As the editor, Christine Shaw, observes the book is an “assessment of the impact of the wars” (p. ix) on Italy between 1500 and 1530. It is an international scholarly endeavor with Italian, British, American and Israeli academics producing the volumes fifteen articles. Their efforts exemplify the explosion of scholarship on the subject in the past twenty years. The book largely accomplishes its task of integrating military, political and cultural history. (The glaring exception is William Prizer’s piece on Roman music and courtesans, which fails to provide any link between warfare and its subject.) The articles are based on significant and imaginative research in the primary and secondary sources. Appropriate illustrations accompany a number of the articles. The book would have benefited from a general map of Italy. Unfortunately, only six of the fifteen articles discuss activity at sea at any length.

How are naval or maritime aspects portrayed? Rarely, if at all is the answer. Michael Mallet (on the transformation of warfare) concludes with one page of twenty on naval warfare citing Spanish military transport, galley predominance and the growing Spanish naval ascendancy. Atis Antonovics, analyzing the French defeat at Naples in 1503-4, tangentially discusses the importance of maritime transport of artillery and supplies. The article on sieges by Simon Pepper observes the value of naval forces in besieging coastal cities through the transportation of supplies and the isolation of a target city by naval blockade. Eva Renzulli’s essay on the papal fortification of Loreta ascribes
the papal motivation to fears of Turkish seaborne raids on the rich pilgrimage church on
the west coast of the Adriatic. David Abulafia’s chapter on Ferdinand of Aragon and the
acquisition of the kingdom of Naples has few references to naval/maritime affairs. That
is unfortunate, because tantalizing tidbits (such as the Spanish destruction of Francese
Torella’s pirate fleet, and mentions of Ferdinand’s vision of reviving an Aragonese
trading network in the western Mediterranean, as well as the assertion that New World
precious metals paid for the Italian wars) indicate that the king had a maritime vision.
George Gorse’s article on France and Genoa (1494-1528) has scattered references to
overseas trade, the city’s fleet, its harbor, and brief references Admiral Andrea Doria
shifting the city’s allegiance to the emperor, but he writes more about the political
symbolism of French and Genoese acts. Intriguingly, he observes that the French saw the
republic as another walled city, while the Genoese considered it a maritime gateway;
some of the images accompanying Grose’s piece aptly illustrate those differing
perspectives. (And who could resist an article that includes the passage on a French king
personified as a porcupine preserving his country from an attack by a three-headed Italian
monster?) All in all the discussion of nautical affairs appears as diversion from the main
preoccupations of the authors. While that is understandable for Shaw’s article on the
Papal States and Letizia Arcangeli’s on Milan, it seems mysterious for Mallet, Abulafia
and Grose to adopt that perspective.

The book provides the reader with some of the latest scholarship on the Italian
wars of 1500-30. Yet readers lacking a firm grounding in the period will find themselves
lost. D. Abulafia’s The French Descent into Renaissance Italy and M. Mallet’s
Mercenaries and their Masters: Warfare in Renaissance Italy would prove useful
prerequisites to this volume. Naval historians will continue to find J. Guilmartin’s *Gunpowder and Galleys* the definitive work on the Italian wars. On the other hand students and academics researching military, political, and cultural aspects of the wars will find the work stimulating.

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