

## **Research and Documentation**

**As with all of these postings I want you to critically look at what I write and bring out points that you don't understand, can add to or just want out. That critiquing can start a discussion or many discussions.**

### **Introduction**

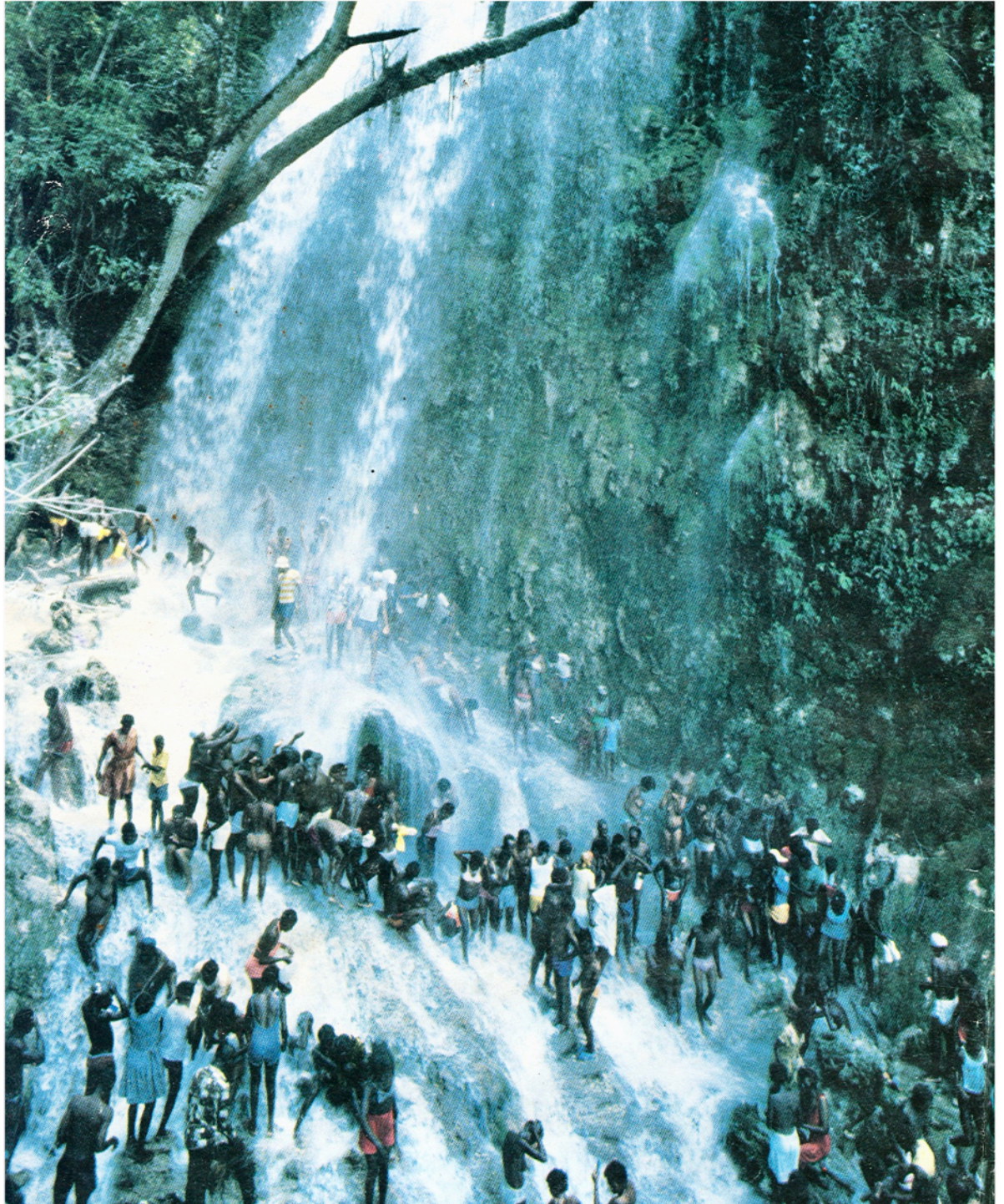
#### **Volunteers Needed for Black Sailing Maritime Research**

The Atlantic Creole Project focusses broadly from the early contributions of Africa to the design of vessels and the skills involved with movement upon the waters of this planet. In answering a basic question about why this should be considered important it is easy to say- why doesn't the history we are taught about human migration out of Africa start at its beginning? How did the human being go to the first landings out of the continent known as Africa? We cannot not see the migrations out of Africa that we are told to be completely factual logical progressions without the consideration of movement by water.

And, along that thread of restricted thinking and why would people travel up from the Ethiopia-Eritrea-Sudan geographic region to an unknown land bridge into Arabia when they could float across the short 20-mile distance at the entrance to the Red Sea with a sometimes visible stretch of land on its other side? Which would be more comfortable walking hundreds of miles with supplies on your back and having to hunt all the while or sitting with your supplies on a raft or canoa and drifting, paddling or even sailing while fishing across to a land you can see few miles away in a few hours? DNA timeline studies date it more in this direction than the other. We are basically told that being African we would prefer the struggle and would be afraid of the water.

