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A Path of Research and Development along Cultural Routes on Mount Amiata

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ABSTRACT

The contribution intends to show the approach and the methodology of historical geography used in the research and to corroborate the identification, as well as the *officialization*, of an ancient route in southern Tuscany. At the foot of Mount Amiata, the route was closely interconnected to the Via Francigena and likewise the history of the villages in the area.

The research has involved a thorough study of ancient written sources and historical cartography, a significant part of the research was undertaken in the field using a multidisciplinary approach. Archeology was particularly important, with the fundamental support of GPS survey tools and a consequent digital return and analysis by Geographical Information System (GIS).

The aim is not only to produce scientific material for the rediscovery of a historical-geographic context, but also to offer an important opportunity to make the most of the natural resources and the cultural, historical and artistic discoveries with the itinerary as the central idea. Following the concrete results obtained from the *officialization* of the itinerary, the research is an important witness to the landscape transformations and to the territorial development that the route, as in the past, continues to encourage.

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Keywords: Cultural Routes; Historical Cartography; GIS; Heritage; Amiata

Il contributo intende mostrare l'approccio e la metodologia propri della geografia storica, condotti nella ricerca e mossi dall'avvaloramento dell'individuazione, nonché ufficializzazione, di un antico tracciato che, nei pressi della Toscana meridionale alle pendici del Monte Amiata, fu strettamente interconnesso alla via Francigena e così la storia dei borghi e delle tracce presenti sul territorio.

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La ricerca ha dunque seguito un approfondito studio sulle antiche fonti scritte e la cartografia storica, inoltre sono state condotte numerose ricerche sul campo mediante un approccio multidisciplinare, in particolare attingendo dall'archeologia, con il fondamentale supporto di strumenti di rilievo (GPS) ed una conseguente restituzione ed analisi digitale per mezzo degli Strumenti Informativi Geografici (GIS).

L'obiettivo non consiste solo nella produzione di materiale scientifico volto alla riscoperta di un contesto storico-geografico, ma si offre anche di costituire un importante opportunità di patrimonializzazione e valorizzazione eterogenea delle risorse naturali ed emergenze culturali, storiche ed artistiche, dove l'itinerario si propone come filo conduttore.

A seguito dei concreti risultati ottenuti dall'ufficializzazione dell'itinerario, ne risulta un'importante testimonianza delle trasformazioni paesaggistiche e dello sviluppo territoriale che la strada, come nel passato, continua a favorire.

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Introduction: Space and history of the ancient routes

The viability constitutes one of the most important traits of the settlement process and the territorialisation of the spaces crossed, representing the result of a complex system consisting of human choices, culture, capabilities and skills of the population, which characterize the territory and the natural environment.

Amongst these considerations, the landscape becomes the theatre for the structure and the organization of a geographical area. That is why it is in a condition of constant transformation, and mainly subordinated by three major factors: environmental, political and socio-economic (Rizakis, 1992).

In the multiplicity of the meanings in which the viability is permeated, the words of geographer Aldo Sestini give a clear complete vision:

(…) a road is not just a route more or less technically equipped and not even a simple flow of goods, people and ideas; it is a living organism, inserted for close relationships in the physical, economic, social and political context of the crossed, indeed joint, regions. What is happening is a reflection of this totality, which in turn is subject to influence (Sestini, 1984, p. 1).

Each action is to create a deep articulation and stratification of elements, both material and cultural, that make up the landscape enriched with a variety of signs and meanings.

If the heterogeneous nature of the roadway gives a clear idea of how complex a study of road segment can be, the road should not be just a still object when we consider the process of transformation but a means that leads to the places crossed along the way.

Roman road traffic had relied on a high construction quality, which provided a consistent road surface, maintenance and infrastructure, allowing an effective control

of the colonial territories of the Empire. Strabone, geographer and ancient Greek historian, praised the importance that the Romans attributed to the elements of greatest necessity, without however, forgetting to embellish the city:

(…) the Ellenians are well-known for having happily founded their cities because they looked at beauty [..] But the Romans were mainly concerned with those things which the Ellen neglected, like the paved streets, the aqueducts and sewers to transmit the city's dirt into the Tevere. They also made roads in the rest of their territory by sloping holes and emptying cavities [..] (Ambrosoli, 1835, pp. 61-62).

In fact, there are a few of these great Roman works still remaining in use today. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, though some invaders had followed the pre-existing routes since the Middle Ages, no power was able to build, maintain, and secure the roads of a sovereign nature, thus recognized universally as a single path, if not as the direction. There were many *vie francigenae.* It is quite difficult to talk about variations of a main path for there were mostly equal and transit routes (Moretti, 2009). In this regard, it would be more appropriate to consider the spatiality of the road, introduced by the historian Giuseppe Sergi[1] with the concept of "street area", in turn inspired by the "multitude of small canals" identified by the French historian Marc Bloch[2] as a characteristic of medieval communications. The street area is the territory in which variable but long-lasting transits interact, that contains variants of the route and constitutes a basin of conditioning on the territory and local society (Sergi, 2000). The research here proposed the study and promotion of the itinerary, or rather of the road area, as one of the variants of the via Francigena, identified by the reconstruction of the stages described in a diary by the Archbishop of Canterbury Sigeric who in 990-994 carried out the return journey from Rome to his episcopal seat.[3] This may seem contradictory to what has just been said, but it should be considered as the result of a declination of ancient viability in a contemporary space-time context in which the purpose, after the historical identification of the itineraries and their related structures, consists of protecting and enhancing cultural itineraries and assets as well as promoting sustainable development.

