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REGIONE AUTÓNOMA DE SARDIGNA
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Port and coastal towers of Arbatax

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Ingots from the wreck of Capo Bellavista

In Arbatax in 1954, in the waters in front of Capo Bellavista, they found the wreck of a Roman ship. They recovered 32 tin ingots weighing an overall 119.1 kg, plus iron and copper¹.

Unfortunately, most of the material found was lost and we now only have 6 tin ingots for a total of 28.3 kg, currently on display in the Museum A. Sanna of Sassari (fig. 1). Because of their shape they are considered similar to those of *Port Vendres* (*Rochelongues*, France), which were part of a cargo shipwrecked around the mid I century A.D. and were manufactured with very pure tin (figs. 2-4). Scholars feel that both the ingots of *Port Vendres* and those of Capo Bellavista came from Spain.

The fact that tin ingots² have not been found very often is due to the fact that it is not found in a metal form in nature; it is mainly obtained from cassiterite (a mineral it is present in as an oxide) and stannite. In ancient times, the only form of this element definitely known of was cassiterite.

In Sardinia, tin ingots have been found in various archaeological contexts, both prehistoric and historic³.

¹ Still in 1954, the Tax Police seized, during several operations, 584 kg of copper and 208 kg of tin which probably came from the same site. It is likely that when it sank the ship was transporting several tons of metal most of which was removed in secret in modern times.

² Tin is one of the less common metals present on the earth's crust; it is malleable, does not easily oxidise when exposed to air and resists corrosion.

³ Like in the wreck of *Domu de S'orku* (Arbus, Iron Age).



Fig. 1 - Ingots shown in "A. Sanna Museum" of Sassari (photo bt M. G. Arru)

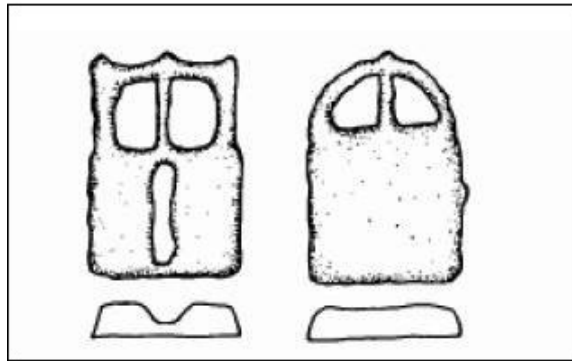


Fig. 2 - Drawing of the Roman Period ingots from the Port Vendres wreck (from PENHALLURICK 1986).

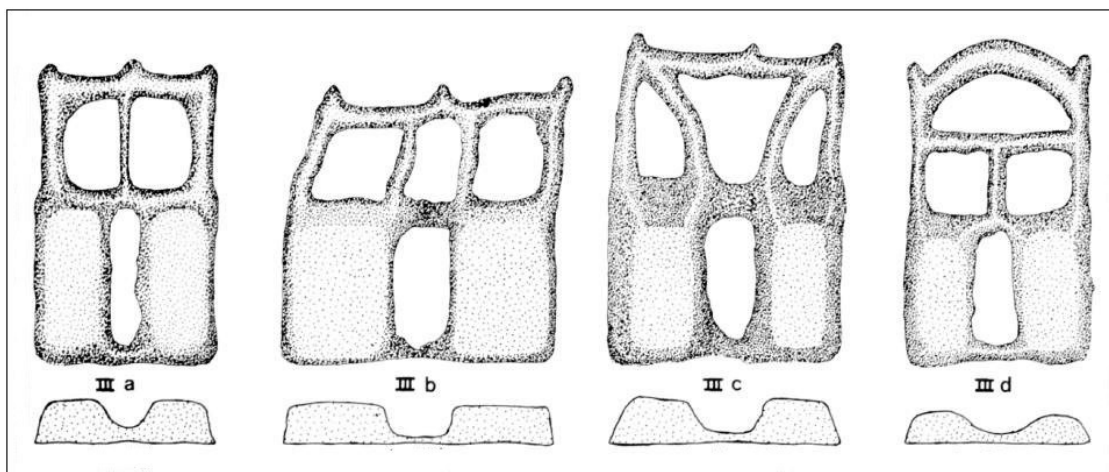


Fig. 3 - Drawing of tin ingots recovered from the wreckage of Port Vendres II (from COLLS ET ALII 1975, p. 64, fig. 2).

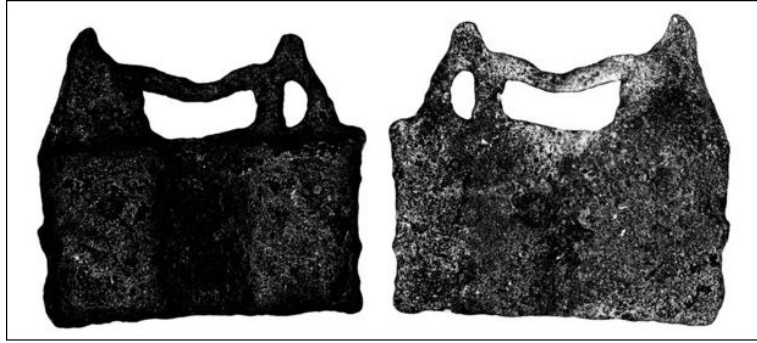


Fig. 4 - Drawing of tin ingots recovered from the wreckage of Port Vendres II
(from COLLS ET ALII 1975, p. 14, fig. 5).



■ Credits

Deepening card edited by Dr. Maria Grazia Arru

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La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



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