Olokun, Kalunga, Agwe are three of the spirits of the sea that still cover an area on the western side of the African continent from Nigeria to Senegal. These ageless deities lead from the sea to rivers and lakes and all bodies of water as a strongly defined reverence and respect for the substance that fills us all and coincidentally is a

word for spirit which is- WATER. Even in the contemporary religions of today water blesses and purifies. So, we would put some type of reverence to water but we would never trust it enough to explore it?



**(Photograph by Johnny Sandaire of Saut d'Eau, the Republic of Haiti)**

Why have we been taught that we don't have any real maritime history?

Why are we familiar with our only reference to sailing as being aboard the enslaved crossings from Africa to the Western Hemisphere?

Does it have something to do with the message written by the enslaved ships caulker, Frederick Douglass, when looking out at vessels sailing that they were "...winged angels of freedom."?

I hope you see where I am going with this. We have been moved away from our maritime heritage that presented a vast horizon that needed and needs real freedom to explore. Freedom by definition means without external controls. The sea cannot be controlled and to move across it entails your individual balance of practicality and intuition. An enslaver does not want their enslaved people to venture into their individual courses without supervision by their forced and enforced control mechanisms.

Maritime history is made up of all those healthy and unhealthy ingredients set in perspective. The concept we are attempting to organise as knowledge does not to have a singularly focussed maritime history, as is done at present, but to tell as inclusive a maritime history as is possible. All maritime histories need to be included in a world maritime history. For our needs we will look at what has been excluded and add that to a world history.

The term Atlantic Creole was described by historian Dr. Ira Berlin as the black mariner in the early expansion of the British Empire to the Western Hemisphere. The term represents the synthesis of cultures with a foot in one hemisphere and a foot in another with knowledge of both. Following this logic the Atlantic Creole mariner moved between cultures held on old ports and newly forming cultures in other ports. Sailing the seas and taking the messages from one place to another is what Atlantic Creole is all about.

***We must identify our misaligned histories in order to correct them:***

## **The Lineage of Sail**

An introduction to Atlantic Creole begins with the fact that enslaved Africans, African descendants, Native Americans, Irish and Scottish were the developers of the greatest turning point in naval architecture before the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the Americas.

Why is this statement important? Because once you begin with it you can allow your curiosity to go both backward in time and forward in time. The state of the art transportation system between the Western Hemisphere and the Eastern Hemisphere started with the sailing vessel. The most important inter-island, riverine, delta, bay and coastal means of transportation also started with the sailing vessel. Sailors understand that every design of sailing vessel has an intent and purpose. They are not just randomly thrown together but designed for efficiency and safety.

Before the creation of the naval architect there was the eye and hands. Ships, boats, canoas were designed through experience and modification using the techniques gained through performance appreciation. The sailor saw and felt what the vessel could do, then improved upon it as far as that knowledge was understood. The vessel builder would try and create that concept either by a model or directly and when the concept was finished and utilised another concept would be moulded from the old concept with the hopes of creating a better one than the last.

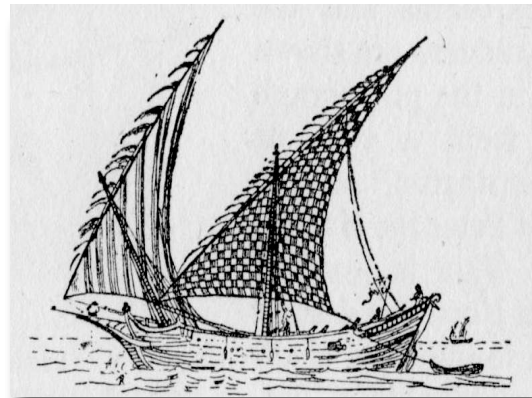


## An Example of Sliding Information

### The Lateen Sail Rig:

This distinctive sailing rig form is held up by a heavy and very awkward spar, usually a composite of more than one spar lashed together and raised along one mast seems to be indigestible as African in origin to most of the older generations of maritime historians. It is called Mediterranean. It is called Egyptian (as though that country is not on the continent of Africa). It is called Phoenician, Arabian, Indian, Sri Lankin, Oriental, Indonesian, Micronesian, Melanesian, Polynesian but not African.

**(Left-Zanzibar Mtebe/Above French Tartane)**



Of course the ageless Mtebe split log vessels of Madagascar-Somalia-Kenya-Zanzibar have always had that particular sail form.

The Lateen sail is triangular but as a Dau or Dhow can be quadrilateral but also look triangular when seen from afar as the symmetry can hide the short luff or front of the sail. The lateen rig is the first fore and aft rig. The concept of fore and aft means a sail that aligns itself to the front and rear of the boat. This allows a reverse draught of wind flow from forward, or windward, of the vessel to be used in propulsion. This fore and aft rigged sail is the basis for contemporary sail design.

