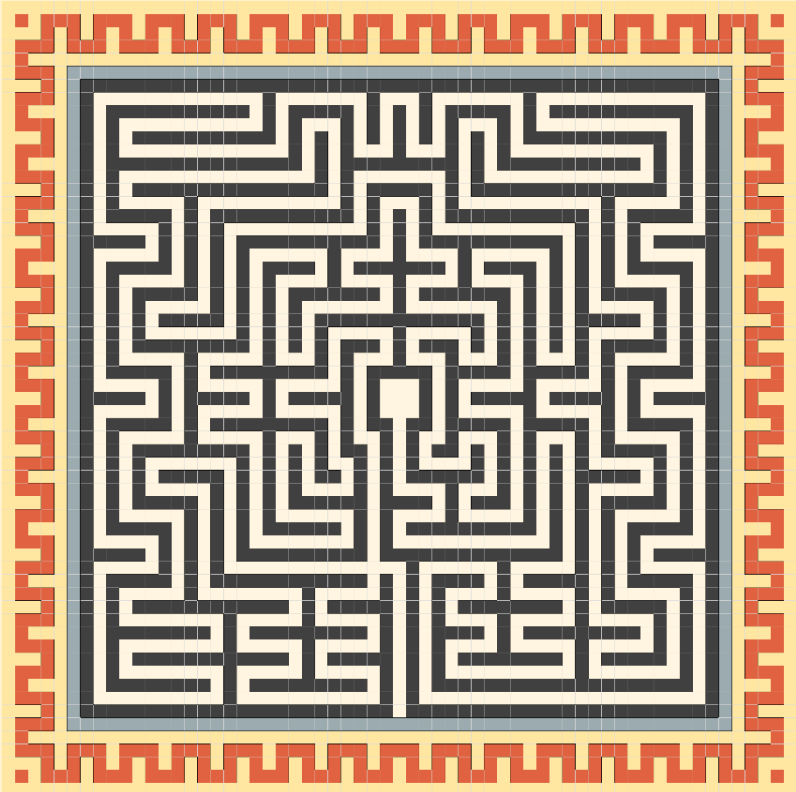


CAERDROIA

THE JOURNAL OF
MAZES & LABYRINTHS



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CAERDROIA 51

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The Journal of Mazes & Labyrinths

51st Edition



The mosaic labyrinth, dating from the early 3rd century CE, preserved in the House of the Fountains at the Roman ruins of Conimbriga, Portugal.

Photo: Jeff Saward, May 2022

CAERDROIA 51

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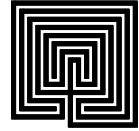
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Caerdroia 51 was produced during September 2022 by Jeff and Kimberly Saward at Labyrinthos HQ. Opinions stated by contributors are not always those of the editors, but *Caerdroia* welcomes open discussion and endeavours to provide a forum for all who are lured by the labyrinth.

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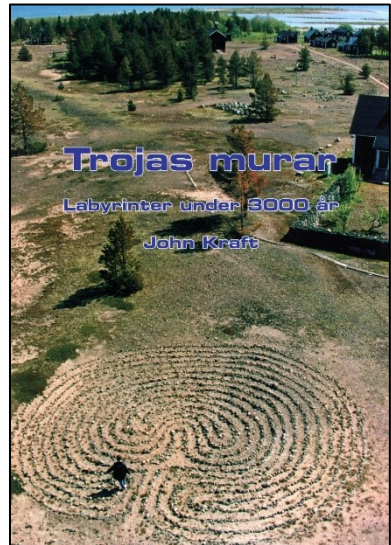


Review copies of maze and labyrinth related books, publications, software and CD's, etc., are always welcome for inclusion in future editions of Caerdroia.

Trojas murar. Labyrinter under 3000 år, by John Kraft. Badelunda Hembygdsförening & P O Flodbergs förlag, Västerås, Sweden, 2022. ISBN 978-91-982763-4-3. Paperback, 342 pages, numerous illustrations, maps, etc.

John Kraft has been engaged in the cultural history of labyrinths, especially in a Nordic context, since the mid-1970s. In his book, he deals with many aspects of labyrinths: their history, spread, morphology, meaning and use. He explains what he and other labyrinth researchers hold as trustworthy conclusions, what they consider possible and what they think are unfounded assumptions. Like a crime commissioner, or a good journalist, he mobilizes many kinds of methods to triangulate facts.

