

Constructing maritime worlds: the problem of objects

Linda Hulin and Damian Robinson, Oxford Centre for Maritime Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford

The creation of boat models or the decoration of pottery with images of boats and their deposition in graves are specific acts of cultures engaged with lakes, rivers or seas. Such a creative use of a maritime ‘vocabulary’ within the object world of a community may speak to the heart of their ideals and represent concepts and thoughts in a tangible way, and such objects are fundamental to modern studies of ancient maritime worlds. This paper comes out of the Oxford Centre for Maritime Archaeology’s *Constructing maritime worlds* project, which aims to document ship and boat models, and selected maritime images, across the museums in Oxford, initially focussing on the collections from the Ashmolean museum. The nature of these collections is, inevitably random, being the product of a mixture of directed collection strategy and opportunistic acquisition over successive generations. It might, then, be argued that little can be gained by examining them as a group. However, boat models and images have the potential to shed light upon not just the variability of maritime engagement, but the degree of penetration of maritime images into fundamental social institutions, delineating the variability of maritime sensibility, or routine awareness of life on water, within ancient societies.

The project seeks to test the proposition that the ubiquity and diversity of maritime images within a community is not only indicative of the strength and value of the maritime activity, but is also mediated by social factors. The paper focuses upon material in the Cyclades and the Nile Valley in the Ashmolean. Whilst not obvious candidates for a comparative study, in fact together they illustrate the differing responses to similar situations. The inhabitants of both the Cyclades and the Nile Valley would have had a constant awareness of water and water travel, even if one took place in sweet, rather than salt water. What will become clear through these two case studies is that this awareness was located very differently in their respective symbolic realms places, which has been obscured by over-arching narratives that focus upon nautical developments.

This paper focuses upon the Cyclades and the Nile valley in the third millennium. Four lead boat models are currently known from the Cyclades, all from the island of Naxos and datable to the Early Cycladic II period. Three are now in the Ashmolean museum, and the fourth in Liverpool. They have a rarity and an appeal that ensures their display in a museum setting, and they occupy an equally prominent place in discussions of maritime development of trade and social formation on the islands.¹ The Ashmolean also houses an example of a so-called ‘frying pan’—a ritual object of uncertain use—with an image of a boat incised upon it. Included in this discussion will be examples from the Ashmolean’s Egyptian collection, which embraces boat models in ivory, terracotta, faience, and stone, as well as images of boats painted onto pots and, in one case, a ceramic box. All date to the Naqada II or II-III periods, but provide a context for the differences between the engagement of maritime imagery in Old Kingdom Egypt and the Cyclades.

Case study 1: The Cyclades 2650-2450 BC

¹ C. Broodbank, ‘The Longboat and Society in the Cyclades in the Keros-Syros Culture’, *American Journal of Archaeology* 93/3 (1989), pp. 319–37.

Our first task is to navigate away from the objectifying influence of museum displays, which takes objects that are, ultimately, opportunistically acquired (within the context of the collection as a whole), and strategically displayed (within the context of the visitor story as a whole). Approaches to boat models fall within a three-step pattern: (1) nautical and technological characteristics are noted, mirroring the founding interests of maritime archaeology; (2) they are then placed within their economic context, and finally, but by no means universally, (3) within their cultural context.² Thus Broodbank placed the Naxos craft within the technological development of a ‘long third millennium’ that reached back to the end of the Neolithic, when similar vessels were carved in the rock at Strophytous on Andros;³ images pecked into stone slabs near the Keros-Syros site of Kophi t’Aroniou continue the tradition of representations in rock art into the Early Cycladic period on Naxos.⁴ However, his identification of a horizon of sewn craft across western Europe and the central Mediterranean and, indeed, technologically comparable lashed ceremonial- and war-craft of the southern hemisphere is, ultimately of use only in steps 1 and 2 of the analysis outlined above.⁵ The construction of technological narratives across time are essential to the construction of the *long durée* of economy and society in the Mediterranean and elsewhere, but in themselves shed but dim light upon the function and perception of boat models and imager within different societies. However, the Cycladic boat models have been drawn into the wider socio-economic narrative, which saw the inclusion of boat imagery in ritually-charged contexts across the Mediterranean, and incorporated into a more complex symbolic repertoire represented across a wide range of media from pots to architecture, from Malta to Egypt. Broodbank linked this to the emergence of voyagers, ancestors of the Argonautic ideal, mariners made specialist through the tension between the marine and agricultural economies.⁶

