

O Tempo Resgatado ao Mar/Time Salvaged from the Sea. Over 2,000 Years of Maritime History at the National Museum of Archaeology, Portugal

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Maritime archaeology museums often suffer from the double-bind of trying to fulfil aesthetic sensibilities and yet remain informative. The artefacts on display might be selected for their qualities as individual *objets d'art* by exhibit designers, yet are presented in isolation from their contexts. Or the alternative: technologically over-wrought displays and texts that the maritime archaeologist will find necessary for explanation are perhaps overwhelming in terminology and even confusing to the average museum visitor. In the case with the recent maritime archaeology exhibit “O Tempo Resgatado ao Mar/Time salvaged from the sea” at the National Museum of Archaeology, in Lisbon, an appreciative balance was struck: illustrative artefacts from underwater excavations throughout Portugal were displayed with consideration for their visual qualities, accompanied by accessible texts that didn't undersell their complicated technological or personal histories.

The exhibit, which ran from March 2014 to September 2015 in the west wing of the museum, in the former Jerónimos Monastery building in the Lisbon suburb of Belém, presented the past 30 years of maritime archaeological investigations in Portugal. It aimed to tell of “a journey through time...reconstructing contexts and piecing together the evidence that has been hidden under the sea” (p. 19). Spanning more than 2,000 years, from the Roman to modern periods (one item is from the Iron Age), the exhibit leaves the viewer with a clear sense of the scope of history of the finds—some 336 objects. The focus is on shipwrecks, the misfortunes at sea, but it is made painstakingly clear that these are not on display as the result of “treasure hunts” but of archaeological investigation, undertaken by “duly qualified experts” (p. 20). Thirty sites are represented in the exhibit, spanning the coasts and inland waterways of Portugal and the Azores.

There are two publications that accompanied the exhibit. The first, *O Tempo Resgatado ao Mar: roteiro/Time salvaged from the sea: guide* is the well-written and to-the-point

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handbook for the exhibit, with texts both in English and Portuguese (Silveira Martins 2014a). Some of these are copied directly from the exhibit displays, and a few additional notes and drawings contribute to the overall contextualisation. A large number of the artefacts are beautifully photographed, and the 156-page guidebook by 25 authors is rounded off by a small glossary and short bibliography (the page numbers in this review reference the guidebook). It could have been helpful to have the guidebook in hand when seeing the exhibit, but actually this was not absolutely necessary. The book serves as a succinct record of the exhibit and is a compact yet informative history of maritime archaeological investigations in Portugal. As such, it is a valuable publication in itself, whose importance will continue long after the exhibit's run.

The second book, *O Tempo Resgatado ao Mar*, at 219 pages, is the detailed presentation of the exhibit's themes (Silveira Martins 2014b). Its 18 articles, longer and more academic in presentation than those in the guidebook, are all in Portuguese. These are by many of the same authors who contributed to the shorter guidebook, and are very generously illustrated and more in depth—ranging from a similar introduction to the history of the practice of maritime archaeology in Portugal, to preservation issues and case studies in conservation, to a quite long article on methodologies within the field of maritime archaeology, to ports and maritime networks in the region, to Roman and medieval finds. Several articles are dedicated to the coastlines around Lisbon and the Tagus, historical *naus* ships and recent shipwrecks, as well as the future of the practice and education within the field. These articles are then followed by a photo catalogue of the finds. It is also a marked contribution to the history of maritime archaeological investigations in Portugal, but less accessible to a wider audience due to the choice of language.

It is perhaps the large *carreira da Índia*, or Indiaman ships that conjure up images of Portugal's Golden Age of Discovery and trade, and one might suspect that it is this imagery that would open the exhibit. Instead, it is a modest 4 m-long dugout canoe of the seventh to ninth century from the Rio Lima, in northern Portugal, that first greets the visitor. Its purpose here is to highlight the difficulty in dealing with the conservation of waterlogged finds. This discussion is usually reserved for the back pages of exhibit catalogues or as a footnote at the end of a display, so it is refreshing to see it placed first and foremost, and introduces the scientific theme that runs through the texts (pp. 34–39). This is immediately followed by a small note on the history of underwater archaeological exploration in Portugal, mentioning the early investigations at Trofa, in 1959, by Manuel Heleno, and the subsequent support of underwater investigations at other sites by Francisco Alves, the former director of the National Museum of Archaeology, and the establishment of the National Centre for Nautical and Underwater Archaeology (Centro Nacional de Arqueologia Náutica e Subaquática; CNANS) in 1997 (pp. 15–17).

