Excavations at Metaponto, 1979

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Plans by Michael Shearin Guarino and Ian Sutherland.
Drawings by Ellen Simmons.
Map of territory of Metaponto by Carole Pierce.
Photographs by Christopher Williams.

Front Cover and Inside Back Cover
Amphora from tomb at S. Angelo Vecchio.
Inv. no. SA 79-975P, H., 0.325 m.
University of Texas
Excavations at Metaponto, 1979

For the past five years the University of Texas has conducted excavations in the territory of Metaponto under the auspices of the Soprintendenza Archeologica della Basilicata. The scope of the project is to explore the countryside around the ancient city and to establish the habitation pattern and the social and economic relations between the urban and rural communities. The 1979 season provided a wealth of information for the overall project. Work continued at Pizzica-Pantanello, the site which was begun in 1974 and which first showed the diversity of rural activities in the area. In addition, thanks to the generosity of the Superintendent of Antiquities, Dott.ssa Elena Lattanzi, and the encouragement of the former Superintendent, Professor Dina Adamesteau, The University of Texas was asked to undertake a salvage operation at the masseria S. Angelo Vecchio, located ca. 9 km. west of Metaponto.

Fig. 1 Grain—the source of prosperity in the territory of Metaponto.

Figs. 2a–b Red-figure hydria from tomb at S. Angelo Vecchio, depicting youth pursuing maiden. Inv. no. SA 79-967F. H., 0.215 m.
Acknowledgements

The Project Director, Professor Joseph C. Carter opened the 1979 season by introducing the staff members to the sites excavated by the Soprintendenza and by the University of Texas. Professor Adamsteaneu kindly gave us a survey of the territory in which he explained the results of the aerial photography through which ancient sites and roads have been located in the area.

The results of the excavation were accomplished through the constant encouragement given us by the staff of the Soprintendenza, first of all, Dott.ssa Lattanzi and Professor Adamsteaneu. We benefited greatly from the practical advice given by Antonio Indice and Giuseppe di Taranto and from the excellent cooperation of the landowner, Sig. Vincenzo Santoro, and the workmen and staff at Metaponto. Thanks to Dott. Salvatore Dedono of the Ente Irrigazione, Bari, we were again able to use the facilities at Pizzica-Pantanello for cleaning and cataloguing of finds.

Special thanks go to the students who participated in the 1979 season at Metaponto. A successful season produces immediate excitement, but it takes many hours of hard work and commitment to complete the documentation of the finds both at the site and in the storerooms. Through efforts of the students we were able to see the results fall into place, first at Metaponto itself, then in Rome during the last days of the season at the Bryn Mawr Villa Massenzia, and now in Austin. In addition to the regular staff, we were happy and proud to welcome many visitors to the site. The first report of the season was presented at the Annual Archaeological Conference in Taranto, and the publication of the material is now in progress.

Thanks to the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities, The University of Texas, private foundations, and individual donors, we have been able to pursue the goals of the project. We gratefully acknowledge the interest shown in our work.

Austin, October 1979

Ingrid E. M. Edlund
Associate Director, University
of Texas Excavations at Metaponto,
Field Director, 1979 season.

Fig. 3 Terracotta plaque of standing Persephone.
Inv. no. SA 79-446T. Pres. H., 0.297m. (See fig. 34)

Fig. 4 Pizzica. Well and 4th-century B.C. farmhouse, excavated in 1976–1978.

Fig. 5 Pizzica. Stratigraphy in test trench V, excavated in 1978–1979.
Pizzica

Since no continuous work can be done at this site without the use of a well-point system, we concentrated our efforts on the test trenches in the farmhouse area, which had been begun in the 1978 season. The stratigraphy outlined by Professor Carter was confirmed, and it is clear that the 4th-3rd century farmhouse structure was built over the 6th century B.C. pebble pavement. The exact sequence of the building periods of the farmhouse is now under study.

