



## EDITORIAL

### IN HONOR OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF PROFESSOR JIŘÍ SVOBODA

Prof. PhDr. Jiří Svoboda, DrSc. is an important figure in Czech and Moravian archaeology and well recognized internationally leading expert on Palaeolithic, palaeoanthropology, and Quaternary geology, who celebrates his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday in September of this year.

Jiří Svoboda was born in Prague on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1953 and, like many of his other fellow archaeologists, he began delving into the secrets of the past and the lives of our ancestors from early childhood. It was northern Bohemia, especially the region of Českolipsko and Děčínsko, where he began to find and collect the first prehistoric stone artefacts in his youth, and perhaps his innate curiosity and effort to get to know them more precisely led him to the study of archaeology, with a special concern to the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic. He studied the field of prehistory together with history at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University between 1973 and 1978. He finished his studies by defending his diploma thesis "*Křemencová industrie z Ondratice a její místo v paleolitickém vývoji*" (*Quartz industry from Ondratice and its place in Palaeolithic development*) and in 1979 he received his doctoral degree based on his rigorous work, "*K otázce klasifikace a interpretace staropaleolitických kamenných industrií*" (*On the issue of classification and interpretation of Lower Palaeolithic stone industries*). During his studies at Charles University, he completed an internship in France in 1977–78, where he studied geology at the "Université de Provence" in Marseille directly under the guidance of the prominent French Palaeolithic scholar, Henry de Lumley.

After completing his studies, he started to work at the Moravian Museum as an assistant researcher at the Anthropos Institute, and in 1981 he joined the Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Brno (formerly/until 1992 Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences) (IA CAS Brno), where he is working with few disruptions until the present, and since 2019 he achieved the position of the emeritus Professor. In 1985, he was awarded the scientific degree of CSc. in the field of prehistoric archaeology, which he defended with the candidate's thesis "*Rohovce ze Stránské skály u Brna*" (*The cherts from Stránská skála near Brno*), and he obtained the degree of DrSc. with his doctoral thesis "*Paleolithic of Moravia and Silesia*" in 1994. Between the years 1990 to 1992, he held the position of deputy director at IA CAS Brno and he directly participated in the creation of the institute's scientific and research concept, which ideological line is held until the present. Within the organizational structure of the institute, he has served as a chairman of the Scientific Council and a vice-chairman of the IA CAS Brno Supervisory Board and was also a member of the Academic Assembly of the Czech Academy of Sciences. In 1995, the newly conceived Centre for Palaeolithic and Palaeoethnology was created directly on his initiative and his leadership lasts until 2018.

Besides research activities, Jiří Svoboda has developed a rich pedagogical activity connected with several semestral courses and leading students' thesis. He worked at the Institute of Archaeology and Museology of the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University (MU) in Brno and at the Faculties of Arts at Palacký University in Olomouc and at the University of Hradec Králové. However, the most significant

