

Week 1, Tuesday
Sailing the Nile and the
Red Sea beyond –
seafaring in ancient Egypt

AHAR5017

Ships and Seafaring in the Mediterranean

Dr. Katharina Zinn







ABU SIMBEL This is one of the two mighty temples hewn from solid rock in Nubia for Ramses II (1279-1213 BC). They were discovered by the Swiss traveler Johann Ludwig Burckhardt in 1813, and excavated more after by the Italian Giovanni Battista Belzoni.

PHILAE This temple, dedicated to the goddess Isis, was built near the first Dynasty. Ptolemaic and Roman times (196 BC to 390 AD) saw the site of the best preserved temples in Egypt. During the building of the Aswan High Dam, a new island on the higher lying island of Agilkia.

EDFU The temple of Edfu, the best preserved in Egypt, dates from the reign of Ptolemy III (244-241 BC) and Ptolemy XII (80-51 BC). A huge granite statue of Horus, the falcon god, flanks the gateway to the colonnaded hall.

THE COLOSSI OF MEMNON As the last remnants of the almost completely vanished mortuary temple of Amenhotep III (1370-1352 BC), these giant sandstone statues are enshrined in solitary splendour in the fertile land of west Thebes.

TEL EL AMARNA This city was founded by Akhenaten (1352-1336 BC) and flourished after his death. It was dedicated to his god Aten, represented by the sun and life rays on many temple and tomb reliefs.

DEIR EL-BAHARI This bay in the cliffs of the western mountains contained the royal mortuary temple of Hatshepsut (1473-1458 BC), pictured here, and Thutmose III (1479-1425 BC).

TESTUM UMM EL-SERKAT

FAFARA OASIS

THE SPHINX The Great Sphinx of Giza, this, a lion's body and a human head, was built during the reign of Khafre (2558-2532 BC).

GIZA Towering over Giza, in the southwest of Cairo, are the three most famous pyramids in the world, built between 2613 and 2494 BC. Together with their mortuary temples and adjacent buildings, the imposing royal tombs are still an awe-inspiring sight.

ALEXANDRIA Founded by Alexander the Great (332-323 BC), Alexandria was famous for its library and the significance of Pharos. In 130 BC it had replaced Memphis as the capital of Egypt. Prone to damage from earthquakes, some of its treasures, including the palace of Cleopatra (51-30 BC), are under water.

MAP OF ANCIENT EGYPT
This shows the most important sites, temples and monuments from the Old Kingdom to the time of the Romans.

A riverine society with access to sea – Mediterranean and Red Sea

Nile and Desert – seafaring is mostly “river-fearing”

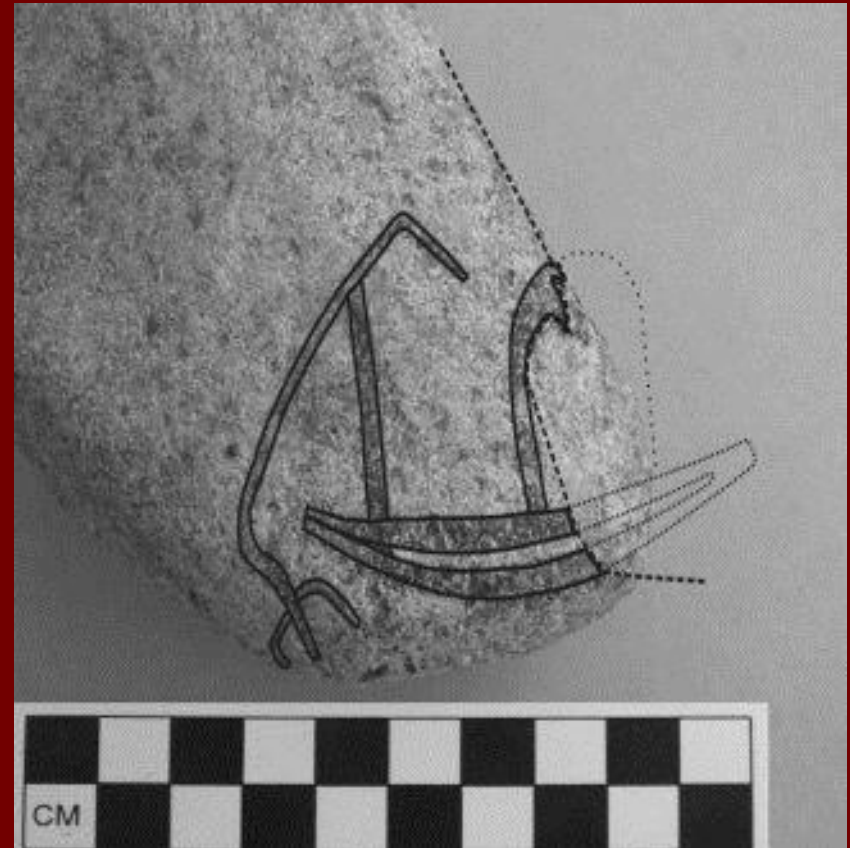
Nile is unpredictable during flood period and due to
cataracts – gaining experience for challenging
seafaring (as in contrast to modern river-cruising)





Oldest boat depiction:

granite pebble with boat decoration → seventh millennium BC, site 16-D-5 on western bank of White Nile (25km south of Omdurman – Sudan)



Hierakonpolis Tomb 100





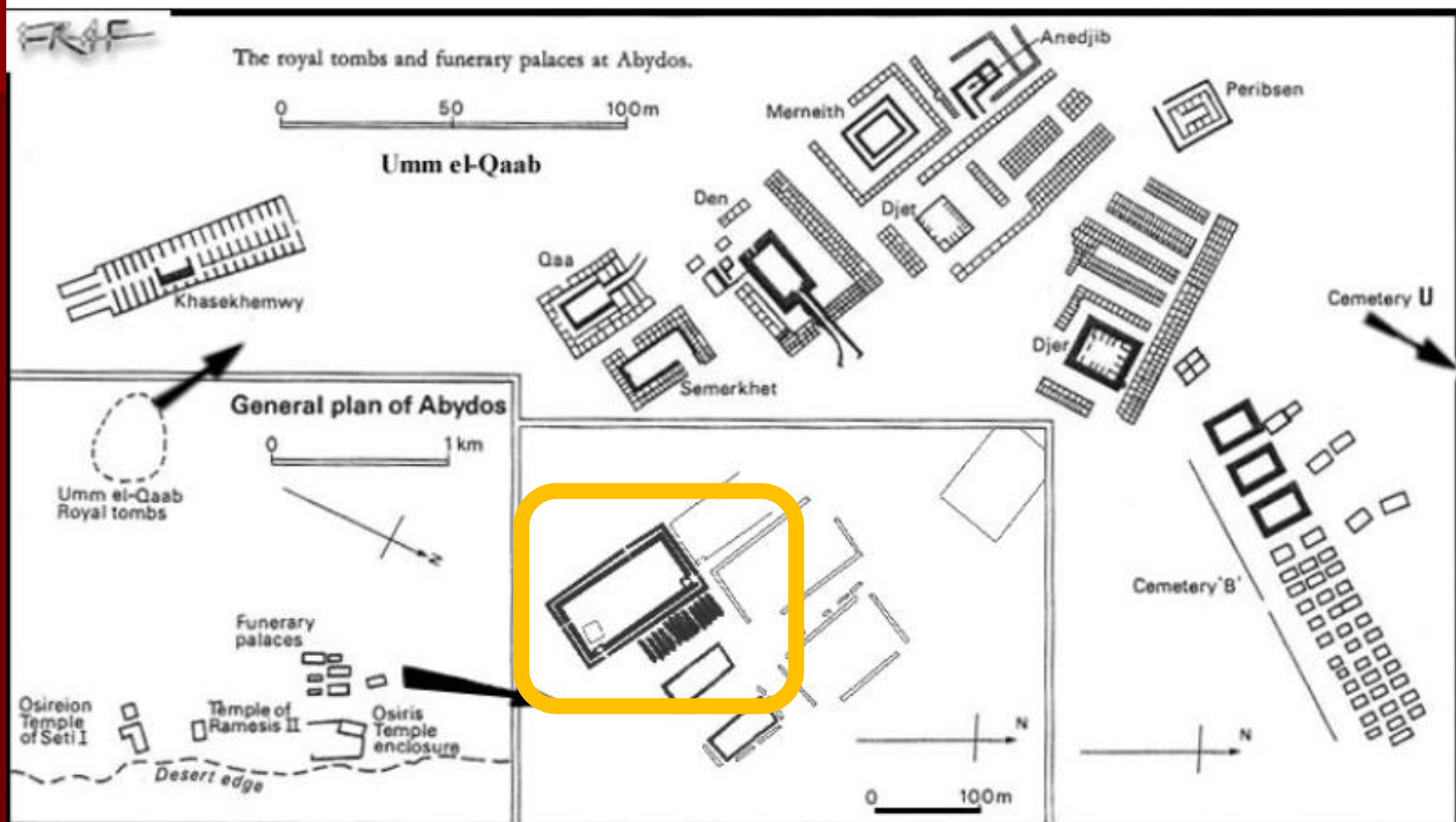
Predynastic (Naqada ii-iii) pottery with boat decorations





