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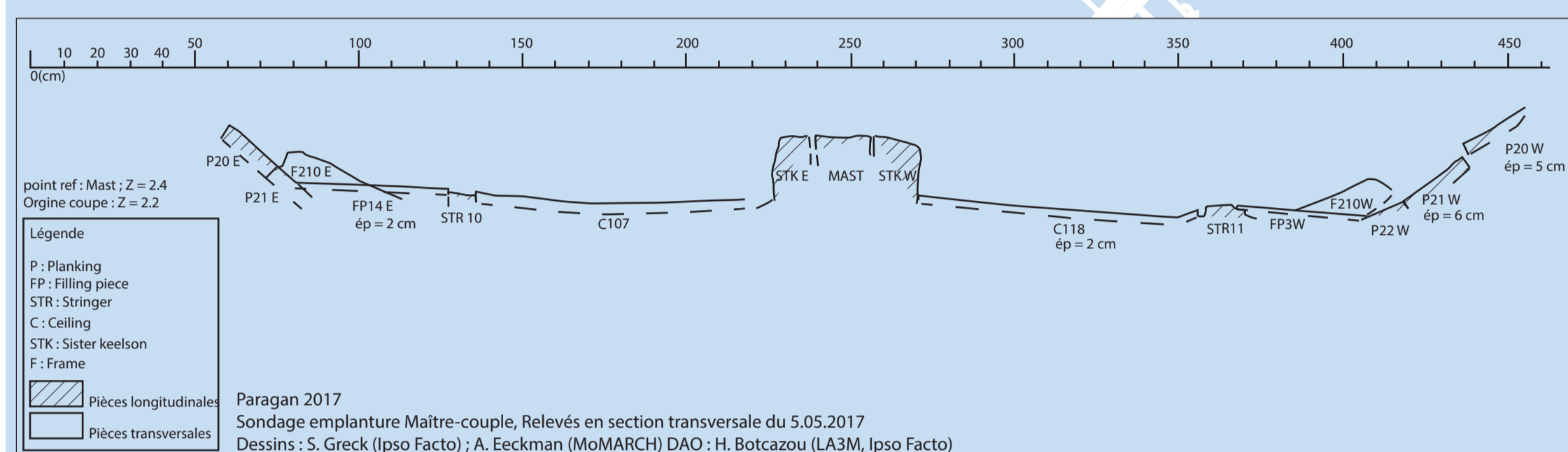
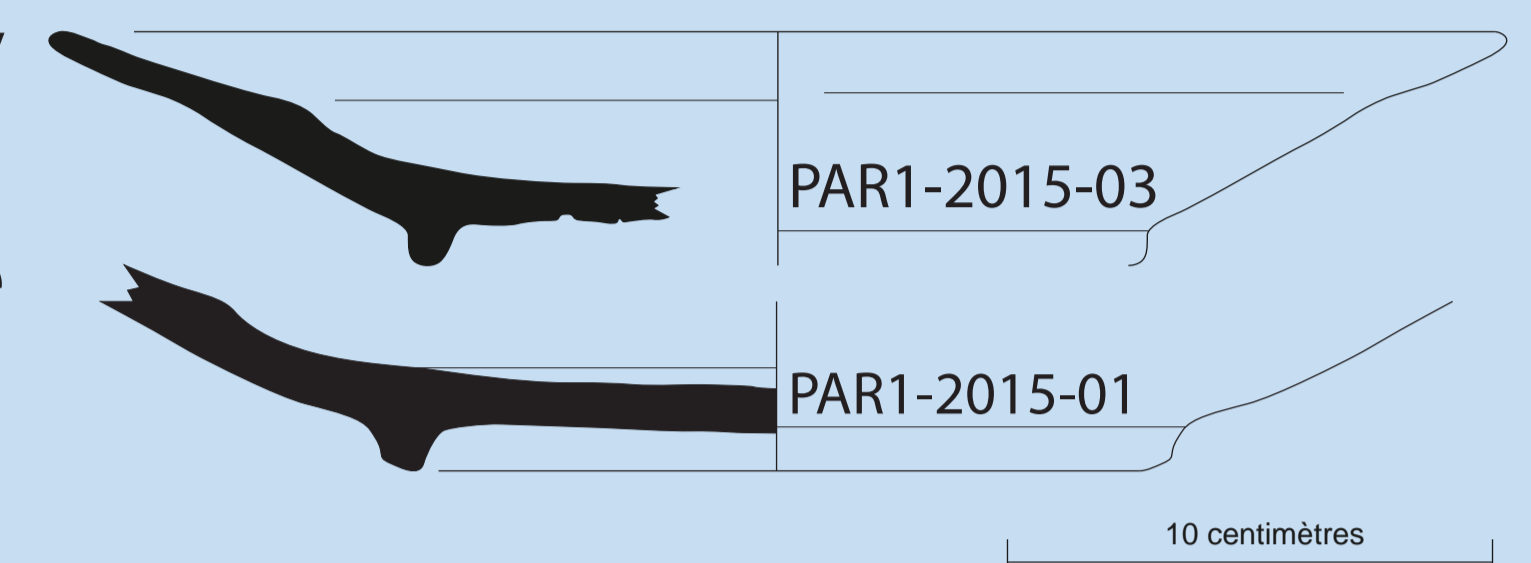
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The Paragan wreck, preliminary study of a late XVIIth - early XVIIIth c. ship from Corsica's coast (Bonifacio, France).

