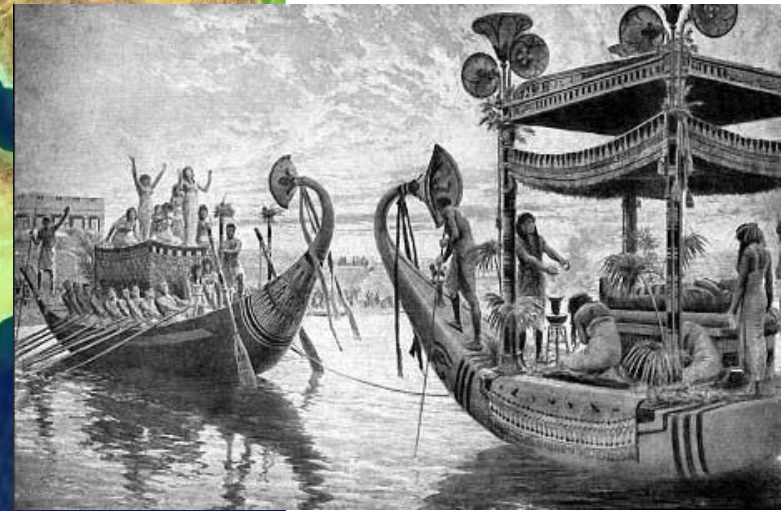
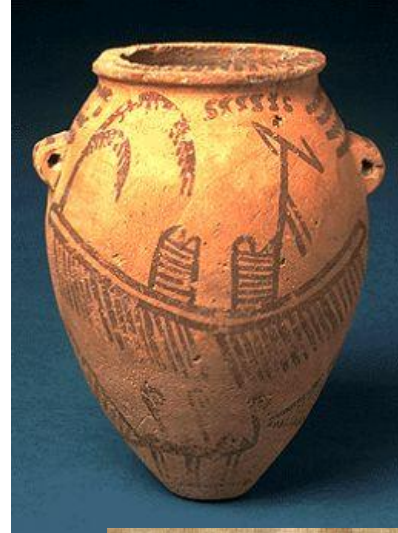


The landscape and prehistoric contexts for early Egyptian and Mesopotamian boat and ship navigation



The plan for the week:

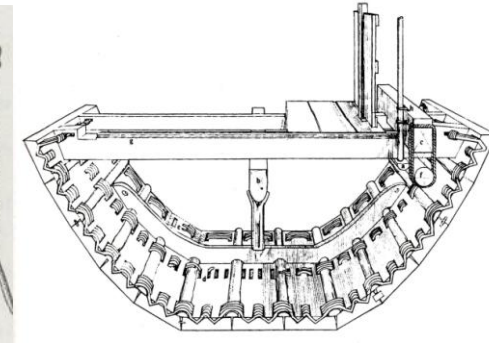
Monday: very early evidence from both Regions (with focus on Egypt, Mesopotamia continues on Friday)



Wednesday: Boats in Egyptian religion
(with Prof. Laurel Bestock)



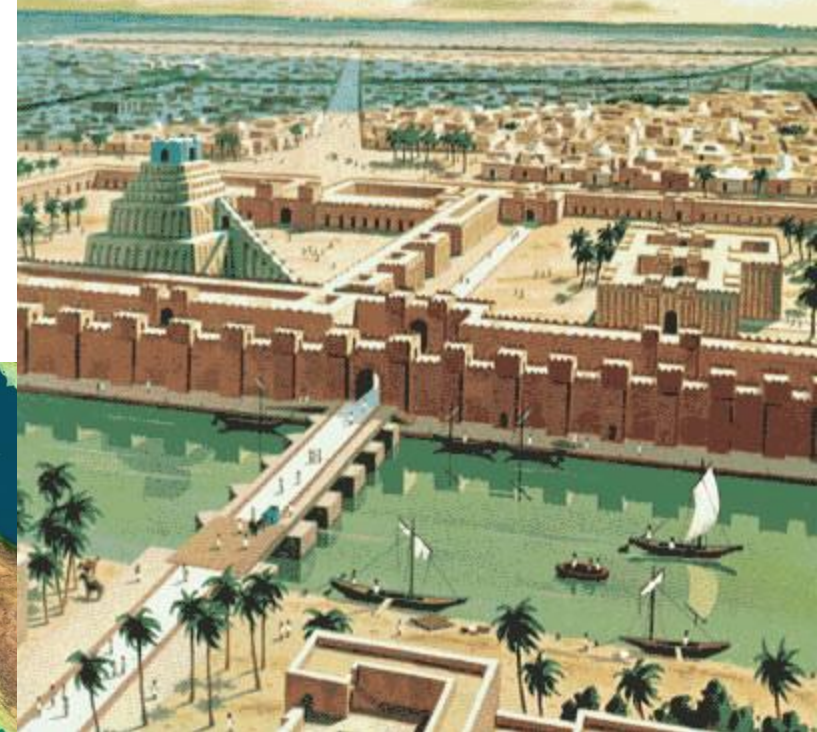
Friday: Mesopotamia continued,
and technical aspects of Egyptian
boat construction



