



New perspective on Messapic language and culture

Michele Bianconi – University of Oxford

Marta Capano – Università per Stranieri di Siena

Federica Fanizzi – Università di Bari

Marcello Gelone – Soprintendenza ABAP per il Comune di Napoli

Valentina Lunardi – University of California, Los Angeles

Simona Marchesini – Alteritas - Interazione tra i popoli





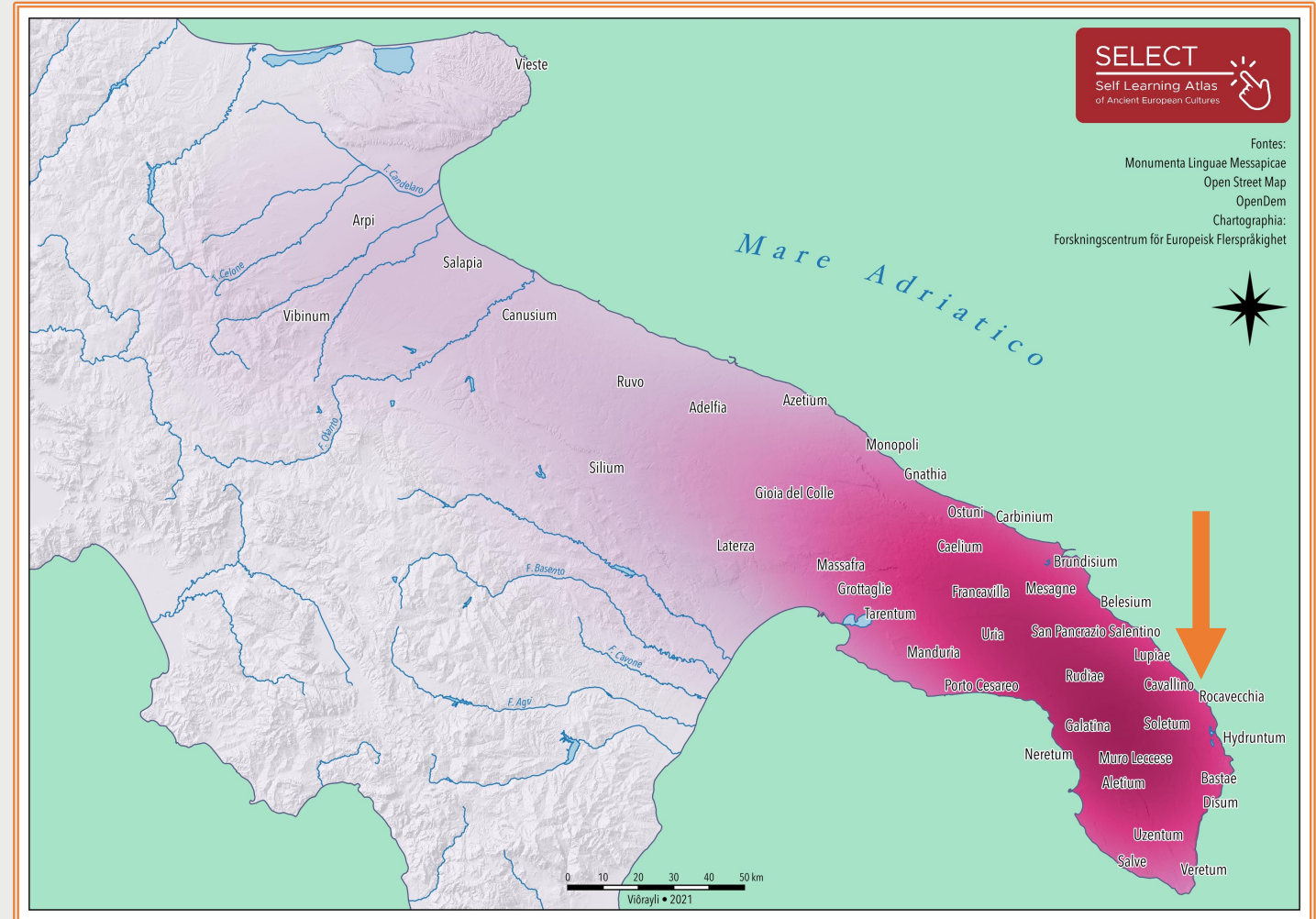
Università
Stranieri
Siena



1 Introduction

1 The Messapic Language

- Indo-European language
- Apulia, southern Italy
- Circa 600 inscriptions
- 6th c. BCE – 3rd c. BCE
- MLM (Monumenta Linguae Messapicae) by de Simone & Marchesini
- New inscriptions from Grotta Poesia (Rocavecchia): only 22 published; hundreds not yet.

