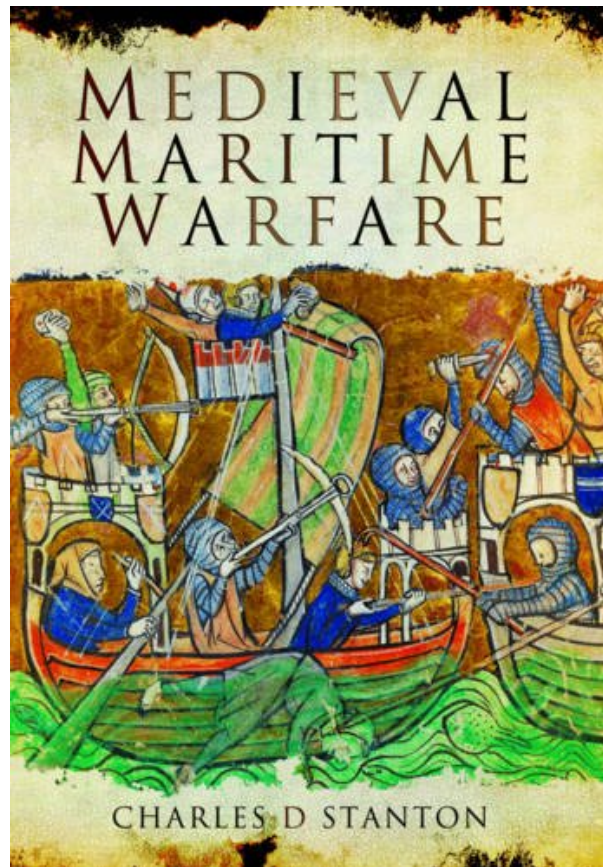
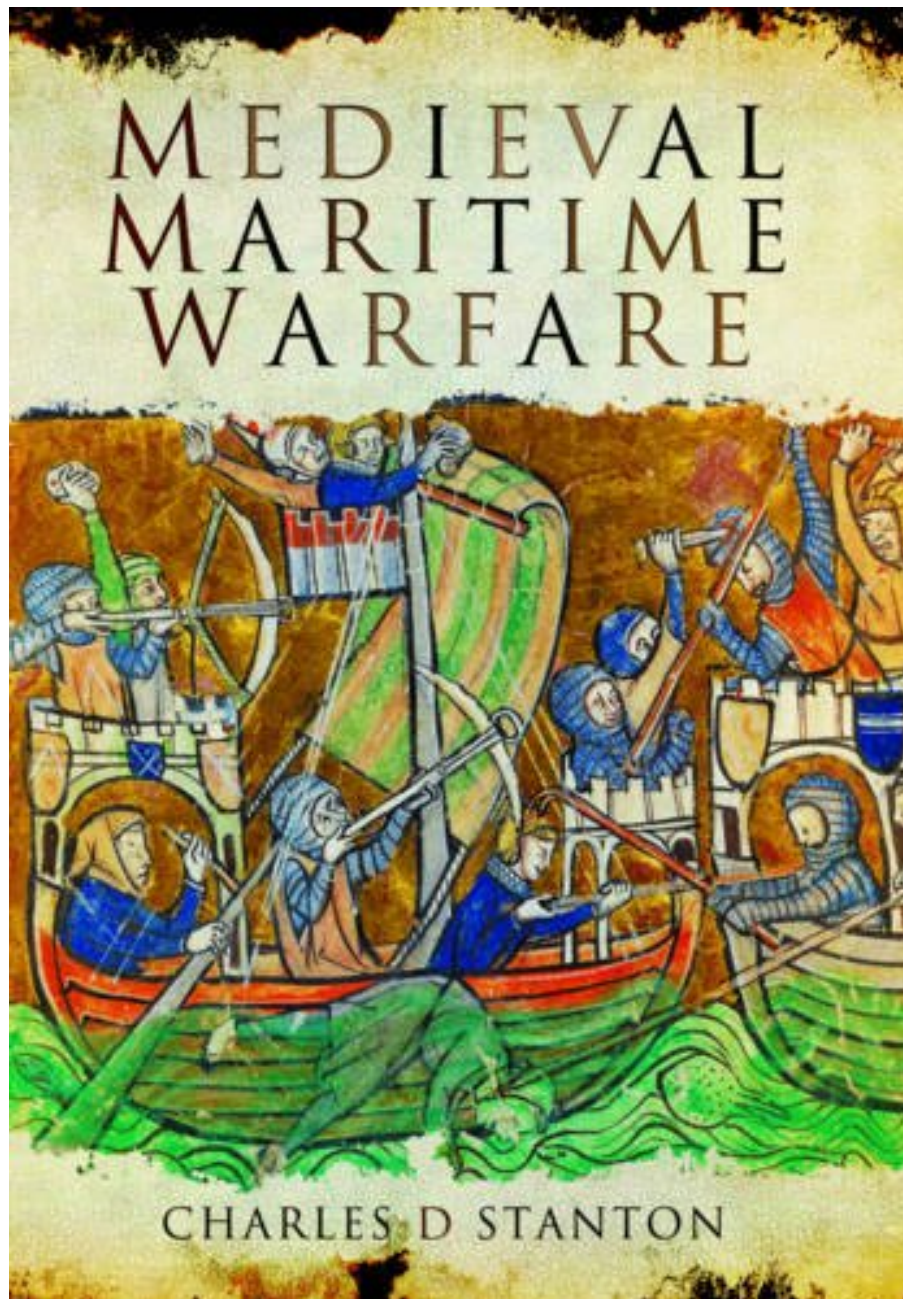


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Review

...provides its readers with a solid education in the campaigns, broader political and technological trends, and strategic aims of the maritime powers of Medieval Europe, the Levant, and North Africa... Whether one's interest is in the technology of medieval naval warfare, the strategy and tactics of engagements and campaigns, or a study of the complex interaction between naval institutions and the societies that they served and preyed upon, Stanton has crafted a thoughtful work that should encourage more research and writing into the fascinating field of medieval maritime warfare. (Naval Historical Foundation)

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Following the fall of Rome, the sea is increasingly the stage upon which the human struggle of western civilization is played out. In a world of few roads and great disorder, the sea is the medium on which power is projected and wealth sought. Yet this confused period in the history of maritime warfare has rarely been studied – it is little known and even less understood.