Professor Marshall Becker undertook the study of the skeleton found within the farmhouse complex in 1977. We are hoping that the results of his study will enable us to explain the unusual location of the skeleton, and its relation to the dwelling.

Another aspect of the analysis of material from Pizzica is represented by Mr. Gerry Hoye who is testing the kilns from Pizzica (as well as those from S. Angelo Vecchio) as part of an extensive research project on kilns in S. Italy and Sicily.
Fig. 6 University of Texas Excavations in the territory of Metaponto.

Fig. 7 The masseria S. Angelo Vecchio.

Fig. 8 View towards the masseria S. Angelo Vecchio.

Fig. 9 Excavations at S. Angelo Vecchio. In foreground Sounding A (filled in at the end of the season).

Fig. 10 View towards masseria S. Angelo Vecchio.

Fig. 11 Masseria S. Angelo Vecchio. View from the Basentana highway. In foreground Giovanni Santoro.

Fig. 12 Excavation in progress at S. Angelo Vecchio. Area of wall and tile fall.

Fig. 13 Excavation in progress at S. Angelo Vecchio. Area of kilns.

Fig. 14 Excavation in progress at S. Angelo Vecchio. Squares F6 and G9, with wall and tombs, facing west.
S. Angelo Vecchio—The Site and The Territory

The masseria (estate) S. Angelo Vecchio is located off the Basentana, ca. 9 km. from the ancient city of Metaponto. Earlier in the year, the owner of the masseria, Sig. Vincenzo Santoro, had accidentally hit upon a cluster of votive terracotta plaques while widening a road on his property. The surface finds were collected, and the sides of the road cleared through the efforts of the Soprintendenza. We were indeed very fortunate to be able to explore this site. Its location on a hill overlooking the Basento river and the Incolonata plateau, together with the presence of natural springs, immediately suggested that the terracotta plaques discovered were part of a larger context.

Although S. Angelo Vecchio represents the westernmost point of the territory of Metaponto, and thus may seem a far-away outpost, it is by no means an isolated site. A survey of the surrounding territory under the expert guidance of Giuseppe di Taranto established the proximity of our site to that of several farm houses (fittorie), identified through surface finds, and also to the important sanctuary of S. Biagio.

Due to the cultivation of the fields, excavation at S. Angelo Vecchio was concentrated on the hilltop and east slope of the hill north of the masseria where the soil was undisturbed. Three test trenches were excavated on top of the hill, and the area on the east slope measured 45 x 40 m., including three deep soundings, A, B, and C. The soundings were laid out at the points where the terracotta plaques had been discovered by the landowner, to the west of the modern road.
The House on the Hilltop

The site presents a continuous occupation pattern from the 6th century B.C. to the early 3rd century B.C. The earliest habitation is documented by the foundation walls of a small house on the hilltop to the north. The preserved length is ca. 4 m., and the width of the structure is ca. 3 m. The walls are made of rough uneven blocks of stone, and can be dated by the pottery context of Ionic cups to the 6th century B.C.

The Retaining Wall and the Pottery Deposit in Sounding C

In sounding C, which extended E-W on the east slope of the hill, by the modern road, traces of a massive retaining wall were discovered. It consists of small and large stones packed tightly together, with a total width of 2 m. The construction of the wall has parallels in the city of Metaponto (I owe this observation to Dr. Antonio di Siena), and should be dated to the 6th or possibly early 5th century B.C. on the basis of this correlation and the pottery context.

Fig. 15  Sixth-century B.C. foundation wall on hilltop at S. Angelo Vecchio, facing east.
Fig. 16  Retaining wall in Sounding C and Square C5.
The Fifth-Century B.C. Tombs

Further up the hill, NW of Sounding C, 5th-century burials were discovered, which suggest the presence of a nearby *fattoria*, although its exact location cannot be established at this point. Of the five tombs excavated so far, three consisted of stone sarcophagi, covered with tiles, which contained well-preserved skeletons. One body was buried directly in the soil, and covered with tiles, and another skeleton may have been moved and later placed on a large rock, in a folded position. The tomb gifts were impressive for a site which is remote from the city in terms of location, yet fits into the pattern of *fattoria* dispersed throughout the territory, which all had individual family burial grounds. At S. Angelo Vecchio the tomb gifts consisted of large undecorated amphoras of local manufacture, as well as red-figure hydriai and an owl cup attributed to the Pisticci Painter by Professor A. D. Trendall.

