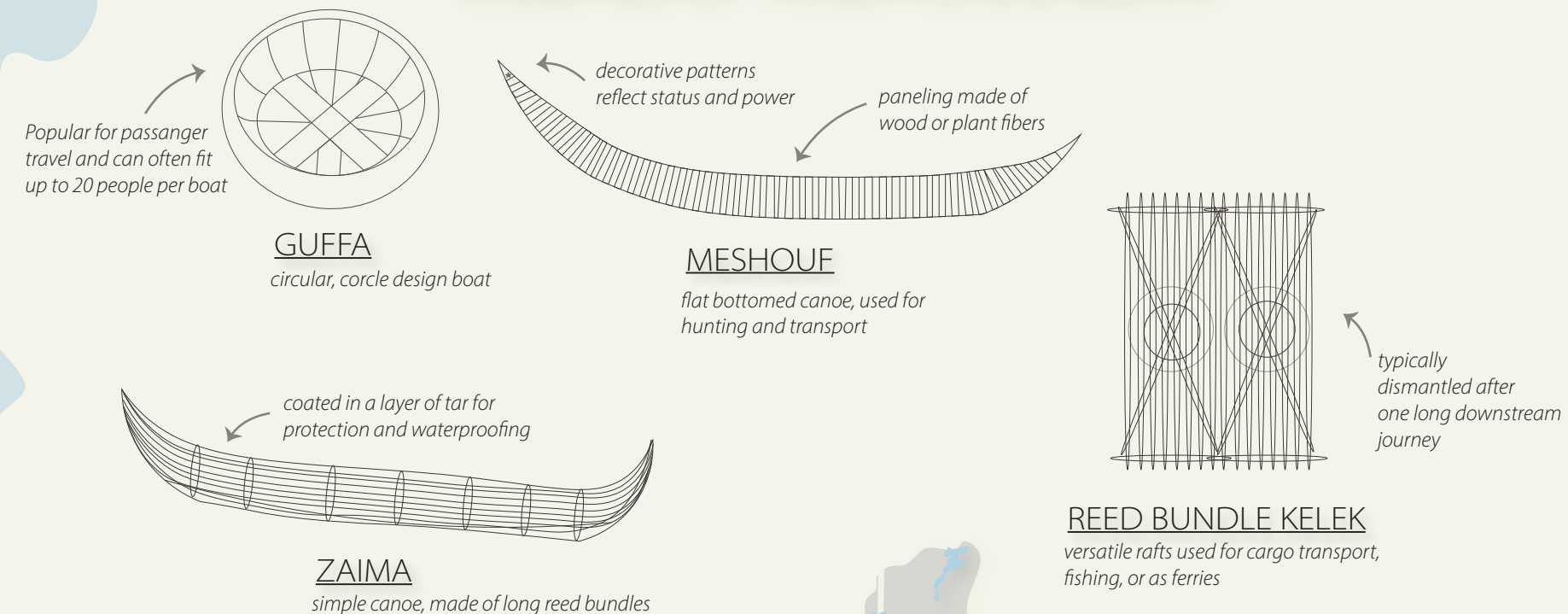