The ships upon which the Naxos models (Figure 1) were thought to be based are estimated to have been between 15 and 20 metres long, and would have required a crew of at least 24 to paddle them.⁷ The model is of a type of longboat that is seen as being of crucial importance in trading, particularly the acquisition of metal ores (lead and silver) and status objects (particularly obsidian) that were required for the development of social hierarchies and complexity in the Cycladic region. To propel these boats would have taken teams of rowers, the training of whom would have required significant investment of time. The ability to summon rowers implies a complexity not obvious from the relatively undifferentiated small-scale settlements on the islands at the time.⁸ The assumption, then, is that the boats were manned by agriculturalists, but it is reasonable to assume that they were helmed by more skilled practitioners who built, looked after, and repaired the boats, and who possessed

² Such considerations resonate with the aims of the *Constructing Maritime Worlds* project. We aim to provide a detailed, technical study of boat models in the museum collections in Oxford, from the 3rd millennium BC to the twentieth century (step 1) and to consider their place in the societies from which they derived, which range widely from the religious (objects deposited in graves and temples) to the technical (eighteenth-century scale models made to test the design efficiency prior to ship-construction, to tourist memento (clove-boats from Indonesia) (step 3). Our thanks go to Paul Collins and Liam Macnamara in the Ashmolean museum for their help in phase 1 of the project, to Ian Cartwright in the Institute of Archaeology, University of Oxford, who took the excellent photographs, and to Simon Plessey, whose skill as a draughtsman is also evident here.

³ C.A. Televantou, ‘Strofilas: A Neolithic Settlement on Andros’, in *Horizon: A Colloquium on the Prehistory of the Cyclades*, eds N. Brodie, G. Gavalas and C. Renfrew (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 43–53.

⁴ C. Doumas, ‘Korphi t’Aroniou’, *ArchDelt* 20 (1965), figs 4, 7.

⁵ C. Broodbank, *The making of the middle sea. A history of the Mediterranean from the beginning to the emergence of the Classical World*. (London, 2013), pp. 327–9.

⁶ C. Broodbank, *The making of the middle sea*, pp. 329–30.

⁷ C. Broodbank 1989; *An Island Archaeology of the Early Cyclades* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 100–1.

⁸ C. Broodbank, ‘The Longboat and Society in the Cyclades in the Keros-Syros Culture’, *American Journal of Archaeology* 93/3 (1989), pp. 319–37; *Island archaeology*, pp. 320–1.

navigational skills—knowledge of waves, tides, currents, local and regional topography and stars wind, sea birds etc.⁹

This model of a lead boat from Naxos in the Cycladic islands is one of the prized maritime objects on display in the galleries of the Ashmolean and illustrations of it appear regularly in discussions of Bronze Age seafaring in the Aegean. Clearly then from its visibility in the literature of seafaring and Aegean archaeology we should perhaps expect boat models to be a relatively common item in the material world of Naxos, or the Cyclades, yet all of the known examples come from the same island, and possibly the same site.¹⁰ With this exception, boat models do not appear to be part of the funerary traditions and practices for the majority of Naxian society. Boat models originally made in the Cyclades, we must assume that their distribution was indeed originally limited to this one site.