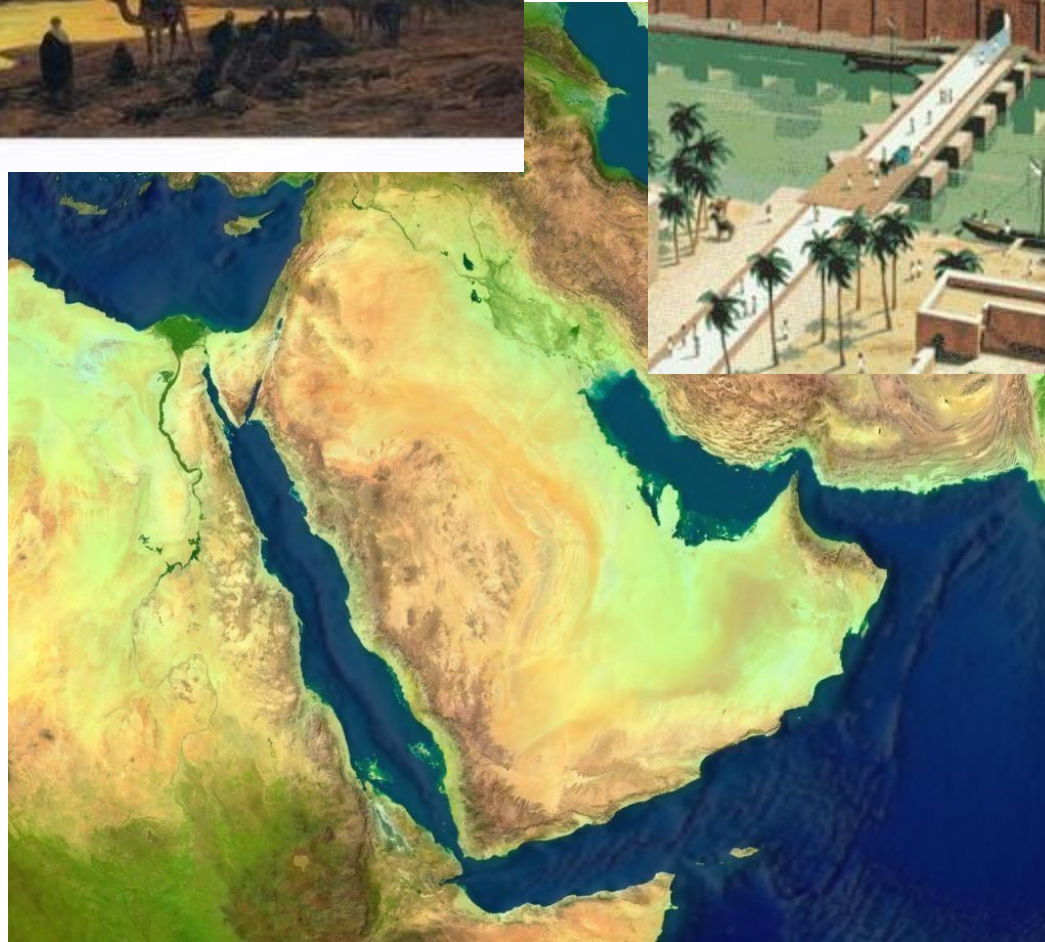
Prior to the Persian conquests of Cyrus II (Cyrus the Great) ca. 540 BCE, the most culturally enduring, sophisticated and powerful societies in the ancient world flourished on rivers

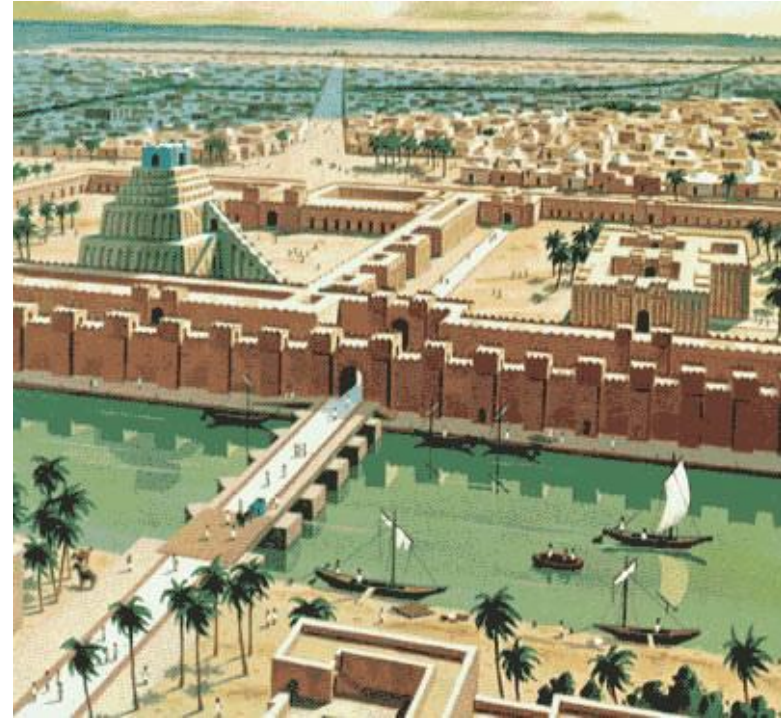


Giza Pyramids
(Nile River,
Lower/northern Egypt)



