such a socioeconomic transformation – restructuring of the entire society – is unthinkable without corresponding changes in the spiritual culture, religion, ideology, intensely manifested in the rituals, leaving behind archaeologically and anthropologically documentable material.

If these ideas are correct, then the existence of brutal rituals connected with human sacrifices and anthropophagy were not necessarily limited to the territory of prehistoric Europe in the Bronze and Iron Ages. It may appear everywhere where the society in its development acquired economic bases strong enough to provide sustenance for populous agglomerations, for the accumulation of wealth and for social differentiation inside the population. The history of ancient civilizations, no matter whether in Central America, China or in Sub-Saharan Africa, provides enough material for those who want to study these social relations.

Thus we get to a model enabling us the explanation of archaeologically discovered situations. Its plausibility consists of course in accurate explanation of find circumstances of the individual discoveries, as it is very probable that the unearthed human remains illustrate various kinds of events. It is necessary to differentiate conclusively the sacrifices and anthropophagy in their various forms. It is necessary to distinguish and explain the individuals killed in other ways and buried without the usual reverence (e.g., enemies killed in fight), to explain the double or triple burials, etc. It is necessary to explain conclusively the finds of human bones, skulls and mass burials, appearing in the earlier periods, in the Neo-Eneolithic, or even with Palaeolithic hunters, and to show the differences between these finds on the one hand, and between finds from the Bronze and Iron Ages, on the other.

However, all this requires the use of modern archaeological methods paying detailed attention to find situation, to relations between finds, to human remains, and to all finds appearing with human remains, such as accompanying animal bones, accumulations of sherds, stones, etc. All this requires the use of very sophisticated techniques of excavation, detailed documentation and highly skilled personnel for research in layers containing finds.

It is very natural that many archaeological researches have the character of rescue work, limiting greatly the possibility, of gaining maximum information from the

site. The time pressure to which such rescue operations are exposed, shortage of workforce, shortcomings in the standard of the technical personnel, all these factors have negative impact on the archaeological work and on the obtainable results. We are well aware of these problems, but the fact remains that the unearthened, but unduly documented finds have their documentary value greatly distorted, sometimes lost. The relation of archaeologists to other materials discovered alongside with archaeological artifacts in the course of the research form the key for solving the problems of life and changes in the prehistoric society.

The research and study of rituals of the Bronze and Iron Ages and problems connected with the social structure of the contemporary society require changes in the hitherto excavation practices, and also in methodological approach.

With complex teamwork we can explain a number of significant new facts.