Abydos Royal Enclosures, West of Kom es-Sultan (Talbezirke, Funerary enclosures, Open Courts)

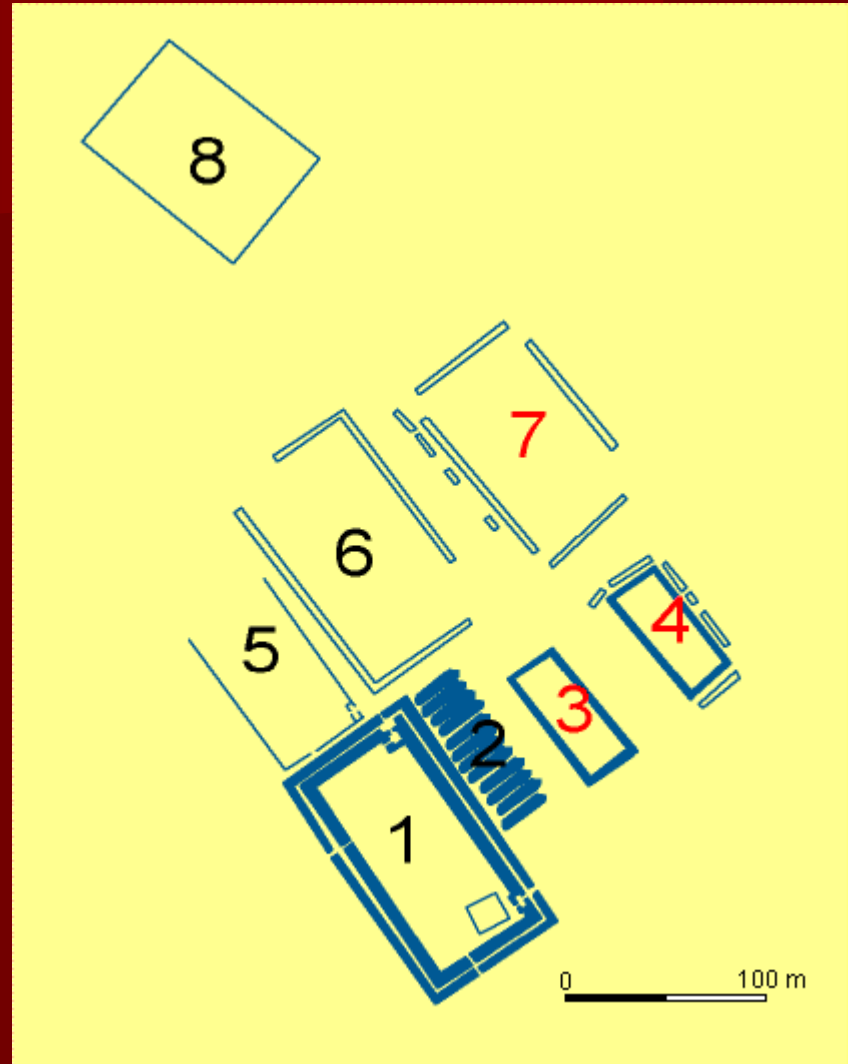
(Francesco Raffaele)



B. Trigger, in: Trigger, Kemp, O'Connor, Lloyd, *Ancient Egypt: A social History*, 1983, fig. 3.2 (with some modifications)

Abydos – Royal Enclosure

1. Khasekhemwy
2. Funerary Boats
3. Anedjib or Semerkhet
4. Merytneit (or Den ?)
5. Peribsen
6. Djer
7. Djet
8. Qaa (?)





Early Dynastic Funerary boats at Abydos North



- Complete fleet of 14 boats
- Before interpreted as bastioned corner of small enclosure
- boats vary from 18/19 to 24/27 meters long
- sealed by mudbrick casing
- Traces of white pigments on planks
- prows towards the Nile
- mudbrick casing support for poles/pennants on top of the boats?

Early Dynastic Funerary boats at Abydos North

- interior of the boats filled with mudbricks too
- boulders aside boats have = model anchors?
- wood planks: painted yellow on outside, not cedar, lashed by holes, rendered impermeable to water by reeds between them
- pottery and small seal impressions in one of the 14 boats → no king's name appears, but general impression more early 1st dyn. (Aha) than 2nd (Khasekhemwy)

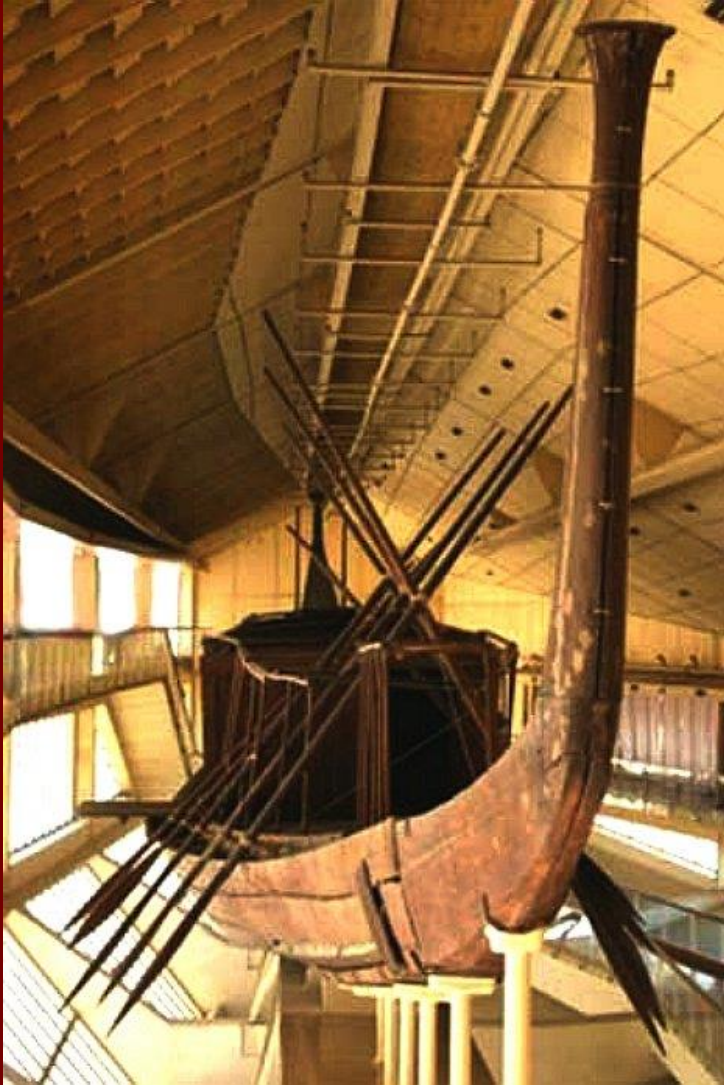


New excavations – Abu Rawash



- solar boat of Den (1st dyn.): l: 6m , w: 1.5m, well preserved
- world's oldest intact ship?
- BELIEF: solar boats→ transport pharaohs in afterlife
- nearly intact, composed of 11 planks of local wood, wood in good condition (preservation by dry desert environment)
- Den not actually buried at Abu Rawash, but Abydos
- Den's seal dated boat

Buried solar boats - Khufu



- In 1954 an Egyptian archaeologist discovered what may be the Pharaoh Khufu's 43-metre solar ship, made of cedar, in a Giza pyramid.
- The 4,500 year-old intact vessel is on display near the pyramid.

