Chapter 21
Basilicata

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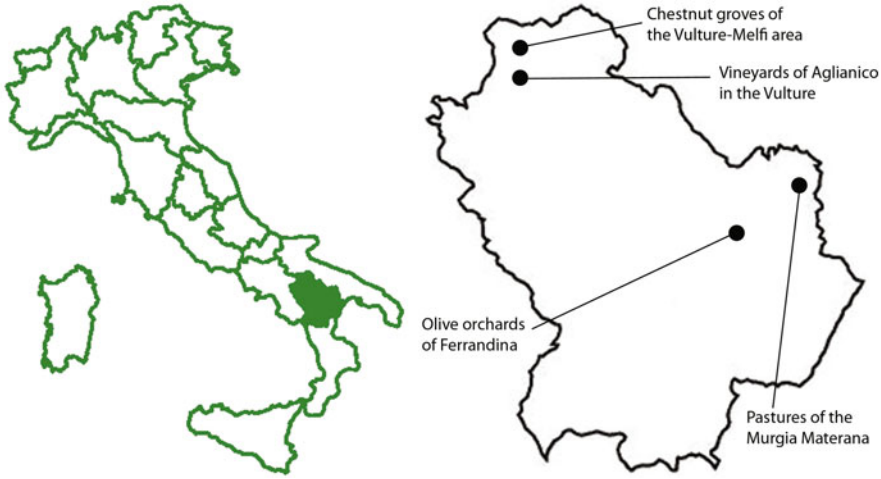

21.1 Introduction

A very ancient land, Basilicata was inhabited as early as the Paleolithic and the Neolithic, when the first organized farming villages sprang up in the Matera and Melfi areas. In the eighth century B.C., the first Greek colonists landed on the Lucanian shores of the Ionic Sea, giving rise to the flourishing civilization that went down in history as "Magna Graecia". It is to the Greeks that we owe the first systematic agricultural landscaping of the Italian South. The region, known as Lucania even

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before the Romans, later took the name of Basilicata, except for a short period, from 1932 to 1947, when it officially resumed its ancient name. Its inhabitants, instead, have always been known as Lucani. Basilicata is mainly mountainous and almost totally lacks plains, except in the Metaponoto area. Its harsh and craggy morphology has always influenced the character of Lucanian agriculture, as well as that of its society and economy. 35 % of the region's area is covered with woods. The utilized agricultural surface extends over little more than half of the total surface, and consists for 27.5 % of pastures and 72 % of farmland. Although the area with the best potential morphological and bioclimatic conditions for farming is that of Metaponto, it only became available for agriculture after major reclaiming works were completed in the first half of the twentieth century. Hence, Lucanian agricultural landscapes having a "historical character" are concentrated in the hills, where ever since the time of Magna Graecia the crops that epitomize "Mediterraneity" appeared; notably the olive tree (the steno-Mediterranean species par excellence) and the sub-Mediterranean grapevine. The Metaponto area is presently one of the most important fruit and vegetable districts in all of Italy. Although here citrus growing mainly began to spread in the last century, a few kilometers from the plain, on the gentle clayish slopes between Tursi and Montalbano Jonico, the "Staccia" orange has been grown since ancient times, foreshadowing what was to transpire many years later down in the reclaimed lands in the plain. A poorer agriculture, instead, has been traditionally practiced in the mountains. Wheat, as well as typical and niche vegetables, have always been the typical crops of the marginal agriculture of the plateaus and small valleys of the many Lucanian massifs. The cultivation of wheat deserves separate consideration. It has always been grown in Lucania. By 1975 it already accounted for over 30 % of the Useful Agricultural Surface (UAS), and has been expanding constantly over the last few decades. The cost of this expansion has mainly been paid by the meso-xerophilous woods of hill and low mountain slopes, whose best preserved testimony is presently found in the pastureland of the Matera side of the Puglian Avampaese. The northeast area of Basilicata, instead, ever since the abolition of the Dogana della Mena delle Pecore has become the best example of the expansion of non-irrigated farmland. As part of this process, the tillage of the soil of Monteserico at Genzano, with its 17,000 ha of woods, bush and pastures (some of the best in the Dogana di Foggia), on the one hand, and the deforestation of the nearby Bosco della Badia near Banzi, regarded at the time as one of the most extensive Lucanian forests, were among the most emblematic episodes in the transformation of the Lucanian agrarian landscape in the second half of the nineteenth century. Returning to deforestation, this is undoubtedly a phenomenon that affected the whole Western world in a rather recent past, although in different ways and at different times. At any rate, the expansion of woods registered in Italy in the last century also regarded Lucania. Today the region has dense and extensive woods that are being exploited in multiple ways. The historical relevance of the Vulture chestnut groves and their importance for the mountain populations is stressed in the entry devoted to them in the present catalogue. The thick woods of this area gave shelter to brigands who infested the whole region in the second half of the nineteenth century, a phenomenon depending on the extreme indigence of the local population. As in the rest of southern

