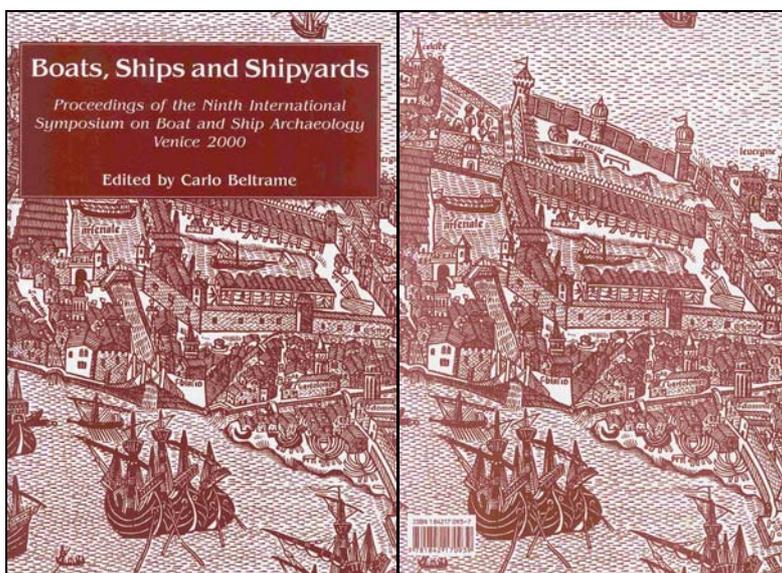


Beltrame, C. Ed. 2003. Boats, ships and shipyards. Proceedings of the Ninth International Symposium on Boat and Ship Archaeology Venice 2000. – Oxford, Oxbow Books

Review by W.B. Waldus



The International Symposium on Boat and Ship Archaeology (ISBSA) is one of the most important meetings of researchers involved in maritime archaeology, which is held every three years at a place with a mayor maritime past. The conference in Venice was the ninth; the Museum of Ancient Navigation in Mainz will be the host of the eleventh conference in 2006. The conference is an opportunity for researchers to present their current projects to the international maritime archaeological community.

Compared to other fields of research in archaeology, maritime archaeology is a relatively young discipline. As Frederick Hocker writes in the introductory chapter, a lot of work is to be done to guarantee continuity and creative research, but the growing number of professionals permanently involved in maritime archaeology and increasing public interest in the subject over the last two decades promise a bright future.

The same chapter also describes the evolution of the ISBSA. In its earliest days the conference focused on problems concerning the interpretation of the remains of ships, now it has become a forum of research focusing on understanding the maritime past in a broader way. The title 'Boats, Ships and Shipyards' therefore does not completely cover the contents. The well-illustrated and voluminous book contains an impressive amount of 53 articles which deal with a great variety of subjects and show the directions of specialisation within maritime archaeology. It is divided in eight sections: the introductory papers followed by seven series of articles sharing a theme or a geographical area. For example, section E, dealing with inland boats, contains articles about indirect evidence for water transport in late Iron Age north Germany, Stone Age petroglyphs in Russia, ship finds at the Danube in Serbia and the reconstruction of medieval Russian boats based on traditional boatbuilding.

Despite the variation of subjects, the starting point of most papers is material evidence, differing from small objects to entire layouts of harbours. The detailed study of Furio Ciciliot (paper 19) deals with late medieval iron nails used for Genoese ships. Based on archaeological and historical evidence, a classification system for chronological studies is built up. Articles describing ship remains are abundant, like article 5 by Cheryl Ward about Egyptian Early Dynastic sewn planked boats. In this article the technical analysis of the spectacular boat burials of Abydos is summarised. Three reconstruction projects of shipwrecks are described in section C. In addition to traditional scale model reconstructions, article 13 by Vibeke Bischoff describes the application of computers for the reconstruction of the Ladby ship. Combining archaeological and iconographic evidence with computer based reconstruction drawings has led to a replica based on all available data.

Apart from studies primarily based on archaeological remains, the volume also consists of historical, abstract and synthesising articles. The study of Susan Rose (article 34) on medieval galley warfare for example is mainly based on written and iconographic sources. Section F of the book is dedicated to these galleys, as they had a key-role in Mediterranean warfare of late medieval Venice. The principles of maritime ethnography are presented in a clear way by Lucy Blue (article 50). South Asia as a study-area might offer analogies for prehistoric seafaring, fishing and transport. This relatively unexplored field of research contrasts with most articles presented, where technological analysis is the main focus. And last but not least the study of Ole

Crumlin-Pedersen on eleventh century ship types of the north (article 38) deals with the problem of applying names of ship types known from written sources to archaeological ship finds.

Of course it would not be possible to discuss all 53 articles. The ones mentioned above give an impression of the wealth of information this volume offers. As Hocker formulated in the introduction, maritime archaeology needs an integrated global perspective to achieve a better understanding of the maritime past. To what extent does 'Boats, Ships and Shipyards' contribute to this perspective of the future? Since there is no synthesis of the different sections of the book, it might be a somewhat overwhelming shipload of information the reader has to deal with. It is therefore that 'Boats, ships and shipyards' cannot serve as a handbook of maritime archaeology. It is however an impressive overview of the *status quo* of work done by maritime archaeologists in the year 2000, and full of creative and challenging research subjects that surely will stimulate maritime institutions all over the world to expand their research.

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