

had been analysed by relevant specialists. This resultant monograph is substantial and contains not only detailed accounts of the survey (Ch 4) and excavations in the town (Chs 6–9), but also individual chapters dedicated to inscriptions (Ch 5), chronology (Ch 10) architecture (Ch 11) and to the different finds: ceramics, glass artefacts and beads, gold-processing and metalworking remains, coins and metals, faunal and plant remains and other miscellaneous artefacts (Chs 12–21). Nixon carefully discusses the archaeological evidence in combination with the historical accounts of Arab authors (these collected in Appendix A). Archaeological specialists will find the other numerous appendices (B–N) valuable, as they set out the full range of evidence collected and the methods employed. These appendices thus enable readers to focus on the main text and interpretations without extended intervening specialist entries, but with printed access to the latter available at the end of the volume (although in some cases cross-referencing to the relevant appendix, such as in Ch 12 on the ceramics, is not ideal). Combined, the volume clearly presents the results from Essouk-Tadmekka in the context of Islamic medieval West Africa. Besides an introduction (Part 1: Chs 1–3), the discussion and synthesis (Part 5, Chs 22–24 and Conclusion) frame and contextualise the whole research project and the evidence generated. It is worth noting that for all chapters Nixon is the main author or a co-author (except for Chapter 5, on the inscriptions, by Moraes Farias, Nixon's predecessor in the study of Essouk-Tadmekka).

In summary, the book is a great success. Although essentially an archaeological monograph, its compelling argument transcends the presentation of results and even the reconstruction of the cultural history of Essouk-Tadmekka itself to offer important and often revealing reflections on trans-Saharan commerce (including the gold trade), Islam in West Africa, Tuareg culture and history, and the transmission of technologies and ideas. It is therefore highly recommended to scholars and students interested in the history and archaeology of West Africa and of the Islamic world system in the Middle Ages.

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*Le alte valli di Taro e Ceno tra fede e laicità: re, monaci e pellegrini.* (DEA: Documenti ed Evidenze di Archeologia 6). Edited by Manuela Catarsi & Patrizia Raggio. 21 × 30 cm. 96 pp, 74 colour and b&w pls and figs. Bologna: Ante Quem & Soprintendenze ABAP Emilia-Romagna, 2017. ISBN 978-88-7849-121-2. Price: €21.00 pb.

The main brief of this fairly slim volume appeared to be to examine the landscape impact of the foundation of the monastery of Bobbio, established by the Irish monk St Columbanus in the Parma-Piacenza Apennines, on lands granted by the Lombard Italian King Agilulf in AD 614. Eleven chapters (largely by the editors) draw, we are told, on excavations, surveys and findings conducted or overseen by the then Soprintendenza all'Archeologia dell'Emilia-Romagna. Less emphasis is set on history and key names (basic summaries on Columbanus and Agilulf are given by Raggio and Catarsi respectively in Chapters 1 and 2) and likewise on the standing abbey complex itself and the site location (each given three-page coverage in Chapters 4 and 5), and more weight goes to churches, dependencies and other monastic sites: thus, Chapter 11 covers the monastery of San Michele di Gravago (first cited in AD 744), while fairly detailed description and discussion are given of medieval churches (and burials) in the Val Vona (Ch 8); and the early medieval religious landscape is best treated in Chapter 6. Otherwise we learn nothing really of the landscape itself or the working population and their villages and products, or even the monks and pilgrims of the volume's title, although Chapter 9 on roads does a fair job in showing Bobbio's connectivity, including with the notable pilgrim route of the *Via Francigena*. Overall I felt that the archaeological treatment was too slight: Raggio's coverage of roads does plot diverse main and subsidiary lines, but we are given no details on road forms — widths, angles, surfaces, etc. In fact most chapters would have benefitted from such extra detail: rare are plans of abbeys and churches (none are given for Bobbio itself or San Michele di Gravago), and excavation photos only really come in Chapter 8. It's nice to get pretty views (we get five scenic '*vedute*' alone in Chapter 6 and Chapter 10 has three

'panoramic' photos), but these should surely supplement and not replace illustrations from the actual site-based studies of the Soprintendenza. In sum, a useful effort but not one with full coherence or sufficient depth to bring either period(s) or area alive.

NEIL CHRISTIE (*University of Leicester*)

*The Sutton Hoo Story. Encounters with Early England.* By Martin Carver. 16 × 25 cm. xiii + 241 pp, 148 colour and b&w pls and figs. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2017. ISBN 978-1-78327-204-4. Price: £19.99 pb.

Those of us who long taught with Martin Carver's *Sutton Hoo: Burial Ground of Kings?* (Philadelphia, 1998) and who came to mourn both the book's increasingly outdated interpretations and its passing out of print, will be very happy to have his much-changed *The Sutton Hoo Story* back in our classrooms. Still intact is the original book's marvelous presentation of the history of the site and its many excavations; elsewhere, though, the volume presents ideas and interpretations that are quite different from those found in *Burial Ground of Kings*. Some of the updates are subtle changes of phrase, to bring the book in line with more current thinking: 'Celtic' field systems, for example, have been replaced by 'Iron-Age' ones. Other changes are more fundamental: the presentation of the origins of the English and the formation of early kingdoms, for example, reflect the last 15 years of scholarship on identity and early medieval history and myth-making.

*The Sutton Hoo Story* also incorporates highlights from the painstaking research presented in Carver's monumental 2005 volume, *Sutton Hoo: A Seventh-Century Princely Burial Ground and its Context*. Coffins in the earlier *Burial Ground of Kings* were constructed from planks, but now are fashioned from tree trunks; the 'human sacrifice' associated with Mound 5 has been demoted to a later execution burial; textiles recovered from the graves are given more space; and the animal remains have been re-thought. Discussions of the prehistoric and earliest medieval phases of the site, uncovered during excavations at Tranmer House, have also been added. The inclusion of these earlier burials in the revised book allows Carver to make thought-provoking comparisons between them and the site's more famous mound burials. The presentation of the overall sequence of the site reflects new thinking as well.

The important final chapter, which stands in place of the old volume's list of unresolved questions, offers wide-ranging discussion of some of the possible meanings of Sutton Hoo, situated in two decades of new research and reflection, and it succinctly and beautifully places Sutton Hoo into conversation with other sites — Brandon, Bloodmore Hill, Snape, Spong Hill, Swallowcliffe Down, West Stow, as well as England's *wic* sites. And it offers up new ideas about individual objects, the meaning of material culture more broadly, ritual practices, kingship and trade networks connecting Britain with the eastern Mediterranean, Francia and Scandinavia.

ROBIN FLEMING (*Boston College, USA*)

*The Place-Name Kingston and Royal Power in Middle Anglo-Saxon England. Patterns, Possibilities and Purpose.* (BAR British Series 630). By Jill Bourne. 21 × 30 cm. xii + 167 pp, 89 colour and b&w figs, 4 tables. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports Ltd, 2017. ISBN 978-1-4073-1583-3. Price £44.00 pb.

Taking its cue from a pioneering approach to *-borp* place names, this book posits that the Kingstons form a 'family' and share commonalities awaiting discovery. The thesis is presented in Part 1, prefaced by a very clear base map showing the location of all 70 known Kingstons (whether they are first attested before or after Domesday Book) and their marked pattern of proximity to a Roman or other early attested road. Part 2, 'The Data', profiles each Kingston, located within a 1st edition 1-inch Ordnance Survey map and accompanied by geographical