The via Francigena, as an international route, is therefore to be integrated into a wider context where many other paths exist, on different levels and crossing the most diverse landscapes, that of the Cultural Itineraries, which "represent interactive, dynamic, and evolving processes of human intercultural links that reflect the rich diversity of the contributions of different peoples to cultural heritage" (*ICOMOS*, 2008, p. 1). The program of Cultural Itineraries, which was started in 1987 by the Council of Europe with Camino de Santiago de Compostela. This was the first of the itineraries and the via Francigena followed later in 1994, they represent a unique means for the rediscovery of the multiple identities of the European region and the consolidation of the European identity through the essential component of landscape (Berti, 2012).

1. The via Francigena on Mount Amiata: methodology, studies and research on the "street area"

On the study of the itineraries, the type of cause / effect relationship that is established between the road traffic and the related urban habitat or infrastructures should be taken into account. It will be interesting to understand what those roads, that have become a stable element of the landscape, have produced, finding themselves in close proximity to obligatory passages because of their particular geographical location. Instead, when the transit possibilities were different on a local scale, the direction and the "life" of the itineraries were dictated by other infrastructure logic and the needs of both urban habitat and traveller, and thus shown to be short lasting.

This was especially true in medieval times, when the way of travelling did not require particular structural qualities: the width was reduced (not more than three meters), and there were cobbled rough and modest works of art, such as bridges (particularly narrow and defined by a single round arch) (Moretti, 2011, pp. 13-14). Considering the complexity of the movements of historical itineraries and stratifications over time, reconstructing a path means, rather than tracing a unique road, to identify a territory-road made up of firm points such as *submansio* (stages), inhabited centers and obligatory today.

This approach cannot clearly be based on a mono-thematic study, but requires an extremely articulated methodology and consequently of a multidisciplinary nature, where an in-depth knowledge of the historical and cultural context can never be ignored. Each of the elements that are dealt with requires a particular approach, but they must be considered complementary to each other, in order to comprehend the human and natural elements set in the landscape and in history as a whole. The method can be defined by recalling the indications of the medieval archaeologist Stella Patitucci Uggeri (2002) and at the same time demonstrating the sources and documents consulted, the field activities and the tools used.[4]

2. The historical and geomorphological context

The development of people and their boundaries may be considered to be strongly conditioned by the environmental aspect, as claimed by one of the fathers of political geography, Fredrich Ratzel (1914). Without falling into a deterministic view, the natural context of the considered area in relation to the surroundings gives a reasonable explanation for the birth of a new road network where one of the most important road lines will converge: the via Francesca or Francigena, so called at least since the tenth century.

A route was outlined by the Longobard irruption in the second half of the 6th century and initially called Via di Monte Bardone. The Longobards, also for geomorphological reasons, identified the same Cisa pass as the entrance to Tuscan land. This was witnessed by the Longobard historian Paolo Diacono (720-799) when he describes the passage of King Longobard Grimoaldo while he was directed to destroy the Forlimpopoli city:

(…) he entered the Tuscia for the Alpe di Bardo in the time of Lent, with totally unaware of the Romans, he unexpectedly plunged into the city at the same moment of the Holy Easter Saturday baptism, and committed such a massacre that even killed the deacons baptizing children on the same sacred source (Capo, 2013, pp. 27-30).

The path, with the intent of reaching Rome, continues through southern Tuscany, along the base of Mount Amiata, an ancient volcano now no longer active but completely covered by vegetation. Here two valleys meet, they take their names from the rivers that they cross, the Orcia and the Paglia. To the east of the mountain, the Paglia Valley is again bordered by smaller reliefs creating a particularly strategic natural passage that can be controlled from any summit.

