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REGIONE AUTÒNOMA DE SARDIGNA
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Archeological area of Sant'Eulalia

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ The Azulejos

The Sant'Eulalia site also certified to a small number of examples of *azulejos*, or *rejos*, (majolica or simple painted terracotta tiles, used in floors or wall decorations): one find shows the decorative “compass rose” pattern (fig. 1), a second has plant elements and straight lines (fig. 2) on its surface.



Fig. 1 - Azulejo with “compass rose” decoration from S. Eulalia (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).



Fig. 2 - Azulejo with plant pattern (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).

The first tile has a circular yellow medallion in its centre enclosing a star or compass rose with golden pearls amongst its petals; there are four wave patterns in the corners.

The former has close ties with another two finds in Cagliari, i.e. in Vico III Lanusei (fig. 3)¹ and in Via Cavour (fig. 4)²: this independent tile³ has a circular yellow medallion in the centre, with a star or a compass rose in it, in white and blue with golden pearls among the petals; the four corners have wave motifs, painted in white on a blue background. Based on the style and mix comparisons, the example is from the end of the 16th-beginning of the 17th century and may be from a Catalan workshop.



Fig. 3 - Fragment of azulejo from Vico III Lanusei (from CARTA 2006, p. 235, fig. 152).

¹ Carta 2006, p. 235, fig. 152.

² Porcella, Salvi 1994, Tab. I,1 p. 163.

³ Tile with an independent decoration, with a finished, autonomous motif.



Fig. 4 - Azulejo from Via Cavour (from PORCELLA, SALVI 1994, p. 163, Tab. I,1).

The second tile, a dependent cell, seems to be a part of the "renaissance" decorative style, with its inspiration by plants⁴. The Iberian tiles are mostly square, rectangular, hexagonal, octagonal, and used in floors or to decorate walls, especially the skirting; they have a flat, coloured surface, showing impressed or relief work, in a single colour or multi-colour. Originally, in the 13th century, they started as a posterior imitation of the Arabic *alicatados*, with fragments of enamel ceramic known as *aliceres*, arranged to create a mosaic effect, with thin raised geometric weaves to contain the enamel. The first Spanish azulejos (13th century) - from the Spanish word *azul* «blue» - have slightly raised dividing lines aimed at containing the enamel of various colours (white, green, turquoise, black, yellow, etc) in their compartments, a technique that was changed by the *alicatados*. The decorative styles on the surfaces of the *azulejos* followed the trends they were subject to: the first was Islamic style, inspired by the geometric shapes and interwoven by the *alicatados*; in the 14th century, the Andalusian style with metallic shine; the Renaissance style included floral, heraldic and antropomorph styles - not allowed in Islamic ideology. The largest production centres were Seville and Toledo; they were also popular (17th-18th centuries) in Latin America; in Sardinia, they came from Seville, Murcia, Valencia and Barcelona⁵ and the *laggioni* came from Liguria (from the

⁴ Ballardini 1930.

⁵ Dadea, Porcella 1997, pages 267-269; Dadea, Porcella 1999, p. 320; Porcella, Salvi 1994, p. 156.

Renaissance influence in the patterns⁶) produced mostly from the 15th century onwards. In the 15th century, two specific techniques were used for this production: the *cuerva seca* and the *cuerva* decoration processes. In the former, the perimeter line of the design was impressed into the tile, using a mould on the unbaked clay (fig. 5): mixing manganese with a greasy substance defined the figures and kept them from leaking from the enamel during baking; in the *cuerva* or mould method, the impression of the same tool on the clay was so that the lines of the drawing were raised compared to the areas that made up the figures, providing a clear separation⁷.



Fig. 5 - Laggione in Islamic style originating from the *alicatados*
(From <http://www.poterie.it/pdf/azul3x.pdf>).

⁶ Carta 2006, p. 234.

⁷ Ballardini 1930.

■ Credits

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