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Associazione per lo studio e la conservazione delle imbarcazioni veneziane

Taken from Dante's *Divina Commedia*, 'Arzanà' is the ancient name of the State ship building yard of the Venetian Republic, the *Arsenale*. The aims of today's Arzanà Association are the salvage, study and preservation of traditional naval heritage.

It was founded in Brest in 1992 during the second international meeting of period vessels (which takes place once every four years) and now has around forty members as well as countless collaborators and supporters. Over the last twenty years the non profit Arzanà Association has purchased around fifty period boats of all kinds: working boats in wood, sailing and rowing boats, all of which were saved from certain destruction; it also purchased equipment, tools and other finds of historical-ethnographical interest from *squeri* (boat building yards) or craftsmen workshops that closed down. This heritage of Venetian maritime tradition is to be preserved in the ancient *Casa dell'Arsenale* of the Venetian Republic and in other venues in Venice, in collaboration with the Italian Navy, the Institution for the conservation of the gondola, the city council administration, the Italian Institute of archaeology and ethnology and various other Venetian associations.

Most of the items in these collections were salvaged, rediscovered or donated by private citizens; others are temporary collections registered with the pertinent Superintendency and currently housed in the premises of the Arzanà in Calle de le Pignatte in Cannaregio, an ancient boat building yard, first documented in the fifteenth century and active until 1920. This was where one of the most important families of gondola makers, originally from the Belluno mountain district in the Dolomites, worked: the Casal dei Servi family.

The numerous kinds of vessels purchased by the Arzanà and housed in the club premises, in the Arsenale and other venues include *barche da seràgianti*, *batèle*, *batelóni*, *bragàgne*, *bragozzi*, *sciopòni*, *topi*, *puparini*, period gondolas (including the philological copy of an eighteenth-century gondola) as well as countless other types of vessels that have now disappeared in our lagoons or are the last surviving example.

A dozen of these boats have been restored using traditional methods and are kept in water permanently and may be used by members and supporters wishing to take part in cultural initiatives and festivals.

The Arzanà is financed thanks to annual contributions from its members and contributions from friends. It has launched an appeal to Bodies, Associations, Foundations and private figures who would like to make a contribution towards the restoration and maintenance of these period boats and thus be named in the "Adopt a Boat" programme. These boats may then be used by their benefactors for their own needs.