As evidenced by the *Atlas of the Archaeological Sites of Tuscany* (Torelli, 1992), the area, in addition to the medieval period, has historically been visited since prehistory and then in the pre-Roman and Roman times. However the consolidation of the road network is confirmed after the collapse of the Roman Empire and the road deterioration was due to the concatenation of natural and political-military factors. The geomorphologic context of the territory crossed by the road is essential not only in identifying passages, but also in understanding the reasons that have caused the abandonment or preference of other roads. In general, on hillsides and mountainous areas there are no major transformations, they are generally more stable, as opposed to the significant variations along the coastline or in wetlands, lagoon and river areas. Therefore, on one hand, we find the waterlogging and imperviousness of malaria in the Maremma lands, thus complicating the passage of the Via Aurelia on the Tyrrhenian coast. We also have the Chiana Valley, conditioned by a natural flood, which was witnessed by the cartography realized by Leonardo da Vinci after the reconnaissance of 1503 (Chellini, 2007), which saw a gradual abandonment and radical transformation of the Via Cassia. On the other hand, what influenced and favoured the passage was the persistent and strong position that the Byzantines exercised at the beginning, forcing the Longobards to maintain their distance from the Exarchate (Szabò, 1992). The road then made its way into Latium on the Via Cassia north of Bolsena, following the new stretch built under Traiano and not the existing Etruscan route to Orvieto.

Slowly the political fragmentation of the peninsula increased, creating new organizational needs in the area and determining the birth of a multitude of new, sometimes spontaneous, networks. The result is a complex road system which stratifies the territory with groups of streets, variants and *diverticula* (side-streets) that arise, abandon, reactivate and alternate in importance. This makes it impossible to talk about tracing the "true" route of the via Francigena, but it makes sense to find the various places touched by the travellers along the way.

3. The incipience through the documents and other sources

In the first of a long series of events, the sacredness of the itinerary was gradually defined and conspicuously enriched by the many relics on the way; consequently, every expression of spirituality affects the environment, shapes it and creates a "sacred

space" (Stopani, 2004, p. 149). Other exceptional written sources of ecclesiastical origin, useful for witnessing the existence and dating of structures, villages and streets, are Diplomatic Codes, which systematically collect works and writings of the past belonging to a given territory.

With the new Longobard design of evangelization, conquest and control of the territory, the process of the foundation of abbeys began, these provide a great opportunity to identify the importance of the great links of that period. The abbeys near the Francigena were all erected within a distance of about 30 kilometers from each other, so it can be assumed that the distances were calculated on the basis of a day's walk (Kurze, 1998).

Among these, the Abbey of San Salvatore on Mount Amiata was built in the fifth decade of the eighth century, founded by the noble Friulian Longobard Erfo under the reign of Ratchis:

(…) King Rachis confirms to the Abbot Erdo the goods he donated for the construction of the monastery and the church of S. Salvatore [on Montamiata] with the servants of the glebe that cultivate them, and takes the monastery under his protection (Kurze, 2004, p. 82).

This document is contained within the Codex Diplomaticus Amiatinus, significant for its antiquity, wealth and integrity, the most important in central Italy for the late Middle Ages (with particular regard to the lack of narrative sources), for which transcribing and publishing parchments (until 1198) was accomplished by Prof. Wilhelm Kurze. The foundation was also linked to the legendary story in which the king of the Longobards Ratchis was the protagonist. According to the legend, he had been faced with the appearance of the Holy Savior on the top of a fir tree, so painted (Fig. 1) inside the abbey by Francesco Nasini (1621-1695).

Figure 1: 1652-1653, Francesco Nasini, detail of the painting of the appearance of the Holy Savior within the same Abbey
Source: author's picture

The legendary event is also described in the same period by the illustrious writer and ecclesiastical character Ferdinando Ughelli (1596-1670), who, in addition to the legend, records the remarkable presence of relics along with the description of the "casalia" of "Paliano, Casulane" and "sancti Philippo" (San Filippo), that of the surrounding environment through the "fluvio Palia" (Paglia River), "fossato Rigale" (Rigale ditch) and the tree quality to make it "terra umbrata" (shaded land) (Ughelli, 1647, pp. 665-672).

The side-road for the Abbey of San Salvatore touches the above-mentioned village of San Filippo, here there is a thermal bath that was already appreciated in Roman times for the therapeutic properties of its waters, and the Pietrineri site. It is then attested in 1023 that there was a public road bordering on Rondinaia (Kurze, 2004, p. 128), the name of a stream and a current cottage in the same locality. It continues on to the current Trefossata road, just below the monastery, "where the church of Santa Maria Interfossata is documented in 1079, an important reference for the inhabitants settled near the Pagliola stream" ("Albinita" and "Kasis Fabris") (Mambrini, 2016, pp. 4-5). The area in question was intercepted by the valley along the Formone stream on the via Francigena near the staging post of the Ricorsi, whose sixteenth-century building and bridge still maintain a medieval structure (Mambrini, 2010).

The monastery therefore fell within the aforementioned area between the local abbeys. From the frontier of the Pontifical State, after a little disagreement, it was possible to reach Pontremoli. Therefore it is easy to understand why this route

represented the Longobard "highway" connecting Tuscany with northern Italy. However, this does not rule out the idea that there were also several minor passages, known only to the natives, which allowed only a few people to cross the mountain.

In fact, they tended to use the highways, for greater security and control over the territory, completing a new road to join the centres on the hillsides. It is therefore fundamental to go back to the way in which it had been consolidated by following the related structures. From the south to the north, following the footsteps of Sigeric, it is attested in the year 1000 in Codex Diplomaticus Amiatinus that the largest village in the valley included about 400 inhabitants: Voltole (Kurze, 2004, p. 120).