# Out of Africa Under Sail Migration Theory

## I From The River To The Delta

## II From The Delta To The Sea

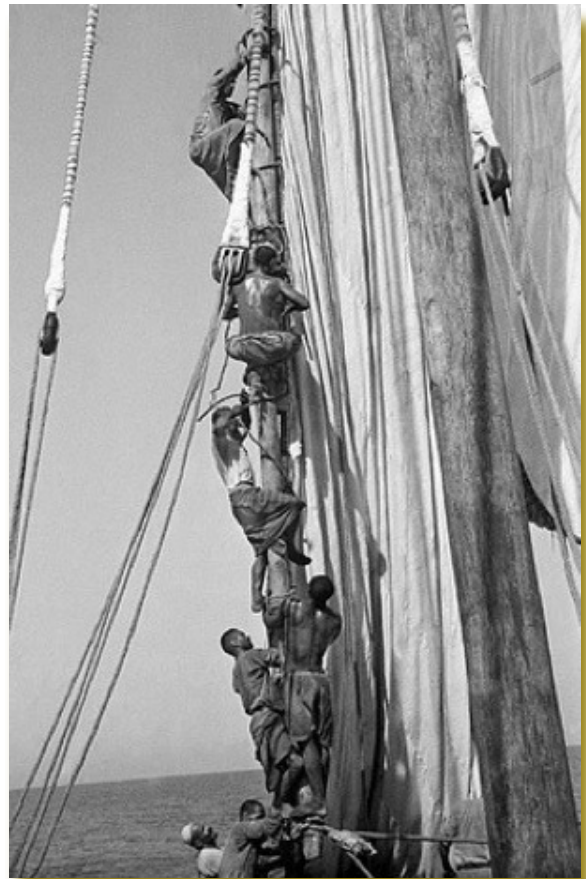
## III From the Sea To The World

## IV Hand, Reef And Steer

*I am going to start this off with my concept of a beginning for you to digest and find fault or more detail.*

## I From The River To The Delta

Since we all know and it is even accepted internationally that the first human presence on this planet is found in the continent of what has been named Africa. It is always accepted that a migration out of Africa is how the world was populated. With those knowns we can go back to the bond with water that the first humans maintained. Lucy's remains were found in near the River Awash, around Hadar, Ethiopia, about a hundred plus miles from the sea. It makes sense that once humans realised that they needed water to survive and even to have substances to eat that they would try to be as close to water as possible. We are almost the same percentage of moisture as our





planet making a possible invisible umbilical bond as well as a practical one. That being said I came up with a story based on hypothesis but kind of comfortable.

When the first human saw branches, logs and other debris floating along the tops of rivers they might have thought that they could do the same and after many many drownings I am sure they figured that they needed assistance from some of that debris and maybe jumped on the side of a log to move effortlessly along with the current downstream. Of course after a lot of scrapes and bruises a concept was developed to figure out a way to strap some logs together to make a raft, then when a tree was struck by lightning and fire burned out part of the trunk fire proved a way to

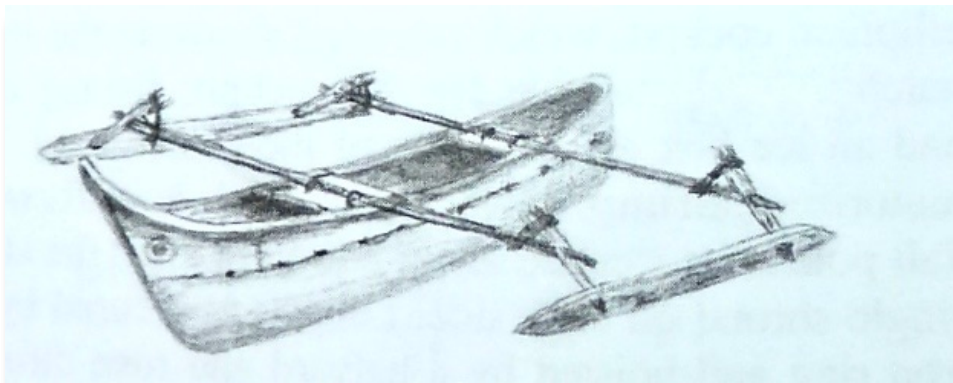




scrape out the inners of a trunk and sit on or in the log and a canoa was invented. Not much has changed since then as far as the concept of multihulls and monohulls.

Why use a raft or boat for transportation? Walking will get you there...eventually, but maybe when the skill of fishing is thought up the log might get the provider further and more comfortably than the competitor on foot. Supplies could be carried also since horses were a long way off 70,000 years ago. It also opens an added ease of food when fish has become added to the diet. The idea of the return voyage might also create the wanderlust for the group to move along with the raft or log in just one direction. Then, tidal effect on the more delta areas could be used to form a way back by just waiting for the tide to change course so villages could become stationary. The point being that movement by water, not looked at much in our normal recounting of pre-historic humankind, is a factor that needs consideration in the development of my little tale here.

Living in delta regions gave the ancestors a touch of land while living next to the water, an initiation into the brackish aspects of salt water and a slower living schedule due to the nearness of a range of foodstuffs. This possible time consideration could have allowed for better development of vessels. Carving out the canoas and maybe inventing planks to raise the sides to go out further in the delta toward the sea. Maybe stabilising the canoa with other branches and developing better designs for paddles to move the canoas with no wind over a wider range to other sides of the delta. Planking up or out-rigger canoas might have defined differences in tribal concepts of what families preferred in work and diet.



