

**Richard A. Gould, *Archaeology and the Social History of Ships*. Cambridge University Press Cambridge 2000, 360 p.**

Richard A. Gould's recent book is a welcome outline of maritime archaeology and its possibilities. The book, of course, deals with the wrecks, but it also goes beyond that, treating human behaviour and the activities causing wrecks. In addition, Gould presents a vivid picture of the history of shipbuilding.

Gould's background as an ethnoarchaeologist is clearly evident, which can only be positive. His way of picking up examples and looking at them from a different angle than is usually done is refreshing, especially from a theoretical point of view. This perspective is followed throughout the whole book.

The first three chapters are dedicated to the principles and basic techniques of maritime archaeology and shipbuilding. After this thorough overview it is easy for the reader who is not necessarily involved in maritime archaeology to move on.

Gould begins the history section with the archaeology of small watercraft. He describes the development of boat-building techniques from log dugouts to clinker-built vessels.

For some reason, Gould has chosen not to refer to Finnish or Swedish research concerning sewn boats. There is a rich material of medieval sewn boats in Finland and Sweden, which could have been dealt with here. Two of the Finnish boat finds, those from Rääkkylä and from Mekrijärvi, have even been reconstructed (Forssell 1983; 1985a; 1985b; 1995; Hiekkanen *et al* 1988; Naskali 1986; Westerdahl 1985; 1987; Vilkuna 1998; Taavitsainen 1999).

Chapters dealing with the earliest ships, ancient trade and sailing vessels in the Middle Ages provide an entertaining excursion in the early history of seafaring. The author takes the reader on a journey from Egyptian shipbuilding to shipwrecks of the Hanseatic League, and to seafaring in Medieval China.

Gould moves on to the ships of the great age of sail, and furthermore to new technologies and naval warfare. It is good that Gould has decided to give a thorough treatment also to younger wrecks and the modern history of seafaring and

shipbuilding. In doing so he enables us to see how underwater archaeology can expand our knowledge by filling gaps in recent history as well. It would have been easy to remain with the ancient Romans or the wrecks of the Spanish armada.

A good example of the results of studying recent wrecks comes from Pearl Harbour, which is currently a topical subject. A persistent myth connected to the loss of the USS Arizona was that Japanese Petty Officer Noburo Kanai literally sunk the ship by dropping a bomb down its funnel. However, underwater research confirmed that this was not the case. The fatal explosion was located near the forward turret, and not in the midships area where the funnel was situated. This example shows how easily and quickly oral tradition can be established as the only truth.

With regard to maritime infrastructure, Gould could have chosen another way of treating the subject. He restricts his discussion mainly to docks and harbours which are of course important but not the only parts of the maritime landscape. Gould's theoretical approach and his expertise as a "wreck anthropologist" would have applied well also to other monuments than ships, harbours and docks.

In the future the disciplines of marine and terrestrial archaeology will (hopefully) approach each other. The present dichotomy between land- and marine archaeologists should be erased in order to research the maritime infrastructure as a whole with the methods of both disciplines.

In his final chapter Gould touches on a very important issue. Treasure-hunters are becoming better equipped and financed than ever before. Side-scan sonar and other devices have made the localization of the sites much easier. Combined with the effective and shameless exploitation of contemporary mass media this provides a dangerous mixture.

In the future, the alternative pasts presented by treasure hunters will be an increasingly serious problem. By manipulating the media, modern treasure hunters disguise their destructive activities as scientific research. At the same time a highly romantic and dramatic picture of the work and the finds is served to a hungry public. The aim of this "phoney baloney" - as Gould puts it - is to obtain justification for the stripping of the wrecks, while raising the prices of the finds to obtain maximum profits.

As a whole, Gould's book is fresh and well written. The author has personal way of looking at things but also an ability to tell a story. The book deserves its place in every maritime archaeology enthusiast's bookshelf, whether professional or not.

Jukka Palm  
Department of Cultural Studies / Archaeology  
Henrikinkatu 2  
FIN-20014 University of Turku  
Finland

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