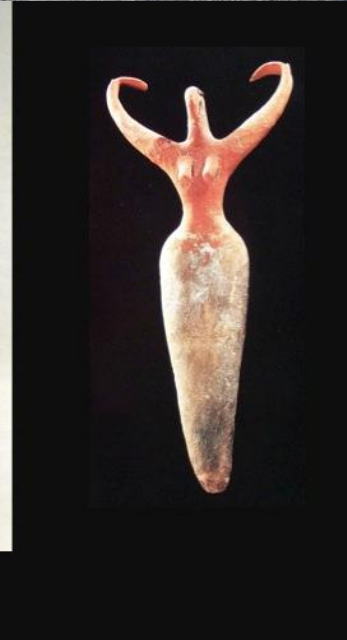
Babylon (Euphrates
River, southern
Mesopotamia)





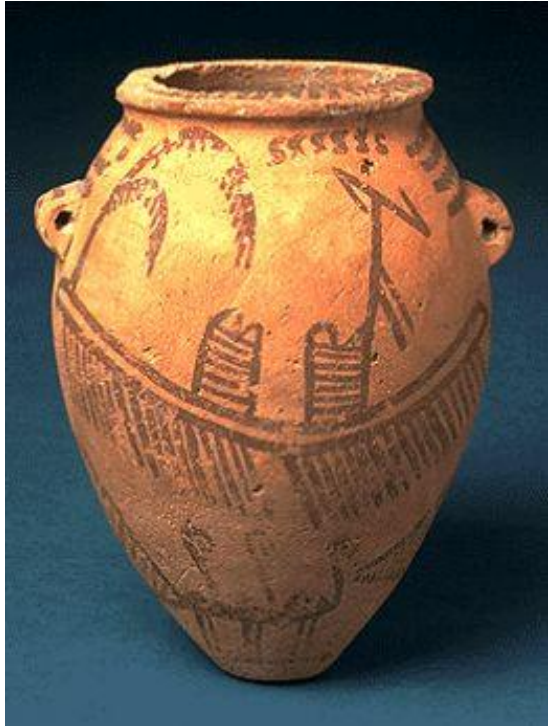
The world's first states formed in the regions of Egypt and Mesopotamia. The riverine regions of Mesopotamia and Egypt are striking not only for their early, prodigious and enduring civilizations and economic base, but also for a notable deficiency in raw resources

Late Predynastic Egypt: setting the scene in Naqada II (Gerzean, ca. 3500-3200 BCE)



Mostly evidence from cemeteries, showing the earliest material culture uniformity along the Nile between Upper Egypt (south) and Lower Egypt (north)

Necklace with gold, malachite and lapis lazuli beads from Naqada II burial at Abydos



This trend towards uniformity in mortuary practices included bodily ornamentation in precious metals and other exotic stones, and specific kinds of pictorial representation

Representations of boats are not all associated with mortuary contexts



Petroglyphs in the Wadi Hammamat
in the Eastern Desert (drainage connecting Upper
Egypt with the Red Sea)

Representations of probable papyrus boats from funerary jars (left) and petroglyphs (right)
(all Naqada II or Gerzean)