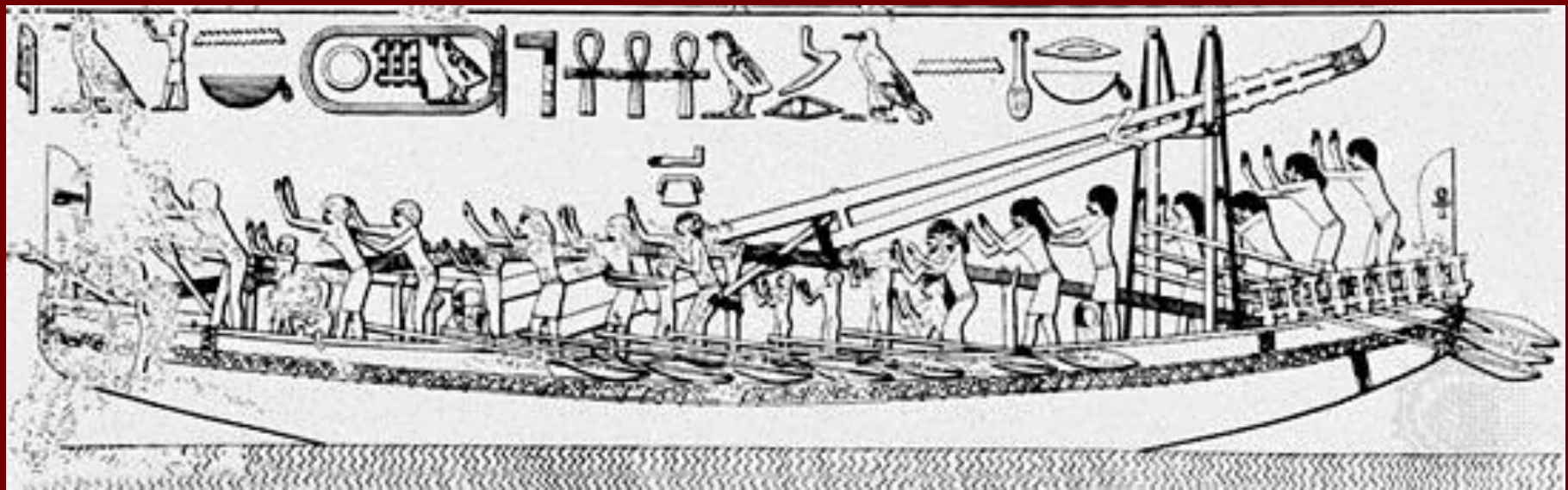


New excavations – Abu Rawash

- site of ruined pyramid Djedefre (son Khufu, 4th dyn.)
- complex includes solar boat pit (ditch 115 feet long cut out of living limestone next to pyramid → intended to hold solar boat, no boat found)
- Filled with thousands of fragments of statues → reconstructed: sculpted heads of Djedefre (Louvre)



Sahure 5th dyn.



Boot models

Procession of model boats (MK, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) –
Tomb 10A Bershah



2 types of boats: sailing downstream, rowing upstream



Both possibilities in one boat



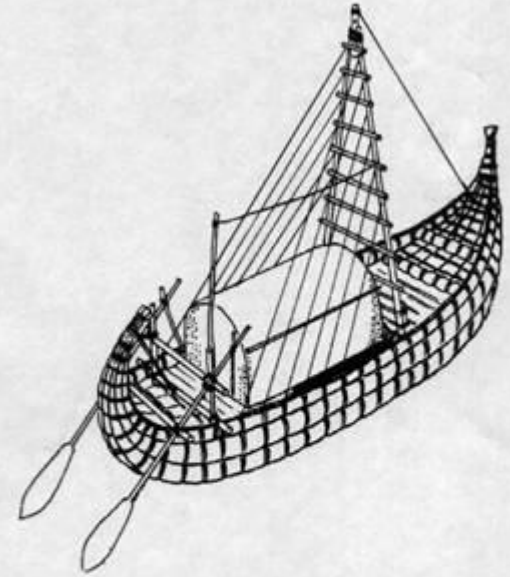


Papyrus boats (use on the Nile only?)

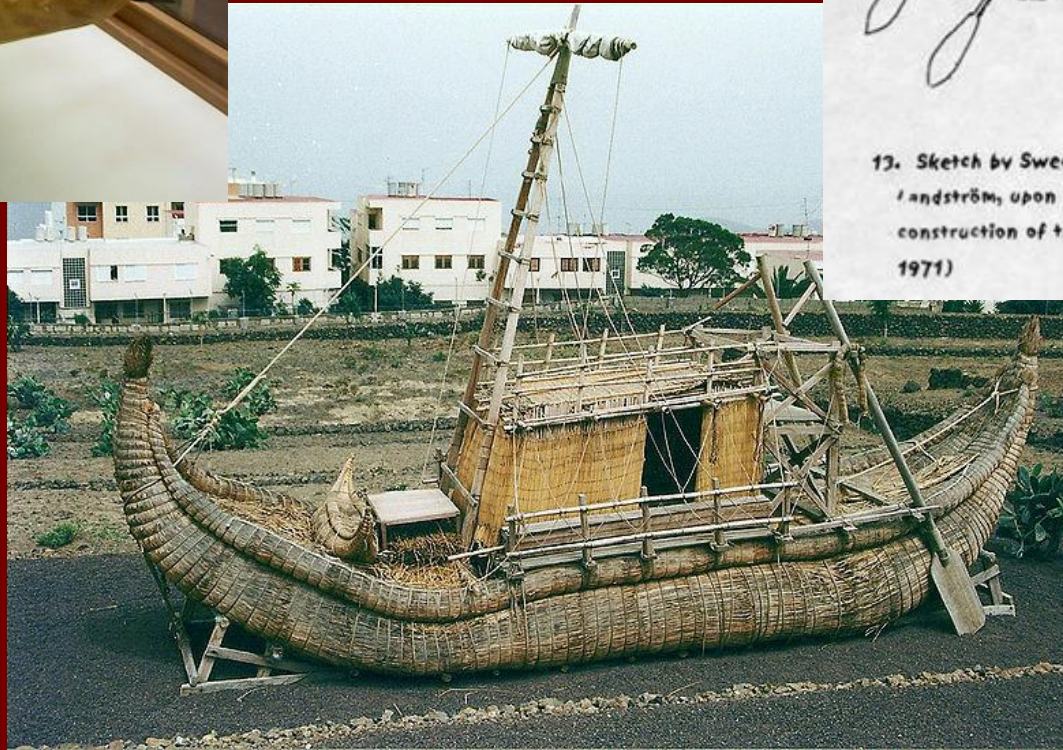


Papyrus boats (use on the Nile only?)

