

Foreword

The 200th anniversary of Lithuanian anthropology

Lithuanian anthropology has a rich history. When "Theory of Organic Beings" was published by Jendrzej Sniadecki in 1804, Vilnius University became the earliest kernel of anthropology in the eastern half of Europe. The period of ancient Vilnius University was the first peak of anthropology in this country, as the study of the same author "Remarks on Physical Education of Children" (1805) as well as the handbook of anthropology by J. Jasinski (1818) were published, and some special questions of anthropology were tackled in the lectures of B. Jundzill and M. Homolicky, the professors of the University.

After Vilnius University was closed by Russia, following the uprising of 1831, the time was not propitious for development of sciences in Lithuania in general. A new rise of our anthropology began at the end of the 19th c., and it was connected with the name of Jonas Basanavièius, a prominent physician, leader of the Lithuanian national rebirth. Upon emigration to Bulgaria, he published "Materials on Bulgarian Sanitary Ethnology" in 1891, and he encouraged educated young to investigate the physical peculiarities of our people, interpreting anthropology as part of ethnology, so important for national rebirth. Under his influence, the studies by Povilas Višinskis, Jonas Baronas, Domininkas Bukantas, Petras Avišonis and others were performed.

The third peak of our anthropology is connected with the Anatomical Institute of Kaunas University, where numerous samples of skulls were collected and investigated and the first conclusions on the ethnogenesis of Lithuanians were made. To this pe-

riod of the history of anthropology a special study is devoted in the present issue.

After World War II, ethnogenetic investigations that flourished in Kaunas became unpopular and unwelcome. Salezijus Pavilionis, a prominent anatomist of the Medical Faculty of Vilnius University, directed his attention to auxology, which was connected with medical practice in general and pediatrics in particular. All periods of the growth of children were elucidated, and some important theoretical problems were solved. He created a Lithuanian auxological school, which is the forth peak of this science in Lithuania. The role of S. Pavilionis in the history of anthropology is elucidated in a separate report of this issue of "Acta Medica Lituanica"

On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of Lithuanian anthropology, the international conference "200 years of Lithuanian anthropology: modern trends, history, relation to medical practice and humanities" dedicated to the 425th anniversary of Vilnius University took place in Vilnius in October 27–30. The Human Morphology Commission of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Department of Anatomy, Histology and Anthropology of the Medical Faculty of Vilnius University, as well as Lithuanian Morphological Society were the organizers of the Conference. Specialists from 10 countries took part in it.

Nowadays auxology, craniology, palaeopathology, palaeodemography, palaeoecology, forensic anthropology and other fields of applied anthropology are being developed in this country.

Prof. Gintautas Èesnys