However, long-boat images appear in another medium, incised into so-called ‘frying pans’. These are objects of uncertain, but most likely mundane use (they show no sign of burning, nor do they appear to have functioned as lids) (Figure 2).¹¹ Frying pans have a wider distribution in the Cyclades than boat models (extending to the Greek mainland and, much more rarely, to Anatolia), but it is important to note that only thirteen examples decorated with boats are known: seven that were excavated from the cemetery at Chalandriani on Syros,¹² and the remainder assigned to Syros on stylistic grounds.¹³ Chalandriani was an unusual site in the Cyclades, being considerably larger than most sites (or so it is inferred from the size of the cemetery). Within the Cycladic context, where significant variability in wealth is not evident, a number of graves at Chalandriani contained imported goods, including metal and stone wares.¹⁴ Frying pans of any kind form a minority element within the burial repertoire at Chalandriani,¹⁵ the symbolic repertoire being dominated by marble folded arm figurines, and, more rarely, zoomorphic vessels. Thus boat images represents a minority motif within a minority form, occurring with a number of maritime-related motifs that are themselves more widespread: fish, sun/star symbols and abstract ‘sea-spirals’ that may represent billowing waves and which hint at practices of celestial navigation.¹⁶ Broodbank emphasised the specialness of the graves with fish imagery, and certainly they co-occur with other imported grave goods. This can be interpreted in one of two ways, either as an elite signifier, referencing proto-argonauts¹⁷ (and see also Catapoti’s discussion of the embodiment of the warrior in Early Bronze Age Cyclades),¹⁸ or as signifying the emergence of a maritime subculture, as argued by Tartaron.¹⁹ The latter does not exclude the possibility of the acquisition of wealth (although at this point, the Cycladic settlements are generally heterarchical), but does privilege community ties based upon the transmission of knowledge. If maritime images reflected elite power in general, then one might expect them to be more widespread in the Cyclades.

⁹ Enduring knowledge systems discussed in detail in T.F. Tartaron, *Maritime networks in the Mycenaean world* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 90–138.

¹⁰ C. Renfrew, ‘Cycladic Metallurgy and the Aegean Early Bronze Age’, *American Journal of Archaeology* 71/1 (1967), p. 5.

¹¹ J.E. Coleman, ‘“Frying pans” of the Early Bronze Age Aegean’, *American Journal of Archaeology* 89 (1985), p. 204.

¹² Ch. Tsountas, ‘Kykladika II’, *ArchEph* (1899), p. 89.

¹³ J.E. Coleman, Frying pans, pp. 191–219, 327.

¹⁴ C. Renfrew, L. Marangou, and G. Gavalas eds, *Keros, Dhaskalos Kavos the investigations of 1987–88* (Cambridge, 2007).

¹⁵ C. Broodbank, *Island Archaeology*, pp. 249–53.

¹⁶ J.E. Coleman, Frying pans, pp. 198–9, 207–8; Broodbank, *Island Archaeology*, pp. 249–53.

¹⁷ C. Broodbank, *Middle Sea*, p. 329.

¹⁸ D. Catapoti, ‘Further thoughts on the *International Spirit*: maritime politics and consuming bodies in the early Cyclades’, in *The seascape in Aegean Prehistory*, ed. G. Vavouranakis (Athens, 2011), pp. 71–89.

¹⁹ T.F. Tartaron, *Maritime Networks in the Mycenaean World* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 125.

Of relevance here is the island cult site of Dhaskalio Kavos and its seasonal sister settlement close to the shore on the island of Keros. The ceramics indicate that the island's ritual constituency was wide, embracing the Keros-Syros triangle, as well as, less obviously, the Argolid.²⁰ Renfrew referred to the site as a 'symbolic attractor', declaring it to be the first maritime sanctuary, maritime in the sense that it was reached by water. From the material evidence, however, this would appear to be the limits of its maritime connections. No boat models have been found, and very few frying pans, so few, in fact, as to form a pattern of deliberate exclusion.²¹ Fish images have been found on only four vessel fragments, none of them frying pans.²² Instead the repertoire was dominated by figurine fragments, with some zoomorphic vessels. Very little metal was found. Renfrew sought to explain this absence by suggesting a 'culture of snobbery' operated at the site; certainly if many things could be brought to the place, then the fact that some were not suggests some kind of exclusionary decision-making was in operation. At Chalandriani, most graves align themselves with the repertoire of Dhaskalio Kavos; perhaps, then, the choice to bury someone with maritime-related objects could signify membership of a group of seafarers that constituted a subgroup even at Chalandriani, a group formed by the possession and transmission of skills and who curated the long boats on behalf of the wider island community that formed the crew. The status of that subgroup is open to question, since they do not present as wealthier than others in the cemetery.

