



Let's Meet...Hanno

Early Phoenician sea explorer who may be the first person to sail into the Atlantic Ocean from the Strait of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean Sea.

By

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I, Hanno, also called Hanno the Navigator(@480BCE) was a famous Phoenician explorer. I lived in a Phoenician colony, on the coast of Africa, called Carthage.

Little is known of my life but my journey gave me a place in history. After I returned home, I had a tablet about my voyage placed in the temple of Ba'al Hammon, in the city of Carthage. My journal of my voyage have not survived down through history. However, a Greek translation of the clay tablet I wrote(called Hannonis Periplus) about my travels has. Another writer, the Roman, Pliny the Elder told of my accomplishment. He stated that I may have **circumnavigated** the continent of Africa and reached the Arabian **peninsula**. Few historians actually believe this is the case. However, if I did sail around the continent, I would have beaten Portuguese explorer, Vasca de Gama(1497), by almost 2000 years!

Unlike many earlier cultures that settled by **fertile** land and farmed, Phoenicians didn't have any good soil, so they turned to the sea. The Phoenicians were the earliest known sea traders who ventured out on ships made from hard cedar trees found in Phoenicia. I would add that these trees also had a wonderful **fragrance**.

There weren't any compasses in my day but the Phoenicians got great at **navigating**(finding the way) using stars. The Phoenician Star, I believe you call it the North Star in your time, was the most important star used by sailors. This enabled us to do something other sea travelers couldn't do, travel at night.

The Phoenicians didn't want any **competition** on the Mediterranean Sea so we started stories about sea monsters to frighten others from sailing on "our" sea. One such creature was the hippocamp (hippocampus). It was said to have a head of a horse and the long tail of a fish. My crew was very brave because, in my day, we also believed the earth was flat and if you went too far, you would fall off the earth!

I traveled through the **Strait** of Gibraltar, a narrow strip of water connecting two larger water masses, and entered the Atlantic Ocean. In my day, we called this area the Pillars of Hercules. I then headed south.

Historians think I may have had 60 ships and 30,000 people aboard to help start new **colonies** for the Phoenicians. But, do the math, that would mean about 500 people per ship, a bit crowded for a wood ship, don't you think? Add to this, there were lots of cats aboard the ships. Cats were great at keeping the rat population down.

Along my thirty-five day journey, my crew and I came upon many amazing sites and we had some dangers, too. We came upon some native people that threw rocks at our ships and wouldn't let us land when we were getting low on water. Sailing up a huge river, which historians think is Senegal, we saw huge mammals, which you call elephants and river horses, which you call hippopotami. There were also lots of crocodiles in the river. A huge mountain of fire, which I called Chariots of the Gods, was also recorded. Historians think I may have witnessed an eruption of Mount Camaroun, a volcano. I especially remember seeing very hairy creatures. The word "gorilla" comes from the word which I used to name these hairy creatures spotted near the present day country of Sierra Leone. I also remember camping on land which was very forested. At night, we could see camp fires in the area and heard the beating of drums. We decided it might be best to leave this area as soon as possible!

Some people give me credit for sailing across the equator. Had I crossed the equator, do you have any idea what might look different in the night sky? Most historians think I did get as far south as the present day country of Sierra Leone or even the country of Gabon. Still others think I just got to the coast of southern Morocco.

I had a great honor. Scientists named one of the craters on the moon after me! The crater has lots of potholes and is found near the Mare Australe (mare means "ocean").

That was my life.

Signed,

Hanno the Navigator

Did You Know?

1. The first alphabet, 22 letters, came from the Phoenicians. The Greeks added 4 more letters.
2. The color purple was first invented by the Phoenicians. They squeezed a gland of a sea creature to get the "color for dyeing cloth. About 10,000 were needed to make just one garment. "Tyrian Purple" as it was called, was very valued and expensive!
3. It is thought that the Phoenicians also gave the world glass! There was plenty of sand along the shores where the Phoenicians lived! They became known for glassblowing.
4. One of the **colonies** of the Phoenicians was Carthage, it means "new city".
5. Another Phoenician explorer, Himilco,(6th century BCE) is said to have reached the shores of northwestern Europe.
6. A lower jaw was found to have evidence of braces suggesting the early Phoenicians had knowledge of dentistry.
7. Robert Ballard(found the Titanic) discovered 2 ancient Phoenician ships off the coast of Israel in 1999. The ships date back to 750 years BCE.
8. Historians think the Phoenicians raised elephants!
9. Not having any wood for building, both the Egyptians and Mesopotamians purchased Phoenician cedar trees to build their palaces and temples.

