

# Messapia: Economy and Exchange in the Land between Ionian and Adriatic Seas

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## Introduction

Ever since the Bronze Age, the geographical position of Messapia (fig. 1), between the Ionian and Adriatic seas, has enabled the development of relations characterised by continuity within the framework of mobility in the Mediterranean. In the light of the most recent investigations, the papers will adopt a multidisciplinary approach to the regional economy, production and exchange, in a period from the Iron Age to the Roman conquest in the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The papers will focus on certain aspects of the economy in Messapia, with particular reference to bio-archaeological themes (including livestock rearing and the consumption of animal resources), textile production (to be analysed by applying archaeometric methods to residues of fabric) and imports of luxury products from Greek cities and the Greek colonies of

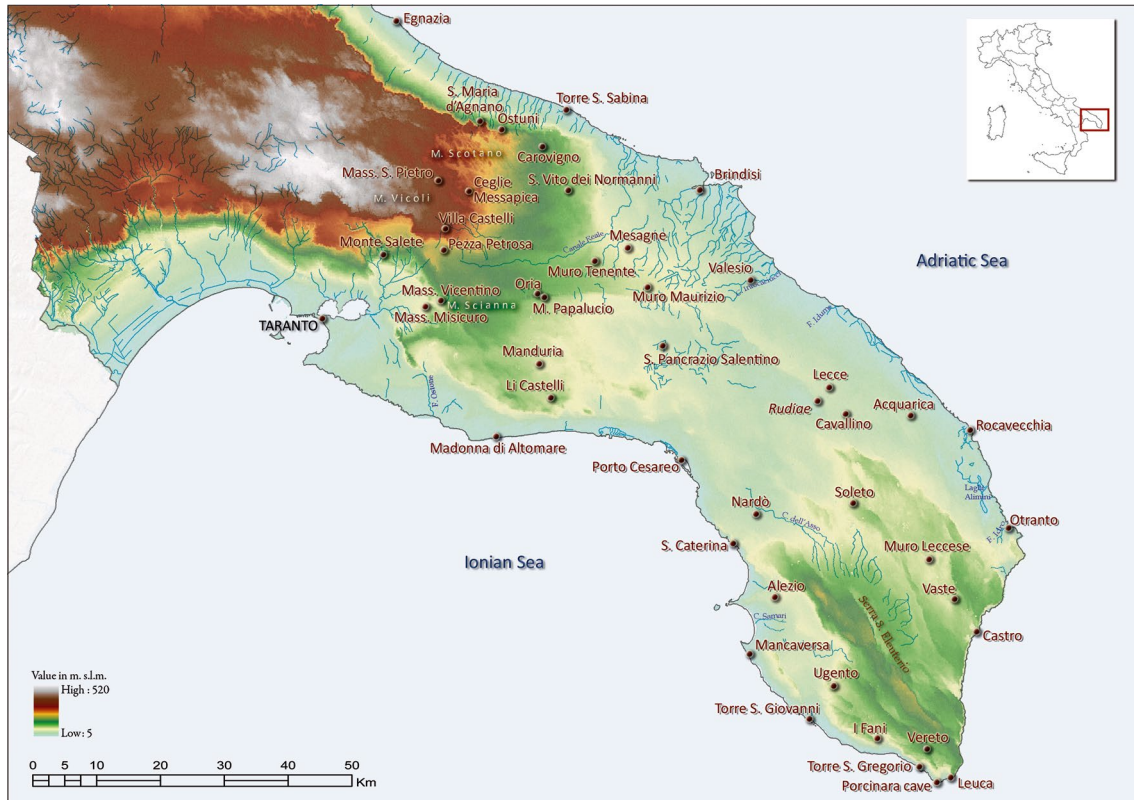


Fig. 1: Taranto and the main Messapian settlements, most of which mentioned in the following papers.

southern Italy.<sup>1</sup> The Iron Age, a period when the Salento was at the centre of traffic and migrations that led to the establishment of the Greek settlement of Taranto in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, will be the focus of special attention. Of interest are the production techniques of the indigenous settlements and commercial exchange, which is seen from an early period, particularly on the shores of the Strait of Otranto. The presence in grave goods of imported prestige items will be investigated with reference to the forms of self-representation adopted by the Messapian aristocracy in both funerary rituals and manifestations of power within the settlements. The variety of religious manifestations in the Messapian world constitutes a particular case study linked to cultural exchanges, which, thanks to the recent discoveries of places of worship, can now be investigated in detail. Important in this regard are the discoveries made in Castro, where the Athenaion – linked to the myth of Aeneas's first landing on the shores of Italy – was identified. In this site, the abundance of votive offerings, the richness of the structures of the cult and the ways in which the rituals were performed all enable us to investigate the investment of resources in the religious dimension, especially the consumption of collective energy in the manifestations of the cult. A further objective is to reconstruct the economic system underlying the cult in Messapian society, considering its relationships with the other peoples of the Mediterranean.

### **Note**

<sup>1</sup> The papers of this session have been edited by Francesco Meo.

### **Image Credit**

Fig. 1: by the authors.