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REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
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Archeological area of Sant'Eulalia

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ Devotional medals

35 devotional medals¹ (figs. 1-4) found in the tombs of the larger crypt in the Sant'Eu-lalia archaeological area are personal items, often found together with rosaries, or linked to chains or sewn on fabric². The metal items show differences in shape, size and subject shown: the images show Christ and some saints such as Saint Joseph³ (fig. 1), the archangel Michael⁴, Sant'Ignatius from Loyola⁵ or it has been hypothesised that some of the figures are popes or a saint, sometimes vald, richly embellished and in a few cases *expansis manibus*, that has a small globe on his head, issuing rays of light with the inscription IHS⁶ and placed between two figures kneeling at his sides⁷.

¹ Murgia 2002, n. 106, p. 158; n. 108, fig. 80, pages 159-160; n. 112, fig. 81, pages 161-162; Nieddu 2002b, n. 107, p. 159; n. 109-111, pages 160-161; Pinna 2003b, figs. 15-16, p. 335.

² Pinna 2003b, p. 329 and note 39.

³ Murgia 2002, n. 108, fig. 80, pages 159-160; see Leonio, Fersini 1986, pages 103, figs. 32, 71, pages 119-120, 135; Sereni 1990, figs. 31-33, pages 511-512.

⁴ Leonio, Fersini 1986, pages 102,103; figs. 9, 44, pages 110-111, 124-125; Cat. Med. n. 1113, p. 166; Pinna 2003b, p. 329.

⁵ Pinna 2003b, p. 329. For the medals with similar saints in a burial context, please refer to Leonio, Fersini 1986, pages 81-82; Sereni 1990, figs. 31-33, pages 511-512.

⁶ Nieddu 2002a, p. 158; n. 111, p. 161.

⁷ Murgia 2002, n. 106, p. 158; Nieddu 2002a, n. 105, p. 159; n. 110, pages 160-161.



Fig. 1 - Back of the same coin: S. Joseph and Child (photo by AFS).

On the other side of the medal there is usually the Virgin Mary in her various aspects and religions: the *Theothokos*⁸ usually has the baby Jesus in her arms⁹, especially if traceable to the worship of the Virgin of Carmelo¹⁰ (fig.2); the Virgin appears to be alone and pierced by swords when the Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows is reproduced, a worship that corresponds to the celebrations of Good Friday¹¹

⁸ From this «god» and t...ktw «to generate, give birth», epithet given to Mary as the Mother of God and only guaranteed after the Council of Efeso in 431, where the dogma of the two nature of Jesus in the womb of the Virgin Mary was defined (Söll 1984, coll. 2104-2109).

⁹ Murgia 2002, n. 106, p. 158; Nieddu 2002a, n. 105, p. 159; Murgia 2002, n. 108, fig. 80, pages 159-160.

¹⁰ Nieddu 2002a, n. 107, p. 159; see Leonio, Fersini 1986, p. 106; nn. 21, 48, pages 115-116, 126.

¹¹ Nieddu 2002a, p. 158; n. 111, p. 161; cfr. Leonio, Fersini 1986, pages 104-105, figs. 50, 59-60, pages 127, 131; Sereni 1990, figs. 31-33, pages 511-512.



Fig. 2 - Medal with the Virgin Mary and Child (perhaps Our Lady of Mount Carmel), (photo by AFS).

There some medals among these devotional signs - brought by the pilgrims on return from their pilgrimages¹² - and other celebration items for the holy years¹³ that sometimes carry the inscription ROMA on the exergus¹⁴. The latter seemed to have been given out generously to the confraternities that came to the western Christian capital on their spiritual trips.¹⁵

The medals could be melted or minted: often cones of steel were used made by the craftsman, that had to be beaten onto the previously melted disk. The “beater” struck the form with a large hammer: sometimes, due to a mistaken strike, the minting was ruined making the medal imprecise, so that in the second half of the 18th century, the ferrule was adopted, i.e. A steel shape that was placed around the planchet, that did not allow any deformation from wrong beating¹⁶. The most typical shapes for these

¹² Pinna 2003, p. 330.

¹³ See Leonio, Fersini 1986, pages 88-89; Sereni 1990, figs. 31-33, pages 511-512.

¹⁴ See Leonio, Fersini 1986, p. 84, figs. 1, 20, 40, 55, 58, 73, pages 107, 115, 123, 129-130, 135-136; Cat. Med. n. 1134, p. 170.

¹⁵ Pinna 2003b, p. 329 and note 46.

¹⁶ Leonio, Fersini 1986, pages 82-83.

objects are oval, circular and octagonal (figs. 3-4), sometimes with hooks to be sewn onto shrouds or patiences¹⁷.



Fig. 3 - Medal: male figure of uncertain origin (photo by AFS).



Fig. 4 - Rear: uncertain iconograph of a man with Child (photo by AFS).

Several of them can be found in burial contexts as an inseparable item from the faithful: the devotional medal guarantees divine protection in life for health and the removal of temptation, increasing devotion to some specific saints¹⁸.

¹⁷ Murgia 2002, n. 106, p. 158; n. 108, fig. 80, pages 159-160; n. 112, fig. 81, pages 161-162; Nieddu 2002a, n. 107, p. 159; n. 109-111, pages 160-161; Pinna 2003b, figs. 15-16, p. 335. The patience is a type of religious dress open on the sides, pending in the front and back, and a devotional dress with effigies of the Virgin Mary

¹⁸ Leonio, Fersini 1986, p. 83.

■ Credits

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