From here, the exhibit and guidebook follow a classic chronological organisation, starting with what are referred to as “tragic events [that] occurred at sea during the Roman period” (p. 43). The exhibit explains what forms of evidence can be found from this period, as the state of preservation of coherent shipwrecks along the Portuguese coast, especially from this period, tends to be poor. Objects recovered along the coast and in rivers include the usual cargoes of amphorae (cleverly displayed in a simple white cross-section relief of a hull), fishing weights, lead anchor parts, lead sounding weights, and the stray finds of small bronze statuettes, lead amphorae labels, and an unusual (and unusually well-preserved) type of cargo: a ca. 1.5 m long elephant tusk recovered from Cape Sardão (pp. 43–57).

Picking up the conservation theme introduced at the exhibit's start, a section is dedicated to “Caves in excessively humid or aquatic environments”. The inclusion in an

exhibit on maritime archaeology, it is explained, is due to “technical and methodological issues associated with its conservation characteristics” (p. 58). Here, the oldest find in the exhibit, an Iron-Age spear of pear wood, buckthorn and iron from the Almonda River caves and metal weapons and ceramics from the Roman period in Bacelinho cave are exhibited. Concluding the Roman part of the exhibit is a small (ca. 35 cm long) hull planking fragment with pegged mortise-and-tenon joinery, belonging to the so-called Arade River *Geo 1* site, at Portimão (p. 60).

As fragmentary wrecks, the remains of three medieval vessels from Ria de Aveiro in northern Portugal are presented through the display of blocks, a clevis pin, and a deadeye. Dating to the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, one vessel (*Ria de Aveiro G* wreck) is interpreted as clinker-built (p. 63). Other materials from several sites near Aveiro reveal a variety of port activities and trade relations from the fifteenth century to the present, including ceramics (locally made jugs, plates, Rhinish stoneware, pipes, and sugar moulds) and a compass and boatswain’s whistle (pp. 68–79).

Finds from the busy water-front of Lisbon are not ignored: mention is made of the *Boa Vista 1 and 2* wrecks, discovered in 2012 several metres below Avenida 24 de Julho. Re-used ship parts were identified in the large section of a seventeenth and eighteenth century shipyard slipway excavated at the Praça de D. Luis I site (p. 81). Also identified is part of the stern of the Corpo Santo Square ship, from the fifteenth century; the slightly better preserved bottom section of the Cais do Sodré ship (sixteenth to seventeenth centuries) includes floor timbers with engraved marks and part of a steering whipstaff (pp. 82–83).

The bulk of the exhibit is rightly dedicated to the finds from the *carreira da Índia*, or Portuguese Indiaman, presumed to be the *nau Nossa Senhora dos Mártires*. It was lost in 1606 at the mouth of the Tagus River, in front of the São Julião da Barra fortress (pp. 87–103). The shipwreck’s location was known since the 1970s, and after a period when it was looted by sports divers, archaeological investigations began in 1993. The wreck, first identified as site SJB2, is often referred to as the “Pepper wreck” due to its main cargo carried loose in the hold (Castro 2005: 3–4).

The wrecking event was severe, and salvage and recovery at the site in the early seventeenth century meant that very little of the exposed structures were left intact for long. A small portion of the mid-section of the bottom of the hull just before the mast (approximately 12 × 7 m) is preserved. Mention is made of the reconstruction that was undertaken by F. Castro and N. Fonseca using archaeological evidence and existing contemporary shipbuilding documents (see also Santos et al. 2012). In addition to the ship’s fragmentary hull, unique finds fill the back wall of the exhibit space, including the eponymous pepper corns, three well-preserved astrolabes, coconuts, gold jewellery, checker pieces, nested weights, Chinese porcelain and stoneware, and a charming small wooden elephant carving.

The next part of the exhibit focuses on finds from shipwrecks nearly contemporary to *Nossa Senhora dos Mártires*: the sixteenth century *Rio Arade 1* ship (Portimão), the *Angra B*, *Angra D*, and *Angra F* wrecks (sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, found in the Azores), and the *Faro A* wreck from the seventeenth century (pp. 105–108). Isolated modern-period finds are on display from the Arade River in Portimão: blocks, customs seals, and a sword (although heavily encrusted, displayed simply in a clear Plexiglas tube filled with water).

