

BOATS

The British
Museum

JOURNEY OF CIVILISATIONS

ROOM 3

9TH AUGUST,
2018

ORGANISED BY

PANKAJ PROTIM BORDOLOI
NEW DELHI, INDIA

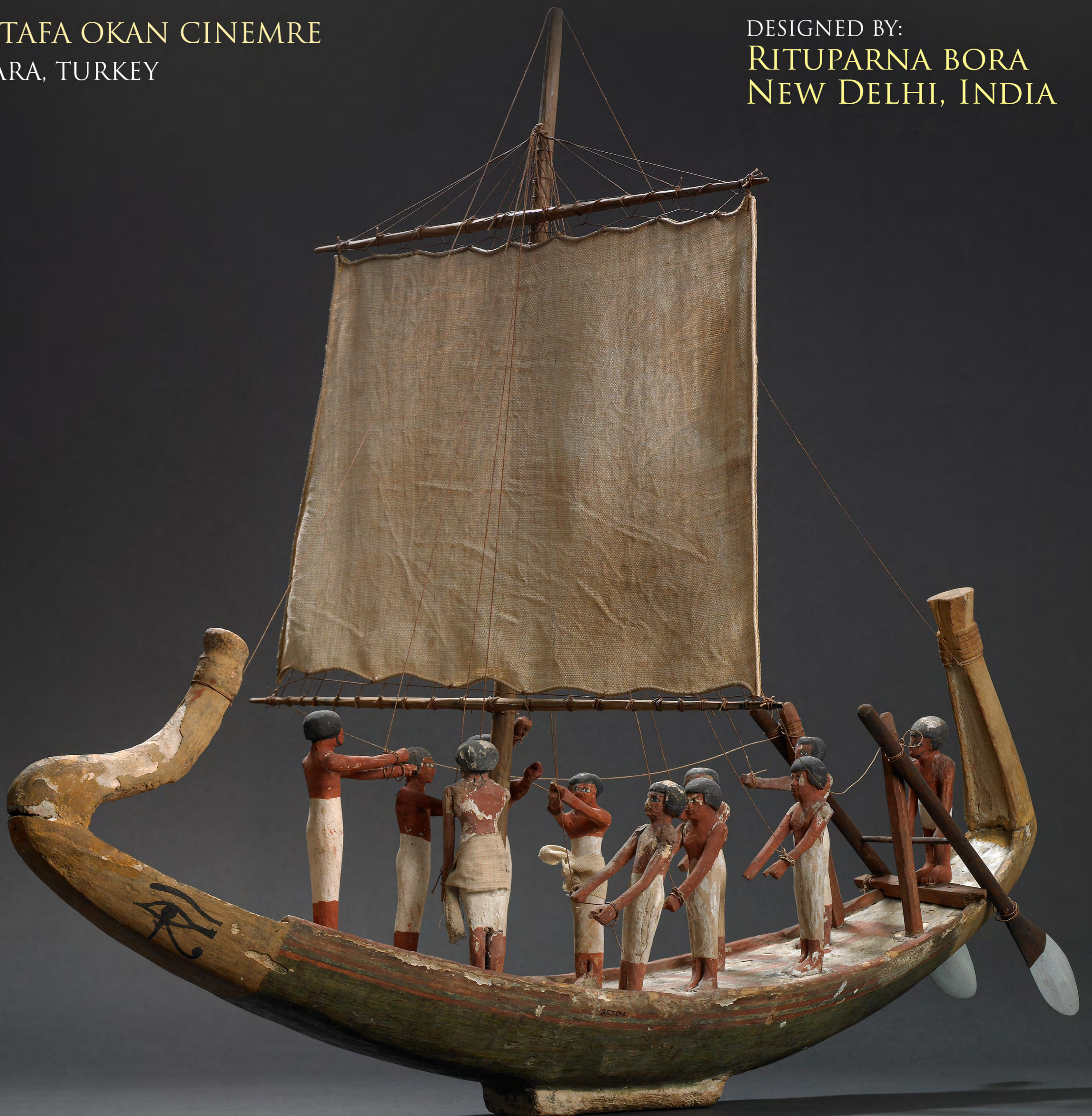
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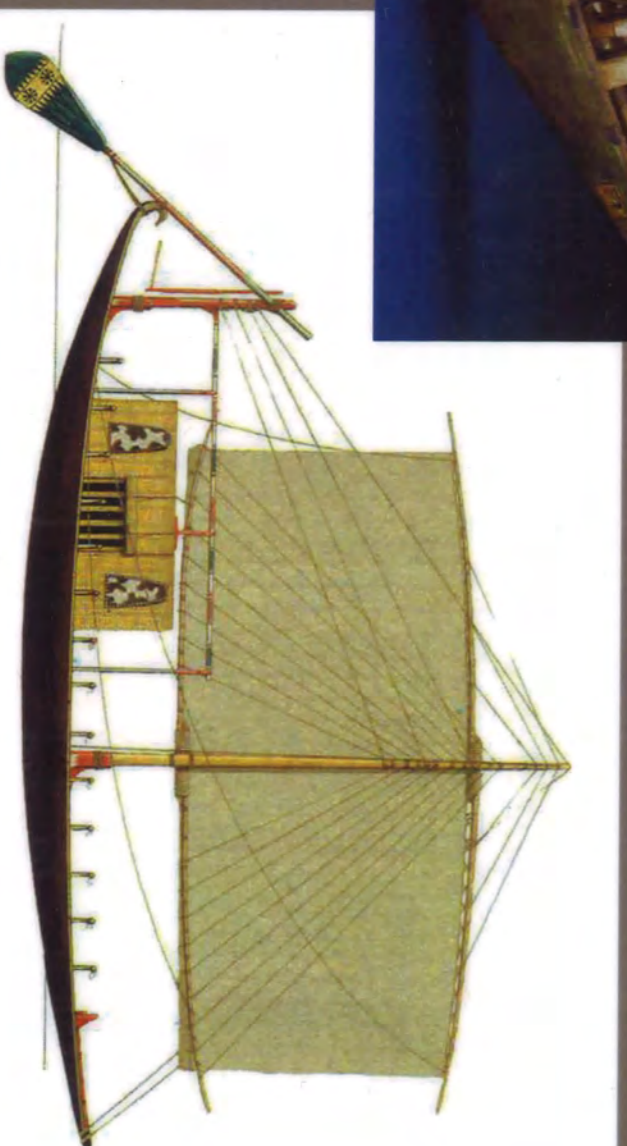


