

## Sound change and morphological analogy in a *Trümmersprache*: the case of Messapic

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Fragmentary languages are, by definition, difficult to navigate for the comparative linguist, as the lack of sufficient data often hinders the level of abstraction needed for a theoretically informed description. However, the very few certainties that scholars might be able to reach about a *Trümmersprache*, its grammar, and its position within the language family (if available) often happen to be based on specific views on sound change and its interaction with morphological analogy. Messapic, a language present in Apulia in the second half of the first millennium BCE (cf. DE SIMONE 2018, MARCHESINI 2020, 2021 MATZINGER 2019) is a case in point in this respect.

In this talk, we are going to share some results from an ongoing collaborative project (SPEM – Seminario Permanente sul Messapico) which, among other things aims at re-evaluating the synchronic and diachronic phonology of Messapic. We will show that Messapic presents a number of challenges when it comes to a Neo-grammarians-inspired analysis of sound change, but – at the same time – that the progress in Indo-European linguistics and in the study of the languages of ancient Italy of the last 50 years forces us to revise some fundamental assumptions which have by now become canonical.

On the basis of a comprehensive analysis of vowels in the entire material that is available today (about 550 published inscriptions in *MLM* + more than a hundred inscriptions which are either unpublished or have been published in recent years) we are going to show that some of the sound changes which have become canonical (at least since DE SIMONE 1972 and 1988, but one could go back to KRETSCHMER 1896) should possibly be revised. For instance, it is worth re-examining the outcomes and relationships between inherited \*/*ō*/ and \*/*ō̄*/, which are traditionally thought to be treated differently in Messapic. Such a revision would have important consequences not only for some areas of nominal morphology in which analogy is supposed to have played a key role, but also for the re-definition of the dialectal position of Messapic within the Indo-European family.

### References

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- MLM* = de Simone, C. & Marchesini, S. 2002, *Monumenta Linguae Messapicae*, Wiesbaden: Reichert.