

The conquest of the seas is not a recent event in the history of mankind. Since prehistoric times, men have ventured out onto water. Many cities and empires were thalassocracies or were formed around a sea basin. The sea played a major role in their political or economic construction. If, for a long time, China did not have the influence in the West that its size and civilisation should have prompted, this may be in part because it could not, or did not want to, be a maritime power . . .

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