



BOAT SYMBOLISM IN PREDYNASTIC AND EARLY DYNASTIC EGYPT: AN ETHNO-ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPROACH

Dorian Vanhulle

CRéA-Patrimoine, Université libre de Bruxelles

ABSTRACT

Predynastic and Early Dynastic boat images were used to express complex ideological concepts. The most important of them is the notion of “Order out of Chaos,” which became the cornerstone of the pharaonic ideological system that emerged at the end of this crucial phase of Egyptian history. During subsequent millennia, the boat is mostly used in iconography and literature as a mere vehicle, whether it is for common people or for gods and kings, although some texts show that it can still express metaphorical meanings. Other Neolithic coastal and riverine societies around the world, particularly in South-East Asia and the Pacific, show a similar importance of the boat, including the use of the boat as a marker of the community. Such a function in the first stages of the Predynastic period can be postulated.

Flanked by seas, crossed by the Nile, regularly flooded and having navigable lakes, ancient Egypt was the home of a riverine, lacustrine and coastal culture. Because of this natural environment, the necessity of relying on boats appeared very early.¹ It comes then with no surprise that, already during the pre-pharaonic periods, this daily vehicle appears in all categories of artistic and craft productions, whether it is boat models,² painted or incised representations on very diverse materials (ceramics,³ tissue,⁴ architectural elements⁵), rock engravings⁶ and real boats buried in funerary contexts.⁷ Although logical, it appears that this ubiquity of the boat in all archaeological media that belong to the 4th millennium BCE has unsuspected implications. A careful analysis shows indeed that the way the boat was used in Naqadian iconography was subtler than previously thought: if the boat was depicted very pragmatically as a means of transport or as a sacred item during the Pharaonic periods, it was rather used as a powerful ideological symbol during the 4th millennium BCE.⁸

The boat has been of crucial importance in most Neolithic riverine, coastal and insular cultures around the world. Various studies related to the boat in Scandinavia, South-East Asia and the Pacific

adopt what has sometimes been called a “ship-as-symbol perspective.”⁹ Quite universally, it has been observed that the boat played a crucial role during political, military and funerary activities, but also during ceremonial events. It was used as a powerful symbol in artistic productions. The parallel with Egypt, especially during the 4th millennium BCE, is obvious enough to encourage us to apply this theoretical perspective to Naqadian boat depictions. Although comparative studies focussing on cultures that are separated both in time and space are very hazardous and prevent us postulating any direct parallel, this very rudimentary analysis shows the benefits of conducting researches in which anthropological concepts allow us to enrich our argumentation.

This paper briefly addresses the ubiquity of the boat in Naqadian art and compares it with other Neolithic riverine societies from South-East Asia, Indonesia and the Pacific. It appears indeed that some common cognitive reflexes can be postulated, helping us to better understand why the boat was chosen to embody crucial ideological concepts in Egypt during the 4th millennium BCE. On the basis of these observations, we will then underline some elements suggesting that the boat may notably have

been used as a metaphor for the ordered social group in Predynastic iconography.

THE BOAT AS A SYMBOL IN PREDYNASTIC AND EARLY DYNASTIC ICONOGRAPHY

Naqadians, like most of prehistoric societies around the world, used metaphorical concepts as a means of expression. These concepts were mainly conveyed through artistic productions, the different motifs in the composition being associated in order to express complex discourses.¹⁰ Some motifs were used metaphorically in order to embody important ideological notions and it appears that the boat was the most powerful of these symbols.¹¹ It should then not be considered for what it is, that is to say a mere vehicle, but for what it means as a symbol inside the whole scenography. This is not especially easy because this meaning could change according to the medium and the context in which the image was used. We thus have to deal with some sort of “contextual polysemy.”¹² If this symbolic nature of the boat has been punctually acknowledged by some authors,

the important use of the boat as a symbol (...) has a long history in Egypt. Some societies (...) have found in the horse a powerful image of authority, which elevates and almost encompasses the rider. The Egyptians used the boat, often decorated in a distinctive way, to achieve the same effect, sometimes turning it quite literally into a shrine,¹³

it has never been really analysed. This first section aims to provide an overview of the symbolic nature of the boat in Naqadian iconography.¹⁴

The first manifestations of boats in pre-Pharaonic art can be traced back to the Naqada I period (c. 3900–3600 BCE), where they essentially appear on White Crossed-Line pottery.¹⁵ With the exception of some peculiar examples showing what looks like a boat depicted from above,¹⁶ the composition is almost always related to symbolic hunts in which the boat plays an active role.¹⁷ Indeed, it is regularly depicted harpooning dangerous animals in the total absence of any human hunters (Fig. 1). The fact that the boat itself is shown harpooning the animals would confirm its status of protector of the Cosmic Order of the world. Moreover, mixing the desert and the valley in a single scene thanks to the depictions of plants and animals typical of these two

ecosystems could be a way to signify that the boat, which should be understood as a metaphor for an ordered human group headed by a cast of leaders, dominates the whole universe. This suggests that the underlying message is related to the concept of “Order over Chaos.”¹⁸

