

# **‘Mariner’s Mirror’ and the ‘Early Modern Period**

## **Reviewed by Rob Morgan**

Sometimes, no frequently, the journal of the International Society for Nautical Research comes up with gems. In this case in the May 2011 issue (Vol. 97 No.2) in which Jeremy Black’s text from a memorial lecture to Alan Villiers entitled *‘Naval Capability in the Early Modern Period’* occupies pages 21-32.

Not an article on the Royal Navy fighting the Dutch in the Medway and scraps around the lovely island of Menorca, but a very, very wide ranging piece which looks at riverine warfare with canoes, and the developments of Chinese and Indian Ocean fleets.

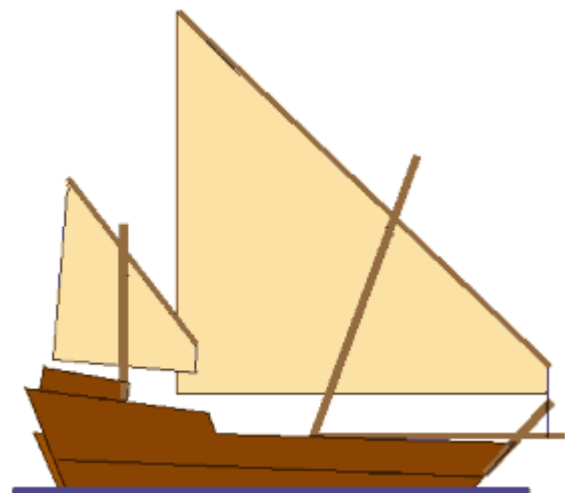


He pays due tribute to Portugal’s immense achievements in naval development and design especially in conflict with Ottoman expansion. A significant number of battles noted here, especially those in the Red Sea and along the eastern coasts of Africa could easily be wargamed using the excellent 1/2400<sup>th</sup> ‘Tumbling Dice’ ranges which would provide everything necessary (My own penchant, a small modelling note here, is to use the ‘Dice’ ASN 18 Dhow pack against Navwar’s 1/1200<sup>th</sup> RS10 Portuguese Caravella, and maybe an

RS3 anchored Carrack-works well, ignore the scale issue- there’s not one!) The Portuguese fought the Chinese junk fleets as well of course and in one encounter in 1522 lost two ships out of three in a single sea-fight against junks.

### **Arabian Dhow**

The heavily gunned Portuguese, Jeremy Black reminds us, faced serious opposition in S.E. Asia largely from galley fleets such as those of Achin and Brunei, some 300 strong, and the European reliance on sail power meant vulnerability to fast shallow-draught oared ships. Black’s emphasis on the lack of influence that sea power had on many of Portugal’s opponents immense land strength and his overall view that ‘naval capability’ existed beyond the



fleets of European powers has a great deal to offer the wargamer. His references unfortunately, are scant, but his theme is valuable.



**Caravela**

Well worth reading, and developing on the table top. Inexpensive too, my own guess is a decent Portuguese v Ottoman encounter for under a tenner.

Website: [http://www.snr.org.uk/mariners\\_mirror.htm](http://www.snr.org.uk/mariners_mirror.htm)