

# Connecting the Empire: Roman Seafaring





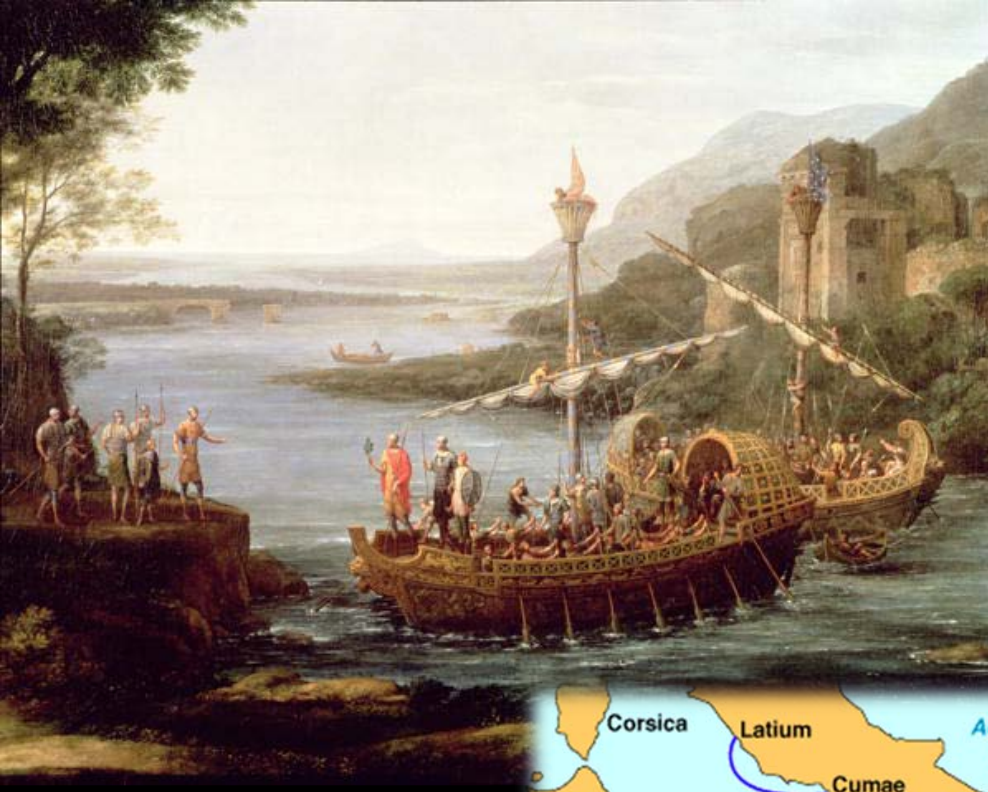
# The *Aeneid* by Virgil



The story of one of the founders of the Roman people traveling across the sea.









