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## 2

### DEFINING 'THE REGNA VINI' OF THE SESTII

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Cleo Rickman Fitch enlightened in so many ways the hearts and minds of all of us who knew her. As far as Cosa is concerned, her commitment to study of the site and its history, her careful scholarship on the lamps and her meticulous drawings of them, the vision and taste with which she beautified the excavation with gardens: these memories will always remain with us. Not only did her study of the lamps illuminate the history of Cosa, but her involvement with the work of her colleagues at Cosa was a source of stimulation and encouragement to all. She came to share my own interest in the wine (and later in the garum) industry of the Sestii at Cosa, and she often discussed with me the fact that six of the lamp fragments from Cosa bore little S stamps in which the shape of the S resembled the distinctive S of the Sestius amphora stamps. She was interested in the possibility that a Sestius amphora pottery in the Port of Cosa might also have produced lamps.<sup>1</sup> It is particularly fitting, therefore, to contribute this Sestius paper in honor of Cleo Fitch. To the end, she maintained a lively interest in the topic of the Sestius enterprise.

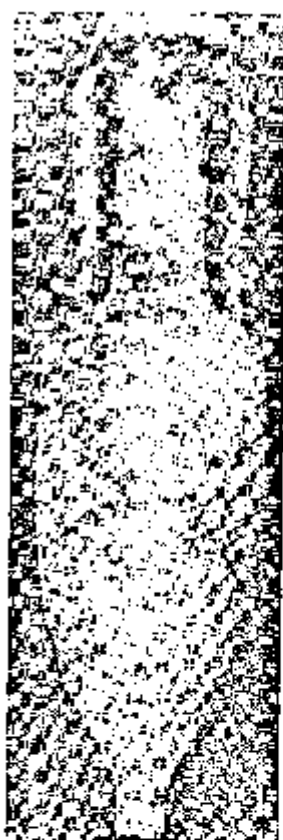
The process of identifying and then defining the Sestius organization has been a protracted one. That is only to be expected in the case of a firm that was constantly expanding and redefining itself over two centuries or more. Scholarship about the Sestii has also gone through stages of redefinition. From the 1950s to the late 1970s there was disagreement about the nature and dates of the Sestius enterprise and about its relationship both to Cosa and to the Grand Congloué wreck or wrecks. In the 1980s, the argument became politicized when some ancient historians raised questions about the existence of profit-oriented trade in antiquity. At the same time, a tendency developed to replace close study of amphora finds with such time saving procedures as weighing, quantification, and discriminant analysis. These debates and practices have slowed our understanding of organizations like that of the Sestii.<sup>2</sup>

Attention—from the start, worldwide attention—was first focused on the products of the Sestius firm in 1952, when Jacques Cousteau ushered in the era of underwater archaeology by exploring what was at the time identified as a single Greek shipwreck datable to 240 B.C., lodged 140 feet down in a cradle of rocks on the side of the Grand Congloué, the eastern-

most island of the Marseillevcyre massif off Marseilles. In the wreck was found an "amphora city" consisting of thousands of jars bearing on their rims trademarks of what we now know to be the Sestius firm (color pl. 10). News organizations worldwide reported on the discovery and exploration of the wreck, which attracted attention on its own merits and also because it involved the first successful use of underwater television. Here Cousteau inventively employed an industrial underwater TV camera, 6,000-watt bulbs, and an underwater loudspeaker to permit the archaeologists on shore, especially Fernand Benoît, the director, to supervise the divers at the site of the excavation. Such was the modern world's introduction to the Sestius enterprise.<sup>3</sup>