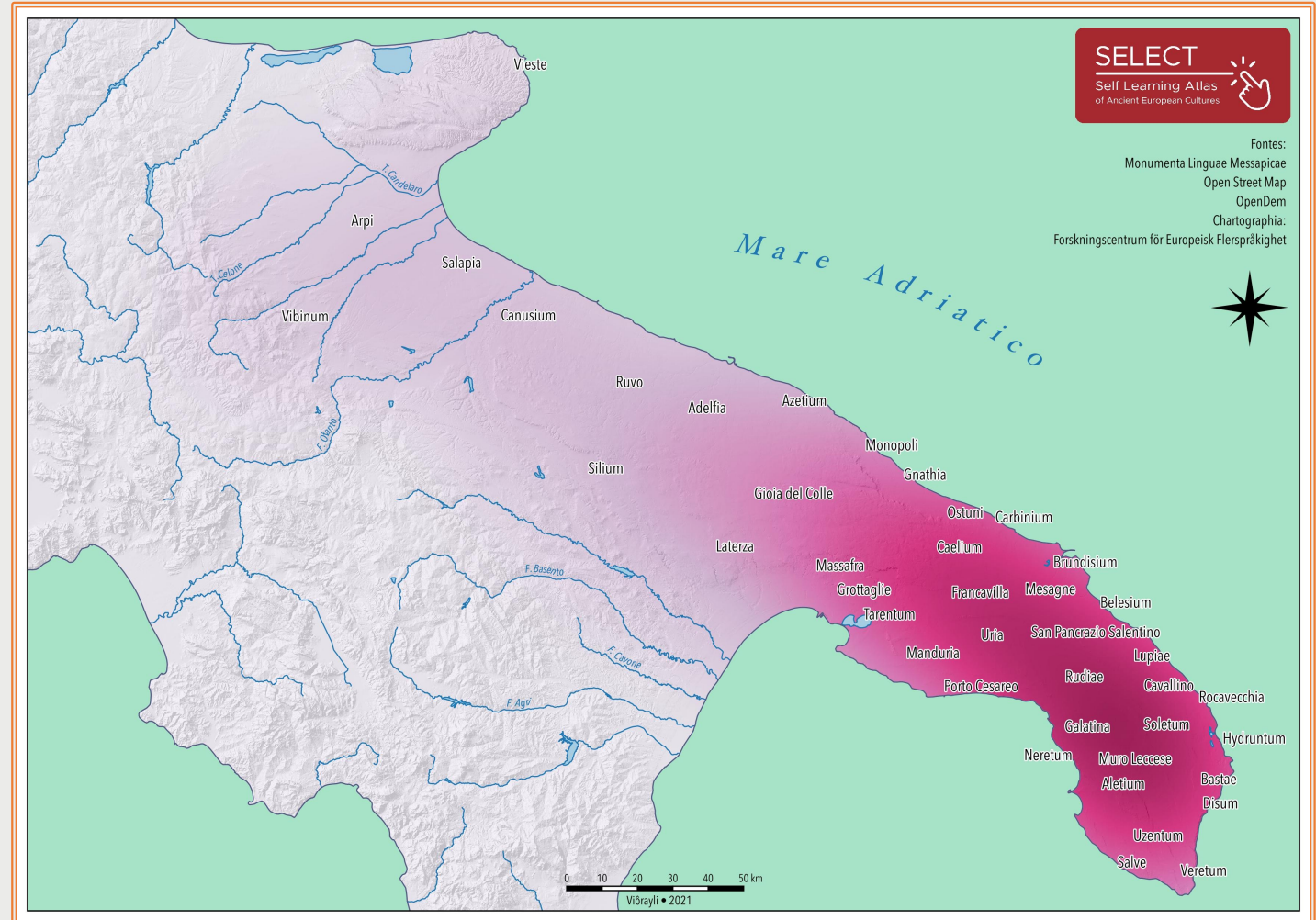


1 Roadmap of our presentation

- A new project on Messapic: SPeM (§1.1);
- New inscriptions: Ostuni and Grotta Poesia (§1.2);
- Some methodology (§2);
- A case-study: the Castro altar (§3);
 - The Archaeological Data (§3.1)
 - The Epigraphic and Linguistic Data (§3.2)
 - A New Proposal (§3.3)
- Conclusions (§4)

1.1 A new project on Messapic: SPeM

- Seminario Permanente sul Messapico
- Born within Alteritas – Interazioni tra i Popoli
- Interdisciplinary (3 groups): language, cults, and palaeography
- Scholars from different institutions & at all career stages
- Holistic approach to Messapic



