



# Different Cultural Boat Designs and Purposes Including Human Interactions with Water

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## DESCRIPTION

Boats are one of the oldest inventions of human civilization. They have been used for various purposes such as transportation, trade, exploration, warfare, fishing, recreation, and ritual. Boats also reflect the culture and environment of the people who use them, as well as their relationship with water.

One of the earliest types of boats was the raft, which was made of logs, bamboo, reeds, animal skins, or baskets. Rafts were used to cross small water bodies or to float downstream. They were simple and cheap to make, but not very stable or maneuverable. Rafts were used by many ancient cultures such as the Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Indians, Chinese, and Polynesians.

Dugouts were more durable and buoyant than rafts, but still required human power to paddle or pole them. Dugouts were used by many indigenous peoples around the world, such as the Native Americans, Africans, Australians, and Southeast Asians.

The invention of the sail was a major breakthrough in maritime history. Sails allowed boats to harness the power of wind and travel faster and farther than before. Sails also enabled boats to carry heavier loads and more people. The earliest sails were square-shaped and suited for sailing downwind. Later, fore-and-aft sails were developed that allowed boats to sail across or against the wind.

The Egyptians were among the first to develop advanced sailing cargo ships. They used them to transport stone columns, grain, gold, and other goods along the Nile and across the Mediterranean and Red seas. The Egyptian ships were made of wooden planks that were lashed and sewn together. They had a single mast with a square sail and a steering oar at the stern.

The Phoenicians were another influential maritime culture in ancient times. They were skilled sailors and traders who established colonies and ports around the Mediterranean and

beyond. The Phoenicians built galleys that were powered by both sails and oars. The galleys had a long and narrow hull that was designed for speed and agility. The Phoenicians also invented the bireme and the trireme, which were galleys with two or three levels of rowers. These ships were used for both commerce and warfare.

Different types of boats emerged in different regions of the world according to their needs and resources. For example, in China, junks were developed as versatile vessels that could sail in rivers, lakes, and seas. Junks had a flat bottom, a high stern, multiple masts with battened sails, and a rudder for steering. In Scandinavia, Vikings built long ships that were fast and seaworthy. Long ships had a shallow draft, a clinker-built hull, a single mast with a square sail, and oars along the sides. They were used for raiding, trading, exploring, and colonizing. In Polynesia, outrigger canoes were developed as stable and efficient vessels for navigating the vast Pacific Ocean. Outrigger canoes had a main hull with one or two lateral floats attached by poles. They had a triangular sail that could be adjusted to different wind directions.

Boats are not only functional tools but also cultural symbols that express human values and beliefs. For example, in ancient Egypt, boats were associated with the sun god Ra and his journey across the sky. Boats were also used for funerary rituals to transport the souls of the dead to the afterlife. In ancient Greece, boats were linked to the sea god Poseidon and his power over storms and earthquakes. Boats were also used for religious festivals such as the Panathenaia and the Olympic Games. In Polynesia, boats were regarded as sacred objects that embodied ancestral spirits and genealogies. Boats were also used for ceremonial voyages such as migrations and pilgrimages.

Boats are thus an integral part of human history and culture. They reflect how humans have adapted to different environments and interacted with water as a source of life, challenge, opportunity, and inspiration.

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