Charles Stanton uses an innovative and involving approach to describe this fascinating but neglected facet of European medieval history. He depicts the development of maritime warfare from the end of the Roman Empire to the dawn of the Renaissance, detailing the wars waged in the Mediterranean by the Byzantines, Muslims, Normans, Crusaders, the Italian maritime republics, Angevins and Aragonese as well as those fought in northern waters by the Vikings, English, French and the Hanseatic League. This pioneering study will be compelling reading for everyone interested in medieval warfare and maritime history.

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A rather superb overview and starting point

By JPS

These (as mentioned in this review's title) were the book's objectives and I was rather happy to discover that they have been fully achieved. Given that this is an overview, and because of the book's scope – roughly ten centuries – the reader might find in some cases that the author has somewhat and sometimes “cut corners”. Those that have already read more specialised books or one or the other of the periods covered will nevertheless find that there is a fair amount of detail included (much more than I initially expected, anyway!) and that all of the main points are well-made, starting with the limitations of naval warfare under oars and sail at the time. Also included are some good summaries of at least some of the main debates that have taken place among historians and a rather fascinating collection of illustrations, including some superb pictures of Scandinavian warships

A second - and related – major feature of this book is that it is a compilation and a summary. As such, it does not contain any original findings. However, it draws on just about all of the main specialists for each of the various periods covered and contains ample notes and a bibliography which will allow anyone wanting to go any further to do so. Note, however, that the bibliography seems to have been deliberately kept short, possibly to avoid burdening the general reader. A number of titles are omitted from it, both because they are quoted and referenced in more recent titles that are included in the bibliography and because they are listed and referenced among the notes (with total some fifty five pages).

A third feature of this book is its rather interesting and easy to read structure. A short introduction of some nine pages summarises the main components and limitations of medieval naval warfare. This is followed by ten chapters separated into two sections. Each chapter summarises the struggle under review and ends with a focus on a specific and particularly noteworthy naval battle or siege in which naval forces played a prominent role – a case study of sorts. The first section (six chapters) deals with naval warfare in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. The second section (the remaining four chapters) is about naval warfare across the North Sea, the Baltic and the English Channel.

All of the main conflicts and periods that I was expecting to find were included, such as the Byzantine-Muslim struggle, the key and vital role played by the “naval connection” during the Crusades, “The Viking Onslaught” or the “Norman Invasion” (1066 and all that), and the Hundred Years War. Also included are less well known but nevertheless important episodes, such as the Norman expansion in the central Mediterranean (the author's speciality), the wars of the Angevines versus the Aragonese over the control of Sicily, the deadly rivalries between Pisa and Genoa and then Genoa and Venice and a very interesting

chapter on the German Hanse. A final advantage of these ten chapters is that they can be read separately.

Five stars for a very much recommended book.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent introduction to a fascinating topic

By Hubert Brown

This is an excellent book, if you are interested in the subject matter. Stanton describes, with pictures, the evolution of maritime technology. As for warfare, he divides the subject into the Mediterranean theater dominated by Genoa, Venice, and the Ottomans, on the one hand, and Northern Europe on the other, concentrating on Vikings, the Hanse, and the French/English battles. At the end of each general description, he provides a detailed consideration of some significant battle, significant in the sense of the development of naval warfare as well as historically so. The writing is clear, well edited, and the illustrations profuse and appropriate. I read most of this book on my Kindle, but examined the illustrations on my Kindle for iPad, which presented them in color, and capable of being zoomed in on. Aside from matters directly related to warfare, Stanton provides enough social and economic context to make the significance of the military matters clear. I am not an expert in this field, but my impression is that this book would be enjoyed by both the general reader, and the more knowledgeable.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Naval Warfare in the Middle Ages

By Albert A. Nofi

A summary of the review on StrategyPage.Com

'Maritime historian Stanton ("Norman Naval Operations in the Mediterranean", etc.) has produced a readable, very serious study of naval warfare in the wider European world from the age of Justinian to the Renaissance. The book has two parts, a long one on the Mediterranean and a shorter one on the North and Baltic Seas, and their adjacent waters. He covers an impressive range of actors, Byzantine, "Barbarians," Muslims of various backgrounds, Norman, Aragonese, English, Angevin, Crusader, Viking, the Hanse, French, and the several Italian states. Stanton effectively weaves together rather technical discussions of warship design, seafaring and the sailor's life, naval strategy and tactics, complex diplomacy, comments on people, commerce, cultures, all of which makes for a lot of history, not just maritime history. An excellent feature is that for some particularly important operations, Stanton follows his summary overview in his main text with deeper analysis in chapter annexes titled "Exemplary Engagement." Many of the events he covers, such as Byzantine-Muslim or Aragonese-Angevin wars are likely to be unfamiliar with English-speaking readers, which makes this a particularly valuable book.'

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