



Bengal Watercraft:

Unknown Heritage

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Abstract

Watercraft is one of the most important cultural elements in any riverine/maritime community; here the members directly reciprocate their behaviour in ecology. As a result, keen observation is extremely essential to study the designs and the construction patterns of watercraft according to the informal



Ritual performance by the boat builder after completion of the boat building

rules and procedures handed down over the years by the boatmaker. Boat making as a process of livelihood practice is a direct response to the ecological settings, which must be studied contextually - from environmental factors, the shape and size of the watercraft itself, raw materials, and so on.



Noukabaich: Traditional boat race of Sundarbans

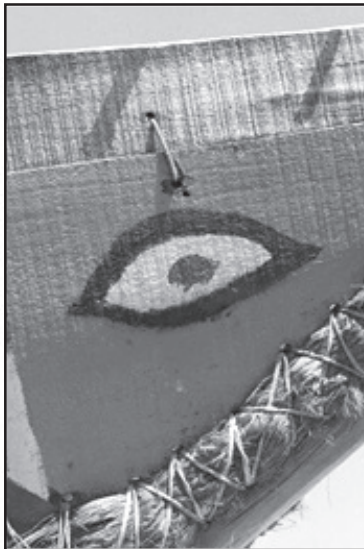
Ethnography of riverine/maritime culture documents riverine/maritime knowledge of the past and also establishes the process of change of that knowledge over time and how it connects to present-

day folk knowledge. Maritime ethnography - as a domain of study is diachronic which establishes a temporal dimension of the watercraft-making process chronologically.



Prow of a boat with symbol of sacredness. A boat equipped for racing in the boat race festival of Sundarbans.

Boat is the oldest mode of transport. It was invented much before the invention of the wheel. Wood was the material which early man shaped into a hollowed structure that can sit on the water.



Personification of boat. Boat is here in Bengal treated as living entity. Each boat has oculus.

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That was the boat, the dugout, a watertight compartment where penetration of water was prevented. The invention of the boat makes human migration easier. The boat is the tool that gives thrust to explore resources of aquatic food, and resource of distant islands.

Bengal is not landlocked but rather riverine. Numerous water bodies and water resistance were overcome by those people living in this part of the world by innovating various types of watercraft in time immemorial. Not only do they overcome the barrier of almighty rivers but also oceans. The intricate relationship with waterbody and boat manifests the culture called boat culture. In this presentation visual ethnographic account on boats of Bengal is a humble tribute to those boat makers and boatmen.



To the scale wooden boat models and author