Natural and anthropic changes on landscapes: signs and designs in a river system. The study-case of the Potenza River final sector (Porto Recanati, Italy)

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Since 90s the geomorphology group of the University of Camerino has developed scientific research aimed at reconstructing the landscape in relation to man activity, population and its settlement dynamics. In the present study, this kind of research has been particularly addressed to the Marche Italian coast nearby the Potenza River mouth where traces belonging to different ages were recognized. Photo-interpretation, analysis of recent and historical maps, field surveys, geophysical investigations and observations on archaeological evidences, allowed to identify and to confirm several traces of ancient riverbeds on the actual alluvial plain, suggesting also a chronological collocation. These ancient river paths are strictly related to the events of the *Potentia Picena* Roman colony and its *ager* (II BC - VII AD centuries), where, among many evidences, a Roman bridge still remains *in situ*, keeping memory of an ancient river course.

Further, it was possible to reconstruct a reliable geomorphological evolution of the Potenza River during the Middle Ages, when man interfered on the river course several times, diverting it and creating a new mouth. This last was positioned near the medieval community settlement, organized around the *Castrum Maris*, a kind of dock and castle built for economic, defence and political reasons by Frederick II Hohenstaufen. The present paper aims to reconstruct the fluvial dynamics of the Potenza River nearby its mouth at least since the Roman age, trying to establish the relationship between man and river. The study also addressed the social motivations related to the complex series of human interventions, by means of historical archive documents mostly unpublished.