

*Temporary Palaces. The Great House in European Prehistory. (Oxbow Insights in Archaeology).* By Richard Bradley. 13 × 20 cm. x + 244 pp, 30 b&w figs. Oxford & Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2021. ISBN 978-1-78925-661-1; epub: 978-1-78925-662-8. Price: £16.99 pb.

I am full of admiration for scholars who spent the pandemic writing books (I was mostly eating Taco Bell in a state of ennui). The singular scholar Richard Bradley is one of these people, having generated his 2021 Oxbow Insights in Archaeology volume *Temporary Palaces* in that period of upheaval. The title stems from a sculptural artwork including a light installation with the inscription ‘All palaces are temporary palaces’. From this poetic starting-point, Bradley takes us on a journey through the architecture of prehistoric Europe from the Neolithic to the Viking Age, from Ireland and Britain to France and Scandinavia.

The journey starts with a paradox: the puzzling fact that some prehistoric architectural structures in Britain look entirely similar, even if built thousands of years apart – from timber buildings of the Neolithic to halls of the early-medieval period. Likewise, Bradley argues there are eerie similarities between late-Neolithic henges and those of Iron-Age Ireland. This point of departure eventually develops into the book’s overall argument, namely that there is a recurrent idea of ‘the Great House’ in prehistoric Europe – monumental structures often springing from regional domestic architecture that played a crucial role in feasting, craft production and ritual practice.

The volume is structured into three parts: ‘A problem shared’, ‘Dream houses’ and ‘Setting the house in order’. Part I sets out the above-mentioned paradox, while Part II tackles interpretation of houses, from the hands-on understanding of their physical making to the conceptual scale, eg critically discussing the Levi-Straussian ‘house society’ and its applicability to European prehistory. Part III centres *sequence* and trajectory of different architectural traditions. Overall, Bradley reviews an impressive range of sites, materials and research questions across northern Europe.

As with any study, there are arguments one would want to see discussed more or unpacked further. Nevertheless, the book’s final argument – which is the most lasting one for this reader – is the perspective gained by analysing prehistoric buildings at a broad chronological and geographical scale: Bradley’s unwillingness to ‘conform to a limited and all-too-insular conception of the prehistoric period’ (p 26), and actively choosing to cross geographical and chronological divides, sets an example for scholarship generally. Overall, this is wide-ranging and thought-provoking book which should be read by anyone interested in the architecture of European prehistory but equally by early-medieval archaeologists engaged in buildings and their meanings.

MARIANNE HEM ERIKSEN (*University of Leicester*)

*La torre e il palazzo Maconi in Siena (XII–XIV secolo). Articolazione degli ambienti interni e controllo dello spazio urbano.* By Jacopo Bruttini. 21 × 30 cm. 86 pp, 5 colour ‘tavole’, 65 colour and b&w pls figs and tables. Sesto Fiorentino (FI): All’Insegna del Giglio, 2021. ISBN 978-88-9285-078-1; epub: 978-88-9285-079-8. Price: €40.00 pb.

Towers within cityscapes were a pretty common feature in medieval northern and central Italy, as built symbols of secular and noble family wealth, competing alongside the many church campanili and civic towers; while many subsequently collapsed or were removed – in conflict or for civilian safety or in urban redevelopment – many survive in adjusted form (from museums to residences) in cities like Rome, Bologna and Lucca. Here, Bruttini interrogates the built fabric and textual record to strip down Siena’s Torre Maconi to understand its constructional sequence, its original configuration and urban context, and to learn more of the imprint of the Maconi family – one of the oldest in Siena, prominent in civic/communal and military offices, but one that struggled in mid-13th-century conflicts. The family held prime urban space close to Piazza del

Campo and the via Francigena (the publication sadly lacks a plan of medieval Siena or an aerial photograph of the historic core); archival documents such as the *Tavola delle Possessioni* of 1320 reveal their properties included other towers with attached palaces, plus *domus*, warehouses, shops and piazzas; combined, we see a militarised urban ‘enclave’ by the 13th century, where high towers, defended spaces and elaborate palaces displayed family power. Detailed structural survey of the remnants of the Torre Maconi (part-incorporated in late-medieval structures) via rectified photography, vertical stratigraphic and materials analysis, plus 3D modelling, offer physical insight into elite-built investment and display strategies, but more specifically guide on the internal articulation of one of these distinctive medieval towers and palaces. Oddly, Buttini does not engage in discussing what happened in the towers (some texts refer to prisoners held), which were rarely used for residence (note the minimal fenestration in the reconstruction drawings on pp 78–80), and acted more as landmarks. The tower’s origins are set to the second half of the 12th century and the attached palazzo to c 1200. Texts refer to requests to lower the tower’s height in 1349 because of concerns over stability; lightning damage in 1439 certainly meant its reduction. Final note goes to the study of a set of five underground/rock-cut chambers or hypogea beneath the Maconi complex (pp 61, 68–72), some up to 8 m below the modern ground level, used variously as cellars, stores, cisterns and living spaces; while some conceivably originate in pre-Roman times, Buttini argues that a number were excavated to serve the 13th-century palace complex.

NEIL CHRISTIE (*University of Leicester*)

*Vitrum, alumen, sablonum. I manufatti vitrei in Terra d’Otranto tra Medioevo e prima età Moderna (secoli XIII–XVI)*. (Contributi di Archeologia Medievale. Premio Ottone d’Assia e Riccardo Francovich, 16). By Simona Catacchio. 21 × 29 cm. 170 pp, 37 colour and b&w ‘tavole’, 69 colour and b&w pls and figs, 17 tables. Sesto Fiorentino (FI): All’Insegna del Giglio, 2020. ISBN 978-88-9285-008-8; epub: 978-88-9285-009-5 (ISSN 2035-5424). Price: €36.00 pb.

An annual publication award to outstanding young researchers, the Premio Ottone d’Assia e Riccardo Francovich genuinely reflects high quality, often innovative, work, usually based on doctoral research. Simona Catacchio’s thesis at the Università del Salento looks to give proper voice and visibility to medieval glass products, whose finds always feature in archaeological reports, but rarely see detailed scientific assessment and contextualisation. Here, the focus is on finds from excavations in the southern Apulian centres of Lecce (a city with ancient roots) and *Borgo Terra* (Muro Leccese, a fortress-town founded in the late 15th century), with questions focussed not solely on forms and comparanda, but also on the processes of production, scales of local versus imported goods, modes of marketing, vessel uses and levels of recycling. As stressed in both Introduction and Chapter I (which addresses materials, production, textual and archaeological sources, and trade flows for the full medieval period), while northern and central Italy (notably Veneto, Liguria and Toscana provinces) have good archaeological evidence for medieval glass production sites, SE Italy is an unexpected lacuna, with imports long viewed as dominant here, despite recognised local ceramic (including glazed) traditions. Hence Catacchio’s application of archaeometric analyses to identify materials and techniques in order to reveal local/regional glass industries.

The extended Chapter II (pp 27–97) outlines the excavated sites and assemblages, and catalogues the recovered finds and their vessel typologies (from beakers to chalices, to bottles, lamps and urinals). Contexts include dumps in a cistern at Lecce castle, in the cloister of the Santa Maria del Tempio convent and around the courtyard of Borgo Terra’s Palazzo del Principe, mainly covering the 15th to 16th centuries (13th- and 14th-century finds, meanwhile, derive from the courtyard of Lecce castle). Differences exist in forms at each site, such as the