1.2 New inscriptions – Ostuni



NO PHOTOS
PLEASE

1.2 New inscriptions – Grotta Poesia

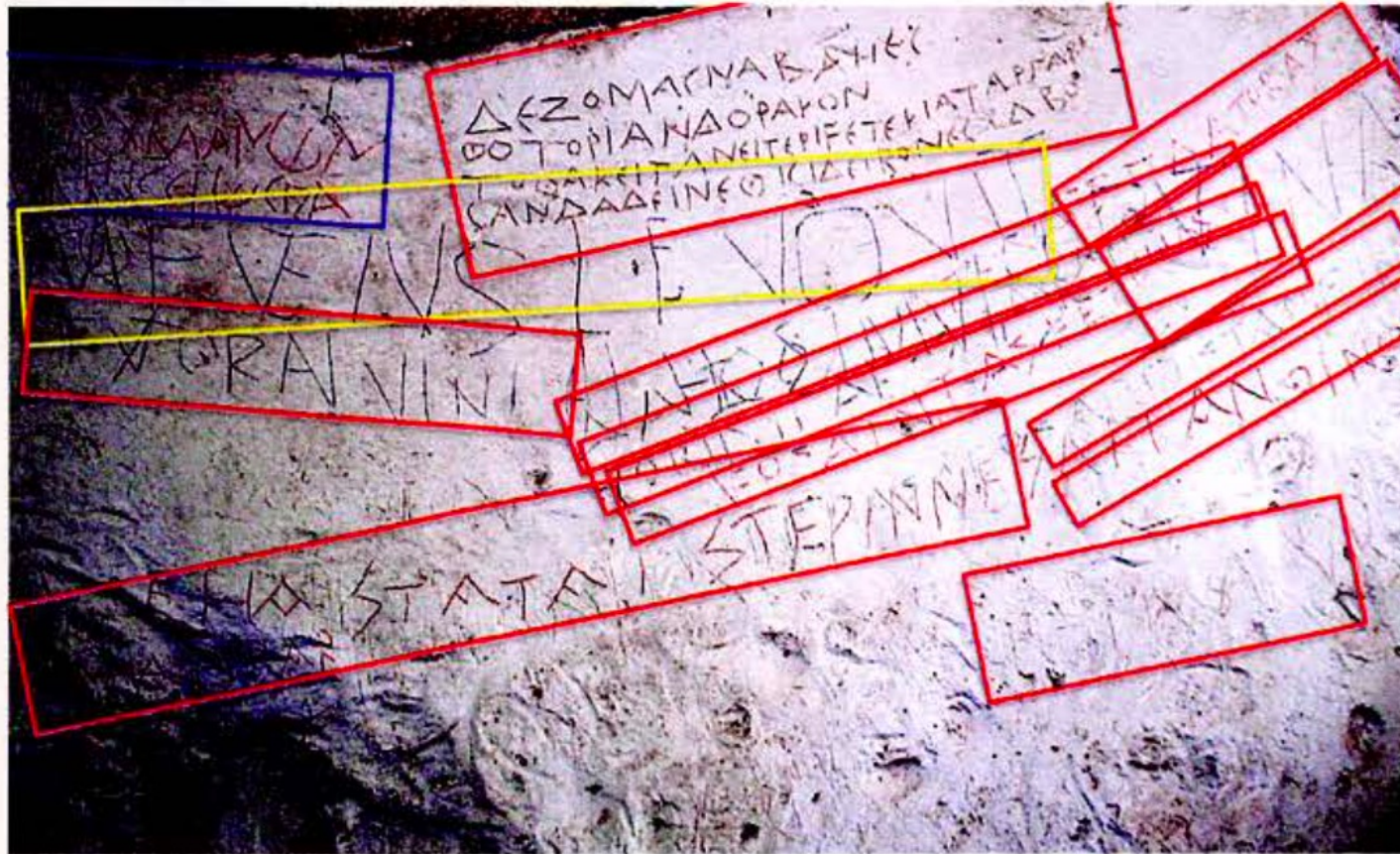


Fig. 13: Grotta Poesia di Rocavecchia (Melendugno, Lecce): cast of a portion of a wall with 'palimpsest' of inscriptions: Messapian (red boxes), Greek (blue box), Latin (yellow boxes).



2 Some methodology

2.1 Reliability scale

- 0: Lost record, known only from drawings.
- 1: Lost record but object known from photos,
→ more verifiable depending on the quality of the images. The autopsy is not possible.
- 2: Record available and preserved at known locations, with photographic documentation and repeatable autopsy, but whose context is not well known.
- 3: Record preserved with repeatable autopsy from recent archaeological excavations.
- 4: Preserved records from archaeological excavations conducted with scientific methodology in large areas that allow for a better definition of both the micro- and macro-context.

