

Basilica of San Saturnino

Patrimonio culturale
SARDEGNA Virtual Archaeology



■ “Porthole” tomb

The archaeological site of San Saturnino is located in the eastern part of the city of Cagliari, an area which in ancient times stood outside the city limits and was part of the necropolis extending east of the town, from today's Viale Regina Margherita up to the Bonaria hill. Here you can still see the surviving evidence of the necropolis and the Basilica dedicated to the martyr Saturnino.

A so-called “porthole” tomb (figs. 1-3) is visible next to the right aisle of the eastern transept of the church: this particular type of grave is more monumental than the ones in the necropolis, and is characterised by a completely or partially buried funerary chamber, covered by a barrel vault or a pitched roof and with a small portal door on one of the short sides, which had a more symbolic function rather than a practical one. This type of tomb came to light in various places in central-southern Sardinia. They were sometimes individual, sometimes collective, and in some cases were part of small necropolises, together with other ‘poorer’ types of grave, close to places of worship, probably from the Byzantine age; most of them were found as isolated examples, however, probably because widespread digs have not been carried out that allows us to discover whether they are a part of larger cemetery areas. According to an interpretation by Donatella Salvi, rather than being privileged or elite tombs, there were a novelty, probably tied to the new arrivals from Greek-Eastern cultures on the island.





Fig. 1 - "Porthole" tomb (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).



Fig. 2 - "Porthole" tomb (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).



Fig. 3 - "Porthole" tomb: inside and background (photo by Unicity S.p.A.).



■ Credits

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