Toponymy is another precious element of research, especially when there is a possible link to the elements of the territory, through which references of Roman roads may be found, such as the general terms of the road: *via*, *strata*, *publica* and *regia* (as will be seen later). Moreover, toponymy is related to the frequentations of the pilgrimage phenomenon and to the *agio*-toponyms (names of the saints), to the sacral dedications and to the *xenodochia* (hospice infrastructures). Furthermore in this study, toponymy has allowed us to reach an important conclusion. In fact together with the testimonies of the current settlement of Voltole, where there are remains of medieval construction, it was possible to identify the X *submansio* of Sigeric, called Sce Peitr in Pail, just in the borgo mentioned above thanks to St. Peter's dedication, repeatedly mentioned in the CDA (Mambrini & Stopani, 1989).

Nearby there was one of the side-roads from the Abbey of San Salvatore passing through Pietregrosse or *Cepponero*, the current road of Poggio la Billa, witnessed in the Codex Diplomaticus Amiatinus where an oath of Count Ranieri is reported "not to contradict the construction of the castle designed by the monastery between S. Maria in Poio and the well Ceppeonero" (Kurze, 2004, p. 139). The castle will never be realized but it still demonstrates the importance of transit and the strategic aspect of the stretch.

Subsequently, we find that the Abbey represented a neuralgic point of connection from which it was possible to reach the via Francigena, once you crossed the Paglia river and the *Casella* area.

In this area there was the ancient village(it has since disappeared) of *Callemala*, whose toponym has a clear reference to the road structure (bad road). The plan shows old structures, or rather Roman, and is remembered as *Personiano* (Cambi, 1996). The settlement consisted of "approximately 200 inhabitants, a church dedicated to Santa Cristina attested to 962, a cemetery and a *xenodochio ad usum peregrinorum*" (for the use of pilgrims) (Kurze, 2004, p. 117). The monks of S. Salvatore also owned houses, taverns, mills, cultivated land, pastures and woods. To emphasize the importance that the Abbey had on the territory and the flow of the road, the new denomination *via Francisca* is contained for the first time within the Diplomatic Amiatine in the 9th century in a contract of 876 (Fig. 2) inside an *Actum Clusio*, in the description of soil given to rent: "Prist Ostriberto, responsible of the S. Salvatore monastery in Montamiata, rented to Gisalprando, son of dead Gaudifrido, a monastic property in Callemala, of the land of the curtis domnicalisnella forest Campulongu, bordering with the via Francigena [...]" (Kurze, 2004, p. 109).
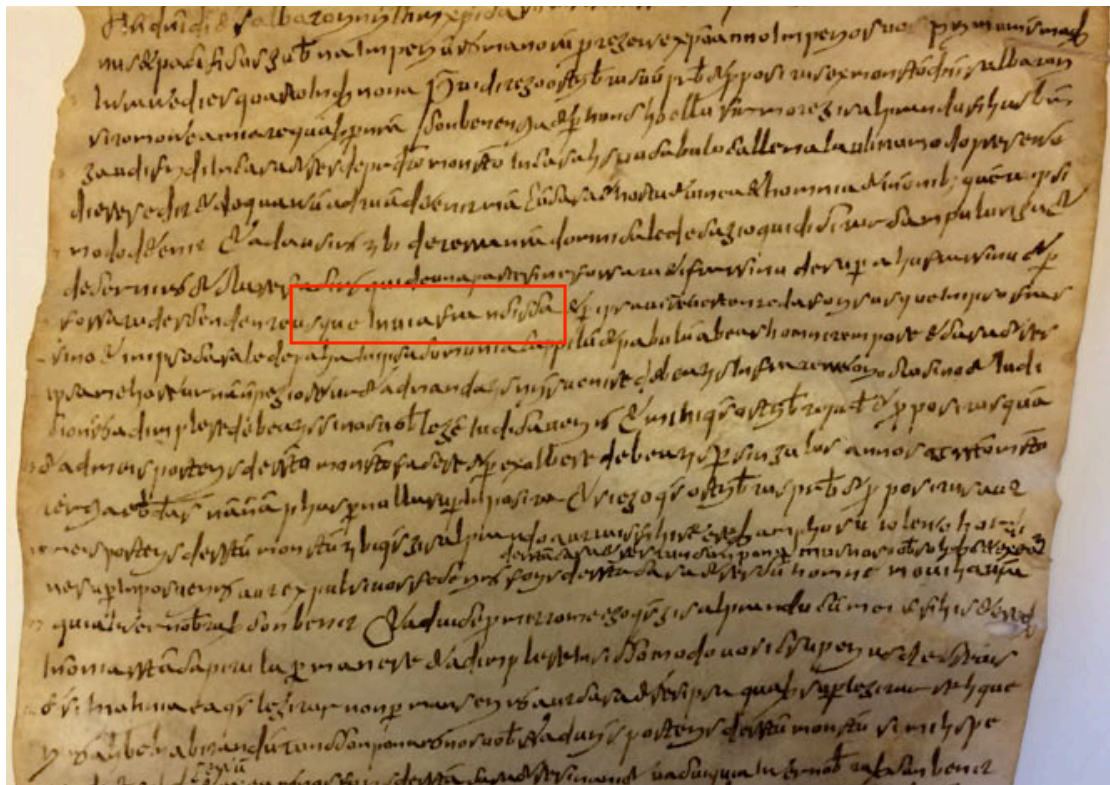
Figure 2: Detail of parchment contained within the *Codex Diplomaticus Amiatinus*, year 876. Inside the red box you can read "usque in via francisca*"*
Source: On concession of the State Archive of Siena, Diplomatico San Salvatore MA, 876, may 4 (cas. 6). Not allowed further reproduction (author's picture)