If Order was basically maintained by the cohesion of a social entity, the ruler was, in the eye of its subjects, its true guardian. Before the first personification of the king in art, Order was signified through motifs that structured the whole composition; motifs such as human figures or boats. Chaos was mainly embodied by dangerous and charismatic animals, by dead bodies, by anarchic movements or by a combination of these possibilities. Obviously, this concept of an indestructible chaos that must be permanently controlled is one of the reasons that explains the longevity of pharaonic kingship: without Pharaoh at the head of the State, the world was doomed. The association of arm-raised figures, most probably members of the elite, surrounded by what could be prisoners and taking part in a hippopotamus hunt is a good indicator of the ancestral nature of the concept in Egypt.¹⁹

One could reasonably argue today that this concept of Order out of Chaos, although very useful from a theoretical perspective and still regularly used, is too simplistic by modern standards.²⁰ If it is



FIGURE 1: C-Ware plate (Egyptian Museum, Cairo—CG 2076) decorated with one sickle-shaped boat and two small barques harpooning a hippopotamus. Hartmann 2008, fig. 5.

true that Naqadian philosophy will never be fully understood and cannot be limited to this concept as we define it today, the primacy of Order over Chaos was nevertheless a part of it and its pertinence remains difficult to deny. Moreover, its elaboration implies that the Naqadians had a complex understanding of their environment and a strong capacity to conceptualise their observations. This duality between order and chaos became archetypal in Egypt by the end of the 4th millennium BCE. The two-necked serpopards of the Narmer Palette are a good example of this: because their necks are intertwined and they are both leashed by men, they most probably embodied this duality and its full control.²¹ These animals might also represent the unification of the Two Lands, since they bear strong similarities with the *smꜣ tꜣwy* scenes of the pharaonic periods.²² Last but not least, the concept of Order out of Chaos served as the foundation of *Ma'at*, which is the “clé de voûte idéologique et institutionnelle de l'Égypte pharaonique.”²³

Naqada II (c. 3600–3300 BCE) is a key period as it marks the beginning of the expansion of the Naqadian culture throughout the whole Egyptian territory, in the Levant and in Lower Nubia. Naqadian society became progressively highly hierarchical and witnessed the elaboration of a complex ideological and religious system built around a cast of people, perhaps already of royal status. The boat is then used in compositions where the concept of the primacy of Order over Chaos is only one aspect of a more global discourse. Well-known examples are the Gebelein painted linen and the wall painting from Tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis.²⁴ Their iconography consists of a naval procession that dominates a set of scenes dedicated to the expression of order and control of the wilderness. This procession, which is imposing and brings balance to the whole composition, is composed of several sickle-shaped boats and a sacred barque, thus comprising a mixture of political and religious power inside a unique scene. It is largely accepted now that this iconography refers to some kind of festival, perhaps a pre-formative equivalent of the Pharaonic *Heb Sed*.²⁵ It appears then that from the second half of Naqada II, powerful ideological concepts were expressed by professional artists through the depictions of ceremonies focussing on the person of the king and in which these concepts play a central role. This explains why the use of direct metaphors, like the hunting scenes of the Naqada I period, is far less documented in the valley

in the second half of the 4th millennium BCE. Nevertheless, it can still be witnessed in rock art productions.

By the end of Naqada II and the beginning of Naqada III, naval processions appear mainly on prestigious ivory knife handles and in rock art. Among these productions are the famous Gebel el-Arak knife (Naqada IID-III A) and the Metropolitan knife handle (Naqada III A).²⁶ The former is sometimes considered to be of Mesopotamian origin because of the oriental nature of several of its iconographic motifs. There is no need here to reopen the longstanding debate about the origin of its decoration, since it is largely accepted now that, despite an undisputable influence of Mesopotamian imagery, this work of art is a genuine Naqadian production.²⁷ If an oriental influence is indeed difficult to deny, Egyptian artists adapted these exogenous motifs to their own needs and ideology.

The Gebel el-Arak knife handle shows a double naval procession organised in two lines: one is characterised by ceremonial boats with upraised extremities,²⁸ the other by classical Naqadian sickle-shaped boats. These two levels are separated by several dead bodies. We can thus observe this dichotomy between an ordered and powerful naval procession and a more chaotic scene, the former encompassing the latter in order to maintain it into control. Moreover, the upper register of this side of the handle is decorated with military activities and is then also dedicated to the expression of power, violence and domination.²⁹ The decoration of the Metropolitan Knife Handle adds to this double naval procession a pedestrian procession, both of them heading towards what seems to be a sanctuary (Fig. 2). The last example known to us of this particular iconographic theme has been engraved on one of several related rock panels in the vicinity of Aswan (Fig. 3).³⁰ This rock art, which is currently considered to date back to the Naqada III A period, this time shows the procession in an undoubtedly royal context since a crowned king and its court progress alongside the boats.