**(Ngalawa Outrigger Paddle Canoa of Zanzibar)**



**Next:**

## **II From The Delta To The Sea**

So, humankind arrived at the Delta, where the river meets the sea. There is that kernel, that we now know as adventure, sprouting after making the passages along the river and finding paradise next to an expanse of this body of water. They have conquered the fears of the rushing water and now the water is almost still most of the time but still has the allure of travel to something better over there on the other side. The dangers of the river and its rocks is not as extreme looking out on the delta shoreline but walking is still much more laborious than floating especially when you just go along a coastline and can go ashore whenever you wish. Paddles are developed and maybe the canoas eventually get deep enough to carry hoped for cargo and more passengers who can paddle faster and reach distances further from the river mouth settlement. Paddling does take some stamina and maybe the concept of a sail is brought to light. Maybe by a child playing with leaves stuck in a stick and observed by somebody who recognises that the breeze actually pushes the stick along sometimes at a good pace.

A sail is woven using palm fronds or leaves and branches and held up on a canoa eventually with a paddle or two guiding by leaving it in the water along the side and later moving it back to the stern. But the breeze blows into the sail and turns the canoa over. A raft solves that problem and an outrigger also solves it. But how to hold up the leaf sails is conquered first by tying two sticks on either side of the raft or the outrigger and tied in an A-frame . This takes a long time to develop and many trials



and errors. The raft and the outrigger both are burdened by their lashings and the needs for flexibility and stationing the masts in the right spots so the sail has the power to push the vessel but not to fall apart with the twisting of the winds combined with the workings of the currents.

The canoas build a thwart, a plank above and across the hull. The thwarts supply a sitting position and with a hole cut into the forward one creates a station for one mast in place of the two. There is less rigging with one mast with only a need for one or two lines (shrouds) positioned on the sides to hold it in place. The sail grows and can be elongated upward when attached to another pole with that developing into a sail rig that is secured at the bow and eventually called a lateen rig. The boat gains the name Dhow, which in Swahili means Boat.

Geographic conditions might need the originating designs to call for shoal, rock or reef considerations in the depth, material and for manoeuvrability. The formation of the sails becomes an important factor and with that the materials needed for those designs and that reaches a jump in the level of sophistication where learning steps become traditional and taught. Monohulls develop canoa bottoms that hold a growing number of planks above. As the canoas grow longer with the addition of and dependence on more planks the canoa becomes a keelson to hold ribs or frames that tie upon which the planks can be secured by bark twisted into rope and eventually by wooden plugs, (trunels or tree-nails).

Again, this all took time and adaptations not unlike what sailors philosophise about today. The problem that sailors today also have in kind is when you have a better boat you use it for more distant shores. I am sure when our ancient ancestors found themselves on the other side of the delta or bay before they thought they should have been there they started thinking the delta or bay was too small and looked out at the forbidden yet compelling horizon. Now, it wasn't what is over there on the other side, now, it was what is out there?



### III From the Sea To The World

The historical assault on our African influences on the development and uses of sail power can be focussed right here. These are the times of the first migrations out of the continent that was named Africa. The term itself has its earliest European recorded meaning as Egyptian for Motherland. I never learned that in school. I thought the Greeks termed the continent something to do with hot land. The first sailors, who probably dared to break land based traditions and pushed off from somewhere is now called Djibouti and went over to what is now Yemen, probably did not call where they left Africa, or maybe they did?

Our African histories are so invisible with jumps from the first humanoid remains found well inland to all of a sudden we are in Egypt and then we are in Bethlehem and then we are in Greece, Rome, Spain, Morocco, France, England, the Americas. Wait, what was Africa doing during all these skips in time and how did Africans move their people around this blue planet? We have recorded histories of African conquests on the continent of Africa that seemed to have just popped up thousands of years after those first sailors shoved off but how were those cultures developed?



That's some whole other stories there. I am just sticking to our invisible maritime history and heritage that has enough evidence to be picked up and placed in the puzzle even if it is only through speculation at this point in time.

So, what was the route taken by those sailors and on what type of vessel did they adventure? I use the term adventure because going out into the unknown is an adventure by definition. Let's take my little group who has found their way to a delta region and sees this great expanse of water out past the delta. It must have been one of the greatest mysteries and probably led to a lot of campfire tales that included monsters of the deep as well as losing the biggest fish ever known. A tribe of fishermen developed who were the supreme adventurers who came back from space with the greatest tales and fish, sometimes including the biggest fish ever known.