Italy, there was very high emigration here in the early 1900s. It is worth mentioning that the spread of the Turkish oak (*Quercus cerris*) mainly depended on the use of its especially hard and durable wood to make sleepers for Italy's "historical" railways. Trees of this species form some of the most beautiful groves in the stretch of the Apennines extending from the Sella di Conza to the Passo dello Scalone, such as the *cerreta* of Monte Croccia near Accettura, the Cupolicchio Woods at Tricarico, etc. The areas we have selected do not bear witness to every aspect of the Lucanian district, but reflect an attempt to highlight an added value found in some significant rural districts; notably, the extraordinary connection between history, traditions, and landscape in districts where cultivations have become the distinctive element of the landscape. Here farming permeates local culture and phenological cycles are synchronous with the life rhythms of local people.

21.2 Chestnut Groves of the Vulture-Melfi Area (40° 58′ 51″ N; 15° 39′ 10 E)

The area is covered with chestnut orchards extending over upper hill and lower mountain slopes for about 2,100 ha. The landscape is protected according to the landscape law n. 1497 of 1939 and n. 431 of 1985. The land is mainly privately owned and lies within the townships of Atella, Barile, Melfi, Rapolla, and Rionero in Vulture, except for some publicly owned areas mainly at Rionero in Vulture. The area can be reached from the Bari-Napoli highway. One exits at the Candela tolls and takes the SS 658 in direction Potenza. After exiting at Melfi one drives on towards the Lakes of Monticchio. This chestnut grove area, the most important in all of Basilicata, lies in a district encompassed within a half circle formed by the eastern slopes of the Vulture. The versants here are usually not especially steep and altitudes range from 500 to 1,000 m a.s.l. The soils of volcanic origin of the slopes of the ancient Vulture volcano are ideal for the acidophilic nature of the species *Castanea sativa.*

The local chestnut orchards are a highly significant landscape element of the Vulture area, especially for the Melfi farmland. They are an emblematic illustration of the expression "chestnut civilization," used to describe the historical importance of this type of woods in Italy, where the chestnut tree is also known as the "bread tree" for the fundamental importance of its fruit in human diet. In the Vulture area, besides having great aesthetic landscape value, chestnut orchards play an important role as an element of local historical identity. As early as 1231, the Costituzioni di Melfi included clauses to protect chestnut orchards—which at the time were mainly grown as a source of food—from damage caused by cattle. The Costituzioni, issued under the reign of Frederick II, is the first general code of law for the whole kingdom of Sicily. It was a milestone in the history of law and bears witness to the importance of chestnut growing in all the kingdom. The significance of the chestnut tree and its fruit for the area is borne out by the prominence of the *varola*—a local term for the roasted Melfi chestnut—in the important oenogastronomic event "Aglianica" and, above all,

