

H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

James P. Delgado, ed. *Encyclopedia of Underwater and Maritime Archaeology*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998. 496 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-07427-7.

Reviewed by Charles C. Kolb (National Endowment for the Humanities)

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The slave transport *Whydah* and the ill-fated *Titanic*—both the focus of significant recent motion pictures—evoke emotional images and document important events in American and British history and culture. These vessels are but two of nearly five hundred subjects considered in this first comprehensive reference book on the submerged past. Archaeologists working in the deep ocean, in lakes and rivers, and on buried coasts may encounter the remains of ships, seafaring material culture, or drowned settlements during their research. A single, holistic, and up-to-date reference work that characterizes phenomena such as prehistoric Native American remains, submerged Bronze and Iron Age sites, sunken cities and harbors of the Mediterranean world, ancient warships and merchant vessels, and recent ships lost during military activities—including the maritime testing of nuclear devices—has been needed for some time. This volume is a significant contribution to remedying this deficiency.

By definition, encyclopedias are comprehensive references works containing articles on a broad range of subjects or on numerous aspects of a given field or topic. These entries are usually arranged alphabetically. The focus of this review, *Encyclopedia of Underwater and Maritime Archaeology*, fits the latter meaning and provides an up-to-date set of articles written by the an international group of the foremost authorities on this dynamic and expanding subject matter. My assessment of the volume will be in two parts: a general overview of the structure and contents of the work, and a commentary on the quality and quantity of the specific entries and the volume's overall contents, citing perceived strengths and weaknesses.

James P. Delgado, executive director of the Vancouver Maritime Museum, Canada, trained as both an archaeologist and a historian, is the author of fourteen books and numerous articles published in professional and popular journals on maritime history and underwater archaeology. He has lead or participated in many

shipwreck archaeological expeditions to Mexico, Micronesia, North America, and the Arctic. Therefore, Delgado is an outstanding choice to be the editor of this compelling and comprehensive reference work which documents the discovery, recovery, conservation, and cultural meaning of the submerged past. This volume, available in North America since mid-February 1998, is published in association with the British Museum Press, and originally appeared in England as *British Museum Encyclopaedia of Underwater and Maritime and Archaeology* (London: British Museum Press, 1997, L 29.95).

The initial five pages of the Yale imprint are composed in American English style and spellings; otherwise, the Queen's English and British spellings are found in both editions. Therefore, "archaeology," rather than "archeology," predominates. Both the American and British editions have 125 color and 235 black-and-white illustrations which have been selected carefully and add an important dimension to the narratives. Other structural components of the volumes are identical: the two-page preface and acknowledgments, a four-page list of 171 contributors and their professional affiliations, the one-page document entitled "How to Use This Book," a "Subject List by Topic," the 141-item "Glossary of Nautical Terms," and twelve-page triple-column index containing topical and proper-noun entries.

The encyclopedia itself encompasses 464 pages and contains more than five hundred topical, alphabetically-arranged entries prepared by an international team of archaeologists or other scientists who have made the actual discoveries or conducted the original research. The editor was assisted in this monumental effort by a multi-national nine-person "Editorial Advisory Board" which includes distinguished members from Australia, Canada, England, Mexico, Sweden, and the United States (the latter providing four advisors). The list of 171 re-knowned contributors represents twenty-nine countries (the United States has eighty-six separate authors, England has twenty, and Canada fifteen, while Australia has

nine contributors and Scotland has six). The other polities are represented by one, two, or three authors. Each subject carries its author's initials so that a reader can identify the specific writer whose initials correlate with those in the list of contributors.

In most instances, the five hundred topical entries are accompanied by a syllabus of "Additional Reading" provided by the author of that entry. These references are designed to direct the reader to current and easily-accessible works rather than to provide an exhaustive bibliography. Approximately one-quarter of the five hundred topical entries are cross-referenced to articles that deal with the subject concerned, and additional cross-references (delineated in bold-face type) are given in the text of the entries themselves.

The "Subject List by Topic" is an extremely useful finding aid and, like a table of contents, provides a reader with a cross-indexed topical and chronological tabulation. This list includes "Sites" (comprising 619 entries), organized under five subheadings: maritime underwater, prehistoric archaeological, ship burials/vessel sites on land, shipwreck sites organized by date (with eight chronological subdivisions), and a list of 310 sites arranged by location or by polity. A total of fifty-three loci are listed, alphabetically spanning "International" and Australia through Uruguay; the United States of America has eighty-eight entries, the United Kingdom lists forty-one. The subject list also has a "General" category comprised of 154 entries divided into five components: legislation/legal issues, organizations/institutions/agencies, regional/national essays, research themes/approaches, and technology/techniques.

Delgado reminds us that "the last great frontier on earth is the deep ocean" (p. 6), but the contents of this encyclopedia encompass a diverse assemblage of topics and sites from the Continental Shelf and the North American Great Lakes, among other fresh water loci. The encyclopedia's entries begin with the "Abandoned Shipwreck Act (US)" (1987) which establishes government ownership over the majority of abandoned shipwrecks located in waters of the United States of America and affirms the authority of state governments to claim and manage abandoned wrecks on state submerged lands. The approximately five hundred articles end with the subject "Zwammerdam," which is the name of a Roman fort and quay (dating 47-260 C.E.) located on the course of the old Rhine River in the province of Germania Inferior, where Roman period log boats and barges were excavated by archaeologists from Amsterdam University from 1968 to 1971.