The role that the street acquires, absorbs the most diverse circumstances, its imagination is in continual enrichment, in particular "it is a matter of relationship between communication paths and political powers which is primarily a matter of space-power relations" (Cardini, 1985, p. 23).

The Church sought new protection from the Franks, a Catholic population in political-military ascendancy. For them, the connection with Rome was of much greater importance than it was for the Longobards: hence the understandable Carolingian interest that the road would become safer and more viable. The Longobards' road became the Franks' road, from that we get the name *Francisca,* which later became the via Francigena in the 12th century, between the end of Carolingian domination and *Romea* domination (Szabo, 1989).
In the 11th century, on the other side of the valley, in front of Mount Amiata, the castle of Radicofani was consolidated; this fortification was a safer passage for travellers who gradually abandoned the Paglia Valley. The road came to define new socio-economic dynamics by favoring some centres at the expense of others. The process of depopulation of the villages along the valley such as *Callemala* followed.

4. The ancient cartography and the travel diaries

As this research will highlight, another fundamental aspect comes from written sources, which, considering the lack of interest in the efficiency of the road system in the medieval period, are mainly found indirectly in documentation, for example on the confinement and management of land ownership.

Since the medieval routes were largely concerned with pilgrimages, those written sources inherent to the sacred elements of the itinerary abound, such as hagiography and travel narratives in diary form, *itineraria scripta* or *adnotata*, and cartographic, *itineraria picta*. These are the first real listings of the achieved stages, *mansiones*, with their infrastructure and useful information for the traveller. Among them, the most complete work is the *Itinerarium Antonini*[5], which includes an account of road routes between the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. with descriptions of the distances in Roman miles that allow you to reproduce a map of the itineraries of that period.

As for the graphic representations of the territory, a famous example is the *Tabula Peutingerina*[6]. Although it is a completely depicted cartographic representation, it is particularly useful for understanding the complexity and vastness of the network of the Roman Empire as well as for identifying the passages of the centres involved and their destinations, since it was realized with the will to reproduce the whole system of connections that Rome had with the rest of the Empire, as such it was a real atlas of the road (Quilici, 2004).

One of the first documents that testifies to the path to the Fortress of Radicofani, in front of Mount Amiata, is the diary of Abbot Nikulas of Munkathvera, on a pilgrimage from Iceland to Rome and then to the Holy Land, who, during the trip between 1151 and 1154 remembers the mountain of *Clemunt* (the hymn indicating the Mount of Radicofani) on top of which is the castle *Kona*, a mistakenly attributed name by the Abbot himself, as it is his translation of another settlement on the Formone Valley (*Muliermala*) (Stopani, 1986). However, it would be wrong to think that the passage between the two masses of Amiata and Radicofani had been completely abandoned as it represented the most direct way to reach Rome (as is currently the case). Even before the 1442 ban of the State of Siena "that the Roman road (Fig. 3) did not pass over the valley" (due to the poor safety of the route), in 1422, the notary of the community of Abbadia San Salvatore Ser Sergio of Ser Francesco, complained that Radicofani would like to burn huts along the *Strada Romana* where they received pilgrims and viatores" (Mambrini, 1998, p. 241).

