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REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
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Castle of Monreale

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Vitreous decorated fragment

Inside the castle of Monreale, in the *delta* room, a particularly interesting vitreous fragment was found during the archaeological investigations of 2000 in the waste layers consisting of soil and fragments of various materials (fig. 1).

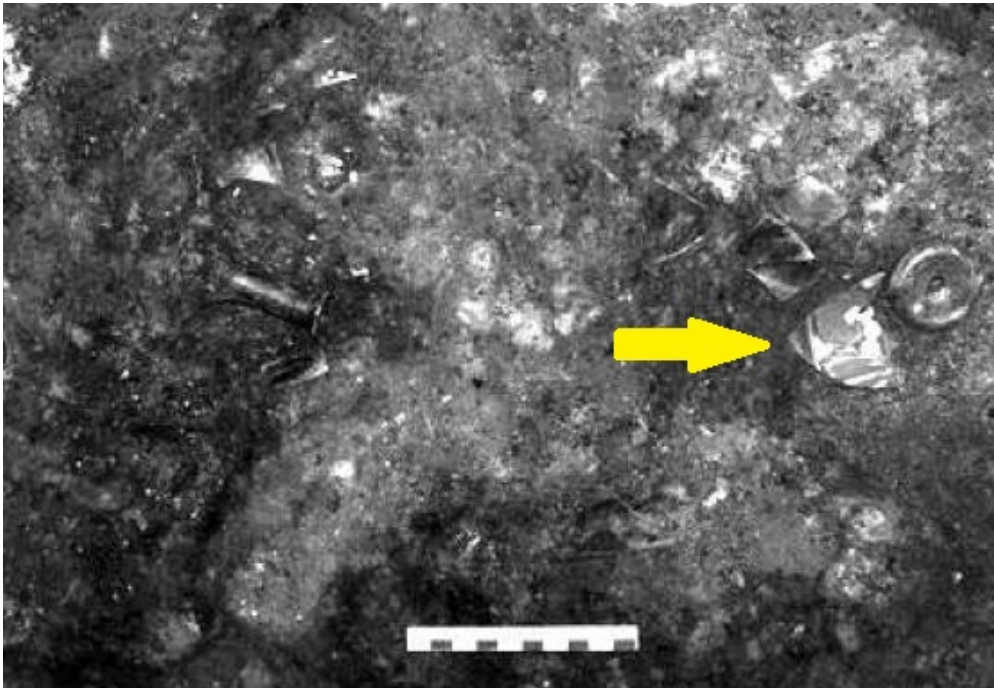


Fig. 1 - The keep of the castle of Monreale. *Delta* room: the excavation area in which the vitreous decorated fragment was found (from STASOLLA 2010, fig. 17, p. 51).

The small piece (62 mm in length by 28 mm in height) is made of thin and transparent glass (1.2 mm), decorated with coloured enamels on both sides.

One of the motifs consists of the shield with four red poles in a field of gold, flanked by three-lobed floral elements coloured in yellow and blue. To the left of the coat of arms there is a blue background with six-pointed gold stars, symbolising a starry sky (fig. 2).

The finding may be included in the types of glasses of Venetian production made of decorated glass with polychrome enamel, dated between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

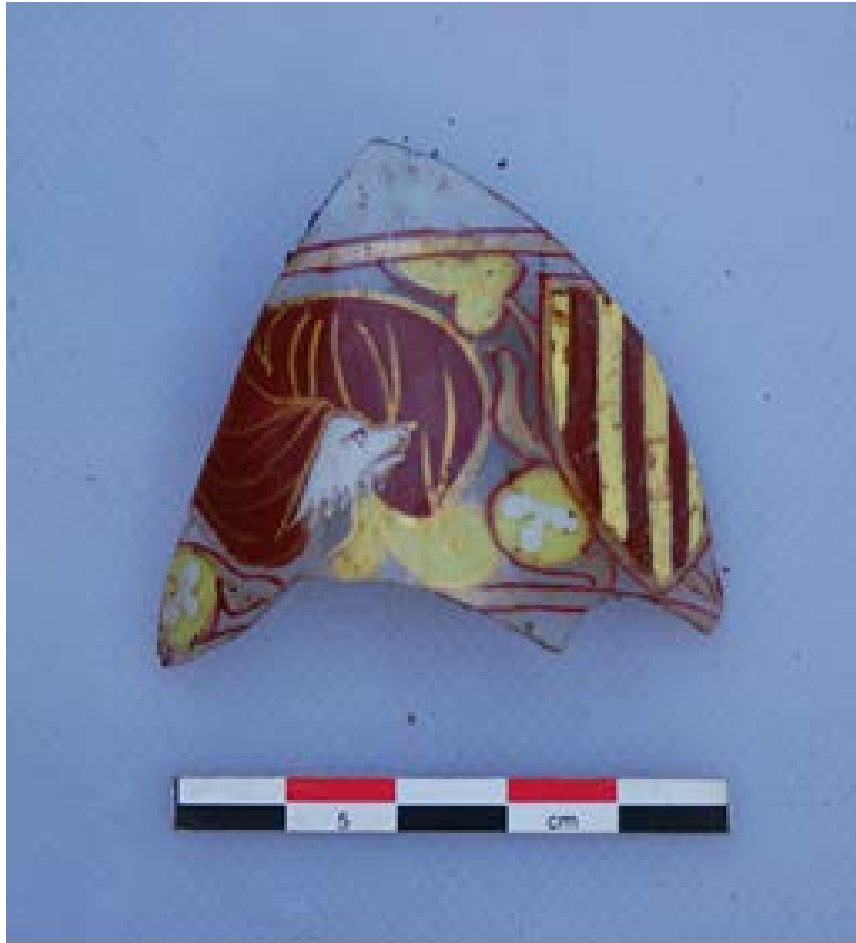


Fig. 2 - Vitreous fragment from the castle of Monreale (photo from STASOLLA 2010, fig. 18, p. 51).

Due to the limited size of the fragment, only some considerations are possible concerning the heraldic pattern partially preserved in the decoration: the shield with the four red poles was the coat of arms of the Counts of Barcelona and, later, of the Crown of Aragon (fig. 3); in a composite form, during the second half of the thirteenth century, it also became part of the emblem of the Giudicato of Arborea.





Fig. 3 - The coat of arms of the Crown of Aragon (from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aragon_Arms.svg).

This vitreous fragment, therefore, could be proof of the presence in Monreale of members of the family of the Judges of Arborea or of a member of the House of Catalonia and Aragon, who not only were the only ones allowed to use artefacts with the Crown coat of arms, but who also had the economic means to commission a luxury product such as these glasses, personalised with the desired decoration.



Fig. 4 - Coat of arms of the Giudicato of Arborea: an uprooted Arborea tree and the poles of Aragon (from http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/it/a/af/Stemma_giudicato_di_arborea.jpg).

■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Maria Grazia Arru.

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■ Bibliography

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