The encyclopedia's coverage also includes archaeological topics such as fields of research, methods, equipment, and interpretation. For example, there are synopses on "absolute dating," "archival research," ceramic studies, "experimental archaeology," "Global Positioning System" (GPS), "professional ethics," "quaternary coastlines," and "treasure-hunting." In addition, nautical topics are also explicated, including subjects such as "air-lift," "Bronze Age stone anchors," "International Congress of Maritime Museums," "National Geographic Society," "SCUBA," "small craft studies," "submersibles," and the "UN [United Nations] Law of the Sea Convention" (1982). Important vessels, such as *Admiral Graf Spee* (scuttled in the River Plate estuary in 1939 and still unsalvaged); the *USS Arizona* and Memorial at Pearl Harbor (1941); Captain Bligh's armed transport *Bounty* (1784-1790); La Salle's ship *La Belle* which floundered in Matagorda Bay, Texas (1686); the US Navy's dirigible *Macon* (1935); and famous salvaged and restored ships—the British *Mary Rose* (1545), Swedish *Vasa* (1628), and American brig *Niagara* (1812)—are also documented.

Entries concerning important nautical, underwater, and scientific personages such as Bob Ballard, George Bass, Jacques Yves Cousteau, Edwin Link, Joan du Plat Taylor, and Peter Throckmorton are included. National maritime museums (the Greenwich, Haifa, Helsinki, San Francisco, and Western Australia Maritime Museum, among others), institutions and academic programs (Netherlands Institute for Ship and Underwater Archaeology, Scottish Institute of Maritime Studies, South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology, and Texas A&M University's Nautical Archaeology Program) are also among the topics considered. Likewise, important publications including the *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* are documented. This encyclopedia was prepared before the publication of Bob Ballard's newest volume, *Lost Liners* (Robert J. Ballard and Rich Archbold; New York: Hyperion, 1997), which documents the investigations of seven famous ocean liners: *Lusitania*, *Mauretania*, *Olympic*, *Titanic*, *Britannic*, *Normandie*, and *Queen Mary*. A majority of the ships discussed in Ballard's treatise are, at the very least, mentioned in the encyclopedia.

Historians of the cinema and students of popular culture will appreciate accurate and informed discussions about Phoenician and Roman galleys, the creation and demise of the Spanish Armada (1580-1588), the slave transport *Whydah Galley* (1717), and the ill-fated *Titanic* (1912). Significant archaeological sites such as the submerged Late Harappan city of Dvaraka, located on the Pakistani coast of the Arabian Sea (fifteenth century

B.C.E.); Roman harbors at Cosa, Italy (273 B.C.E.) and at Cesarea Maritima, Israel (first century B.C.E.); the sacred artifact-rich cenote of Chichen Itza in Mexico's Yucatan (fifth to thirteenth centuries C.E.); Kublai Khan's Fleet (decimated at Takashima, Japan in 1281); Port Royal, Jamaica (sunk during a 1692 earthquake); and the major Second World War sunken ship sites at Pearl Harbor (1941) and Truk Lagoon (1944-1945) are also summarized.

No encyclopedias covering similar subject matter exist currently, although there are reference works on aquatic life, marine sciences, and the 186-page *Encyclopedia of Underwater Investigations* (Robert G. Teather; Flagstaff, AZ: Best, 1994). In sum, James Delgado's *Encyclopedia of Underwater and Maritime Archaeology* has no peer. Among the strengths of this reference work is the breadth of coverage and the editor's attention to detail and the comprehensive approach that he and his colleagues have taken. A lengthy article on the Spanish Armada with cross-references to many ships and personages is especially commendable. Likewise, the maritime aspects of the American Civil War are very well documented for an encyclopedia of this magnitude. However, there is "thin" coverage of some topics—for example, material culture studies and preservation issues, and the archaeology of inland seas (the Great Lakes, the Black and Caspian seas, and Lake Victoria in East Africa). There are no references to maritime websites, for instance, to the National Maritime Museum, <http://www.hmu.com/maritime_museum> or to naval and nautical museums in the United Kingdom, <<http://www.mailbase.ac.uk/lists-f-j/history-sources/files/mar-museums.html>>. Neither are electronic lists mentioned; for instance the Internet listserves L-THALASSA (Spanish-American Maritime and Nautical History), and NAUTARCH (Nautical Archaeology [currently inactive]), and SUB-ARCH (Underwater Archaeology).

Readers interested in First or Second World War submarines or U-boats will find insufficient references (only four U-boats and two I-boats are mentioned) but may wish to consult a website, <<http://www.uboot.net>>, which has nearly one thousand hyperlinks. As might be expected, some important ships are only briefly noted, among them the Great Lakes ore carrier *Edmund Fitzgerald*, the Pula Buaya wreck located off the southeastern coast of Sumatra (dating to the Song Period), and the 1600 C.E. wreck and recovery in 1991 of the Spanish merchant galleon *San Diego* in the Philippine Sea. For better or worse, maritime or nautical science fiction writings or films are not considered, so that the reader should not expect to encounter references to *The Abyss*, *Grey Lady Down*, or *Sphere*, among other examples.

Nonetheless, these are insignificant shortcomings in comparison to the holistic documentation that this handsomely illustrated and painstakingly prepared volume provides. It is well known that reference works—almost by definition—are out of date as soon as they are published. However, they do establish a benchmark for future compilers and serve as important resources for both scholars and the public. A volume of this scope and magnitude must be assessed not on picky detail but on how well it achieves what the editor intended. There is no doubt that this comprehensive reference work covering the periods from prehistoric through the modern era will be a standard compendium on underwater and maritime archaeology for years to come. The volume will be extremely useful to professionals, scholars from other disciplines, students, and the general public.

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