In addition to the famous cartographic productions, it is possible to find important testimonies in views, small scale plans and maps (often *Cabrei*[7]), the purpose of which was to illustrate the confinement, transitions of goods, land ownership, architectural structures, maintenance work, but indirectly to deliver state of the art roads.
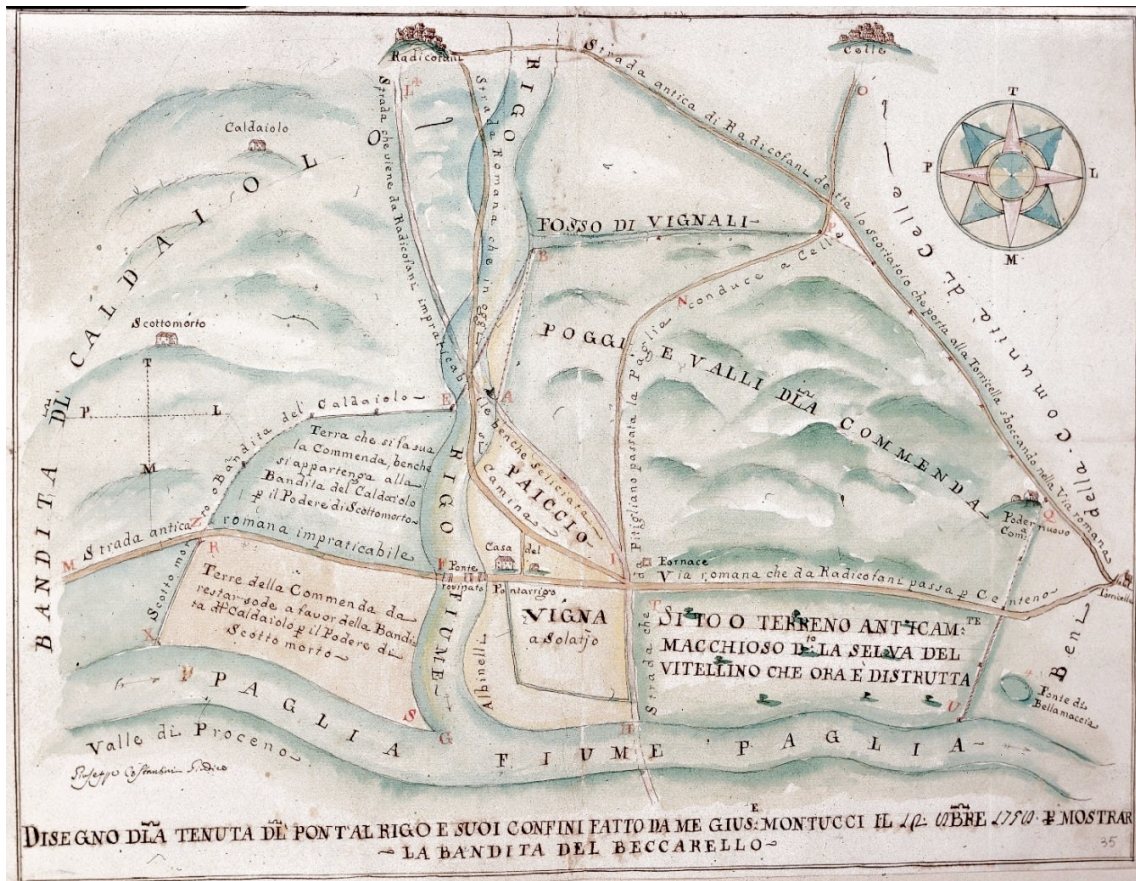
Figure 3: *Cabreo* painted by Giuseppe Montucci on October 12th 1758. On the bottom left of the paper, above where the Paglia River flows, you can notice the *Strada antica romana* (ancient Roman road) already defined as impractical. Nowadays, it is difficult to trace, at its side we find the one we call Via Cassia, identified as the Regional Road 2 that connects Rome with Florence
Source: On concession of the State Archive of Siena, Quattro Conservatori, Piante, 3052, n. 35. Not allowed further reproduction (author's picture)

Continuing the main route, in 1014, the hamlet Briccole (Kurze, 2004, p. 124) is mentioned, easily attributable to the XI Sigeric station called *Abricula*. There was an important hospice here where in 1079 and 1088 the Countess Matilde of Canossa resided on her return journeys from Rome and a further document of *Codex Diplomaticus* 1191 recalls *Hospitale de Briccole*. The structure remained operational until the beginning of the nineteenth century as the road continued to be a transit point even after the sixteenth century when it became the Roman border of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany (Mambrini, 2010).
The road, at the time of Sigeric, mainly continued to Siena and later further north from Mount Bardone, as has already been mentioned. But along the course of history it will be subjected to successive transformations. From the 13th century, commercial traffic grew and the roads that went to Rome were manifold; as Plesner (1979) defined, in his important work already mentioned, *the road revolution*. The Francigena loses its uniqueness, its origins are numerous and the destination is renowned (Rome),

changing its name to *Romea*, the Arno valley (Florence) is developed and the Cisa Pass is relegated to a local function. The itinerary that was formed is a sort of *collage* between the old consular roads still in use, the new routes of emerging peoples driven by various expansionary needs and the reflection of the new control dynamics exercised on the territory and thus on the viability. The centers that developed along the route had a close relationship with the road; in the Paglia Valley, during the fifteenth century, it was called *Strada Maestra Sacrata Romana* (Sacred Roman Maestral Way) (Stopani, 2007). Along the *reign roads*, built and maintained by the state, the presence of replacement horses and the livelihood of the traveller were ensured. Located between the Briccole and the Ricorsi there is the staging post of the Scala, attested to 1562. It represented such a particularly important reference at that time that it was shown in the major international scale maps, including the paper of 1695 described by Giacomo Cantelli da Vignola: *Italy with its main posts and main roads*, "the only postclassical document specifically related to road mapping" (Vecchio, 2004, p. 105). Subsequently, the structure, heavily damaged by a fire in 1760, was replaced by the Poderina staging post, and in fact it was cited in 1843 by the Repetti geographer as a tavern, which also provides us with a detailed description of the infrastructure along the post road (Repetti, 1843). In the light of the in-depth studies proposed here, there is a clear necessity for an interdisciplinary approach that does not only consider the road itself, but rather the space and the area of influence that is generated around it. The proximity to the welfare facilities and the progressive extension of the villages along the valley with their economic and commercial activities, explains the copious transit that was developing (Fig. 4).