96

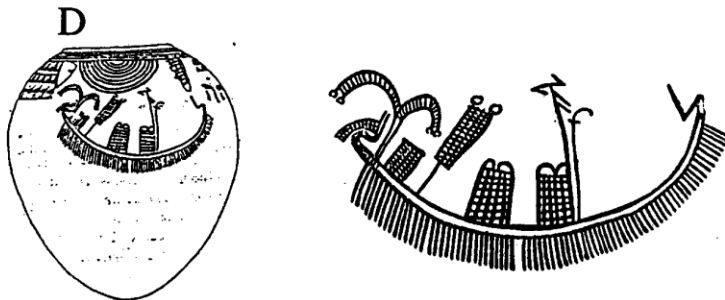
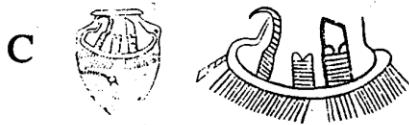
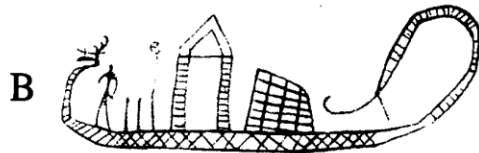
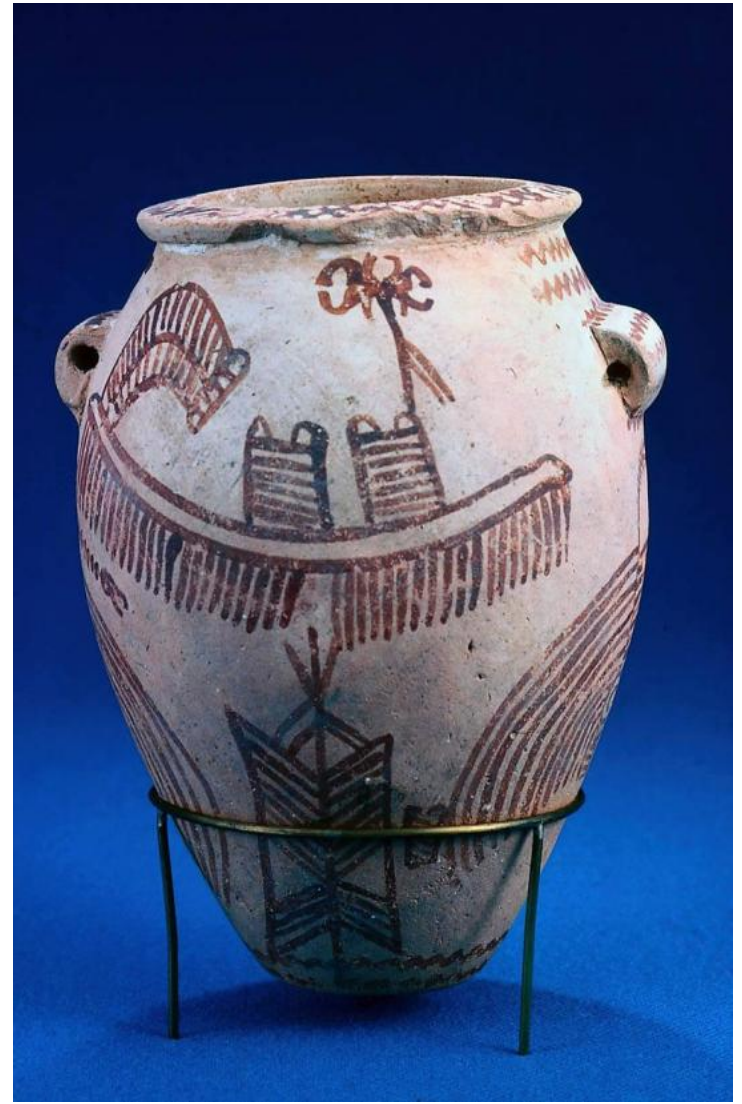
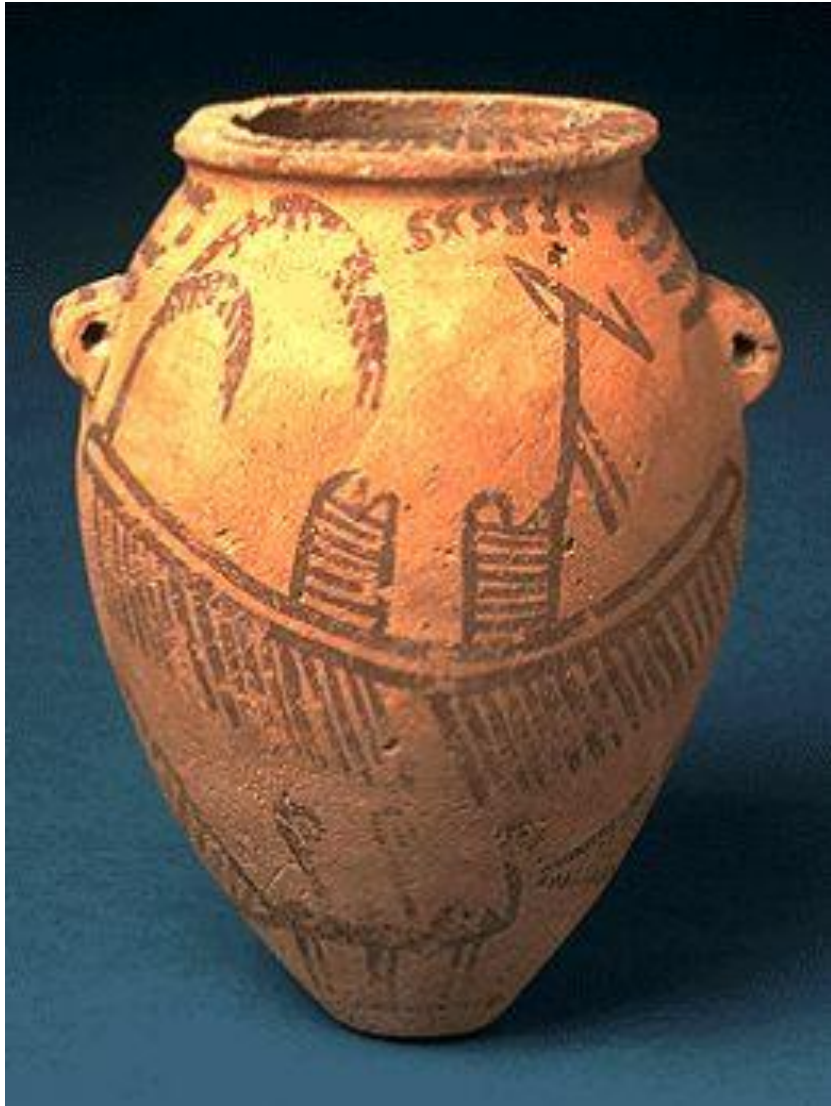


Figure 36. Papyrus craft (?) drawn on decorated ware. A and B--Quibbel, 1905: pl. XXII.C; C--Petrie, 1901b: pl. XVI. D--Bowen, 1960: 144.