Fig. 17 Excavation of Square G6, with wall built over tomb, facing east. In foreground Mary Emerson and Leonardo Pacciani. In background Michael Guarino.

Fig. 18 Tombs in Square F6.

Fig. 19 Cover of South tomb in Square F6.

Fig. 20 Amphora from tomb at S. Angelo Vecchio. Side view. For front view, see cover. Inv. no. SA 79-975P. H., 0.325 m.

Fig. 21 Red-figure hydria from tomb at S. Angelo Vecchio. For details, see figs. 2a–b. Inv. no. SA 79-967P. H., 0.215 m.

Fig. 22 Red-figure hydria from area of tombs at S. Angelo Vecchio. Inv. no. SA 79-970P. H. 0.170 m.
The Kilns

The most important phase of the site is represented by an industrial complex, which consists of four small kilns (with possible remains of others), an enclosure wall, and a shed for storage. This complex was built immediately on top of the burials, which might imply new ownership of the land or a break in the population pattern, all within the 4th century B.C. The original construction of the kilns seems to have been that of curved tiles, stacked up and held together with clay. Two of the kilns were at a later point rebuilt, and lined with tightly fitting tiles and a coating of clay.

Fig. 23  North and South kilns in Squares F2-F3, facing north.

Fig. 24  Remains of kiln in Square D4, on slope towards modern road, facing north.

Fig. 25  Detail of North kiln in Square F3.

Fig. 26  Detail of North kiln in Square F3.
The Terracotta Plaques and Molds

The material fired in the kilns was vast, and included several types of 4th-century B.C. votive plaques, depicting Zeus, Persephone, Dionysos-Hades, and satyrs and maenads. The style and iconography correspond to examples known from Taranto, Metaponto, and Heraclea-Siris, but with variations in size and details. Misfired plaques were found near the kilns and provide interesting material for a study of firing techniques. Terracotta molds of a silen antefix, an Artemis Bendis antefix, and a round loom weight with a small Eros in relief, indicate a varied production. Some gray-ware pottery found inside the best preserved kiln shows the continuity of the site into the 3rd century B.C. The tiles used to construct the kilns are noteworthy because of the stamps impressed on the flat surfaces. The designs show an anchor, a wreath, or a spoked wheel, and a few inscriptions.
Survey of the Territory of Metaponto

In order to tie the site of S. Angelo Vecchio to the other sites excavated by the University of Texas team and the Soprintendenza, a survey was undertaken by Carole Pierce as a special research project. A 'squadra volante' was formed, consisting of Ms. Pierce, Giuseppe di Taranto, Michael Guarino, and Ingrid Edlund. Our aim was to locate the sites in the area which have already been excavated as well as the ones which are known only through surface finds, and to record them on the available maps. This project is of extreme urgency, since the landscape is changing every year through the development of irrigation systems and roads. In analyzing the material, Ms. Pierce noted the cluster of farmhouses in some areas, an arrangement which could be explained by the sources of water, but which might also indicate specialized activities carried out by the members of each farm. As is evidenced by sites such as Pizzica, S. Bingio, and S. Angelo Vecchio, the term 'fattoria' includes structures with varied functions, both agricultural, industrial, and religious.