Fig. 21.1 The removal of the undergrowth is one of the typical features of chestnut orchards, which were managed as carefully as gardens

in the homonymous "Festival of the Varola" held annually at the end of October in the center of Melfi. The strong identity value of the crop for the Vulture-Melfi geographical area is borne out by the area's recent request for a PGI-brand for the local chestnuts. The rural landscape of the area is enhanced by the presence of many rock churches, such as S. Margherita dello Spirito Santo and Santa Lucia dei Giaconelli. Others are still waiting to be discovered. These churches provide a link between the rhythms of rural life and popular religion, confirming the importance of Lucania as one of the Italian regions where testimonies of ascetic life are most abundant. From a structural point of view, the most organic is the church of Santa Margherita, entirely dug into tuff rock. It dates back to 1200 and all its walls are frescoed.

The area shows a good degree of integrity as far as the chestnut orchards are concerned, especially in the parts where regular maintenance is performed. This is partially a consequence of the importance attributed to the chestnut and of the gastronomic events held to support its production. Special attention should be devoted to monumental chestnut trees. These should be identified and preserved even if they are no longer productive or in poor condition.

The area's main elements of vulnerability are the gradual decline of farming and the risk of attacks by parasites. Mount Vulture is included in the Rete Natura 2000 (Nature 2000 Network) as a Site of Community Interest and a Special Protection Zone for plant and animal species. This naturalistic destination will probably be confirmed at the institutional level by the soon to be established Regional Natural Park of Vulture. This approach threatens to encourage a gradual evolution towards

mixed woods leading to a loss of the peculiar characteristics of the historical chestnut orchards, which does not include other species. A tendency that cannot be opposed by the landscape protection provided by the law (1497/1939 and 431/1985) not suited for this purpose. Further risks include intense attacks of cortical cancer on chestnut trees. Infections have indeed been reported in the area, but from a hypovirulent strain of the ascomycete *Cryphonectria parasitica.* In the past, cortical cancer of the chestnut took a heavy toll on the Vulture chestnut orchards, causing the conversion of many tall-tree orchards to coppice management (Fig. 21.1).

21.3 Pastures of the Murgia Materana (40° 38′ 48″ N; 16° 41′ 35″ E)

The pastures of the Murgia Materana extend over about 4,000 ha in a hilly area with altitudes between 200 and 520 m.s.l. The land is mostly privately owned. There are still some commons of limited extension in the township of Matera. The area can be reached from Bari by the SS 96 state road to Altamura, then the SS 99 to Laterza. It lies after the town of Laterza on the right side of the road. These pastures are prevalently included within the township of Matera, on the Laterza side. The area displays the typical features of the Murgia, being a plateau strongly characterized by the emergence of Mesozoic limestone. Karstic phenomena play a major role in determining the morphology of the area, the presence of canyons (*gravine*) being the most tangible evidence for this.

The Murgia Materana is distinguished from Upper Murgia not only by the singularity of its landscape, but also by human settlement going all the way back to the Paleolithic. The Murgia Materana is an outpost of the Puglian Upper Murgia in Lucania. Although separated by a valley called the Fossa Bradanica, the two areas share a common geological origin, as well as a common history of land use and a biodiversity ensured by the persistence of pastures. The area is of great importance for the conservation of biodiversity, especially as regards flora and fauna, and is therefore included in the Park of the Materan Murgia and one of the sites of the NATURA 2000 network. Many testimonies of the history of the area are kept at the "Domenico Ridola" National Museum in Matera, while testimonies from the Greek period (eighth–seventh century B.C.) and the Roman period (third century B.C. onward) can be found at various sites in the area. Scholars believe that back in those times the Murgia was inhabited by shepherds and herdsmen living in small villages created by adapting small natural caves. These communities were to place an indelible stamp on the man-nature relationship in the area. Here farmhouses, rock villages, and rock churches still retain the allure of cave settlements. Alongside cave dwellings were *jazzi*, that is, sheep-pens made with the comfort of the animals in mind, characterized by dry-stone walls, their being built along slopes, and a southern exposure. Rock architecture was also used for religious buildings in the area. Immigrant Greek religious communities from Sicily and Calabria, Benedictine monks, and later groups of Armenians, Jews, and Slavonians, each with their manners and customs, shaped caves into churches,

