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Archeological area of Sant'Eulalia

Patrimonio culturale
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■ Location of site

The church, the museum of Sant'Eulalia and the underlying archaeological area are in the historical district of Marina, overlooking the harbour. Going under the arcades of via Roma, you turn into the perpendicular via Concezione. The belltower rises high between the houses. The entrance to the archaeological area is in via del Collegio, continuation of the previous one.

■ History of the Studies and Digs

The history of the studies of the Sant'Eulalia archaeological area is patchy. It can be traced back first to the XVII century, then the sources cease for a long time until the archaeological finds at the end of the XX century. What seems unusual is the silence of the scholar Giovanni Francesco Fara in the XVI century, and that of the Canon Giovanni Spano, in the description he made of the Marina district in the mid XIX century; proof that the remains of the ancient quarter were still hidden and unknown.

The Sant'Eulalia parish archives still keep a 1612 accounts register which noted daily activities and expenses on works to construct the choir. The document is of considerable interest for the news reporting that they found an ancient well and raised its ring for a height of about six metres, during that restoration¹. That date was substantiated by its discovery in 1990 (fig. 1); when they found two different masonry techniques relevant to the life stages of the well.

¹ MUREDDU 2002b, p. 283.



Fig. 1 - The first discovery: well ring and XVII century wall structures beyond the sacristy (photo by AFS).

The interest for the church and its building in medieval times can be found in some publications preceding the great underlying discoveries: in the 60s of last century, Maria Freddi developed a reading of the ancient church's structures starting from the recovery of some archive documents where it was first mentioned². The work of 2000 by Maria Bonaria Urban highlighted the dedication to the martyr of Merida³, patron saint of Barcelona from the XIII century, who in Cagliari perhaps replaced the primitive dedication to Santa Maria della Vittoria dei Catalani, wanted by the Aragonese king after the conquest⁴. Finding the underground archaeological area was as lucky as it was surprising. In 1990, in order to create a Treasury-Museum to make the Parish heritage accessible, works were started to renovate the sacristy premises which were in a poor condition. The damp that had formed in walls indicated the presence of a well and led to the extraordinary finds hidden under the floor. The first structures to surface were the shaft of the well raised in

² FREDDI 1966, pp. 245-251.

³ URBAN 2000, pp. 193-194.

⁴ URBAN 1997, p. 130.

the XVII century (fig. 1), with its stone ring and a coeval arch placed over the late antiquity structures⁵. When the water supply was identified, the search started and unexpectedly lasted for almost twenty years, though split into several sectors. This was both because of the size of the area, and to undertake different actions such as consolidating the foundations of the church above, restoration and creating the museum. The archaeological surveys were started in 1999 and continued without interruption until 2002. They were the result of synergistic collaboration between the Superintendency for Archaeological Heritage of the Provinces of Cagliari and Oristano, in the person of Donatella Mureddu, and the Chairs of Christian and Medieval Archaeology of the University of Cagliari, coordinated by Rossana Martorelli, in which the Parish took part (of which Don Mario Cugusi was parish priest). The study of the archaeological sites required, for its diversity, creation of a multidisciplinary team which, besides archaeologists, involved other professional figures: to study human bone remains, the researchers of Anthropological Sciences of Cagliari University; to study the fauna, those from the animal osteology Department of Sassari University; to analyze the clays, the CNR petrographic analysis section of the Cagliari Engineering Faculty⁶. The entire archaeological area extends for 900 m² and most was surveyed during this long period of intervention: a multi-layered site came to light, whose life continued uninterrupted for a period of between the VI century B.C and the VIII A.D. and started again from the XIV with the erection of the Church in the Modern Age. The context revealed a part of the history of ancient Karales, hitherto unknown, in which the structures of a *thesaurus* referable to the Punic-Roman sanctuary area, delimited by a *temenos*, emerged; and the district of an ancient town with an imposing paved road (fig. 2), some residential sectors with different construction stages, a monumental portico colonnade and a deep bottle-shaped cistern.

⁵ CUGUSI 2002a, p. 15; MUREDDU 2002b, p. 283.

⁶ MARTORELLI 2002a, pp. 19-21; MUREDDU 2002b, p. 283 e note 5; MUREDDU 2003, p. 731 and notes 19-20.



Fig. 2 - Paved road and some portions of masonry revealing the different construction stages (photo by AFS).

The first data emerging from the 1990 and 1999 archaeological surveys was presented in an event-convention dedicated to it in 2000 and was then merged into a monograph by R. Martorelli and D. Mureddu, *Cagliari, le radici di Marina*, in 2002⁷. That same year the authors published an article in the the XXIX volume of the magazine *Archeologia Medievale*, on the results arising from a selection of items found on the house with threshold, overlooking the paved road⁸.

