

An overview of rural settlement in four river basins in the province of Grosseto on the coast of Tuscany (200 B.C.–A.D. 600)

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This paper offers a preliminary synthesis of the settlement patterns from Romanization through to late antiquity on a coastal stretch of southern Tuscany (province of Grosseto). Paying particular attention to the changing landscapes from the mid-Imperial period to the first half of the 6th c. A.D., it analyses transformations in the medium term. I will add some information about earlier periods, chiefly the Late Republic and Early Empire, with the goal of considering some longer-term changes.

Archaeological field surveys in Grosseto province have seen an extraordinary growth thanks to the innovative *Ager Cosanus*-Albegna Valley Project promoted by A. Carandini at the end of the 1970s and in the first half of the 1980s. That project began with the goal of making a detailed study of the territorial setting surrounding the Roman villa of Settefinestre, the object of open-area excavations over many years. Subsequently, under the influence of J. B. Ward Perkins' South Etruria Survey, it was decided to broaden the project geographically and chronologically, to concentrate on a much wider area (one untouched by previous systematic research) than the hinterland of Cosa, by extending it to four river valleys (Albegna, Oro, Chiarone and Tafone), and by considering the long time-span between prehistory and the late Middle Ages.¹

The settlement transformations detected in the southern part of Grosseto province, well defined in the *Ager Cosanus* publication,² formed a solid historiographic basis and a reference point for new research. Since 2000, the project 'Carta Archeologica della Provincia di Grosseto', directed by R. Francovich and S. Campana, aims to increase the sampled field survey supported by new technologies (GPS, mobile GIS, extensive geophysical survey, aerial survey and oblique photography, satellite imagery) across the province. It aims to analyse settlement patterns over the long term and create a detailed digital mapping of the ancient landscapes, valuable for preserving and promoting the archaeological heritage.³ This project is in turn influenced by the 'Carta Archeologica della Provincia di Siena' promoted by Francovich and M. Valenti since the early 1990s.⁴ Prior to 2000, the coastal stretch between the Osa stream and the Alma river had been the subject of field surveys undertaken on a small to medium scale to study a single district or river basin.⁵ The absence of a wide-ranging project, capable of taking up the mantle of previous work, prompted a new effort not only to systematize the archaeological data already recorded, but also to undertake a further phase of field surveys, and to provide an explanatory model of settlement patterns.

The study area, previous field surveys and available archaeological record

From north to south, the study territory includes a large part of the Alma basin, the middle and lower Bruna river, the lower Ombrone valley, and that of the Osa stream. This coastal

1 A. Carandini, "Introduzione. Risveglio dopo un decennio" and "Questa ricerca" in id. and F. Cambi with M. Celuzza and E. Fentress, *Paesaggi d'Etruria. Valle dell'Albegna, Valle d'Oro, Valle del Chiarone, Valle del Tafone* (Rome 2002) 5-12 and 15-20.

2 Carandini and Cambi *ibid.*

3 S. Campana and R. Francovich, "Strategia e metodi del Progetto Carta Archeologica della Provincia di Grosseto," in *ibid.* and E. Vaccaro (edd.), "Il popolamento tardoromano e altomedievale nella bassa valle dell'Ombrone. Progetto Carta Archeologica della Provincia di Grosseto," *ArchMed* 32 (2005) 461-63.

4 R. Francovich and M. Valenti, "Cartografia archeologica, indagini sul campo e informatizzazione. Il contributo senese alla conoscenza ed alla gestione della risorsa culturale del territorio," in R. Francovich, A. Pellicanò and M. Pasquinucci (edd.), *La carta archeologica. Fra ricerca e pianificazione territoriale* (Florence 2001) 83-116.

5 See *infra*.