



UNIONE EUROPEA



REPUBBLICA ITALIANA



REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
REGIONE AUTONOMA DELLA SARDEGNA

Archeological area of Sant'Eulalia

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ African oil lamps

There are several oil lamps spread around the entire area of Sant'Eulalia: the lamps are mostly attributable to examples in African Sigillata, especially in the forms VIII and X of the *Atlante delle forme ceramiche*¹, to which a small number of common ceramic items are added². The decorative motifs include mythological figures and scenes taken from the pagan iconographic repertory (e.g. Orpheus³, an erotes⁴) or from the Old Testament, as the examples that represent three children in the furnace in the presence of the angel and Danele among the lions⁵. An unusual scene preserved on a small fragment of disk is inspired by the New Testament, and is interpreted as the Ascension of Christ⁶ (fig. 1): there is a haloed figure, with a folded tunic, holding a cross in his left hand⁷ with expanded ends, while the opposite arm is raised and is holding a roll in his hand; bottom left there is a head of a figure no longer preserved. This figure is completely made on a matrix and is on a tiny group of lamps, in which the scene is inside an amygdala⁸.

¹ Respectively Pavolini 1981, pages 192-198; Anselmino, 1981, pages 198-203.

² Sangiorgi 2007, p. 1372.

³ Sangiorgi 2007 fig. 3, p. 1383.

⁴ Mura 2002, n. 75, pp. 134-135.

⁵ Sangiorgi 2007, p. 1373.

⁶ Sangiorgi 2007, p. 1375.

⁷ This is a cross fixed to a pole, generally used in processions.

⁸ Sangiorgi 2007, p. 1375.



Fig. 1 - Fragment of an oil lamp: the Ascension of Christ (photo from AFS)

In addition to the single figures that do not have enough attributes to allow identification, to the topics already mentioned, there are also some portraits, animal pictures⁹ (figs. 3a-b) and plant motifs¹⁰.



Fig. 2 - Lamp with fish drawing: a - the John Dory (*Zeus faber*) and b - fish with pearl design (Christological motif?), (photo by AFS).

⁹ Demuro 2002, n. 64, pages 125-126, pelican; Marongiu 2002, n. 70, pages 129-130, cockrel; n. 71, pages 131-132, horse; n. 72, pages 132-133, peacock.

¹⁰ E.g. Demuro 2002, n. 61, pages 122-123; see Coletti 2000, p. 227.



Fig. 3 - Lamps with bird drawings (a – pelican; b – cock; c – lapwing; d-e – peacock), (photo by AFS).

Some fragments decorated on the shoulder with the use of coins stand out for their type of decoration, while others are significant as they prove the presence of shapes not yet documented in Sardinia: e.g. Two reflecting jugs decorated with monogram crosses or *chrismons*, belonging to “Atlante X A1c” oil lamps (fig. 4), a shape occasionally found in Sardinia, where the decorations are similar to that of other oil lamps and sigillata¹¹

¹¹ Sangiorgi 2007, p. 1373.



Fig. 4 - Fragment of oil lamp X A1c (photo from AFS).

The *instrumentum* for lighting in the Late Antique age¹² is documented in Sardinia by a large number of oil lamps, mostly referable to African *figlinae*¹³, used in both domestic environments and in places of worship and in burials. It is generally a closed tank, typically oval in shape and made from a mould, onto which one or two *infundibula* open up, the holes for inserting oil and animal fat, that fed the flame produced by the lit wicker.¹⁴ These late items are different from the older ones in their size among parts of the oil lamp and in particular the length of the body. This morphological evolution took place from the 3rd century A.D. In central Tunisia, an area from where the custom of making oil lamps in Sigillata spread. Until the mid 4th century, production was regional but starting from this date, the two main types (form VIII and X of the Atlantis) begin to be travel further around the Mediterranean. The VIII form was no longer made from the end of the 6th century A.D.¹⁵, while the X form, which began to be produced in 400 A.D., begins to undergo a drop only in mid 7th A.D.¹⁶. The African importations were a precise type and decorative model in the island, from which a number of productions arose that were dependent on shape and decoration of the originals, such as Dressel 30 with globe decoration (4th-5th century A.D.) and

¹² The historical period of transition from the ancient world to the medieval world, between the 4th and 7th centuries A.D., is known as the Late Antique age.

¹³ The *figlina* is a workshop where various types of terracotta items were made, including tiles.

¹⁴ Martorelli 2007, p. 75.

¹⁵ Bonifay 2004, pp. 358-370.

¹⁶ Bonifay 2004, pp. 370-391.

the Sicilian oil lamps. In Sardinia, some matrixes were found that have led to the hypothesis of a local imitation of the African items



■ Credits

Coordination Prof. Rossana Martorelli

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

■ Bibliographic abbreviations

Atlante I *Atlante delle forme ceramiche, I. Ceramica fine romana nel bacino del Mediterraneo (medio e tardo impero), Supplemento dell'Enciclopedia dell'arte antica, Roma 1981.*

ANSELMINO 1981 L. ANSELMINO, *Decorazioni di tipo C²-C⁴ e D¹-D². Forme X, XI, XII*, in *Atlante I*, pp. 198-204.

ANSELMINO, PAVOLINI 1981 L. ANSELMINO, C. PAVOLINI, *Lucerne in ceramica comune dell'Africa romana (I-IV secolo d.C.)*, in *Atlante I*, pp. 184-186.

BONIFAY 2004 M. BONIFAY, *Etudes sur la céramique romaine tardive = Bar International Series, 1301, Oxford 2004.*

COLETTI 2000 A. COLETTI, *Le lucerne*, in *Cornus I.2*, pp. 223-230.

Cornus I.2 A.M. GIUNTELLA, *Cornus I.2. L'area cimiteriale orientale. I materiali = Mediterraneo tardoantico e medievale*, 13. 2, Oristano 2000.

DEMURO 2002 E. DEMURO, *Lucerne, nn. 61-64*, in MARTORELLI, MUREDDU 2002a, pp. 122-126.

- MARONGIU 2002 D. MARONGIU, *Lucerne, nn. 70-74*, in MARTORELLI, MUREDDU 2002a, pp. 129-134.
- MARTORELLI 2007 R. MARTORELLI, *La ceramica del periodo bizantino e medievale*, in *Ceramiche. Storia, linguaggio, prospettive*, Nuoro 2007, pp. 75-87.
- MARTORELLI, MUREDDU 2002a R. MARTORELLI, D. MUREDDU (a cura di), *Cagliari, le radici di Marina: dallo scavo archeologico di S. Eulalia un progetto di ricerca formazione e valorizzazione*, Cagliari 2002.
- MURA 2002 L. MURA, *Lucerne, nn. 75-77*, in MARTORELLI, MUREDDU 2002a, pp. 134-137.
- PAVOLINI 1981 C. PAVOLINI, *Decorazioni di Navigius o di altro tipo. Forme VIII e IX*, in *Atlante I*, pp. 192-198.
- SANGIORGI 2007 S. SANGIORGI, *Raffigurazioni inconsuete su lucerne africane in Sardegna. Le attestazioni dalla chiesa di S. Eulalia a Cagliari*, in R.M. BONACASA CARRA, E. VITALE (a cura di), *La cristianizzazione in Italia tra tardoantico e altomedioevo. Atti del IX Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Cristiana (Agrigento, 20-25 novembre 2004)*, II, Palermo 2007, pp. 1369-1386.



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