Analysis of the Finds from Pizzica and S. Angelo Vecchio

For the many facets of scientific analysis of the finds, we were fortunate to benefit from the expertise of consultants, both in the field and at home. Thus, Professor Marshall Becker (West Chester State College) is currently analyzing the skeletons from the Saldone cemetery and S. Angelo Vecchio, as well as the Pizzica skeleton. The results of his work will form the basis for a study of all the skeletal material of the area, a project which is envisaged by the Soprintendenza. Dr. Lorenzo Costantini (Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale, Rome) has undertaken a study of the seed samples from S. Angelo Vecchio, which were collected by means of soil and clay samples, and water flotation. Professor Robert L. Folk (University of Texas, Austin) visited the site on his way back from the University of Texas Excavations in Israel, and presented a proposal with guidelines for a geological study of the territory of Metaponto, which will be coordinated with the excavation project. The black-glaze pottery is being tested through neutron activation analysis by Mr. Samuel Wolff (University of Chicago) as part of a survey of production centers spanning from Carthage to Greece. Mr. Gerry Hoye (University of Alberta) is testing the kilns, both at Pizzica and S. Angelo Vecchio. The soil samples which were brought back to Austin will be analyzed by Professor Vaughn Bryant (Texas A&M University), and Mr. Gene Wooldridge (University of Texas, Austin) will undertake the faunal analysis.
Summary

The extensive production of terracottas, votive and architectural, at the site of S. Angelo Vecchio shows that the countryside formed a vital part of the economy of the area of Metaponto. The proximity of this site to S. Biagio, which is only 2 km away, is an example of different aspects of rural life which existed side by side with the city structure. Thus, the 1979 season of the University of Texas excavations has contributed to our knowledge of the Metapontine territory in a way which ties in with the study of urban Metaponto, which is carried out by the Soprintendenza. As the evidence of a flourishing countryside (chora) increases, the question must now be raised as to the role played by the rural population, not only for the development of the countryside, but also for the economic and political strength of the city of Metaponto itself. There might not be a clear ‘answer’ to this question, but the research carried out has applications to the general concepts of the role of the countryside of Italy in Greek and Roman times.
Fig. 37 Marshall Becker, consultant.
Fig. 38 Ellen Simmons, draftsman.
Fig. 39 Francesca Quarato, restorer.
Fig. 40 Alfredo Portarulo, workman.
Fig. 41 Michael Guarino and Ian Sutherland, architects.
The 1979 season was carried out through the splendid efforts of our staff members and collaborators in Austin and Metaponto:

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  John O'Connor (Dartmouth College)
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  Johanna Smith (B.S., University of Texas, Austin)
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  Vincenzo Matera, Workman, Metaponto
  Leonardo Pacciani, Specialized Worker, Bernalda
  Alfredo Portaruolo, Workman, Metaponto
  Giuseppe di Taranto, Foreman, Montescaglioso

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Dott.ssa Elena Lattanzi, Superintendent of Antiquities for Basilicata, Potenza and Matera
Sign. Leonardo Torracco and family, Pizzica

**Visitors:**

In addition to the work accomplished by the excavation staff and the consultants, visitors to the site contributed greatly by sharing with us their observations and expertise in different areas. The list of visitors shows not only a wide spectrum of Italian and American interest in our project, but also an extensive international exchange of ideas and archaeological experience which this season included visits from colleagues in Poland and Algeria.

Professor Malcolm Bell (University of Virginia)
Professor Robert Buck (University of Alberta)
Professor Hank Chafetz (University of Houston)
Dott. Mahfoud Ferroukhi (Dr. Circonscription Archeologique, Cherchel, Algerie)
Professor Charles Henderson, Jr. (Smith College)
Professor John Kenfield (Rutgers University)
Professor Martin Kilmer (University of Ottawa)
Professor Carolyn Koehler (University of Maryland)
Professor Kyle M. Phillips, Jr. (Bryn Mawr College and Bryn Mawr Villa Massenzia)
Professor Alastair Small (Canadian Academic Centre in Rome)
Dott. ssa Aleksandra Wasowicz (Institute of History, Warsaw)

*Inside Back Cover:*

Amphora from tomb at S. Angelo Vecchio.
Inv. no. SA 79-975 P. H., 0.323 m.
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