

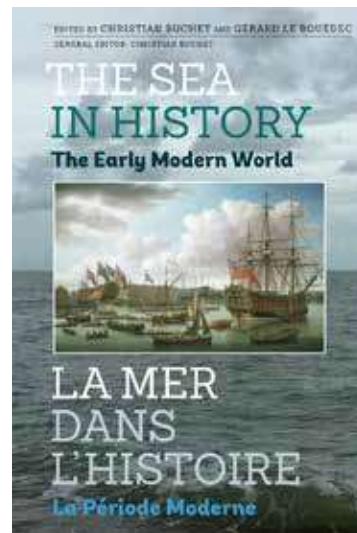
six sections dealing with the Far East, two full papers and part of another focus on the few decades of the early-fifteenth century in which the treasure ships sailed under Zheng He.

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.)
The Sea in History: The Early Modern World
– *La mer dans l'histoire: La Période Moderne*.
Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, www.boydelandbrewer.com, 2017. 848 pp.,
ISBN 978-1-78327-158-0. (E-book available)



“How did the sea modify the course of history?” Like the Enlightenment’s famed *Encyclopédie*, this ambitious four-volume work produced by the Océanides project aims to catalogue and explain the entirety of humankind’s interaction with nature—a Universal History viewed through a maritime lens (xxv). In *The Sea in History* an international and interdisciplinary group of 260 senior academics seek to identify—and quantify as far as possible— “what developments can be attributed to the sea, both in general history and in ... political entities?” (xxiii). The illustrious team explores the economic, technological, and political effects of maritime activity around the globe. Like the Enlightenment philosophes, the work is impressive and field-defining, although ultimately certain aspects of maritime influence remain impossible to measure.

This volume was edited by Gérard Le Bouëdec, Emeritus Professor of the University of South Brittany, and Christian Buchet, Professor of Maritime History at Catholic University of Paris, and Scientific Director of the five-year Océanides enterprise. The bilingual volume contains 42 chapters in French and 33 in English. Both front- and end-matter usefully appears in both languages. The conclusion, by Le Bouëdec, largely recaps the contents of each chapter, while Buchet’s General Conclusion (repeated in each of the four volumes) lays out the project’s overarching claims, which relate primarily to trade.

The third volume is dedicated to “the early modern world,” the late fifteenth century to the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars. By choosing to begin with the “1488-1492 geographic ‘big bang’” (1039), the editors acknowledge the significance of the Portuguese Pedro Dias rounding the southern tip of Africa into the Indian Ocean, a navigational milestone equal or greater than Columbus sailing to the Caribbean. Indeed the volume places more emphasis on the Indian and Pacific Oceans than on the Atlantic. In this “early modern” volume (*moderne* in French), there is considerable focus on the developments of the eighteenth century—many of the authors look ahead to industrialization. (Readers interested in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries may find pertinent material in the second, “medieval” volume.)

Even in a project as international as this one, western Europe receives the most attention, particularly Great Britain, the Netherlands, and France. There are, however, illuminating case studies of less prominent maritime entities, including the Hanseatic league, Sweden, Russia, and the Habsburgs. The editors made concerted efforts to construct a global project, including novel work on Indonesia (M.-S. de Vienne, A. Ota), Peru (J. Ortiz-Sotelo), and the Maratha Empire of India (S. Pendse). If only a small proportion of the chapters discuss extra-European regions (seven focus on parts of Africa, four on India, eleven on Asia), there is considerable benefit to presenting these studies alongside more familiar cases. These global examples make eminently clear that financial innovation, political calculations, and labour issues were not unique to European maritime actors.

Economic questions tie together the contributions. Many chapters trace the expansion of trade in specific commodities, with salt and wine receiving as much

analysis as the slave trade (the former treated in chapters by I. Amorim and A. Wegener Sleeswijk, the latter by D. Eltis and O. Grenouilleau). We are told that coastal communities progress up a hierarchy of maritime activity: from fishing to trade, which in turn leads to the development a navy (1027). The sea can act at considerable distance, shaping the agriculture of the coastal hinterlands. And yet certain claims are heavy-handed: do “maritime capitals” (in contrast to “land-based capitals”) develop their demographic and economic wealth solely due to their location? Buchet contends that “The lesson is clear: political entities that turn towards the sea think in terms of flows, exchanges and openness, all drivers of economic development” (1018). Surely such priorities are not limited to coastal cities.

Similarly, the research agenda presuppose that maritime benefits can be quantified (“what additional advantages did the sea provide to the groups that engaged in maritime activities?” xxiv). By posing questions in this way, polities chosen as intriguing counter-examples (Central Europe by O. Chaline, Safavid Persia by C. Poirier-Coutansais) become straw men, quickly dismissed for their “inability to rule the waves” (966). The project as a whole offers a useful corrective to those histories that overlook the maritime context, but as is the case when carpenters encounter nothing but nails, to these economic maritime historians, it seems that *everything* develops because of the sea.

Overall the project succeeds at its broad goals, providing a wealth of detail about the connections between state and merchant, pirate and port, not just in Europe but around the world. Readers may, however, wish for social and cultural approaches to this material. Sailors appear as statistics rather than individuals. A lone chapter by F. Bellec discusses the impact of maritime “discoveries” on literature and art, while medicine and science are each discussed in just a single chapter (M. Harrison, L. Ferreiro).

The decision to publish a dual-language work leads to occasional awkward translations (structuration, “Insulindia” for maritime southeast Asia). The absence of a comprehensive index and bibliography is regrettable. Fortunately, the footnotes of individual chapters offer a trove of multilingual sources, and are one of the strengths of this collection.

Although the price of the four-volume set is prohibitive for general readers, the breadth of material in this volume will make it a valuable addition to specialized libraries.

In their efforts to quantify and analyze the effect of oceans on global trade, Buchet, Le Bouëdec and the Océanides team have produced an admirable modern-day *Encyclopédie* of the sea.

Margaret Schotte
Toronto, Ontario