241	Laterza	C.da Candile, da Monte Camplo	1	La	1	s
242	Lecce	nota da copie (Marciano); copia conservata	1	Lup	2	s
243	Lecce	strada delle Quattro Spezierie (1807); dispersa	2	Lup	0	n
244	Lecce	C.da Le Aule (1857), dispersa, solo apogeo	3	Lup	0	n
245	Lecce	C.da S. Bartolomeo (1839), dispersa, solo	4	Lup	0	n
246	Lecce	necropoli dell'anfiteatro (1900), dispersa, solo	5	Lup	0	n
247	Lecce	necropoli dell'anfiteatro (1900), dispersa, solo	6	Lup	0	n
248	Lecce	necropoli dell'anfiteatro (1900), dispersa, solo	7	Lup	0	n
249	Lecce	necropoli dell'anfiteatro (1900), dispersa, solo	8	Lup	0	n
250	Lecce	necropoli dell'anfiteatro (1900), dispersa, solo	9	Lup	0	n
251	Lecce	necropoli dell'anfiteatro (1900), dispersa, solo	10	Lup	0	n
252	Lecce	piazza V. Emanuele, tomba (1900), dispersa	11	Lup	0	n
253	Lecce	Isola del Governatore, tomba IV (1900), M	12	Lup	3	s
254	Lecce	necropoli dell'anfiteatro (CIM), dispersa, solo	13	Lup	0	n

2.2 Usability scale

Yes: Record usable without doubt for any research (types 3-4)

No: Record not usable for any investigation (record with 0 reliability)

sub iudice: Record usable for some aspects, but not for every type of investigation (types 0-2). These cases are individually evaluated taking into account:

- 1) the length and "plausibility" of the text;
- 2) the presence of independent apographs in "0" cases;
- 3) consistency of the text (also in "1-2" cases);
- 4) its legibility to the extent of the preservation of the object.