Figure 4: *Second Demonstration Plan of the Grand Duke of Tuscany with the State of the Church from San Casciano to Piancastagnaio*, Camillo Rossi, 1785. From the paper it

is possible to see the complex road system that was developing further; also in the lower right there is the village of Abbadia San Salvatore with a radiant road system and a direct connection to Radicofani (to the left), which was defined the *Strada Romana*
Source: On concession of the State Archive of Siena, MS. C 31, plant n. 2. No further reproduction allowed (author's picture)

On the one hand, these centers provided safety and security, in some cases attracting the flow of prosperous markets, and on the other hand the increase of population and economic growth changed the way the streets were considered: they became the indispensable instrument of economic life by providing homes with a supply of food and goods. Through the study of the larger care facilities along the way, despite the continuous changes, there are clear results of the downhill passages along the via Francigena and, although smaller, the local road structure that allowed people to reach the Abbey on Mount Amiata.

5. Field survey and digital analysis: roads, infrastructures and settlement

In addition to the studies illustrated, a number of field surveys were conducted along the paths and in locations already identified through the sources described above. The confrontation on the territory represents an indispensable phase of research on the ancient road, and more generally of historical geography. In this way, it is possible to support the proposed thesis and to make the research more scientific. It is possible to compare the reality of the territory concerned, the communities and local populations, to acquire more detailed information in order to gain at the same time concrete knowledge as well as an overview.
This is particularly the case as regards the road with the infrastructures connected to it and the settlement fabric. In such situations archaeological research plays a fundamental role, as there are extremely complex constructions with new road engineering criteria and techniques. It allows us to find along trails, traces of works and artifacts such as bridges, supporting walls, paved road and *miliaria* (a road marking system milestones or pillars) (Lugli, 1957). This is essentially concerned with the viability of Roman origin, while medieval fortresses are very scarce since they were essential solutions.
The layout of the settlement is vast and complex, as will be analysed in the case study, it includes the various dwellings interconnected to the viability, the fortifications born in the medieval castellation, the attractive shrines for the pilgrim, the hospitals to assist travellers, churches, monasteries and parish churches. Of these, in particular, the link was conceived by the Danish researcher Plesner (1979), according to whom the parish churches arose along the great communication paths in relation to the pre-existing road districts. In this way they were able to survive the Roman decline and continue throughout the Middle Ages with the dual ecclesiastical function and road maintenance.
Finally, a purely geographic approach to the collection and management of computerized data by the Geographic Information Systems (GIS)has been considered. These tools allow you to acquire the information directly on the ground using GPS

(Global Positioning System) and return it to the appropriate software that creates geo-referenced data from digital cartography. In addition, there are *geo-data*, the databases that enable the inclusion of a searchable and geo-localizable data bank in the immediate future. The potential is enormous, as a large amount of well-located information on paper can be consulted at the same time, overlapped and compared, depending on spatial arrangement, in chronological and thematic order.

The stretch of road on the slopes of Mount Amiata along the Paglia Valley, formerly controlled by the Abbey of San Salvatore, is full of testimonies documented both in the writings in the archives of the Monastery and in archaeological excavations carried out during the 1980s and 1990s. Many of the testimonies do not refer to the viability however, cultural and economic factors cannot ignore what a road of this magnitude implies in the area involved. Moreover, by consulting the aforementioned *Atlas of the Archaeological Sites of Tuscany*, it is immediately clear that the greatest concentration of artifacts connected with Roman and medieval buildings are distributed along the route along the Paglia Valley. And yet, by carrying out accurate research in the field, countless finds have been found relating to the road organization, including in Pietrineri and *Le Caselle*, as shown on the map below. Of the latter, part of the ancient late medieval path used to climb up to the monastery, there is now nothing left of it, only photographic evidence of the 70s which shows a medieval structure. In the *Carta Archeologica* "a tank excavated in the trachyte, probably a winemaker of the medieval period" (Cambi, 1996, p. 60) is described. Even today, in the valley of the same road, there are traces of the ruins of a Romanesque church enclosed in the Lagaccione Farm where a single-lancet window is well visible and walls in support of water management.

