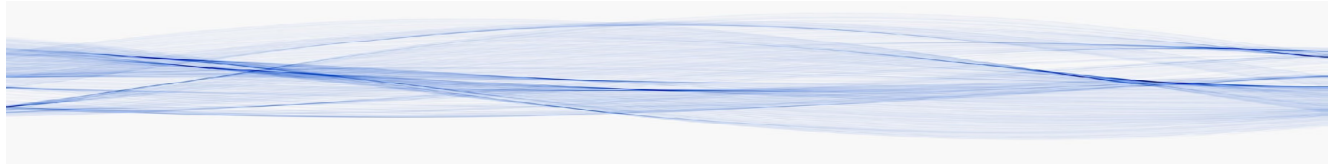


The "Periplus" of Hanno



Phoenician Ships

We shall now revert to the record of the voyage which the famous Carthaginian/Phoenician navigator Hanno undertook, probably on the orders of the Senate, beyond the Pillars of Hercules -- that is to say, on the Ocean. The Punic text of the record of this journey was engraved in the Temple of Chronos (Baal Hammon) at Carthage. There is only one Greek version, dating perhaps to the third century B.C. As J. Carcopino has shown, this has been modified to suit Greek tastes. The Greek text is no doubt less complete than the Punic original, but certain philological oddities can be found in it which indicates, as I believe, that it is an actual translation of a Punic text. It runs as follows:

"The record of the voyage of King Hanno of Carthage round the lands of Libya, today known as (Africa), which lies beyond the Pillars of Hercules. It has been engraved on tablets hung up in the Temple of Chronos."

The Carthaginians decided that Hanno should go past the Pillars and found Carthaginian cities. He set sail with sixty pentekontas carrying thirty thousand men and women with provisions and other necessities. After passing the Pillars of Hercules and sailing for two days beyond them we founded the first city, which was named Thymiaterion. Around it was a large plain. Next we went on in a westerly direction and arrived at the Libyan promontory of Soloeis, which is covered with trees; having set up a shrine to Poseidon, we set sail again towards the rising sun for half a day, after which we arrived at a lagoon close to the sea covered with many tall reeds. Elephants and large numbers of other animals were feeding on them. Leaving this lagoon and sailing for another day, we founded the coastal cities named Carian Wall, Gytte, Acra, Melitta and Arambys.

Leaving this place we arrived at the great river Lixos which comes from Libya. On the banks nomads, the Laxities, were feeding their flocks. We stayed for some time with these people and made friends with them. Upstream from them lived the unfriendly Ethiopians whose land is full of wild beasts and broken up by high

mountains where they say the Lixos rises. They also say that about these mountains dwell the strange-looking Troglodytes. The Laxities claim that they can run faster than horses. Taking Lixite interpreters with us we sailed alongside the desert in a southerly direction for two days, then towards the rising sun for one more day. We then found at the far end of an inlet a little island five stades in circumference. We named it Cerne and left settlers there. Judging by our journey we reckoned that it must be opposite Carthage, since we had to sail the same distance from Carthage to the Pillars of Hercules as from the Pillars of Hercules to Cerne. From there, sailing up a big river named the Chretes, we arrived at a lake in which there were three islands, all larger than Cerne. Leaving these islands, we sailed for one day and came to the end of the lake, which was overshadowed by high mountains full of savages dressed in animal skins that threw stones at us and thus prevented us from landing. From there we entered another river, which was big and wide, full of crocodiles and hippopotamuses. Then we retraced our journey back to Cerne. From there we sailed south along a coast entirely inhabited by Ethiopians, who fled at our approach. Their language was incomprehensible even to the Laxities, whom we had with us. On the last day we disembarked by some high mountains covered with trees with sweet-smelling multicolored wood. We sailed round these mountains for two days and arrived in a huge bay on the other side of which was a plain; there we saw fires breaking out at intervals on all sides at night, both great and small. Having renewed our water supplies, we continued our voyage along the coast for five days, after which we arrived at a huge inlet, which the interpreters called the Horn of the West. There was a big island in this gulf and in the island was a lagoon with another island. Having disembarked there, we could see nothing but forest by day; but at night many fires were seen and we heard the sound of flutes and the beating of drums and tambourines, which made a great noise. We were struck with terror and our soothsayers bade us leave the island. We left in haste and sailed along by a burning land full of perfumes. Streams of fire rose from it and plunged into the sea. The land was unapproachable because of the heat. Terror-stricken, we hastened away. During four days' sailing we saw at night that the land was covered with fire. In the middle was a high flame, higher than the others, which seemed to reach the stars. By day we realized that it was a very high mountain, named the Chariot of the Gods. Leaving this place, we sailed along the burning coast for three days and came to the gulf named the Horn of the South. At the end of it was an island like the first one, with a lake in which was another island full of savages. The greater parts of these were women. They had hairy bodies and the interpreters called them Gorillas. We pursued some of the males but we could not catch a single one because they were good climbers and they defended themselves fiercely. However, we managed to take three women. They bit and scratched their captors, whom they did not want to follow. We killed them and removed the skins to take back to Carthage. We sailed no further, being short of supplies." Considered solely from the literary viewpoint, this can only be regarded as a marvelous record of a journey, a true and highly readable adventure story. What strikes me particularly in this composition is the quality; I might even say the modernity, of the style.