Even so, we can see that the material from the Cyclades supports our initial proposition that the position of maritime images within the symbolic repertoire does not reflect the socio-economic value of maritime trade. The wider repertoire, as expressed in the cemetery at Chalandriani and the religious centre at Dhaskalio Kavos, had yet to incorporate such images within its repertoire, even though, given the numbers of oarsmen needed, sea travel would have part of the experience of significant numbers in all island communities; indeed, the wide-ranging communities that went to Dhaskalio Kavos could only have reached the site by sea. Egypt, the subject of our second case study, is another arena in which water travel would have been a constant of in the life of many, if not, most inhabitants of the Nile valley. However, unlike the inhabitants of the Cyclades, the communities of the Nile valley chose to respond to this activity in a positive way, drawing boats into the symbolic and mythic realm. This occurred in the predynastic period, at the same time as the (Neolithic) Cyclades was engaged in vigorous trade with the Greek mainland, yet, as noted above, Neolithic antecedents to EC II boats imagery are few. Thus it could be argued that the avoidance of maritime imagery within the Cycladic visual repertoire has a long history, in which case the question becomes why did it increase in the EC period at all. Was there a significant expansion of sea-borne activity? Broodbank highlighted the greater sailing range made possible by the introduction of sewn boat technology enabling the construction of outsize canoes.²³ Or did the social organisation of that trade change, with not so much the emergence of maritime specialists, who would have been necessary in the Neolithic period as

²⁰ C. Broodbank, 'The Pottery', in *Keros, Dhaskalio Kavos the investigations of 1987-88*, eds C. Renfrew, L. Marangou, and G. Gavalas (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 131-2; C. Renfrew, O. Philaniotou, N. Brodie, G. Gavalas, E. Margaritis, C. French and P. Sotirakopoulou, 'Keros: Dhaskalio and Kavos, Early Cycladic stronghold and ritual centre: preliminary report of the 2006 and 2007 excavation seasons', *Annual of the British School at Athens* 102 (2007), pp. 103-36.

²¹ C. Broodbank, 'The Pottery', in *Keros, Dhaskalio Kavos the investigations of 1987-88*, eds C. Renfrew, L. Marangou, and G. Gavalas (Cambridge, 2007), p. 177.

²² C. Broodbank, 'The Pottery', pp. 136, 139. Out of 507 incised images, only 2 were of fish, both on the Dark Blue version of Blue Schist ware; a further painted examples were found, although others, also few in number, were found in the 1960s excavations.

²³ C. Broodbank, *The Middle Sea*, pp. 328-9.

well, but an increasing self-identification by those specialists?²⁴ As noted above, the material benefits of membership to a maritime subculture are not obvious; they may, or indeed must, have increased in the social realm, in which case the reasons for this may well lie in relations within the Cycladic communities as a whole.

Case study 2: Egypt

The Keros-Syros culture is broadly contemporary with the fifth dynasty of Egypt. In Egypt, boat models recur throughout the material culture of the predynastic period early dynasties of Egypt and have a long life in pharaonic Egypt. However, we can go beyond the simple observation that the Egyptian religious system responded more positively to activities on water than did that in the Cyclades and present a nuanced picture of this engagement. On closer examination, there is a similar exclusion of maritime ventures, but for different reasons.

By the Old Kingdom, Egypt had had a long history of engagement with the Mediterranean. The pharaohs of the Old Kingdom were actively engaged in trade with the Mediterranean. Alabaster vases bearing royal names found in Byblos date back to the second dynasty. The possible scale of trade ventures is indicated by the 40 ships of cedar logs imported by king Sahure in the fourth dynasty, cedar being destined for prestige projects, such as the fittings on the Cheops' boat burials.²⁵

This trade has long antecedents. Egypt was active in the Mediterranean towards the end of the third millennium, acquiring timber from the Lebanon and, possibly, Cyrenaica, and a range of goods from its settlements in the Negev. There is evidence to suggest port facilities at Ashkelon, likely subsidiary to the nearby Egyptian Naqada I-II settlement at Tell es-Sakan.²⁶ While the precise organisation of Egyptian trade with the Mediterranean in the Old Kingdom is not yet clear—there is a debate over the extent to which it was manned or controlled by Asiatics²⁷—it is clear that such trade was a high-prestige activity.²⁸

However, there are relatively few images of sea-going ships in Egypt, and these occur relatively late. There are rare depictions of vessels with sails in the Naqada period,²⁹ it is not clear if they were capable of putting to sea, since tension cables, necessary to prevent ships breaking up at sea, appear to be absent. Images of sea-going vessels first appear in reliefs from the funerary temple of Sahure at Abusir, which depicts an entire fleet.³⁰ By way of contrast, scenes in tombs belonging to court officials and priests of the fourth-sixth dynasties (mostly the fifth dynasty, with the nine examples) show the construction of a variety of rivercraft,³¹ and models of river boats and small figures of rowers, are also included in their tombs.