News of the underwater work near Marseilles reached Virginia Grace and me at the Agora Excavations of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, where she was working on Greek amphoras and I, on Roman. In 1952, Professor Benoît sent us photographs of the amphoras and asked us for information about their dates (fig. 2.1). On the basis of amphora finds from precisely dated closed contexts at the Agora, we knew from the shape of the Sestius amphoras that they should be dated not in 240 B.C. but rather to the late second and early first centuries B.C. (fig. 2.2). We also knew that a second group of amphoras, of quite different shape, found under the Sestius jars at the Grand Congloué, should be dated a century earlier, about 200 B.C. It was clear to us, therefore, that Cousteau had found at the Grand Congloué two wrecks, one superimposed over the other. Dangerous headlands are sometimes host to multiple superimposed wrecks. A French archaeologist, Emile Thevenot, a specialist in amphoras, joined us in our assessment of the Grand Congloué site and produced the earliest paper questioning Benoît's theories.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile in 1955, Dr. Grace and I paid separate visits to examine Cousteau's finds, then stored in the Borély Museum in Marseilles; in 1955 I also had the opportunity to visit the American Academy in Rome and to examine there, through the kind invitation of Frank Brown and Doris Taylor Bishop, the amphora finds from the early years of the Cosa excavations. On seeing the Cosa finds, I immediately noticed the preponderance of Sestius trademarks in the group. I had been a doctoral student of the Roman historians Lily Ross Taylor and T. R. S. Broughton at Bryn Mawr and was thus only too well acquainted with the history of the late Republic and with the critical year of 63 B.C., when, one of Cicero's poems confidently assures us, the birth of Rome occurred. That was the year, of course, in which he was consul and his close friend, P. Sestius, was quaestor. I knew from Cicero's letters to Atticus and from his famous speech in defense of Sestius that Sestius had an estate at Cosa and that he had made at least two trips to Marseilles. In an article written soon after the visit to Marseilles, I went on to suggest that P. Sestius could have been both an amphora manufacturer on the side at



*Fig. 2.1 (far left). Sestius amphora of Will Type 4a from the upper Grand Congloué shipwreck (Grand Congloué 1) off Marseilles. H. 1.05 m. Scale, slightly under 1:10. Photo courtesy of Fernand Benoît.*

*Fig. 2.2 (near left). Sestius amphora of Will Type 4a from the Agora Excavations, Athens, no. P 8106. From Deposit C 9:7 (end of second century B.C.). H. 1.05 m. Scale, slightly under 1:10. Photo: Allison Frantz.*

Cosa and also the owner either of the ill-fated upper Grand Congloué shipwrecked boat or at least of the cargo of amphoras it had carried.<sup>5</sup>

Such proposals met with disagreement on the part of Professor Benoît and other European scholars, but with the passage of time and the advancement of amphora studies the tide of skepticism slowly began to recede.<sup>6</sup> The publication in 1987 of Anna Marguerite McCann's excavations in the Port of Cosa presented compelling arguments for a connection between the Sestius family and the port; and in the same volume the French underwater specialist, Luc Long, revealed that he had examined Benoît's own notebooks from the Grand Congloué and that they attested to the existence of an earlier ship, now called "Grand Congloué 1," underneath the Sestius wreck, now called "Grand Congloué 2." Long's intensive underwater explorations at the site itself confirmed the observations in Benoît's notebooks.<sup>7</sup>

With time, new evidence has accumulated that permits us to form a more detailed picture and to reach a more complete understanding of the Sestius organization and its importance. Let us turn first to literary evidence, though it is admittedly circumstantial in nature.<sup>8</sup> Horace seems to give us in the fourth ode of his first book of *Odes* almost a bird's-eye view of the Sestius enterprise.

The poem, often called the "Sestius ode," is dedicated to L. Sestius Quirinus or Quirinalis, the son of P. Sestius. It is in this poem (line 18) that we find the phrase "*regna vini*." In his use of the term, Horace was, in his way, being both typically precise and typically ambiguous. Placed fourth in book I after the obligatory odes to Maecenas, Vergil, and Augustus, the "Sestius ode" almost serves as the "real" dedication of the book, indeed of the first three books. To be sure, L. Sestius was *consul suffectus* in 23 B.C., the year in which Horace published the first three books of the *Odes*. That fact alone might be sufficient to explain the prominent placement of the fourth ode. But the relationship of Sestius and Horace was not just a formal one. The two had fought together on the side of Brutus at Philippi in 42 B.C., Sestius serving as proquaestor and Horace serving as military tribune, and both men had had their properties confiscated after Brutus's defeat in that battle. This poem commemorates their lasting friendship and, indirectly (probably in deference to the feelings of Augustus), their shared Republican loyalties, still alive some twenty years after the assassination of Caesar. Sestius, we are told, even displayed likenesses of Brutus in his house (Appian *BC* 4.51, Dio 53.32.4). The fourth ode could also be a celebration of the restoration to Sestius of his family estate and business enterprise after he was amnestied in 39 B.C.

