

world, with some references provided through the Roman lens. Nor is there much on the scene in Africa south of the Mediterranean littoral, or of Latin America. If nothing else, such gaps demonstrate the difficulty in fitting in every topic that could be addressed in a single volume as well as impressing on the reader the broad orbit of the subject with what has been included.

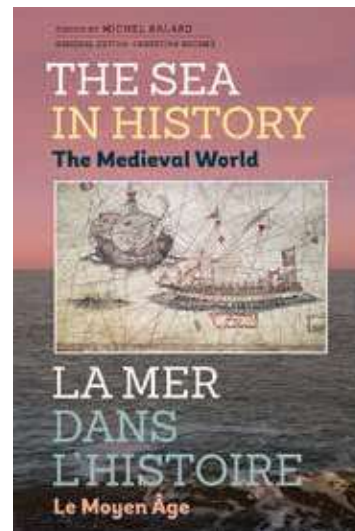
Arnaud in his general introduction acknowledges this problem and admits that antiquity as an epoch is not well defined. In the Western tradition, the ancient world was that of the Mediterranean and the near East. The entities that strove for dominance as well as trade with each other form the bedrock of European civilization, and this reality is reflected in the fact that the three-quarters of the articles address issues in the Mediterranean basin. Civilizations further afield were legendary or only vaguely known to exist—knowledge essentially due to trade by very small enterprises—or were entirely unknown, such as the Americas and Australia. These significant limits do not render the effort at creating a global history nugatory and many of the papers will be of interest to both the specialist and general reader.

There are three caveats to note with this book. The first is the lack of an index to help locate material within the many papers that are linked. An index is an important aid to the reader of any academic text and this is no exception. Its lack is unfortunate. The second is that references, almost all secondary in nature, are often provided only as footnotes. It would have been helpful to have a bibliography at the end of each paper. Finally, the cost at US \$220 is undeniably steep. Few will be willing to lay out such a sum, particularly if only a few articles are of immediate interest, and hence it likely will be a matter for libraries.

Ian Yeates  
Regina, Saskatchewan

Christian Buchet and Michel Balard (eds.). *The Sea in History - The Medieval World/La mer dans l'histoire - Le Moyen Âge*. Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, [www.boydelandbrewer.com](http://www.boydelandbrewer.com), 2017. 1086 pp., ISBN 978-1-78327-159-7. (E-book available) [Review reprinted from *The Northern Mariner/Le marin du nord*, Vol. XVII, No. 4, October 2017.]

This intimidating volume represents the second in a set of four, following on *The Sea in History - The Ancient World*, and preceding two more books on the early modern and modern eras. The book's editor, Michel Balard, wastes no time in invoking Braudel in his introduction, which serves as a



clear enough signpost to what follows. And what follows is interesting, diverse, and often exciting. Even 75 papers in French and English and over a thousand pages, however, can hardly do justice to a subject that spans a millennium and—more ambitiously—the entire world. The book embraces “Universal History,” as the editor puts it, seeking to identify how the sea was a “differentiating factor in world history.” It is a tall order, and one cannot envy the editor his job of herding so many scholars, themselves distributed across 40 countries, including the Caribbean, Mali, Korea, the Mongol Empire, Indonesia and elsewhere. Despite that geographical spread, the total regional distribution of the chapters does not stray that far from the traditional haunts of medieval studies. Of the 75 entries, 31 deal with some aspect of the Mediterranean (including the Black Sea), with 10 focussing on Venice and Genoa alone. Another 14 cover the North Atlantic, North Sea and Scandinavia. This leaves little room for the Americas, where we have two papers on the Mayans and one on the Andean coast of South America. The Indian Ocean is better served with seven papers, and the Far East with six. The remaining chapters are broader studies, which tend to focus on European examples, such as Nikolas Jaspert’s look at the link between piracy and state power, while a handful of authors travel even further afield, to Senegal, or to the Philippines.

A book like this faces a challenge: to cover the bases implied in its title, or to provide new offerings and fresh scholarship. *The Sea in History* attempts to satisfy both requirements, with mixed results. Some contributors offer new insights, such as Gertwagen’s insightful reflections on the sheer incompetence of the Venetian navy, and Gregor Rohmann on the Vitalian Brethen in the Baltic. Two engaging chapters, by Gerassimos Pagratis and Nevra Necipoğlu, contest the traditional view of Byzantines as antipathetic to the sea. Other contributors, however, provide straightforward surveys of their subjects, as in Sachin Pendse’s paper on shipbuilding in India and Jorge Ortiz-Sotelo’s overview of “Central Andean Peoples and their Relationship to the Sea.” Some of these feel more necessary than others: with a surfeit of books on the Vikings available, do we need a new 14-page overview of the Viking ship, no matter how well written? One senses the intention to cover all the bases, but of course there are omissions. The absence of Polynesia is surprising; likewise, except for a section on Spain, the Islamic Mediterranean during its so-called “Golden Age” before the crusades is entirely absent. And while Angela Schottenhammer provides a useful overview of “Maritime Relations between the Indian Ocean and China in the Middle Ages,” the intervening territory of mainland South-East Asia doesn’t merit a single article.

Meanwhile, for the ever popular city of Venice, we learn about the culture and conditions of sailors in Doris Stöckly’s paper, Jean-Claude Hocquet explains the vital role of salt in the commune’s economy, Bernard Doumerc outlines different logistical approaches to Venetian seafaring, Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan describes the expansion of the arsenal over the centuries, while John E. Dotson addresses the shipbuilders and Ruthy Gertwagen offers an admirable overview of the “Naval Power of Venice in the Eastern Mediterranean.” At the other end of the world, of

six sections dealing with the Far East, two full papers and part of another focus on the few decades of the early-fifteenth century in which the treasure ships sailed under Zheng He.

In short, coverage is uneven and sometimes arbitrary. Guided by the ghost of Braudel (and Horden and Purcell), most of the authors make an attempt at the *longue durée*. The papers mostly eschew historical personages in favour of durations, which are usually measured in centuries. But the comparative project suggested by the editor of the sea as a “differentiating factor in world history” is not made explicit, as each paper by necessity confines itself within one region or subject area (already big enough in most cases). Drawing out the comparisons is left to the reader, a task that is eased by the predominance of certain themes. Chief among them is shipbuilding. Individual articles cover the topic in the Adriatic, Venice, Portugal, Byzantine Constantinople, Viking Scandinavia, India, and the Philippines, while others address it more lightly in Al-Andalus, the Kingdom of Jerusalem, knightly Rhodes, Lusignan Cyprus, Crete, England, Yuan China, and Korea. Any specialist in naval technology will be well served by this book. A second key theme is naval organization and state sponsorship of fleets and maritime expansion, and here too the offerings span the globe.

This book is, quite simply, too big. There is a nice volume here on Venice and Genoa, another on the medieval Baltic and North Sea, a third and slighter one on China and the Indian Ocean. Taken together, they are difficult to deal with. It is not clear for whom this book is intended. Its diversity makes it a fun read; this reader had never before considered the navigational problems faced by the early Maya, or the balsa rafts of the Peruvian coast. But nobody buys a book at this price for its entertainment value. Specialists in the history of shipbuilding, nautical technology, or naval organization will have reason to consult it, and those pursuing cross-cultural approaches to these subjects may find it very valuable indeed. A comparative approach to the various maritime histories of the world is a desirable outcome, which this book fosters, and it may be recommended on that basis. I would certainly hope to find it in any library or collection devoted to naval or maritime studies.

Romney David Smith  
London, Ontario

Christian Buchet and Gérard Le Bouëdec (eds.)  
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