2.3 Results of our review

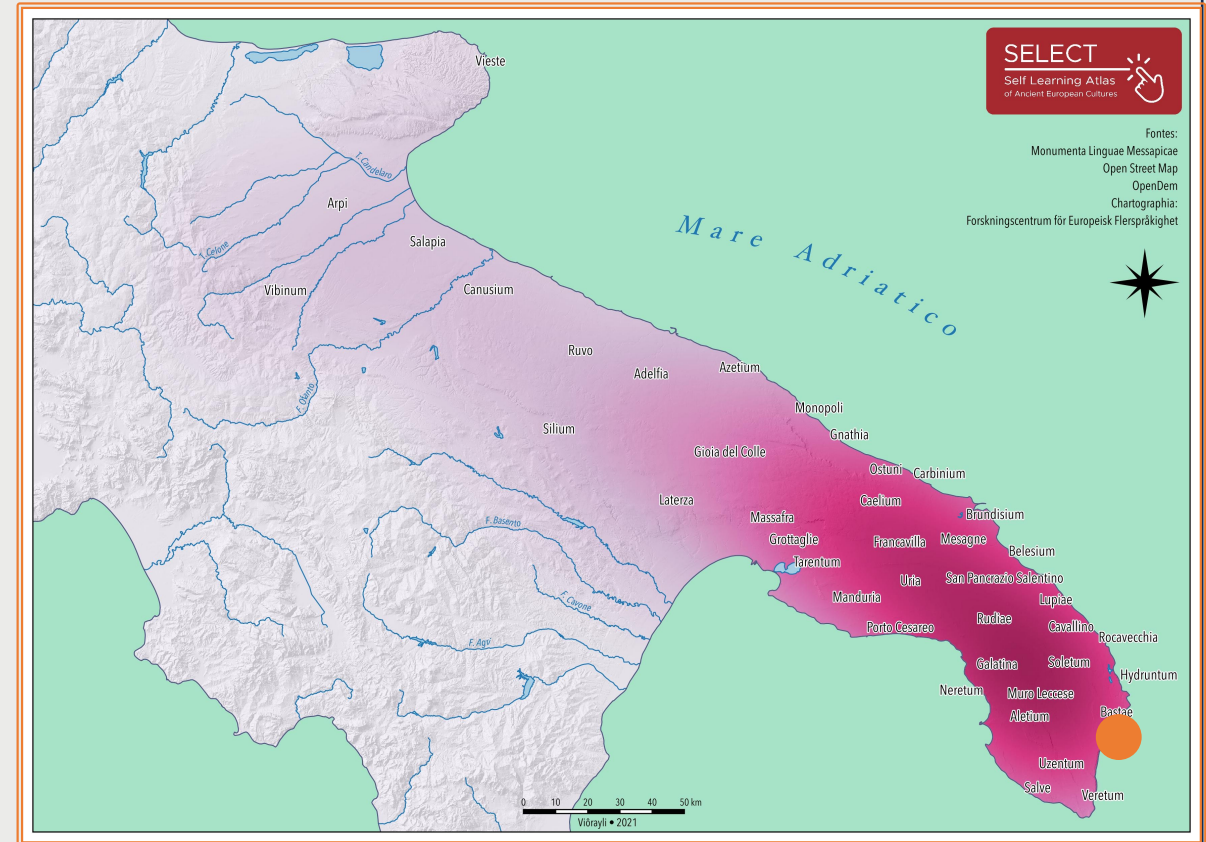
Reliability

- 24.3% of records in MLM (and updates) belong to category 0;
- 11.5% to category 1;
- 24% to category 2;
- 22.2% to category 3;
- 18% to category 4.

Usability

- 63% of definitely usable texts ('yes');
- 24.5% of non-usable texts;
- 12.5% of *sub iudice* texts.

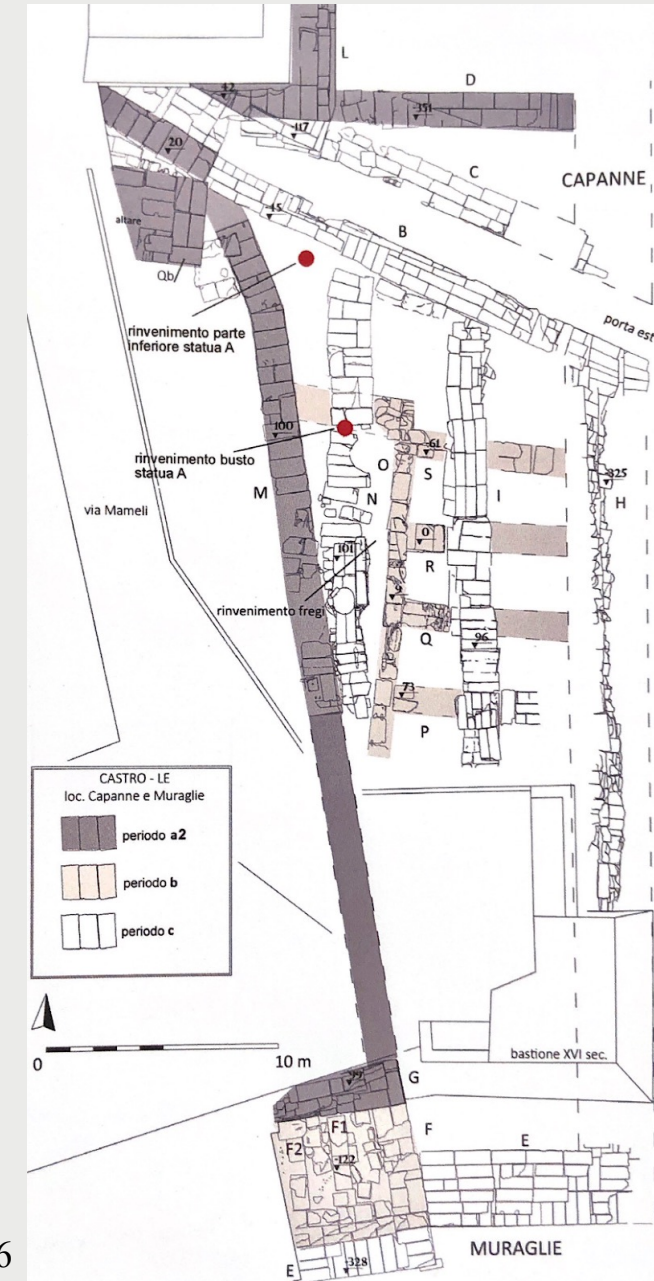
3 A case study: the Castro altar



3.1 The Archaeological Data

The Sanctuary of Athena

- 3rd century BCE: the Sanctuary of Athena in Castro underwent several raids.
- Structures and fortifications demolished or stripped.
- Romans erected new fortifications in 181 BCE.



D'Andria 2022: 71, fig. 6

3.1 The Archaeological Data

Roman walls and pre-Roman materials

- Last round of defensive walls preceded by de-consecration ritual.
- Burial of the most significant objects within the sacred site.
- Limestone statue of the goddess Athena.

