



THE MERCHANT SHIP

Historical study and monograph of the Mercure 1/48

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There are very few available studies about the French merchant ship during the Old Régime. This, in fact, prompted the creation of a new work on the subject, the publication of two volumes on the “*Compagnie des Indes*” in 1983, followed by a third volume about the slave ship in 1984. However, there was still a need for a more general study of the merchant ship as the “*Compagnie des Indes*” or French East India Company fleet combined military and merchant functions, and furthermore, slave ships were operated for a highly specific activity. Thus, we are now presenting a more “open” study of the subject, as the reader will be able to note after a looking at this work’s table of contents. The period

covered begins in the 16th century and ends in the first quarter of the 19th century; well beyond the end of the Ancien Régime. Two volumes were planned to present the separate monograph of the sample ship. The work follows the order of presentation found through the earlier volume about the “*Compagnie des Indes*”.

Here again, the first volume is especially important as it defines the merchant ship, showing its evolution and variations over a period of approximately two centuries.

Twenty five chapters progressively develop the reader’s knowledge on the subject. After introducing the theoretical base, we shift our attention to the practical information, and then to the construction of a ship designed for long-course navigation, the *Mercure*, which operations are the theme of the last chapter.

The typology of the commerce ship is the subject of a special chapter. Although it is only presented in essay form, it necessitated many pages and several illustrations. For the first time, this work offers readers a complete body of knowledge about the merchant ship, a subject which has largely been ignored until now. With approximately 220 illustrations and plates, the volume also required about forty plans at 1:00 scale in order to describe the ship and its evolution.

The second volume, in a dossier format, contains 30 plates, including framing, to allow the construction of a model ship of the “*Mercure*”, a merchant vessel from the 1730s.

PRESENTATION OF THE WORK

BOOK 23 x 31 cm format, 272 pages with abundant plans, tables, graphics and reproductions of historical iconographical documents, with the same reproduction as 30 plates with multiple fold-outs, instructions on building the frame and model of the “Mercure” at 1:48 scale.

TABLES OF CONTENTS

Volume I : History of the Ship

Chapter I - The theoretical base

Ship’s burden and tonnage, calculation of displacement, weight, sundry notes, expenses.

Chapter II - Technical Information

Major proportion of the merchant ship, sundry measurements of accommodations, proportions of building equipment, dimensions of

hewn timber, remarks on the frame, proportions of the rigging.

Chapter III - Constructing the ship

Aspects of the merchant ship, its conception, specific study of a sample ship, a note about construction.

Chapter IV - Typological essay on the merchant ship

17th-c. commercial vessels. Western Mediterranean (barks, pinnaces, vessels). Eastern Mediterranean (tartanes, barks, polaccas).

18th-c. commercial vessels. Western Mediterranean (cutters, coasting luggers, schooners, brigantines, brigs, trysails and three-masters), Eastern Mediterranean (tartanes, pinks).

Chapter V - Use of the ship

Arrangement of the seaboard, western

havens, eastern havens, commercial activity in the ports, western ports, eastern ports, preparation of merchandise, stowing the cargo, loading the *Mercure* before departure from Bordeaux and upon her return from the islands, remarks on the ship’s tonnage, Atlantic routes, some thoughts about the ship’s burden.

Store and transport-ships in the royal fleet.

Conversion of measurements.

Source and bibliography.

Volume II : Monograph on the *Mercure*.

The written comments complement the material from the first volume. Rules of rigging, showing the successive steps working on the rigging, illustrated with a series of drawings.



RIG MODEL			SHELL ONLY		
Length	Width	Height	Length	Width	Height
90	20	120	62	20	20

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