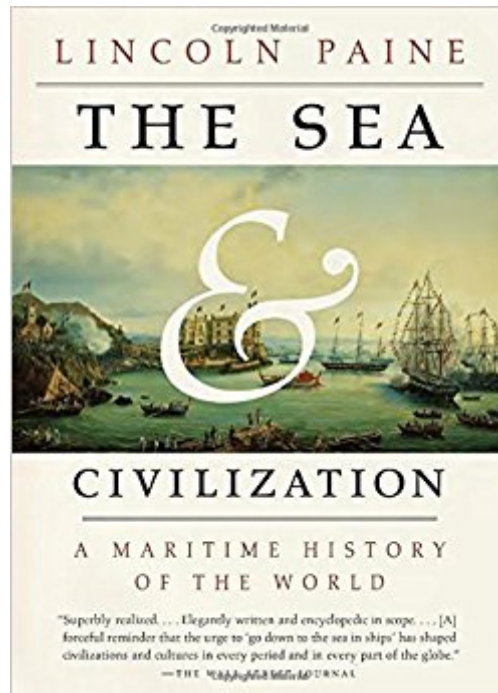


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The Sea And Civilization: A Maritime History Of The World



Synopsis

A monumental retelling of world history through the lens of the sea—revealing in breathtaking depth how people first came into contact with one another by ocean and river, lake and stream, and how goods, languages, religions, and entire cultures spread across and along the world's waterways, bringing together civilizations and defining what makes us most human. *The Sea and Civilization* is a mesmerizing, rhapsodic narrative of maritime enterprise, from the origins of long-distance migration to the great seafaring cultures of antiquity; from Song Dynasty human-powered paddle-boats to aircraft carriers and container ships. Lincoln Paine takes the reader on an intellectual adventure casting the world in a new light, in which the sea reigns supreme. Above all, Paine makes clear how the rise and fall of civilizations can be linked to the sea. An accomplishment of both great sweep and illuminating detail, *The Sea and Civilization* is a stunning work of history.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Even though the Earth's surface is 70% water, historical narratives are usually land-centered. Paine (*Ships of the World*) shifts emphasis from land to water in order to correct this imbalance, an approach that takes the reader through history via the seas. He devises a chronological spiral around the world, starting with a recounting of ancient times, before covering the same areas in medieval times, and so on up to the modern era. Paine's highly detailed work encompasses a wide array of topics, from trade and the influence of the sea on warfare and political coalitions, to ship building techniques through the ages, to piracy and slavery. Of particular interest

are the intricate alliances and shifting loyalties of ancient Mediterranean cultures, the outsized role of the relatively tiny Spice Islands, the impact the Vikings had on cultural exchange across coastal Europe, and the influence of religion on areas as diverse as trade and maritime law. Readers expecting a naval history will receive much more: a thorough history of the people, the ports, and the cultural activity taking place on the water. Paine has compiled an invaluable resource for salty dogs and land-lubbers alike. Photos, illus., & maps. Agent: John Wright, John Wright Literary Agency. (Nov.) --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

Sensing that the maritime world is not as prominent in popular consciousness as formerly, Paine presents this ambitiously capacious maritime history of the globe. Visually, it spans from vessels recorded in primitive pictographs to modern photographs, and verbally it addresses every regional arena of mercantile and naval activity as it elevates awareness of seas and rivers as conduits between states and peoples throughout human history. Global in embrace Paine may be, but particular geographical areas, such as the Mediterranean Sea and the seas surrounding Asia, receive his primary attention. Discussing the posture of ancient civilizations such as Egypt and China toward the sea, Paine covers the waxing and waning of empires as evidenced in exchanges of goods and the ships that transported them. The emergence of Europe in global navigation, which Paine prefaces with Viking explorations and medieval commerce in the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas, was a phenomenon that he connects to preexisting Asian trading networks that drew Portugal, then other European nations, into building maritime empires. So comprehensive and knowledgeable a history as Paine's offers a sturdy keel for any maritime history collection. --Gilbert Taylor --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

This book provides a valuable sea-based perspective on history different from what we typically learn in school. I found this highly enlightening. The author provides great detail, sometimes more detail than I would have liked. However, the detail shows the author's mastery of the subject, and offers something for all readers.

Encyclopedic coverage. Well written, although filled with so much information makes for slow reading. Not summer reading, but well worth the time put in to obtain such a thorough coverage of the subject.

The book is a great synopsis of 10,000 years. Necessarily, it is both too much and not enough. It is

also one of the key stories of the interests of men that result in civilization. I very much appreciated the work.