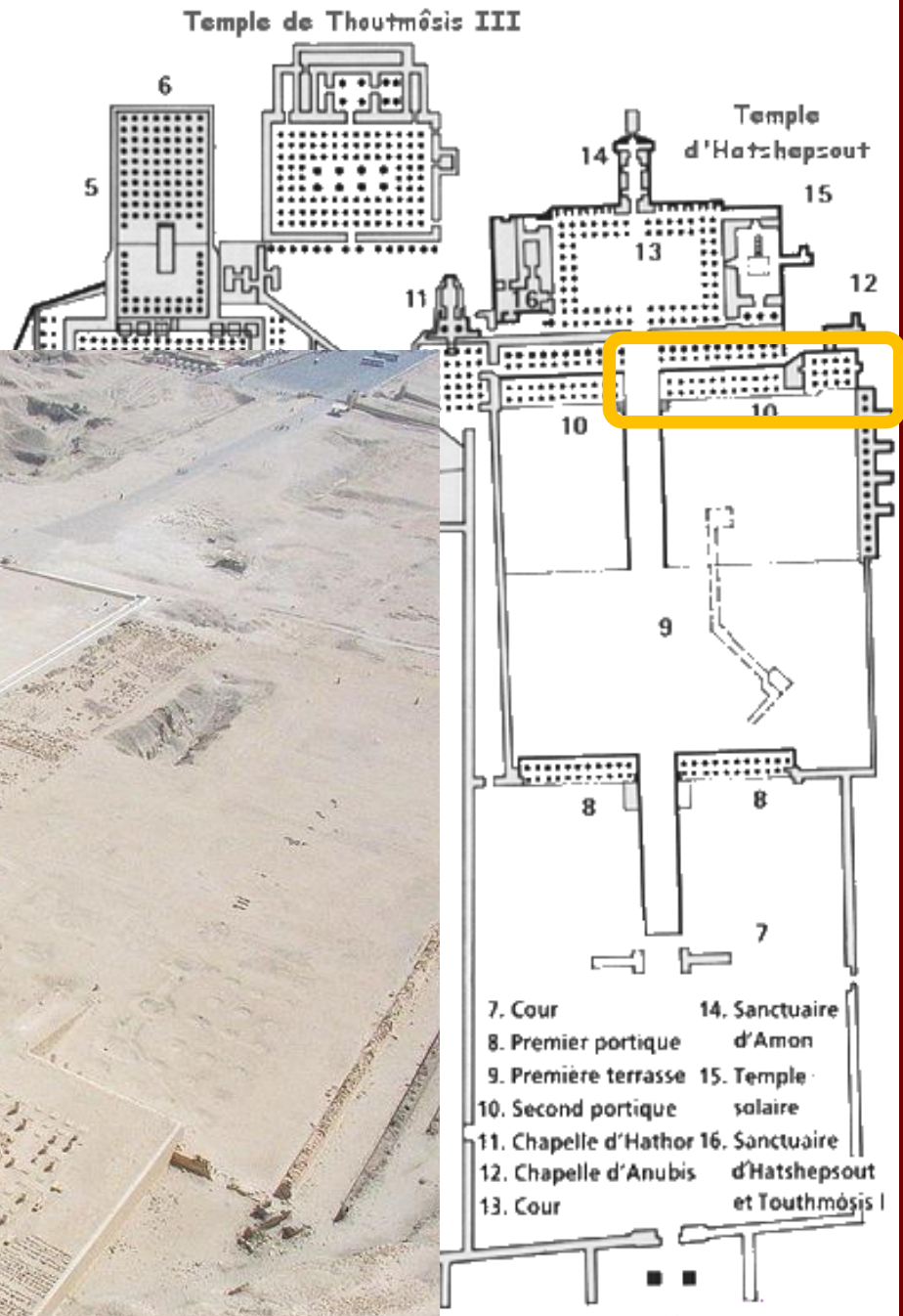
Thor Heyerdahl – Reed Boat Ra II



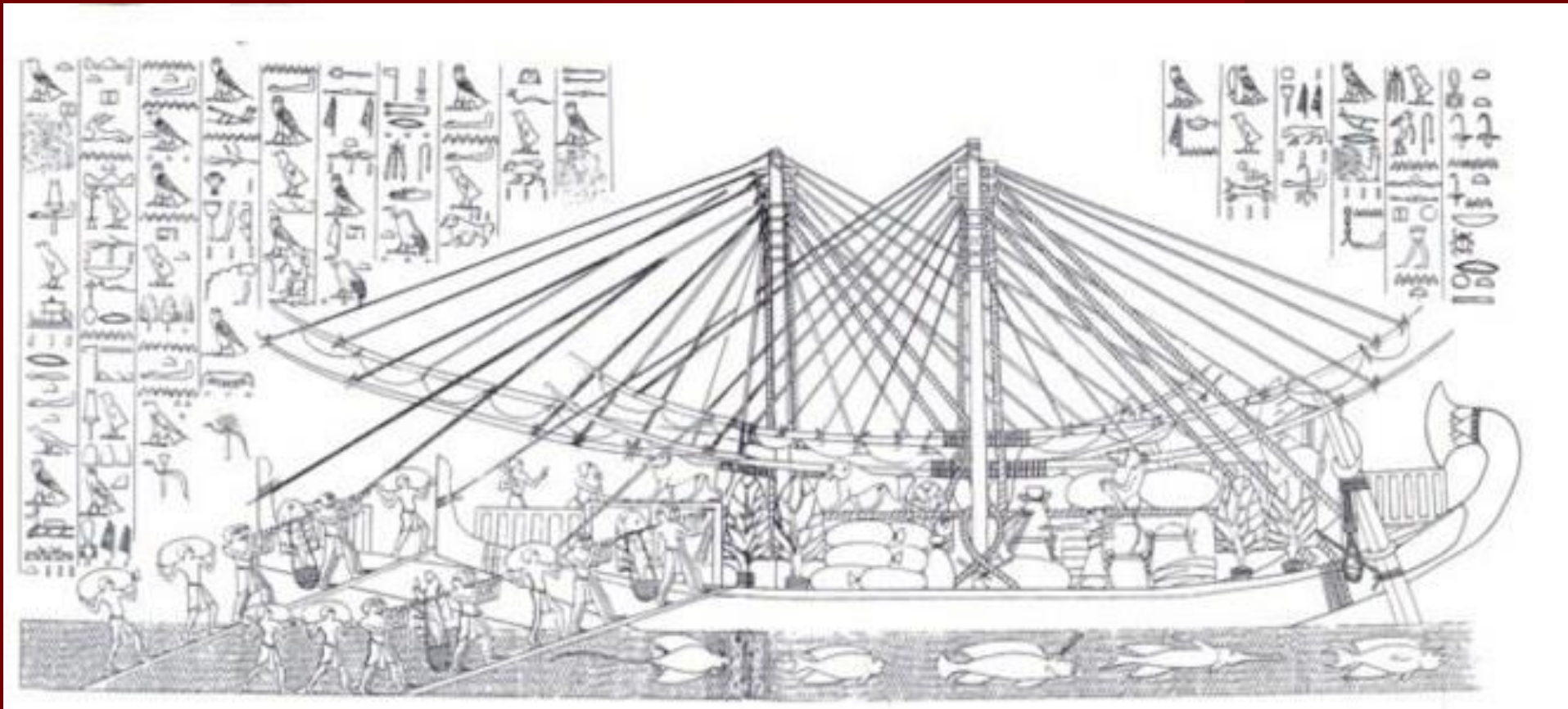
13. Sketch by Swedish maritime history expert Björn Landström, upon which Thor Heyerdahl based the construction of the reed boat *Ra* (after Heyerdahl 1971)



