

Bronze *rostra* from the Egadi Islands off NW Sicily: the Latin inscriptions

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Since 2004, 11 bronze *rostra* have been found in the waters off NW Sicily. Nine of the 11 were identified by ongoing systematic underwater survey in the vicinity of the Egadi (*Aegates*) Islands; the other two were recovered by chance in the nets of local fishermen. The Egadi Islands Survey (2005-) is being conducted jointly by the Soprintendenza del Mare of the Regione Siciliana and RPM Nautical Foundation, under the joint direction of S. Tusa (Soprintendente del Mare for Sicily) and J. G. Royal (archaeological director of RPM Nautical Foundation). Full details of the survey and of the finds up to the end of the 2011 season were published in this journal in 2012.¹

The *rostra* are the most spectacular pieces within a remarkable set of finds, including helmets, metallic objects, amphorae and other pottery. This material, as convincingly argued by Tusa and Royal, probably represents one part of the site of the final battle of the First Punic War, the Battle of the Aegates Islands, fought on March 10, 241 B.C., between Rome and Carthage.² It is not the purpose of this paper to debate in detail that identification, nor to consider the archaeological implications of the finds, nor their significance (which is considerable) for our attempts to understand ship design and construction in the Hellenistic period.³ Its purpose is to present a working edition and preliminary discussion of one element from those finds, namely the Latin inscriptions so far identified on 7 of the *rostra*. An eighth ram (Egadi 3) bearing a Punic inscription is the subject of separate study.⁴

At the time of writing (July 2014), 11 rams have been found, of which 10 have been recovered and 1 remains on the sea-bed:

SUMMARY OF THE EGADI RAMS AND ASSOCIATED INSCRIPTIONS

Egadi 1	Found by fishermen in vicinity of Egadi Islands	Latin inscription
Egadi 2	Found in survey	Fragmentary, any possible inscription lost
Egadi 3	Found in survey	Punic inscription
Egadi 4	Found in survey	Latin inscription
Egadi 5	Found in survey	Fragmentary, any possible inscription lost

1 S. Tusa and J. Royal, "The landscape of the naval battle at the Egadi Islands (241 B.C.)," *JRA* 25 (2012) 7-48.

2 Ancient account in Polyb. 1.59-61, cf. Diod. Sic. 24.11, Zonar. 8.17, Eutrop. 2.27, Oros. 4.10.5-8. For modern accounts, see G. De Sanctis, *Storia dei Romani* vol. III. *L'età delle guerre puniche. Parte I* (Turin 1916) 184-87 and 264-67; J. F. Lazenby, *The First Punic War: a military history* (Stanford, CA 1996) 150-57. Eutropius (2.27.2) provides the date, on which see F. W. Walbank, *A historical commentary on Polybius*, vol. 1 (corr. repr., Oxford 1970) 124-25, and M. G. Morgan, "Calendars and chronology in the First Punic War," *Chiron* 7 (1977) 109-12 (both accept the near-equivalence of the Julian and Roman calendars at this point and the probable accuracy of the date). All dates in this article are B.C. unless otherwise stated.

3 Many of these aspects have already been debated in a workshop held at Oxford on April 8, 2013, and in an AIA-APA panel held at Chicago on January 3, 2014; a set of papers originating in those meetings is now being prepared for publication.

4 By P. Schmitz (Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti); for now, see Tusa and Royal (*supra* n.1) 43.