Fig. 21.2 The pastures of the Murgia Materana date back to the eighth century B.C. They show considerable landscape values due also to the geomorphology of the area

coenobia and chapels decorated with the typical architectural elements of Greek and Latin liturgy. Further spectacular testimonies of the relationship between man and nature date from the time span going from 1500 to the early 1900s. In this period, farmhouses and *jazzi* were built to answer the demands of the local agropastoral economy, as well as canals, settling vats, and water cisterns, connected by a still used road network extending all the way to the city of Matera. The denseness and expansion of the local canal network indicates that it was made to meet the needs not just of the population residing in the countryside, but also and especially of the flocks and herds. Critical lows in the water supply were obviously reached in the summer. Hence, the technologies employed had the main purpose of guaranteeing a summer supply. These technologies are interesting subjects for studies on the role of traditional knowledge in adaptation to climate change. All over the Park one still finds splendid rural mansions, including some fortified ones. These are drawing increasingly more tourists, who marvel at finding such an extraordinary cultural landscape in a protected natural area. The area also owes its archaeological significance to its many rock churches, built over a very long time span extending from the Early Middle Ages to the nineteenth century. Many fascinating rock-cut churches are found near small rural settlements or along the ancient routes connecting the town to the countryside. In these churches one recognizes architectural elements patterned after those of regular above-ground churches. The digging was carried out so as provide the indispensable elements of a cult building with minimum resource expenditure.

The landscape shows a good degree of integrity. Possible threats to a landscape of this type could come from individual harmful actions such as illegal waste dumping, or soil tillage. Such actions, however, are made difficult by the restrictions and controls applied since the institution of the Park. The true vulnerability factor of the area is the management of the pastures of the Murgia Materana. Pastures in pseudo-steppes are secondary formations derived from disturbing factors—notably fires and grazing—which over time curbed the natural dynamism of the vegetation, allowing the present landscape to form. A prolonged absence of these factors would allow the native forest vegetation—probably consisting originally of deciduous thermophilic oak groves—to colonize the area again, leading to the loss of the historical landscape (Fig. 21.2).

21.4 Olive Orchards of Ferrandina (40° 30′ 00″ N; 16° 27′ 00″ E)

The area extends over about 800 ha in a hilly area with altitudes between 150 and 450 m a.s.l.. It is mostly privately owned and lies within the municipality of Ferrandina, in the province of Matera. This is the most important olive-growing district in Lucania, with interesting ramifications also outside of Ferrandina, near the communes of Miglionico and Grottole. The area is reached by the Basentana state road (SS 407). One exits at the Ferrandina/Scalo junction and continues towards Ferrandina. Geomorphologically the area belongs to the Basento Valley. This is characterized by *calanchi* (gullies), although these are actually more frequent on the hills on the opposite versant of the olive-covered hills slopes of Ferrandina. The exposure of the farmed areas is variable, although eastern exposures prevail. Terraces can be sometimes seen on especially steep slopes. The olive orchards extend over a hilly environment with highly incoherent clayish soils, and often in conditions of accentuated acclivity. This morphology can easily result in erosion and instability, as the frequency of gullies in the area bears out.