This symbiosis of ideological concepts, religious notions and political power in a single scene marks the last step of a process started in Upper Egypt centuries before. The continuity with Naqada I is obvious as it seems that the new authorities used ancient traditions within a complex ideological system focussing on a strong caste of kingly elites during Naqada II, and on one particular king by Naqada IIC–III A. Thus, if this iconography easily

FIGURE 2: The pedestrian procession of the Metropolitan Museum Knife Handle (n°26.241.1). Williams and Logan 1987, fig. 2.

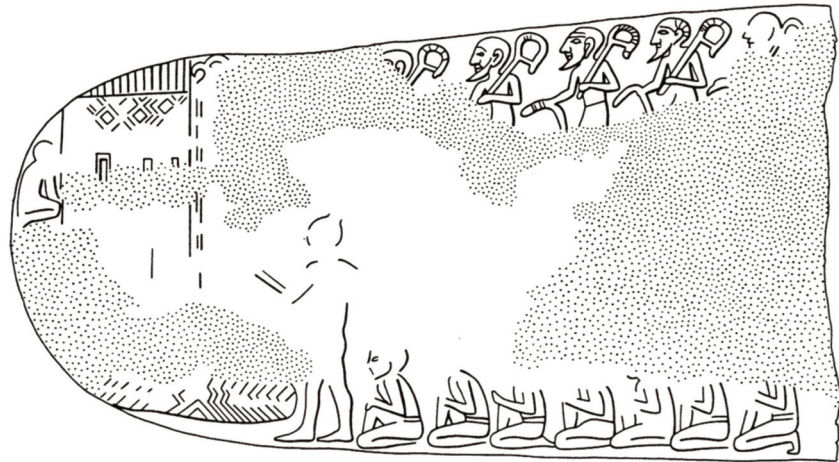
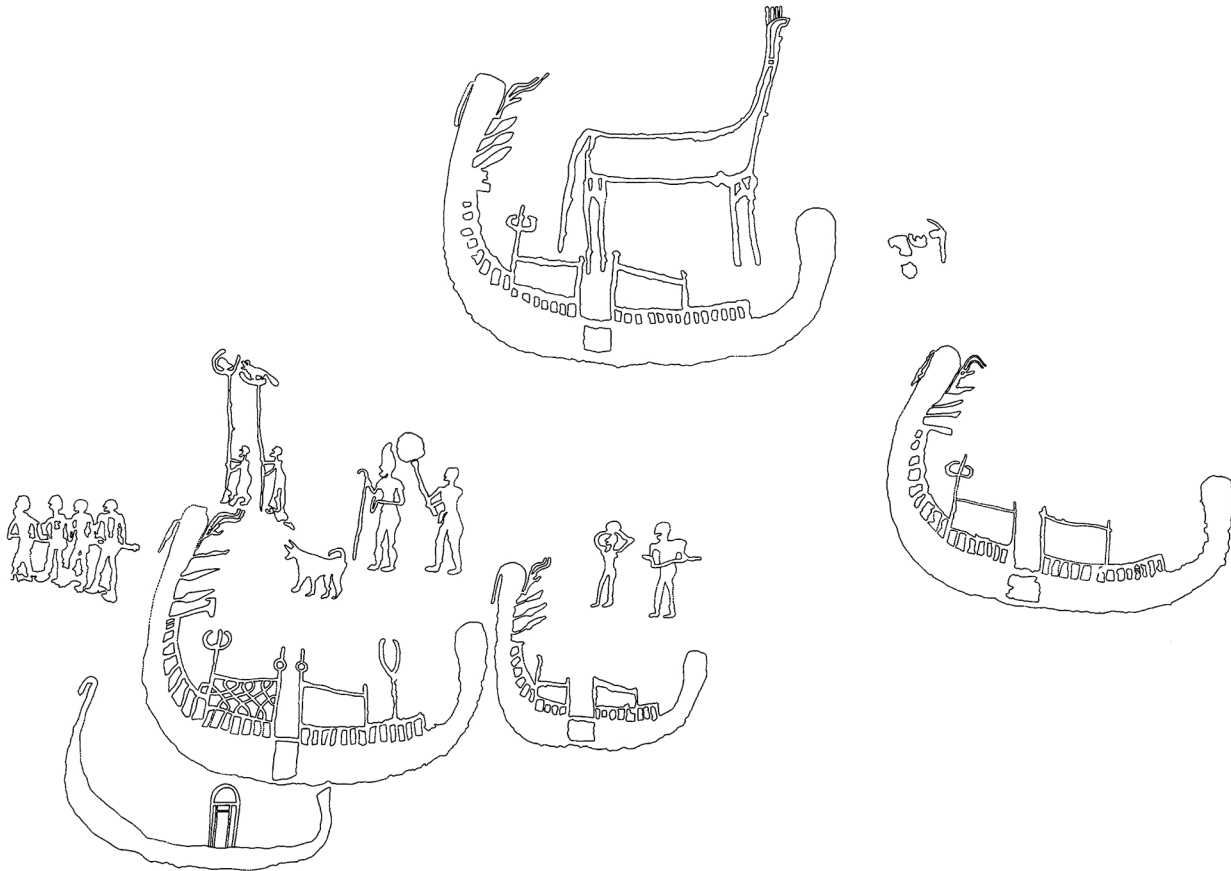