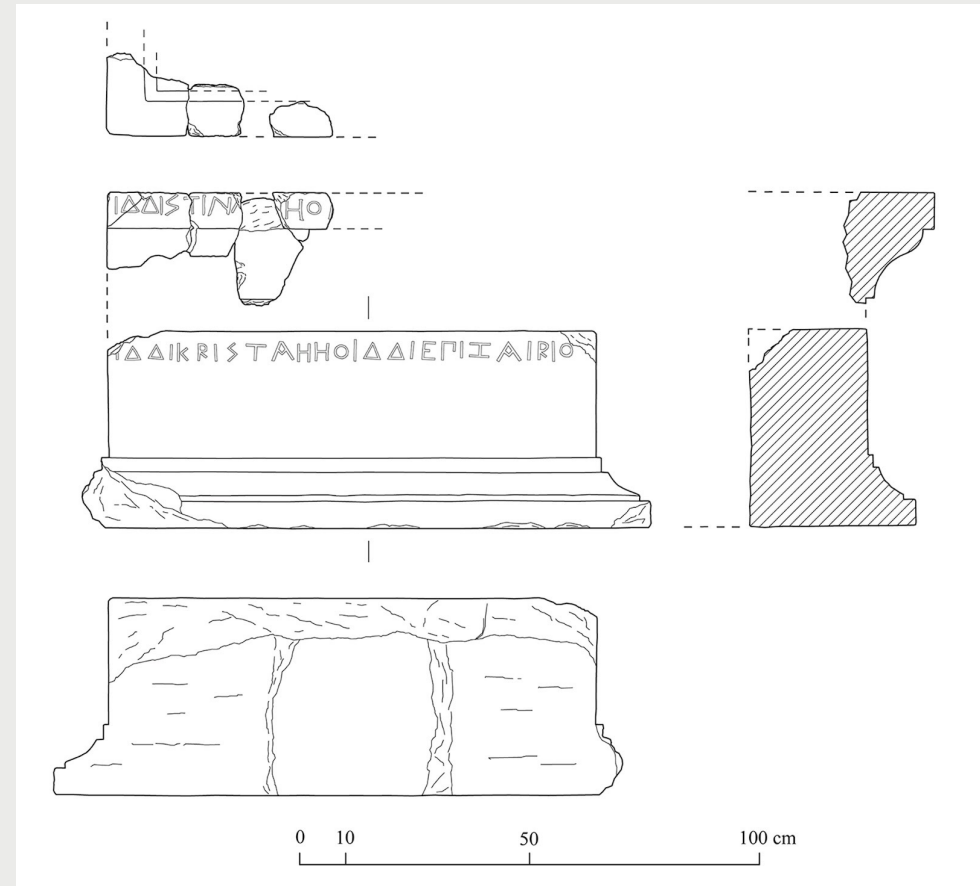


3.1 The Archaeological Data

The Altar

- $42 \times 122 \times 37$ cm.
- Made of so-called “pietra leccese”, a local bio-limestone.
- Found in fragments in the filling against wall M.
- Basement and crowning with a fillet and *cyma reversa*.
- On the upper surface, small depression, limited by a frame, with traces of combustion.

Drawing of the altar (D'Andria 2023)



3.1 The Archaeological Data

The Altar

Photo: courtesy of F. D'Andria



3.1 The Archaeological Data

Comparanda

- Decoration with a fillet and *cyma reversa* also in friezes from the sanctuary.
 - Affinities with architectural sculpture from Taras.
- stylistic trends determining a renewal of the sanctuary from the 4th c. BCE onwards.



Ismaelli 2023, cat. 130

3.1 The Archaeological Data

Parallels

- Altar from the same filling against wall M.
- Inscription: *hazzavaandamat[|]
matroate*
- Traces of combustion.

Differences

- Other Messapian altars have the upper surface divided into two or three parts.
- No traces of combustion.



D'Andria 2023: 62.



Altare Muro Leccese
(Meo 2020: 8, fig. 8 A)

MLM 27 Rud



MLM 9 Bal

3.2 The Epigraphic and Linguistic Data

First reading / *Editio princeps* (D'Andria 2020)

iddis [...] hom̄ [...] tina

iddi kristahho iddi epizairio

Implications

- The first word is *iddis*, likely a nominative corresponding to the dative *iddi*;
- The two texts are somewhat separate: nom.sg. on the frame (labels?), dative as a dedication;
- Altar is used for activities related to more than one god (*Iddis* and *Tina*)

3.2 The Epigraphic and Linguistic Data

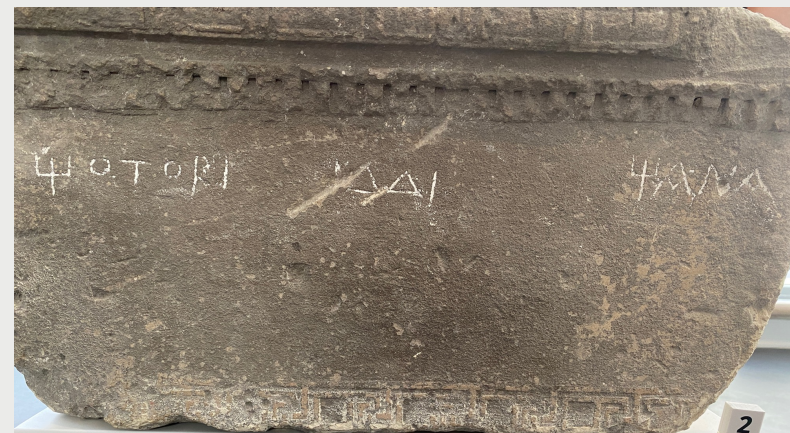
First reading / *Editio princeps* (D'Andria 2020)