The district of Ferrandina owes its significance to the local importance of the olive-growing tradition, whose beginnings date back to the Great Greek period, although the area was initially colonized in the eighth century B.C. by the Aenotrii, who penetrated the interior of the region following river valleys. Olive trees thus strongly characterize the local landscape, especially in the Ferrandina countryside, where the orchards alternate with arables, vegetable gardens and xerophilic woods with a prevalence of deciduous thermophilic oaks. The olive-growing area mainly extends on the hill slopes overlooking the Valley of the Basento, one of the most important watercourses in Basilicata. Olive orchards also extend along the whole course of the Basentana road in the direction of Metaponto. Here, however, they alternate with citrus orchards, which gradually prevail as one approaches the coast. The historical value of the Ferrandina olive orchards is borne out by their high number of centenary specimens. Another important aspect is that the area boasts an autochthonous cultivar, the *Maieatica*. The use of olives in unique cuisine recipes, deeply rooted in local

Fig. 21.3 The importance of the olive orchards of Ferrandina lies in the presence of centenarian trees and an autochthonous cultivar, the *Maieatica*

tradition, such as the "Ferrandina black olives", are a tangible testimony of the intimate connection between olive-growing and the local culture. According to local lore, oven-baked olives were part of the rations of Greek and Roman soldiers. A few kilometers northwest of the town of Ferrandina, on the ridge of a hill, is the castle of Uggiano (Obelanum), which dominates a vast landscape extending between the Basento valley and the Vella and Salandrella rivers. This architectural complex is now reduced to a few ruins, but it originally extended over quite a large surface. Around its walls was an urban settlement of which only scarce vestiges remain. The castle is mentioned as early as the Lombard period in connection with the division of southern Italy between Radelchis and Siconulf in 845. It was expanded during the second Byzantine colonization and conquered by Robert Guiscard in 1066. It reached the peak of its splendor with its renovation under the Angevines, completed in 1350. Today around the ruins of the castle are fields with sparse olive trees, also used for grazing, which are a fascinating aspect of the local landscape.

The olive-growing district shows a good degree of integrity. Because of the especially high incoherence of the geo-pedological substratum of the area, one of its main vulnerabilities is the high instability of its versants, where erosion forms gullies (*calanchi*) and causes numerous landslides. In 1960, a landslide entirely destroyed 100-hectares of olive orchard at Castelluccio. The abandonment of the countryside and consequent interruption of normal farming practices are another major risk factor for the terraced olive-growing district of Ferrandina. Physical aspects aside, other vulnerabilities are connected to the political management of the olive-growing sector. The low competitiveness of the local olive production compared to that of

