

## 1550 YEARS SINCE THE FIRST JOURNEY AROUND THE WORLD WAS COMPLETED BY AETHICUS DONARES (ISTER)

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**Abstract:** Aethicus Donares (Ister), philosopher, geographer, explorer, the first European who discovered America, the first human being who travelled around the world, would have lived during 25<sup>th</sup> January 421-500 A.D. He was born in Histria and initially embraced the military career, working for a period in the county of Scythia Minor, at Durostorum. As a result of his military skills, he took part in the battle on Catalaunus Fields in 451 A.D. against the Huns. In the maritime city-citadel Histria, he perfected the techniques of travelling becoming a good sailor. Aethicus Donares left this place on 21<sup>st</sup> March 461 when the day time equals night. He was in charge of the ships and together with his 101 companions, he had a leading role in advancing the ships. His travel took place between 461 and 465, about 5 years on dozens of seas, bays, straits and four oceans-Atlantic, Frozen North, Pacific and Indian. He wrote "Cosmography" in 466 A.D. This famous work was issued in more than 40 copies. It was written in the Dacian language and it included several volumes. Being a genuine encyclopaedia, "Cosmography", is also translated in Greek and Latin. The Public Library of the Leipzig University in Germany has a manuscript belonging to the 8<sup>th</sup> century which is written in Latin.

**Key words:** geographer, Cosmography, expedition, sailing, ships.

Aethicus Donares (Ister)<sup>1</sup> philosopher, geographer, scientist, the first European to discover America, the first to tour the world is supposed to have lived between January 25<sup>th</sup>, 421 – 500 AD. He was born at Histria and he took up a military career working for a period of time in Scythia Minor at Durostorum. Due to his military abilities he takes part in the battle against the Huns in 451 AD at the Catalaunian Plains.

The Romanian ancient philosopher Aethicus Histicus,<sup>2</sup> of noble origin – according to the "Cosmographia" – nobile prosapia parentum<sup>3</sup>, might be one of the ruling descendants of Histria region (Histriae regione) from Scythia Minor (nationae scythica) in the half of the fourth century.<sup>3</sup> In the 22<sup>nd</sup> chapter of his Cosmographia, Aethicus writes he was born in Histria (ille Histria se exortum).<sup>4</sup> He attended school in the Pontic city, was tutored in Latin and Greek literature. He might have attended academic schools in Asia Minor, Greece or other parts of the world. He traveled a lot and made known his discoveries in his writings. He crossed the seas around the Pontic cities and was eager to know the people outside the Roman Greek World, people not even mentioned in the Old Testament.

In the maritime city of Histria he became a skilled sailor and Aethicus Donares<sup>5</sup> left the city on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 461. He was the leader of several ships, helped by his 101 companions. The voyage took five years, between 461 – 465 during which he sailed over tens of seas, gulfs, straits and four oceans: The Atlantic, The Arctic, The Pacific and The Indian oceans.

The voyage started in Histria being carried on several stages at different periods.<sup>6</sup> The first route to the Atlantic Ocean crossed the Black Sea, The Marmara Sea, The Aegean Sea, The Mediterranean Sea through Gibraltar, the Atlantic Spanish coasts, the North Sea to the British coasts, the Islands near the North of Scotland, Iceland and Greenland. Aethicus Donares stayed in Greece, at Athens, other cities in continental Greece and the islands where he had talks with Greek philosophers.<sup>7</sup>

The expedition reaches Orkney Islands in North Scotland; here the crew may rest, buy in fresh food, mend the ships and gather geographical information from the locals. Their chosen headquarter was in the Orcadace Island. They came here in the autumn of 461 to find out about ways of navigation in the Atlantic and as they had enough time, they even discovered copper and zinc ore.

The expedition heads to the Faroe Islands, unknown, with steep unapproachable coasts, named Rifarice (steep) by Aethicus Donares. Despite all these, people are friendly and the land is rich in noble metals and diamonds. They spend here the winter of 461 – 462.

They leave the Rifarice Islands, sail the British Isle and 420 km to the West they land in Iceland. The climate is influenced by the Atlantic in the South and the Arctic Ocean in the North. The island is huge, frozen with many fiords, well shaped gulfs and amazing hot, high springs – the geysers that offer a refreshing image. The crew finds a few settlements with kind people, good fishermen. Aethicus Donares mentions the fact that people ate very big lobsters that lived in the fiords.

Influenced by the great number of shellfish and the shape of the coasts, Aethicus Donares (Ister) names the island with the Dacian word Riakeon (a kind of land looking like a lobster), the word becomes popular for other locations too, such as the future capital Reykjavik, Reykjanesta.<sup>8</sup>

In the spring of 462 AD Aethicus Donares discovers Greenland, the first land of North America. As he reached Greenland, he may be considered as the first who discovered America, 1030 before Christopher Columbus. When the locals tell them that summer is very short, they leave soon, unwilling to sail the Arctic Ocean in winter time.