Thus it would seem that, as in the Cyclades, there was a limited engagement with maritime imagery. Whereas in the Cyclades this was the result of cultural snobbery and/or religious conservatism that extended back into the Neolithic period, in Egypt boat imagery had a long history, starting in Naqada I, but becoming common in the Naqada II-III period.

²⁴ Characterized by Broodbank as a consequence of travel in the new outsize craft being “ideologically charged, imbued with power, status and cosmological overtones”, *The Middle Sea*, p. 329.

²⁵ W. Culican, *The first merchant venturers. The ancient Levant in history and commerce* (London, 1966), p. 18.

²⁶ P. de Miroshedji and M. Sadeq, ‘Tell es-Sakan’, in *Gaza Méditerranéenne. Histoire et archéologie en Palestine*, ed J.-B. Humbert (Paris, 2000), pp. 101–4.

²⁷ See summary in D. Fabre, *Seafaring in ancient Egypt* (London, 2004), pp. 91–3.

²⁸ B. Landström, *Ships of the Pharaohs, 4000 years of Egyptian Shipbuilding* (London, 1970), pp. 64–5.

²⁹ L. Casson, *The Ancient Mariners. Seafarers and Sea Fighters of the Mediterranean in Ancient Times* (Princeton, 1991), pl. 1; E. Black and D. Samuel, ‘What were sails made of?’, *The Mariner’s Mirror* 77 (1991), pp. 217–26.

³⁰ L. Borchardt, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Sahu-Re* (Osnabruck 1981), pls 11–12.

³¹ S. Mark, *From Egypt to Mesopotamia. A study of predynastic trade routes*, (College Station 1997), pp. 69–87.

Boats and boat scenes are present in a wide variety of media, an indication in itself of the ubiquity of both medium and message. They are found carved into the rock in the eastern desert and Lower Nubia,³² and are included, or form the focus of, scenes painted on jars,³³ on a cloth from Gebelein,³⁴ and a wall in tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis.³⁵

Rock art aside, boat images and models seem to have been confined to the funerary sphere, although admittedly, extensive settlement evidence is lacking. D-ware closed vessels, the creation of specialised workshops, became the medium for boat images (Figure 3). Two or three boats could be painted on each jar, depending upon its size, but the curved surface meant the vessel would have to be rotated to create any form of narrative and in fact, the relationship between each image is unclear. The painted scenes on the wall of Hierakonpolis tomb 100 and the Gebelein cloth are more complex and indeed, it has been suggested that the black boat depicted in tomb 100 represents a visiting vessel from Mesopotamia.³⁶ They have been interpreted as funeral cortèges or elite processions, possibly a *heb-sed* festival, although the boats occupy the central band in each image, their surrounding figures are weakly related to either the vessels or to each other.

Boat models appear to have belonged primarily to the religious sphere, with Hierakonpolis, a burgeoning religious centre in the Nagada II period,³⁷ yielding a number of ivory boat models, although they were also made in stone, terracotta and faience. A wide range of sewn reed and possibly plank boats are represented. Some, although not all, boat models show details of lashing and cabin construction, some with a figure inside (Figure 4); holes in the hull may be to peg boats to large scenes or for a rudder. Images painted on pots show other details, oars or paddles, standards with symbols later related to nomes, and more rarely, tassels, feathers or possibly animal heads at or hanging from the prow. Males wearing penis sheaths and (female) figures with upraised arms occupy the vessels and these details also appear on the Gebelein cloth and in tomb 100. Figures with upraised arms also appear in conjunction with boats in rock peckings in the eastern desert, but the boats in rock art appear to be confined to one type only: with a high prow, and possibly animal prows.

As noted above, river-craft continued to be represented in the pharaonic period. In both royal and private tombs, boats for freight, hunting or pleasure were provided for the use of the deceased in the afterlife; also found were boats needed to transport the mummy of the deceased across the river to his tomb or down to sacred sites.³⁸ In addition, boats with a high prow and stern

recalling those found in the eastern desert in the predynastic period—occur on royal tombs and represent the solar barque of the sun-god Re.