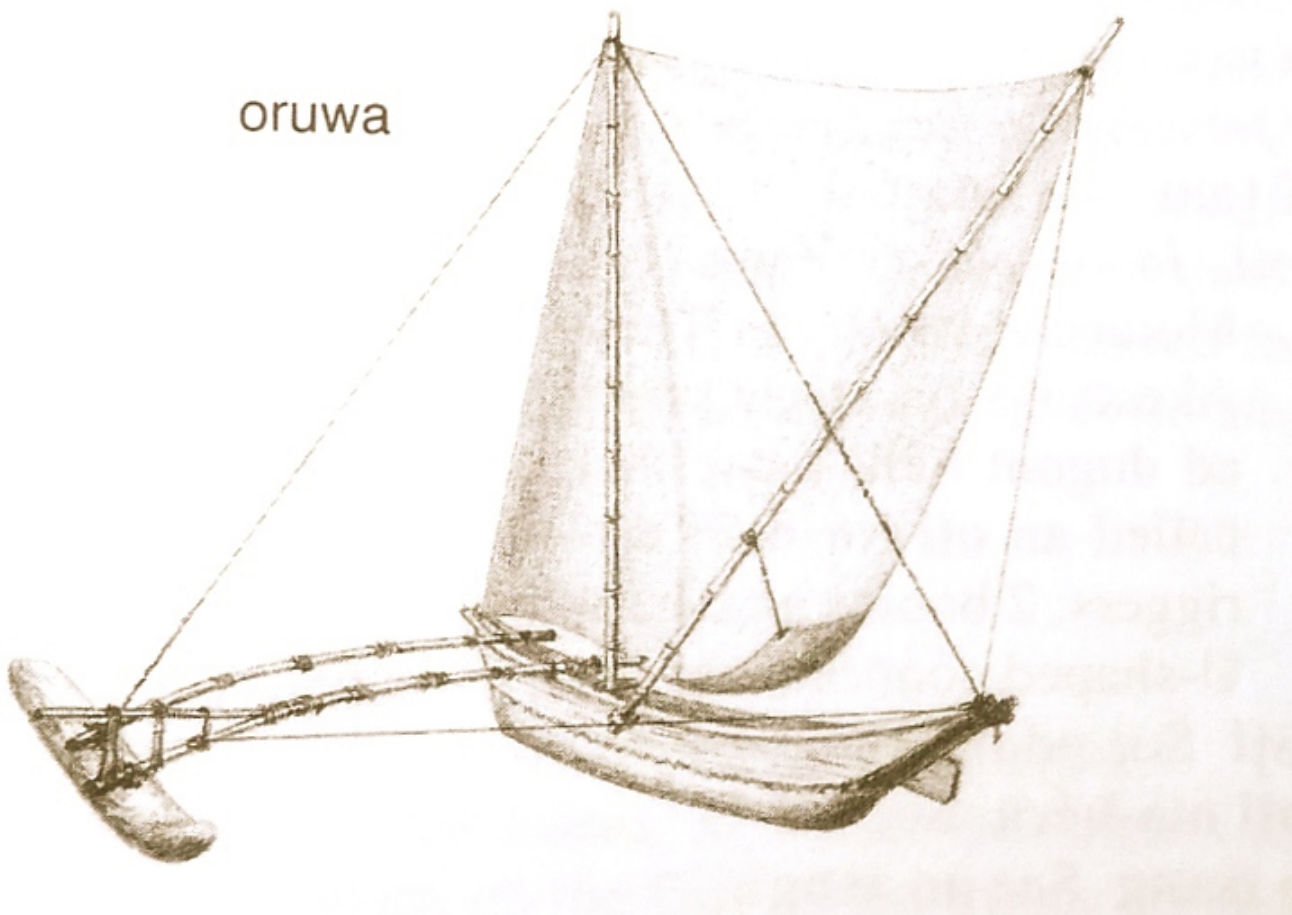
Did their own tales of adventure lure them out further and further over time until they actually reached a land where there wasn't land before? Did they find their ways back with stories of other types of food sources and/or fewer rules to be governed by?

The types of hulls might have developed in search of those tales of lands where there were none before. Planks sinewed by stronger fibres together and pitch caulking to keep the vessels dryer. The sails also made by stronger and lighter fibres woven tightly hold more wind and not break apart or be too uncontrollable. The first cottons and ropes and uses of the sun for navigation all developing over centuries to get to the bigger fish, the other land by a sometimes relaxing ride over water.

I am excluding the ride North along the Nile but including the tributaries of that great river that led to the sea. The Nile has its own hidden normal folk histories to be uncovered but the people who did the development of sail power were not the pharaohs who come much later historically but the people who looked for food and eventually for trade. The people who developed sail power moved along the coasts, stopping and forming tribal sites and moving from them to form other tribal places.