FIGURE 3: Rock panel from Nag el-Hamdulab (site 7, tableau 7a). Hendrickx et al. 2012, fig. 11.



finds its place in funerary contexts, its semantics refers mainly to ritual and ceremonial domains. It is not surprising then to witness the use of boat models in all of the first cultic deposits and temples³¹ and the inhumation of real boats in elite funerary contexts.³² It is also important to underline the fact that all of these boat depictions are to be seen on rare objects

only accessible to high members of the society.

It appears that iconography witnessed a strong phase of increasing complexity and standardisation during Naqada II. All of this comes to an end with the advent of the First Dynasty. Indeed, once the king is personified for the first time as the ruler of Egypt, the boat is no longer needed to express all

these primordial notions. The king is now the personification of *Ma'at*. Proof of this is the confinement of the barque, much smaller than the king, in a corner of the Narmer Palette and its very pragmatic function on administrative ivory labels commemorating festivals or economical expeditions. However, the boat of the Narmer Palette still has a political and religious aura since it dominates beheaded enemies and is surmounted by the god Horus. The First Dynasty is in fact a phase of transition: if the boat has lost its original meaning in iconography, it can still designate the royal institution. Several engravings of that period, in South Sinai and in Lower Nubia, show boats surmounted by a *serekh*.³³ These boats, showing great artistic qualities and thus engraved by professional artists, are territory markers commissioned by the State. They testify that the new Egyptian State controls the area and that its influence goes as far as these remote regions. This last function of boat images did not survive the Second Dynasty. It is interesting to observe, however, that the boat remained an ideogram in the hieroglyphic system.

BOAT SYMBOLISM IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Boats are among the most dominant and enduring motifs in Scandinavia,³⁴ South-East Asia and the Western Pacific. They are depicted in a variety of media. Studies devoted to the Neolithic cultures of these regions rely on archaeology, but also on anthropology and ethnography. Consequently, the “ship-as-symbol” perspective has been far more considered in those fields than in Egyptology.³⁵ On the contrary to Egypt, however, more pragmatic information has rarely been investigated by specialists of these regions: “to some extent,

however, the symbolic role of boats has overshadowed their functional importance within the region and the potential information that such representations and images may encode about early maritime technology”.³⁶ Because providing a general introduction of these very diverse societies cannot be undertaken here, this section will only rely on instructive as well as famous case studies. They demonstrate the multi-faceted nature of the boat and allow us to look at pre-pharaonic images with a renewed perspective.

South-East Asia is characterised by very large and scattered territories, among which are numerous islands and coastal areas. Although it is expressed in many different ways depending on the region, it appears that there is an “intertwined dichotomy between the sacred/profane or ritual/prosaic nature of boat and maritime themes in many South-East Asian societies.”³⁷ Boats are the vehicle of the soul, helping it to pass from one world to the other. They are thus strongly related with death rites and funerary activities. The way boats are used in Indonesia and the Pacific provides us with other important aspects that might be transposed into Predynastic Egypt.

We would like to focus first on the Niah Caves of Borneo, which provide us with rock art and inhumations that involve boats. The Niah Caves are located in the state of Sarawak, in the eastern part of the island of Borneo. They are notably famous for the discovery of some of the oldest human remains in South-East Asia.³⁸ One of these caves, named Gua Kain Hitam, is well known for its rock paintings (Fig. 4).³⁹ These paintings, which are one thousand to two thousand years old, cover a long narrow strip of approximately forty-six metres situated on the western wall of the cave. They portray human figures, probably representing warriors and hunters, animals, legendary beasts and boats.⁴⁰ It is interesting to note that boats are the most recurrent motifs and that they “contain (...) a wealth of symbolic imagery.”⁴¹ They are situated just above a gravesite where the bodies were placed in dugout canoes. These boat-shaped coffins were situated on an east-west axis and their bows were



FIGURE 4: Rock art panel from Gua Kain Hitam (Borneo). Szabo'et al. 2008, fig. 6.



FIGURE 5: Boat-coffins from Gua Kain Hitam (Borneo). Szabo' et al. 2008, fig. 2..