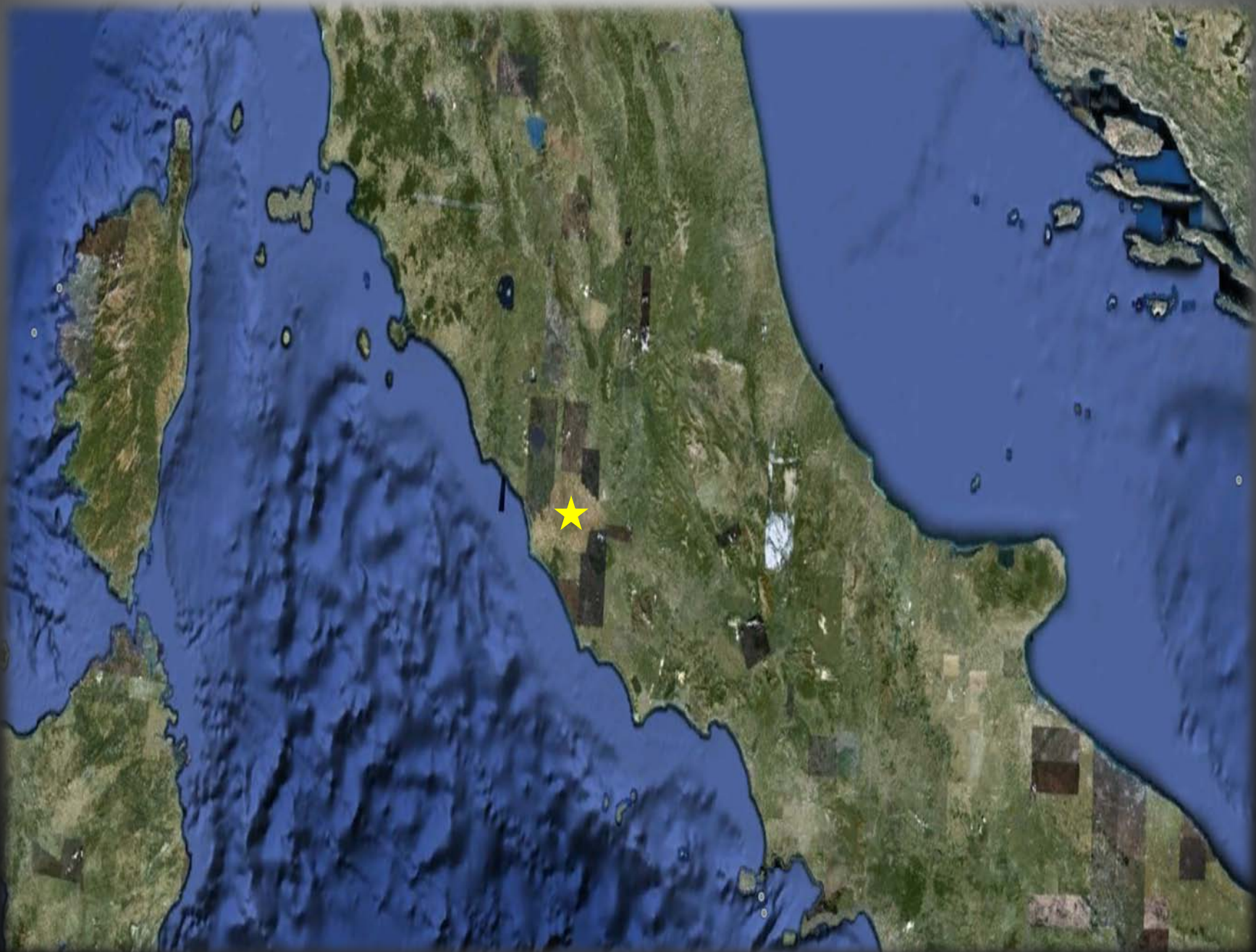
c. 500 BCE



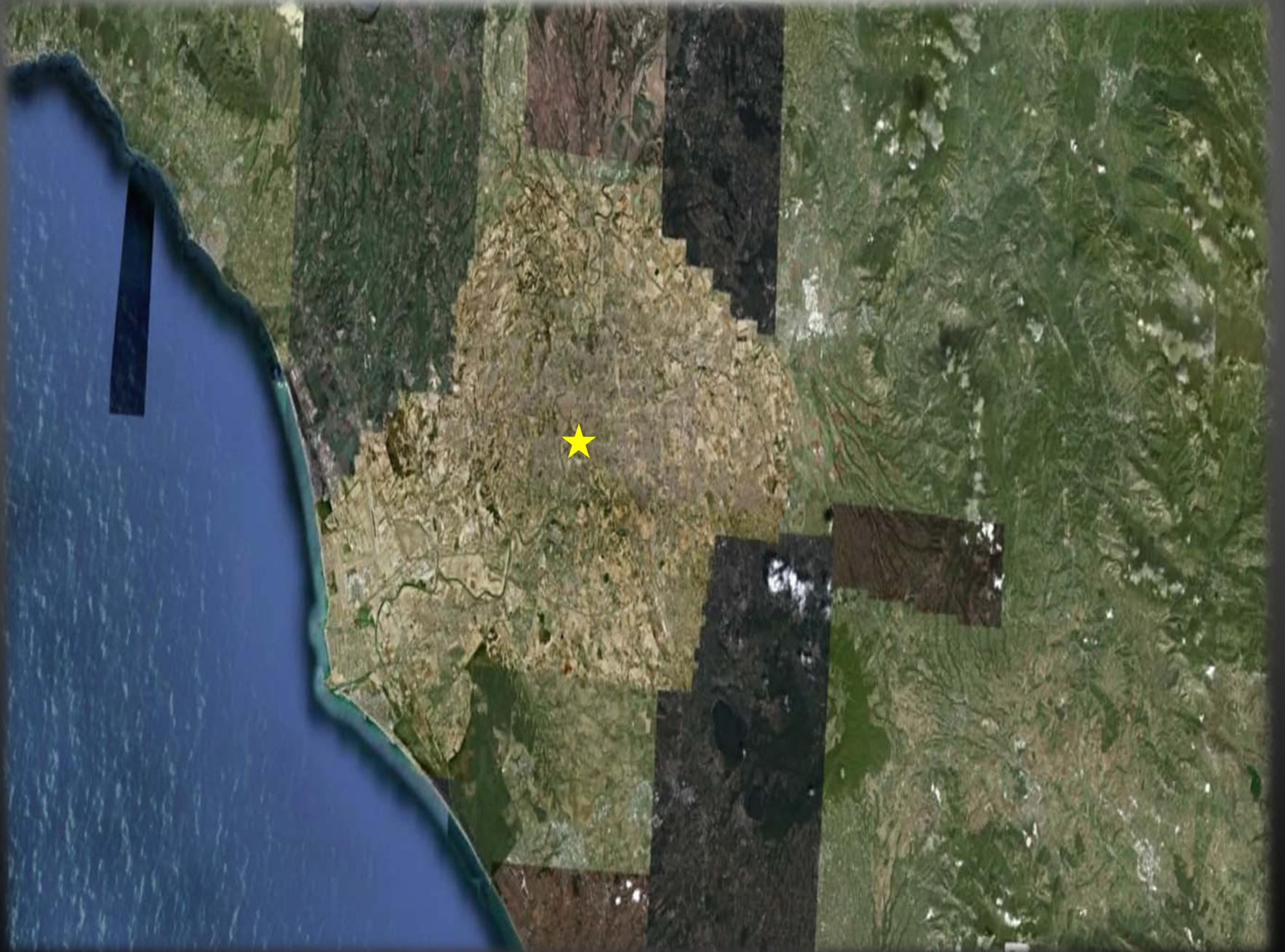




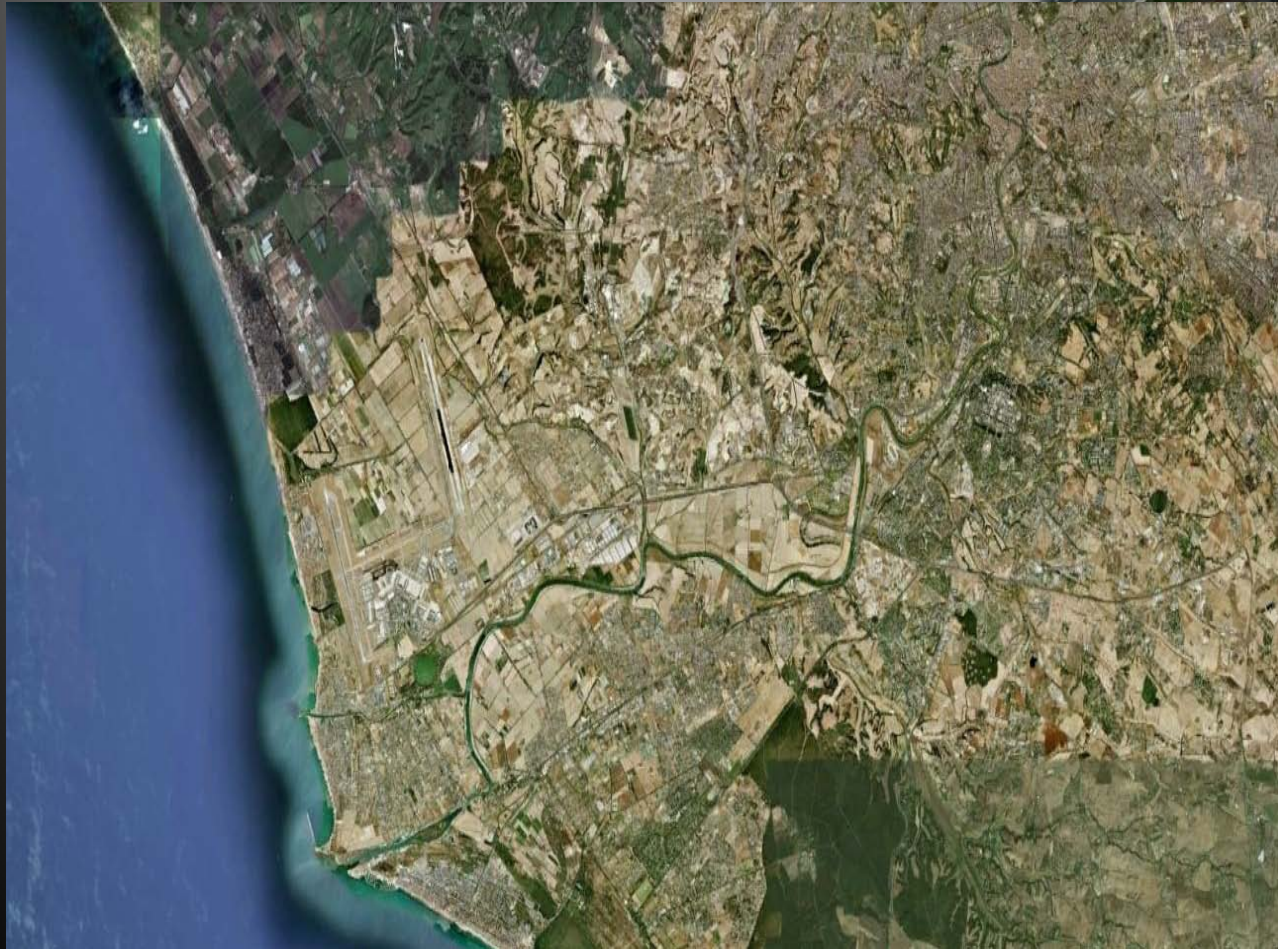














c. 264 BCE







Carthage

## 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE coin showing a Roman quinquereme

According to Polybius, the Romans seized a shipwrecked Carthaginian quinquereme, and used it as a blueprint for their own ships







# Pompey Magnus

Coin with trireme (?)





c. 44 BCE





**Battle of Actium:  
Octavian vs.  
Antony**





c. 117 CE  
PAX  
ROMANA



# The Empire Connected

Commerce, Movement, and  
Communication



**Pliny the Younger, *Panegyric on Trajan***

*... in his wisdom and authority and devotion to his people [he] has opened roads, built harbors, created routes overland, let the sea into the shore and moved the shore out to sea, and linked far distant peoples by trade so that natural products in any place now seem to belong to all.*



# Trade Routes Roman Empire





# Travel Times (Favorable Conditions)

<b>STARTING</b>	<b>DESTINATION</b>	<b>DISTANCE</b>	<b>TIME</b>
From Ostia to	Africa	270 miles	2 days
Ostia	Gibraltar	935 miles	7 days
Ostia	Spain (northern)	510 miles	4 days
Ostia	Marseille	380 miles	3 days
Messina (Sicily)	Alexandria	830 miles	6, 7 days
Puteoli	Alexandria	1000 miles	9 days
Corinth	Puteoli	670 miles	4.5 days
Rhegium	Puteoli	175 miles	1.5 days
Puteoli	Tauromenium (Sicily)	205 miles	2.5 days
Alexandria	Ephesus	475 miles	4.5 days
Carthage	Syracuse	260 miles	2.5 days
Carthage	Gibraltar	820 miles	7 days

