

Book Reviews

Das Völkerwanderungszeitliche Graberfeld von Környe. By Ágnes Salamon and István Erdélyi. (Studia Archaeologica, V.) Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1971. 184 pp., 31 fig. 14 plates, \$16.00.

This book, which was extremely well received by Eastern and Western European scholars, has to my knowledge not yet been reviewed in an American periodical. Among Eastern European scholars, Russians, Czechs, Rumanians, and Hungarians wrote extremely favorable critiques. In the West, German, Swiss, and Austrian experts have also found the work to be trailblazing, opening up a new direction in the research on the Great Migration period after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. The book presents documentation which will require a revision of the currently accepted chronology of the appearance of the early Avars in the Carpathian Basin.

The material treated came from 152 graves near the town of Környe. It is worthy of note that about 50% of the bone material discovered was suitable for anthropological examination. The biochemical examination of the skeleton findings was made by I. Lengyel; the morphological and general anthropological analysis, by T. Toth. The book is written in German with the exception of the analysis by Toth, which appears in English.

Toth's anthropological analysis also suggests a possible need for correcting the chronology of the appearance of the Avars in the Danubian area. Toth believes that the predominance of the Proto-Europoid and Mediterranean characteristics of the Avars is possibly connected with an autochthonous group of the Roman period both in the Central Danubian Basin and in the Transdanubian area. All the foregoing shows strong analogies to the early Avaric period. It is noticeable that many horse burials were discovered at Környe. The orientations of certain group graves indicate a possible family burial system. In addition to the assembled wooden coffins, many coffins were carved out of tree trunks.

In the third part of the book the authors describe all their findings in great detail. The presentation of the findings was made by the Computer Code System which Salamon established for Avaric remains and published in 1966.

The scientific treatment of the findings is extremely effective. Well-designed diagrams give quick views for the reader of the results of analyses performed. In the sociological analysis the authors group together the graves as those of the rich, average and poor, which gives a new aspect to their analysis. On another chart, the yields are also grouped together for historical and sociological analysis according to their utility and not to sex of the skeleton. (Female, male, child.) However, a general short tabulation of sexes in relation to the findings is also included.

Since the anthropological report concluded that the autochthonous and the German migrant groups could easily have composed the early Avar epoch in Környe, I would welcome another tabulation to show statistically the stylistic origin (Byzantine, Roman, German, Avaric and other barbaric) of the findings in relation to the position and the network of the graves and to the anthropologically established racial distribution.

On the basis of the classification in six groups and the analysis of all grave articles, the authors conclude that the stylistically heterogeneous origins of the findings are represented in most of the graves. This fact suggests quite a cosmopolitan though homogeneous society of the early Avars, who maintained and mixed Western, Byzantine, and inner Asiatic artistic and utilitarian traditions.

The assumption of the heterogeneous nature of the Avars has long preoccupied scholars as a highly hypothetical and controversial issue. The excavation in Környe is indeed a great step forward toward the acceptance of this highly disputed thesis. Perhaps this is the reason why both Eastern and Western scholars were so eager to review and evaluate this book so positively.

By suggesting the heterogeneous nature of the Avars the authors are opening the door to further hypotheses which will stimulate scholars to further scientific disputes. It is stated as a possibility that the cemetery of Környe holds the remains of the settlement of mercenary groups from Byzantium. This settlement also contained racially heterogeneous elements.

Since the publication of the book, the result of research on the weapons found at the excavation in Környe has been published. The scholarly world now is awaiting the publication of the physico-chemical examination of the ceramics and the serological date of the bones. Such additional information will complete the evaluation of the finding of the Avaric cemetery in Környe, for which the book of Salamon and Erdélyi is essential.

Sándor Petőfi; His Entire Poetic Works. A translation by Frank Szomy. 2nd ed. (Boca Raton, Fla., Published by the Author, 1972. Illus. Pp. 773).

Frank Szomy's intention, to make available an English translation of the poetic works of Sandor Petofi is a laudable one. Unfortunately, neither his command of the nuances of Hungarian nor his talent for English versification is equal to the task. In all fairness it should be noted that Mr. Szomy assumes no false airs and acknowledges in the "Foreword" that "the effort has been devoted to giving an accurate version of the thoughts and ideas of the poet." This much is generally accomplished, even when some of the thoughts suffer so much in the translation that their freshness and vitality disappear.

In general, poems that are chiefly narrative or descriptive are more successfully translated than those lyrics in which both the imagery and the music of the lines are essential to the total meaning. So a poem like *The Apostle* communicates the meaning of Petofi's original. However, since the excellent verse translation of Victor Clement has been in print for more than ten years, Mr. Szomy would have been well advised to give merely a brief prose summary and direct the reader to that work. It is this lack of awareness of the scholarly work in progress, this isolation from current scholarship in Hungarian literature that is one of the major drawbacks of the work. It is certainly at the root of most of the errors found in the volume.

The two other long narrative poems, *The Village Hammer* and *John the Hero* have not yet appeared in a better English version, so Szomy's rendering of the story is adequate. Unfortunately, Petofi's playful and ironic style does not come across in the translation of the former, and the mock heroic tone is lost. A study of the techniques of Pope's *Rape of the Lock* or Byron's *Don Juan* would profit any translator of the satiric Petofi. The second epic is an even more difficult poem to translate. Petofi uses a genre and a vocabulary that is not familiar to the Western reader. The imaginative world of the poem is closed to the translator, as it had been to John Bowring and William Loew, though Szomy at least gives an accurate version. Still, some disturbing elements remain: "Kanaan" of Canto XI is translated as "Caen," and in Canto XIII the imagery is transformed into pedestrian verbosity:

Johnnie Corn and the princess
Reached the battlefield at sunset.
The setting sun's last rays
Looked with reddened eyes at the terrible scene.