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Context

In June 2015, a Corsican diver discovered along the south west coast of Corsica, in the small bay of Paragan, a well preserved hull exposed in the seabed, at only -2,5 meters deep. A team of experts was quickly organized by the Underwater Archaeology Research Department (DRASSM, French Ministry of Culture) in July 2015 in order to survey the site. The wreck is preserved in most of its length, and up to the bilges. It represents a remarkable "archaeological laboratory" for the study of vernacular Mediterranean naval architecture. Not much remains from the cargo of the ship: the shallow depth must have allowed its recovery when it sank. However, some decorated ceramic shreds of Ligurian earthenware (five plates and a jug) can date the wreck between the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th Century. In April 2016 this wreck was chosen to be one of the two school fieldworks of the International Master of Maritime and Coastal Archaeology (MoMArch), led by the University of Aix-Marseille (AMU) and the DRASSM. The excavation project is co-directed by Franca Cibecchini (DRASSM) and Eric Rieth (CNRS), with the partnership of Ipsos-Facto and it is planned to go on at least four years.



Objectives

The main objective of this excavation is to identify the architectural principles and processes of modern Mediterranean ship-building tradition, and finally, to make hypothetical restitutions of the original ship and its nautical qualities, that will provide new data on coastal shipping in the Modern Era. Another main objective is to train MoMArch students in the methods and techniques of naval architecture in the field.

The first phase of the excavation program (2016/2018) is to excavate the upper part of the remains, without disassembling any elements from the structure, in order to obtain a global vision of the architecture of the ship and establish a first catalogue of its "architectural signatures". The next phase will be to operate some purposeful dismantling of the structure in order to complete the catalogue and register, a maximum of archaeological data that will add to the restitution of the principles and processes of construction of the Paragan 1 ship, as well as its form, its rigging and its nautical capabilities.

Description

The wreck is orientated NE-SW, and is 14 meters long and 4,50 m at its largest point. The first hypothesis assumes that the Paragan wreck was originally at least 18 m long. The presumed stern was excavated in 2016 and the main mast step area with the pump well was excavated in April-May 2017. A survey was also opened in the area interpreted as the bow of the ship.



Several specific "architectural signatures" relate this wreck to Mediterranean naval architecture: the carvel planking; the composite mast step area (sister keelson, buttress, dovetail filling pieces, and chock); the structure and morphology of the master frame; the organisation of the frames (pre-moulded frames with hooked scarfs between the master frames and the tail frames); the exclusive iron nail joints; the transverse floating ceiling.

Provisional conclusions

The architectural characteristics of the Paragan 1 wreck fits into a tradition of naval construction that is specifically Mediterranean, archaeologically attested since the end of the 13th Century (Culip VI wreck, Catalu na), and of which several vernacular shipyards of the meridional part of Mediterranean represent some of the ultimate ethnographical evidences. The ballast is mainly composed by pebbles of "serpentinite" that are found either in Cape Corse or in Liguria. If the construction of the wreck is obviously Mediterranean, the architectural type of the ship and its origin are still to interpret.

