

Historical Basis for Possible Austronesian Influence on Phoenicians Ships

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Dec. 17, 2025

Let's see, so the Romans famously got their seagoing ship-designs from the Phoenicians, during the 1st Carthaginian war, so the real question is where those Phoenicians got their seagoing-boat-design.

Really, there are 2 equal possibilities in my mind, **A** & **B** of which Dr. Solehah Binti Hj. Yaacob's theory is **B**:

But first Theory **A** is that perhaps Phoenicians got their seagoing boat design from the west, from the western Mediterranean Tartessians ("Tarshish") and other Sea Peoples, who invaded during the Bronze Age Collapse (1200 B.C.), which chaos spawned the Phoenician Renaissance. This possibility **A** is supported by 1st Kings 22:48, also perhaps by the Hercules & Atlantis legends, which respectively record Hercules, dressed like an Olmec, or other trans-Atlantic seafarers arriving in the Western Mediterranean from the Americas.

B The other possibility is that they got their boat design from expeditions on behalf of Egypt. Phoenicians were the seagoing vessel-constructors for Egypt, living as they did in Lebanese hardwood forests, which Egypt totally lacked; hence, the word "Phoenician" is probably derived from the Egyptian word for "Carpenters." Now Egypt is famously a bottleneck for Indian Ocean sea-trade passing into the Mediterranean. You have to ask yourself how far back this Egyptian trade-bottleneck was functioning.

In Roman times, the "Periplus of the Erythraean Sea," records regular shipments of "copper and sandalwood and timbers of teakwood and logs of blackwood and ebony" leaving the Indian port of Barygaza, in Gujarat, to be shipped to the ports of Omana (in the northern Persian Gulf), and Cana (in Oman), and Mouza Emporion (in Yemen). Neither were they just cautiously hugging the coast, but obviously faring well in the open ocean, for Ptolemy's "Geography," which is approximately contemporaneous notes every single major island group in the Indian ocean, except the Seychelles, including Madagascar ("Menouthis") the Andamans, and every island in the Maldives, i.e, way out in the middle of nowhere. Perhaps it's even this early that Austronesians contributed their genes & language to the island of Madagascar ("Men[o]uthias"), as the last stop on the African East coast trade-route, as mapped by Ptolemy.

Now note: According to the "Periplus," these Indian Ocean traders weren't taking their goods all the way to Egypt, but only as far as Yemen. So who was taking the goods the rest of the way up the Red Sea, to Egypt? Obviously, the Phoenicians were. Why else would you have all these Greek Hellenistic placenames scattered down the East African coast? ("Arsinoe" . . . "Berenice" . . . even "Serapion" way down in Tanzania?) And indeed, we know the Phoenicians were in the Red Sea, as early as 600 B.C. when they circumnavigated Africa for Pharaoh Necho II. In fact this same Necho II may well have been the first to build a 'Suez canal,' then called the "Canal of the Pharaohs," theoretically enabling Mediterranean ships to sail up the Nile, through his canal, and the Pikrai lakes, right into the Red Sea.

But Phoenicians were there even earlier, as early as 900 B.C., when Solomon used Phoenician King Hiram's assistance to construct his famous gold-fleet at Ezion Geber at the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba; he also left 2 pillars reportedly inscribed in Phoenician, on either side of the Gulf of Aqaba, 1 still

standing today at Nuweiba beach, and the other confiscated by Saudi authorities, but not before being documented by famous explorer Ron Wyatt. And the way it's described in 1st Kings 9:26-10:12, it sounds as if the Phoenicians may even have known what they were doing, and have made the journey themselves, earlier, though admittedly more likely is that it was merely Pharaoh who knew to go to the "Chryses Chersonesus," or "Golden Peninsula," to get that super-high-quality Malaysian "Gold of Ophir," that is, in the Greek version, "Sophir," which is the same word as Sanskrit "Svarṇa," whence comes the Malaysian placenames "Svarṇabhūmi" ("Land of Gold"), and "Svarṇadvīpa" ("Island of Gold"), from which come the more familiar modern placenames "Sumatra," and maybe even "Johor."

But the Egyptian trade bottleneck, (and probable Phoenician seafaring to facilitate it) goes back even further. Two 1000 B.C. and 1200 B.C. mummies in Egypt contained detectable Cannabis & Tobacco, only grown in the Americas; and Hashish from central Asia. And around this time, we see plenty of activity way out in the Eastern Indian Ocean, as Hinduism rapidly spreads down the coast of Southeast Asia, probably spread by seafarers, thus demonstrating that the shipping was going on at least that early.

But it goes back even further: Moses, who was himself an Egyptian prince, living 1400-1275 B.C., wrote in the Book of Genesis 2:11-12, that "the river Pishon; flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there." This is obviously talking about India: That name Havilah evolves into the Indian endonyms, "Abiria," "Aryavata," "Bharat," "Damela" and even "Tamil." So we have to ask, "How could a 14th century B.C. Egyptian prince be such a connoisseur of world gold, that he'd make special mention that the Gold from India is particularly "good"? Obviously, because gold was being shipped into Egypt from many places, including India. So it seems that the Indian ocean sea-trade economy was probably active, at least as early as 1400 B.C.

The picture that develops in my mind, is that Austronesian traders, working on behalf of Indian kings, were shipping Indian goods to Egypt, and bringing back other commodities in return, and the original mild Phoenician Mediterranean boats, probably faring just fine in the peaceful Mediterranean & Red Sea waters, ran into these deep sea super-ships, perhaps Dhows (if they go back that far), somewhere around Yemen, and could well have adopted numerous Austronesian deep-sea improvements . . . which ultimately ended up in Roman ships.

But I'm no expert on ship design. I'm merely demonstrating that there's lots of geographical & historiological basis for taking Dr. Solehah Binti Hj. Yaacob's theory seriously. Ultimately, her theory would probably stand or fall on the basis of Austronesian DNA spread (or lack thereof), and any demonstrable parallel ship-design evidence, between East & West.