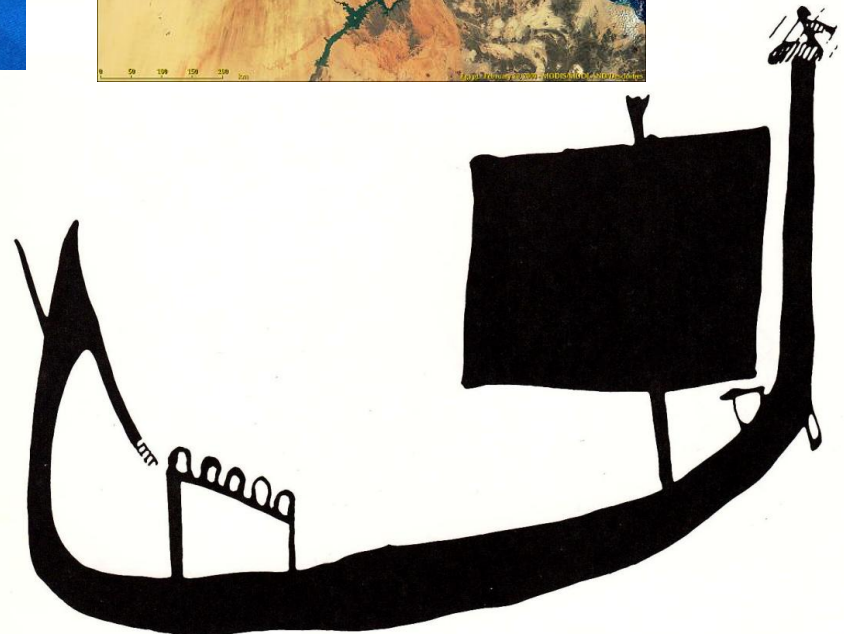
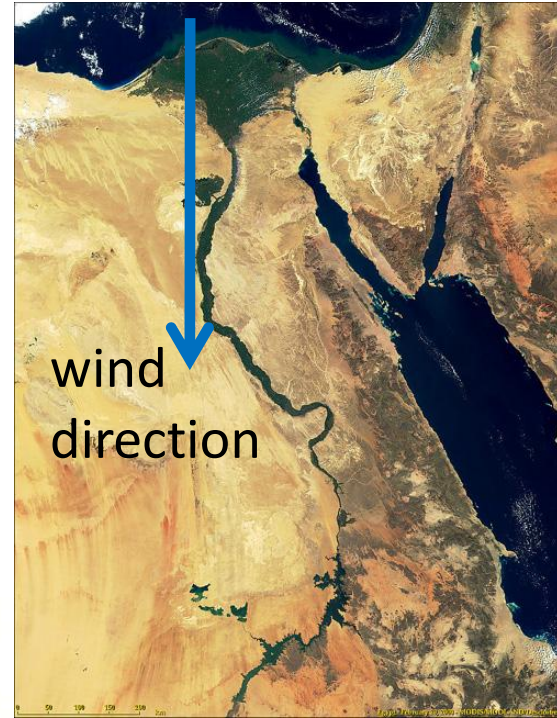
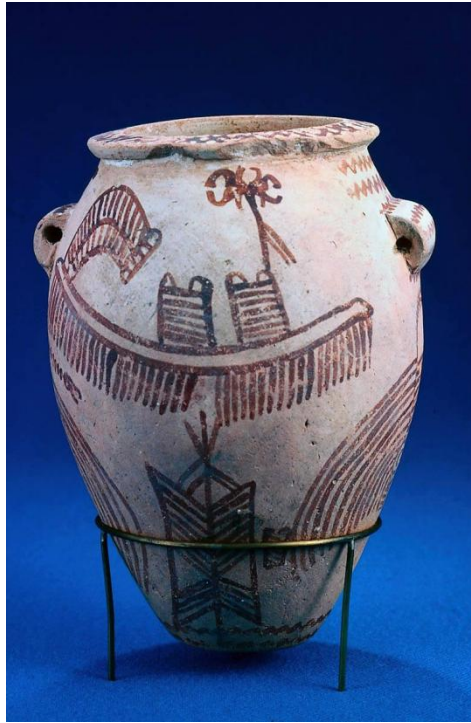


But the hulls on most Naqada II boat representations were probably plank-built (wooden)

