

IMPERIUM KONFLIKT MYTHOS
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Press Release

A Roman Ship on the Outer Alster Lake in Hamburg Naming of a Ship Reconstruction from the Time of the Varus Battle

Hamburg, 30th May 2008

From January 2007 to March 2008 historians from the University of Hamburg and boatbuilders from the shipyard of Jugend in Arbeit Hamburg e.V. reconstructed a Roman ship modelled on finds from the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Its performance was demonstrated in first trials on the Ratzeburg Lake, the Elbe-Lübeck-Canal and the Elbe. Before its visits to various towns and cities as the herald for the exhibition project "IMPERIUM KONFLIKT MYTH. 2000 Years Varus Battle", it was named "Victoria" today, 30th May 2008, on the Outer Alster Lake in Hamburg.

Six Co-operation Partners

The reconstruction of the Roman ship is a joint project of the University of Hamburg, the shipyard Jugend in Arbeit Hamburg e.V., the Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe (LWL), the Varusschlacht im Osnabrücker Land GmbH – Museum und Park Karkriese, the Landesverband Lippe as well as the Kreis Lippe. The ship will make up part of the exhibitions "IMPERIUM KONFLIKT MYTH. 2000 Years Varus Battle" which next year will deal with various aspects of the battle in museums in Haltern (Westphalia), in Kalkriese (Lower Saxony) and in Detmold (Kreis Lippe).

At the same time the reconstruction has to do with an archaeological experiment. Up to now it was not known how this type of ship performed and how manoeuvrable it was. Now that a complete reconstruction was available tests could be made to ascertain the speeds and manoeuvrability of this ship.

An Authentic Reconstruction

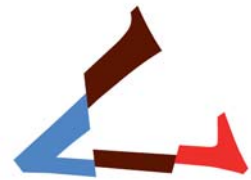
Exactly like the originals, the Roman ship is 16 m long and almost 3 m wide; it weighs about 3 tons. It has space for 20 oarsmen as well as for a helmsman and a captain. Two boat builders, 17 students and three boat building apprentices worked almost 15 months on it. In January 2007 the keel was laid for the ship, on 31st March 2008 it was afloat for the first time. Two Roman shipwrecks served the shipbuilders and students of the Department of Ancient History as a model for the reconstruction. They had been discovered in 1986 on the Danube in the vicinity of Oberstimm, not far from Ingolstadt, and raised in 1994. The Museum of Ancient Shipping in Mainz provided the basic archaeological study and a model which the builders used to orientate their work. The materials for building the reconstruction came from Lippe: firstly oak for the frame, including 700 lathed wooden pegs, which hold the ship together. Then there is larch for

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„IMPERIUM KONFLIKT MYTHOS. 2000 Jahre Varusschlacht“ ist ein Ausstellungsprojekt im Jahre 2009 getragen von:

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the planking and mast as well as spruce for the oars. The Landesverband Lippe supplied the wood from its forests. The ship builders used the mortise-and-tenon-techniques, just as the Romans did. All in all the reconstruction of the Roman ship cost around 250.000 Euro.

Results of the Trials

The Roman ship was tested for four weeks on the Ratzeburg Lake; then the students and the boatbuilders sailed the ship back to the shipyard via the Elbe-Lübeck-Canal and the Elbe. They took three days for the 150 km journey.

The ship's manoeuvrability was tested, using the ship's sails and with the 20 oarsmen. The ship performed remarkably well: using its sails, it reached speeds of up to six knots (11 km/h). The twenty oarsmen reached almost the same speed. Its acceleration, too, was considerable. Using its sails, the galley attained a speed of three knots in 10-20 seconds. The ship is very manoeuvrable: it can turn 180 degrees in only 30 seconds. In this fashion the tests provide quite new findings relevant to the establishment of Roman rule in Germanic territory.

The scientific results have been published in an illustrated volume: Rudolf Asskamp and Christoph Schäfer (eds.): Projekt Römerschiff. Nachbau und Erprobung für die Ausstellung 'IMPERIUM KONFLIKT MYTHOS. 2000 Jahre Varusschlacht', Koehlers Verlagsgesellschaft. Hamburg 2008.

The Roman Ship on Tour

Now that the scientific tests have been concluded, the ship will be heading towards various towns and cities in Germany and neighbouring countries from June 2008. It can be viewed there. At the same time the wooden ship is heralding the exhibition project "IMPERIUM CONFLICT MYTH. 2000 Years Varus Battle". Its stops are e.g. Hamburg-Harburg (6.-8.6.), Mainz (20.-23.6.), Rheine, Westphalia (11.-13.07.), Xanten (8.-10.8.), Nijmegen (22.-24.8.), Bonn (29-31.8) and Minden (26.-28.9.); further stops are planned for Magdeburg, Ingolstadt and Hanover.

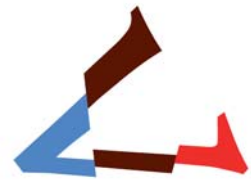
Statements

Hamburg's Senator for Science

Dr. Gerlinde Gundelach

"This wonderful project shows that there is great potential in the successful combination of science and practical craftsmanship and that the humanities can perfectly well leave their ivory tower. The ancient Romans would have been delighted. At the same time the building project provides unemployed young people with a new career perspective and makes its contribution to quickly finding work for them and to integrating them into the labour market."

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The President of the University of Hamburg

Prof. Dr.-Ing. habil. Monika Auweter-Kurtz

“From my point of view the project “Roman ship” is a convincing symbiosis of theory and practice. The reconstruction made not only new scientific findings possible but enabled all those concerned to experience something of history directly. I am most pleased that a research object at the University of Hamburg could literally become reality. Furthermore the successful co-operation between different institutions. I am quite proud that the University of Hamburg is involved in a big exhibition project and can also make a contribution to the training of young people by co-operating with the shipyard Jugend in Arbeit Hamburg e.V.”

The Director of the Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe (LWL), Dr. Wolfgang Kirsch:

“In our LWL-Römermuseum in Haltern the exhibition “IMPERIUM” with famous exhibits from the great museums of the world will be demonstrating to its visitors the development of Rome from a village on seven hills to the dominant power in the Mediterranean area. The biography of Publius Quintilius Varus and the history of his family, whose family tree took them back to the very origin of Rome, form the leitmotif for the exhibition. During the Roman campaigns into Germania the most extensive concentration of military installation at that time came into being in today’s Haltern. The boathouses, the remains of which archaeologists have excavated at Haltern, are part of this enormous military base.”

The Landrat of the Kreis Lippe, Friedrich Heuwinkel

“In Lippe the Roman ship will anchor in May 2009 in the moat of the Detmold Castle in front of the Lippisches Landesmuseum at the opening of the exhibition MYTH and certainly attract considerable public attention. A tour on the Weser from Hedemünden, where the first Roman camp in Lower Saxony was discovered in 1988, to Minden is planned to demonstrate the ship’s performance on Lippe’s waters – a route such as the Romans would have taken 2000 years ago”, commented the Landrat of the Kreis Lippe Friedrich Heuwinkel.

Landrat Manfred Hugo, Landkreis Osnabrück

**Chairman of the Superior Board of the VARUSSCHLACHT im Osnabrücker Land GmbH –
Museum und Park Kalkriese**

“Based on the findings of two decades of scientific research into the ancient battlefield in Kalkriese, the exhibition CONFLICT will reconstruct the fight against Rome and the road taken by the Germanic tribes to dominance in ancient Europe and offer answers to the central question: Why war? A question which moves us still down to this very day.”

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