

Coins and *coloniae*: The Case of Cosa

The Latin *colonia* of Cosa was founded in 273 BCE as an *ex novo* city after the fall of nearby Vulci to Rome and was situated on a promontory overlooking the Mediterranean Sea in Central Italy. While the city has been studied extensively concerning its foundation, political dealings, and architecture, its socio-economic interactions with the surrounding region, including the full reach of its coinage that was minted at the colony from 273 till the mid-third century BCE, has not yet been overly explored (Brown 1951 and 1980). As a result, new research seeks to reevaluate legacy data on the coins minted at Cosa while incorporating new data on the circulation of Cosa's coins within the South Etruria region in order to revisit possible functions of these coin types and reconstruct circulation patterns based on updated information. As a small facet of a larger project that examines regional socio-economic networks among cities in South Etruria during the Middle Republic, this paper presents preliminary findings on the circulation and potential function of coinage from *coloniae* in the region between the third and second centuries BCE.

Cosa has experienced several decades of excavation beginning in 1948 and continuing today. Throughout that broad timeframe, several areas of the city have been targeted: the forum, arx, walls, several houses, and, most recently, the baths. The main concentration of the excavations has focused on architecture, but numerous publications have also produced valuable findings on the various materials discovered during excavation, including a volume that provides a diachronic numismatic history of Cosa from the time of its foundation to its apparent demise between the third and sixth centuries CE and intermittent Medieval settlement (Buttrey 1980). This same volume provided evidence regarding coins minted at Cosa and their circulation

throughout Italy, which, at the time of the publication, appeared to be relegated to Etruria and Central Italy (Buttrey 1980). However, excavations both at Cosa and at other sites in South Etruria, such as Roselle, have continued, which have provided the opportunity to update the scope of Cosa's coins and determine the coin types' full extent. Through the investigation of new material uncovered since 1980, in conjunction with previously published work containing provenances for these Cosa coins, perhaps a clearer understanding of Cosa's regional influence, as well as other *coloniae* in the region, can be reached.

Further, while Cosa's and other *coloniae*'s coin circulations have been somewhat studied in previous years, the contexts and potential functions of these coins have remained scarce in archaeological discussions. One hypothesis has posited that the nature of these coin types was to commemorate the founding of the city, while another suggests special usages associated with the home city (Crawford 1975). However, these coin types do not seem to be relegated to the city that minted it, but, as in the case of Cosa, have appeared in regional cities, and even farther abroad, suggesting other usages not yet explored, such as regional or local commercial activities. Therefore, in addition to a discussion about the circulation patterns of Cosa coins, this paper further investigates the contexts in which the coins were recovered in order to determine potential coin use patterns that may illuminate local and regional socio-economic networks of interaction between Cosa and its urban neighbors.

Bibliography

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