

An ancient Egypt-to-Black Sea route? Adventurers to test theory

July 31 2019, by Diana Simeonova



Goerlitz and his team say they drew inspiration for the design of the 14-metre boat from ancient rock drawings from upper Egypt and the Caucasus

Were the ancient Egyptians able to use reed boats to travel as far as the Black Sea thousands of years ago?

A group of adventurers believe so, and will try to prove their theory by embarking on a similar journey in reverse.

In mid-August the team of two dozen researchers and volunteers from eight countries will set off from the Bulgarian port of Varna, hoping their Abora IV reed boat will take them the 700 nautical miles through the Bosphorus, the Aegean and as far as the island of Crete.

The team is specifically seeking to prove a hypothesis lent credence by Herodotus, the expedition's German leader, Dominique Goerlitz, told AFP.

The ancient Greek historian wrote: "Egyptians sailed through the Black Sea to get materials that they could not have from the east Mediterranean."

Goerlitz, 53, and his team say they drew inspiration for the design of the 14-metre (46-foot) boat from ancient rock drawings from upper Egypt and the Caucasus.

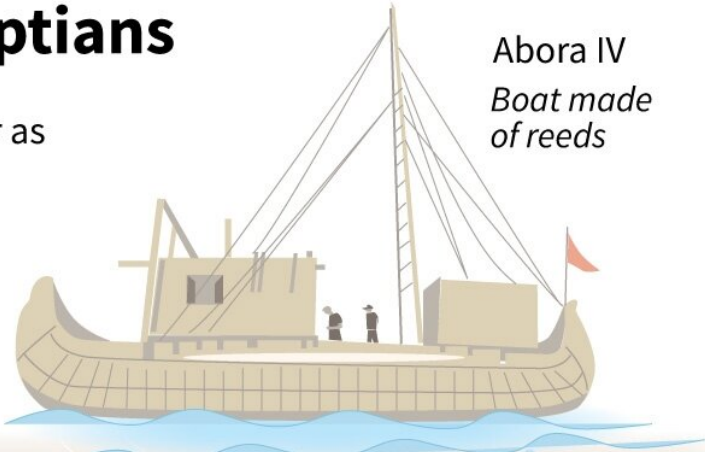
Bolivian know-how

The construction was carried out with the help of volunteers and two members of the Aymara indigenous community from Bolivia's Lake Titicaca, Fermin Limachi and his son Yuri.

Sail like the Egyptians

Adventurers attempt to prove ancient Egyptians sailed as far as the Black Sea, in reverse

Abora IV
Boat made of reeds



Graphic of the reed boat and map of the route planned by a group of adventurers who will attempt to prove ancient Egyptians sailed as far as the Black Sea to trade.

It is no accident that the Abora IV bears a striking resemblance to the famous Ra II reed boat that Norwegian adventurer Thor Heyerdahl used

in his 1970 attempt to cross the Atlantic—Limachi's father helped build that vessel too.

Large bundles of totora reed were lashed together with ropes to form the main body of the vessel before it was equipped with a wooden mast and two reed compartments for sleeping.

In all, 12 tonnes of totora reed and two kilometres (a mile) of rope went into making the boat, which will have two sails—measuring 62 square metres (670 square feet) and 40 square metres (430 sq ft), Fermin said.

"The main question of all is whether this boat... is able to cross the difficult island shelves of the Aegean Sea," Goerlitz said.

Reaching the Cyclades islands and then Crete will be crucial for proving his initial hypothesis, he added, as the Minoan civilisation which flourished there from 2,700 to 1,200 BC was long proven to have traded with Egypt.



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