

A MEDIEVAL GLASSHOUSE IN THE GENOESE APENNINES, ITALY  
(FIG. 43)

The existence of a medieval glassworking site on Mount Lecco<sup>57</sup> was already known from abundant scatter of production-waste on a terrace on its E. side, within the state forest. In the summer of 1971 the archaeological group of the *Istituto Internazionale di Studi Liguri*<sup>58</sup> during a systematic excavation discovered remains of a glass furnace (*fornus operis*), surrounded by a working-area bounded by rough dry-stone walling. No documents have yet been found which securely refer to the Mount Lecco glasshouse, although the place-name *vederaria* appears in the area in documents as early as the 11th century.<sup>59</sup> Excavations, however, provided clear evidence of the chronology of this furnace and of the glass it produced. The beaten earth floor found in the working-area is made up of thin successive layers, in all 0.30 m. in depth, representing alternate use and disuse, and contains only one clear ceramic group. This pottery consists of Liguro-Pisan *maiolica arcaica*,<sup>60</sup> occasional Hispano-Moresque and *graffita arcaica*<sup>60</sup> sherds and glazed cooking-pots with high necks and hooked rims: an association which in Liguria can be assigned to the last decades of the 14th and the 1st half of the 15th century. Many applied glass seals from wine bottles, also found in these layers, resemble the arms with crossed shield of the Genoese Republic, which belong to the 1st half of the 15th century.<sup>61</sup>

The furnace itself is roughly circular in plan (2.30 m. diameter) and constructed of irregular stonework derived from local tough orphiolitic rock bonded with clayey earth. Its essential structural characteristic is the central flue, lined mainly with refractory bricks and mortar. The E. end of the flue opens on to the ashpit, and its W. end is rounded and linked to the outside by a small irregular opening. The centre of the flue was partly filled by a mass of fused glass which overflowed on to and over the siege platform on which the crucibles were set. The ashpit, which is partly inside and partly outside the furnace, is rectangular in plan and consists of a small pit dug in the ground, and bounded on the S. and E. by stone slabs which appear to be so placed as to channel the prevailing N. wind into the flue. Nothing of the upper part of the furnace was in place, but many wedge-shaped and truncated pyramidal refractory bricks were found in the layers of disuse of the beaten earth floor and in the final destruction-layer. The form of these bricks obviously suggests a hemispherical cupola. The many schist slates in the destruction-layer may have come from the roof of the working-area.

Although a complete typological and technological analysis has not yet been made, it is appropriate to mention here some of the more significant finds from the beaten earth floors and from the refuse discarded outside the walls that bounded the working-area:

1. Fragments of crucibles were found in abundance in all layers. Their form is cylindrical or slightly splayed, the larger ones having thicker walls (diameter 0.35 m., height 0.20 m.). The fabric is of ground quartz of constant grain size in clay with low iron content. Metal equipment is rare and its use uncertain.

2. Glass waste, though very fragmentary, shows that the glasshouse mainly produced glass for common use, such as subcylindrical beakers, and bottles with long necks, often with applied trailed collars. The walls of these vessels are very thin and sometimes have decorated moulding (*umbonatura*). The glass is usually greenish, but occasionally colourless. Preliminary chemical analyses on some samples confirm that it is potash glass. Artistic blue glass with white trailed decoration was also produced,

<sup>57</sup> On the Apennine watershed 25 km. from Genoa, 840 m. above sea level.

<sup>58</sup> The research was financed by the G.N.R. *Centro per la Storia della Tecnica*.

<sup>59</sup> T. Belgrano, 'Cartario genovese', *Atti della Società Ligure di Stori Patria*, II (1862), pt. I.

<sup>60</sup> T. Mannoni, 'La ceramica medievale a Genova e nella Liguria italiana', *Studi Genuensi*, VI (1967-8).

<sup>61</sup> N. Bascape, *Sigillografia*, I (1969).