*Regna vini* ("realms of wine") in a poem dedicated to L. Sestius logically refers to the massive wine industry of the Sestii. Most commentators, unaware of the archaeological evidence for the industry, assume that the phrase refers here to the banqueting office of *magister bibendi*, but, if that is the case, only here in Latin literature is the phrase used to refer to such an office. In a 1982 article, I suggested that *regna vini* and the words *carinas* (line 2), *officinas* (line 8), *regumque turris*, and *beate* (line 14) are ambiguous compliments to L. Sestius.<sup>9</sup> As to *carinas*, Cicero tells us, and the Grand Congloué wreck perhaps proves, that the Sestii owned or had the use of boats. *Officina* was the technical Latin term for a pottery factory, such as must have existed in the Cosa port. *Regumque turris* suggests certain villas in the Cosa area that, excavation has shown, were decorated with distinctive towers. The poet almost seems to be describing, or to have in mind, a landscape painting of Cosa and its port done in the Roman Third Style. As to *beate*, both Cicero and Catullus mention the great wealth of the Sestii. In this poem, Horace indirectly and gracefully personalizes his rather conventional "Spring is here; seize the day" theme by referring poetically to the quite unpoetic Sestius pottery interests, doubtless the source of the family's great wealth.

The *regna vini* of the Sestii was indeed a wine and pottery empire, the largest wine exporter known to have existed in Italy during the Republic. Study of contemporary amphora stamps proves that the Sestius family business maintained, at its height, almost a monopoly over the production and distribution of wine. Centered in the Port of Cosa, the Sestius enterprise may have lasted as a family

concern from as early as the latter third century B.C. to the first century A.D. Let me attempt to define the empire now in chronological and geographical terms. This was clearly a family enterprise, handed down from generation to generation, and as we come to realize that fact, it is as a general rule difficult, almost fruitless, to identify with any one particular historical Sestius the various amphora shapes manufactured by the firm as it evolved. Our earliest evidence of the wine enterprise, which throughout its history exported chiefly to the west, to the Celts in Gaul and Germany, may come from Pech Maho, near Narbonne in southern France, where several examples of Greco-Italic amphoras of Will Type 1b, one of them possibly bearing a Sestius stamp, may occur.<sup>10</sup> Unstamped fragments from jars of the same shape occur also in early contexts on the hill of Cosa. Pech Maho was destroyed at the end of the third century B.C. Whether or not such circumstantial evidence throws light on the date of the founding of the Sestius factory at Cosa, fragments at Cosa itself point to a date at least as early as the last half of the third century B.C. A graffito reading M SE has been found on the shoulder of a jar fragment (no. C 65.397; fig. 2.3) of Will Type 1d (fig. 2.4). Of even greater importance is a whole amphora of the same type and date discovered recently by Robert Ballard and Anna Marguerite McCann in deep water off the Skerki Bank 60 miles north of Tunisia. This jar is stamped at the base of one handle with the letters SES followed by a trident with tines pointing up. With the possible exception of the Pech Maho stamp just noted, it is the earliest known Sestius stamp.<sup>11</sup>

Founded, then, as early as the latter third century B.C. and centered in the fertile Cosa area, the Sestius wine enterprise reached its height by the end of the second century. Massive exportation of wine from Italy to the thirsty Celts probably was assisted by Roman legislation prohibiting the Transalpine peoples from planting either the vine or the olive.<sup>12</sup> The demand for wine in Gaul, the making of Delos into a free port in 166 B.C., and the destruction of Carthage in 146 left the Romans free to export wine and olive oil in much greater quantities and in larger amphoras of greater capacities. The small Greco-Italic jars were gradually enlarged into the tall containers that comprised the cargo of the upper Grand Congloué wreck (Will Type 4a). As has already been noted, Athenian Agora contexts permit us to date the floruit of that type as early as the late second and early first centuries B.C.<sup>13</sup> Numerous Sestius trademarks found along the coasts and the chief rivers of France attest to this trade (fig. 2.5). Painted inscriptions naming the Sestius firm have even been found on unstamped amphora fragments of Type 4a from the Celtic *oppidum* of Manching on the Danube and on an unstamped fragment of Type 5 (an early container for garum) from a context of the late second and early first centuries B.C. at the Athenian Agora.<sup>14</sup> Like other examples of Type 5 found at Cosa itself and in the Port of Cosa, one of them bearing a Sestius stamp, this piece strongly suggests



Fig. 2.3. Graffito reading *M SE*, incised on the shoulder of a fragmentary amphora, Will Type 1d, from the hill of Cosa, no. C 65.397. Scale, 1:1. Photo: author.