The next stage is the voyage between Greenland and Kamchatka across the Arctic Ocean. They sail through Lancaster, Barrow, Melville and MacClure narrows in North Canada (the North Magnetic Pole Zone), passing near several islands to the Bering Narrow located between the Bering Sea and the Pacific Ocean; then they go South and reach Kamchatka Peninsula.<sup>9</sup>

In the spring of 463, the expedition stayed here for several weeks. They rested in a village on a hill near the coast, named by Aethicus Donares as Chomacinata. The villagers were in contact with the crew and offered information about the climate, region, sailing routes and also gave them supplies. Aethicus Donares studied the region helped by the inhabitants. Leaving Kamchatka Aethicus Donares' expedition reaches the Sea of Japan, sailing near the big islands of Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu.

In the summer of 463 AD they are welcomed by the Japanese king Yuryaku (456 – 479); they are also celebrated at the imperial palace.

A few days later they head to the East China Sea, the South China Sea, the Mariana Islands – Agrhan, Guam, Pagan, Saipan, voyage that took place between 463 – 464. The ships voyage along the numerous islands of the Pacific Ocean, reach Malacca Peninsula – Malaysia, then the Philippines, landing South of Manila in 464 near Mindora Island in Calapa (Calapan) toponym, where the researchers had documentary trips about the neighbouring seas.

The expedition searched an enormous space containing the Mindora Islands, the East of Malaysia, Borneo, Sulawesi Islands (Celebes), New Guinea, Solomon Islands, the Coral Sea, the Torres Narrow between New Guinea Island and York Cape in the North of Australia, the Java Sea, Sumatra Island and Malacca Peninsula. The special fauna and flora of the Equatorial Pacific islands are also researched by the members of the expedition. From here Aethicus Donares sails his ship back home to Histria, crossing the Bengal Gulf near the Birmanian coasts, Bangladesh, East India and Sri Lanka, to the West sailing near West India, Pakistan, the Oman gulf and the Persian shores.<sup>10</sup>

At the beginning of 465 they landed in Persia (Iran), where they were greatly welcomed by the Persian king Perozes I (457 – 484) at the royal palace, celebrating their tour of the world. The crew bought their supplies to return to the Black Sea. The voyage continues through Saudi Arabia, Aden Gulf,

the Red Sea, Suez Gulf, Suez Isthmus, the Mediterranean Sea between Anatolia and Cyprus, the Aegean Sea, the Marmara and the Black Sea.

This way, the expedition marches triumphantly towards Histria, finishing their tour of the world, 1057 years before Magellan. In 466 AD, he wrote "Cosmographia"<sup>11</sup> that was handed to us in over 40 copies. It was written in Dacian in several volumes.<sup>12</sup>

The true encyclopedia "Cosmographia" is also written in Greek and Latin. The voyage journal was written at Histria in Dobruja. He used Hebrew, Greek and Latin<sup>13</sup> letters together with his own alphabet known today as the Aethicus Alphabet. It is characteristic for the period as it uses its own letters and names.<sup>14</sup>

Both Aethicus Histricus' "Cosmographia" and the "Alphabet" are known from their manuscripts. The work is special as it uses information based on travel notes around the world and knowledge from his log book, which the author called "The Explaining Catalogue of the Tour of the World".<sup>15</sup>

It is interesting that in his "Cosmographia" Aethicus Donares (Ister) mentions 311 names given by him for various toponyms (locations), hydronyms, forms of relief.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> century, a copy of Aethicus Histricus gets in South Spain and Archbishop Isidor from Seville uses various data from it in his encyclopedic work "Etymologies".

The work written in Dacian is also mentioned by the Benedictin from Fulda, Harabanus Maurus. Today we have the abbreviated version of "Cosmographia" from the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Aethicus is the author of some other writings, unfortunately lost. We know of a manuscript from the 8<sup>th</sup> century in Latin, kept at the Public Library of the Leipzig University, Germany, but parts of it are censored by Ieronim of Freising – Bavaria.

The well known navigator took part in numerous voyages before his attempt to tour the world.

Aethicus Histricus, the Dacian Roman author made famous in his world, the greatness of the land between the Danube and Pontus Euxinus and he had a valuable contribution for the culture of his period. This is also a proof of the presence and continuity of the ancient Romanians in Dacia. The Latin spoken by the Scythe Aethicus Histricus is the Oriental Latin, the language spoken by the Dacian Roman population.<sup>16</sup>

Aethicus' work means the cultural and linguistic affiliation to the Eastern Roman world of the inhabitants of this country.

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