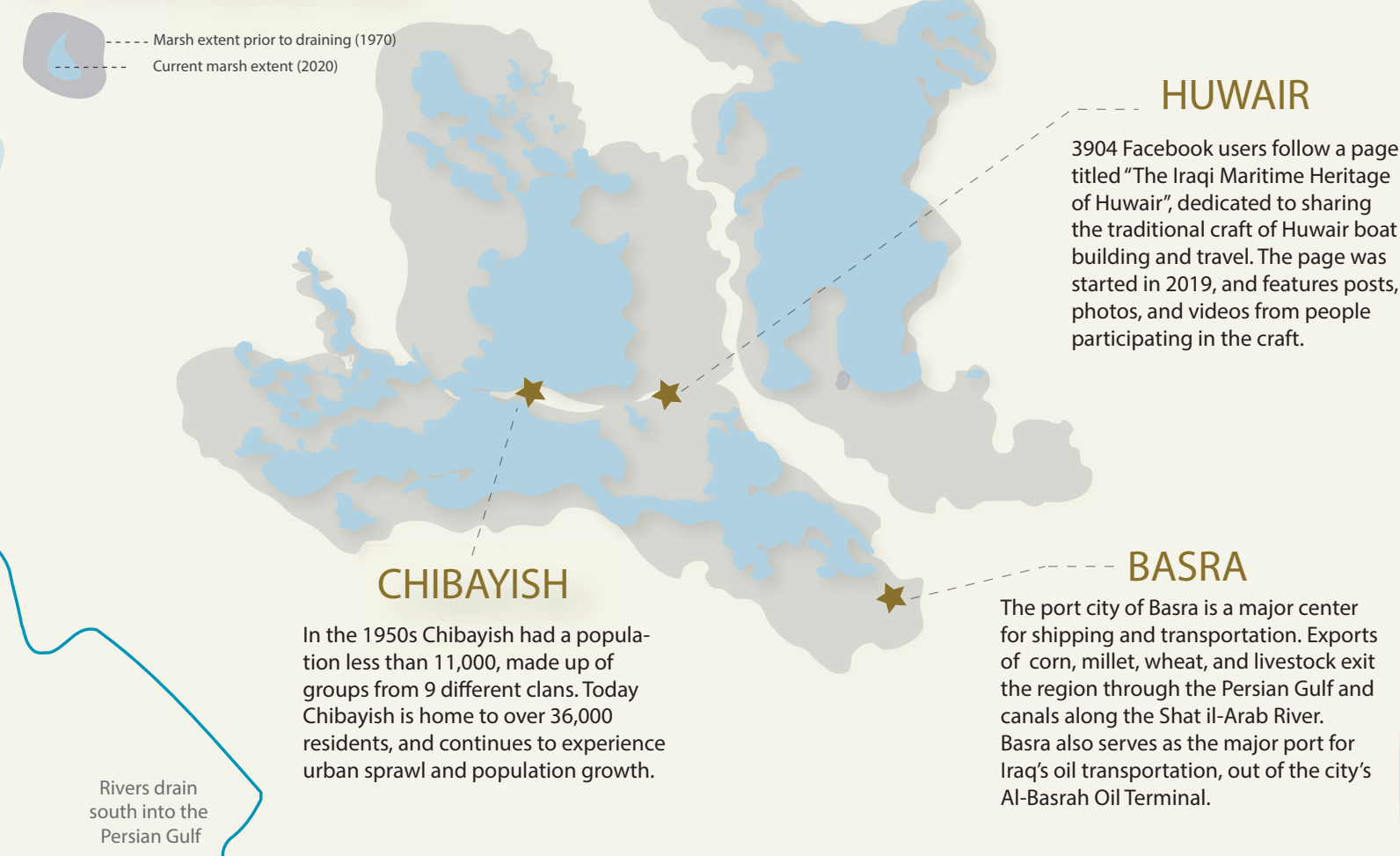


