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Book reviews

Hroby barbarů v Praze-Zličíně.

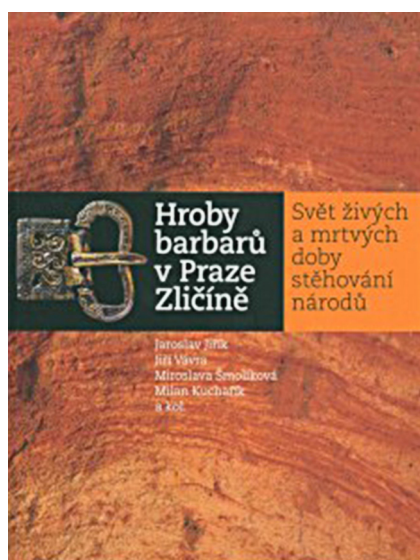
Svět živých a mrtvých doby stěhování národů.

Barbarian Graves at Prague-Zličín. The World of the Living and the Dead of the Migration Period.

Jaroslav Jiřík, Jiří Vávra,

Miroslava Šmolíková, Milan Kuchařík *et al.*

The City of Prague Museum. Prague 2015, 255 pp. ISBN 978-80-87828-15-1. Czech language.



This representative publication about the Migration Period and the Prague-Zličín burial site is the first complete popular scientific evaluation of research findings from the largest necropolis of the human skeletal remains in Bohemia of the so-called Viničice group from the 5th century AD. Following several partial essays, this book was compiled to accompany an exhibition of the same title held at the City of Prague Museum (May 2015 – February 2016). The publication is based on high-quality interdisciplinary rescue archaeological excavation conducted between 2005 and 2008 during which 173 graves were unearthed. All chapters of this book are written in Czech language, English version is being prepared.

The main figures behind the collective work of twelve authors are the archaeologists Jaroslav Jiřík and Jiří Vávra. The publication is abundantly illustrated with finds, particular site situations, and many impressive, scientifically-based reconstructions created by Libor Balák. The monograph as a whole may be divided into two parts. The first eight chapters are dedicated to the Migration Period in general: primarily presenting introductory passages about the Migration Period in Europe (Dieter Quast) and the Migration Period in Bohemia (Jaroslav Jiřík), and other more specific contributions. The second part (nine chapters) focuses on the results of the Prague-Zličín burial site research: describing the exacting research itself and dealing with the finds and their connections, mainly gold and silver jewellery, ceramic and glass vessels, tools, everyday objects, and textiles. The authors also pay attention to a special phenomenon of that time, *i.e.* the robbing of graves, and naturally to their anthropological examination. Some chapters have been written more for researchers who are familiar with the issues, while other chapters have a more informative character or present partial results of the Prague-Zličín burial site research. The book further benefits more serious readers by having professional notes and a list of quoted literature, and thus no major shortcomings can be identified. Only in the localisation of some cultures (mainly the Wielbark Culture) being imprecisely placed in two maps (p. 79) or are missing (p. 94) do we find inaccuracies, but this could be down to professional proof-readers.

This monograph does not aspire to be an all-embracing evaluation of research, as this would require a catalogue of finds, detailed descriptions of site situations, and plans of all the graves. Rather the authors have sought to present the complex Migration Period in Europe and Bohemia and mainly show the abundance of the finds and main results of the examination of the Zličín site in the context of the surrounding Barbaricum at the border of the Western Roman Empire. Global interpretations

that follow on from the burial site analyses would require more time. Nevertheless, it can already be said that the Prague-Zličín burial site is one of the most significant of the Viničice group and that its significance goes beyond Bohemia. The necropolis was also used by the elite of the Viničice group and the location's background may be regarded as one of the centres of power in the so-called Great Prague area. Based on the preliminary analysis of the artefacts, many multifarious long-distance contacts can be observed: not only in the Danube Region, central and South Germany, and the Rhineland, but also in areas of today's Italy, France, and even Egypt. In addition to the archaeological finds from the 5th century AD, the site expands our knowledge through its collection of organic materials, or rather the environmental research made on such (anthropology, osteology, textile, leather, human hair, and fragments of wooden coffins). The Elbe Germanic bearers of the Viničice group played an important role in the transformation of the Late Roman Period cultures along with the groups of inhabitants of the earlier Migration Period (especially with the Allemani and the Danube-East Germanic tribes). It was a turning point of the pre-Merovingian 5th century, such that all of Europe changed radically and gradually passed from Late Antiquity into the early medieval way of life – that also strongly affected the Bohemian basin.

The greatest value of the book for researchers lies in the fact that it presents luxurious and other precious finds as well as outlining some topics for further research. I only wish to the authors and the implementation team that the Prague-Zličín burial site of the Barbarians will receive a detailed scientific elaboration after publishing of this brilliant presentation of the research results. Only this would help move forward 5th century research in the Bohemian basin and the *Barbaricum* territory. The reviewed undertaking just published is a springboard for the authors to do so.

Eduard Droberjar

