

REVIEWS

CD REVIEW: MERCHANT & MILITARY VESSELS OF WORLD WAR II REVIEWED VOL 1.

BY NORMAN E. HARNS
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During and after World War II, the United States Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) produced many publications to help US servicemen identify enemy and friendly ships and aircraft. This resulted in a valuable historical archive. Included were photographs, plans, and technical details. The particular offering under review is essentially a reproduction on a CD of ONI 208-5, Far Eastern Small Craft and ONI 223M, Merchant Ship Shapes.

The first inclusion covers minor warships of the Japanese Navy, and a wide selection of civilian craft from Burma, China, Indonesia, and Japan. Naval craft included are sub chasers and landing craft and all lesser vessels. As pointed out in the introduction, this can be the best source on the design and abilities for these craft available. I like the coverage of civilian minor craft of the region(s). Much of this would be hard to come by otherwise. A personal favourite is the illustrations of River Irrawaddy ferry steamers. (You know, from Rangoon to Mandalay etc.). If you need material for small unit amphibious models, in this theatre, then this is for you. Included are useful items like standard Japanese bridging pontoons. The second (smaller) part covers merchant ship shapes. There are pages on camouflage and detection of speed. It explains the variations in visual shape owing to function and nationality in merchant ships of the period. A useful section is an appendix covering typical silhouettes of the ships of the major maritime nations.

I have a few ONI publications in my library. They are good modelling reference material. The material was printed at a time when understanding of the enemy arsenal was vital but imperfect. Photography of a given class of vessel was the best then available, meaning, often not good. The source might be a peace time casual photo, espionage, or cropped combat footage. Bad contrast, and camera shake are not unusual. Most classes are provided with good line drawings, although no scale is given.

I hope the publishers can find a profit in this project. It seems a bit rarefied. The CD is advertised at \$40.00 US or about £30.00 UK. That's a decent amount of money and would fund the purchase of a pretty decent book on the larger merchant fleets in the WWII era, for instance.

The editor of this publication presents a frightening load of waffle in the introduction. This is rather rambling and somewhat irrelevant. It does not detract from the inherent value of the archive, however.

The material is presented on a CD. I struggled to get my system to recognise and load the programme. I did manage. This may be evidence of my own ignorance. You have to find the Adobe Acrobat reader installed on the disc, and you're off and running. The photographic images have been rescanned from the original books. Where possible they have been enhanced for better resolution. The original material was never top quality in production values, photo quality, paper or printing process. A few zooms quickly reveal a lot of squares. My humble Epsom 440 made a decent job of the line drawings but the photos were not very good. In conclusion, this material is valuable. For us wargamers it is pretty good stuff as long as it fits with a specific interest.

John Laing

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Review from *War Games Illustrated*, November 2000.

ERRATA:

- 1: Author's Name should be **Harms** not Harns
 2. Telephone Number should be **-7486**, not -7484.
- Paragraph 1 - 208-5 should read **208-J**



of the charts/cards set that came with the rules, in order to get a decent-looking set of counters and a durable terrain effects chart. If those are my biggest peeves, though, I suppose I can't complain!

Available from Scale Specialties, PO Box 4996, Anaheim, CA 92803-4996, www.ss-sms.com \$40.00 plus shipping GREG RICE

Battlefront costs \$33 but is not, I understand, available through normal distribution channels at this time. You must buy it directly from Fire and Fury Games at conventions or by mail from their website. There are certain economics at work that dictate this but I hope the rules become available, as soon as possible, from your local game shop. They're a very enjoyable set of rules that provide a fresh perspective on company/battalion-level ground combat; they have to be seen to be played, though! Well recommended. -BILL RUTHERFORD

From The Courier - No. 80.

MERCHANT & MILITARY VESSELS OF WWII VOL. 1.

This CD ROM is a re-publication of two late-war documents issued by the Office of Naval Intelligence, with a dozen pages of introductory material by Mr. Harms. These documents have not been generally available, and the introduction helps place them in the context of their time. Editorial comments have been included in the text. The documents are in pdf format, so they are accessible to those with Wndows, Macintosh, Unix, or Linux operating systems. The text has been reset, not scanned, so it is searchable. The photographs and illustrations have been scanned with considerable care, and are reproduced well.

"Far Eastern Small Craft," originally issued in March, 1945, covers minor combatants and merchant vessels under 1000 tons in about 200 pages. Included are subchasers, torpedo boats, gunboats, landing ships, and landing craft, as well as chapters on passenger, cargo, fishing, and utility vessels, barges, and native craft. Many have small line illustrations of the vessels, with one or photographs, a description, and data. Available information varies with the type of vessel. The smaller civilian craft generally lack drawings or detailed data, as the variety is overwhelming, but are instead treated via a dozen or two photographs representative of a type. There are exceptions: if you want clearing rates for a sea-going Japanese dredge, along with a sketch plan, this is your source. The landing craft information is clear enough to inspire me to start scratch-building some 15 mm boats for Command Decision games.