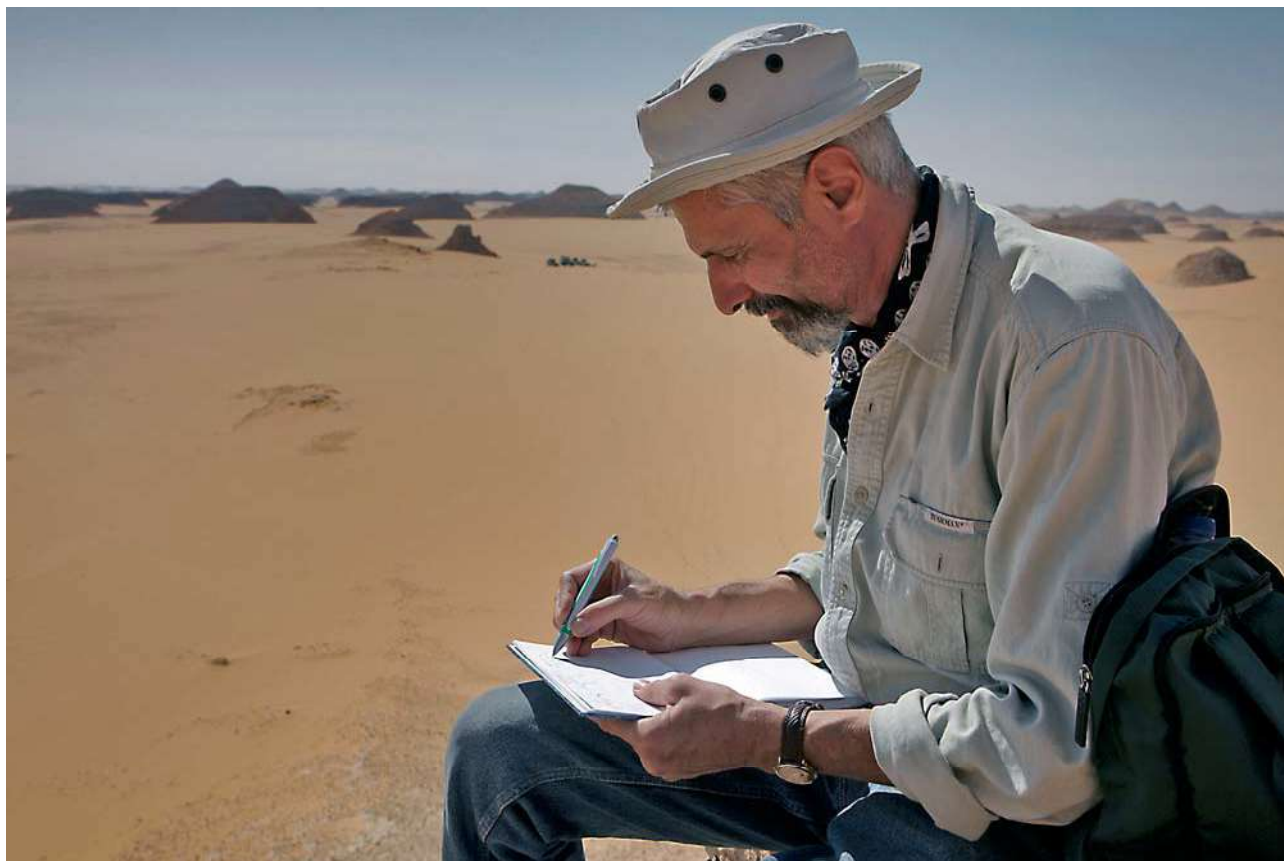


FIGURE 1: Professor Jiří Svoboda during a survey in the Egyptian Western Desert in 2008. Photo: M. Frouz.

academic stage of his career is connected to the Faculty of Sciences at Masaryk University, where he obtained his habilitation in 2000 as an Associate Professor in the field of anthropology and where seven years later he was appointed as a Professor. In 2010, he became the head of the Institute of Anthropology at the Faculty of Science at MU, which he led until his retirement in 2019. From this position, he also served as a member of the dean's college and the Scientific Council of the Faculty of Science at MU. It is also necessary to mention his teaching activities abroad, where he lectured several courses at the University of Vienna, and the University of the Philippines in Manila, for example.

From the beginning of his professional career, Jiří Svoboda was devoted to the study of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic hunter-gatherer societies, human evolution, and Quaternary geology, within the framework of comparative ethnoarchaeological research of recent living nomadic populations as well. From his position

as head of the Centre for Palaeolithic and Palaeoethnology at IA CAS Brno, he initiated systematic and comprehensive research of Palaeolithic settlements, settlement areas, and their peripheries in Moravia and Mesolithic settlements in northern Bohemia. These research projects gradually resulted in broadly conceived, interdisciplinary research questions addressing the origins of the first anatomically modern humans in Eurasia, and their physical, social, behavioural, and symbolic adaptations in changing environmental and socio-economic contexts. The results of his research significantly expand our knowledge of the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic settlements in Europe, and its hunter-gatherer populations, and they formed an important and respected research foundation for the next generation of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic researchers.

