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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE INDIAN MONSOON

Unlike the trade winds, which have been known to mariners only since the days of Columbus, the monsoon of the Indian seas, which blows part of each year in one direction and part in the opposite direction, has been utilized in sailing voyages from remote antiquity. Long before the advent of steam the monsoon greatly assisted communication by sea between the Mediterranean region and southern Arabia, the Persian Gulf, India and Ceylon, for at the season of the year (May to October) when northerly winds prevail over a great part of the Red Sea, the southwest monsoon blows from eastern Africa to the Malabar coast; while the northeast monsoon, blowing from October to April, coinciding with southerly winds in the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and the southern Red Sea, favored the return passage.

The Phoenicians used these winds at an early period in trading with their colonies on the Persian Gulf, and the Greeks were familiar with them at least as far back as the time of Alexander. The first Greek seaman to turn the monsoon to practical account is supposed to have been named Hippalus, and the southwest monsoon itself was often called Hippalus in antiquity.

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