



The Influence of Sea Power on Ancient History

Chester G. Starr

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In the 19th-century classic, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, Alfred Thayer Mahan argued the paramount importance of naval superiority in peace and war. This work is still considered definitive today, but as Chester Starr, eminent historian of antiquity, points out in this thought-provoking volume, Mahan's theories have led to serious distortions in the way historians interpret the role of naval power in antiquity. Trade by sea was always important in providing raw materials as well as luxuries, but only rarely was it protected by an established navy. As Starr reveals, two nations that did protect their trade routes--Athens and Carthage--both fell after long duels with land-based forces, Sparta and Rome. And though Rome went on to create the most perfected and widely based naval structure in antiquity, when Rome fell it was due to invasions by land, not by sea.

Starr describes major naval battles in fascinating detail, and he examines technological developments as they help to illuminate the limitations of galleys in warfare. Ranging from the Bronze Age to the fall of the Roman Empire, this innovative study provides an important corrective to Mahan's thesis, both as applied to ancient history and to modern strategic thinking.

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