iddis [...] hom [...] tina

iddi kristahho iddi epizairio

Implications

- Parallel for three DNs on an altar in Rudiae (MLM 27 Rud):
a) Ψ otori b) $\dot{\text{i}}$ ddi c) Ψ ana



But N.B.: datives only and nothing on the frame!



Iddis likely to be a different divine figure from *Zis*.

3.2 The Epigraphic and Linguistic Data

First reading / *Editio princeps* (D'Andria 2020)

iddis [...] hom̄ [...] tina

iddi kristahho iddi epizairio

Pros

- We restore a nominative to *iddi*;
- *tina* in the text has parallels from the site: Athena?

Cons

- Nom. *-is* to dat. *-i* possible but uncertain. One example:
varetis̄ (MLM 4 Man; 300-200 BCE) and]rzaide↑ias haiθraaθi varetī (MLM 2 Ve; 550-450 BCE).
- Altar with three attestations of a god and one of another is unparalleled.



3.2 The Epigraphic and Linguistic Data

Second reading (D'Andria 2022)

iddi stina[hḥ]hon/ṁ

iddi kristahho iddi epizairio



Implications

- The first word is *iddi*, likely a dative;
- Possible fourth *iddi* + epithet (?) in lacuna on the right-hand side;
- Altar is used for one god only: *Iddi*.

3.2 The Epigraphic and Linguistic Data

iddi in the Messapic corpus

iddi, MLM 38 Cae (250-100 a.C., pottery fragment from Caelium)

]idde, MLM 15 Ve (600-450, pottery fragment from Veretum)

]idd[, MLM 16 Ve (575-425, pottery fragment from Veretum)

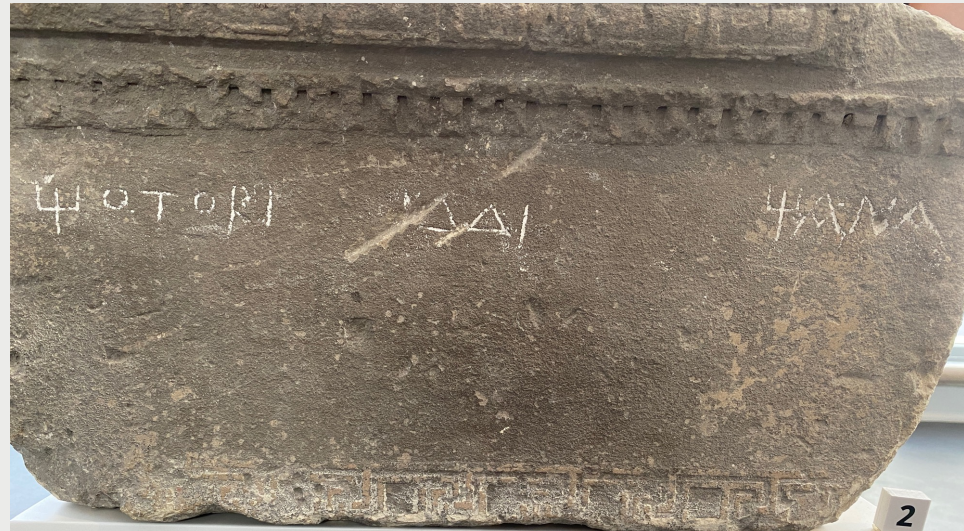
iddi, MLM 27 Rud (400-300, small altar from Rudiae)

iddi [our altar from Castro](400-200)

3.2 The Epigraphic and Linguistic Data

iddi in the Messapic corpus

iddi, MLM 27 Rud (400-300, small altar from Rudiae)



a) Ψotori b) ἰḍdi c) Ψana

Ψotori: dat.; cf. nom. Ψ(a)otor

3.2 The Epigraphic and Linguistic Data

Second reading (D'Andria 2022)

iddi stina[hḥ]hon/m

iddi kristahho iddi epizairio



Pros

- Uniform structure in the inscription
- One function for the altar

Cons

- A DN with four epithets/epicleseis would be a unicum in the area:
 ↳ But would this be a problem?
- *stina*- needs an explanation.

3.3 A New Proposal

→ Could *Zis* and *Iddi* be one and the same divine figure?