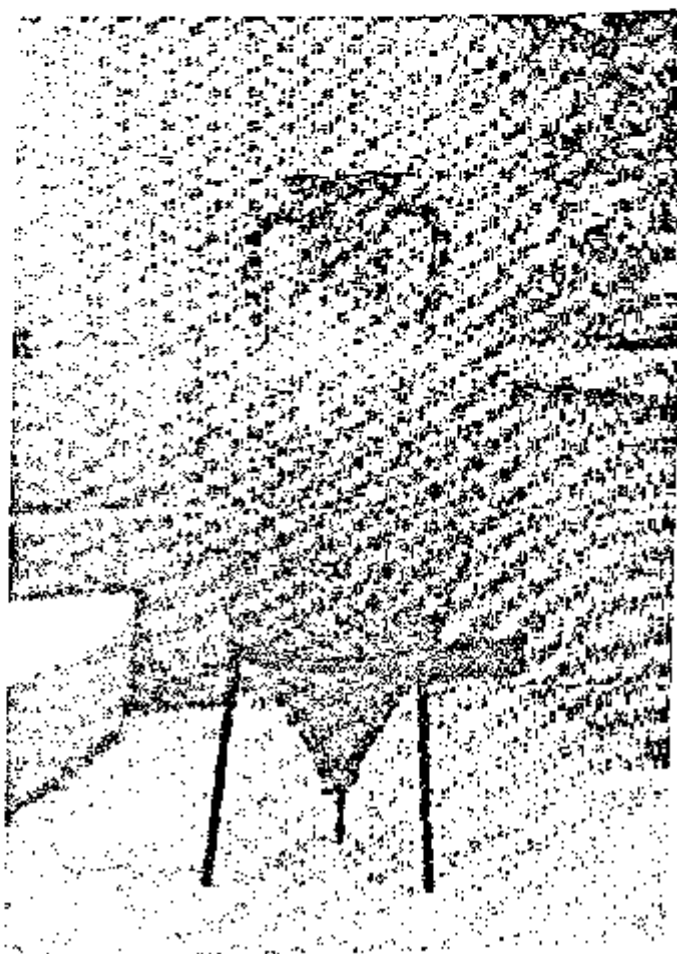


Fig. 2.4. Amphora of Will Type 1d, found in the sea near Brindisi. Brindisi Museum, no. 10. Pres. H. 0.74 m. Scale, 1:10. Photo: author.



*Fig. 2.5. A selection of Sestius amphora stamps from the Port of Cosa. From private collections. Scale, approx. 1:3. Photo: author.*

that the Sestii also began to manufacture and export garum during the heyday of the company's wine business.

Later, beginning as early as the 80s and 70s B.C., Type 4a was, in its turn, enlarged into Type 4b (Dressel's Form 1), the final type of wine amphora produced by the Sestius firm and the largest of all Roman wine amphoras. We can distinguish Types 4a and 4b by the wider rims and vertical rim profiles of Type 4b, its wider bellies and more massive handles and toes (fig. 2.6). The earliest examples of Type 4b, however, like those found at Cosa and also, with Type 4a, in the Mahdia and Spargi shipwrecks, have rims that are not quite vertical in profile and toes and handles that are not quite massive.<sup>15</sup> In contrast to the anonymity of earlier Sestius trademarks, several stamps of Type 4b at Cosa name L. Sestius himself. Here we can finally speak of one particular Sestius as the manufacturer. Since L. Sestius was born about 73 B.C., these trademarks can hardly antedate the latter part of the second quarter of the first century B.C. The sudden disappearance of early Type 4b from Cosa, and the subsequent rebirth of a more evolved version of the type in southern Latium and Campania,<sup>16</sup> may well have had something to do with the confiscation of L. Sestius's property after his services to Brutus at Philippi