Thus boats are deployed in Egyptian religion as both image and metaphor.³⁹ Boat models were placed in tombs so that souls could make necessary journeys to religious centres, a requirement that was firmly embedded in the religious framework: by the Middle Kingdom, boat models were furnished in pairs, one rigged for sail, the other equipped for rowing, thus enabling travel northwards or southwards, propelled by wind or current.⁴⁰ On a metaphorical level, boat images also represented stability, the pinnacle of which was the aspiration to sail

³² Although see D. Wengrow, *The archaeology of early Egypt* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 111–14 on the difficulties of dating rock art.

³³ L. Basch, *Le Musée imaginaire de la marine* (Athens, 1987).

³⁴ E. Scamuzzi, *Egyptian Art in the Turin Museum of Turin* (New York, 1960), pls. 1–5.

³⁵ J.E. Quibell and F. W. Green, *Hierakonpolis II* (London, 1902), pp. 20–23, pls. 75–9.

³⁶ S. Mark, pp. 778–0.

³⁷ B. Midant-Reynes, *The Prehistory of Egypt. From the First Egyptians to the First Pharaohs* (Oxford 2002), pp. 200–2.

³⁸ D. Jones, *Boats* (London, 1995), pp. 26–30.

³⁹ C.A. Ward, *Sacred and Secular; Ancient Egyptian Ships and Boats* (Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 2–3.

⁴⁰ A. Tooley, *Egyptian models and scenes* (Princes Risborough, 1995) pp. 50–3.

in the solar barque alongside Re, either as royal companion or, for commoners, as crew; a number of texts recount these journeys.⁴¹

Boat models could themselves be embedded in the mythical realm. Figure 5 shows a stone model of a flat-bottomed craft from the Ashmolean, which resting upon serpents. They either refer to the pre-creation universe which is composed of just an infinite body of water-Nun, the entwined female side of which, Naunet, was represented by a snake. In this interpretation, the boat sails on primeval waters, a symbol of the triumph of order over chaos, an enduring trope in Egyptian mythology. Alternatively, the snake could represent Apophis – the force of disorder – who had to be repelled from the sun god Re’s solar barque in order to ensure sunrise and stability in the world.⁴² The use of the boat as a metaphor for safety and stability in the watery world of the Nile and in the context of its flood is easily understood.

Similarly, Figure 6 is of a ceramic box from Hierakonpolis, which includes a drawing of a boat on one face, presented alongside an image of a hippo, a building and a decorative element or net. Hunting images were also painted on the flanks of ceramic hippo models. Hippo hunting became a powerful religious metaphor in Pharaonic culture: the hippopotamus was connected to Ra, but also was seen as an evil agent of the god Seth, so a hunt was once more a way of restoring order, as well as proving hunting skills, a key theme in elite art.⁴³

The close relationship between boat images and myth provides an explanation as to why maritime imagery did not penetrate the religious realm, but remained within the sphere of royal prestige and economy: the religious repertoire was filled in the predynastic period, before the Naqadan expansion into the Delta, at least in relation to narratives of journeying and everyday life. The representation of maritime expedition to Punt shown on the walls of the mortuary temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri continues the link between royal prestige economy and maritime trade in the New Kingdom.⁴⁴ Also in the reign of Hatshepsut the Egyptians become familiar with the Asiatic myth of the Conflict of Asherah and Yam (the god of the sea), a tale which would become part of the canon by the Ramesside period.⁴⁵ However, it is significant that this is a tale of conflict and chaos; Yam, or the sea, generates violence and fear. Thus it is arguable that if maritime images had entered the religious repertoire, they would have stood for chaos, in opposition to river craft, who did stand for order. In fact, Egypt has already developed deities and myths relating to the forces of chaos and had no need of more. Thus images of sea-going ships were confined to the secular sphere; within the mortuary complex of Sahure, they carried the message of wealth and prestige and continued to operate within that visual sphere in the New Kingdom.⁴⁶

Conclusion

We can see that if boat images and boat models are removed from long-term technology-based narratives, and are stripped of their burden as engines of economic complexity, then interesting social decisions come into view. That boat and ship images in the third millennium derive from ritually-charged contexts has been recognised,⁴⁷ but in fact these two

⁴¹ Summarised in Jones 1995, pp. 12–25.

