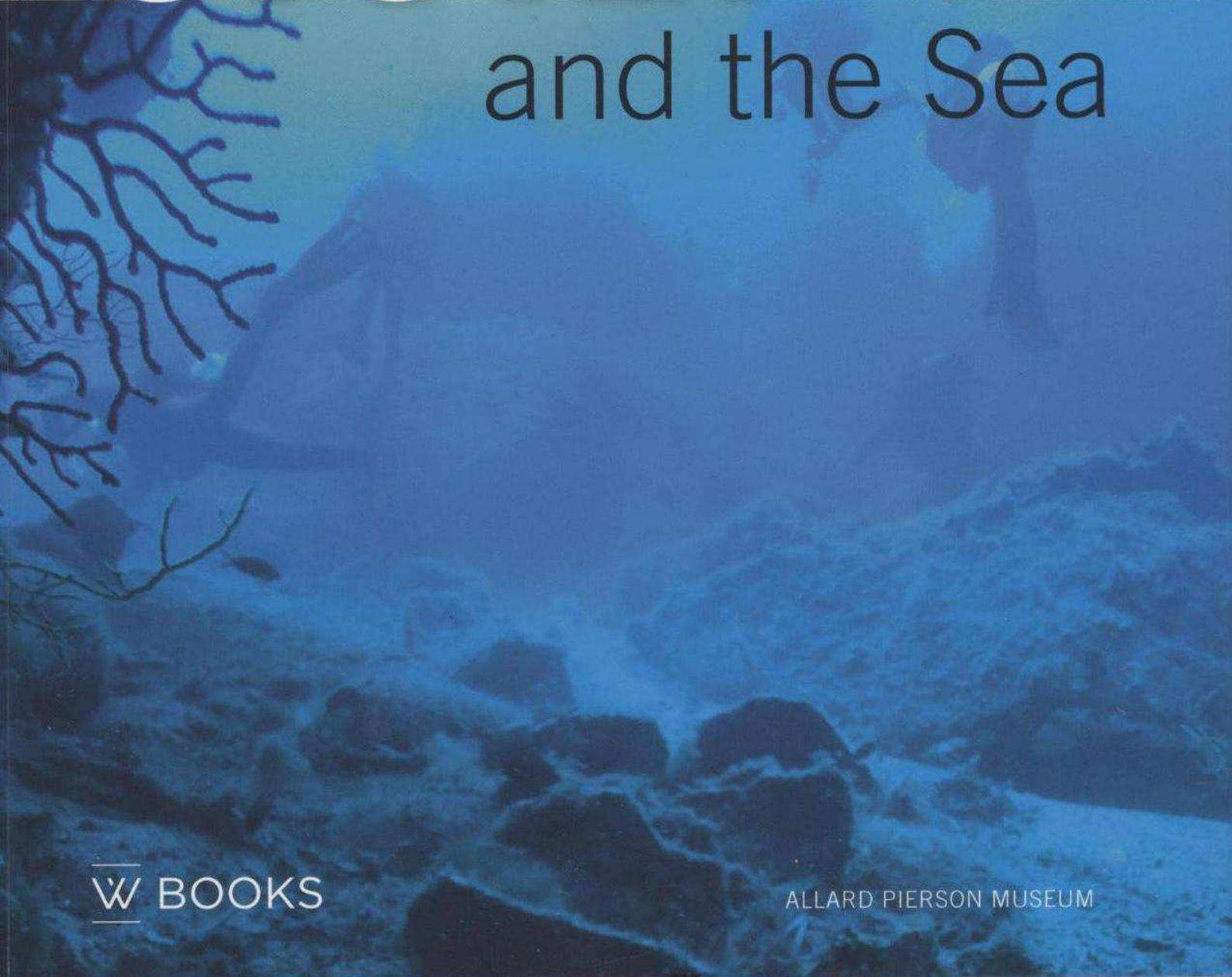


SICILY

and the Sea



W BOOKS

ALLARD PIERSON MUSEUM

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SICILY AND THE SEA MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGY



MOZIA

The submerged ancient causeway to Mozia seen from the air.

ANCIENT PORT

At the foot of the acropolis of Selinus, along the beach and on the opposite sea floor, there are visible architectural elements that belong to the ancient port structures.



The Sicilian sea floor is a treasury full of archaeological riches that were submerged over the centuries due to various geological circumstances (crater formation, changes to the coastline, bradyseism). This partial synthesis of the archaeological finds in Sicilian waters aims to echo the age-old relationship between people and the sea in Sicily. One of the most fascinating sites lies at the westernmost end of Sicily, in the province of Trapani: the Phoenician colony Motya (which flourished from the eighth to the fourth centuries BC), present-day Mozia. This small island is the centre of the archipelago in the Stagnone di Marsala, about eight km long and one of the largest lagoon areas in Europe. The Phoenician city's location in the Stagnone seems to indicate that the entire lagoon area served as a natural port system and that loading and unloading of goods for the Phoenician city took place near the North Gate, which led to the quarters with furnaces and the workshops where purple dye was produced. From the North Gate a maritime causeway also led carts past the city and to the settlement at present-day Birgi on the other side. The causeway originally was a massive construction meant to inhibit free navigation inside the lagoon. The ports of Lilybaeum (now Marsala) at the westernmost point of Sicily have yet to be explored; the three ports which gave this city its fame and prosperity in Antiquity lie on the sea floor off the modern city, covered in thick layers of seagrass. Photogrammetry and field research have made it possible to locate the ports: one lies near Punta Alga, in the bay south of the Stagnone; the one called Porto delle Tartane or Margitello is situated near the modern port; the most important one, opposite the ancient city centre, lies immediately north of Capo Boeo at the location of the modern rowing club. The city of Selinus had to process such a mass of maritime traffic that two ports were needed, one to the east and one to the west of the acropolis, near the mouths of the presently silted-up Gorgo Cottone and Modione. The latter river was known as the Selinon in Antiquity and gave the city its name. The remains of these ports found so far

are a quay built of stone blocks, and some stone bollards attached to the jetty. At the foot of the acropolis, along the beach and on the opposite sea floor, there are visible architectural elements that belong to the port structures.

Near the islet of Basiluzzo, not far from Panarea (both are Aeolian Isles), the outline of a fish pond from the Roman period is visible on the sea floor. The pond is now densely populated by sponges, several species of madrepora corals, orange *Astroides calycularis* corals, and sea urchins. On another Aeolian Island, Lipari, the Soprintendenza del Mare researched the ten-metre-deep site of a magnificent building with a portico

off Sottomonastero in 2008. The columns' diameter measured c.1.2 m; their bases were made of local basalt and rested on a white marble foundation. The building dates from a busy period of city renovation in the course of the second century BC.

SUNKEN PORTICO

The base of a column of the portico off Sottomonastero on Lipari that was discovered in 2008.