Deir el-Bahari



Deir el-Bahari and the Red Sea



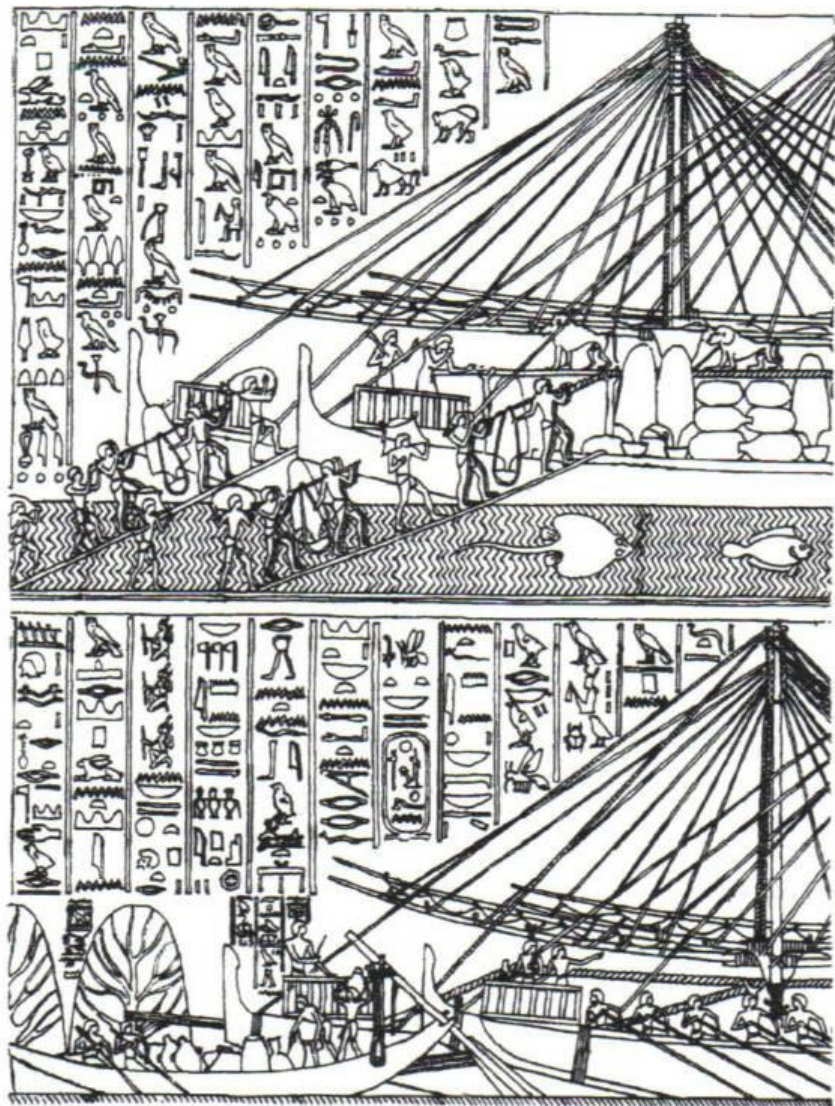
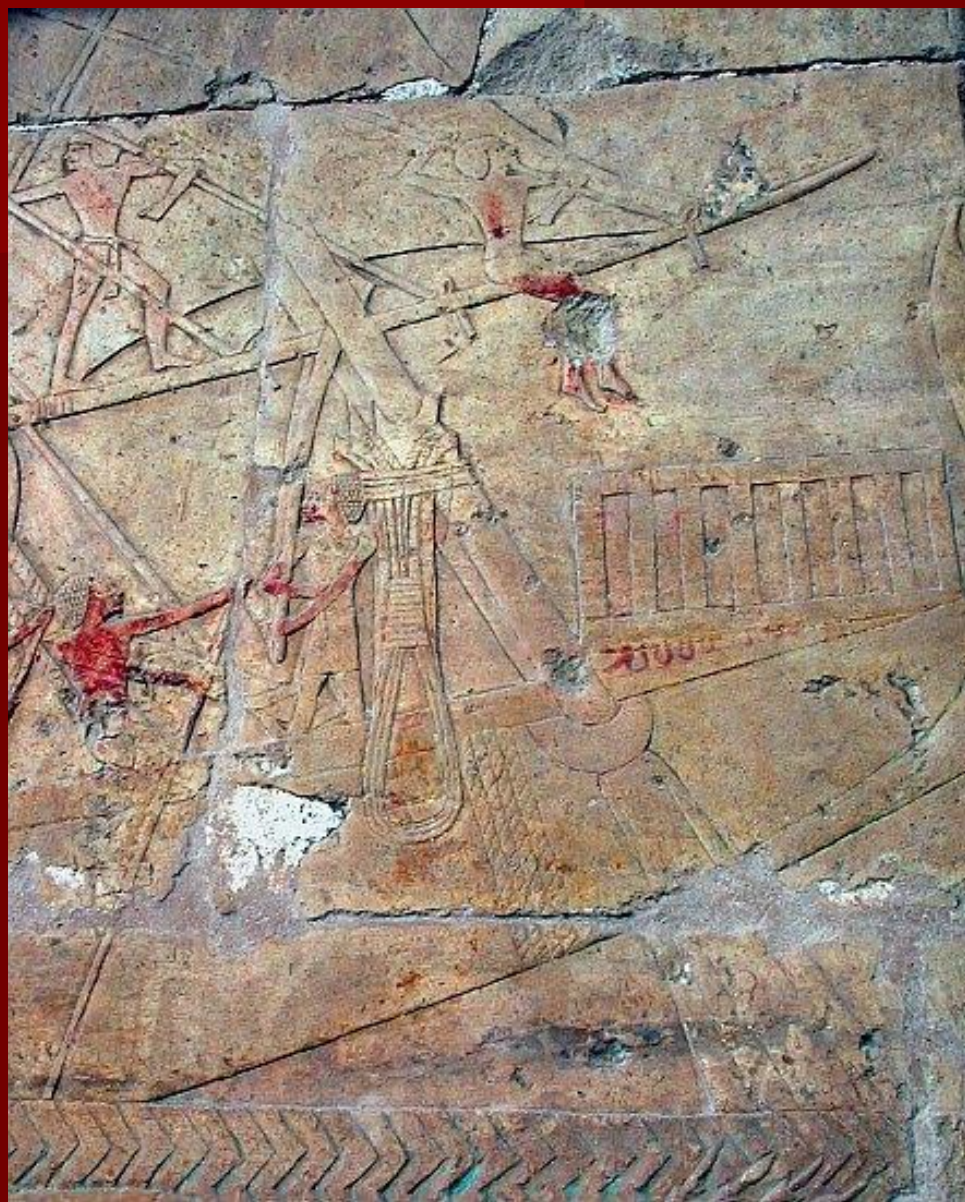


PLATE II *Queen Hatshepsut's cargo vessels*
 Source: Mariette, 1877; Naville, 1898

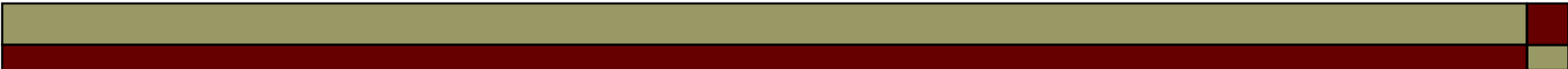




Ship of Hatshepsut



Incense
Shipment,
15th
Century
B.C.

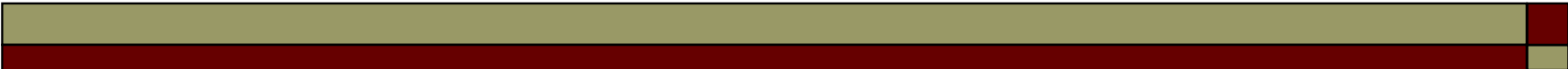


Mersa Gawasis – Red Sea coast

- ❑ Archaeologists from Italy, the United States, and Egypt excavating a dried-up lagoon known as Mersa Gawasis
- ❑ unearthed traces of an ancient harbor that once launched early voyages (Hatshepsut) onto the open ocean
- ❑ just 700 feet from modern Red Sea shore
 - 3,800-year-old reed mat
 - wooden planks
 - Ropes: bundles → thick as a man's chest (largest holds up to 100 feet of rope), woven from papyrus (clue that it may have come from the Nile Valley)
 - Oar blades
- ❑ timbers even contained shipworms which had tunnelled into the ships during sea voyages (tube-like shells filled up wood) → Ward estimated from shipworms that ship endured a six-month, 2,000-mile round trip to Punt → located in modern Ethiopia or Yemen

Blank and ropes found in Mersa Gawasis (Red sea)