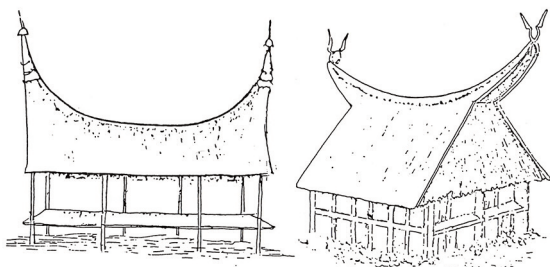


FIGURE 6: Pasemah house (Sumatra). Lewcock and Brans 1975, 109.



FIGURE 7: Houses in the Lio district of Flores Islands (Indonesia). Lewcock and Brans 1975, 110.

decorated with carved animal heads such as crocodiles, clouded leopards and a “sabre-toothed dragon” (Fig. 5).⁴² Recent investigations suggest that these canoes did not belong to one specific owner, but have instead been used repeatedly during almost one thousand years. It is also useful to observe that these inhumations in boat-shaped coffins are not unique since they are also notably attested in Vietnam and the Philippines.⁴³

This narrow link between boats and death and its correlation with Egypt does not need much explanation. This function of soul carriers for the boat is generally well documented since the archaeology of prehistoric societies is mainly funerary. This being said, it underlines the fact that every “boat culture” puts the boat at the centre of their ideological and beliefs systems. This concerns prehistoric Egypt as well.

Other interesting phenomena witnessed in almost every coastal region from South India to Indonesia and the Pacific should be mentioned. Among other functions, the boat is used there as an identity marker and it plays a crucial role in diplomatic and military activities or in the context of alliances and marriages. These boats were precious and, to some extents, sacred. Such “communal boats,” which were kept in a specific building at the centre of the village and showed a very specific typology, have been attested in insular South-East Asia. They were symbolising “the unity of the society and retaining all the special powers it assumes when in ceremonial use.”⁴⁴ Buildings can also take the shape of a boat, such as the “spirit houses” of the Celebes Islands, the communal houses of North West New Guinea, houses of the Pasemah people with a boat-shaped roof in Sumatra (Fig. 6) or the buildings that imitates a boat in full sail (Fig. 7) and the “illness houses” documented in Flores Islands.⁴⁵ The well-known traditional boats of the Salomon Islands are other examples of boats used in ceremonial, political, military and diplomatic activities. Such functions for the boat in the first stages of the Predynastic period can be postulated, as they fit well with its future importance in artistic productions that conveyed ideological and religious discourses.

THE BOAT AS A METAPHOR FOR THE ORDERED SOCIAL GROUP IN PREDYNASTIC EGYPT

Because the boat was used as a symbol already since Naqada I, the possibility that it embodied several still undocumented notions cannot be ruled out. We would like to focus here on the plausible use of the

boat as a metaphor for the ordered social group. Following this theory, it should be considered that the boat can be used as a symbolic depiction of the society in which the sailors are a designation of the population, while their captain is none other than the king.

Life on a boat is highly hierarchical and organised. It is a microcosm within which sailors follow a rigorous organisation and are placed under the authority of a captain. The captain must have all the qualities of a leader and must lead wisely in order to avoid any form of mutiny. It is thus possible to make an analogy between the captain, who is the leader of a group, and the sailors, who are a designation of the people. To obtain such an organisation on a ship, it must necessarily exist beforehand on land. This observation is perfectly consistent with the use of the boat as an allegory of order and control, since it embodied the whole human group managing the wild world of the Nile valley and the deserts. Its presence in hunting scenes would signify that the group was symbolically conducting them under the authority of their leader(s).

Although it is highly hypothetical, the oversized oars that radiate from the gunwale of the boats depicted on D-Ware ceramics could be the expression of this combined strength of the rowers. This multitude of oars would then be the designation of an organised and solidary society. However, such oars mainly appear on D-Ware pottery and rarely on other media. Because the iconography of these vases is considered to be of funerary and ceremonial nature, we must admit that this hypothesis is very speculative. The twenty-eight known emblems, in all likelihood having political and religious affinities, that appear on the poles of the Naqadian sickle-shaped boats⁴⁶ testify that the boat might have been used as an identity marker before the Naqada III period. It remains however to define what "identity" means in Predynastic Egypt. Indeed, the fact that two different emblems could appear on the same vase remains unexplained: it could be the designation of an alliance between two different groups or the association of a geographical and a political/religious marker.

Some Upper Egyptian sites have offered rare traces of community buildings that date back to the Naqada I period: structures too large to have sheltered a single family unit and probably used in the context of rituals and/or funerary ceremonies.⁴⁷ The local variations observed in various domains, such as ceramic⁴⁸ and lithic productions,⁴⁹ but also

the existence of already old regional centres by the end of Naqada I,⁵⁰ suggest that, in addition to a global "Naqadian identity," localised groups preserved their own local identity. In such a context, the sickle-shaped boat could very well have served as a community marker and have been used during diplomatic, military and ceremonial activities. This would explain the disappearance of the poles with cult emblems during Naqada III, in parallel with the political unification of Egypt, and the development of an image of the boat this time only associated with political power. This would also explain the importance of the boat in previous and future ideological and religious concepts. Besides, the way these boats were stored remains an open question: their high value implies an obvious need for protection when they are not afloat. Dismantled or not, they had to be kept in the immediate vicinity of the community, if not directly in the centre of it, during Predynastic times.