# Periplus (periplous)

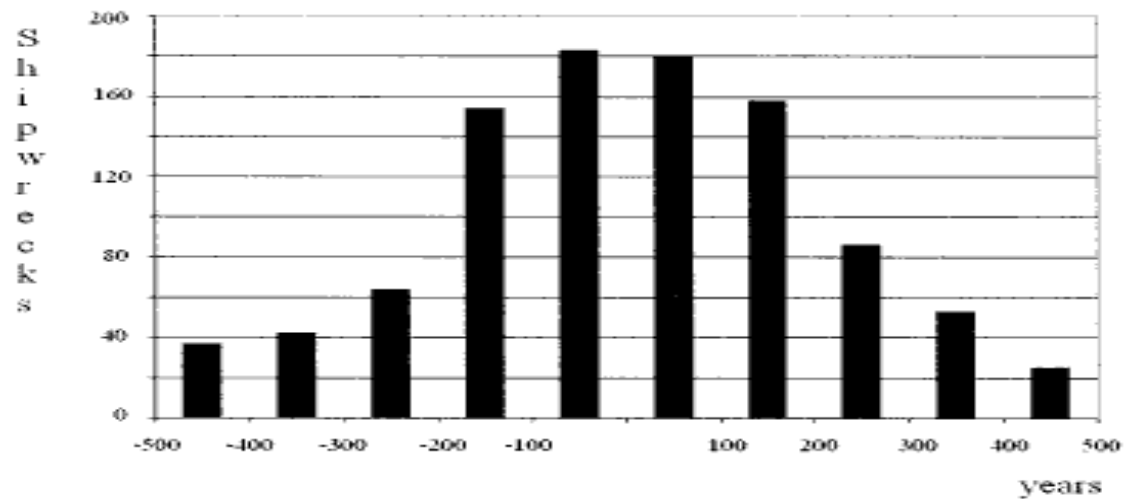
*Periplus of the Euxine Sea*

*Periplus of the Erythraean Sea or  
Periplus of the Red Sea*



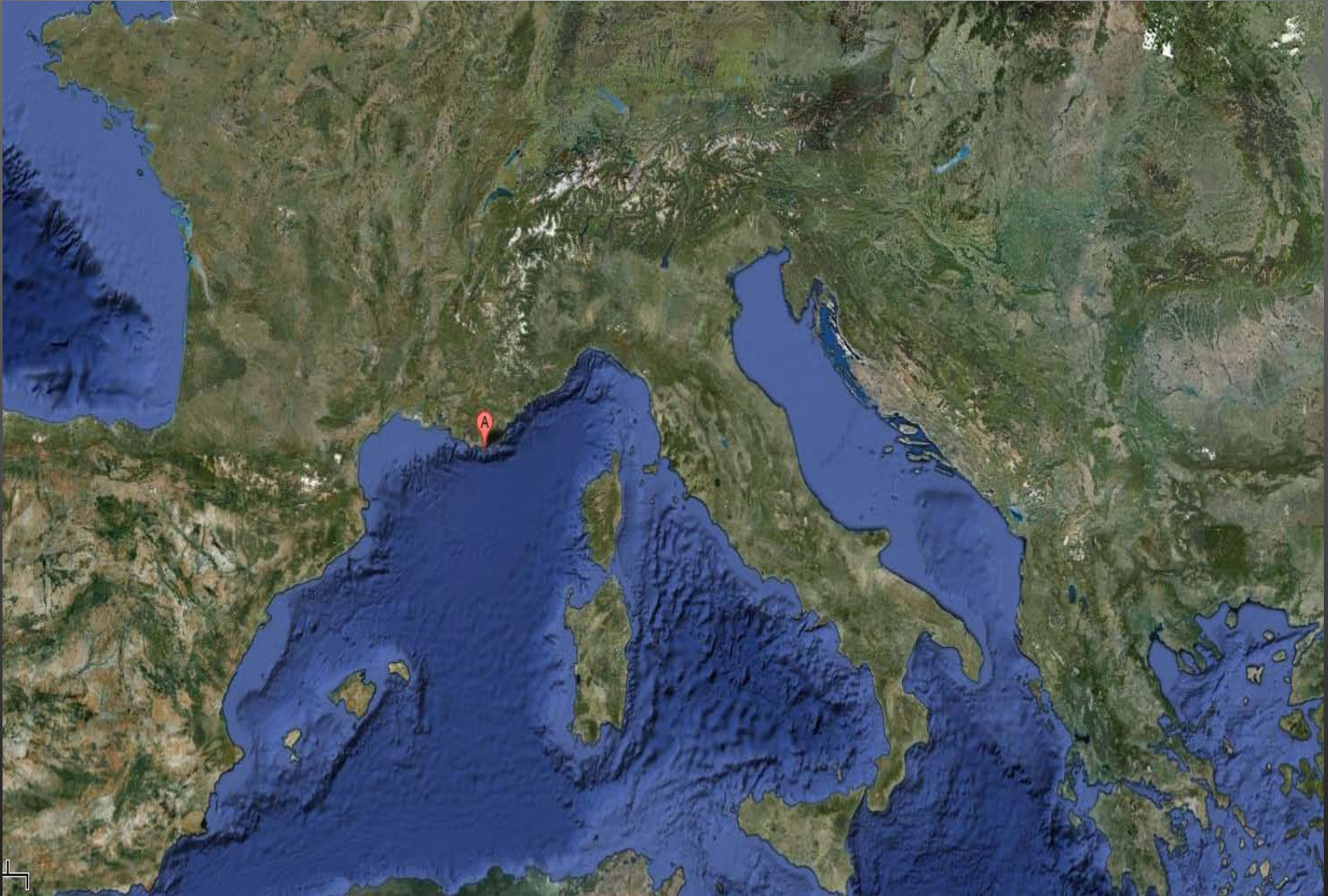


Figure 1: Shipwrecks for periods of centuries



The histogram shows the number of shipwrecks in the centuries V B.C. – V A.D., according to the data furnished by Parker (cited, 1992), collected for periods of one hundred years.

# The Madrague de Giens Shipwreck





## Merchant ship (c. 70-60 BCE)

Carrying capacity of 5800-7800 amphorae. 290-390 metric tons. One of the larger merchant vessels from Antiquity.