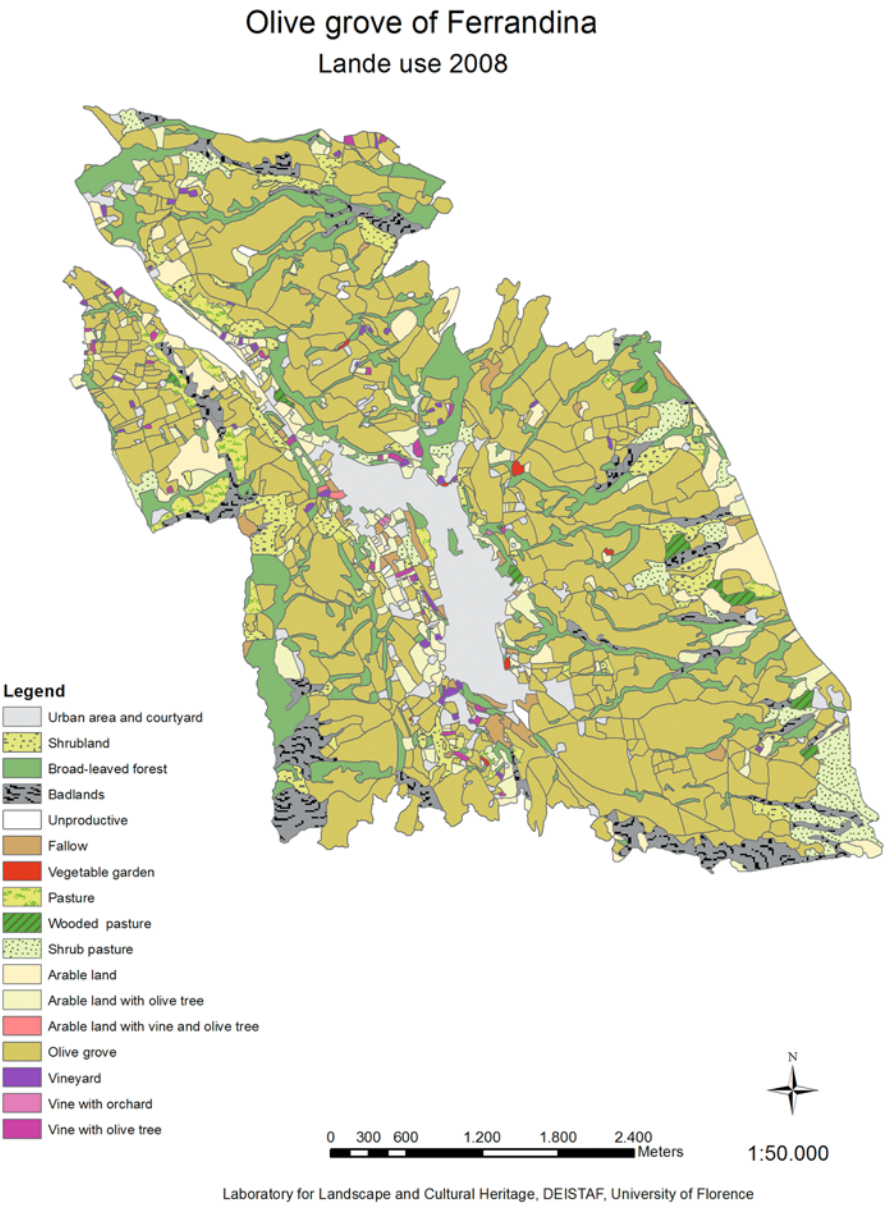

Fig. 21.4 The district of Ferrandina owes its significanceto the importance of the olive-growing tradition, whose beginnings date back to the Great Greek period, although the area was initially colonized in the eighth century B.C. Therefore, this historical landscape is almost 3,000 years old. Currently olive orchards holds 52 % of the territory and the landscape shows a good degree of integrity. The landscape mosaic has a reduced degree of fragmentation, since 70 % of the area is dominated by two categories of land use, namely, olive groves and woodlands

neighboring regions; excessive fragmentation of property; a scarcity of specialized labor; the lack of an organic development plan; the lack of a Protected Origin Denomination brand (even if Ferrandina Olives are a Slow Food Presidium and they are recognized as a Traditional Food Product by the Ministry for Agricultural, Alimentary and Forest Politics): all these factors can pose a threat to the survival of this historical cultivation in the Ferrandina countryside. Another element of vulnerability is a trend to intensification of production that could compromise local landscape values (Figs. 21.3, 21.4).

Land use 2008	Surface (ha)	Surface (%)
Urban area and courtyard	166.68	7.53
Shrubland	88.65	4.00
Broad-leaved forest	298.74	13.49
Badland (*calanco*)	127.95	5.78
Unproductive	3.87	0.17
Fallow	27.88	1.26
Vegetable garden	2.36	0.11
Pasture	40.95	1.85
Wooded pasture	12.78	0.58
Shrub pasture	74.08	3.35
Arable land	101.91	4.60
Arable land with olive tree	92.18	4.16
Arable land with vine and olive tree	0.99	0.04
Olive grove	1,156.55	52.23
Vineyard	10.42	0.47
Vine with orchard	0.59	0.03
Vine with olive tree	7.70	0.35
Total	*2,214.27*	*100.00*

Evaluating indices of landscape	
Number of land uses	17
Number of patches	1,211
Total surface area (ha)	2,214.27
Average surface area of patches (ha)	1.83
Average surface area of arable land patches (ha)	1.67
Average surface area of pasturepatches (ha)	2.61
Average surface area of forest patches (ha)	1.04
Hill's diversity number	1.24
Class of landscape integrity (I–VI)	IV