We should mention his important domestic field activities such as the research in the Moravian Karst caves (Pekárna, Barová, Kolíbky, Býčí skála) or in the

North Bohemian rock shelters in Českolipsko and in Bohemian Switzerland, as well as in Předmostí near Přerov, in Petřkovice near Ostrava and especially the long-term researches in Stránská skála and in Dolní Věstonice – Pavlov – Milovice microregion. He has participated in or organized several research projects abroad too. Already in the 1970s he participated as a student in Dietrich Mania's excavation at the Lower Palaeolithic site of Bilzingsleben in Germany and in Henry de Lumley's excavation/fieldwork of the Arago and Lazaret caves in France. In the Moravian National Museum, under the leadership of Jan Jelínek, he participated in an extensive prehistoric survey in Libya, later, he collaborated with the leading Czech Egyptologists Miroslav Verner and Miroslav Bárta on the research and surveys in Abusir and the Western Desert in Egypt (*Figure 1*). He participated in ethnoarchaeological research in the hard-to-reach areas of Tierra del Fuego in Argentina, on the Yamal and Gydan Peninsulas in Western Siberia, and in Northern Territory in Australia. He led a palaeontological and archaeological survey in Afar and the Blue Nile region of Ethiopia, as well as research focused on the documentation of Upper Palaeolithic parietal art in northern Spain. As the head of the Centre for Palaeolithic and Palaeoethnology at IA CAS Brno, he also developed an intensive collaboration with leading foreign universities and scientific institutions (e. g. University of Cambridge, Bordeaux, Tübingen, or Vienna, Natural History Museum in Vienna, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Max Planck Institute of Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig) and world-leading researchers in the field of Palaeolithic archaeology (Olga Soffer), Quaternary geology (Paul Haesaerts) or palaeoanthropology (Erik Trinkaus, Jean-Jacques Hublin). Together with the geneticists Johannes Kraus and Svante Pääbo, who recently wins the Nobel Prize in Medicine for palaeogenetics, Jiří Svoboda was involved in the genetic research of aDNA of past modern human populations.

Jiří Svoboda has developed his ideas and knowledge in an extremely rich publication activity. As the main author or co-author, he participated in around 500 published works, which include several dozens of professional articles in high-impact foreign journals and more than 30 monographs. He also presented the results of his research activities at numerous international conferences in Europe, America, and Asia, some of which he also directly organized or co-organized. As the main researcher and co-researcher, he also participated in the solution of several domestic

(GA AVČR, GAČR, MŠMT – OPVK) and foreign (Leakey Foundation, Wenner-Gren Foundation, Mellon Foundation, National Geographic Foundation) projects. He was a long-time editor of the monograph series, The Dolní Věstonice Studies, and a member of the editorial boards of several international journals (Anthropologie, Origini, Eurasian Prehistory, Archaeologia Austriaca) and scientific committees (ESHE, INQUA, UISPP). Last but not least, we should mention his popularization activities for a laic audience represented by various papers in popular science magazines (e.g. Vesmír, Živa, National Geographic) and his participation in several documentary films of foreign television productions, among the latter, for example, The Incredible Human Journey (2009, BBC), Mystery of the Ice Age Giants (2019, ZDF/ARTE) and Dames et princes de la Préhistoire (2021, ARTE/ČT). As a co-author, he participated in the creation of museum exhibitions in Dolní Věstonice, in the museum in Přerov, where he prepared an in-situ exhibition in the Memorial of Mammoth Hunters in Předmostí and was behind the theme, concept, and content of Archeopark Pavlov, a modern museum exhibition built directly on the Pavlov site itself. Naturally, we could continue the listing of other numerous activities.

Jiří Svoboda's rich curriculum vitae is an example of his extraordinary talent, immense hard work, and above all, his tremendous enthusiasm for Palaeolithic and Mesolithic archaeology and the oldest history of humans. If said in his own words "*...the arithmetical age of a person apparently does not mean much...*", which is good news to here, because in the case of Professor Jiří Svoboda, we can certainly look forward to more of his research achievements.

Dear Jiří, for the entire domestic and foreign research community we wish you all the best on your jubilee. May your health and strength last as long as possible, and more jubilee may to come, filled with joy, happiness, interesting work, and, above all, everything you dear the most, so you can enjoy every moment of your life.

*Sincerely, Martin Novák and Sandra Sázellová*