There is a boundary to the subject of the book: it deals principally with labyrinths of the angle-type, and Kraft does not discuss mazes. The angle-type labyrinth is unicursal, there is one way through the labyrinth to its centre and you cannot get lost. It has a long history of at least 3250 years and the knowledge of constructing it has been preserved since then, until well into modern times.



This leads us to another way to describe the boundary of the subject matter. Kraft deals with the vernacular tradition of being able to draw or build a labyrinth of the angle-type. The reason why this know-how has been traded for so long is that it is easy to memorize, by using the seed pattern as a starting point. The tradition that falls outside the book's main theme is the scholarly one, which assumes that labyrinths are first designed as a representation, such as a drawing on paper, for example, and then built. This category includes the Roman mosaic labyrinths and the medieval labyrinths on floors in churches and in manuscripts. The church labyrinths are also unicursal, and derived from the angle-type, but so complicated that they cannot be easily memorized. Scholarly labyrinths and mazes take aesthetic aspects into consideration, which gifts them with particular styles. Therefore, it is generally easier to establish their age. The making of vernacular labyrinths is rule-based, and they lack style; the same ideal model is reproduced time and again and dating them is therefore more difficult. To categorize and determine the age of angle type labyrinths are main concerns for the author, together with the question of their use and meaning.

Regarding the chronology of vernacular angle-type labyrinths, Kraft concludes that the labyrinth motif came to Scandinavia earlier than 300 BCE. It spread eastward to India and neighbouring countries after Alexander the Great's campaign. The vernacular tradition was already established in areas north and east of the Mediterranean before it was associated with the Theseus saga around 300 BCE. In Scandinavia the labyrinth motif is associated with the city of Troy, which justifies the book's title: Troy's walls.

The book is organised in four thematic parts. In the first, Kraft defines the angle-type labyrinth, with focus on history and spread in an international context. The second part deals with turf labyrinths, found mainly in the British Isles, and stone labyrinths north of Denmark. Stone labyrinths are categorized as inland or coastal. Except for the location, they differ in age, use and meaning. Kraft summarizes what researchers have discovered about their age and adds his own conclusions. Coastal labyrinths were laid out from the Middle Ages until modern times, and they are generally situated at fishing grounds and associated with rites to ensure successful fishing and good weather at sea. Some of the inland labyrinths are prehistoric and are often found adjacent to burial grounds. The third part of the book is about folk memories of labyrinths and delves into the question of what their meaning might be. Until the middle of the 19th century, labyrinths in Scandinavia were called "Trojeborg" – Troy castles. There are many place names that can be traced to "Trojeborg" and that tells us that there may have been a labyrinth at that location. Kraft emphasizes that it is obvious that the labyrinths were in some sense considered to represent a city or a fortress. A significant contribution to the vernacular tradition of creating labyrinths is Kraft's documentation and analysis of folklore that sheds light on the question: why? The last part of the book is called "Troja" and it discusses the issue that is still enigmatic: the connection between the city of Troy and the Trojan name of the labyrinths. The four parts of the book, which comprise about 200 pages, are followed by appendices of a total of 90 pages, where Kraft reports much of the material he has collected and delves into some side-tracks that have not been fully developed in the main text. The book is very richly illustrated.

Caerdroia's readers will of course know John Kraft from his twenty or so contributions to the magazine since it was founded. He has also published even more in Scandinavian languages in magazines and other publications. These are not always easily accessible, so it is welcome that Kraft has summarized the labyrinth research of the last 50 years with a focus on the angle-type. Unfortunately, the English summary in the book is rather short and it would have been desirable to have a translation of the book in its entirety, or a more exhaustive summary.

Angle-type labyrinths have been built and used for more than 3000 years. Their use and meaning have shifted over time, but the know-how cultivated in the vernacular tradition remains alive well into modern times. In 19th century schools in Scandinavia, children were still introduced to the skills of making them, and during the latest five decades we see new angle-type labyrinths appearing, often in playgrounds. Kraft begins and ends his story at the "Trojeborg" at Tibble, probably more than 2000 years old; this is a labyrinth that raises many questions that cannot yet be fully answered with certainty. For labyrinth researchers there are still many paths to follow, and Kraft's book is an extremely good starting point.

Rolf Johansson