

War at Sea: A Shipwrecked History from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century by James Delgado

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The author of this book has been a practicing archaeologist for over forty years. During that time he has been fortunate enough to have partaken in and reported on a very diverse range of maritime archaeology projects around the globe. He is an engaging fixture at conferences and has been for many years a long-standing advocate for maritime archaeology on television, bringing many of the world's greatest maritime discoveries to our living rooms. In this way, with an encyclopaedic knowledge of the field, James Delgado is well-suited to produce this new overview of the world of the archaeology of maritime conflict as it is today. The book is historically chronological, but it also serves to relate just how far this new archaeological discipline has progressed in recent years.

The book covers just about every aspect of warship archaeology to have been uncovered over the last seventy years. Its time span is ambitious; from antiquity to the Cold War. Within its pages Delgado has captured the essence of the development of maritime archaeology around the world, as it continues to spread out into the unexplored regions of the oceans.

From the chapters on the beginnings of maritime conflict to the early modern period, the author lucidly but succinctly describes the key discoveries and projects. For example he shows how the ram became the deadly naval weapon of the ancient world. He describes how the few examples which survive were found, including a fascinating description of the famous Athit Ram. There is also a very well-considered brief description of the archaeology of the earliest so far found naval battlefield, the Battle of Egadi, which was fought during the Punic wars off Sicily. There is also a very interesting description of how the archaeological remains of the Mongol fleet, destroyed in a storm off Japan in 1281 were found and identified.

As one would expect, the chapters covering up to the industrial revolution include descriptions of the most notable archaeological discoveries, such as the *Mary Rose* and the *Vasa*. Beside these, Delgado also describes a myriad equally fascinating smaller projects which is all too easy to overlook, including the *Kronan*, the *Duart* wreck, the *Dartmouth* and the remarkable *Stirling Castle*. The industrial age takes up the majority of the book and there are excellent retellings of the famous excavations of *USS Monitor* and *CSS Hunley* from the American Civil War, alongside a number of lesser known cases including *CSS Alabama* and *USS Cairo*. Descriptions of the wrecks of the Battle of Santiago and the loss of *USS Maine* follow.

Unsurprisingly the world wars receive excellent coverage. This includes *SMS Dresden* sunk in 1914. The Battle of Jutland, the U-boat campaign and the Grand Scuttle, (in which this reviewer was actively involved, and will therefore pass over out of modesty) are all covered in as much detail as this allows. The significant archaeological work at Gallipoli is described, including the work of Selcuk Kolay who has done much to bring the shipwrecks to attention. There is also a succinct summary of the recent controversy surrounding the sinking of the French battleship *Bouvet*.

The coverage of the Second World War has a slight bias towards recent discoveries by Paul Allen in the Pacific, along with the remains lying in Pearl Harbour. Although *HMS Hood* and *KMS Bismarck* are well-covered, the Battle of the Atlantic receives coverage mainly from the wrecks found on the eastern seaboard of the United States. This shows that like all archaeology, its coverage is uneven, tending to stretch out into areas made archaeologically accessible, by funding, geography and

desire. The great convoy battles in the mid-Atlantic await serious investigation in the future. The book is completed with descriptions of Cold War archaeology including Bikini Atoll and USS *Independence* among others.

Throughout the book the author does not shy away from describing the range of controversies which have emerged over the decades which pertain to the activities of salvage companies, acting within and outside the law. With his description of the work he undertook during the legal wrangling over the *Nuestra Señora de las Mercedes*, Delgado sheds a light on the often complex world of the ultimate ownership of any material lost at sea. However, naval wrecks are covered by sovereign immunity and the rules of "salvor in possession" do not usually apply. For this reason, alongside their often twin status as naval graves, the salvage of warships is always fraught with controversy.

This book represents an excellent overview of where the study of the archaeology of maritime conflict is today. It will undoubtedly find its way onto the library shelves of universities (including my own) as it offers a much needed up-to-date overview of the discipline, written by an archaeologist. Besides students of archaeology, any reader with an interest in the subject will find this book to be a first-class introduction and overview. To aid the reader, the book is replete with an excellent selection of maps and photographs.

There is of course much more to maritime archaeology than just conflict. The archaeology of ships offers unique insights into trade, human interconnectivity, the lives of maritime communities and the broader subject of ship design and construction, to name but a few topics. In this book Delgado is only able to allude to these, but he does contextualize conflict within the wider field.

For all its merits, as a single reference book on archaeology projects featuring naval conflict, this is not a scholarly work, nor do I feel it was intended to be. The book ends abruptly in 1968 with the Russian submarine *K-129* and there is no concluding chapter to bring together the wide range of threads which the author has briefly described in each project covered in the book. This is something of a disappointment. Having described so much, the author's own views on where we are and where we are going would undoubtedly have been insightful. Nevertheless this is a landmark book illuminating the long journey maritime conflict archaeology has been on. The author shows clearly that this discipline is now a major contributor to the study of naval history and it is recommended to members.

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