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Battle of Dogger Bank: The First Dreadnought Engagement, by Tobias R. Philbin

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that German immigrants made for highly respected soldiers in the American Civil War. He also misses the First and Second Schleswig-Holstein Wars of 1848–51 and 1864, respectively, when he asserts that in 1866 Prussia had not been at war for nearly fifty years.

Despite these significant shortcomings, this reviewer hopes that Muth continues to contribute to both the conversation and the controversy.

PETER J. SCHIFFERLE



Philbin, Tobias R. *Battle of Dogger Bank: The First Dreadnought Engagement*. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2014. 198pp. \$32

This title is the latest work from American naval historian Tobias Philbin, who is probably best known for his 1982 biography of Admiral von Hipper. In the author's words, the book is "designed to provide new insights into the first battle between the largest fighting machines of the early twentieth century." As such, one might expect that a detailed analysis of the conduct of the battle itself would form the heart of the work, with perhaps a supporting explanation of the tactics employed on both sides and a discussion of whether these were or were not in line with prewar expectations. This could have been further supported by brief chapters explaining the strategic situation in the naval war at that point; the role of the key personalities; and the original thinking behind the development of the "fast Dreadnought cruiser" as a warship type, insofar as it might help explain the platform's performance in the battle itself. The work could then have been concluded with a discussion on the lessons learned and whether the

proposed corrective measures were successful. In other words, the focus should have been clearly on the engagement itself and what it vindicated or didn't.

Sadly, however, and despite good intentions, Philbin falls well short of this aim. His coverage of the actual battle is scanty and disjointed, and the remainder of the work is notably deficient or simply inaccurate. This is doubly frustrating given that this battle, the first of only two dreadnought-versus-dreadnought engagements in the entire war, probably represented each side's "last, best chance" to put things right, so to speak, before the better-known battle of Jutland a year later. As such, it is indeed an important area for study by the naval historian.

Philbin's difficulties are threefold. First, and as intimated, the balance is arguably wrong between the coverage of the battle itself and the supporting text. He devotes only 30 of the 150 or so pages to actual analysis of the battle, with the remaining pages dealing with the supporting areas. Unfortunately, these 30 pages, more than many others, fall victim to the second difficulty he has, which is in developing a clear and coherent narrative of a series of events, free from repetition and diversion. Rather than recounting the main features of the engagement in a chronological fashion, he chooses to take the different perspectives of the individual ships involved, which does not help the reader elucidate the decision making as it might have appeared to the opposing fleet commanders at the time—a feature central to his stated aim—and leads to a nonsequential presentation of the main events. None of this is helped by the maps in the book that, although reproductions of the original battle reports and histories, are almost unreadable in the scale presented. Thus, despite

being fairly familiar with the overall engagement, I found myself resorting to Wikipedia for a quick reminder and sanity check. Repetition is also rife throughout the book, sometimes in successive paragraphs, pages, and even endnotes, which makes the reader's journey more laborious than it need be.

The real worry, though, is his third difficulty: that of accuracy and the incorporation of a comprehensive coverage of the relevant scholarship. On the accuracy side, some of the construction dates for the ships involved are incorrect, even according to the sources that he does use; he cites the wrong Lambert in the text on page 6; on page 24, he claims Dogger was the first "battle" in the Anglo-German naval race when it was, of course, the first *dreadnought* engagement; while on page 27 he has HMS *Vernon* as "the gunnery school for the Royal Navy," when it was actually HMS *Excellent*. To make matters worse in the context, Admiral John "Jacky" Fisher was of course closely associated with both of these establishments, albeit at different points in his career. In addition, and while not as specific, there are all sorts of other, more general omissions and inaccuracies in the presentation of the powder vulnerabilities, the ammunition and gunnery practices in use, and the train of thought that led to the all-big-gun ordnance, all of which could have been corrected by reference to some of the more current scholarship from the likes of Jon Sumida, John Brooks, and Norman Friedman. Perhaps most importantly, though, and given that the author attempted to cover the origins of the battle cruiser type in his second chapter, it was disappointing to find Admiral Fisher's role in the whole debate minimized, and the relationship between the true dreadnought and its

battle cruiser variant simplified to an unrealistic degree. This is no trivial matter, because, to a greater or lesser extent, the fact that the battle cruiser was essentially performing in a role that had not been originally envisioned by its creators goes a long way toward explaining the very mixed results these ships achieved. Once again, this could have been better represented with a more searching inclusion of some of the more cutting-edge findings from Sumida, Nicolas Lambert, Matthew Seligmann, and others.

In sum, this book will probably disappoint the serious historian of the period. It does gather together in one place a host of interesting and related facts about the battle and its participants. Given that these can form useful "points of departure" for future work in this area, as well as informing and inspiring the amateur naval enthusiast, all is not lost. But the book could have been so much more.

ANGUS ROSS



Huang, Chun-chieh. *Taiwan in Transformation: Retrospect and Prospect*. 2nd ed. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2014. 233pp. \$52.95

As a native Taiwanese deeply steeped in Chinese historical and philosophical sources, Chun-chieh Huang adds dimensions that are less emphasized in many other perceptive books on contemporary Taiwan. A prolific scholar of treatises on Confucian thought, Huang believes that Taiwan can bring much to contemporary Confucian thinking, since Taiwan interprets the world through a lens of contemporary and vibrant democracy—as opposed to China's legacy of the Cultural Revolution and party control.