The archaeological dig and scientific research carried out in the Sant'Eulalia area brought to light a part of ancient *Karales* of which, along a path winding through the centuries, it has been able to delineate the story, urban evolutions, commercial traffic, socio-economic

⁷ MARTORELLI, MUREDDU 2002a.

⁸ MARTORELLI, MUREDDU 2002b, pp. 283-240.

contacts with both the outside world and the island itself. Research results were presented in a series of scientific contributions as of 2003.

In 2003, a contribution by R. Martorelli, D. Mureddu, F. Pinna and A.L. Sanna was published in the *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana*. It presented an overview of the archaeological context, the church, the Marina district and its history: themes presented in a conference held in the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology in February 2001⁹. Of the same period and similar, the article by the archaeologists, S. Cisci and S. Sangiorgi published in the two-monthly Magazine *I Beni Culturali. Tutela, valorizzazione, attività culturali, architettura contemporanea e bioarchitettura* which is a clear examination of the complex work stages performed in the vast archaeological area¹⁰. Then, with reference to the surveys in this area, F. Pinna deals with the study of the burials found in the crypt, highlighting the daily, ethnic, socio-economic and cultural aspects (*Il corredo funerario nella Sardegna post-medievale: la cripta della chiesa di S. Eulalia a Cagliari*)¹¹. That same year, a short but important note on what had emerged in the site was entered in the archaeological guide to Cagliari, by A. M. Colavitti and C. Tronchetti¹².

The following year, 2004, in the *Quaderni del Dipartimento di Scienze Archeologiche e Storico-artistiche "Aristeo"*, R. Martorelli and D. Mureddu added a new element to the framework of knowledge on the religious poles in the Marina district: Sant'Eulalia and Santo Sepolcro¹³.

In the volume published in 2005 of the Series *Late Roman Coarse Ware, Cooking Ware and Amphorae in the Mediterranean: Archaeology and Archaeometry* the first systematic works appeared on the material culture returned by the site: it is a study of finds referred to pottery decorated with Polite lines and those with fire, dealt with respectively by F.

⁹ MARTORELLI et al. 2003, pp. 365-408.

¹⁰ CISCI, SANGIORGI 2003, pp. 7-11.

¹¹ PINNA 2003b, pp. 323-335.

¹² COLAVITTI, TRONCHETTI 2003, p. 35-38.

¹³ MARTORELLI, MUREDDU 2004, pp. 317-318.

Pinna¹⁴ and S. Sangiorgi¹⁵. The latter still deal with the same pottery classes in collaboration with S. Cara, in a work contained in the XXII volume *dei Quaderni della Soprintendenza Archeologica per le Province di Cagliari e Oristano*, which presents the results of archaeometric (mineralogical and petrographic) surveys on a selection of materials from the 1999-2002 dig campaigns¹⁶. Two years later, publication of the Proceedings of the IX National Congress of Christian Archaeology was enriched by a contribution by S. Sangiorgi, related to another pottery class: oil lamps. Those productions declare an African origin, but the different workmanship of some examples and finding some matrices prove local production. Moreover, they include more decorative patterns such as plants, geometrical patterns, Christian symbols and a large quantity of scenes referable to the Old and New Testaments¹⁷ (fig. 3).

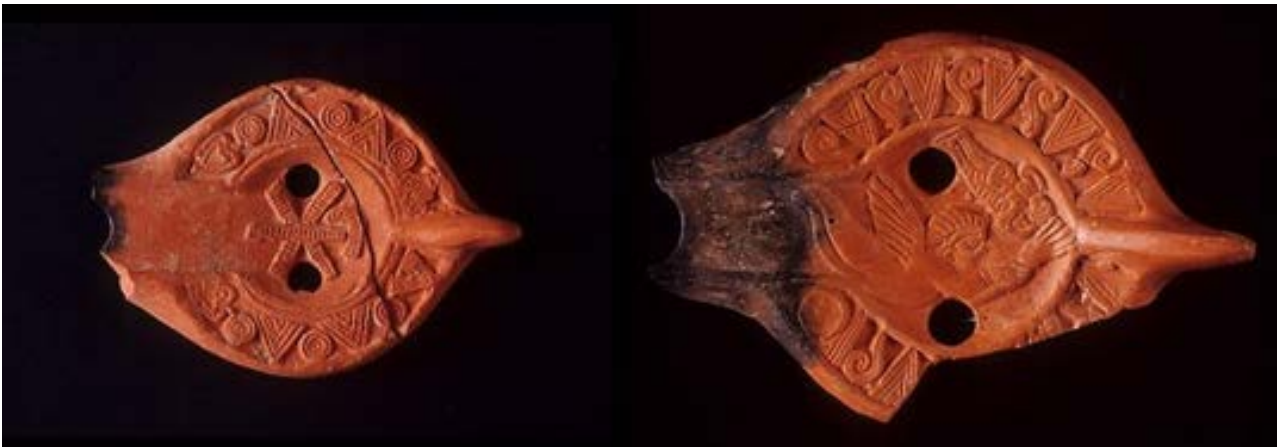


Fig. 3 - Two examples of decorated oil lamps: the first holds a Christogram, the second a cupid (photo by AFS).