"Merchant Ship Shapes," from 1944, is a shorter document, which was intended to improve recognition and reporting. It includes brief sections on recognizing ship types and identifying specific classes, estimating size and speed, aerial recognition, painting and camouflage, and how to make and interpret a descriptive report. It is full of drawings illustrating the points under discussion, and has a 10-page section of silhouettes of representative merchant ships of many nations.

These documents provide not only information on the ships they cover, but on the U.S. intelligence community's understanding of their opponent at the time of release. Good stuff. This is intended to be the first volume in a series, with the next to be ONI 222-J, "The Japanese Navy. By Norman E. Harms ISBN 0-944539-03-3.

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Review from MWAN No. 108, by Hal Thinglum.

Note: Look to MWAN for future articles by Major Craig Martelle, editor of the Gauntlet.

sets), \$18 for one set of data cards. Postage is \$2 (US), \$3.20 (US Priority), \$5 (Canada), and \$9 (Overseas). Visa/master card accepted (phone/fax: 410-381-1632).

By Hal Thinglum – SCALE SPECIALTIES MERCHANT & MILITARY VESSELS OF WWII REVIEWED VOL 1 – Scale Specialties, PO Box 4996, Anaheim, CA 92803-4996 (phone/fax: 714-535-7486; website: <http://www.ss-sms.com>, e-mail: smsnew@earthlink.net) has released a CD –Rom by Norman E. Harms consisting of publications from the original WWII Office of Naval Intelligence (March, 1945) ONI 208-J – Supplement 2 – Far Eastern Small Craft and ONI 223M – Merchant Ship Shapes (1945) and provide information re minor combatant warships and merchant vessels under 1,000 gross tons. It covers patrol/gunboats and a full range of merchant vessels ranging from passenger, passenger/cargo, freighters, tankers, fishing/utility vessels, and most of the Japanese amphibious craft as well as merchant ship shapes found in all theaters. The purpose of the manual in 1945 was to assist Allied forces in identification of merchant vessels. Mr. Harms provides a commentary supplementing the original publications. Within the 245 pages, there are over 600 photos and drawings. Cost is \$40 plus p/h and it can also be obtained from Regal Miniatures, 1980 NW 94th St., Suite D, Clive, IA 50325. They report this is the first of ten volumes of this series. Highly recommended for the WWII Naval gamer!

This is, unfortunately, the last issue of The Gauntlet for at least a couple of years, until Major Martelle returns to the USA. He plans on doing some guest articles for MWAN during this timespan, so look for his by-line.

Product Reviews... by Craig Martelle

From Scale Specialties (see ad on page 54 for contact info) Office of Naval Intelligence Publications 208J -Far Eastern Small Craft and 233M Merchant Ship Shapes. This is volume I - Merchant and Military Vessels of World War II Reviewed. Norman Harms has obtained the rights to these publications and is putting them on CD-Rom for ease of transport and use. It is in the versatile Adobe Acrobat .pdf format - and Norm includes it on the CD just in case you don't already have it installed. I pulled up the files - which took a while on my old Pentium 200. They were well worth the wait! The information is as the U.S. Intelligence community perceived it during WWII. It is also the information that our Naval Commanders had in order to defeat the Japanese. Here's a listing of what's in each volume (both contained on a single CD)

ONI-208J - Minor Combatants, Passenger Vessels, Cargo Vessels, Barges, Fishing Vessels, Utility Vessels, Native Craft.

ONI-223M - Functions and Appearance, Passenger Types, Cargo Types, Engine-Aft Types, Wartime Functions, Structural Changes, Painting and Camouflage, Aerial Identification, Tonnage Computation, Design Trends, Estimation of Speed, Silhouettes... For example, I looked closely through the section on painting and camouflage (for obvious reasons). It showed the modeler or gamer everything he needed to paint and present a historically accurate looking ship, no matter what the scale. Very, very nicely done.

For modelers, historians, and anyone interested in the Navy - this is a superb start to a great collection. At only \$40 plus shipping, this is a bargain - contact Norm for more details.

Pirates! and Taiko Rules from Flagship Games, Rod Thomson, P. O. Box 148; Alameda, CA 94501 or WWW www.flagshipgames.com or e-mail wargame@windstorm.stormnet.com. First is Pirates! - yes, the same name as the set of rules from Gauntlet Publications, but a completely different slant. These rules are more