such equipment, despite a wealth of metal artefacts. The interpretation of this fort as the base for a cavalry unit is founded on a structuralist approach to the interpretation of building forms that is not backed up by any material evidence.

This quibble should not, however, detract from the importance of the volume. It is an extensive and valuable primary resource featuring many important analyses and discussions with wider implications for Roman studies, including explanations for the presence of North African-type pottery on the northern frontier, for the shipment of pottery from southern Britain and grain from Spain, and for the lack of artefactual evidence in the headquarters building and lack of any evidence for an external settlement around the fort. Yet one question on which I did not find any discussion still nags—why did these forts have annexes?

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Andrea Augenti. *Archeologia dell'Italia medievale*. 2016. 332 pages, numerous b&w illustrations. Bari: Laterza; 978-88-581-2230-3 paperback €35.

In April 1965, votes were passed at the 13th *Settimane di Studio sull' Alto Medioevo*, an annual conference of historians, held at Spoleto, that indirectly led to the founding, nine years later, of the Italian periodical *Archeologia Medievale*. Championed by the French historians Georges Duby and Jean-François Lemarignier, and supported by the archaeologists Michelangelo Cagiano de Azevado and Withold Hensel, as well as General Giulio Schmiedt, the assembled historians at a congress devoted to agriculture and the rural world voted to support: (1) the teaching of medieval archaeology within Italian university programmes, and (2) the use of topographic methods based upon cartographic and photographic resources. At a stroke, from this rarefied Umbrian gathering, medieval archaeology in Italy leapt beyond the fetishism of the monument that manacled (and that still to some extent does) the intellectual direction of classical archaeology, its much older sister discipline in the Mediterranean. By this measure, the value of material culture in its topographic context was catapulted into a historical discourse. Fifty years later, Andrea Augenti has written a major overview of Italian medieval archaeology, effectively replacing Sauro Gelichi's short textbook published 20 years ago (Gelichi 1997). The primary achievement of this new book is to make the reader reflect upon both the achievements of the past half-century and to look to the future.

Augenti's elegantly illustrated book focuses primarily upon the early Middle Ages in central and northern Italy. The later medieval archaeology of towns and the countryside, and the archaeology of the islands, notably Sicily, are treated cursorily. Unlike the British textbook on the same theme (Gerrard 2003), the historiography is also brief. Instead, Augenti prompts the reader with a series of helpful pages illustrating the complex sequence of territorial geographies of medieval Italy. Five chapters then review the archaeology of the city and the countryside, of monuments, of cemeteries, and of production and commerce. The final two chapters reach out to historians and art historians, reflecting ultimately on how medieval archaeology in Italy has contributed to major historical themes, and on its future prospects. And those prospects start with an understanding of the role of material culture in the creation of medieval society. Augenti is correctly impressed by the promise of scientific techniques such as DNA and isotope analyses, and he recognises the potential of archaeology as an instrument for pursuing public archaeology in a country that boasts great 'medieval' towns and villages.

Augenti has been assiduous in providing a parallel visual narrative using a vivid miscellany of images. Not for him Italian archaeology's fetishism with poorly labelled and often self-referential GIS maps and 3D computer reconstructions. Instead, he has championed clear plans, often in sequence, and plenty of (the now defunct) Studio Inklink's sumptuous site reconstructions. These illustrations, accompanying Augenti's cogent prose, provide an admirable introduction to the main achievements of medieval archaeology since its unlikely birth through the votes of the Spoleto historians.

Delving beyond the elegant presentation, it is the historical analysis that will come to define this book. Augenti cites the British anthropologist Evans-Pritchard (1976: 263): "anyone can produce a new fact, the thing is to produce a new idea". So,

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has Augenti championed the facts, or signalled the promise of new ideas? The scales are just about balanced. He is very cautious about the collapse of towns and the slow revival of urban communities. What appears on archaeological grounds as "an ice age settling down on the Roman Empire" (Durrell 1945: 75) is cast in terms of what was missing as opposed to a momentous social transformation that is emphatically demonstrated by the disappearance of thousands of later Roman rural sites (Cirelli *et al.* 2015), as well as the collapse of urban life (Hodges 2015). On the other hand, he is a proponent of the later first-millennium revival (or 'explosion', as he calls it) of the Italian countryside, challenging the reductive notions of the French historian Pierre Toubert. Hand in hand with this revival goes an industrial revolution of which Augenti provides plenty of rich detail, although he describes sparingly the revival of Italian ports (Amalfi, Gaeta, Genoa, Pisa, Salerno and Venice) in the early eleventh century and their subsequent role in the pre-Renaissance zenith of Mediterranean commerce.

Published in the month that the post-modern philosopher of the Middle Ages, Umberto Eco, passed away, Augenti's text-book provides a basis for understanding the world that is so brilliantly described in Eco's novel *Il nome della rosa* (*The name of the rose*) (1980). Yet it lacks the depth and mystery of Eco's Middle Ages, in part because it is a synthesis of numerous excavations, conducted by regional archaeology departments overwhelmingly funded by and for local communities. The coalition of details and plans provides the basis for grasping how the medieval world was shaped, from the remaking of its towns and villages, to the ethnic characteristics of its politically unstable territories. It is, however, fair to say that Italy never emerges in these pages as a crucible of ideas and invention. The accounts of agronomy using palaeo-economic data, of technology using the evidence of manufacturing and production, and of the melding of Byzantine and Islamic ideas to the traditions of the peninsula, are sparely discussed. Consequently, we fail to appreciate how the opulent marvels of Italy's twelfth- to fifteenth-century communes and villages that mesmerised (and continue to mesmerise) Europe evolved out of conditions that by any standards were prehistoric.

Augenti must be complemented for his book. It summarises the first 50 years of the discipline at a time when Italy contends with austerity by reducing the number of university teachers and by swingeing cuts to local government spending. In these disorienting circumstances, one indisputable prospect needs now to be confronted: the next generation must advance beyond the local to seek succour in the thick description of Eco's world by synthesising boldly across themes, and by demonstrating through good science the material wonders and triumphs of Italy's medieval miracle.

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Volker Sossna. *Climate and settlement in southern Peru: the northern Río Grande de Nasca drainage between 1500 BCE and 1532 CE* (Forschungen zur Archäologie Außereuropäischer Kulturen 13). 2015. 317 pages, numerous colour and b&w illustrations, tables, CD. Wiesbaden: Reichert; 978-3-95490-078-7 hardback €98.

The south coast of Peru is part of one of the world's oldest and driest deserts. Yet, even here, where water is available, life also thrives. High in the Andes, austral summer rains give rise to rivers, which

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