REFERENCES

- ADÁMEK F., 1961: *Pravěké hradisko a pohřebiště u Obřan*. Moravské muzeum, Brno.
- AMBROS C., 1974: Príspevok k otázke antropofágie na sídliskách doby bronzovej na Slovensku. *Anthropologica – Acta Facult. Rerum Nat. Univ. Comen.* XVII: 1–14.
- BEHM BLANCKE C., 1958: *Höhlen, Heiligtümer, Kannibalen*. Leipzig.
- BREITINGER E., 1980: Skelette aus einer spaturnenfelderzeitlichen Speichergube in der Wallburg Stillfried an der March, N. Ö. *Forschungen in Stillfried 4, Veroff. osterr. Arbeitsgem. f. Ur- u. Frühgeschichte XII/XIV*: 107–142.
- BUCHVALDEK M., ZEMAN J., 1954: Knovízské sídliště v Břešťanech (s antropologickým posudkem J. Chochola). *Archeologické rozhledy* VI: 510–513.
- DVOŘÁK F., 1926–1927: Nálezy únětické kultury na Kolínsku. *Památky archeologické* 38: 13.
- DUŠEK M., 1968: Smolenice – ein Burg der Hallstattzeit in Kleinen Karpaten. *Acta Archeol. Carpathica* 10: 99–109.
- ENGEL K., 1928: Fundnachrichten: Vorrömische Eisenzeit. *Nachrichtenblatt f. deutsche Vorzeit* 4: 116.
- FELGENHAUER F., SZILVASSY J., KRITSCHER H. HAUSER G., 1988: *Stillfried, Archaeologie – Anthropologie*. Stillfried.
- HAVELKA J., 1886: Čelnější památky moravské z doby kovové. *Časopis vlast. spolku mus. olomouckého* 9.
- HRALA J., 1970: Pohřby v knovízské jámě ze Všehlap na Teplicku. Bestattungen in einer knoviser Grube aus Všehlap bei Teplice. *Archeologické rozhledy* 22: 195–196.
- CHOCHOL J., 1954a: Antropologický charakter lidských pozůstatků z knovízské jámy u Kutné Hory. *Archeologické rozhledy* 6: 50–52.
- CHOCHOL J., 1954b: Lidské kosti z knovízských jam v Břešťanech. *Archeologické rozhledy* 6: 769–776.
- CHOCHOL J., 1970: Antropologické poznatky ke knovízskému nálezu ve Všehlapěch. *Archeologické rozhledy* 22: 196.
- CHOCHOL J., 1973: Lidské kosti z knovízských sídlištních jam v Blažimi. *Archeologické rozhledy* 25: 38–39.
- CHOCHOL J., 1974: Kostrové materiály knovízské kultury ze severozápadních Čech. *Crania Bohemica* 3.
- JAKAB J., 1978: Intentional interference on the skeletons of the Otomani people found at the cultic place in Spišský Štvrtok. *Anthropologie* 16: 139–141.
- JELÍNEK J., 1954: Antropologický materiál střední doby bronzové z Hradiska u Kroměříže. *Památky archeologické* 45: 378–382.
- JELÍNEK J., 1957: Anthropofágie a pohřební ritus doby bronzové na podkladě nálezů z Moravy a z okolních území. *Acta Musei Moraviae* 42: 85–134.
- JELÍNEK J., 1984: Important Hallstatt Period Finds in Moravia. *Anthropologie* 22, 1: 91.
- JELÍNEK J., 1990: Late Únětice Pit with Human Remains in Cezavy near Blučina. *Anthropologie* 28, 2–3: 149–158.
- KOUTECKÝ D., 1970: Knovízské sídliště ve Velemyševsi na Žatecku okr. Louny. *Sb. SM* 6: 217–254.
- KOUTECKÝ D., 1973: Knovízské sídliště v Blažimi. *Archeologické rozhledy* 25: 12–38.
- KRIEGLER K., 1930: Das Doppelgrab und andere prähistorische Funde von Nagy-Sáro an Granfluss. *Sudeta* 6: 106–115.
- LANGE G., 1983: Die menschlichen Skelettreste aus dem Oppidum von Manching. *Die Ausgrabungen in Munching* 7. Wiesbaden.
- LIENAU M., 1928: Der Burgwall an der Steilen Wand bei Losow. *Mannus* 20: 209–213.
- LEHMAN E., 1928: Der bronzezeitliche Friedhof auf dem Erfurter Flughafen. *Mannus* 20: 54–78.
- MAŠEK N., 1957: Nové nálezy knovízských sídlištních pohřbů. *Archeologické rozhledy* 9: 322–327, 342.
- MATIEGKA J., 1893–1895: Lidožroutství v předhistorické osadě u Knovíze a v předhistorické době vůbec. *Památky archeologické* 16: 285–292, 385–390, 495–500.
- NEKVASIL J., 1981: Eine neue Betrachtung der Funde aus der Býčí skála-Höhle. *Anthropologie* 19, 2: 107–110.
- PODBORSKÝ V., 1980: Dvě nová halštatská pohřebiště na jižní Moravě. *Sbomik prací fil. fak. brněnské University*: 75–124.
- ŘÍHOVSKÝ J., 1955: Opevněná osada na Tabulové hoře u Klentnice na Moravě. *Archeologické rozhledy* 7: 28–32.
- SALAŠ M., 1987: Třetí rok výzkumu výšinného sídliště u Blučiny (okr. Brno-venkov). *Přehled výzkumů* 1985, 27–28.
- SCHMIDT V., 1893–1895: Archeologický výzkum okolí svatojiřského. *Památky archeologické* 16: 1, 57, 113, 243, 361, 439, 593, 719.
- SMRŽ Z., 1969, 70, 71, 72: Dobroměřice, únětické sídliště, jámy. *Bulletin záchr. odd. Arch. Úst. ČSAV Praha* 34: 28–29.
- SPURNÝ V., 1952: Výzkum v Hradisku u Kroměříže. *Archeologické rozhledy* 4: 250–255.
- STLOUKAL M., 1981: Anthropologische Funde aus der Býčí skála-Höhle. *Anthropologie* 19, 2: 111–114.

- SPURNÝ V., 1954: Lidské kostry v destrukci opevnění Hradiska u Kroměříže. *Archeologické rozhledy* 6: 162–166.
- STUHLÍKOVÁ J., STUHLÍK S., STLOUKAL M., 1985: Ein Věteřov-Massenbegräbniss aus Velké Pavlovice. *Anthropologie* 22, 1: 51–68.
- ŠNEIDROVÁ K., 1954: Další knovízské jámy v Břešťanech. *Archeologické rozhledy* 6: 514–517.
- TIHELKA K., 1951: Záhadné pohřby lidu moravské velatické skupiny u Blučiny. *Acta Musei Moraviae* 36: 129–152.
- TIHELKA K., 1957: *Cezavy u Blučiny*. Krajské nakladatelství v Brně, Brno.
- TIHELKA K., HANK V., 1948: Sídliště únětické a středodunajské mohylové kultury v Brně-Černých Polích. *Acta Musei Moraviae* 34: 138–157.
- TIHELKA K., HANK V., 1966: Jámy na únětickém sídlišti v Brně-Černých Polích z r. 1950–51. *Archeologické rozhledy* 18: 194–197.
- TRŇÁČKOVÁ Z., 1954: Objekty středodunajské mohylové kultury v Přítlukách na Moravě. *Archeologické rozhledy* 6: 746–752, 762–764, 839.
- VLADÁR J., 1972: Predbežná správa o systematickom výskume opevneného sídliska otomanskej kultury vo Spišskom Štvrtku. *Archeologické rozhledy* 34: 18–25.
- VLADÁR J., 1975: *Spišský Štvrtok, opevnená osada otomanskej kultúry*. Nitra.

Dr. Jan Jelínek, DSc.
Anthropos Institute
Zelný trh 7
659 37 Brno