As shown above, once the king starts to be personified in artistic production, the boat loses almost all its previous symbolic prerogatives. It is nevertheless still possible to witness the survival of these early meanings of the boat through Pharaonic literature. For example, we can cite these lines from the *Tale of the Eloquent Peasant*: "See, You are like a town without mayor, Like a group without a leader, Like a SHIP WITHOUT A CAPTAIN, A company without a chief;"⁵¹ "Oh, High Steward, YOU ARE THE WHOLE LAND'S RUDDER, THE LAND SAILS BY YOUR BIDDING (...)." ⁵² Moreover, this semantic substitution of the boat for the society will permanently affect the Egyptian mind, and even the Egyptian vocabulary. For example, the Pyramid Texts assimilate the king to the rudder,⁵³ nautical terms were used in figurative expressions⁵⁴ and pharaoh's workforce was organised in phyles partly named after the four parts of a boat (the prow, the stern, the starboard and the larboard).⁵⁵ The religious importance of the boat during pharaonic times is another, and probably the most obvious, testimony of the ancient function of the boat in the Predynastic symbolic system.

CONCLUSIONS

The boat was the most important technological achievement of human history until the advent of aviation. It embodied the superiority of men over nature and was a sign of power, of wealth and of domination. If this symbolic lecture of the motif of the boat is still marginal in Egyptology, it is quite common in archaeological and ethnographical

studies related to other riverine and maritime cultures.

Despite the fact that each culture has its own practices and traditions, it appears that the boat is systematically a powerful symbol in maritime, coastal and riverine societies. This could notably be explained by the fact that all of them had to deal with very similar daily concerns: “it seems hardly surprising that societies whose daily lives may have involved travel by sea should have chosen the ship as a symbol.”⁵⁶ It is hardly disputable that this statement is also valid when it comes to Predynastic Egypt. The particularity of Egypt is that the Naqadian culture evolves to become a unified political and religious state under the authority of a divine king. All ancient traditions had to be adapted and incorporated into an institutionalised pharaonic ideological system. Religious beliefs and cults concerning the king supplanted the Neolithic practices and traditions. Boat images as the embodiment of the cosmic order of the world and its control were replaced by the figuration of the king mastering the enemies of Egypt. If the boat could still embody the pharaonic state during the First Dynasty, it lost all its previous symbolic prerogatives shortly after. Moreover, the development of writing allowed the expression of ideological meanings differently. The hieroglyphic system, built on images and ideograms, remains nevertheless closely linked with this immemorial taste for metaphors and allegories.

Obviously, all these theoretical reflexions are highly speculative and deserve further investigations. Whether valid or not, they have the advantage of not contradicting the most recent understanding of Naqadian iconography and archaeology. On the contrary, they shed a new light on the origin of this millennial importance of the boat in Egypt and show the potential of an opening of Egyptology to other disciplines and methodologies.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Pyr. = Sethe, K. 1908–1910. *Die altaegyptischen Pyramidentexte nach den Papierabdrucken und*

Photographien des Berliner Museums I–II. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs.

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NOTES

- 1 The first undisputable occurrences date back to the Elkabian period. This prehistoric culture (c. 7300–6400 BCE), identified in the vicinity of Elkab, had to use rafts in order to fish in the deep waters of the river (Vermeersch 1998; Van Neer 1994, 20).
- 2 Reisner 1913; Merriman 2011.
- 3 Graff 2009.
- 4 The only known example is the Gebelein Linen Tissue: Galassi 1955; Williams and Logan 1987, fig. 15; Donadoni-Roveri and Tiradritti 1998, 168–169, fig.77; Patch 2012, 38, 64, 114, 130, cat. 25, 64, 94.
- 5 The only example known to date is the western wall decoration of the Painted Tomb of Hierakonpolis: Quibell and Green 1902, 20–21, pls. LXXV–LXXIX; Williams and Logan 1987, 253–255, 270–272; Wengrow 2006, 109–111, 114–115; Huyge 2014.
- 6 Huyge 1995; Rohl 2000; Morrow et al. 2010; Lankester 2013.
- 7 Ward 2000; Ward 2003; Ward 2006; Radwan 2008; Lindemann 2008; Tristant et al. 2014.
- 8 Hendrickx and Eyckerman 2010.
- 9 These works are mainly related with Scandinavia, South-East Asia and the Pacific: Lewcock and Brans 1975; Manguin 1986; Waite 1990; Crumlin-Pedersen and Thye 1995; Adams 2001; Ballard et al. 2003; Szabó et al. 2008; Rich 2013, 2.
- 10 Tefnin 1979; Tefnin 1984; Tefnin 1993; Hendrickx 2006; Hendrickx 2010; Hendrickx 2013; Hendrickx and Eyckerman 2012.
- 11 Vanhulle 2016.
- 12 The polysemic nature of the boat is well-known: see note 9 and Westerdahl 2013.
- 13 Kemp 2006, 93.
- 14 Rock art is important in this discussion since the boat is by far the most engraved motif (Lankester 2013). However, because discussing the almost two thousand pre-pharaonic boat engravings currently documented would exceed