⁴² Cf. I.M.E. Shaw *The Egyptian Myths. A Guide to the ancient gods* (London, 2014), pp. 19–21, 37.

⁴³ For example, the tomb of Antef, the great herald of the king during the reign of Hatshepsut and Tuthmosis III, has a scene in which Antef and his family spear a hippopotamus; E. Prisse d’Avennes and M. Raven, *Atlas of Egyptian Art* (Cairo, 2007), p. 68.

⁴⁴ J. Dümichen, *Te fleet of an Egyptian queen from the XVII century before our era* (Leipzig, 1868).

⁴⁵ T. Schneider, ‘Foreign Egypt: Egyptology and the concept of cultural appropriation’, *Egypt and Levant* 3 (2003), pp. 155–61.

⁴⁶ N. de Garis Davies and R.O. Faulkner, ‘A Syrian Trading Venture to Egypt’, *JEA* 33 (1949), pp. 40–6.

⁴⁷ C. Broodbank, ‘“Ships A-sail from over the Rim of the Sea”: Voyaging, Sailing and the Making of Mediterranean Societies c. 3500-800 BC’, in *The Global Origins and Development of Seafaring*, eds A. Anderson, J.H. Barrett, and K.V. Boyle (Cambridge, 2010) pp. 249–64.

examples show very different ritual responses to the phenomenon of travel on, and engagement with, water. The proposition set forth at the opening of this paper, that intensity of maritime engagement is not necessarily reflected in the ubiquity or diversity of maritime imagery, holds, for we have seen that the inhabitants of both the Cyclades and the Egypt would have had a constant and often close familiarity with water, but that they responded in different ways.

Although boats played an important role on Cycladic life, this was not represented by the widespread adoption of imagery or its uptake in the symbolic or cosmological systems. That what can only have been a small number of individuals chose to include boat models and images on frying pans in their graves is surely a reflection of an active choice on their part, or on the part of those in the community who buried them, and reflective of a personal connection to the sea. The use of long-boats would have required the presence of people who could build and maintain the boats, navigate and act as rowing masters. Members of the wider community, through their specialist knowledge they were set apart through practice, practice which extended to deposition in graves. Thus in the Cyclades we can see the reflection of a true maritime sub-culture, connected to the sea, but with its own ritual and social preferences within the wider ideology.

Patrick and Anderson, argued, in the context of a wider debate on the extent to which the sea represents a barrier or a connecting force, argued that a maritime identity cannot be assumed to apply to all islands, since on larger islands, there will be communities that have no experience of the sea, or even the coast.⁴⁸ It is arguable that, even when that experience can be assumed, as on the small islands of the Cyclades, religious institutions can be slow to react, and Renfrew's perception of cultural snobbery at Dhaskalio-Kavos, may indeed be a reflection of a conservatism that had yet to acknowledge the maritime sub-culture of the coastal communities there, and indeed was not particularly visible in the preceding Neolithic, which also engaged in a lively sea trade.

In Egypt, the Nile represented a highway along which goods, people, armies and kings could travel. However, even in Egypt, experience of the Nile would not have been uniform, there would have been a difference between those that used boats a means of transporting themselves and goods, and those who built them, maintained them and understood how to read a river whose sandbanks shifted after every annual flood. However, because the Egyptians incorporated the concept of the journey into religious myth and used the river and boats as metaphors for the triumph of order over chaos and as a force of enduring stability, any specifically riverine subculture is not visible to us, having been submerged in the wider culture. Engagement with the sea occurred after the formation of the fundamental mythology of the Nile valley, which was driven by the great temples at Abydos and Hierakonpolis. Maritime myth came later, in the second millennium, in spite of an active sea-borne trade in the east Mediterranean. The sea was imbued with qualities the direct opposite of those linked to the river; the sea was a force of chaos to be feared. Thus maritime images were confined to the sphere of power and prestige, but not religion. There was apparently no room for maritime myth and metaphor within the crowded religious world of ancient Egypt, and subsequent economic and political developments did not trigger any religious adaptations.⁴⁹

These case studies serve as a caution to scholars who would use boat models and boat images in narratives of wealth, status and power, since their place in the wider culture cannot be assumed. There are many different reasons why an individual or group may choose to

⁴⁸ S. Fitzpatrick and A. Anderson, 'Islands of isolation: archaeology and the power of aquatic parameters', *Journal of Island and Coastal Archaeology* 3 (2008), pp. 4–16.