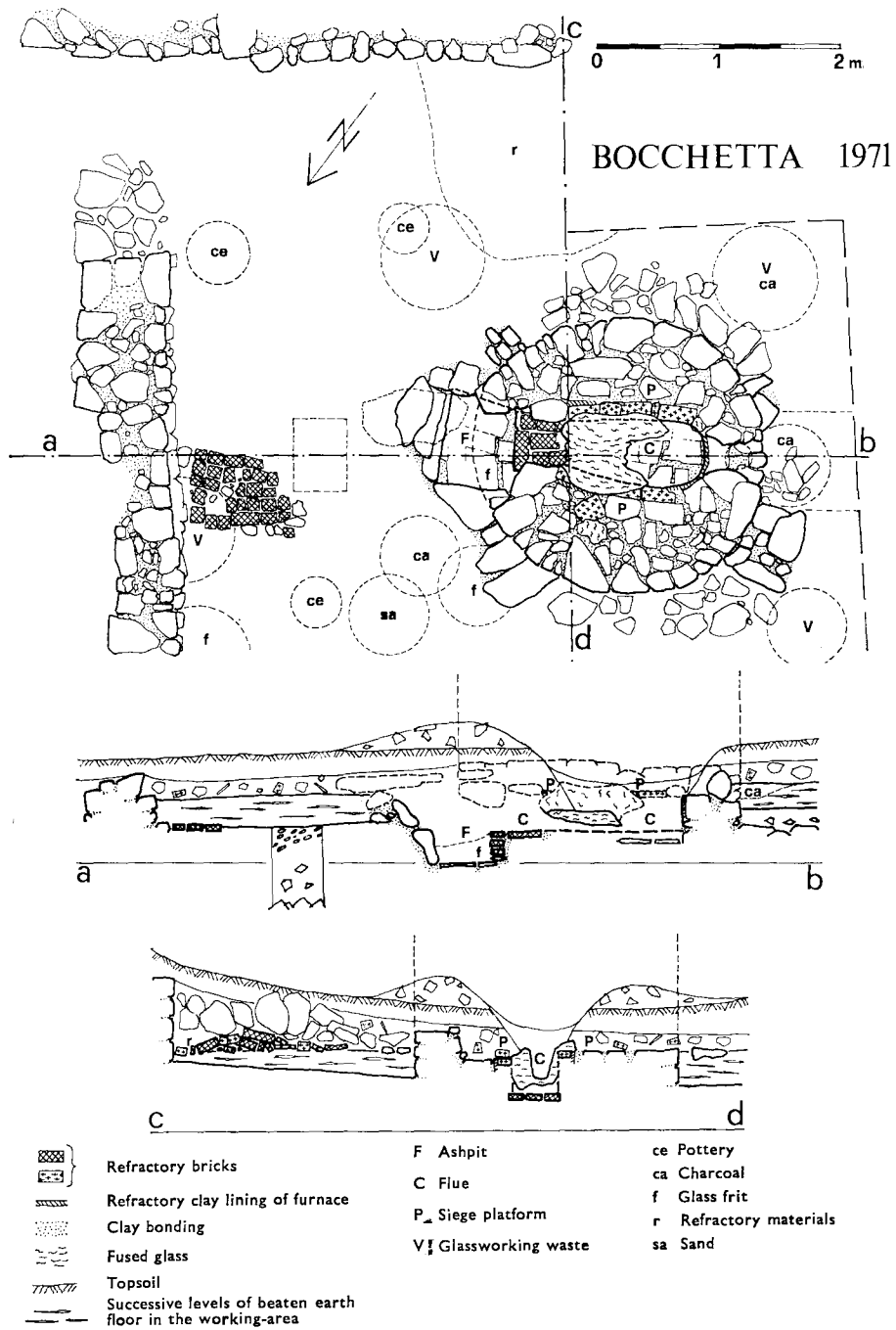


FIG. 43

PLAN AND SECTIONS OF GLASS FURNACE AND WORKING-AREA, MOUNT LECCO, LIGURIA, ITALY (p. 143)

but more rarely. Among the waste there were fragments of used glass, probably brought to the glasshouse as cullet.

3. The raw materials found include white-veined quartz of local provenience, and beech charcoal.<sup>62</sup>

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## THE LONG-HOUSE: A PLEA FOR CLARITY

The term 'long-house' was coined by Iorwerth C. Peate<sup>63</sup> to describe a house in which one end is used for cattle. It is a literal translation of the Welsh term *tŷ hir*, found in medieval documents, which he suggested was applied to houses of this type. The same term in a Latin form, *longa domus*, occurs in English documents, but its usage has not been studied in detail. Whether either name means more than a house that is, in a literal sense, long, is not relevant to present usage, as Peate's coinage has been accepted and employed. Precise definitions have been discussed, on the basis of direct access between house and byre,<sup>64</sup> of entry to the house via the byre,<sup>65</sup> or of a common access for people and cattle.<sup>66</sup> These have been designed to clarify the development of the type, or to distinguish it from similar structures, notably the Yorkshire laithe-house, but all accept and use the original meaning of long-house. The type of structure concerned can be clearly recognized both in standing buildings and from excavations, from the drain or other features in the byre. It certainly needs and merits an individual name.

However, the term has also been used with a much wider meaning, notably by J. G. Hurst in the book *Deserted Medieval Villages*,<sup>67</sup> to describe any three-room house in which the third room is apparently used for farm purposes. This includes most long-houses in the strict sense, except those with only one domestic room. The dual usage has produced the somewhat absurd situation that the term is used in two distinct senses in two sections of the one book.<sup>68</sup>

This ambiguity can and does lead to confusion about what is intended in particular instances and we wish to put forward the strongest possible plea for consistency in usage. Clearly there are two alternatives. 'Long-house' can be used in the particular sense and other terms, such as 'three-unit plan' or 'cross-passage house', as appropriate, for the more general plan-types; or 'long-house' can be used in a general sense and another term may be adopted for the house that includes a byre. This is solely a matter of nomenclature and should carry no implications about the development of or relationships between plan-types. Either solution would be better than the present situation, but we would urge that 'long-house' be used only in the sense 'house-and-byre', and for excavated sites only when there is positive evidence of a byre. This is because:

1. Priority clearly belongs to this meaning. Although refinement of a definition is obviously acceptable, a major change in meaning should not be.
2. The term has been extensively used in published work with this meaning.

<sup>62</sup> I thank Mr. Jeremy Haslam for his kind advice. I am also grateful to Mr. Hugo Blake and Mr. Jeremy Haslam for translating and editing this brief account of the glasshouse.

<sup>63</sup> I. C. Peate, *The Welsh House* (Liverpool, 1940).

<sup>64</sup> J. T. Smith, 'The long-house in Monmouthshire' in *Culture and Environment*, ed. I. Ll. Foster and L. Alcock (London, 1963), 389-414.

<sup>65</sup> P. Smith, 'The long-house and the laithe-house', *ibid.*, 415-38.

<sup>66</sup> N. W. Alcock, 'Devonshire farmhouses, pt. II', *Trans. Devonshire Assoc.*, CI (1969), 83-106.

<sup>67</sup> J. G. Hurst, 'A review of archaeological research' in M. W. Beresford and J. G. Hurst, *Deserted Medieval Villages* (London, 1971), 112-16.

<sup>68</sup> By Hurst, *loc. cit.* in note 67; L. A. S. Butler, 'Wales: deserted medieval settlements', *ibid.*, 263-4.