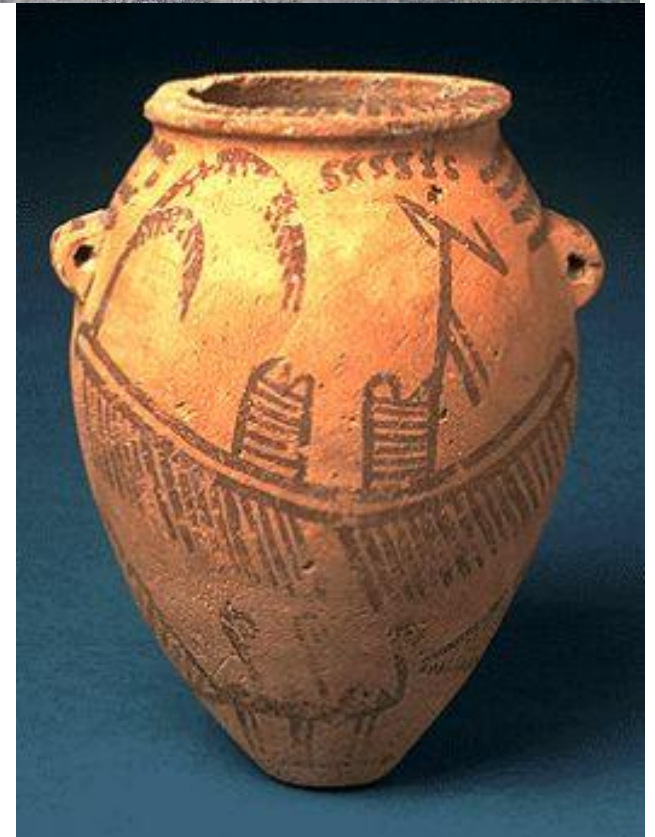
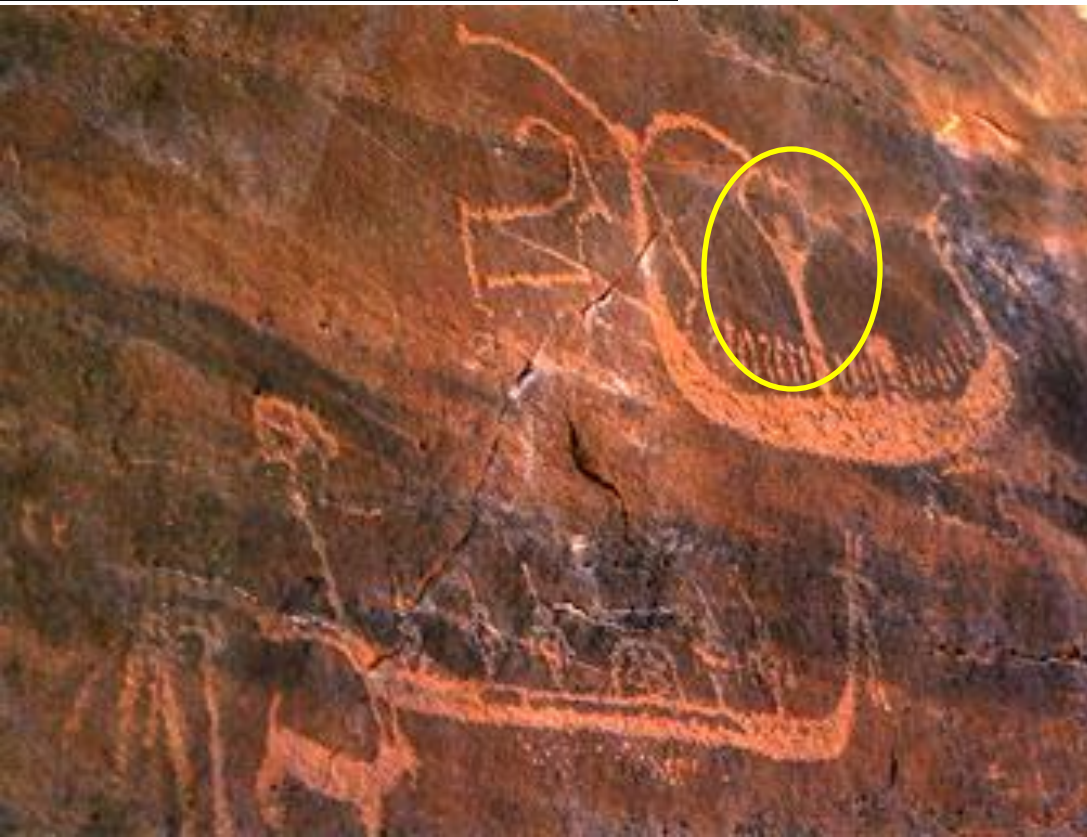


What additional features can be reconstructed from these jars?

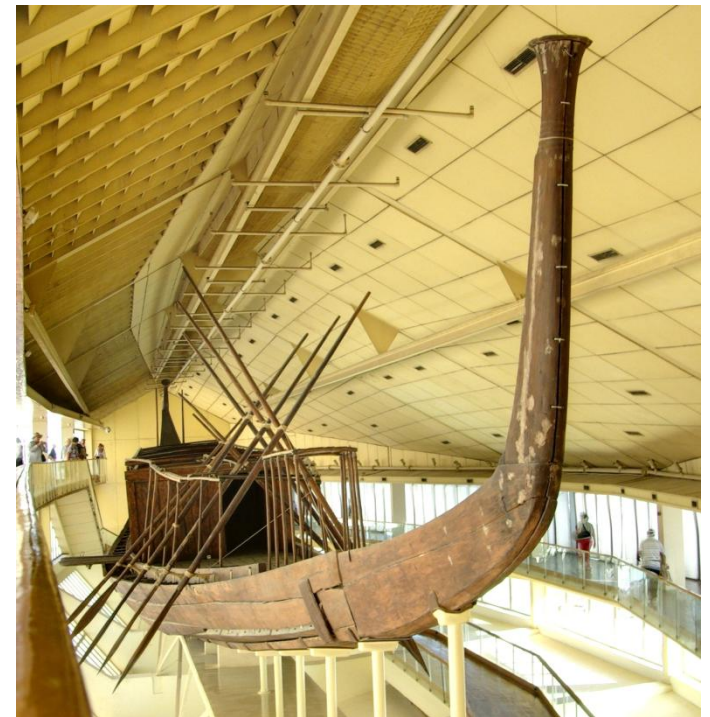
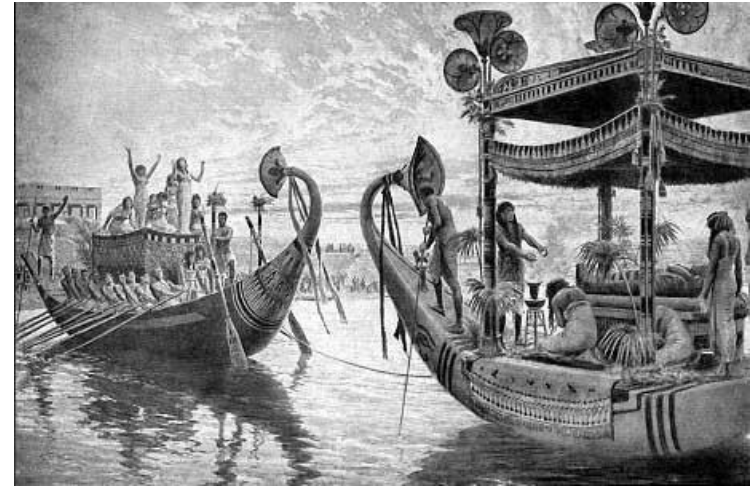
Considerations of wind propulsion on Naqada II boats (and the world's earliest representation of a sail)



What kinds of significance should we attach to this boat symbolism?