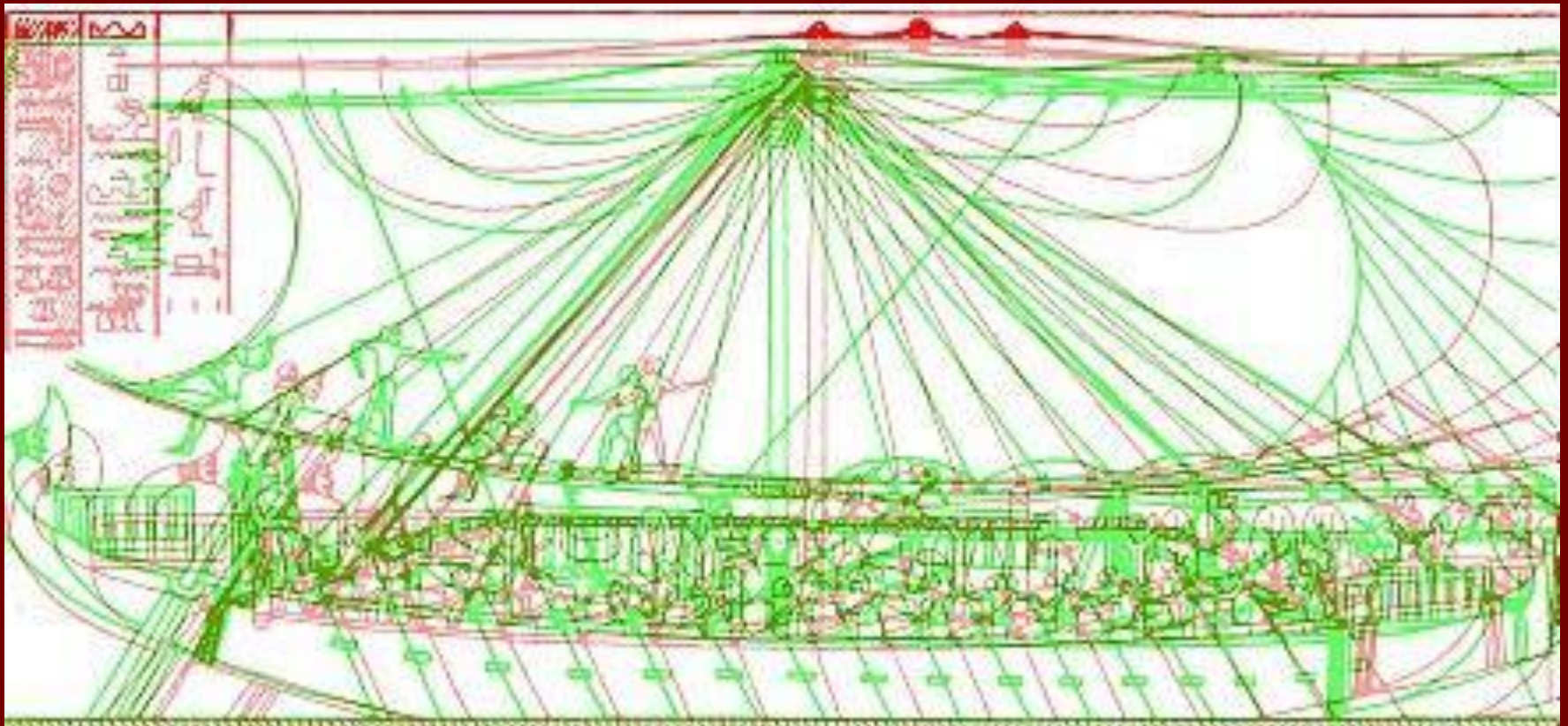
Continuation of excavation project

- ❑ put ancient Egyptian technology to test (Cheryl Ward), together with naval architect, modern shipwrights, Egyptian archaeologist → build a replica 3,800-year-old ship for a Red Sea trial run
- ❑ meant to retrace an ancient voyage of Hatsheput to Punt
- ❑ Discovered material in caves of Wadi Gawasis provided basis for ship reconstruction
- ❑ Douglas fir (North America) best resembled cedar used by Egyptians (strength + density)
- ❑ Naval architect Patrick Couser → watercraft designs from AE, designed ship which matched relief Hatshepsut's funerary temple
- ❑ 66-foot-long, 16-foot-wide ship, completed by October 2008 using ancient Egyptian techniques

Built the *Min of the Desert* in the 21st century AD

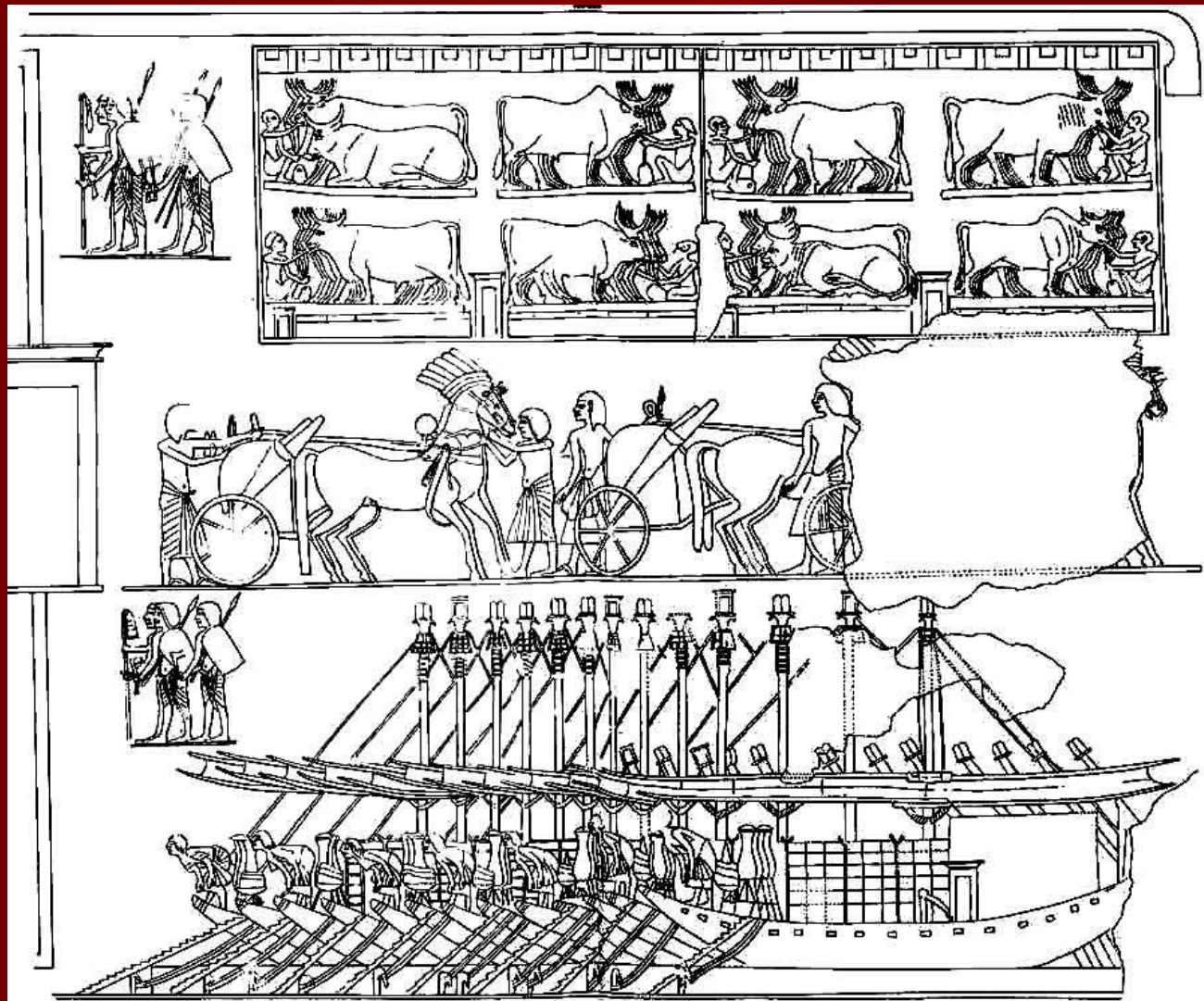


- ❑ Naval architect Patrick Couser based the design of *Min of the Desert* on the ship components found at Wadi Gawasis, as well as the dimensions of an ancient Egyptian "Dashur" boat. By doubling the dimensions and curvature of the "Dashur" boat, Couser produced a design that fit the profile of the Punt ships in Hatshepsut's temple.



