

# **NAUTICAL ARCHAEOLOGY. SHIPS, AND PORT DEVELOPMENT: THE MEDITERRANEAN IN THE EARLY AND HIGH MIDDLE AGES**

Richard W. Unger

## **ABSTRACT**

The rapid growth in nautical archaeology in the last fifty years has increased knowledge about ships and to a limited degree about ports. The development of the two were closely connected but the connection is rarely explored. The evolution of ship design in the early Middle Ages, the ways in which ship construction changed, along with the changes in the size of vessels created differing demands on port facilities.

The Roman Empire left a rich heritage of port construction and in many parts of their far flung realm. The heirs of that infrastructure found themselves both wealthy from the scale of their inheritance and constrained by the implications for ship design and also for maintenance. Roman facilities were abandoned and then replaced by new types or forms of ports and in different places.

The conformation of the economy presented new demands on transportation and the design of ships set new parameters for the loading and off loading of ships. While for the early Middle Ages little is know about port development the actions of governments, both those of Italian maritime republics and of monarchical states in southern Italy and in Spain as well as in the eastern Mediterranean, created a whole new idea of what a port was and what its function should be.