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# Character Biography

## Vëantur

By Oshun

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Vëantur is the first and foremost among the early mariners and shipbuilders of Númenor and the first to renew contact between the island of Númenor and the peoples of Middle-earth. He is crucial in leading to the Númenóreans' self-definition as a seafaring people and masters of the vast seas of Arda to the east of its island kingdom.

When six hundred years had passed from the beginning of the Second Age Vëantur, Captain of the King's Ships under Tar-Elendil, first achieved the voyage to Middle-earth. He brought his ship Entulesse (which signifies 'Return') into Mithlond on the spring winds blowing from the west; and he returned in the autumn of the following year. Thereafter seafaring became the chief enterprise for daring and hardihood among the men of Númenor . . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Aside from being the first Númenórean to accomplish the return trip to Middle-earth, Vëantur's further claim to fame is that his daughter Almarian marries Tar-Elendar's son and successor Tar-Meneldur. It is said of Almarian that "though she herself loved ships and the sea no more than most women of the land her son [Aldarion Tar-Mendeldur's heir] followed after Vëantur her father, rather than after Meneldur."<sup>2</sup>

The fabled island of Númenor was created by the Valar as a refuge from the dangers and perils of Middle-earth. The Valar sought, much as they had tried with the Eldar, to remove the Second-born--as mortal Men or the Edain are called--to a land apart. They attempted to enclose and protect their mortal charges from the greatest of the evils within the boundaries of Arda Marred by isolating and closing off its peoples from the rest of their world.

And setting their course towards it the Edain came at last over leagues of sea and saw afar the land that was prepared for them, Andor, the Land of Gift, shimmering in a golden haze. Then they went up out of the sea and found a country fair and fruitful, and they were glad. And they called that land Elenna, which is Starwards; but also Anadûnê, which is Westernesse, Númenórë in the High Eldarin tongue.<sup>3</sup>

From the earliest days in their new home, the Edain looked to the sea with joy and interest: "Beyond all other pursuits the strong men of Númenor took delight in the Sea, in swimming, in diving, or in small craft for contests of speed in rowing or sailing."<sup>4</sup>

Like all island kingdoms of any size in real history it seems inevitable that Númenor will in time become the home of a seafaring people.

Vëantur serves as the grandsire of Tar-Aldarion, the first and greatest of the mythic Sea Kings of Númenor, whom he trains and mentors as a shipbuilder, explorer, and developer of the great fleets of his kingdom.

It happened on a time that Vëantur said to his grandson: 'Anardilya, the spring is drawing nigh, and also the day of your full age' (for in that April Aldarion would be twenty-five years old). 'I have in mind a way to mark it fittingly. My own years are far greater, and I do not think that I shall often again have the heart to leave my fair house and the blest shores of Númenor; but once more at least I would ride the Great Sea and face the North wind and the East. This year you shall come with me, and we will go to Mithlond and see the tall blue mountains of Middle-earth and the green land of the Eldar at their feet. Good welcome you will find from Círdan the Shipwright and from King Gil-galad. Speak of this to your father.'<sup>5</sup>

Vëantur's tutelage and encouragement ensures his grandson's concern for sea voyages and the craft of shipbuilding. Tolkien tells the reader that

. . . for many natural histories and geographies were composed by learned men in Númenor; but these, like nearly all else of the arts and sciences of Númenor at its high tide, disappeared in the Downfall. Even such documents as were preserved in Gondor, or in Imladris (where in the care of Elrond were deposited the surviving treasures of the Northern Númenórean kings) suffered from loss and destruction by neglect. . ."<sup>6</sup>

Thus, unfortunately, one does not learn in any precise detail of the contributions of Vëantur to the maritime arts and sciences. One can safely compare this fictional character to many of the great shipbuilders and explorers in real world history. However, one is not told of the exact level of technological development the Númenóreans retained from Middle-earth. We do know that "the Edain brought with them to Númenor the knowledge of many crafts, and many craftsmen who had learned from the Eldar, besides preserving lore and traditions of their own."<sup>7</sup> So the Edain who accompany Elros to the Land of Gift are not without technology, but nothing is written to indicate that they have many in their ranks who are brilliant shipbuilders. One presumes, as well, that there are no sailors with the skill to captain a ship, but they have some at least moderately skilled shipwrights among them.

It is said that when the Edain first set sail upon the Great Sea, following the Star to Númenor, the Elvish ships that bore them were each steered and captained by one of the Eldar deputed by Círdan; and after the Elvish steersmen departed and took with them the most part of their ships it was long before the Númenóreans themselves ventured far to sea. But there were shipwrights among them who had been instructed by the Eldar; and by their own study and devices they improved their art until they dared to sail ever further into the deep waters.<sup>8</sup>

Six hundred years into their stay on the island, Vëantur's predecessors have cultivated the maritime industry to the point that, when he reaches his full professional capacity, he is given an official position as master of seafaring under his title of Captain of the King's Ships. The golden age of sail of the island of Númenor, which is ushered in by the prodigious fervor of Vëantur to foster its development through his nurturing of the same appetites in his grandson Tar-Aldarion, begins with trips of exploration and scientific curiosity, a longing to see the home of their ancestors, and a desire to meet Círdan the great Elven shipwright and King Gil-galad of the Eldar. Seeing the peoples of Middle-age, who are suffering at that time under a period of extreme darkness, they seek to share their knowledge and gifts with them.

And coming among them the Númenóreans taught them many things. Corn and wine they brought, and they instructed Men in the sowing of seed and the grinding of grain, in

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the hewing of wood and the shaping of stone, and in the ordering of their life, such as it might be in the lands of swift death and little bliss. Then the Men of Middle-earth were comforted, and here and there upon the western shores the houseless woods drew back, and Men shook off the yoke of the offspring of Morgoth, and unlearned their terror of the dark. And they revered the memory of the tall Sea-kings, and when they had departed they called them gods, hoping for their return; for at that time the Númenóreans dwelt never long in Middle-earth, nor made there as yet any habitation of their own.<sup>9</sup>

Before the fall of Númenor, the trips of the Men of Númenor to Middle-earth increase and are followed by a period of both settlement and international trade, as well an exchange of expertise. Finally, under the growing influence of Sauron, which clouds their enlightened isle, the imperialistic appetites of the Númenóreans grow to such an extent that they begin to exploit rather than aid the peoples of Middle-earth, after which they became "proud men, eager for wealth, and they laid the men of Middle-earth under tribute, taking now rather than giving."<sup>10</sup>

But in the end, the closeness of the Númenóreans to the sea also allows the good men of Númenor, the Elf-friends represented by the Lords of Andúnië, to take to the sea, to barely save themselves and those closest to them. The spiritual father of those last great mariners of Númenor is Vëantur, the grandsire of Tar-Aldarion.

For further information about the life and times of Vëantur, please consult the biographies on this site of [Tar-Aldarion](#) and [Erendis, the Mariner's Wife](#).

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## Works Cited

1. *Unfinished Tales*, "A Description of the Island of Númenor."
2. Ibid.
3. *The Silmarillion, Akallabêth*.
4. *Unfinished Tales*, "A Description of the Island of Númenor."
5. *Unfinished Tales*, "Aldarion and Erendis."
6. *Unfinished Tales*, "A Description of the Island of Númenor."
7. Ibid.
8. *Unfinished Tales*, "A Description of the Island of Númenor."
9. *The Silmarillion, Akallabêth*.
10. Ibid.

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## About the Author

Oshun's *Silmarillion*-based stories may be found on the [SWG archive](#).