Carrying amphorae with the name Publius Veveius Papius . Can be traced to a specific wine producer in Terracina in S. Italy.

Well preserved hull















# New Technology

## Incremental Improvements

- Multiple Masts
- More Sophisticated Rigging
- Larger ships (Madrague de Giens)



## Imperial Navy

Largely a peace-keeping force

Protected ships

*Classis Alexandrina*

Kept down piracy





## Tombstone of an Optio, Sailed on a Liburna

Served in the navy fighting pirates?



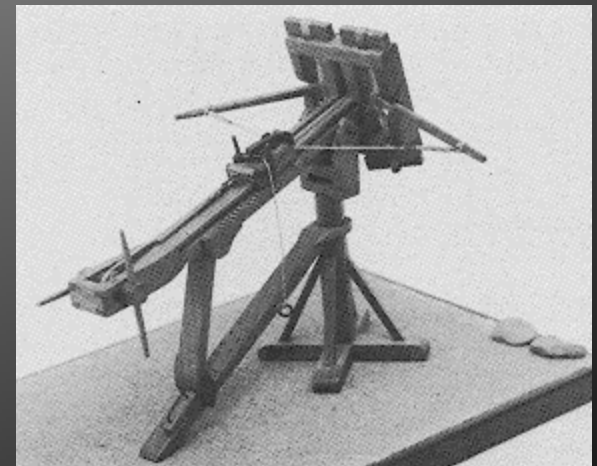
# Naval Ships

- Naval Ships

- quinqueres (Gk. pentērēs), and to a lesser extent quadrires (Gk. tetrērēs) and trires (Gk. triērēs)