VARIETIES OF TRADITIONAL BOATS

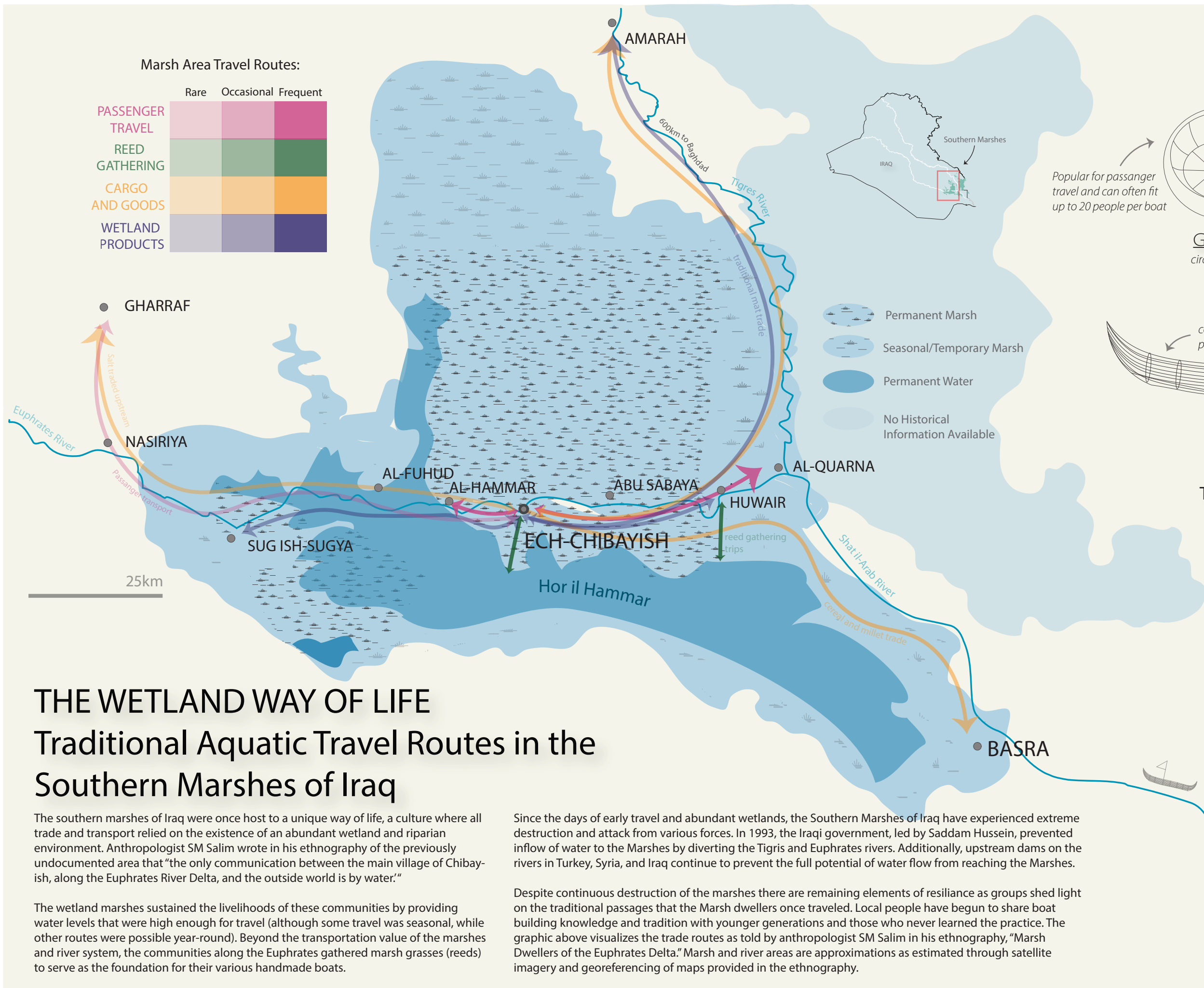


The Southern Marshes Today



Marsh Area Travel Routes:

	Rare	Occasional	Frequent
PASSENGER TRAVEL	Light pink	Medium pink	Dark pink
REED GATHERING	Light green	Medium green	Dark green
CARGO AND GOODS	Light orange	Medium orange	Dark orange
WETLAND PRODUCTS	Light purple	Medium purple	Dark purple



THE WETLAND WAY OF LIFE

Traditional Aquatic Travel Routes in the Southern Marshes of Iraq

The southern marshes of Iraq were once host to a unique way of life, a culture where all trade and transport relied on the existence of an abundant wetland and riparian environment. Anthropologist SM Salim wrote in his ethnography of the previously undocumented area that "the only communication between the main village of Chibayish, along the Euphrates River Delta, and the outside world is by water."

The wetland marshes sustained the livelihoods of these communities by providing water levels that were high enough for travel (although some travel was seasonal, while other routes were possible year-round). Beyond the transportation value of the marshes and river system, the communities along the Euphrates gathered marsh grasses (reeds) to serve as the foundation for their various handmade boats.

Since the days of early travel and abundant wetlands, the Southern Marshes of Iraq have experienced extreme destruction and attack from various forces. In 1993, the Iraqi government, led by Saddam Hussein, prevented inflow of water to the Marshes by diverting the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Additionally, upstream dams on the rivers in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq continue to prevent the full potential of water flow from reaching the Marshes.

Despite continuous destruction of the marshes there are remaining elements of resilience as groups shed light on the traditional passages that the Marsh dwellers once traveled. Local people have begun to share boat building knowledge and tradition with younger generations and those who never learned the practice. The graphic above visualizes the trade routes as told by anthropologist SM Salim in his ethnography, "Marsh Dwellers of the Euphrates Delta." Marsh and river areas are approximations as estimated through satellite imagery and georeferencing of maps provided in the ethnography.

Rivers drain south into the Persian Gulf