



new discoveries

in Sicily

Warship ram discovered... an ancient naval battle revealed?

With virtually no material evidence for ancient warships available to archaeologists, the discovery of an ancient ram has generated great excitement among the members of Sicily's Office of the Superintendent of Maritime Archaeology and those of INA partner RPM Nautical Foundation. Although other exciting Roman-period finds have been located during four seasons of survey around the island of Levanzo, off the northwest Sicilian coast that date to the Roman period, it was the discovery of a bronze ram during the 2008 expedition that provided the first potential corroboration that this area is the site of the final battle of the First Punic war: On the 21st of March, 241 BC, Roman warships lay in wait for a Carthaginian relief fleet making its way to the aide of General Hamilcar Barca, father of Hannibal, who was under siege on Sicily. Laden with supplies, caught in an ambush, and undermined, the Carthaginian warships stood little chance against the larger Roman fleet. Ancient sources vary, but agree that many Carthaginian ships were sunk that day. As only one of six known bronze warship rams, its study should contribute to the tantalizing, yet meager, knowledge we have of ancient Mediterranean warships of the Roman era.

—Jeff Royak, Archaeological Director, RPM Nautical Foundation



During the investigation of an anomaly in 80 m of water, an object with sharp angles and a smooth curve was noted in the sand nearby. Upon investigation with the ROV *Hercules* the image of a bronze ram filled the *Hercules*' video screens. Soon the difficult task of attaching ropes and lifting gear with the ROV began. With great care, the ram was raised to the surface and placed on deck for field recording before its transfer to the Superintendent's facilities for conservation and further analysis.

