



The Influence of Sea Power on Ancient History

Chester G. Starr

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Alfred Thayer Mahan's nineteenth-century classic, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, has long occupied a central place in the canon of strategic thought. But as Chester G. Starr shows in this thought-provoking work, Mahan's theories have also led to serious misperceptions among historians about the significance of naval superiority in antiquity. This analytical study of the role of sea power from the second millennium B.C. to the end of the Roman Empire illustrates both the utility and the limitations of naval power. Focusing on Athens and Carthage, Starr demonstrates that control of the seas was not always a strategic necessity. Similarly, he examines the Roman imperial navy--the most advanced and widely-based naval structure in antiquity--noting that when Rome fell it was due to invasions by land, not sea. Starr describes major naval battles in fascinating detail, and analyzes technological developments as they reveal the limitations of galleys in warfare. This innovative study provides an important corrective to Mahan's thesis, both as applied to ancient history and to modern strategic thought--making it provocative reading for those interested in ancient history and also for those who follow military history.

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