- Arena (1964: 278): «mi pare di poter affermare che queste forme sono le varianti locali (Ostuni, Valesio) del (*klaohi*) *zis* che appare a Carovigno, Brindisi, Galatina, Vaste» (cf. also Pagliara 1978).
- Rix (2004: 492, 495): *Zis* borrowed from southern Oscan.

→ Could *Zis* and *Iddi* be part of the same paradigm?

- More questions: suppletive paradigm or sound change?
- If sound change: what vowel changes took place? Does initial **dy-* > *z-* (cf. Greek)? Initial *i-* in *iddi*? Etc.
- Further investigation needed, but interesting literary reference.

3.3 A New Proposal

Verg. Aen. 3.530-1

Crebrescunt optatae aurae portusque patescit «The desired breezes grew stronger and a harbour opens up
iam propior, templumque adparet in arce Minervae. already closer, and a temple appears in the citadel of Minerva»

- Arx Minervae = temple at Castro (among others, D'Andria 2009: 39).

Verg. Aen. 3.543-7

[...] *Tum numina sancta precamur* « We pray to the holy divinity
Palladis armisonae, quae prima accepit ovantis of Pallas of the loud arms, who first welcomed us as we were rejoicing
et capita ante aras Phrygio velamur amictu; and before the altar we veil our heads with the Phrygian cloth.
praeceptisque Heleni, dederat quae maxima, rite And following the orders of Helenus, the greatest he gave, duly
Iunoni Argivae iussos adolemus honores. offer the rightful sacrifices to Argive Juno»

→ other deities could be worshipped there as well. If Athena and Juno, why not Zis/Iddi?

3.4 Conclusions

- Challenges and new perspectives in Messapic studies.
- Need for further studies in Messapic language and culture.
- Unpublished inscriptions have the potential to drastically change the panorama of Messapic studies.
- Importance of a multidisciplinary approach, integrating linguistics, archaeology, epigraphy and history, for a comprehensive understanding of this area.



Thank you!

Michele Bianconi – michele.bianconi@classics.ox.ac.uk

Marta Capano – marta.capano@unistrasi.it

Federica Fanizzi – federica.fanizzi@gmail.com

Marcello Gelone – marcello.gelone@cultura.gov.it

Valentina Lunardi – vlunardi@g.ucla.edu

Simona Marchesini – s.marchesini@alteritas.it





References

- ARENA, R. 1964, 'Note messapiche (I)', «Rendiconti dell'Istituto lombardo di Scienze e Lettere. Classe di Lettere» 98: 271-86.
- D'ANDRIA, F. 2009, *Castrum Minervae*, a cura di F. D'Andria, Galatina, 2009.
- D'ANDRIA, F. 2020, *L'Athenaion di Castro in Messapia*, «RM», 126, 2020, pp. 79-140.
- D'ANDRIA, F. 2022, 'Necessità di un'archeologia delle iscrizioni: tra Taranto, la Messapia e l'Athenaion di Castro', «Orizzonti» 23: 67-85.
- D'ANDRIA, F. & LOMBARDO, M. 2009, *Due nuove iscrizioni messapiche da Castro*, in F. D'Andria (ed.) *Castrum Minervae*, Galatina: 67-78.
- DE SIMONE, C. 1988, 'Iscrizioni messapiche della grotta della poesia (Melendugno, Lecce)', «Annali della Scuola normale superiore di Pisa» 3/18, 2: 325-415.
- DE SIMONE, C. & MARCHESINI, S. 1992, *Monumenta Linguae Messapicae*, Wiesbaden. [= MLM]
- MEO, F. 2020, 'Indagini archeologiche a Muro Leccese 2016-2018: l'edificio residenziale', «The Journal of Fasti online» 463: 1-23.
- PAGLIARA, C. 1978, 'Le iscrizioni', in F. D'Andria (ed.), *Leuca* Galatina: Congedo: 177-221.

Zis inscriptions

MLM 22 UR (3rd c. BCE)

*]zis [---]alaohera[---]ndimes asiat[---]s artorres [---] denθehides [---]baibas [---]s
dazet [---]drins[---]eita[---]aides[---]tθes [---]lles .[*

MLM 3 OI (4th c. BCE)

klohi zis «o»datisozar

MLM 8 Ro (uncertain date)

klaohi venas zis θaotor taoteθθes θaotori [andirah(h)o?]

MLM 4 Ro (uncertain date)

[k]lauhi zis de[.?]kias artahias θautouri andirahho daus apistaθi vinaihi

Attestations of *idi*

- MLM 13 Ve (date not available; pottery from Veretum)
idi
- MLM 9 Bal (400-300, votive altar from Balesium)
haloti taotoritaolne idibarislaoho