⁴⁹ On religious adaptation to changing social realities, see the fundamental text of P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The social construction of reality: a treatise on the sociology of knowledge* (New York, 1966).

include boat models or motifs in their material worlds, and as many reasons why they do not, and that these reasons lie in the social, rather than the economic realm.



Figure 1: Lead boat model from Naxos. EC II. L: 40 cm; H: 3.5 cm; AN 1929.26 © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.



Figure 2: "Frying pan", probably from Chalandriani, Syros. EC II. H: 1.6 cm; Diam.: 19.1 cm, handle: 2.3 cm; AN 1971.842; © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.



Figure 3. D-ware jar from Naqada, form 53B. Naqada II. AN 1895.606; H: 8.9 cm; diam.: 6.6 cm; © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

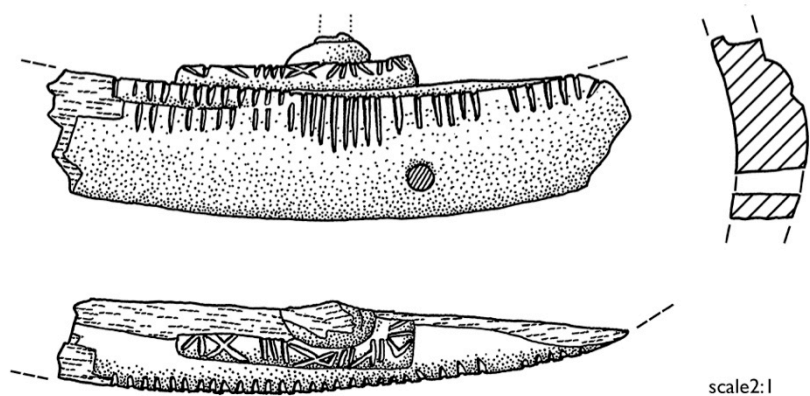


Figure 4: Ivory boat model from Hierakonpolis, broken. Naqada II-III. AN 1896-1908 E.95; L: 8.7 cm; H: 2.8 cm. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.



Figure 5: Serpentine boat model from Hierakonpolis. Naqada II-III. AN 1896-1908. E. 119; L: 27.4 cm; W: 9.5 cm; H: 3.0 cm; © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

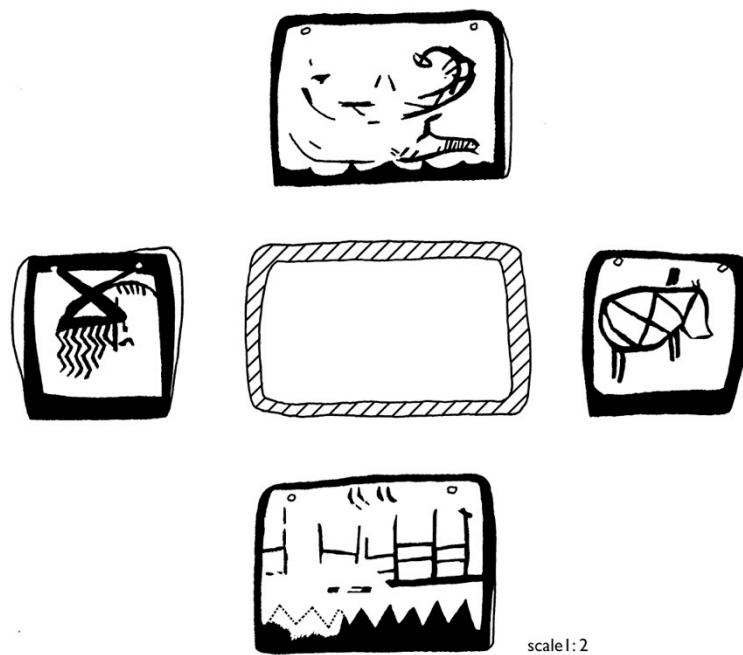


Figure 6: Ceramic box from El-Amra. Naqada IIa. AN 1896-1908 E.2816. L: 19.0 cm; W: 12.8 cm; H: 14.7 cm; © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.