This is a huge, ambitious book with a sweeping point of view. If you believe that maritime trade had a lot to do with making human civilizations more prosperous, indeed, that it was the main reason why the standard of living has risen so dramatically over time, you will find evidence in this book. If you don't believe that yet, this book might change your mind. Very early on, humans discovered that they could improve their lot by trading with other humans who lived in different locations, and therefore had access to different products. Exactly when this happened is disputed, but remains of trade goods certainly date from before the Neolithic Revolution introduced farming as the main means of feeding humanity, rather than hunting and gathering. Transporting things to be traded was probably first done in a backpack. Later, pack animals were used, and when the wheel was invented, animals could be used to pull carts with the trade products on or in them. However, moving trade items by land had drawbacks. Every minute the pack was on the back of a human or pack animal, the creature had to expend energy to hold it up above and beyond the energy it had to expend to hold itself up. Once it started walking, the creature also had to deal with terrain. Going uphill is harder than on the level, and then there are bodies of water barring the path. Owners of the land can help by preparing commonly used routes ahead of time, smoothing out the ground, building bridges over smaller streams, and providing ferries over larger ones. While this would help commerce, it doesn't come for free the landowner would generally have to charge a toll or take a fee out of the profits to allow traders to use these prepared routes, now known as roads. Even worse, in spite of what scientists have to say about energy, the energy expended going uphill does not all return when going back downhill. Going downhill it is easy to fall, and you fall further because gravity is "helping" compared to a stumble when going uphill. In a wheeled vehicle, energy needs to be expended to prevent the vehicle from gaining too much speed and becoming uncontrollable. Accordingly, land transport requires ample labor to carry relatively small cargoes. The ocean has no terrain, nor is it helpful to prepare the route in advance. Historically, no one "owns" it and can have a right to levy tolls on it (although many have tried). Furthermore, once you've erected a more or less watertight hull, or provided enough buoyancy in objects like logs or reeds to stay afloat even if it leaks, buoyancy, the "magic" force holding up the vessel and everything in it, is free and requires no expenditure of energy. Ships can be built very large, larger than any other mobile

structures, without losing their ability to carry cargo. Even better, so long as low speeds can be accepted, a vessel on water requires very little force to move it. Accordingly, ships can transport much larger, heavier cargoes than carts or pack animals, and with a comparatively trifling effort on the part of their crews. Even one person rowing can transport more weight than in a backpack! This is the physics of maritime trade and why it has always been, and continues to be, less expensive to move goods by sea than any other way. Of course the sea has waves, and the weather that creates them can be more of a problem than on land, but that's another story. Mr. Paine, the author, has taken the broadest possible view of his subject. He has not confined himself to any time period, nor any civilization in particular. With such an enormous subject he has chosen, wisely I think, to approach it in the simplest way possible: chronologically from the beginning to the present. While this does call for jumping around to tell the story of each civilization in time periods (most of the time) when more than one civilization was making progress at sea, it is a familiar feature in literature, and in most places is not confusing. This sweeping character is both a strength and a weakness of his work. It's a strength in that it transmits the true depth and wealth of maritime tradition, but it's a weakness in that it leads to a monumental work that can be tedious to read, as well as not being entirely trustworthy at all points because one individual simply can't master the entire sweep of maritime history in all periods. The author does not confine himself to what has often been considered the main line of nautical history, starting with the Mediterranean civilizations and moving into Northern and Western Europe, following the spread of Atlantic seafaring to include the rest of the world. Indeed, he spends quite a bit of ink on the fact that this is an ethnocentric view that shortchanges many civilizations that have also achieved a great deal in the annals of seafaring. To his credit, however, that discussion is relegated to the introduction and the reader may draw his own conclusions from the text. He does not harp on the achievements of any particular culture or civilization, not even to stake out a "contrarian" position compared to the Eurocentric view; he lets the facts speak for themselves. I think that is the correct line to take, and another great strength of the book. I expect this book is going to be a classic that no history enthusiast should be without, and probably the definitive general, world maritime history for years to come. The book is not without weaknesses. Mr. Paine avoids any discussion of the physical principles I have outlined in my third paragraph. Therefore, readers unaware of the economic reasons for using ships, rather than other transportation devices, may feel the entire text is poorly motivated. It is easy for a modern person to imagine that airplanes will soon take over all the transportation roles currently held by ships. In reality, for cargoes that don't go bad, don't have to be fed, and won't write nasty letters or file

lawsuits if they don't get to their destinations on time, the ship still has an inherent advantage. Until such time as lift can be obtained without expenditure of energy, the additional speed of aircraft, while a convenience from the passenger's point of view, does not threaten the ship as the main instrument of world commerce.

A history of mankind, told through the technology of sailing. A most interesting point of view, this book will be of interest to historians of all flavors. History is defined by the knowledge of mankind put into writing. It can be extended back a bit by including pictures and models left behind by our forbears. And it is clarified by examination of the boats left behind on the ocean floor (and sometimes in graves). Well told, informative and worth a place on my bookshelf.

This book is an update on my first tomb relating to where and when we got here = "Tree of Culture" by Ralph Linton? which I read back in the early 50's. The new research verified the theories that I have been living with from the Tree of Culture days and added alternate pathways of migration that filled in many blanks. The navigational information and distribution by floating objects/ boats solved many of my questions.

I recommend this book to anyone interested in trade, ships, maritime history, navies....anything related to the sea and mankind's interface with the sea..

This is a fascinating alternate look at how the wet parts of the planet were involved in history. Did you know how Polynesians navigated out of sight of land? Did you know Ptolemy II built a "Suez Canal"? Did you know how the "Canary Islands" got their name? Did you know why ships are measured in tonnage? I'm not telling! You have to read and find out!

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