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Spanish Warships in the Age of Sail, 1700–1860: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates

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numerous examples of how Dewey's success became a cultural phenomenon, leading to parades, the writing of songs, memorials, and even advertisements for products that Dewey never endorsed. Yet, as Smith relates, Dewey struggled to manage his image, leading to an awkward public controversy after he transferred to his wife ownership of a home that public donations had bought for him in 1899. Seemingly overnight, an adoring public turned on Dewey, although the flap was forgotten quickly. Still, Dewey's brief presidential campaign in 1900 was notably half-hearted and awkward, and he sometimes grew defensive of his record, particularly his management of the Philippines in the months after Manila Bay before U.S. occupation forces arrived.

Smith provides ample coverage of Dewey's life throughout the volume, but his emphasis on Dewey's career largely ebbs after narrating the admiral's command of the U.S. fleet during the winter 1902–1903 maneuvers that President Theodore Roosevelt sought to use as a deterrent against German encroachment in the Western Hemisphere. Dewey continued to serve as president of both the Navy's General Board and also the Joint Army-Navy Board until his death in 1917, but these years of largely institutional service are covered relatively briefly. Readers more interested in Dewey's twilight years will still be better served by Spector's volume.

This gap in coverage aside, Smith has provided audiences with a thorough and engaging study of George Dewey's life and career that takes care to examine Dewey as a man, a naval officer, and a prominent public figure of his day. It not only adds to the scholarly record of Dewey and the U.S. Navy during the

period but also makes for a stimulating read for the general public.

RYAN WADLE



Spanish Warships in the Age of Sail, 1700–1860: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates, by Rif Winfield et al. Barnsley, U.K.: Seaforth, 2023. 392 pages. \$100.

Sometimes, research projects take you deep into the weeds of your subject; if you are trying to put yourself in the shoes of a participant in an obscure engagement, or if you are writing a historical novel, you might urgently need to know precisely when the *Santa Águeda* thirty-four-gun frigate of 1775 was in service. You might also need to know its length, beam, and details of its armament, or who its builder was, or what happened when it underwent a major refit. If you find yourself in a situation like that, this is the book for you. The final three hundred pages consist of a reference guide to every ship in the Spanish navy. As the subtitle says, each entry covers the ship's design, construction, career, and fate.

There is good scholarship in the reference entries. Take, for example, the entry on one of the largest ships in the age of sail, *Santísima Trinidad*. The authors explain that it initially was built in 1767 to carry 112 guns on three full decks, but then expanded twice. Doing so was “illogical,” the authors explain, because when it was launched, it quickly became clear that it was already too big. It “veered to leeward and heeled over badly in rough seas, resulting in difficulties in aiming her guns”—which was ironic given that its primary purpose was to be the largest floating battery in the world.

Expanding it to four decks and 136 guns during a major refit in the 1790s meant that “with the slightest breeze, the windward broadsides pointed at the sky and the leeward rounds went into the water, so that she could not defend herself” (pp. 104–105). In the end, it saw less than five years of active service before it was captured at Trafalgar and scuttled during the storm that followed the battle. The ship entries combine general commentary with meticulous details. They bust the myth that *Santísima Trinidad* was the largest ship in the world by pointing out that while it carried the most guns, there was a class of French three-deckers that was eight and a half feet longer and six inches broader. It is that kind of precision that makes this book stand out as a work of reference.

If you are unlikely to find yourself in urgent need of detailed information on a specific Spanish ship, however, you might pass over this book and save yourself one hundred dollars. After all, the reference section will mostly sit on your shelf unused. Unless you are a glutton for punishment, you are not going to read those three hundred pages. But what about the first hundred pages? The cumbersome title undersells this book, because it ignores the primary reason why someone other than a librarian would buy this book. In fact, the first hundred pages contain a valuable compendium of short essays on Spanish naval history. Those essays attack major gaps in the English-language history of the Spanish navy, and they justify the significant cost of the book for any scholar interested in the subject.

The publisher does not see it that way, of course, as the title indicates. From the publisher’s perspective, this book is about ships—what they looked like, and

what happened to them. Therefore, it is heavily illustrated with black-and-white pictures of ship models, builders’ plans, and other archival documents, as well as paintings of ships in action, maps of key ports, and portraits of important figures. All that, as well as the large format (the book is 9.75 × 11.25 × 1.5 inches), explains the hefty price tag—and that is fair enough. The book’s design and approach follow those of the other titles in the series, many of which have been written by Rif Winfield and which cover other navies’ ships’ design, construction, careers, and fates.

But the introductory essays deserve wider attention. It is difficult to find good scholarship in English on the Spanish navy, even though it was among the world’s largest and most complex for much of the eighteenth century. It stitched together an enormous empire, yet it has tended to finish a distant third in terms of scholarly attention to the British and the French. Winfield and his team have done a service to the profession by providing a general historical overview, including a brief discussion of the Spanish navy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They have also provided an analysis of the navy’s leadership, structure, and administration, and a more elaborate treatment of the navy’s approach to shipbuilding. While *Santísima Trinidad* was an unsuccessful design, that was atypical. In fact, Spanish shipbuilding was often world leading, even if the rest of the navy (especially its infrastructure, leadership, and manning policies) did not meet the same standard. Every library with a reason to have a naval history collection should stock this book because of its reference value, but there is more here than just that.

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