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12 Questions for the Interview (Vasco da Gama)
3/4/00

1. Where is your explorer from?

I, Vasco da Gama, am from Sines, Portugal.

2. What country did the explorer sail for?

I sailed for Portugal.

3. Why did the explorer go?

King Manuel told me to find a water route to India by sailing around the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa.

4. What previous explorations of your country did this explorer follow?

I followed the discovery of another sailor from Portugal. His name was Bartolomew Dias. A few years before my voyage he had discovered the Cape of Good Hope.

5. How did these previous explorers influence the work of the explorer?

Once Bartolomew Dias had been around the Cape of Good Hope, we knew it was possible to reach India that way. I was put in charge of the mission to reach India. Dias also helped with the construction of four ships for my voyage (Sao Gabriel, Sao Rafael, the Berrio, and a store ship called Sao Maria). Dias also gave me sailing advice.

6. Where did the explorer explore?

As you already know, I sailed to India. On the morning of July 8, 1497, I set sail from Lisbon, Portugal, with about 150 men. I traveled down the west coast of Africa until I was a little below the equator. Then I had the boats go farther into the ocean towards South America. This let us take advantage of the good winds in that area. Finally on November 7, we saw land again. We sailed around the Cape of Good Hope and up the east coast of Africa. Finally we reached Calicut, India on May 20, 1498.

7. What challenges did the explorer face?

The main challenge that I faced on my journey was disease. As we were traveling up the eastern coast of Africa, we stopped by the Quelimane River for awhile, but many of my men became sick with scurvy because they didn't have enough vitamin C. On the journey back to Portugal many of my men became sick with diseases such as scurvy. Only 55 of the original crew of 150 men survived the journey back. Another challenge was attacks from the natives at places that we stopped along Africa. Sometimes they were friendly,

and sometimes they weren't. Sometimes the natives hated us because we were Christians.

8. What was the journey like?

The entire journey took a long time. We stopped at many islands and places along the African coast. Sometimes we stopped to get supplies, food, and water and to repair the ships because they became worn out or leaky. When we went around the Cape of Good Hope, the violent waves shook the boats. One of the stops that we made on the east coast of Africa was by the Quelimane River and we met the two chiefs of the natives. One of them wore silk and the other satin. This let us know that India wasn't too far. At Malindi, the last stop before India, the natives sent someone who had lived with them to come with us. He helped guide the ships the rest of the way to India.

9. How did you interact with the indigenous peoples of the lands explored?

When I first arrived in Calicut, India, the Indians there were nice to me and my men and gave us gifts. Soon after, though, the Arabs told the king to force us to leave India because they didn't want us to interfere with their trade. The king then had his men guard us for a few days before we could leave. Soon after that, the king changed his mind again and let us stay and trade. Again the Arabs convinced the king to make us leave so he took some of my men hostage. I held some of his men hostage as well so we both agreed to let each other's hostages go. We then headed back to Portugal. Some Indian ships tried to stop us but couldn't.

10. What was the explored territory like? (hot, dry, cold, wet?)

When we arrived in India, the weather was warm and tropical. It was the hot season and the temperatures were from 85-90 degrees. Cyclones were common also.

11. Was the territory colonized later? If so by whom?

In the 1500's, Portuguese forts were set up on India's west coast.

12. What was this colony like? Was it based on agriculture, mining, trade, etc.?

The forts were set up to control the trade between Europe and India. The forts and Portugal became wealthy from controlling this.