Remembering the use and construction of papyrus boats in later ritual and elite practice

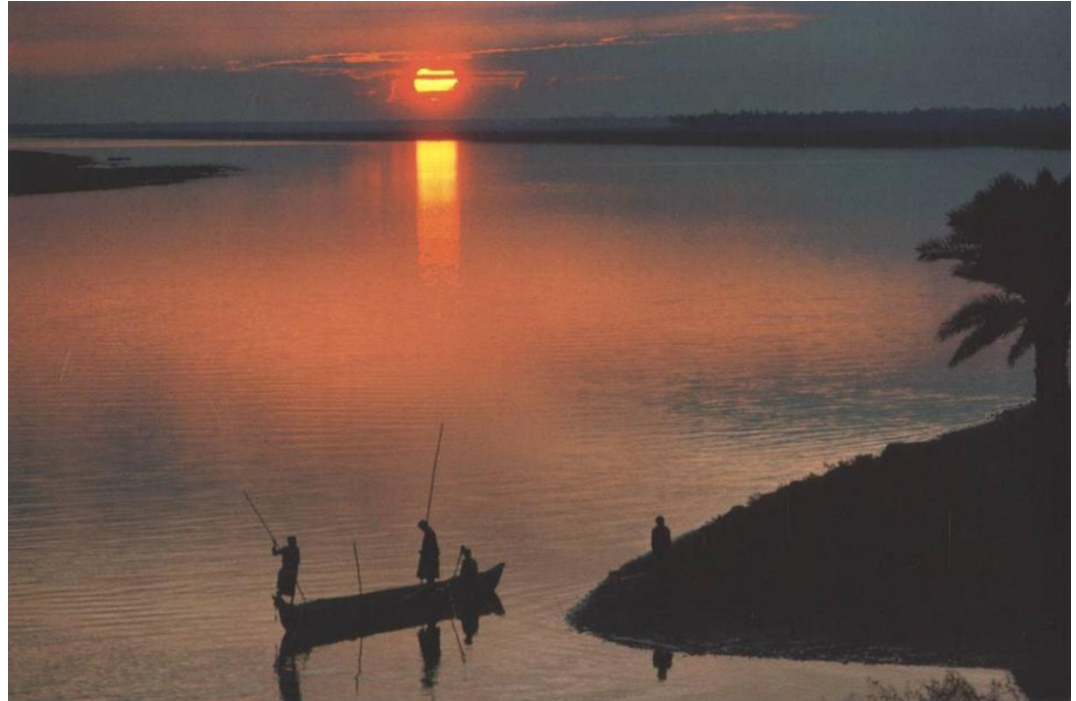


(More on boats in Egyptian religion on Wednesday, more on the construction of an Egyptian processional barge on Friday)

Early evidence for boats and seafaring in Mesopotamia and beyond



‘The formative processes leading to the world’s first urban civilization cannot be understood except as a creative adaptation to the priceless resource of Euphrates water.’
(Robert Adams, 1981)



...but representations of boats or ships are not as frequent in Mesopotamia
(as in Egypt)



Does this mean that boats and ships were somehow less ideologically significant to early Mesopotamian civilization than early Egyptian?



Not necessarily:

- ** compared with Egypt, there are few graves and tombs where boat/ship iconography or models might be conveniently deposited for archaeological discovery
- ** archaeological preservation of Mesopotamian monumental architecture in mudbrick much poorer than the stone monuments of the Egyptians

We know that Gilgamesh was a diver

Epic of Gilgamesh (composed in Mesopotamia no later than ca. 2100 BCE) records a heroic dive after a 'plant of immortality' on the seabed

'He tied heavy stones [to his feet]
They pulled him down into the deep [and he saw the plant]
He took the plant though it pricked his hands
He cut the heavy stones from his feet
The sea cast him up upon the shore'