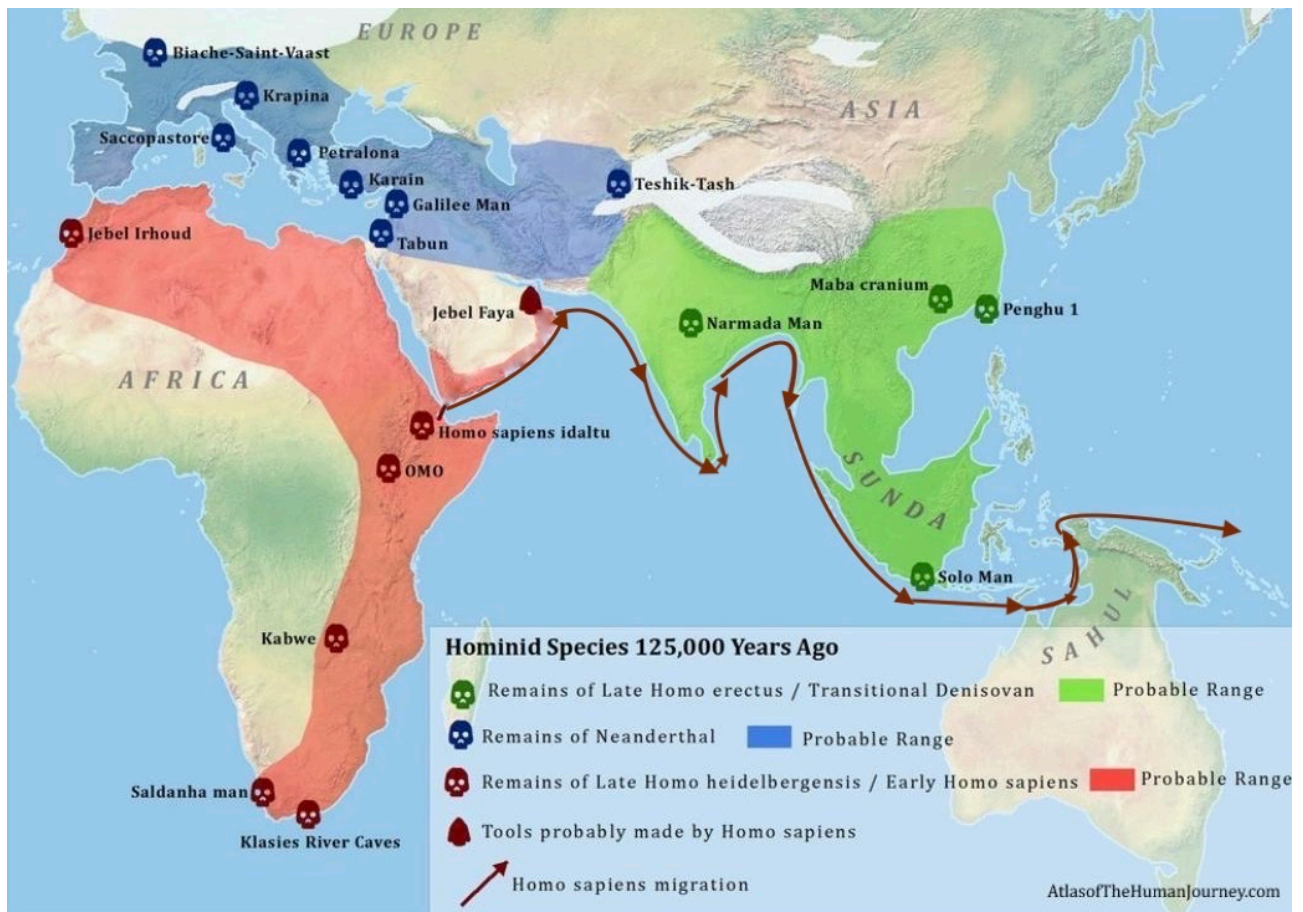
Then, they crossed over from the indent of the Horn over to the land they sometimes could see that we now call Yemen. They followed that coast of Yemen not by foot but

by the same method they used to move along the coast of Africa. They sailed and stopped, sailed and stopped. DNA proved this took place around 70,000 years ago but usually the historians and anthropologists have the people walking. If you had the capability to sail across from Africa to Yemen why would you trudge along on foot when you could go faster and more comfortably aboard a boat?



When they arrived at the point where the land stopped them moving East they crossed into what we now call India. Now, they seemed to go South, again not heading inland but their left behind DNA has them coasting again for a long distance, then breaking off to go inland and North to populate what became the Middle East and then Europe. The other group continued south until they came to another land ending and somehow walked across the water to Sri Lanka where they developed sailing vessels that looked exactly like the ones they had developed in Africa. Or, they sailed across.

Another grouping turned with the Eastern Coast of India and coasted along to the Laotian peninsula. And, again a break away group moves inland to populate the Far East while the coastal grouping moves South and populates the South Pacific Islands including Australia. We have moved along to around 60,000 years ago with our DNA samplings but aboard sailing vessels in place of footing it. I am sure that humankind were helped by their innovativeness in harnessing animals to carry their loads along the shorelines as well as using vessels to paddle, row and sail but the waterborne history is all but excluded as a real ingredient to our journey along the shores and into the Pacific. Why?





The invention of navigation and the return to Africa.  
The margin of error in the writing of maritime history  
strangely starts without a beginning. The following is a  
Wikipedia look at what they title, History of Navigation:

[illegible]

Like, how did those people get where they are today? Do they have an origin? In an almost condescending tone the writer of this contribution awards the first known navigation skills were from the ‘Indo-Pacific’ Islanders, placing the period of their seafaring at between 3000 and 1000 BC when the Taiwanese migrated and populated the Southeast Asia and Melanesia. From there they colonised Micronesia from the Philippines around 1500 BC. Since these ‘findings’ had footnoted references they must be true:

