

L'archeologia della produzione a Roma (secoli V–XV) Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Roma 27–29 marzo 2014. Edited by Alessandra Molinari, Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani and Lucrezia Spera. Collection de l'École française de Rome 516. Bari: Edipuglia. 2015. 698 pp. + 38 b/w and colour plates. €100. ISBN 9788872287781.

La città che produce. Archeologia della produzione negli spazi urbani. Atti delle Giornate Gregoriane. X Edizione (10–11 dicembre 2016). Edited by Valentina Caminnci, Maria Concetta Parello and Maria Serena Rizzo. Bibliotheca archaeologica 50. Bari: Edipuglia. 2018. 334 pp. + b/w and colour plates. €35. ISBN 9788872288511.

The archaeology of medieval Italy has been a major source of new information about the societies and economies of the post-Roman period. Models based on Italian material evidence have served as paradigms by which scholars have examined other parts of the medieval world. One key question which medieval archaeologists of Italy have consistently asked is: what do systems of production in the early Middle Ages tell us about economy, society and politics? This line of enquiry reflects the Marxian framework of *archeologia medievale* as a discipline as it evolved over the 1970s and 1980s: progressive from start to finish. It also generates some of the richest and most exciting new thinking about legacies and trajectories

in the formation of medieval societies. These two volumes, both emerging from major conferences, provide up-to-date answers to questions about production at Rome from late antiquity to the end of the Middle Ages, and – beyond Rome – about cities in Italy as sites of production.

The first volume looks at Rome, the largest city in the medieval west in the early middle ages. Thirty-five focused and short chapters provide a history of how things were made at Rome, where, by whom and how this changed over time. There is an initial section on production at Rome in antiquity; another section addressing the evidence for systems of production from large-scale excavations carried out in the city over the past thirty years (such as the Crypta Balbi, the Metro C, and the Imperial Fora); another section of targeted studies on the making of coins, glass, textiles, pottery, inscriptions, quick-lime for building, etc.; and finally, what documents from Rome say about artisans and production. The findings from Rome are then put in the context of the rest of Italy and then other parts of the early medieval west, including Britain and Iberia. The volume (and accompanying CD of georeferenced datasets) is fantastically rich, providing new information on, *inter alia*, the fine tablewares made in Rome ('Forum Ware'), jewellery, mosaics and pavements, inscriptions, domestic animals, glass, and the few coins of medieval Rome, as well as surnames of artisans and their specializations as they appear in the documents.

The second volume takes a much broader view than the previous, considering urban production in cities from classical Athens to late antique Rome, with a strong focus on the cities of Sicily. In the centre of tenth- and eleventh-century Palermo, people made bricks and pottery, glass, sugar and bread in various workshops; in late antique Agrigento, they made pottery, glass, bread and they processed sulphur. It is sometimes jarring to move between articles on pitchers from the fifth century BCE to pitchers from the tenth century CE, linked principally by the fact that they were made in Sicily. However, the juxtaposition stimulates new insights into the study of how things were made, with what materials, and by whom, by revealing how strongly different systems of production were determined by wider social and economic contexts.

'Archaeology of Production' is a heuristic and an ideology; it includes a multiplicity of approaches targeted at histories of resources, technology, craft and economic motors. But it is not a silver bullet. E. Giannichedda, who contributed to both volumes, stresses that consideration of the archaeology of production of any period reveals the interrelationships between labour specialization, social hierarchy, and power in urban contexts. A. Molinari, who also wrote pieces in both volumes, makes clear that the so-called ruralization of early medieval cities most certainly did not mean the end of urban production, but rather

post-Roman urban production is a corollary to some of the other significant changes in cities, such as the reuse of building materials.

Across medieval Europe, even within Italy – and even within medieval Rome itself – it is impossible to generalize about how things were made, by whom, and how they circulated. These two volumes attest to the diversity of evidence and circumstances. There are lessons to be learned here: what not to throw away from an excavation, how to piece together patches of archaeological data across an urban landscape and through archives of excavations; and fundamentally, that recognizing evidence of productive systems might, paradoxically also come through sites of consumption, two sides of a coin.

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