BOATS: JOURNEY OF CIVILIZATIONS

EGYPTIAN TOMBS OF THE MIDDLE KINGDOM (ABOUT 1850BC), OFTEN CONTAINED VIVIDLY PAINTED WOODEN MODELS DEPICTING EVERYDAY TASKS LIKE FOOD PRODUCTION (BREWING, BAKING, MEAT PRODUCTION, FISHING, PLOUGHING) AND OTHER CRAFT PRODUCTIONS. THESE MODELS WERE PLACED IN THE TOMBS TO PROVIDE THE DEAD WITH ETERNAL SUSTENANCE AND COMFORTS. THIS WAS A WAY OF CONTINUING THE BEST IN LIFE BEYOND THE VERGE OF DEATH.

IN THE MIDDLE KINGDOM, BY FAR THE MOST NUMEROUS OF ALL MODELS WERE BOATS. THESE WERE USED DURING LIFE-TIME ON DIFFERENT OCCASIONS, SUCH AS FOR EVERYDAY TRANSPORT ON THE NILE, DURING FESTIVALS, TRANSPORT OF THE FUNERAL TO THE WESTBANK AND THE MODELS COULD ALSO FUNCTION FOR SYMBOLIC PILGRIMAGES BY THE DEAD OR SOMETIME FOR VERY SPECIFIC RELIGIOUS RITUALS. THE FURNISHING OF THE MODEL BOATS GENERALLY DETERMINES THE USE OF THE BOATS, FROM ORDINARY TRAVEL TO SYMBOLIC PILGRIMAGE.

THE CRAFT TYPE OF THE MODELS OF THESE BOATS ARE DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE AS THESE ARE MOSTLY ROUGH CONSTRUCTIONS. THE EARLIEST BOAT MODELS ARE FOUND IN PREDYNASTIC TIMES (C3100 BC) AND ARE MADE OF POTTERY. WOODEN BOAT MODELS ARE FOUND FROM THE FOURTH AND FIFTH DYNASTIES ONWARDS (C2600-2350 BC).



Wooden model of boat with crew

12th Dynasty, about 1850 BCE, Egypt

This boat model allows the deceased to symbolically undertake a pilgrimage to Abydos, the centre for worship of the Egyptian god of death, Osiris. This boat is crewed by ten men with the helmsman standing by the twin steering oars at the stern. The protective symbolic Horus eye is painted on either side of the prow. Models such as this are typical for the period of the Middle Kingdom (c2050-1650 BC) and show different scenes from daily life.

EA35204, purchased from RJ Moss & Company