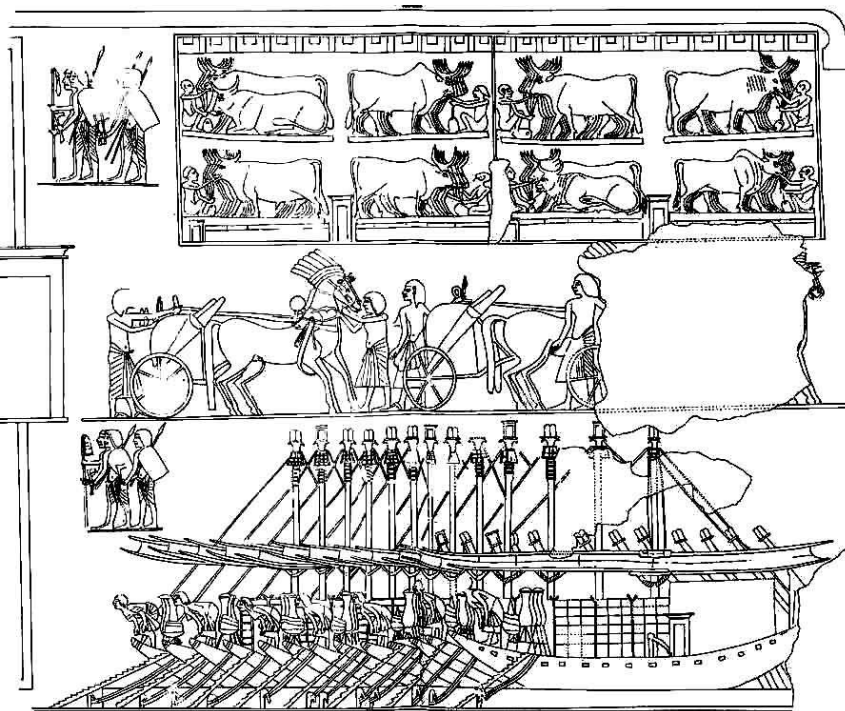
High priest Merire

Amarna tomb 4, North Group



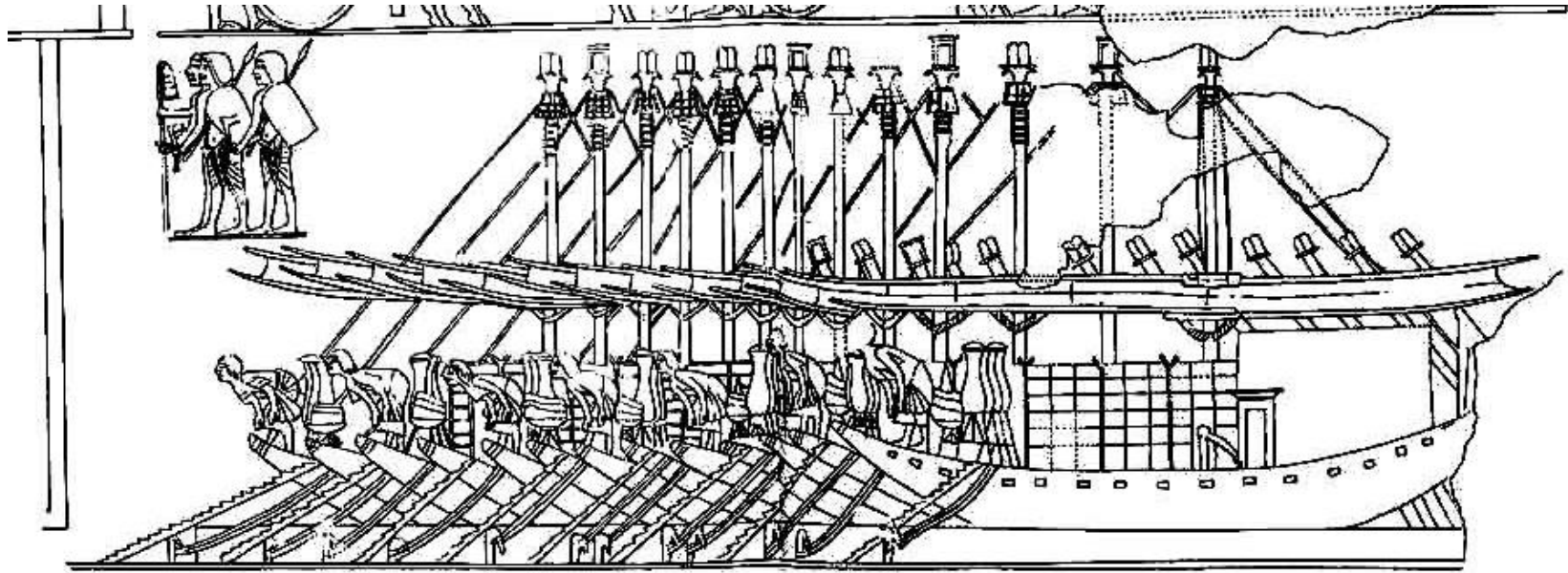
High priest Merire

Amarna tomb 4, North Group



- scene located between warehouses and Nile
- where products arrive, including food from west river bank
- abundance of boats → forest of masts → highlights the intensity of the traffic

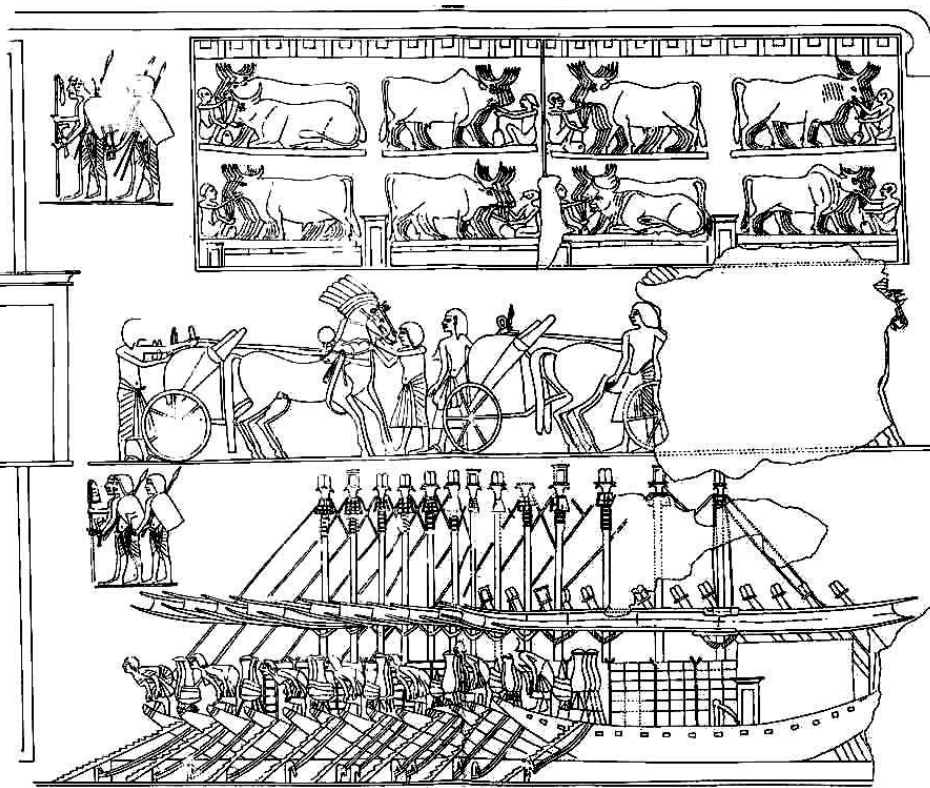
High priest Merire Amarna tomb 4, North Group



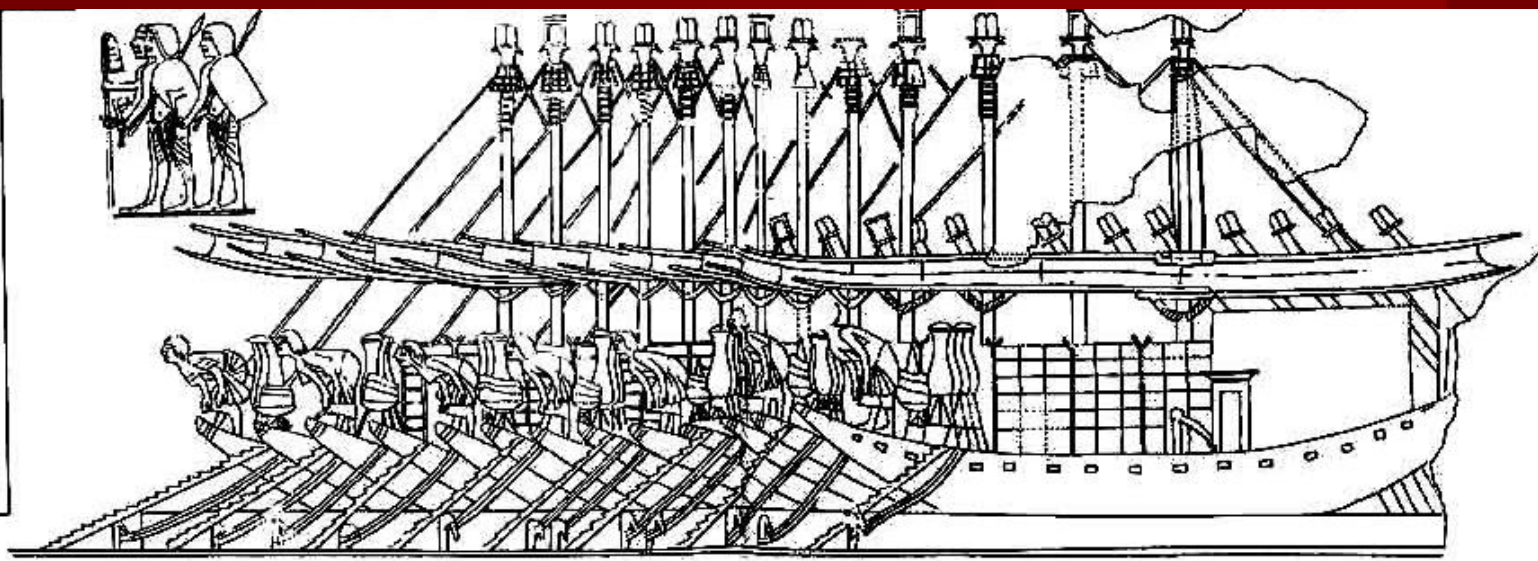
- ❑ each mast held by ropes + carries at its top an ensign (double cartouche?)
- ❑ sails folded
- ❑ every boat moored to stake by two ropes → stepped gangway descends to quay
- ❑ Prow: man (captain?) bows in front of king
- ❑ Behind: bridge congested with goods

