

*The Sea and Civilization: a maritime history of the world*. Lincoln Paine. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013. ISBN: 9781400044092

For decades, world history suffered from a Eurocentric crisis. In many now-canonical works, such as William McNeill's *Plagues and Peoples* (1976), Alfred Crosby's *Ecological Imperialism* (1986), and Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997), scholars failed to lend adequate agency to pre-Columbian or non-Western actors in shaping global interactions after 1500. Still others omitted contributions made by civilizations prior to the modern era and how those contributions impacted history beyond the Age of Exploration. Lincoln Paine, author of previous works on shipbuilding, asserts what worsened Eurocentrism was a lack of connective tissue between the ancient, medieval, and modern periods. In *The Sea and Civilization: a maritime history of the world*, he offers a masterfully ambitious and far-ranging analysis of how bodies of water (from oceans and bays to lakes and inland tributaries) and human activities upon them (shipbuilding, warfare, trade, and travel) influenced the course of world history from ancient times through the present. Rather than employing terrestrial perspectives, Paine's readers should consider world history via the "blues that shade seventy per cent" of the globe. For millennia prior to locomotives, automobiles, and jet travel, human commerce and culture moved easier and faster by water.

Since Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979) initiated a drift from Eurocentrism, other world histories, including Peter Gran's *Beyond Eurocentrism* (1996) and Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996) emphasized regions and ethnicities of the Middle East, Russia, and Asia. Paine, while not dispensing with land- or nation-based world history entirely, superimposes *maritime* history onto nearly every region and time period. Whereas maritime history once considered specific coastlines and their relationships with land-based activities, he cites Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II* (1949) as the first scholarly work to move past national paradigms and treat oceans themselves as coherent units of study. But for Paine, maritime history requires more than regional analyses; in *The Sea and Civilization*, he suggests treating the world's oceans, rivers, and lakes as interconnected systems independent from national borders. At the same time, Paine maintains that without the exploration, appropriation, and taming of the world's water bodies, city-states, nations, and colonial empires would have been unthinkable.

*The Sea and Civilization* originates in Oceania, a region defined by history's longest sustained effort of maritime exploration. Given its geographic breadth (a roughly 10,000-mile stretch of islands from present-day Ecuador to the Philippines), archaeological evidence revealed the use of dugout logboats, sails, and trade networks between seven thousand and thirteen thousand years ago. When European explorers crossed through Oceania starting in the 1500s, they marveled at the habitation of its islands far removed from any continental land mass. More, linguistic and navigational research demonstrated that Oceania's settlement resulted not from "accidental drift" but "intentional voyaging," making the era's seafarers the most advanced in the world. When measured against pre-Columbian Mesoamerican states (Mixtec, Olmec, or Aztec) that did not fully exploit their proximity to the sea, Paine argues Oceanic peoples, though never as numerous or centralized as their American counterparts, ranged farther across the sea than anyone else.

Paine then focuses on the seafaring and shipbuilding techniques of ancient Egyptians, Sumerians, and Phoenicians. He finds that ancient Egypt's commercial successes depended on "harnessing the Nile as a highway of internal communication while the seas were a filter through which its people absorbed foreign goods and influences." For the pharaohs, watercraft were not simply implements for trade: with more than one hundred different types of vessels identified through archaeological findings, boats also were used for funeral rites, waste disposal, celebrations, and fortifications. Via its technological prowess and geographic reach, Egypt facilitated communication with other powers in the region, including Greece and the Phoenician city-state of Levant; those powers, Paine finds, were the first to fan out beyond the Mediterranean and breach the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Once extended, Greeks and Phoenicians founded a number of port cities that still thrive in the present, including Cadiz, Cartagena, Marseilles, Istanbul, and Carthage (now suburban Tunis), which until the emergence of the Roman Empire in the fourth century BCE, stood as the world's largest naval power. For five centuries after, Roman supremacy relied upon dominance of the Mediterranean. Ancient India and China, the latter long considered insular and hostile to foreign trade, also were maritime powers. While many Indian traders ventured to sea for their livelihoods, Chinese traders tended to focus inward by mastering their interior network of rivers. Though China did commercially engage India and Rome indirectly and helped establish the states of Vietnam and Cambodia, Chinese authorities were skeptical of foreign ideas and religious practices.

In the book's middle chapters, beginning with the Viking Age and concluding with the voyages of Columbus, da Gama, and Magellan, Paine devotes considerable space to the emergence of seafaring European powers and the spread of their imperial ambitions up to the beginning of the sixteenth century AD. Especially enlightening are Paine's subsequent chapters that examine the rise of steam technology, the construction of canals and dams, the invention of ironclad warships and modern navies, fisheries and agriculture, the emergence of submersibles, transatlantic competition in freight and passenger service, and the role(s) of waterways during WWI and WWII. Casting a somber glow in the final chapter, Paine opines that when in the 1950s jet travel and postwar car culture rendered ocean liners all but obsolete, ships and shipping lost salience in popular culture. Finally, Paine stresses that perspectives on water travel and trade have radically changed over the past half-century, largely due to forces of globalization. Though ships currently carry ninety per cent of the world's cargo, automation has in many ways supplanted human tasks while maritime vessel registry (as with many other facets of global commerce) no longer conforms to borders or nations.

The most impressive quality of *The Sea and Civilization*, in addition to its engaging prose, is its source material: the work leaves few stones unturned as Paine considers secondary literature of world history, philosophy, oceanography, economics, archaeology; shipping trade journals and port authority records; centuries of newspapers, magazines, diaries, and journals written by explorers, scribes, and royal officials; ancient mythology, images of the sea and maritime commerce in art, literature, and poetic verse; manuals on watercraft design; and hundreds of translated works from Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and Russian sources. Due its top-flight research and inarguable global scope that transcends Eurocentrism, *The Sea and Civilization* not only suffices as a world history survey text but will also benefit scholars and students specializing in geography, military history, engineering, environmental history,

economics, ethnohistory, archaeology, and any academic discipline that engages the intersections between human endeavor and bodies of water.

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