21.5 Vineyards of Aglianico in the Vulture (40° 55′ 00″ N; 15° 40′ 00″ E)

This vineyard area extends over about 1,500 ha on the foothills of the Vulture, with north-east-south exposures at lower altitudes. Here we will focus on the Aglianico del Vulture vineyards in the Vulture area (between Melfi and Atella), which are as a rule

privately owned. The wine-growing area of Aglianico del Vulture wine is actually vaster, extending outward from Vulture to encompass neighboring districts to the south and southeast. The area falls within the municipalities of Rionero in Vulture, Barile, Rapolla, Melfi, Ginestra, Ripacandida, Atella, Maschito, Banzi, Genzano, Forenza, Acerenza, Venosa, Lavello, and Palazzo San Gervasio. It can be reached from the Bari-Napoli highway by taking the Candela exit and driving in the direction of Potenza. It comes into view a few km after the Melfi exit and extends along the road all the way to Rionero as one drives towards the Monticchio lakes. The vineyards mainly grow at altitudes between 200 and 700 m a.s.l. on the clayish tuffaceous soils of pyroclastic origin of the Vulture volcano.

The area owes its significance not only to the high aesthetic value of its vineyards—which harmoniously fit into an especially remarkable landscape mosaic, to be included in the future Vulture Regional Park—but especially to the fact that the Vulture is the historical district of Aglianico wine in Basilicata. The historical character of local viticulture is a strong added value for the vineyards of the Vulture area. Wine-growing in the area goes all the way back to the seventh or sixth century B.C. The local vine may derive its name from "Ellenico", which evolved into "Aglianico" in the sixteenth century, when the Kingdom of Naples was under the rule of the Aragonese. Other scholars believe, on the basis of careful reading of the classics, that the point of departure was Gauranum, one of the types of Falernum, mentioned by Pliny and Atheneus. The name Aglianico is derived, according to these scholars, from the corruption of the ancient names Gauranico or Giurano, which turned into Glinico or Glianica, as the vine is still called in many Lucanian and Irpinian villages. In any case, a crucial impulse toward the spread of viticulture in the area came from the first Greek colonies, when wine became an object of trade between peoples. One of the main strengths of Aglianico del Vulture wine is its high quality. It is appreciated worldwide, has obtained a DOC (Controlled Origin Denomination), and will soon be granted a DOCG (Controlled and Guaranteed Origin Denomination) as well. From a landscape point of view, the vineyards form small patches in a heterogeneous landscape of chestnut groves, woods mostly of Turkish oaks, reforested areas and arables in the highest zones of the Vulture area; olive orchards, arables, and patches of xerophilic woods of deciduous oaks on the lower slopes. In areas adjoining the Vulture district, the vineyards are fitted in a landscape dominated by arables, with sizable woods in places, mostly of *Quercus cerris.* The importance of the wine-growing culture among the people of the Vulture is reflected in a whole range of events, festivals, and initiatives promoting what is much more than a mere farming activity in the Vulture area. Viticulture is an ancient tradition that has kept renewing itself, becoming an expression of the character of the local people and a resource for the promotion and economic development of the area. Many of the vineyards are very old and have been handed down in farming families. This aspect and the presence of ancient cellars dug into the native volcanic tuff, many of which have been restored, enhance the traditional value of wine-growing in the Vulture area.

The area shows good integrity, with espalier vineyards of variable extension harmoniously alternating with olive-orchards, family vegetable gardens, and patches of

Fig. 21.5 The Vulture is the historical district of Aglianico wine in Basilicata, dating back to the seventh century B.C

xerophilic woods on the lower slopes, and bordering on chestnut groves at higher altitudes.

The most vulnerable vineyards are in the sub-mountainous area, where the lower temperatures can place a strain on the typically sub-Mediterranean local grapevine species, *Vitis vinifera*, resulting in a longer harvesting time and a consequent lower quality of the wine. Other vulnerabilities arise from the replacing of traditional methods with modern growing and planting techniques (Fig. 21.5).

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