

personal emotional struggles. This publication is an exceptionally erudite work containing fifty often psychiatric-technical footnotes and a substantial fifteen-page bibliography. This rather costly book is a challenging read, but – as with most scholarly works – rewarding for those willing to persevere.

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Dolin, Eric Jay. *The Wreck of the Mentor: A True Story of Death, Despair, and Deliverance in the Age of Sail*

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232 pp., illustrations, appendixes, list of characters, index

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Eric Jay Dolin delivers a masterful account of the 1832 wreck of the American whaleship *Mentor*, a disaster that shattered not only the vessel but the very social order aboard it. What begins as a stormy night off the reef-strewn coast of the Palau Islands, unfolds into a years-long saga of survival, moral fracture, and cross-cultural entanglement among the scattered islands of the South Pacific.

Drawing from archival sources, logs, journals, oral histories, and Indigenous accounts, the narrative transcends the typical shipwreck story. It becomes a study in human resilience and the breakdown of maritime hierarchy, where authority dissolves and survival becomes the castaways' only goal. The author's meticulous research brings depth to the sometimes convoluted yet tragic tale, illuminating the psychological and cultural consequences of contact between vastly different worlds.

Unlike many "Age of Sail" shipwreck accounts, *The Mentor* is greater than the usual cautionary tale of nautical misfortune. It is a rare and complex chronicle – one that spans multiple islands and years, populated by a cast of characters thrust into perilous and morally fraught circumstances. The book explores how the ambitions of the commercially oriented West collided with the realities of Pacific Island life, revealing the precariousness of seafaring and the unpredictable consequences of maritime whaling and far-flung trade ventures.

Dolin notes in his author's introduction that shipwreck narratives have traditionally relied almost entirely on the records left by explorers or merchants, rather than on accounts from the Indigenous peoples they encountered. As a result, it is difficult to recover authentic native perspectives or to verify the accurateness of existing historical accounts. The limitations

of the available sources require careful interpretation, and conflicting evidence often makes it challenging to determine which version of events is most reliable. Consequently, this book is necessarily shaped by the author's interpretation of the historical record, informed by but not wholly resolved through contradictory source material. Also, since this is Dolin's twelfth work of maritime history, two of his earlier books – *Leviathan: The History of Whaling in America* and *Left for Dead: Shipwreck, Treachery, and Survival at the Edge of the World* – likely provided intellectual continuity with the themes explored here.

This generously illustrated work opens with an extensive cast of characters: the captains and crews of the British East Indiaman *Antelope*, the *Mentor*, and the *Friendship*; personnel from HM Ships *Panther* and *Endeavour*; the crew of USS *Vincennes*; and a formidable list of secondary figures ranging from Pope Leo XIII to individuals involved in conflicts across the islands during the Second World War. The author also includes detailed descriptions of Indigenous customs and ceremonies, including religious practices, the enslavement and mistreatment of Caucasian captives, and the harsh conditions they endured. Additionally, the author provides illustrations and explanations of native artifacts, tools, flora, and fauna, along with commentary on their uses and cultural significance.

The result is a compelling and often harrowing narrative that challenges romanticized portrayals of maritime adventure. It reframes the reader's understanding of hardship, survival, and cultural encounter during one of the most volatile periods of Pacific exploration. The book also introduces readers to numerous Palauan cultural terms, such as *Ibedul* (a chief), *bai* (a large meeting house), and *kilit* (a sacred vertebrae bracelet). Dolin even offers a fresh definition of the term "beachcomber," describing it as a rescued castaway who had assimilated into local culture.

Dolin's complex story has so many facets that it becomes peripatetic, thus at times is a challenge. The large number of characters, shifting locations, and many intertwined storylines occasionally make the account difficult to follow. Nevertheless, readers who approach the book with patience will find themselves richly rewarded. Eric Jay Dolin's latest work stands as yet another excellent contribution to maritime history – one that will resonate with readers interested in the human dimensions of historical catastrophe.

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