

Underwater archaeological research at Mazotos shipwreck:

2015 field season

The fourth full excavation season of the Mazotos shipwreck, Cyprus, was successfully completed last October, after 4 weeks in the field (03–31.10.2015). The fieldwork was conducted by the Maritime Archaeological Research Laboratory (MARELab) of the University of Cyprus, under the direction of Dr Stella Demesticha, Associate Professor in the Department of History and Archaeology, in collaboration with the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus. The objective of this year's field season was to complete the investigation of the aft part of the ancient ship, so that the archaeological assessment of the site can be completed and the team can proceed to the future planning of the project.

The finds were particularly promising regarding the preservation degree of the wooden hull. The excavation reached down to the lowest level of the cargo amphorae, which were found in an almost upright position, in other words as they were stowed before the ship's last, fatal journey. When the amphorae were removed, we exposed part of the wooden hull, which was preserved in a good condition at a width of almost 1.20 m. Based on preliminary examination, it can be deduced that the ship, which is dated to the middle of the fourth century BC, was assembled with mortise and tenons. The use of this technique was adopted sometime during the Late Bronze Age in the eastern Mediterranean but was more widely used during the Classical era and became well established during the Hellenistic period, as archaeologists have learnt from the study of the Kyrenia shipwreck (Cyprus). Thus, the excavation of the Mazotos shipwreck provides key insights into the development of shipbuilding during this transitional phase.

Apart from the hull, the excavation brought to light galley wares as well as more cargo jugs and amphorae. Beyond the Chian amphorae, which form the largest part of the cargo, Mendaian ones were also found stowed in the stern. The conservation and storage of all finds is carried out by the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus in the Laboratory of Underwater Finds in Larnaca.

Parallel to the archaeological research, marine biologists, members of the NGO *Enalia Physis Environmental Research Centre*, are studying the encrusting community of organisms and associated ichthyofauna found at the site.

The excavation team included undergraduate and post-graduate students from the University of Cyprus, as well as maritime archaeologists and divers, all volunteers from Cyprus and abroad. The photogrammetric mapping of the site is coordinated by Dr Dimitrios Skarlatos, Assistant Professor in the Department of Civil Engineering and Geomatics, Cyprus University of Technology, Limassol.

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