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Necropolis of Is Pirixeddus

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Gold earring

The so-called “leech” earring was found together with other items (terracotta tableware, a scarab in steatite and glass paste necklace beads) in tomb 9 AR in the Punic necropolis of Sulky, datable between the 6th and 5th century B.C.

The earring (7.3 cm long) has a body made of tubular gold metal, in an oval shape, that narrows towards the end: it is a very simple item that compared to other leech earrings that are slightly swollen in the centre, this one has two small cones joined together for the base (figs. 1-2).



Fig. 1 - Leech earring from tomb 9AR of the necropolis in Sulky.
Municipal Archaeological Museum “F. Barreca” (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)



Fig. 2 - Leech earring from tomb 9 AR of the necropolis in Sulky.
Municipal Archaeological Museum "F. Barreca" (photo by Unicity S.p.A.)

The type of leech earring is rather common in Punic Phoenician gold jewellery, and they can be of a simple shape, or decorated with some details, such as pendants (figs. 3-4) or applications of a different type, including the ones obtained using filigree and granulation techniques (fig. 5) that are more rare among the items found in Sulky.



Fig. 3 - Drop earrings in the shape of a basket, from Tharros. National Archaeological Museum of Cagliari (from Acquaro 1984, p. 20, fig. 7).

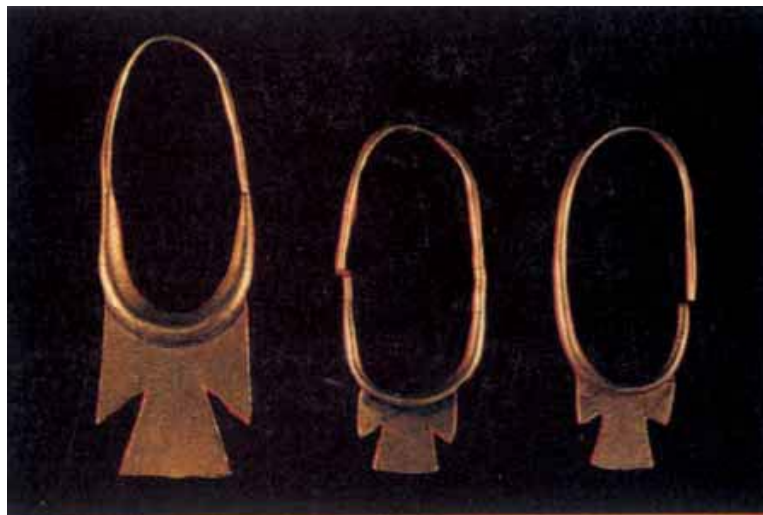


Fig. 4 - Ankh drop earrings, from Tharros. National Archaeological Museum of Cagliari (from Acquaro 1984, p.21 fig. 11).



Fig. 5 - Earring in gold filigree and granulation from Tharros. National Archaeological Museum of Cagliari (from Quattrocchi Pisano 1974, table I, fig. 1).

The development of this class of materials, with the possibilities offered by trading of metal along Mediterranean routes, is linked to an artistic tradition that was rich and successful for centuries in the Phoenician motherland. In Sardinia, the evidence from Tharros so far appears to be the largest and most important because of the quality and quantity of the jewellery as well as of the other *athyrmata* (bric-a-brac). It is hard to say whether the Sulky ring was forged in a workshop in Sulky or whether it hails from the well-known ones in Tharros, or even from Phoenicia. The doubt in question comes from the evidence of a substantial homogeneity and conservatory nature of this kind of production that makes it difficult to distinguish between items made in the East and those in the West. The hoarding of jewels that could be kept for several generations, always being used, limits the possibility of precise chronological definition, as even when found in easily datable archaeological contexts, it isn't possible to deduce the period of actual production, but only that of use.

Earrings were adornment and very probably were indications of belonging to a high social class with great economic possibilities. In addition, they are items that often have magical and religious symbols, and therefore had an important apotropaic function both in life and death, and it is probably that some were created specifically to adorn the deceased. In the case of the Sulky earring, these symbols are not present and the items is therefore a simple embellishment.



■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Cinzia Olianas

■ Bibliographic abbreviations

- ACQUARO 1984 E. ACQUARO, *Arte e cultura punica in Sardegna*, Sassari 1984.
- BARTOLONI 2007 P. BARTOLONI, *Il museo archeologico comunale "F. Barreca" di Sant'Antioco*, Sassari 2007
- PISANO 1989 G. PISANO, *I gioielli*, in Aa. Vv., *I Fenici*, Milano 1989, pp. 370-393.
- QUATTROCCHI PISANO 1974 G. QUATTROCCHI PISANO, *I gioielli fenici di Tharros nel Museo Nazionale di Cagliari*, Roma 1974.



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La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



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