



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

Castle of Monreale

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Bowl with blue monochrome decoration (late fourteenth-early fifteenth century)

Among the numerous ceramic finds recovered in 1992 during archaeological investigations in the so-called "butto" (= dump) of the castle of Monreale, there was also a hemispherical earthenware bowl decorated in cobalt blue, imported from Paterna (a Spanish town located in the Valencian region).

The artefact is characterised by a thin brim, a wall with a slightly accentuated belly, the bottom almost flat inside, but umbilical outside and resting on a slightly flared ring-shaped foot (fig. 1).



Fig. 1 – Bowl with monochrome blue decoration from the castle of Monreale (photo by R.A.S.).

The pattern which decorates it consists of eight rays which start from the slightly hollow centre and end, alternately, with a palm or with a deltoid filled by two groups of vertical parallel lines.

On the bottom, two concentric circles intersect the rays at the base of the palms and deltoids.

Two parallel horizontal lines run beneath the rim. The outside of the bowl is glazed but not decorated.

Blue decorated majolica makes its appearance during the first half of the fourteenth century and goes on up to the sixteenth century and beyond (fig. 2). It was introduced to Europe by the Arabs and its main production centre is Paterna.

The most frequent shapes are hemispherical bowls, but also dishes, jars, candlesticks, bowls and basins (figs. 3-4). The oldest pieces have a not very elaborate decoration consisting of palms and foliage.

After having obtained the so-called "bisque" (that is, the ceramic body without any coating) by a first firing in a furnace, the pots were allowed to dry. Subsequently, the surface of the article was covered with a stanniferous glazing and, after it had dried properly, it could be decorated with the cobalt blue which stood out extraordinarily on the white backgrounds of the majolica.



Fig. 2 - Example of bowl with cobalt blue decoration, from Paterna (from RAVANELLI GUIDOTTI 1992, fig. 33, p. 53).



Fig. 3 - Example of bowl with cobalt blue decoration, from Manises (from RAVANELLI GUIDOTTI 1992, fig. 35, p. 54).



Fig. 4 - Example of jug with cobalt blue decoration, from Manises (from RAVANELLI GUIDOTTI 1992, fig. 34, p. 53).



■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Maria Grazia Arru.

Preliminary research by Dr. Valeria Paretta and Dr. Daniele Corda.

■ Bibliography

CARRADA 2002 = F. CARRADA, *Ceramiche dal Castello di Monreale (Sardara-Cagliari)*, in R. MARTORELLI, *Città, territorio, produzione e commerci nella Sardegna medievale. Studi in onore di Letizia Pani Ermini*, Cagliari 2002, pp. 378-417.

CARRADA 1998 = F. CARRADA, *Maioliche valenzane dal castello di Monreale (Sardara, CA)*, in *La ceramica nell'iconografia, l'iconografia nella ceramica. Rapporti tra ceramica e arte figurativa. Atti XXIX Convegno internazionale della ceramica (Albisola, 24-25 maggio 1996)*, Firenze 1998, pp. 251-258.

WHITEHOUSE 1997 = D. WHITEHOUSE, s.v. *Maiolica*, in *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Medievale*, 8, Roma 1997, pp. 140-143.

RAVANELLI GUIDOTTI 1992 = C. RAVANELLI GUIDOTTI, *Mediterraneum. Ceramica spagnola in Italia tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, Viterbo 1992.





UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



UNIONE EUROPEA

Progetto cofinanziato dall'Unione Europea
Programma Operativo FESR 2007-2013

FESR - Fondo Europeo di Sviluppo Regionale - Asse I, Linea di Attività 1.2.3.a