



Jan was a latecomer to herpetology. He did not begin his work on "Iconographie Générale des Ophidiens" until 1853, when he was 62. The book was published in 50 parts, each with six plates, during the period 1860-1881, with a so-called 51st part in 1881 (1882) containing the title page, table of contents, and index (all reprinted 1961). Together with his artist, Ferdinando Sordelli, a museum assistant, Jan continued to amass snakes for the museum's collection, and those species that could not be acquired permanently were borrowed from virtually all of the major European and American museums of the day, except those in London and Berlin who refused to cooperate. Eventually Jan and Sordelli produced an atlas of 300 plates, in folio, illustrating the snakes of the world. Concurrently, Jan had separately published only the first two parts of the text in smaller format when he died, in Milan, on 8 May 1866. Thus, we must credit Sordelli for seeing the remainder of the illustrations through to publication.

• *References*: "Inaugurandosi Soleunemente . . . il Busto di Giorgio Jan," by E. Cornalia, L. Giacomo Pirola, Milan, 27 pages, 1867; Siebenrock, 1901 (pp. 445-446); "Il Centenario di Giorgio Jan (1791-1866)," by C. Conci, *Atti Soc. Ital. Sci. Nat. / Mus. Civ. Stor. Nat. Milano*, 106: 1-94, 1967. • *Portrait*: From Conci, 1967, courtesy Wolfgang Böhm. • *Signature* (1863): Adler collection.

SORDELLI, Ferdinando (1837-1916).

Ferdinando Sordelli, naturalist and artist, is best known for his collaboration with Giorgio Jan in producing the monumental treatise "Iconographie Générale des Ophidiens." Sordelli was born in Milan on 12 December 1837 and came to work with Jan at Milan's Museo Civico di Storia Naturale in 1857, originally as a temporary assistant and later, in 1865, as permanent assistant. Later, Sordelli's own research was in zoology and paleontology, particularly on fossil plants and also including herpetology, but it was his gift as a draftsman that first brought him to Jan's attention.

Jan had begun his work on the atlas of snake illustrations in 1853. He was a good artist himself, but the task was too large for one person. Sordelli had been Jan's student prior to 1857, and his artistic abilities led Jan to entrust to him the intricate and large-scale task of illustrating his book. Apparently many of the drawings were made while Sordelli was still a teenager and before he was officially hired by the museum in 1857, but the work was not completed until about 1868, during which period it required all of Sordelli's time. Jan had died in 1866, so it was Sordelli who completed publication of the book, issued in 51 parts from 1860 to 1882 (reprinted 1961). The atlas of 300 plates, in folio, comprised the staggering total of nearly 8500 individual figures which were drawn in superlative detail and arranged on each plate with artistic skill, thus providing one of the most comprehensive series of drawings of an animal group ever issued.



Sordelli retired as museum assistant in 1915 and died in Milan on 17 January 1916.

• *References*: "In Memoria del Prof. Ferdinando Sordelli," by M. De Marchi, *Atti Soc. Ital. Sci. Nat. / Mus. Civ. Stor. Nat. Milano*, 55: 1-4, 1916; "Il Centenario di Giorgio Jan (1791-1866)," by C. Conci, *Atti Soc. Ital. Sci. Nat. / Mus. Civ. Stor. Nat. Milano*, 106: 1-94 (see p. 68-69), 1967. • *Portrait and signature* (1859): Museo Civico di Storia Naturale, Milan, courtesy Mario Schiavone.