

A Late Roman wreck from deep water investigation off the Egadi Islands (West Sicily): Levanzo 1

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Most recent deep water explorations off Sicilian shores are an outspring of an agreement between governmental underwater cultural heritage authority (Soprintendenza del Mare) and RPM Nautical Foundation, addressing the use of high technology toward the historical reconstruction of the ancient sea routes across the Mediterranean sea. This collaboration allows to bring ahead with regularity the objective of carrying out an accurate survey of the deepest sea beds, thanks to the oceanographic ship *Hercules*, with the use of multibeam and direct immersions, allowing, for a general area of over 200 square km, to individualize numerous targets of archaeological interest that will be subsequently object of verification. The oceanographic ship *Hercules*, a structure in continuous evolution, has a new R.O.V. that allows underwater exploration up to the depth of 600 meters. Such R.O.V. of new generation is a versatile machine, endowed with delicate pliers applied to prehensile mechanical arms, as well as baskets of recovery applied to the cage of support, where finds are positioned. Here we present the dynamics and results of the 2006-2008 campaigns which have discovered at minus 80 m depth the remains of a cargo ship travelling from North Africa probably towards Rome, (or central Italy) via the Egadi route with its load of amphoras and *tubuli* and lost its way in the abyss of the Mediterranean Sea. At present, the load presumably consists of a type of container used because of its small dimensions for the supplies of particular products. The place of production of such manufactured articles appears to be identified by the great concentration of finds with different cities of North Africa, starting with *Mauretania Caesarensis* (since the 3rd century AD) and diffused in a limited area in Tunisia, Volubilis and Sousse, Banasa and Lixus in Morocco. Their export seems almost entirely destined to the restocking of the Capital. It is possible to insert these containers, and so our Wreck 1, in a chronological horizon among the 5th and the full 6th century AD.

Keywords: *Late Roman wreck, deep water investigation, Mediterranean, western Sicily, Egadi Islands.*

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