



Necropolis of Is Pirixeddus

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Ceramic protome

An Egyptian-style female protome was found in the northern sector of the necropolis of *Sulky* during the digs in 1979 (17.6 x 11.1 x 6.7 cm). It was made with red, porous, impure clay and contains traces of yellow-cream engobe. It was made with a mould, then finished by hand and with a stick. The back is hollow to fit the face and has a suspension hole on the top of the head (fig. 1).



Fig. 1- Egyptian-style female protome. Municipal Archaeological Museum "F. Barreca" (photo by C. Olianas).

The figure's hair is represented by vertical stripes that descend at the front onto the sides of her neck, over the shoulders, typical of Egyptian female images (fig. 2). There are small vertical bands on top of her head that finish low on the forehead with a smooth horizontal band; another smooth band goes round the head higher up. The face is rounded with pronounced cheekbones and a round chin, a wide and strong nose, voluminous eyebrows,

almost perfectly horizontal with the outside corner downwards and slanted eyes. Small mouth and full lips. Dimples in the upper lip and chin were made with a stick. The description also perfectly matches six examples found in Motya in 1964, whose substantial identity is clear in the details that characterise it (figs. 3-4).



Fig. 2 - Egyptian fresco depicting the goddess Isis (from http://www.strie.it/femm_Iside.html)



Figs. 3-4 - Two specimens of female protome found in Motya. Whitaker Archaeological Museum of Motya (from Moscati 1990, p. 124)

The Sulcis protome can be compared to others in Sardinia and Carthage. In Sardinia, two coming from Tharros seems to have been created using the same matrix, or identical matrices, with an identical model at their origin (fig. 5). Other identical protomes were found in Carthage.

Regarding chronology of the Sulky protome, it was found with Punic material from the second half of the 6th century B.C.; Motya examples can be attributed to the end of the 6th century B.C., found in the tophets and not in the necropolises such as that of Sulky; the Carthage examples are thought to be dated between the 7th and 6th century B.C. There are therefore type, chronological, iconographic and technical coincidences that are common to all protomes, which do not seem to have been produced locally, but may come from the Carthage workshops.



Fig. 5 - Female protome from Tharros. National Archaeological Museum of Cagliari (from Ciasca 1988, p. 3639).



■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Cinzia Olianas

■ Bibliographic abbreviations

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- MOSCATI 1988 S. MOSCATI, *Le officine di Sulcis*, Roma 1988.
- PICARD 1965-1966 C. G. PICARD, *Sacra Punica. Étude sur le masques et rasoirs de Carthage = Kartago 13*, 1965-1966, pp. 1-116.
- TARAMELLI 1918 A. TARAMELLI, *Maschere fittili apotropaiche della necropoli punica di Tharros ed altra, pure apotropaica, dalla necropoli di S. Sperate = Nsc*, Roma 1918, pp. 145-150.

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