- Lighter craft such as Liburnian

- deck-mounted ballistae and catapults



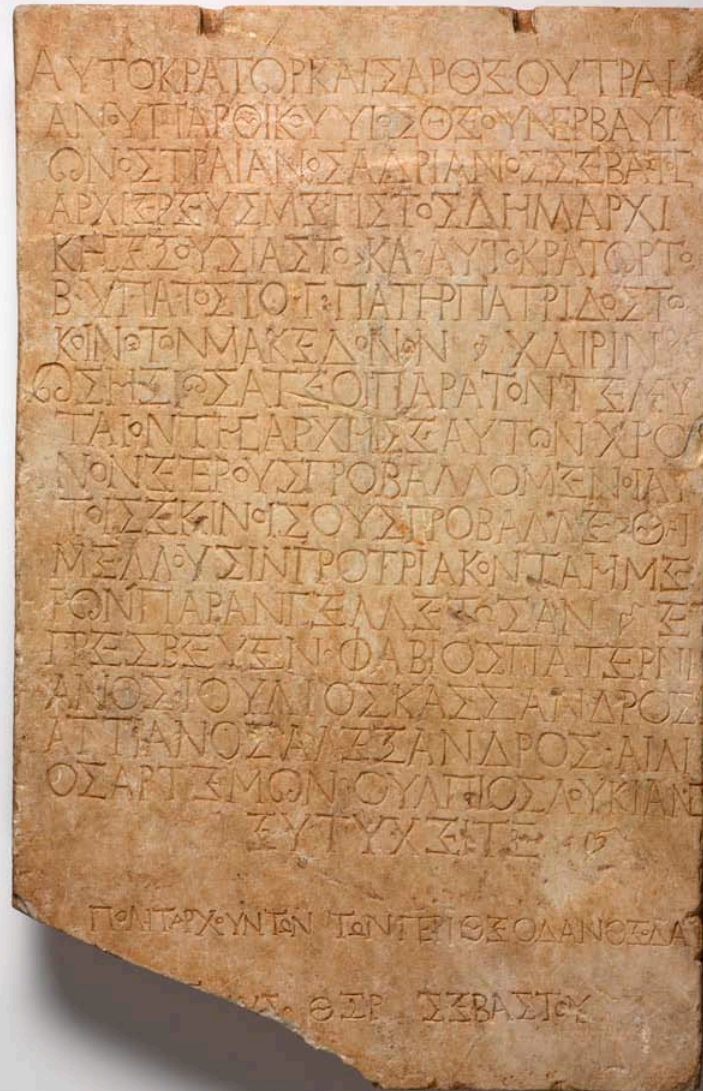


# Communication

Imperial Decrees

Contact with officials (Pliny's Letters)

Personal Correspondence



**Letter of a Recruit: Apion**  
**Select Papyri I (1932) #112 (II. A.D.)**

Apion to Epimachus, his father and lord, very many greetings.

Before all else I pray for your health and that you may always be well and prosperous, together with my sister and her daughter and my brother. I thank the Lord Serapis that when I was in danger at sea he straightway saved me. On arriving at Misenum, I received from Caesar three gold pieces for travelling expenses. And it is well with me.

Now I ask you, my lord and father, write me a letter, telling me first of your welfare, secondly of my brother's and sister's, and enabling me thirdly to make obeisance before your handwriting, because you educated me well and I hope thereby to have quick advancement, if the gods so will.

Give many salutations to Capiton and my brother and sister and Serenilla and my firends. I have sent you by Euctemon a portrait [*eikonin*]of myself. My name is Antonius Maximus, my company [*kenturi(a)*] is the Athenonica. I pray for your health.

[Postscript:] Serenus, son of Agathodaemon, salutes you, and . . . , and Turbo son of Gallonius, and

. . . .

[Addressed:] To Philadelphia, to Epimachus from Apion his son.

[Additional address:] Deliver at the camp of the first cohort of the Apameni to Julianus, vice-secretary [antiliblario] this letter from Apion to be forwarded to his father Epimachus.