A singular find emerged from the 2001 digs. It only has comparisons in five island cases of Christian burials, similar to Sant'Eulalia: a plaster fragment with the painted inscription, bearing the letters *arch*. The epigraphical text can be interpreted in several ways, but the

¹⁴ PINNA 2005, pp. 267-284.

¹⁵ SANGIORGI 2005, pp. 255-266.

¹⁶ CARA, SANGIORGI 2005-2006, pp. 19-45.

¹⁷ SANGIORGI 2007, pp. 1369-1386.

most accredited hypothesis is the integration in *archiepiscopus*, in reference to the diocese of *Karales* in 314 and to its level as metropolitan bishop in 484. Study of the find was entrusted to L. Mura who presented his contribution during the I Study Convention held in Sant'Antioco in 2007 and published the following year¹⁸.

The 2007 dig activities focused on the area under the church's central nave, continuing the dig, started years before, of the crypt used as a cemetery built between the end of the XVII and start of the XVIII century. Burials brought to light were arranged in a disorderly way and were of two types: in wooden coffin and in a pit in the ground. Preliminary news of this new dig was given in the XI volume of the Magazine *Archeologia Postmedievale*¹⁹.

The volume, published in 2009, of the Magazine *Studi Sardi* holds a re-reading of the late antiquity and early Middle Ages contexts in the light of Urban Archaeology, retracing the steps of that discipline introduced in Cagliari in the 70s of the XX century. The areas of survey within the urban fabric reported by the author Rossana Martorelli, include the S. Eulalia site related to urban changes in the Sardinia capital²⁰.

Knowledge of the Marina district received a new contribution from the same lecturer in 2013. She proposes a study related to what occurred in the district in the Catalan - Aragonese period, outlining an *excursus* of important moments by analyzing the literary sources of the period and archaeological documents. Within this framework outlined in *Un decennio di ricerche archeologiche nella Cagliari catalano-aragonese* you can find an identification proposal through recognition of certain indicators of the first map of the structure erected in the XIV century²¹. A contribution has now gone to press on the urban changes in the Sardinia capital between the VIII and XI centuries, proposed by R. Martorelli and D. Mureddu during the convention *Settecento-Millecento d.C.: storia, archeologia e arte nei 'secoli bui' del Mediterraneo. Dalle fonti scritte, archeologiche ed artistiche alla ricostruzione della vicenda storica: la Sardegna laboratorio di esperienze culturali*. It examines the Cagliari remains showing the move of the town's early Middle Ages core:

¹⁸ MURA 2008, pp. 279-283.

¹⁹ CISCI, TATTI 2007, pp. 357-358.

²⁰ MARTORELLI 2009, pp. 213-238.

²¹ MARTORELLI 2013, pp. 243-268.

with regard to the Marina district (fig. 4), the various finds have highlighted the stages related to abandon of the area which probably occurred after the end of the VII century B.C. In that stage, the site became progressively covered by earth and the layers deposited taken an irregular shape until they form a hill which definitely covered the area²².



Fig. 4 - View of the Marina district, showing the belltower of Sant'Eulalia (photo by AFS).

Actions performed during this ample period of time have been enclosed in a larger project which gave huge space to teaching activities with the participation of young students of archaeology who took part in all the different digs in large numbers. Turning the area into a museum has been valorized in full within the program. It enabled this archaeological complex to be returned to and used by the community, guaranteeing the survival of a collective memory of centuries of buried history.

²² MARTORELLI, MUREDDU 2013, pp. 113-132.

■ Credits

Coordination Prof. Rossana Martorelli

Deepening card edited by Dr. Claudia Cocco and Dr. Francesca Collu

■ Bibliographic abbreviations

ACSR	Archivio Centrale dello Stato di Roma.
AFS	Archivio Fotografico della Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici per le province di Cagliari e Oristano.
ADAM 1989	P. J. ADAM, <i>L'arte di costruire presso i romani. Materiali e tecniche</i> , Milano 1989.
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