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REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

Castle of Monreale

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Cork tray

During the archaeological investigations carried out in the delta room within the keep, a large cork tray was found, probably used as a serving platter for meats and game for the lords of the castle's table (fig. 1).



Fig. 1 - Cork tray from the castle of Monreale (photo by G. Ucheddu).

Cork has been used since ancient times to make closing plugs for amphorae (fig. 2), containers, signalling floats in ports and as insulation for the roofs of houses.

In Sardinia, the first evidence concerning the use of cork dates back to the Nuraghic period: fragments of used cork containers, presumably used to store weapons and other items, have been found in Nuraghe Losa Abbasanta and in Nuraghe Santu Antine of Torralba.

Fragments of cork relating to footwear have been found instead in the Carthaginian necropolis of *Tharros*.



Fig. 2 - Cork of an amphora recovered at the site of the Navi antiche of Pisa, San Rossore (from http://www.cirte.eu/materiale_millenario.php).

During Roman times, caps for ceramic containers, floats for fishing gear and feminine footwear were produced with cork.

From the medieval age onwards, cork has been used mainly in crafts related to agricultural activities, in order to produce containers of various shapes and dimensions, like the characteristic trays for roasts, stools, containers for making cheese, containers for measuring cereals, apiaries (figs. 3-4-5-6).



Fig. 3 - A cork pail, Gavoi (from <http://www.sardegna.digitallibrary.it/index.php?xsl=626&s=17&v=9&c=4461&id=8192>).



Fig. 4 - A cork apiary, Desulo (from <http://www.sardegnaigitallibrary.it/index.php?xsl=626&s=17&v=9&c=4461&id=200340>).



Fig. 5 - Transporting cork, postcard (from <http://www.sardegнадigitallibrary.it/index.php?xsl=626&s=17&v=9&c=4461&id=130855>).



Fig. 6 - The room dedicated to cork manufacturing in the Museum Galluras, Luras. (OT) (from <http://www.galluR.A.S..it/it/lavorazione-del-sughero>).

A *unicum* dating from the early medieval Age is represented by a bronze mirror kept in a cork case fitted with a sliding cover and decorated with a silver thread pattern, from *Cornus* (fig. 7).



Fig. 7 - Bronze mirror in a cork case from *Cornus* (photo by R.A.S.).

■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Maria Grazia Arru.

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

■ Bibliography

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La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



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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