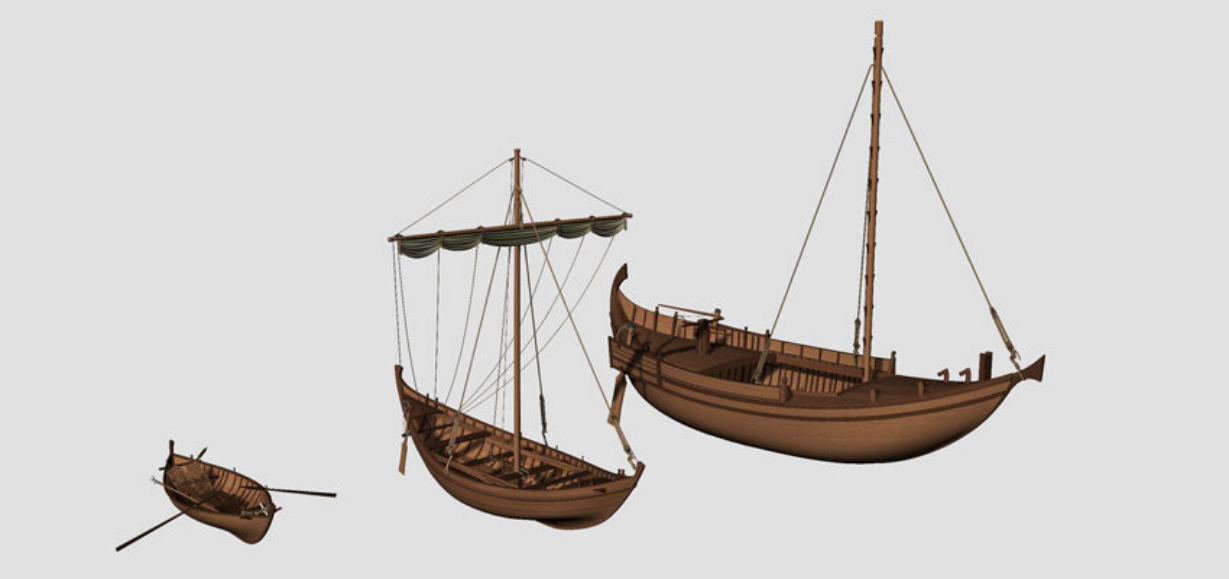
3-D reconstructions of boats from the ancient port of Rome

June 22 2020, by Clara Barrau



3D reconstructions of the three boat types found in Fiumicino: fishing boat (left), small sailboat (centre) and a harbour lighter (right). Credit: D. Peloso, Ipso Facto scoop.Marseille/P. Poveda, Centre Camille Jullian, CNRS, Aix Marseille Université

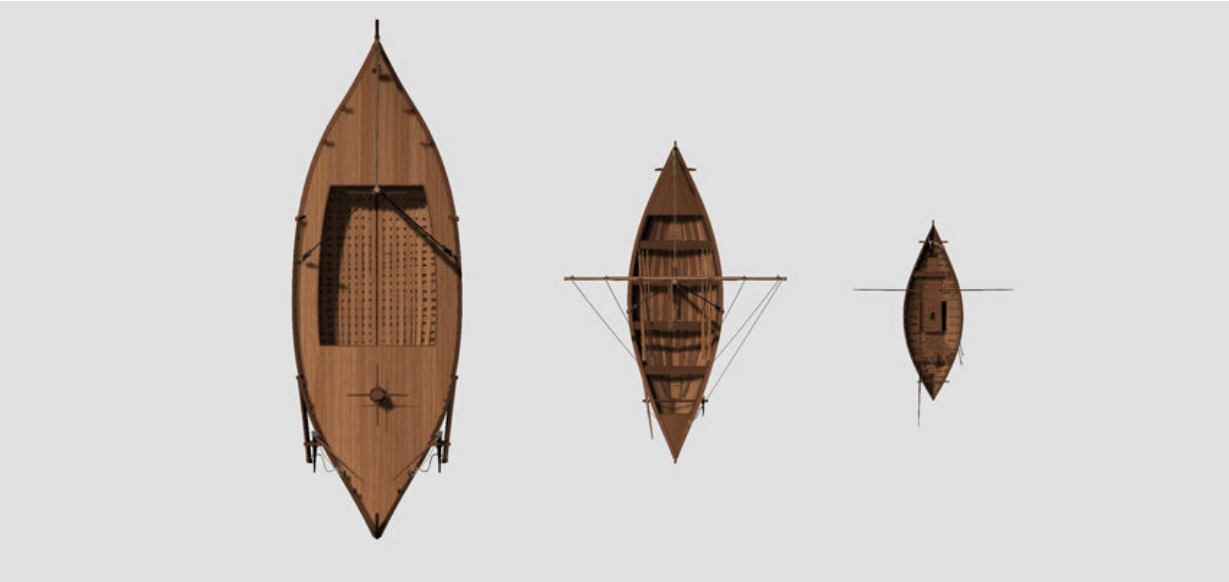
Today, Fiumicino in Italy is a busy airport, but 2,000 years ago this area was filled with boats—it was a large artificial harbor only a stone's throw from the ancient port of Rome (Ostia).

To tie in with the opening of the site's newly refurbished museum, Giulia

Boetto, a CNRS researcher at the Camille Jullian Centre (CNRS/Aix-Marseille Université), has coordinated 3-D reconstructions of three of the wooden boats found at Fiumicino. These boats, in use between the 2nd and early 5th centuries AD, were abandoned in the port, at which time, they became waterlogged and covered with a layer of sediment. These oxygen-free conditions enabled the boats to survive until they were excavated, almost 60 years ago.

Recovered and initially housed in the museum, which required major structural work, these wooden remains were documented using state-of-the-art digital survey techniques, then analysed and reconstructed in 3-D, thanks to Boetto's expertise in naval archaeology. The researcher also called on Marseille-based start-up Ipso Facto to create 3-D models of the remains and on her colleague Pierre Poveda, a CNRS research engineer in the same laboratory, to restore the missing parts using archaeological comparisons and iconographic representations.

By the end of the year, these 3-D reconstructions will be housed at the new Roman Ship Museum in the Archaeological Park of Ancient Ostia. This exhibition will enable visitors to discover ancient boat construction techniques and what life was like on board these Roman vessels. It will also allow them to virtually navigate in what was the most important Mediterranean port complex during the Roman Empire.



3D reconstructions of the three boat types found in Fiumicino: fishing boat (right), small sailboat (centre) and a harbour lighter (left). Credit: D. Peloso, Ipso Facto scoop.Marseille/P. Poveda, Centre Camille Jullian, CNRS, Aix Marseille Université

More information: Video: https://webcast.in2p3.fr/player/5eecc85b09f08?autostart=true&jwsource=cl

Provided by CNRS

Citation: 3-D reconstructions of boats from the ancient port of Rome (2020, June 22) retrieved 24 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2020-06-d-reconstructions-boats-ancient-port.html

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