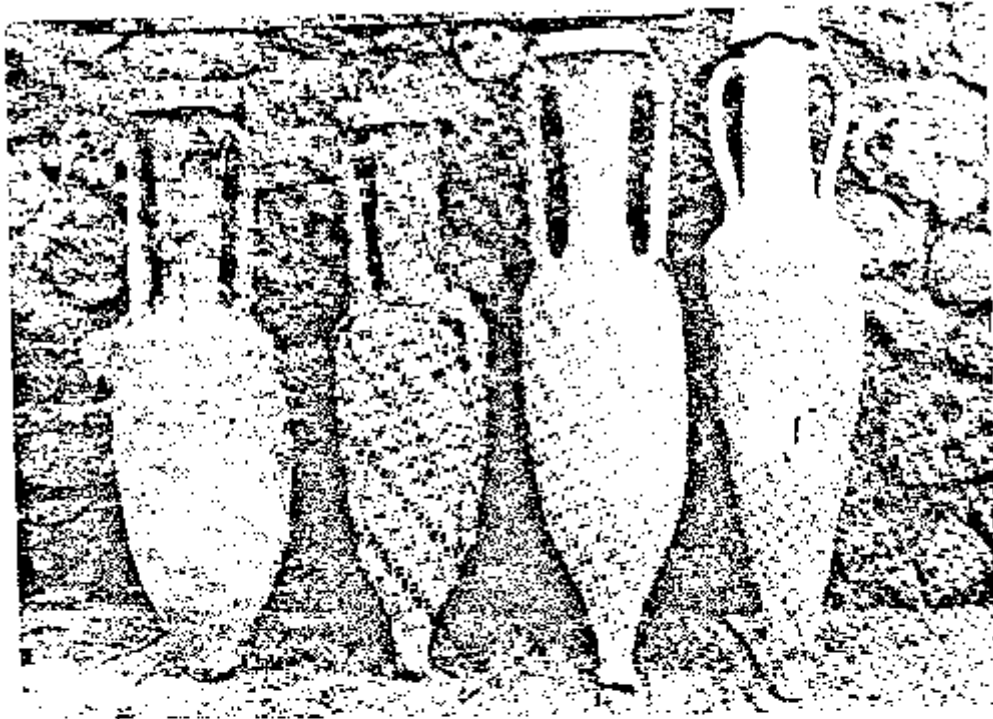


Fig. 2.6. Amphoras of Will Types 4a, 4b, and 5 from the hill of Cosa. Left to right: C 67.387 (jar of early Type 4b, lacking its toe; pres. H. 1.005 m); C 65.399 (small, early precursor of Type 4a; H. 0.995 m); C 67.78 (Type 4a; H. 1.09m); C 65.395 (Type 5; H. 1.17 m). Scale, approx. 1:14. Photo: author and Kevin Sarring.



Fig. 2.7. Three Cosa lamp stamps, the letter shapes of which resemble those of Sestius amphora stamps. Scale, 1:1. Drawings: Cleo Fitch in Fitch and Goldman 1994: fig. 136, nos. 171, 172, 173, 169, 190, 174.

in 42 B.C. But Cosa is generally thought to have been destroyed a generation earlier. More consideration needs to be given to the precise date of the town's destruction. A destruction during the decade 70 to 60 B.C.<sup>17</sup> does not accord with the large number of amphoras of early Type 4b that are found in the Port of Cosa and in the town or with the amphora stamps at Cosa that name L. Sestius.

L. Sestius was, in any case, amnestied in 39 B.C., and the Sestius amphora factory seems to have revived in the Port of Cosa at that time, presumably as a result of the restoration to him of his property. There is no longer evidence



