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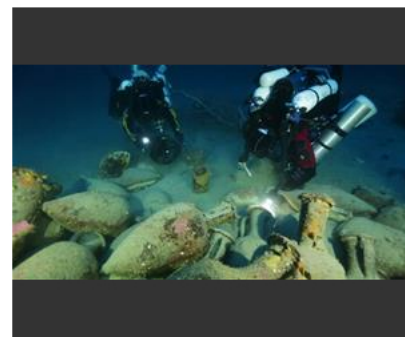
Ancient shipwreck discovered near Aeolian Islands

By JASON DEAREN | ASSOCIATED PRESS | 2 hours, 20 minutes ago in [Science](#)



GAINESVILLE, Fla. (AP) — The divers descended 410 feet into dark Mediterranean waters off Italy, their lights revealing the skeleton of a ship that sank thousands of years ago when Rome was a world power. A sea-crusted anchor rested on a rock. The ship's cargo lay scattered amid piles of terra cotta jars, called amphora.

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In this undated photograph provided by Global Underwater Explorers, divers illuminate Greco-Roman artifacts of a ship that sunk during the Punic Wars between 218-201 B.C., in the Mediterranean Sea, off... (Associated Press)

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Highly trained technical divers with a Florida-based group called Global Underwater Explorers — GUE for short — are helping Italian researchers to unlock an ancient shipwreck thought to date to the second Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage. Able to descend hundreds of feet further than most divers



and with Greek inscriptions that provide clues to the ship's origin. The size and shape of the amphora help them understand what the ship was carrying.

Experts believe it could have been a supply ship for Roman legions or that it belonged to a wealthy merchant, possibly from the Italian region around Naples, which Mazza described as "very rich and wealthy, with lots of nice wine in that area."

Another possibility Mazza and Tusa are investigating is whether the ship was a supply vessel in the fleet of Claudio Marcello, a Roman consul who conquered Sicilian city of Syracuse in 212 B.C.

GUE divers were paid through corporate contributions to its "Project Baseline," an endeavor in which divers and citizen scientists throughout the world submit data from myriad underwater sites that future researchers can use to compare and track changes. In addition to working on the wreck, Project Baseline divers around the world are surveying reefs and caves, including a deep sea cave off France.

In the case of the Panarea III shipwreck, the data collected from the site can be used by the Italian government or others in the future.

Much more research is needed before the team can be sure about many of its early hunches about the Panarea III, but with help from GUE the crew plans to return next year to the site for more dive work.

Jablonski can hardly wait.

"Reaching the dive site was a mystical experience and very much like reaching through a window in time," he said.

Follow Jason Dearen on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/JHDearen>



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