

Roman and late-antique shipwrecks with stone cargoes: a new inventory

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A. J. Parker's magisterial catalogue of shipwrecks includes references to 44 sites at which stone cargoes of some description (excluding millstones) have been recorded, thirty-nine of which are datable to the Roman and Byzantine periods.¹ Considering that he catalogued a total of 1189 shipwrecks, roughly 80% of which date to between the 2nd c. B.C. and the 10th c. A.D., it is clear that cargoes comprising stone in any significant quantity are fairly scarce (only 3.5% of the total); in fact, they are roughly as common as cargoes of roof-tiles. Since Parker's book, however, new discoveries have come thick and fast. This is true of shipwrecks of all types — D. Gibbins estimated that at least 1500 were known by the end of the 20th c., and J. Strauss has recently counted 1646 — but it is especially true of those carrying stone:² since just the turn of the century, 14 new shipwrecks with stone cargoes have been published, while a further 6 sites have been re-investigated with significant results.³

This paper draws together all of the evidence for shipwrecks (or potential shipwrecks) with stone cargoes datable to between the 2nd c. B.C. and the 7th c. A.D., however patchy or incomplete their documentation. Ninety-six sites fall within these parameters, of which 83 are almost certainly shipwrecks (Table 1), while the remaining 13 constitute chance discoveries on the seabed (Table 2).⁴ The aim is not to offer a complete overview of all of these wrecks or how they relate to ships carrying cargoes of other materials;⁵ rather, it is intended to provide an updated inventory and analysis of what the newly discovered sites, in particular, add to our understanding of the distribution, chronology, size, and composition of wrecks containing stone cargoes. Although the new finds do not radically alter our knowledge of which stone types ended up where, they do add to the picture of how they got there, the size and composition of individual shipments, the organization of local and regional distributive systems, and the chronology of this activity — in sum, the mechanisms underpinning this trade, rather than its end results.⁶

Site identification

Parker's catalogue contained references to far more shipwrecks at which stone cargoes have been identified than are given by most subsequent studies. On the one hand, recent

1 Parker 1992. He also refers to a wreck of the 6th-4th c. B.C. carrying sandstone column drums at Punta Stilo (Calabria) and a later (probably mediaeval) cargo of building stone at Punta del Diavolo in the Tremiti islands (*ibid.* 349 and 362-63).

2 Gibbins 2001, 205. Strauss' work is reported in Wilson 2011, 34.

3 New are the Altinkum, Amrit, Ayaş, Capo Rizzuto, Cavo Doro, Chrétienne M(3), Dor 2001/1, Les Pierres, Les Riches Dunes 5, Marseillan Beauséjour, Porticcio A, Sète, Skerki Bank F, and Suvian shipwrecks; those which received new attention are the Jakljan, Kızılburun 1 and 2, Punta Cicala, Punto Scifo B, and Veli Školj sites.

4 The possibility that the latter come from submerged ancient buildings can in most cases be ruled out, since they were found either at depth or far from the coast; but in the absence of associated finds or further details about their archaeological contexts we can say little about when they were being transported.

5 For general discussion of most of these wrecks, see Martino and Occelli 2009, 127-30; Russell 2011a; *id.* 2012, though no more than 73 are listed in these and few of the late-antique ones.

6 For more on the distribution of stone, see Pensabene 2002; Lazzarini 2004.