Two well-known historical shipwrecks conclude the archaeological portion of the exhibit: the French ship *L’Ocean* (1759), and the Havana-built *San Pedro de Alcantara* (1786). The historical context for *L’Ocean*’s running aground near Vila do Bispo is rooted in the Seven Years War, with Portugal remaining neutral as the British and French fleets engaged, sometimes at very close range, off its coasts. Finds from these wrecks include

buttons, buckles, rings, silver spoons, and musket bullets (pp. 120–125). The 64-gun *San Pedro de Alcantara*'s sinking is a better-known tragedy: when returning to Cádiz from Lima, it ran aground due to navigational error at Peniche, on the coast north of Lisbon (pp. 127–141). Finds here are mostly personal possessions: gold rings, coins, a crucifix, a saltshaker, and a sliver saddle stirrup. Dramatically, this wrecking is depicted in two similar paintings made shortly after the event by Jean Pillement, showing the aftermath of the misfortune and the salvage of the vessel. A drawing by Luis Paret and Josef Ximeno maps the salvage efforts. It would have been interesting if the exhibit here had taken up the opportunity to present a theme on past salvage attempts.

After a small section on the British *SS Dago* (1942), victim of a German air raid (pp. 146–147), the exhibit concludes with two footnotes that are no less significant: “The teaching of underwater archaeology” and “International institutions and cooperation: education for heritage” (pp. 148–149). As a pedagogical exercise, this section could have benefitted from more detail. Especially in the guidebook, surely references could have been added beyond just the mention of existence of the UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. One leaves the exhibit, and puts down the guidebook, wondering if Portugal is a signatory to the Convention (for the record, it is: Portugal ratified in 2006) (Alves 2011).

The exhibit and guidebook texts are presented in clear English and Portuguese, with only small inconsistencies (i.e., 16th century vs. sixteenth century). Periodically in the exhibit, soundless videos of excavation and survey by divers accompany a display. Although the videos are credited, not all are from CNANS, raising the question for me regarding the role of avocational divers, interested dive groups, or NGOs such as Arqueonáutica, in maritime archaeological investigations in Portugal. The exhibit would give the impression that only “duly qualified experts” (p. 20) conduct such investigations, but the history of cooperation and “duly qualified experts” working before the establishment of CNANS is much more complicated. Perhaps Portugal's much-opposed experiment with legalising treasure hunting between 1993 and 1997—and the cessation of all maritime archaeology projects during this period—led to the staunch position presented in the exhibit (Castro 1998).

There are some small yet significant differences between the guidebook and the exhibit, with the guide offering solutions to the complaints one might have from a visit to the museum. For example, in the exhibit, the map of Portugal with major rivers and noted find-sites is tucked away on a poorly-lit wall just before the exit; in the guidebook, it is the first figure of the catalogue—especially helpful for those who might not be intimately familiar with Portuguese geography. Some of the ship-technical terms introduced in the exhibit (futtock, dovetail joints) are defined in the guidebook's glossary of 28 terms (some more relevant to ordnance than ship construction), or if not here, defined in the guidebook's text (such as with clinker construction related to the *Ria de Aveiro G* ship, p. 63). The fifteenth-century *Corpo Santo Square* ship is noted as “carvel-built, following the skeleton-first principle” (p. 82) which is unfortunately left undefined; what might this mean to a non-specialist?

More could have been made out of the largest section of the exhibit, the wreck of *Nossa Senhora dos Mártires*. It is clear that the São Julião da Barra fortress at the mouth of Tagus, in front of which the wreck was found, is used instead to introduce this vessel as well as a part of Portugal's recent history of maritime archaeological investigations. This stretch of coast is where, for example, we learn of the larger maritime cultural landscape studies underway since the 1970s, especially the recent creation of the underwater archaeology map of the municipality of Cascais (p. 86; see also Freire 2014). But more information

would have gone a long way. For example, we are told both in the exhibit and the guidebook that prior to a short stop in the Azores, *Nossa Senhora dos Mártires* was returning from a sixth-month voyage, but not from where (p. 87). If one is not already familiar with the history of Portuguese trade routes, these could be explained even briefly here, as is concisely done with a description of the use of astrolabes during the Age of Discovery, three of which were found on the ship (p. 104). Sadly, there is no image of the remains of the hull or its reconstruction in the exhibit—although this is rectified in the guidebook (p. 89), and with a small video of one of the excavation campaigns in the exhibit.

Tucked in towards the end of the exhibit is a short text called “Together and alone: crossing the blue” relating to the *San Pedro de Alcantara* wreck (1786) by J.-Y. Blot (p. 126). It briefly yet eloquently describes how the words maritime archaeologists use to describe physical parts of a ship—‘stern’, ‘poop deck’ and ‘hold’—transform into the travellers’ whole world for an isolating voyage across the sea. Social hierarchy on this floating cosmos can be even more defined than it is on land, and Blot points to the archaeologists’ challenge of identifying the roles and spaces in this temporary closed community. This is a point worth remembering, and rightly echoes K. Muckelroy’s early call for us not to forget the human element and personal narratives within the naval technology we seek to study (Muckelroy 1978: 221–225). The exhibit “O Tempo Resgatado ao Mar/Time salvaged from the sea” does carry on this reminder.

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