Italy has long been a focus for developed early medieval archaeology, due in no small part to the much-admired but sadly departed Riccardo Francovich († 2007) and his research drive from the University of Siena; but it is fitting that the editors of *New Directions in Early Medieval European Archaeology: Essays for Riccardo Francovich* are equally notable figures in the field — with Sauro Gelichi prominent for work on towns and landscapes in NE Italy and Richard Hodges on monasteries and economies in the centre-south. But as book/monograph reviews in recent years in *this* journal reveal, the Spanish peninsula has seen many projects and excavations (both research and rescue) which make this an equally exciting arena for data and ideas on early to late-medieval populations, landscapes and transitions. This specific volume gives scope to compare and contrast the current archaeologies and approaches to core themes like identity, urbanism and authority in the landscape in these two Mediterranean territories. A shame is that the number of contributions is compact: five papers for each region (Spain forming Part One, Italy Part Two), rounded off by a typically perceptive and reflective end piece by Chris Wickham comparing their territories’ early medieval economies.

In terms of urbanism, Malpica Cuello takes a theoretical angle to what made a city in Al-Andalus and the forms of emergent central places, whereas Gutiérrez interrogates the archaeology and material expressions of early medieval towns in northern Spain; meanwhile, Hodges and Gelichi respectively explore city form and roles, and the types of new cities or central places that emerge in early medieval NE Adriatic Italy. Fragmentation, change, identity and place are core to landscape assessments in the Spanish River Tagus area in the 6th–8th centuries by Olmo-Enciso, and in (Francovich’s) Tuscany by Bianchi; later in the sequence is Quirós Castillo’s discussion of the processes of seigneurialisation in the Alava province of the Basque country. The material, social and landscape impacts of Islamisation are neatly examined for Spain by Gutiérrez Lloret and for Sicily by Molinari (who prefers to cite ‘Islamisation’ in inverted commas), while Noyé provides an overview of an enduring Byzantine Calabria, facing both Arabs and Lombards (this paper, sadly, suffers from a weaker translation and fewer editorial checks; however, overall, many will be grateful for these essays available in English).

Francovich himself would have been delighted to read (and edit) the 17 summary papers in *Quarant’anni di Archeologia Medievale in Italia*, a special issue of the journal founded by Francovich, *Archeologia Medievale*. Indeed, the publication is comparable to the SMA’s own 50 years *Reflections* volume (2009) in presenting worthy and informative overviews of changes in knowledge and approaches in an array of fields which have been cultivated by contributors across the journal’s 40 years. The emphasis is understandably on Italian medieval archaeology, but most papers feed wider audiences (eg Vannini et al on public archaeology and medieval archaeology; Molinari’s survey of medieval archaeology and economics; Tenghini’s essay on medieval and Islamic archaeologies; Fiocchi Nicolai’s view of the slow marriage of medieval and Christian archaeology; and Martin Carver’s commentary on what the discipline is for in Europe as a whole and how we should be reporting and sharing its findings). Urbanism, rural settlements, environments, burials, production, lordship and other themes receive strong coverage and duly reflect healthy debate, even if there are imbalances in take-up and data-depth across the peninsula.

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