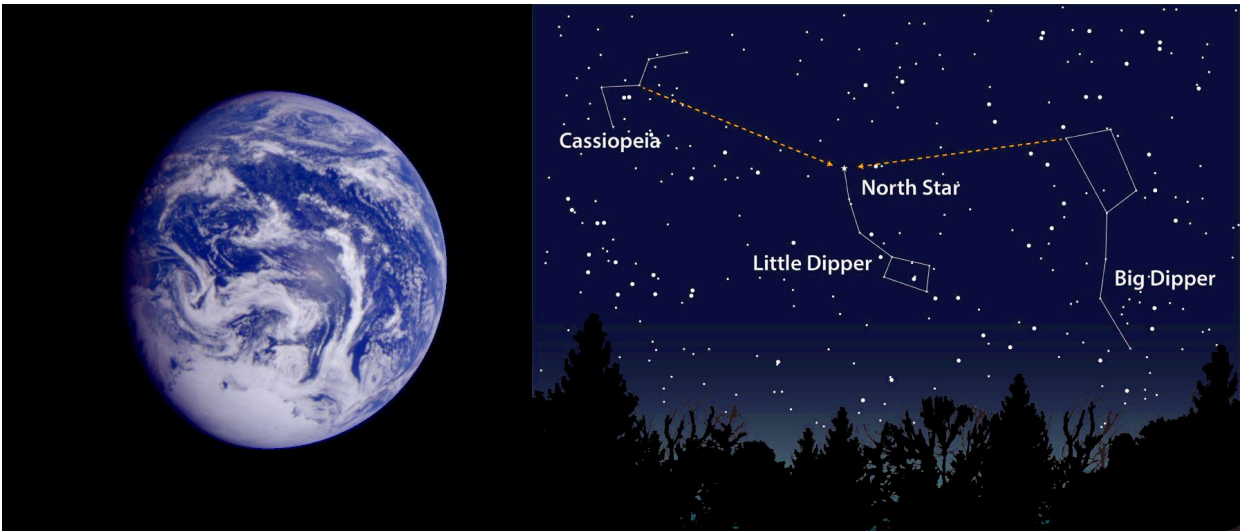
ISBN 9781920942854.<sup>^</sup> Mahdi, Waruno (1999). "The Dispersal of Austronesian boat forms in the Indian Ocean". In Blench, Roger; Spriggs, Matthew (eds.). *Archaeology and Language III: Artefacts languages, and texts*. One World Archaeology. Vol. 34. Routledge. pp. 144–179.

Still, if you read my first pieces in *Invisible Histories*, which could have footnotes also but they would mainly just refer to me, you would find a rendering of that first section of history which says, in my imagined way, that there was a simple navigational skill being developed by the Africans who populated Taiwan and the Philippines. But, I am just a sailor who is looking at this development from a sailor's perspective. You just don't start a voyage without a boat- you just don't start history where you feel like it.

So, in this concept of navigation only being ocean passages across expanses of water I would argue that coastal and riverine passages were the first ways of finding your way on the water and should be included in this area of history, not downplayed. If you do that then the natural conclusion is that from where life started people figured out ways of not just going forward but returning also. That means they had developed a conception of where they were on the water and that is the basic definition of maritime navigation. The still used basic navigation technique called dead reckoning is simple. You point somewhere from where you are that is within sight and go there. You can use that same destination at your rear and go back to where you came. Reference points are the basic memory skill of the sailor. If your memory is bad then you draw those references on something and you have a map.

Coastal navigation relies upon points of reference. Coastal sailing is generally more difficult than ocean passages simply because you have a coast which is made up of land... rocks, currents, wind shifts, reefs, stuff to note in memory or to draw on something. These dangers are also references to know and to use when gunk holing as it is also called. To know that there are submerged rocks across the entrance to an innocent looking cove can also be given a name and thereby drawn on that something that identifies it and eventually drawn on something that will be called a navigation chart.

Okay, back to my imagination and how the star charts developed. I think that if you look up at night and see the stars you will notice that they move across the sky, or in reality our planet moves under them. But, the point being that they seem to come up



in the East and move toward the West until they descend with the most prominent light being the Moon. During the day the Sun follows its own track across the sky. Our turning movement is not only a little lopsided because our planet is not a perfect globe and its rotation around our star that we call the sun makes it seem like the stars are going South a bit and going North a bit. If you have nothing else to do but look up at the stars you will find that you can define roughly a seasonal pattern to what seems to be their movements. For your geographic area on this planet it can be noted that year after year the movements East to West and North and South. South Pacific Islanders did that with sticks and passed down information.

In other parts of the world we made up religions based on the lights in the sky and our sun. We built legends based on exploits that were governed by those gods in the skies. We started recording where those gods went and how they helped us or hurt us and named it his story.

From the stars and our creation of paper we created navigation charts to steer by with just drawing in and marking places we have been able to almost know where we move as long as it is coastal or within sight. We marked lines on that chart and numbered them along horizontally. But what about vertically? We needed to know that to precisely know where we are, don't we? We simply pieced the vertical lines to section off the planet mathematically and with the invention of the time piece it made sense. We created Latitude and Longitude as well as the clock and more accurate calendars to not only know where we were but when we were there. The clock moved us



efficiently around the globe using our planet's blue waters, and over land, also. Now, we have Global Positioning Systems brought to us via satellites that were assembled in space by ships.