- the scope of this paper, we decided not to consider it. Rock art has its own specificities and remains at some point enigmatic. It is nevertheless important to underline that the engravings identified in what can be called “liminal areas” (Lippiello 2012), such as Elkab, Hierakonpolis or Ouadi Abu Subeira and the Gharb Aswan area, should be considered with caution. Those areas are in clear connection with important Naqadian sites and cannot be directly assimilated with the many engravings scattered in the deserts. For example, the solar cosmology postulated in Elkab by D. Huyge (D. Huyge, 1995; 2002) designates the giraffe as a powerful solar symbol during the Badarian period and Naqada I. The boat would only be used in this perspective from the Naqada II period. This study underlines the fact that the boat was not the only motif that was symbolically powerful and that regional specificities or preferences may have existed. This does not preclude that the boat was already an important symbol during Naqada I.
- ¹⁵ Some rare exemplars of boats incised on ceramics (Petrie and Quibell 1896, 43–44, pl. LI.27, LII.70–71; Petrie 1901, 29, pl. XXI.52; Williams 1989) and on a palette (Stockholm, Medelhavsmuseet MM 16000: Säve-Söderbergh 1953, 153, fig.8; Hendrickx 2013, 243, fig. 6) should also be mentioned.
- ¹⁶ Petrie Museum, University College London: UC15319, 15281 (Graff 2009, 211, no. 54; Petrie 1920, pl.XXIII, WC70E) and Royal Museum of Art and History, Brussels: E.2988 (Graff 2009, 226, no. 99; Hendrickx and Eyckerman 2010, 128, fig. 6).
- ¹⁷ Graff 2009, nos. 14, 40, 74, 117, 171. Hunting scenes almost completely disappear from ceramic decoration during Naqada II. One peculiar exemplar from Gebel el-Silsileh should, however, be mentioned: Graff 2009, no. 191; Hendrickx and Eyckerman 2010, 129, fig. 8.
- ¹⁸ Asselberghs 1961; Baines 1995; Hendrickx 2006; Kemp 2006, 92–99; Raffaele 2010.
- ¹⁹ This particular scene appears on one of rare White Crossed-Line ceramics decorated with persona wearing feathers or branches on their head and an animal tail at their belt. In all likelihood, they are members of the ruling elite of that time. They seem to dominate smaller figures that have their arms behind their back. If their identification as prisoners is still a matter of discussion, it is nevertheless generally accepted that this iconography conveys a discourse of domination and power, probably in a violent context: Dreyer et al. 1998, 113–114, fig. 12.1, 13; Dreyer et al. 2003, 81, 83, fig. 5, 6a; Midant-Reynes 2003, 326–330; Graff 2009, no. 148, 155, 161–162; Hartung 2010, 118, fig. 4c; Hendrickx and Eyckerman 2012, 25–32, fig. 1a–e, 3.
- ²⁰ See Axelle Brémont’s paper in this volume for a discussion about the ideological concept of “Order out of Chaos” in Egypt.
- ²¹ Quibell 1898, 81–84; Köhler 2002; O’Connor 2011; Allan 2014. The “Dogs Palette” shows a similar scene except that the two animals are not leashed. They seem to lick the bull, that is to say the embodiment of the king. The message is still the same, since the beasts are placed under the direct authority of the ruler (Asselberghs 1961, pl. LXX; Wengrow 2006, 180, fig. 9.3; O’Connor 2011, 150, fig. 16.7; Kuhn 2011).
- ²² Kemp 2006, 69–73, fig. 20; Merzeban 2008.
- ²³ Assmann 1989; Midant-Reynes 2003, 366–367; Menu 2005; Menu 2007.
- ²⁴ Between Naqada IIA and IIC (c. 3600–3400 BCE), this iconography appears with some variations on the Gebelein Linen Tissue (see note 4) and the Painted Tomb of Hierakonpolis (see note 5). It has recently been postulated that this painting has been “repainted and modernised” during the Naqada III period in a possible attempt of recycling and updating Naqada II imagery (Huyge 2014).
- ²⁵ Williams and Logan 1987; Ciałowicz 1997.
- ²⁶ Williams and Logan 1987; Sievertsen 1992; Vertesalji 1992; Czichon and Sievertsen 1993; Pittman 1996; Delange 2009.
- ²⁷ One fragment of another ivory knife handle found in tomb U-503 in Abydos shows strong stylistic similarities with the Gebel el-Arak knife handle (Dreyer et al. 1998, 99, fig. 7; Hartung 2010, 111, fig. 5.a; Raffaele 2010, fig. 2.2).
- ²⁸ This ceremonial function is suggested by the peculiar typology of these boats and the

