



Lords of the Sea: The Epic Story of the Athenian Navy and the Birth of Democracy

By John R. Hale

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The epic true story of Themistocles and the Battle of Salamis, and a rousing history of the world's first dominant navy and the towering empire it built

The Athenian Navy was one of the finest fighting forces in the history of the world. It engineered a civilization, empowered the world's first democracy, and led a band of ordinary citizens on a voyage of discovery that altered the course of history. With *Lords of the Sea*, renowned archaeologist John R. Hale presents, for the first time, the definitive history of the epic battles, the fearsome ships, and the men—from extraordinary leaders to seductive rogues—that established Athens's supremacy. With a scholar's insight and a storyteller's flair, Hale takes us on an unforgettable voyage with these heroes, their turbulent careers, and far-flung expeditions, bringing back to light a forgotten maritime empire and its majestic legacy.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Historian and archeologist Hale brings both skill sets to bear in this account of an Athens whose golden age and democratic institutions depended on its navy. Between 489 and 322 B.C., Athens built, ruled and lost an empire extending from the Aegean to the Black Sea. The sea permeated every sphere of Athenian life, and most well-known Athenians were identified with sea power: Thucydides and Sophocles commanded fleets. The fleets were based on triremes, reflecting a doctrine favoring the craft and cunning of the steersman and rowers over brute force. Those skills were a product of the commitment and cooperation of free men who played an increasing role in Athenian politics at the expense of those better off and higher born. In times of crisis, all free adult males were expected to board the triremes. Athens's rule of the sea came to an end when a cabal of aristocrats betrayed the fleet to the Macedonians. And that was possible only because the mysterious spiritual essence sustaining Athenian effort and sacrifice had been lost as well. (*June*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Hale has enjoyed a career as an archaeologist, including underwater searches for ancient warships. Here he examines the origins, growth, and campaigns of the great Athenian fleet, which helped make Athens the most powerful polis in Greece for most of the fifth century BC. After the defeat of the Persian army at Marathon in 490 BC., the Archon Themistocles urged his fellow citizens to build a large fleet to counter further Persian invasions. Financed by the windfall of silver from the nearby mines at Laurium, the Athenians soon constructed a fleet of over 300 triremes, the most advanced naval vessels in the eastern Mediterranean. Athenian naval supremacy held the Persians at bay and formed the basis for the Delian League, used by Athens to build a maritime empire. Hale follows the campaigns of the fleet through the Peloponnesian War and the supremacy of the Macedonians under Alexander the Great. His efforts to link Athenian naval growth to the growth of democratic institutions will be disputed by many historians. Still, this is a well-written, stirring chronicle. --Jay Freeman

Review

"You'd have to be half asleep already not to become hooked by the first few paragraphs of John Hale's *Lords of the Sea* - The Cleveland Plain Dealer "Hale's simple but vigorous sentences prick up your ears from the first page...one hopes to hear more from him." -Dwight Garner, The New York Times "With something for almost everyone, "Lords of the Sea" tells an important story and imparts to him who wants to learn important lessons. It's well worth the read." -Washington Times "Dr. Hale's sparkling creation, that rare history so brilliantly told that, like the Athenian democracy, it is truly for all people." - Louisville Courier-Journal "Historian and archeologist Hale brings both skill sets to bear in this account of an Athens whose golden age and democratic institutions depended on its navy." - Publishers Weekly

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