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Dark Age Naval Power: A Reassessment of Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Seafaring Activity

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why the voyages never led to exploration and colonization.

Deftly avoiding the swamps of socio-philosophy, Levathes paints a picture of a society so sure that it was the best that could possibly be that it felt no need of anything physical or intellectual from anyone else. The rulers of China believed that China's self-evident superiority would be manifest to all, and all would (and should) come to them with proper fealty.

To trade with the world in goods and ideas and to explore that world became an abomination to China's rulers. One hundred years after Zheng He's last voyage, the building of an oceangoing vessel in China was a beheading offense. Had it not been so, this review might have been written in Mandarin.

FRANK C. MAHNCKE
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Haywood, John. *Dark Age Naval Power: A Reassessment of Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Seafaring Activity*. London: Routledge, 1991. 232pp. \$45

John Haywood has produced a detailed study, originally written as a dissertation for the University of Lancaster, of early seafaring, and one of considerable importance. Students of naval history, and those who teach it, usually skim over this period for lack of solid information. Haywood provides not only details of early medieval naval history in northwestern Europe but offers a thesis as well.

The book opens with a brief introduction setting forth the purposes of the book—to write a history of Germanic

seafaring from the earliest recorded incident, a failed attack on the Romans on the Ems River in 12 B.C., through the age of Charlemagne in the ninth century. The author relies primarily on literary evidence, but where possible incorporates archaeological evidence. This approach differs from work on the succeeding Viking age, where scholarly concentration is primarily focused on ship finds. The results of this approach are revealed in chapters on early Germanic piracy and the raids of the Franks and Germans. Haywood argues correctly that the seakeeping ability of early medieval vessels was so limited that ship-to-ship battles were rare. Readers will be surprised, however, to discover the extent of naval activity during this period.

For those who hope to find answers to questions concerning the migrations of the Angles, Saxons, and other tribes to Britain, the volume both intrigues and challenges. Haywood argues that the Frisians (whose significance is deflated at the expense of the Franks) and other Germanic tribes employed sails on their ships. Although the Nydam and Utrecht ships as well as other early finds are discussed, none provide evidence to confirm use of the sail. The author does not provide a reconstruction of King Alfred's navy, but he does provide useful supplementary information to suggest that it proved successful against the Danes. The emperor Charlemagne (d. 814) and Louis the Pious receive praise for grasping the importance of naval power. They used it to great advantage in campaigns, especially on rivers, where ships were involved in

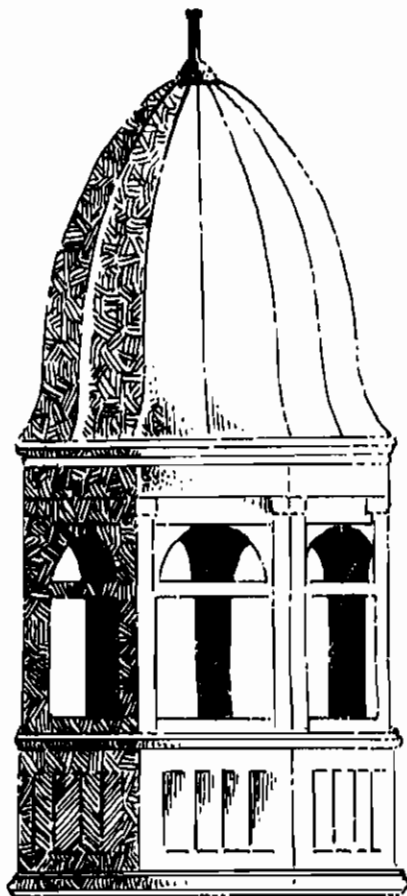
160 Naval War College Review

communications, transport, and logistics.

Dark Age Naval Power provides a provocative glimpse at the dawn of Germanic seafaring. These people understood the value of a navy and

possessed an understanding of naval tactics and strategy that will surprise many readers.

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The cupola—originally the “circular observatory”—of Luce Hall, which was built for the Naval War College, in the Flemish style, in 1891–1892.