of wine exportation from the Sestius firm, but several unique, experimental amphora shapes related to Will Type 16 appear to have been designed as small containers for garum, perhaps for local or domestic use.<sup>18</sup> It is well known that this was an era when the dwindling export of agricultural products from Italy stimulated provincial competition.<sup>19</sup> The Sestii and other Republican wine producers had made their own containers; but, with the drying up of the wine trade, they were left, so to speak, holding the bottle. L. Sestius turned to fired *tegulae*, a term that, in the late Republic, when the firing of such materials was becoming a new industry, seems to have been used interchangeably for bricks and tiles, the two being at the time almost indistinguishable. Sestius's bricks (the complexity of the stamps on them suggests he thought of them as bricks rather than as tiles), made near Rome, are among the earliest we have.<sup>20</sup> He or other members of the Sestius family may also have manufactured lamps and dishes at Cosa and elsewhere. Sestius stamps on Arretine ware sometimes look like photographically reduced versions of Sestius amphora stamps on Type 4a;<sup>21</sup> and, as Cleo Fitch observed, the little S stamps on the Cosa lamps also resemble the S of the amphora stamps (fig. 2.7). In its final stage, the Sestius family's huge wine empire diversified into other directions. The Sestius family was quite possibly still manufacturing bricks in the first half of the first century A.D.,<sup>22</sup> but its *regna vini* no longer existed.

Having attempted to define the Sestius organization in chronological and geographical terms, let us finally summarize its significance. Throughout its long history, the Sestius firm clearly owed its success to remarkable entrepreneurial energy. It was one of the earliest exporters of Italian wine to markets in the western Mediterranean. Helped, as we have noted, by protective legislation, the firm accommodated itself throughout the second century B.C. to increasing market demands, enlarging the capacities of the amphoras and shipping them in huge cargo ships that held hundreds of jars. In the late second and early first centuries B.C., if not before, it was the chief exporter of wine from Italy (fig. 2.8). In this same period, it apparently commenced the production and export of garum. The Sestius organization continued to flourish until the middle of the first century B.C. Its exports, while directed chiefly toward Gaul and Germany, even reached Athens. A cessation of production in the middle of the century may have been a result of the proscription of L. Sestius and the confiscation of his property. After he was amnestied, the organization diversified into the manufacture of various clay products, both at Cosa and elsewhere. L. Sestius himself set up in Rome one of the earliest factories for fired bricks. With the business acumen that had characterized his ancestors for almost two centuries, he was apparently one of those who foresaw that the desperate need for strong, lasting building material in Rome and elsewhere in the empire required the start of a new industry. The buildings that stand in Rome today owe their survival to the birth and development of the



Fig. 2.8. Amphoras of Will Types 4a, 4b, and 5, on display in the Cosa Museum courtyard. Far right, three olive oil amphoras imported into Cosa from North Africa. Photo: author.

Augustan brick industry, in which the Sestii were pioneers. The *regna vini* were gone, but the vitality that led to their development continued to be felt.

### Notes

1. Fitch and Goldman 1994: 40, 225. Cf. n. 22 below. I should like to take this opportunity to thank Norma Goldman for the skill and the affectionate care with which she organized "*Lux ex Cosa*," the symposium honoring Cleo Fitch, and for the energy and dedication that she has devoted to the organization of this volume.
2. For a summary of the chief controversies, see Will 1979: 340–41, with nn. 1–7; McCann 1987: 31, with n. 135; Will 1987: 174–75, with n. 6. Tomber 1993: 151–62 discusses the application of quantification and discriminant analysis of amphora finds to the study of the late Roman economy.
3. Cousteau 1954 gives a lively and informative account of his excavations at the Grand Congloué site.
4. Thevenot 1954: esp. 239 ff. For a fascinating account of the critical part played by

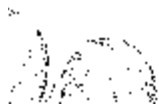
Virginia Grace thirty years earlier in the dating of the Grand Congloué wrecks, see Grace 1985: *passim*. See also below, n. 7.

