
Review

by Filipe Castro

Des bateaux et des fleuves, archéologie de la batellerie du néolithique aux temps modernes en France

by Éric Rieth.

Editions Errance, Paris, 1998

ISBN: 2 87772 145 X, 159 pages, 121 illustrations, references, glossary, bibliography, paperback

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A quick look at the map of France shows immediately the dense net of rivers and creeks penetrating deep inland, and home to many villages and cities which extend along its margins.

This delightful book on river craft covers the ships that can not be imagined without that landscape behind them, be it rural or urban, with castles, bridges, towers, aqueducts, churches, palaces, or plain simple houses. This book is an invitation to look at this particular universe that includes the rivers, their margins, and the people that traveled in them, carrying a very rich past in which the boats have such an important share.

This book deals with river craft before the industrial era of the middle nineteenth century, when canals and dams drastically changed the conditions of navigation, allowing year-round circulation along many rivers, such as the Seine, Oise, Yonne, Marne, Meuse, Saône. It is divided into five chapters.

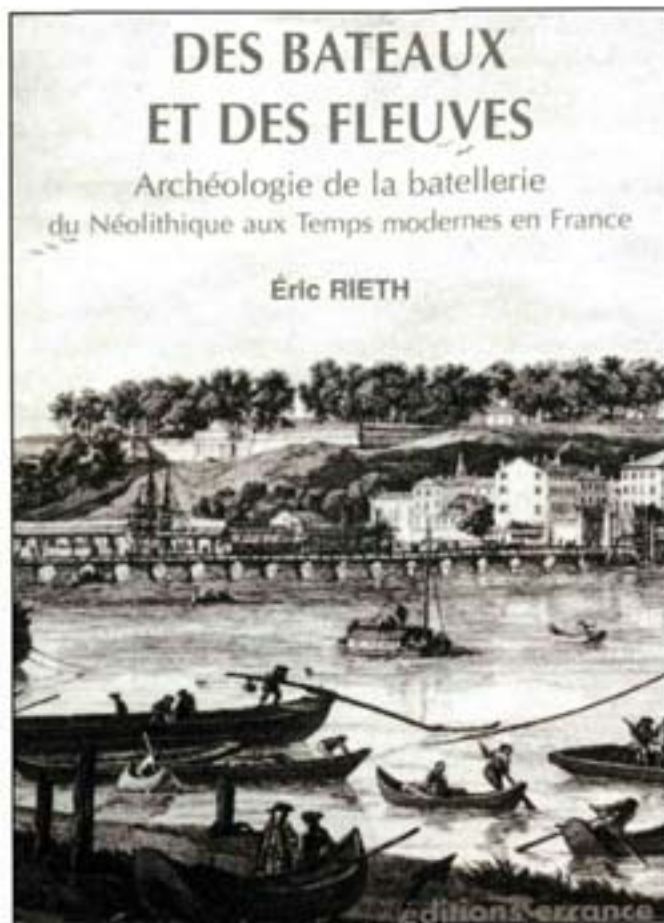
The first is dedicated to the specifics of river navigation, much different from ocean navigation, in which the ships travel in a deserted sea. River boats spend their entire existence in a landscape from which people are seldom absent, with landmarks, curves, shallow passages, and narrow ways. As a result, these craft can not be considered separately from their landscape, nor from their cultural environment. These vessels were designed for and adapted to a particular environment, many times modified for the passage of the boats, with docks, tow paths and maintained banks. Inland waterways were not only communication routes, but also the place of many economical activities, from the production of artifacts to the exploitation of the local fauna. River navigation was also the object of administrative, juridical, economical and political control, tolls being demanded during the Middle Ages and the *Ancien Régime*.

In the second chapter, the author provides the reader a set of basic definitions of aspects related to the study of fluvial hydraulics, a characterization of the most important hydrographic basins of France, and a comment on their importance in a broader view. This considering that all these rivers end in the sea, either in the Mediterranean coast, a culturally diversified universe that goes from Spain to Lebanon, or in the Northern and Western European coasts that extend from the Baltic to the Atlantic.

The third chapter is dedicated to the major building traditions of the fluvial environment: floats, rafts, and boats. In this last group, the author describes three smaller groups: logboats, assembled craft, and the mixed technique of extended logboats. The text is illustrated by iconographical and written sources, and archaeological examples. From the almost 10 m long dugout of the tenth century BCE found at Chalain-Marigny, to two rafts from the second-third centuries CE found in Strasbourg in an old course of the Rhine, to the medieval extended dugout of Ouroux (Saône-et-Loire), and to the over 40 m long *bateau foncet* described in the seventeenth century *Traité des bois servant à tous usages*, Éric Rieth takes the reader through the diversity of solutions found by the builders of these craft.

In the fourth chapter, propulsion methods are presented. An overview of the several ways in which boats and rafts used the current, paddles or oars, poles, sails, or human or animal pulling force from the banks to move along their ways. Once again clear illustrations and opportune quotations make the reading easy and comprehensive. Some com-

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The Bodrum Library Grows

With the Frances Rich Library building nearing completion, we are pleased to announce that thousands of books on classical archaeology from Homer and Dorothy Thompson's collection are now safely in Bodrum and being cataloged by Faith Hentschel and Berta Lledo. Shipping cost INA nothing, thanks to our good friends in TINA (Turkish INA) established by INA Director Ayhan Sicimoglu, who arranged for the first shipment of books a couple of years ago. This year TINA member Jonathan Beard arranged through Garry Ferruli to have NSCSA (National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia) ship 127 large boxes of books without cost from Houston, Texas, to Izmir, Turkey. So we add our profound thanks to all three of these people to the thanks we earlier expressed to the Northwest Friends of INA in and around Portland, Oregon. The Friends made the original acquisition of the books possible, and now have a goal of raising an endowment for the library so that we can keep it up to date by journal subscriptions and annual book purchases. Lastly, Dr. David Gibbins of the University of Liverpool, who will play a large role in our forthcoming excavation of a fifth-century B.C. shipwreck off the Turkish coast, has obtained about \$5,000 of new books in the United Kingdom and will soon ship those to Bodrum, where he hopes to bring students from the U.K. for parts of their spring terms starting in the year 2000. Our dream of turning INA's Bodrum headquarters into an academic as well as field-work center is coming true. ☞

George Bass



Photo: R. C. M. Piercy

The new library facility at the INA headquarters in Bodrum nears completion and it is hoped that it will be operational by the year 2000.



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ments on steering, stressing the fact that here direction and propulsion are frequently synonyms but pointing out the importance of controlling direction in large craft traveling fast in relation to shore, but with almost no speed in relation to the water in which they travel.

Finally, in the fifth chapter the author presents three examples of river craft through different approaches: a group of seven dugouts dating from the fifth to the thirteenth centuries; an extended dugout from the eleventh century, the *Orliac* wreck; and the *Port-Berteau 2* wreck, a small ship from the fifth to eighth century excavated between 1992 and 1997.

Much more than a mere invitation to discover river craft and rivers, as the author puts it, this book is an wonderful trip to the world of the historical, ethnographical, archaeological, and technical investigation of highly diverse and rich solutions of fluvial transport in France, from the Neolithic to the beginning of the industrial boom of the nineteenth century. ☞

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