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REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
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Castle of Monreale

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Fragment of a bowl from the "Ave Maria series"

During the archaeological investigations carried out in 1992 in the so-called "butto" (dump) of the castle of Monreale, a fragment of a hemispherical bowl in Valencian majolica, decorated in blue and lustre, attributable to the so-called "Ave Maria series" was found together with numerous other pottery artefacts (fig. 1).



Fig. 1 - Fragment of a bowl with the letters "VE" from the castle of Monreale (photo by Unicity).

This type of decoration had a free central subject, the background adorned with rings enclosing circled discs and the invocation "*Ave Maria gratia plena*" placed in the peripheral portion of the open forms (bowls, basins, dishes; figs. 2-3-4).



Fig. 2 - Example of a dish from the "Ave Maria series", Manises (from RAVANELLI GUIDOTTI 1992, photo 37, p. 68, sheet 37).

The epigraphic part always used Gothic letters painted in blue, whilst metallic lustre was used for the background which, sometimes, could have a warmer tone. In fact, to save on production costs, the amount of copperoxide was increased while the silver content was lowered.

The fragment of bowl found in Monreale has the decorative motif of the branch with three stems ending in plant elements in blue and lustre on the inner surface of its centre. A blue line runs above it, beyond which "VE", may be read, the only two remaining letters of the invocation to the Virgin Mary.

The outer surface is decorated with dots, swirls, asterisks. Because of its morphological and decorative type, the artefact can be dated to the first half of the fifteenth century and is attributed to the ceramic workshops of Manises (a Spanish town located a few kilometres from Valencia).



Fig. 3 - Example of a basin from the "Ave Maria series", Manises

(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manises,_bacile_con_cerbiatto_e_iscrizione_ave_maria_gratia_plena,_1400-1450_ca..JPG).

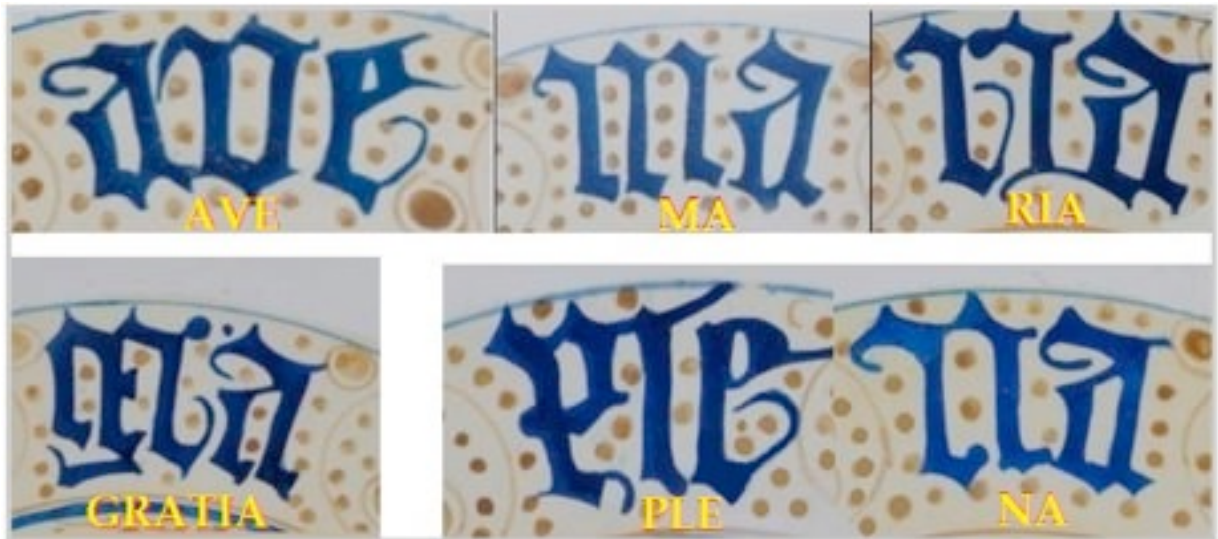


Fig. 4 - The invocation formula "*ave maria gratia plena*". The word "gratia" is abbreviated with a "link", i.e. by tying or absorbing one or more letters in order to save space. (reconstruction by M. G. Arru, from RAVANELLI GUIDOTTI 1992, photo 37, p. 68, sheet 37).

■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Maria Grazia Arru.

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■ Bibliography

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