5. Will 1956. Many points made in the present paper are expanded upon in that article.
6. Benoît 1961. An extensive bibliography is given in Will 1979. In recent years, European scholars have joined the Americans in the hunt near Cosa for material about the Sestius organization and about pottery production in the general area. Manacorda 1978 describes his find of twenty-six Sestius stamps in the center of the Portus Cosanus, at the spot where the Sestius factory almost certainly lay (Will 1979: 342 and n. 11). Cf. also Manacorda 1981. Carandini and Settis 1979 (esp. 96–97 and exhibition panels 35–36) describe Sestius-related finds from the excavations of the Roman villa of Settefinestre in the Ager Cosanus. See also below, n. 20. Peacock 1977 describes a find of pottery kilns to the north of Cosa, along the Albinia (modern Albegna) River. These were in a locally well-known area of ancient and modern brick kilns (Will 1979: 349). Hesnard et al. 1989 describe additional kilns in the same area, at what they refer to as “Torre Saline.” Cf. McCann 1987: 21–22, where the suggestion is made that ancient salt flats might have been located here, as were large saltworks in the early sixteenth century. Such a deposit of salt would have been essential to the preservation of fish and the manufacture of garum, a product we know now was manufactured at Cosa. A photograph in the Hesnard et al. chapter (fig. 3) shows what appears to be a holding tank for fish, an essential facility in Roman garum factories around the Mediterranean and on the Atlantic coast of Africa, as discussed by Gazda and McCann 1987: 151–54, and by McCann 1987: 338. The finds along the Albinia/Albegna River and in the general Cosa area corroborate the importance of the entire region as a production center for both wine and garum. On the commercial importance of the Gulf of Talamone, into which the Albinia/Albegna River flows, and the wide spectrum of amphora finds from a comprehensive land and water survey there, see Bruno et al. 1980: esp. 41–43. See also the summary in McCann 1987: 61, n. 27, of the widely dated sequence of amphora finds from Porto Ercole, on the Argentario peninsula opposite Cosa.
7. Long 1987: 164–66. Grace 1985: 41 reports that when she saw Benoît in Marseilles in 1955, she “thought he was then willing to believe in two wrecks on the site (but not more than two, he said).”
8. See Will 1982-1 for further discussion of individual points made here.
9. Will 1982-1: 243–44.
10. On the typology of Greco-Italic amphoras, see Will 1982-2: *passim*; Type 1b is discussed on 345–46 and n. 12, where I remark that amphoras very similar to Type 1b occur at Pech Maho, although the reading of the Sestius stamp in question, noted by Benoît 1961: 41 and elsewhere as reading JES, may now be uncertain. Cf. Solier 1979: 119, n. 144. Two recent discussions of various questions concerning Greco-Italic amphoras are Vandermeersch 1994: esp. 69–87, and Kirigin 1994.
11. McCann and Freed 1994: 67, color fig. 16 opposite p. 80. The same photos are reproduced in McCann’s chapter in this volume, fig. 1.18 and color pl. 6. The tines point down, not up, in later Sestius stamps on rims of Will Type 4a; cf. Will 1987-1: Cats. A58–A66.
12. On the legislation, see Cic. *Rep.* 3.16, and Will 1990: 28; Will 1997: 121, 127, 131, n. 7.

13. On the contextual information from the Athenian Agora, see Grace 1985: 40; Will 1987-1: 182, and esp. 1987-2: 34 and n. 23.
14. Will 1979: 346-47, and 1987-1: 202, color fig. 4.
15. Will 1987-1: 184, and esp. Will 1987-2: 35-36.
16. Will 1987-1: 184; 1987-2: 35. Kilns for Type 4b were found in Latium and Campania as early as the nineteenth century. Cf. Theodor Mommsen's report in *CIL* 10:8050 of the discovery in 1881 of a huge deposit of amphoras near Terracina. Cf. modern finds in the area of Cosa as reported by Hesnard 1977; Peacock 1977: 262-65; Hesnard and Lemoine 1981: passim; Panella 1980: 254-55; Hesnard et al. 1989: 24-30.
17. Brown 1980: 74.
18. Will 1987-1: 209.
19. Such competition was furthered either by a repeal of the protective legislation mentioned by Cicero (above, n. 12) or by ignoring that law.
20. Specialists in Roman bricks accept the Sestius products as bricks. Cf., for example, Bloch 1948: 46-47; Steinby 1974-75: 87-88. Carandini and Settis 1979: 96 and exhibition panel 35 discuss possible Sestius-stamped bricks or tiles from the villa of Settefinestre (cf. above, n. 6). The simplicity of the stamps in question, and the fact that bricks and tiles were generally made close to the areas in which they were to be used, suggest that L. Sestius may have begun to manufacture *tegulae* in the Cosa area before inaugurating the brick business in Rome.
21. Will 1984: 10-11.
22. Steinby 1974-75: 87-88.

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