High priest Merire

Amarna tomb 4, North Group



- ❑ cattle transported on ships – regrouped in stalls close to the quay (two cattle-yards sounded by low wall, large entrance in the middle + smaller side door on left)
- ❑ each yard: 20 head of cattle with individual drover for five each → fed by hand
- ❑ waiting in front of outside door of temple: three chariots with finely bridled horses with driver and groom
- ❑ king's body-guard: five soldiers each with spear, shield, axe/flail waiting for royal couple in temple



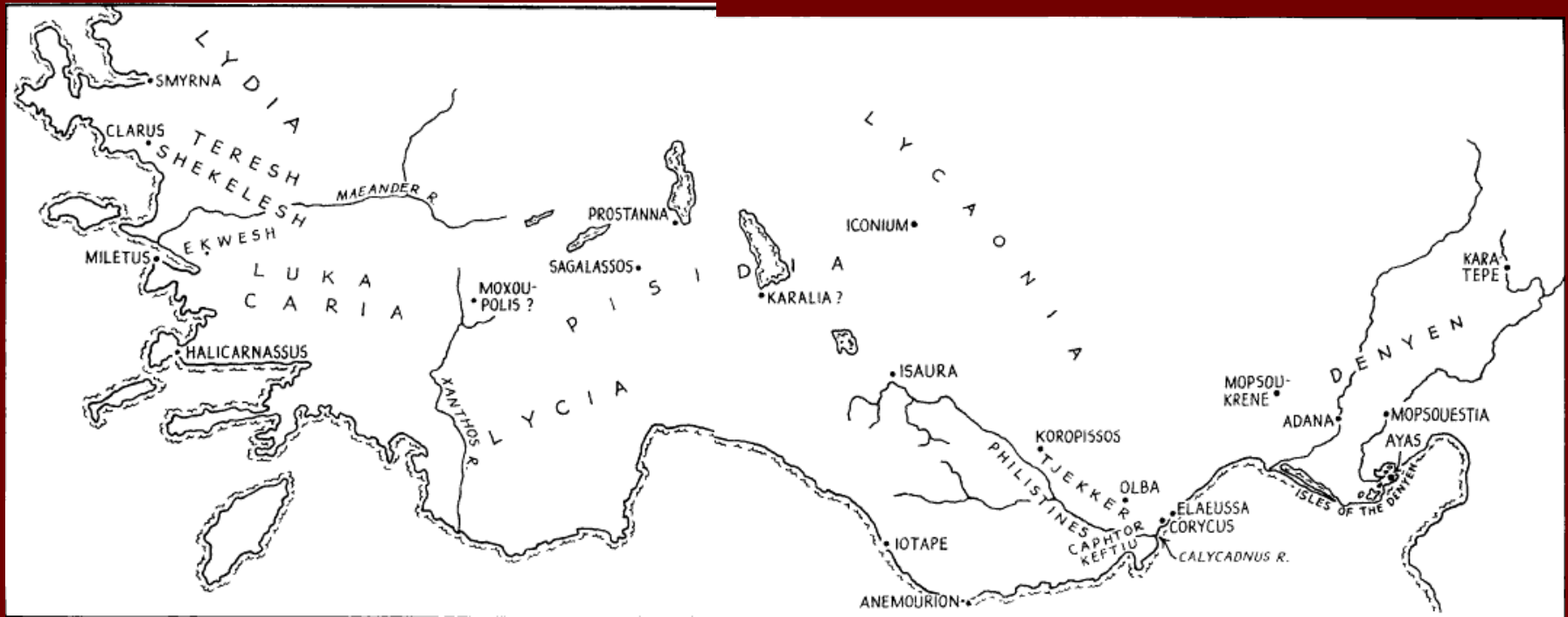
Reconstruction of
the ships depicted in
Tomb of Merire II,
Amarna



R III, Medinet Habu



Homelands of the Sea-People



Places of settling Sea Peoples from Amarna letters

- ❑ Rib-Addi of Byblos - problems with people he calls the Shirdanu
- ❑ Tyrian Abi-Milku reports the death of the king of the Danuna
- ❑ BUT: peoples might not be necessarily identical with Sea Peoples with similar names

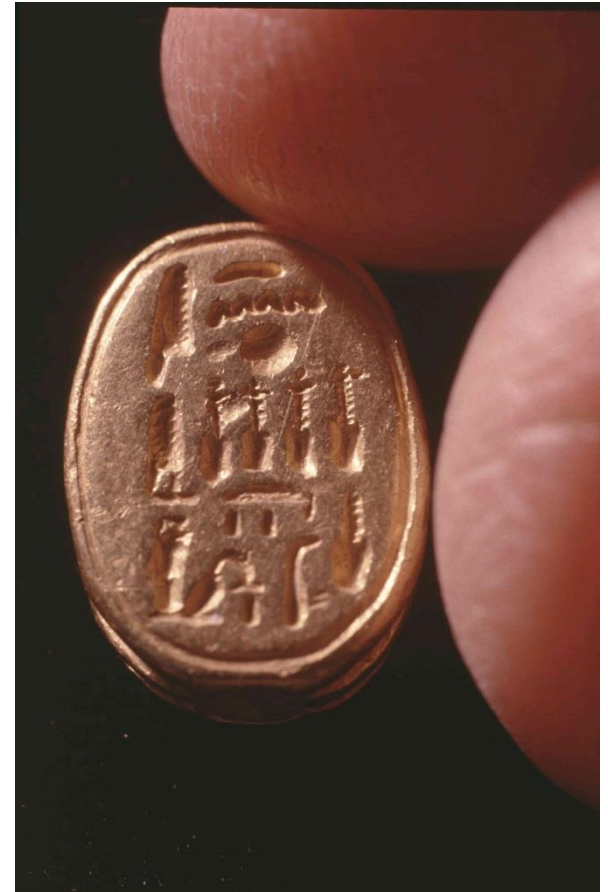


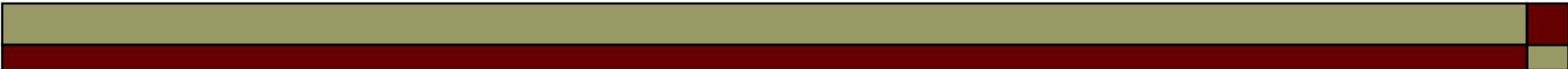
Remains of ancient Egyptian seafaring ships discovered

- ❑ first remains of ancient Egyptian seagoing ships
- ❑ Together with fragments of pottery at the site → hints about extent of ancient Egyptian trade voyages
- ❑ Pottery dates some of the artefacts to 15th century BC (time of Hatshepsut's expedition to Punt)
- ❑ pottery finds include items from Yemen (one potential site for Punt)
- ❑ two curved cedar planks → steering oars?
- ❑ Artefacts in caves as offerings to the Egyptian gods?

Egypt bound into Mediterranean sea trade

- Uluburun ship
 - Gold scarab of Nefertiti (dating of the ship)
- Cedar trade from Byblos
- ...





Case studies for discussion in workshop

- ❑ Buried travels - mortuary boats – Pre-dynastic boat burials in Abydos
- ❑ Old Kingdom sun boats
- ❑ Middle Kingdom funerary boat models