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REVIEWS

Leshikar-Denton, M. E. and Luna Erreguerena, P. eds., 2011. *Underwater and Maritime Archaeology in Latin America and the Caribbean*. First paperback edition. Left Coast Press, Walnut Creek, California. 316 pp. Black & white photographs, line drawings, bibliography, index. ISBN: 9781598742633. RRP NZ\$60.00.

Andy Dodd

This is a paperback reprint of Number 56 in the One World Archaeology Series published in 2008. The publication arose out of the fifth World Archaeology Congress in Washington, D.C. in 2003, which incorporated sessions on the underwater archaeology of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). It is available in New Zealand and Australia from Footprint Books, and the paperback volume is priced at a much more affordable \$60 rather than the hardback volume at \$126.

Chapter 1 serves as a useful background summary of the politics surrounding underwater archaeology in the region and many of the key projects undertaken to date. Following the publication of the 1996 ICOMOS Sofia Charter on underwater cultural heritage, a number of smaller countries from LAC joined to form a united group which pushed for the adoption of the 2001 UNESCO Charter for the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage. Presently LAC countries account for 14 of the 41 signatories. Recent archaeological research and investigation in these countries is therefore pertinent to those with an interest in the UNESCO convention.

Practitioners in New Zealand and the Pacific might also be interested in the many similarities surrounding archaeological research in New Zealand and many of the smaller or less affluent Caribbean countries. As one might expect from their geographical location, underwater heritage in LAC countries faces threats in the form of commercial salvage and, like New Zealand, many LAC countries struggle with a lack of qualified practitioners and a limited pool of resources to commit to archaeological research. Some countries in LAC which are not yet signatories have taken an approach similar to that of New Zealand, in applying the principles of the UNESCO convention to heritage permit applications. Reasons for not ratifying range from pre-existing

salvage agreements, to requirements for legislative change which are not seen as a priority by politicians.

The Caribbean has a diverse range of underwater archaeological heritage, from Mexican cenotes (sinkholes) containing some of the earliest human remains in the region, to the submerged 17th century ruins of the town of Port Royal, to the wrecks of European vessels engaged in transporting slaves to the New World or treasure back to the Old. Papers in this volume have been submitted by contributors from 10 different countries, and traverse a number of topics from history, inventory and site survey, materials conservation, site formation processes, cultural resource management, technical diving and tourism on historic wrecks.

All this is not to say that New Zealand's comparatively recent history should be a deterrent to recognition and protection of underwater heritage. Countries such as the Cayman Islands, a country with over 500 years of maritime colonial history, provides protection to all wrecks over 50 years of age. Similarly those who might argue that New Zealand's dynamic coastal environment has dispersed any archaeological context can find examples of archaeological research on heavily salvaged sites, and sites dispersed over a wide geographical area. A survey of historic anchorages in the Netherlands Antilles which resulted in the discovery of numerous archaeological deposits and previously undocumented shipwrecks, could equally be carried out in the Bay of Islands or Marlborough Sounds, for example.

The subject range of the book is broad, and the reader is at times left feeling that this volume suffers from a lack of cohesion. To make the book accessible to a wider audience, papers dedicated to the specific history of an individual shipwreck might have been replaced by an overview of Caribbean and Latin American maritime history. People unfamiliar with the geography of the area may also struggle with the lack of location maps, both in individual papers, and for a basic overview.

That said, this book will be worthwhile for people with an interest in maritime archaeology. It demonstrates what can be achieved by agencies with the inclination to document and preserve their underwater cultural heritage, even with limited resources, in spite of the considerable pressure from well-financed and high-tech commercial salvage companies.