- presence of a vaulted cabin that can be identify as a shrine (Hendrickx, Darnell, Gatto, and Eyckerman 2012, 300). These ceremonial boats bear obvious similarities with some reeds rafts depicted on Urukian cylinder seals (Salonen 1939, pl. III.2). This fact mainly underlines the probable contacts between Egypt and Mesopotamia at that time. It does not prove in any way that the decoration is oriental.
- ²⁹ The historical interpretations of Egyptian iconography, which postulates that a scene probably describes a real event, cannot be sustained anymore. Because Naqadian art is not narrative but rather codified and based on an association of signs, we prefer to adopt a structuralist approach (see note 10 for some references).
- ³⁰ Hendrickx et al. 2009; Hendrickx, Darnell, Gatto, and Eyckerman 2012, 295–326; Hendrickx, Darnell, and Gatto 2012; Darnell 2015.
- ³¹ Quibell 1900, 6, pl. V, XXXI.1; Quibell and Green 1902, 31–32, 36, 43, 49, 50, pl. LXIII; Petrie 1903, 24, pl. III.20; Dreyer 1986, 37–50, 80; van Haarlem 2009; Kopp 2006, 75, 142, pl. 31.491; Ciałowicz 2009, 95, fig.36; Busmann 2010, 108–110, 243, 291, 337, 342, pl. 93/fig. 5.51-57, pl. 192/5.681; Chłodnicki et al. 2012, 201–231.
- ³² See note 7.
- ³³ Tallet and Somaglino 2014; Tallet 2015.
- ³⁴ Several studies deal with the roles played by boats in Scandinavian rock art (Helskog 1985; Crumlin-Pedersen and Thye 1995). Boats often appear in association with animals, hunters and warriors.
- ³⁵ About the boat as the metaphor of the ordered social group, see Manguin 1986. A more recent and global analysis can be found in Ballard et al. 2003.
- ³⁶ Lape et al. 2007, 238.
- ³⁷ Szabó et al. 2014, 162.
- ³⁸ Mainly investigated between 1954 and 1962 by Tom and Barbara Harrison (Harrison 1958; Harrison 1960; Harrison 1964; Harrison 1967), these caves are the subject of new research projects by the McDonald Institute of Archaeological Research in Cambridge (Barker et al. 2011; Barker 2013; Barker and Farr 2016).
- ³⁹ Szabó et al. 2008, 149–169; Tan 2014, 89–90, 158–159.
- ⁴⁰ The paintings, actually partially damaged by algae, are red. The colour is an organic material, probably tree resin (Pyatt et al. 2005).
- ⁴¹ Szabó et al. 2008, 158-159.
- ⁴² Szabó et al. 2008, 151.
- ⁴³ Tenazas 1973; Bellwood and Cameron 2006.
- ⁴⁴ Lewcock and Brans 1975, 107.
- ⁴⁵ Lewcock and Brans 1975, 107–112.
- ⁴⁶ The nature of these emblems remains enigmatic and many arguments in favour of a religious or political significance have been provided since the beginning of the 20th century (Aksamit1981; Aksamit 2006). Some of these emblems were still used during the pharaonic period to designate nomes (de Morgan 1897, 92–94; Newberry 1913; Anselin 2004) or deities (Petrie 1920, 20; Helck 1950: 123–124; Baumgartel 1955, 11–14; Baumgartel 1960, 144–151; Graff 2009, 43–44). V. Loret thought that these emblems were used to identify clans (Loret 1904) while A.M. Roth proposed that they designate primitive versions of the future phyles (Roth 1991, 208–209).
- ⁴⁷ Such a structure has been discovered in el-Mahâsna. It dates back to the Naqada IC-IIA/B period and was probably the siege of ceremonial and/or ritual activities (Anderson 2011). The ceremonial area HK29A in Hierakonpolis should also be mentioned (Friedman 2009).
- ⁴⁸ Friedman 1995, 516–524, 862–863.
- ⁴⁹ Holmes 1989, 322–338.
- ⁵⁰ Anđelković 2008. The author comes to a similar conclusion since he postulates the existence of “pre-nomes”, that is to say of “autonomous local villages” about the beginning of Naqada IA (Anđelković 2008, 1051).
- ⁵¹ Lichtheim 2006, 177.
- ⁵² Lichtheim 2006, 179.
- ⁵³ *Pyr.* 917b and 1093; Postel 2003, 383, n. 35.
- ⁵⁴ Chappaz 1980; Kruchten 1995; Rizzo 2005.
- ⁵⁵ Roth 1991.
- ⁵⁶ Ballard et al. 2003, 398.