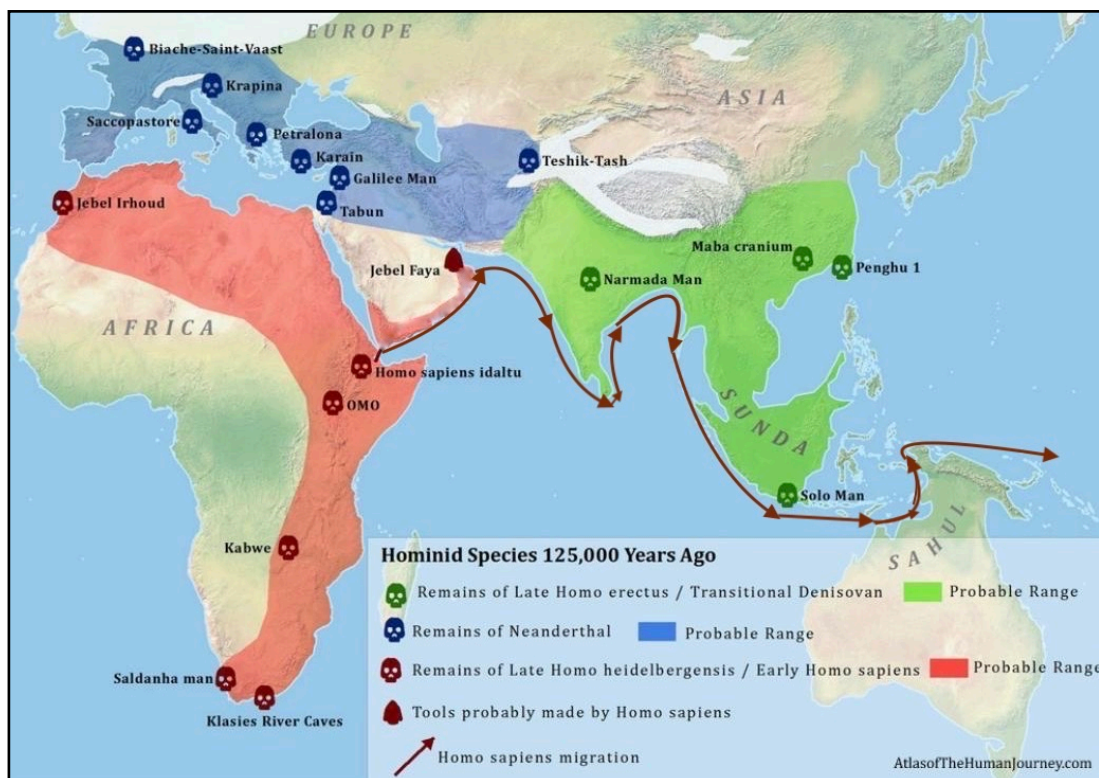


So, back to the first humans to moved across the Bal al-Mandab from Ras Siyan to Ras Menheli ...I do not find it strange to think that eventually people who ventured the nineteen to twenty miles from Dijibouti to Yemen and then along the coast would figure out a way to mark points of land to remember if they gained the courage to go back on a course they took to arrive where they had started. In doing this I am sure they figured that the land disappeared when it got dark and by that they over time understood that the stars could be used to keep going in place of possibly running into land or rocks that they remembered from the passages and they gained a little more mileage each time they travelled. What an adventure that must have been. The biggest fish stories were born right there...

In time they probably worked out that one day might equal the distance from one point to another point on the land. Then they might have figured out that that same distance at night would be the same amount of time taken during the day. I know this sounds childish to us today since we know all of this but as a new discovery this might have activated a lot of excitable brain cells and a continuation of the adventure called learning.

Picture a bunch of sailors grouped around somebody getting a hair cut talking about going this far and finding that point to know that they went that far. The next one decided they would try that and bring back better stories and maybe another sailor decided he or she would try it and on and on. Going forward and tracing going back again until they moved from Africa to India then looking for a coast that eventually was found to be an island which they might have thought to be across a wider bay but was not far away. I think it took, like all of this, a very long time to grasp the concept of islands on an ocean.

They started following wind and sea currents aligning those with the stars, moon and the sun's passing coming to a conclusion or what we call a seasonal course until finally a chart is produced using sticks and shells for those seasons. Along those courses people stop and settle and develop stories about those voyages that encourage others to try for newer places again with the concept of adventure in a sense defining freedom. Today, we still link freedom with adventure.



So, historically, why would anybody want to take away a spirit of adventure from anybody else? When dealing with tribal systems we find that to restrict people from adventuring through an administration of fear is to curtail their freedoms by some form of coercion like establishing a spiritual taboo or a physical force. If the people are contained they are already subservient. As a solitary entity, sailors, at least at sea, are not subservient beings but have to be balanced with the self aware ingredients of the practical and the intuitive which add up to the adventurous world again.

What do you feel, maybe that primitive instinct of freedom, when looking out at the sea's horizon?

I think a lot of the confusion on this point is in the wording again and in the competitiveness about the importance of who went where first? I feel, as a sailor who has sailed a lot of oceans, that migrations came from a lot of directions, but that they moved out of Africa over water first.

My theory is that those first Africans who moved out of the continent went by water across from what is now Djibouti across to what is now Yemen, then along that coastline and across to India. It just makes sense. Historically, if you don't want a controlled people to know about the adventure of questing for a better life you might put the terrors of the seas in their minds and their stories - his stories. The 20 miles across the Strait of Bal al-Mandab (Gate of Grief in Arabic) from Ras Siyan (Dibouti) to Ras Menheli (Yemen) can be seen on a clear day. The island of Perim shortens the trip even more and would probably be an initial landing site. The history from the beginning of humankind skips from the maritime perspective for about 60,000 years to Egypt, and it keeps this narrative going that Egypt is more middle eastern than continental African. All of a sudden along the coasts and islands reaching to Australia and out into the Pacific our ancestors walked on water and/or land bridges that have disappeared?

The Aborigines of Australia have a different oral history that says they came by boat from Africa between sixty to seventy thousand years ago, which is why they still look African, I guess.