In light of the above, the itinerary surrounding the variant has been supported by geographic research through the Geographic Information Systems. Therefore, the various paths covered by the research have been traced using GPS instruments, then returned and analysed by means of specific GIS software so that they can be superimposed and carefully studied on current cartographies as well as on Leopoldino ones dating from the nineteenth century (the first to respond to second geodetic criteria). It was thus possible to overlay the path taken from the geo-referenced maps of the Leopoldino Cadastre and observe how the traces follow the various Abbey links (Fig. 5) as well as the route called Royal Postal Roman, with the exception of the sections in which the natural elements intervened, such as rivers and landslides. It is in fact on the valley where the via Francigena was flowing that many of the street artifacts were "hidden" by the lush vegetation, and therefore hardly detectable (Porcelloni, 2017, pp. 207-208).

Figure 5: Detail of the Leopoldino Cadastre (1920s) with the overlaying of the GPS track along the *Via della Casella*, which descends from the same village on the Paglia Valley
Source: author's elaboration

In a certain sense we can consider the viability as an entity that lives, and at the same time that it is lived. The human hand activates particular processes of transformation and allows the sedimentation of both material and cultural elements, on the territory and on the communities touched by the road. Many of these remain today, even when the road sections cease to occupy the structural function for which they were built. The object of research is in this sense an exemplary case, an area that shows a considerable quantity of human stratifications from different eras, whose role has shifted from marginality to centrality, and vice versa. Thus viability, is conditioned in turn by natural and socio-cultural factors.

Conclusion: The modern role of the Cultural Routes

The geographical characteristics have greatly influenced the nature of the settlements of Mount Amiata, as well as the very life of the communities. At one time, it played a very important strategic role, a centre to control over the territory, and made it a stage for countless historical events. Now, instead, with the evolution of events and the same geographical condition, it is in a marginal position which is also reflected in the socio-economic system.
As with the ancient Romans, it continues to privilege the roads that allow for a direct passage, so that the main viability runs along the straight and flat Paglia Valley, a road

that was banned in the modern era, while the official route of the via Francigena deviates to the village of Radicofani, already a UNESCO heritage site along with the Orcia Valley area. The variant for the Abbey of San Salvatore, from north to south, has a junction near the old staging post of Ricorsi and the other shortly after passing the Voltole area. The route was inaugurated on July 10th 2016, a goal for the community and the territory. The European Association of the Vie Francigene played an important role in initiating the virtuous processes which a community had to meet to make the itinerary official, both from a historical-scientific point of view as well as structural. There is also a more general coordination of activities from above and on the ground among institutions, universities and associations. Indeed, the final result for the via Francigena should be considered as a uniform product, inserted into the heterogeneous context of the realities affected.

It becomes a real product for territorial marketing, where promoting a unitary image is a key objective for a suitable offer, including signposting the path and indicating complementary opportunities (Polci, 2008), or rather what other local peculiarities and endogenous resources exist. The via Francigena is an experiential dimension that needs to be planned, starting from what it really means. The route allows us to embrace and connect together segments that are seemingly separate: rediscovering the places with a religious dimension, knowing the local traditions and history, getting in touch with nature, seeking inner well-being through a physical and moral challenge, meeting and sharing (Bergonzi, 2011). In fact, many transformations related to the restoration and promotion of the itineraries have already taken place in the territory so as to contribute to development not only for tourists but also for the community. In fact, in order to comply with the European path parameters, safety improvements (pedestrian crossings, illumination and signs) have been made and the areas of degradation have been reduced. In addition, a number of activities have been promoted for the involvement of the local population, aimed at increasing awareness and sensitivity on the theme. A sense of cohesion and identity has also been reinforced by its multicultural nature, in order to guarantee the principle of sustainable development.

The same infrastructures once connected to the road and now forgotten, having fallen out of use, are recognized as cultural-historical heritage and involved in heritage and promotion processes, in order for them to be preserved in the future (Fig. 6). Any cultural asset can be preserved, restored or reused without losing its meaning and its value, but no cultural asset has the same degree of complexity as the landscape, which can be retained in its trans-formation but not preserved (Belluso, 2012).

Figure 6: The sixteenth-century church adjacent to La Scala, along the via Francigena, from left to right, before (2013) and after (2017) the restoration work
Source: author's picture

In this case we witness an abandoned landscape[8], which, although evocative of its history of loss of function, is revitalized by giving it back its original value. There is a new sacralization of the landscape linked to the transit of modern pilgrimage, a multidimensional experience that involves the perception of the values of the landscape that has been crossed.

In this sense, landscape, as a living entity constantly transformed, is again characterized by the development of the road system so that they can be defined as *landscape itineraries*. Even though the ancient route has lost some of its original characteristics overlying with modern roads, it recounts events and historical layering through a spatial and temporal dimension of signs[9].

The route can be considered as a living being; it has extensions, branches, parts that have lost their function, and alternative routes (Mazora, 2017). It allows us to share the diversities of heritage, to re-inhabit places, to maintain their history and culture by continuous temporal leaps, while living in the present and maintaining its original function; the one for travelling.

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