



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA  
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

# Archeological area of Sant'Eulalia

Patrimonio culturale  
**SARDEGNA** Virtual Archaeology



## ■ Money boxes

Amongst the materials and layers of silt filling the bell-shaped cistern, whose mouth opens in the Opus signinum of the portico of the Sant'Eulalia late antiquity district, we found some common pottery fragments with some bronze coins oxidised on the inner surface, so abraded that the two sides could not be read so no dating was possible. (fig. 1).



**Fig. 1** - Coins oxidised on money box fragments (photo from Unicity).

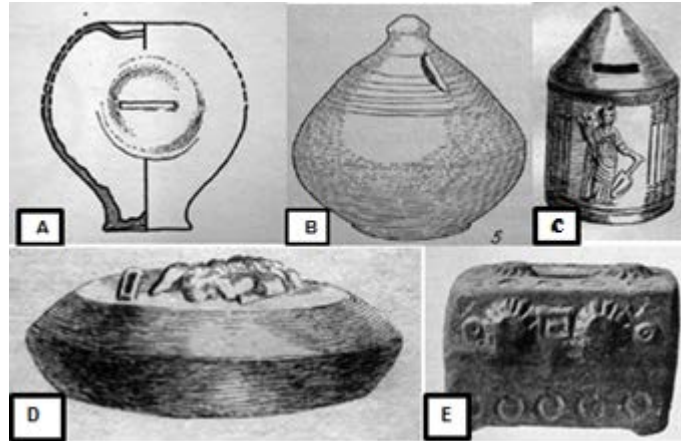
One of the interpretation hypotheses leads to reconnecting the fragments to several money boxes. This is supported by some hoards for a total of 56 coins datable between the I and V century A.D.<sup>1</sup>. In spite of the chronology, there are no Vandal coins. It does not seem by chance that those finds were in the cistern, where they could have been stored as protection against theft.

The lack of documentation so far has prevented a sure definition of the antique term used for a money box, but it is thought that the words *loculus* and *locellus* were used for them, mentioned by Giovenales (mid 1st-mid 2nd century A.D.) to indicate a mobile container against the arch (Sat. I, 89) and *aulula*, from which the comedy *Aulularia* by Plautus (mid 3rd - end 2nd century B.C.) takes its title. Based on the heterogeneity of the shape and production method (lathe or matrix), the items have been split into five categories by G. Baratta: the "glass" type (fig. 2a); the "upper grip" type (fig. 2b); the

---

<sup>1</sup> Mura 2008, p. 281, note 10.

“hut” type (fig. 2c); the “oil lamp” type (fig. 2d); the “arch” type (fig. 2e). The unusually shaped items, or ones that “recycle” containers originally used for other matters are placed in a category of their own<sup>2</sup>.



**Fig. 2** - Five distinct money box categories: A - glass-shaped; B - from above; C - bell-shaped; D - oil-lamp shaped; E - arc-shaped (from BARATTA 2012, figs. 1-5, pp. 172, 174).

The presence of similar items at Sant'Eulalia is particularly interesting not just for the intrinsic value of the item but also due to the rarity of the findings in archaeological areas, determined by their functions: money-boxes in which there is only one opening, clearly to insert coins, but without a second one to remove the coins, so they had to be broken. Similarities in the fragments and other items made with a matrix, although for a different use, make it often difficult to reconstruct the full item. Alongside some items that do not show any type of decoration, there are others characterised by a set of patterns where mainly the portrayal of divinities protectors of trade and fortune and abundance, thought to bring good luck<sup>3</sup>.

The occasion for which these items were used is uncertain: certainly with the function of collecting coins, but the limited size made them inadequate to hold truly important amounts<sup>4</sup>. Contrary to their function, most of the whole items, or ones that can be fully reconstructed (figs. 3-4) have been found without their content. The origins of the items

---

<sup>2</sup> Baratta 2012, pp. 171-177.

<sup>3</sup> Baratta 2012, p. 178.

<sup>4</sup> Baratta 2012, pp. 178-179.

cannot be generalised to allow a hypothesis about their use by different social classes, both in private and publicly, both in reference to daily life and in holy life.



**Fig. 3** - Imperial period example from the Archaeological Museum of Ptuj – Slovenia (<http://badwila.net/pottery/salvadanai/index.html>).



**Fig. 4** - Money box from a silos in the Cathedral of Sassari, 14th century. (from MARTORELLI). 2007, fig. 147, p. 85).



## ■ Credits

Coordination Prof. Rossana Martorelli

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

## ■ Bibliographic abbreviations

- BARATTA 2012                    G. BARATTA, *De brevissimis loculis patrimonium grande proferatur (Tert. cult. fem. I, 91, 19): i salvadanai*, in *SEBarc*, 10, pp.169-193.
- MARTORELLI 2007                R. MARTORELLI, *La ceramica del periodo bizantino e medievale*, in *Ceramiche. Storia, linguaggio, prospettive*, Nuoro 2007, pp. 75-87.
- MURA 2008                        L. MURA, *Un'iscrizione dipinta dall'area archeologica di Sant'Eulalia*, in F. CENERINI, P. RUGGERI (a cura di), *Epigrafia romana in Sardegna. Atti del I Convegno di Studio (Sant'Antioco, 14-15 luglio 2007)*, Roma 2008, pp. 279-283.

## ■ Periodicals and magazines

- SBEarc**                                *Sylloge Epigraphica Barcinonensis*, I, 1994 e ss.



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



**REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA**  
**REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA**

## La Sardegna cresce con l'Europa



UNIONE EUROPEA

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