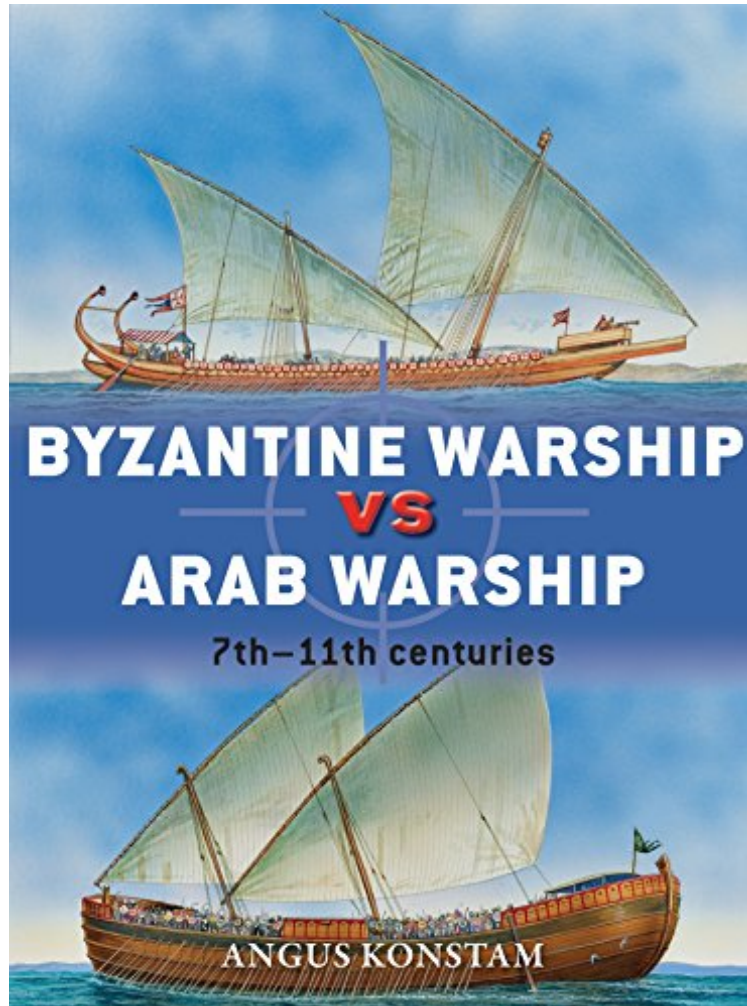


[Mobile pdf] Byzantine Warship vs Arab Warship: 7th–11th centuries (Duel)

Byzantine Warship vs Arab Warship: 7th–11th centuries (Duel)

Angus Konstam

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Angus Konstam : Byzantine Warship vs Arab Warship: 7th–11th centuries (Duel) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Byzantine Warship vs Arab Warship: 7th–11th centuries (Duel):

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A Very Good Summary Based on English Language Literature on the Subject (as Opposed to Based on Primary Sources) By Yoda This book, like all in the Osprey “Duel” series of which it is a part, is rather short. It is only 80 pages long and about a third of these consist of illustration of one type or another. Hence if one is looking for an academic tome on the subject this is not the book to read. A more appropriate question is, considering the limitations of the format it is part of, how well does it do at covering its topic? The answer is quite well. The author, Angus Konstam, is an eminent naval historian who has written dozens of books on the subject of naval warfare, many of which have been published by Osprey. In addition, many of his books are on vessels and

naval tactics that were crudely similar to those covered in this book. For example, he has written "Renaissance War gallery 1470-1590" and "Lepanto 1571" (both published by Osprey). His expertise on vessels and naval warfare show through in this book. He discusses, in some detail, the construction methods used in both Arab and Byzantine vessels (very similar) and places these in historical evolutionary context. He describes how warship design moved away from the solid (but inflexible) construction techniques used in ancient Greek warships to the utilization of more flexible building techniques. These techniques made it much more difficult to sink warships via ramming, which was the preferred method in antiquity. As a result, tactics instead emphasized melees leading to boardings and attempts to sink vessels not through ramming but the utilization of fire. The Byzantine forces were much more effective here as they possessed something called "Greek Fire", a liquid that burned on anything (including water) that was sprayed via a flamethrower like device at ranges of up to 40-50 meters. There are some particularly good illustrations on this flame throwing system in this book. Unfortunately for the Byzantine state the Arabs, eventually, discovered the secret of this weapon and hence negated the Byzantine advantage. Mr. Konstam also discusses many of the other limitations imposed on naval warfare as a result of these vessels' physical characteristics. Due to their poor sea keeping qualities and small supply holding capacities, they tended to hug the coasts and could not venture far from ports, bays and beachable coasts. Hence nearly all the important battles of the period were within sight of land and not more than a day or two sailing from friendly ports or coasts. Mr. Konstam also states that the Arabs depended more on specialized heavily armoured naval marines and let their oarsmen play no role in the resulting melees. This was due to Arab mistrust of their oarsmen who were primarily Coptic Christians and hence "unreliable". The Byzantines, on the other hand, depended less on heavily armed marines and more on lightly armed troops, especially oarsmen who could quickly join the battle from their posts and more than make up, in number, for their lack of armour. This provided the Byzantines with greater tactical flexibility. It was the main tactical difference between Arab and Byzantine naval warfare techniques. One last point of note is the long time period this struggle for naval supremacy lasted. It did not last a decade or two but for almost four centuries. In addition, contrary to what many historians of Byzantine history have assumed, the struggle was not a lopsided affair favoring the Byzantine state. It was a close run affair. Despite all of the above strengths, the book does have a few weaknesses. The main one is that the author does not make use of primary sources but instead makes use entirely of English language secondary sources. Apparently he does not know Greek, Latin or Arabic. Hence the book does not provide any new or unique insights into the subject. Nevertheless, the summary of these English language sources is very good and provides a good picture not only of the naval vessels themselves but the tactics used by both sides. Even for the specialist reader very educational. The book does have a few other weaknesses thought that prevent this reviewer from granting it a five star review. One is that, surprisingly, the book lacks cutaway drawings as well as views looking down on the vessels from the top and directly toward the stern and aft. In addition, the role of seamanship is not discussed. Which side had superior seamanship and what, if any, differences did it make in tactics and the conflict? In addition, other questions of importance are left unanswered or not discussed. Most importantly, what was the legacy of these vessels and their tactics, especially on later medieval warfare? In short, despite these weaknesses a very good summary of the already existing literature on the subject for those interested on the subject. Highly recommended.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This is a great little book
By Dave Kasten This is a great little book. Allot of facts that i never really had a question about. But then again if i need to find something i have the book to look it up. So for the history bluff check out some of these books on .0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars
By jcperot very informative

This engaging study pits the the Byzantine dromon against the Arabic shalandi in the prolonged struggle for mastery in the Mediterranean in the four centuries after 630 AD. For four hundred years the Byzantine Empire's naval forces vied with the warships of the Islamic world for mastery of the Mediterranean. At the heart of this confrontation were the fighting vessels of the two powers, the Byzantine dromon and the Arabic shalandi, both oared warships. In those four centuries of warfare between two major maritime powers, both the Byzantines and the Arabs left us records of their doctrine and tactics, as well as of how their ships were built. Featuring full-colour artwork and rigorous analysis from an authority on naval warfare, this enthralling book offers a glimpse of the long-lost world of war at sea in the age of Byzantium.