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Eighth Voyage of the Dragon: A History of China's Quest for Seapower

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Korea, as armed camps. Amazingly, the number of people in the armed forces of the impoverished and supposedly drained Vietnam is two thirds of those of the large and wealthy United States.

The author's discussion of the vigorous economic power of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, and the United States' increased and changing role as a trading partner with them is illuminating. In 1979 the value of US trade within the Pacific exceeded that of trade with Western Europe for the first time. In a curious switch we have become the hewer of wood and drawer of water who supports the Japanese economic miracle. The United States now sells primary products—grain, soy beans, rice, and other raw materials to Japan and buys from that country automobiles, low-priced electronics and other products typical of the old-fashioned stereotype of the capitalist world exploiter. The frustrating problem of how to persuade Japan "to put its boots on again" and do more to protect Asian economic progress is discussed with fresh insight.

This concise book is recommended to naval officers for an evening of stimulating professional reading. It will invoke pride as well as increased understanding of the US Navy's continuing role in maintaining East Asia as a zone of relative peace.

HAMLIN A. CALDWELL, JR.

Swanson, Bruce. *Eighth Voyage of the Dragon: A History of China's Quest for Seapower*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982. 348pp. \$26.95

There has long been need of a history of China and the sea, and we are indebted to Bruce Swanson and the Naval Institute Press for this fact-filled study. The intriguing title refers to the seven Chinese maritime expeditions of the first

third of the fifteenth century. In one of the few official sponsorings of maritime activity in China's history, the Ming dynasty launched over two thousand vessels in sixteen years, and sent many of them (317 on the first expedition) to Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, and East Africa. As many as 27,000 men were embarked on just one of these expeditions, and the technical capacities both of ships and navigation were far in advance of Western accomplishments of the time. A century later Pedro Cabral led the second Portuguese expedition to India in ten ships of under 300 tons and, possibly, 150 feet—the 62 "treasure ships" of the Ming fleets were around 180 feet and probably displaced about 700 tons. Mr. Swanson tells this story well; it is with the implications of his title and subtitle that some questions suggest themselves.

The author begins his book with a short analysis of the traditional Confucian continental civilization and the various philosophic, political, and cultural characteristics of the society that made it eschew seapower. Oddly, relatively little mention is made of the constantly dangerous pressure of the Central Asian nomad tribes on the imperial state (the Great Wall rates two fleeting mentions). Nor, is the autarkical nature of the Chinese economy highlighted, save to note quite correctly that it was directed toward a "self-sustaining market system." Curiously, Mahan's observation that "the necessity of a navy . . . springs . . . from the existence of a peaceful shipping . . ." seems to have been forgotten. In this section Swanson suggests (as he does several times in the book) that maritime power's role for a continental empire was always a difficult one and ". . . is a question which still has not been resolved." This does not sound like a man expecting an

108 Naval War College Review

eighth voyage soon, nor, for that matter, does Swanson's text in general show "a history of China's quest for seapower."

Is there a more general theme that might suggest a Chinese view of seapower? Nations that have developed successful maritime power are in the first instance usually small islands or trading nations forced to the sea by a poor hinterland—Crete, Phoenicia, Athens, Corinth, Genoa, Venice, Holland, and England, for example. In the second instance there are the continental peoples who came late (and often unnaturally) to seapower because their continental limits were reached or were being threatened—such peoples as the Romans, Mongols, Turks, Germans, Americans, and Russians. The Chinese may well eventually join this second group but, as with the imperial dynasties for so many centuries, not while there is a threatening horde to the north and west.

The middle section of the *Eighth Dragon* deals with China as an object of Western and Japanese seapower after the Opium War of 1842, the stillborn navies of the modernization period and the collapse both of imperial and nationalist China. The failure of China to develop a modern navy in the century after 1842 was just one of the many failures of Confucian China to learn to use and understand modern technology. Mr. Swanson's chapters are filled with well-researched examples of such failures. From this period comes one of the book's strengths—photos from an 1884-85 album of Ltjg. Moses Lindley Wood, now held in the Nimitz Library at the Naval Academy. These and other equally piquant pictures from official and private sources are not always reproduced to best advantage but they will add a great deal to a reader's enjoyment.

The last and by far the longest section covers maritime developments since 1949. The coverage is detailed. No one interested in the Chinese Peoples Republic's maritime progress (or the absence of such progress) can henceforth count his research complete without consulting Mr. Swanson's work. Still, the accumulation of data seems occasionally to overwhelm the analysis. The discussion of "new strategic relationships" after the Sino-Soviet split is strangely truncated; Nixon and Kissinger appear in two lines (Albania gets nineteen). But a more serious cavil is the strategic analysis that concludes the book: "On the other side, the West, particularly the United States, now views China in a larger strategic context—as a valuable friend whose assistance is necessary to contain Soviet expansion in Asia." Presumably, it is in the light of this assigned role that we are being asked to look at the plans of "the neo-maritime advocate Deng Xiaping" and to judge China's "latest quest for maritime and naval power." One wonders.

Western histories of navies "opening" China are detailed and full of portentous conclusions. Chinese documents of the same period show a ratio of about 11-1 in favor of documents dealing with problems of inner Asia over those dealing with the big-nosed, red-faced barbarians at Guangzhou and Hong Kong. The mandarins of Beijing, Confucian or communist, have had over 2,000 years of precedents on where the enemy is and where he should be met.

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Bess, H. David and Farris, Martin T.
U.S. Maritime Policy, History and Prospects. New York: Praeger, 1981.
204pp. \$24.95