

AN UNUSUAL DECORATION OF CAPODIMONTE PORCELAIN FRAGMENT

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Among the approximately 200 diagnostic ceramic fragments recovered during an occasional excavation at the Real Fabbrica in Capodimonte, one piece stood out as a unique specimen: a shard with an unusual brown-reddish surface. To better understand the nature and origin of this unusual decoration, the fragment was selected for a dedicated analytical study. The piece is roughly rectangular (ca. 4×3 cm) with a thickness of about 2.5 mm. Its interior surface is coated with a colourless glaze, while the exterior surface is covered with a brown-reddish glaze.

The fragment was first examined under an optical reflected-light microscope to determine the number and thickness of the surface layers. Chemical compositions of the porcelain body, the glazes, and the decorative layer were then investigated using scanning electron microscopy coupled with energy-dispersive spectroscopy (SEM–EDS). Analyses of the body and glaze were performed on a cross-section perpendicular to the fragment's surfaces, whereas the decoration was characterised directly on the exposed exterior surface.

The results indicate that this unusual brown reddish coloration originated from a misfired gold-decoration layer. Moreover, Microstructural and compositional features suggest that gold nanoparticles are consistent with the process reported for Meissen wares.

This multidisciplinary approach provides new insights into the technological features and colouring processes of this distinctive fragment, contributing to a broader understanding of ceramic production techniques in the context of the assemblage.