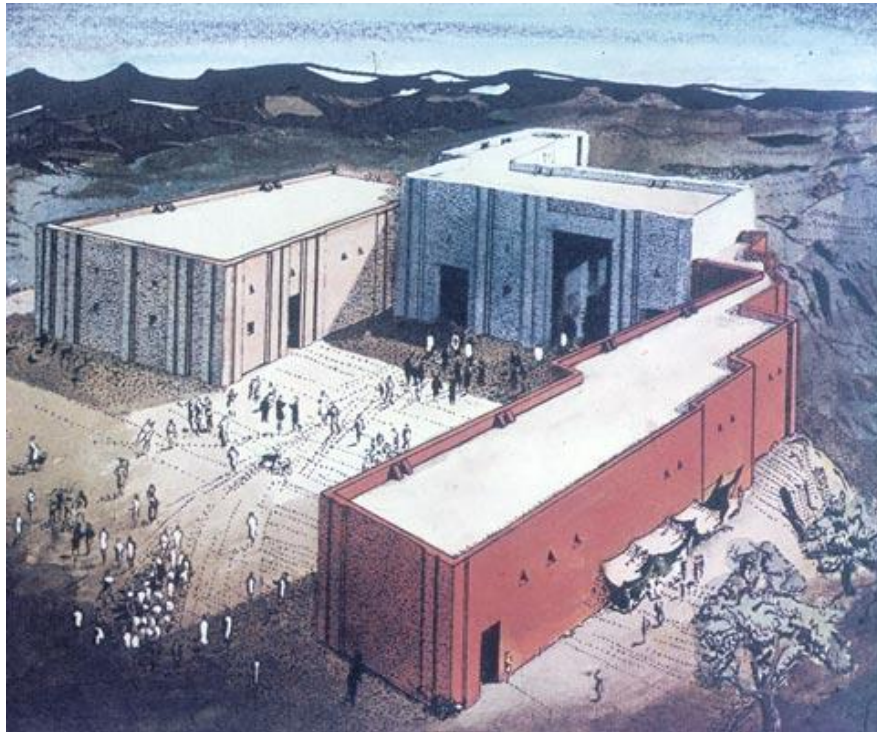
He also commissioned the construction of a big ship, in anticipation of a great flood to be unleashed by vengeful gods

Tear down the house and build a boat!
Abandon wealth and seek living beings!
Spurn possessions and keep alive living beings!
Make all living beings go up into the boat.
The boat which you are to build,
its dimensions must measure equal to each other:
its length must correspond to its width.
Roof it over like the Apsu.

I drove plugs (to keep out) water in its middle part.
I saw to the punting poles and laid in what was necessary.
Three times 3,600 (units) of raw bitumen I poured into
the bitumen kiln....



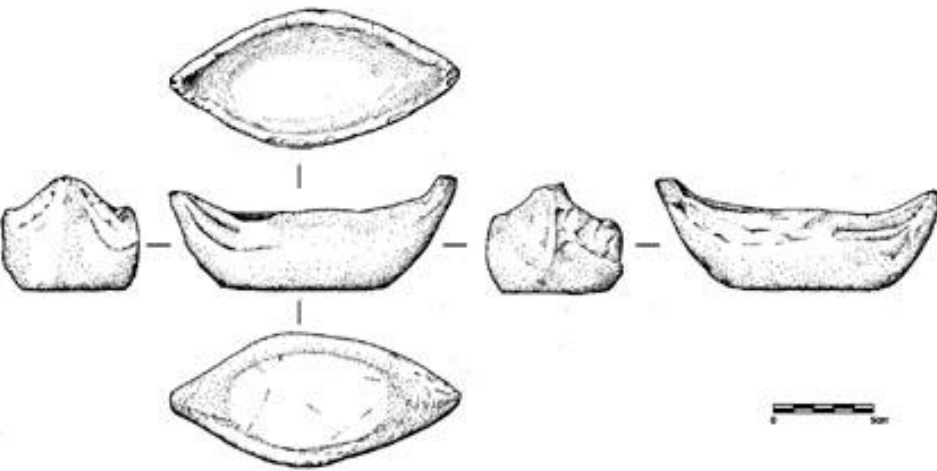
The Ubaid origins of Mesopotamian seafaring (Ubaid=ca. 6000-4000 BCE) and the earliest evidence for seafaring boat/ship construction in the world



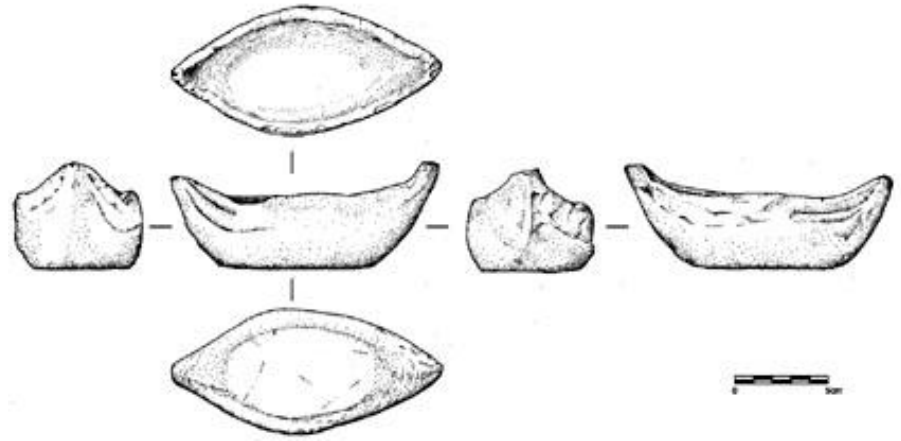
The Ubaid: no lavish tombs,
but proto-temples and a prototype
for the first cities

An Ubaid temple

Recent excavations at the Ubaid period site of As-Sabiyah in Kuwait (ca. 5500 BCE)
at interface between villages of Arabia
and temple centres of Mesopotamia



A closer look at the bitumen (a natural tar or pitch, 50 similar pieces)
and boat model from As-Sabiyah



These boats seemingly travelled no further than the length of the Arabian Peninsula