

The Spargi Wreck

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The finds from the Spargi wreck can now be studied at first hand in the dramatic new Nino Lamboglia Museum of Naval Archaeology at La Maddalena, on the island of Maddalena, off the NE coast of Sardinia. The cargo of Italian wine amphoras, for too long illustrated by sketch drawings, can now clearly be seen to belong chiefly to Type 4a (called "Dressel 1A" by Lamboglia), datable from the late 2nd to the second quarter of the 1st c. B.C., but quite a few jars show the later, more developed lines of Type 4b (Dressel's Form 1), which had evolved by the second quarter of the 1st c. B.C. The mixture of the two types of shipping jars in one cargo suggests that the doomed ship should be dated about 75 B.C., when one shape was replacing the other, rather than 120-100 B.C., the traditional date for the wreck. A small group of olive oil amphoras of Type 11 ("Brindisi-type"), datable to the first quarter of the 1st c. B.C., was part of the same cargo.

The Spargi wreck is brought to life by the exhibition at La Maddalena. The central room of the museum is filled with a display that suggests the hold of the original ship. Over 200 wine amphoras, some with stoppers still in place, stand upright, shoulder to shoulder, and represent the upper layers of the amphora cargo. The visitor descends stairs at the sides of the "ship" and turns to face a reconstructed cross-section of three layers of shipping amphoras as they must have been superimposed in the actual hold.

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