

# PEPPER WRECK

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STORY OF A SEVENTEEN  
CENTURY PORTUGUESE NAU

IN THIS ARTICLE COMIC, WE PRESENT THE STORY OF EXCAVATION & RECONSTRUCTION OF A SEVENTEEN CENTURY PORTUGUESE NAU, THE NOSSA SENHORA DOS MARTIRES.



AFTER A SIX-MONTH VOYAGE RETURNING FROM INDIA, NAU SUNK ON SEPTEMBER 14TH, 1606 IN TAGUS RIVER VERY CLOSE TO LISBON [1].



IT IS CALLED **PEPPER WRECK** SINCE NAUS CARRIED AN ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF **PEPPERCORNS** IN ADDITION TO A VARIETY OF OTHER TRADE GOODS. **PEPPERCORN**, USED TO SEASON FOOD, WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT SPICE IN PORTUGUESE TRADE. SPECIAL BOXES WERE BUILT INTO THE HOLDS OF THE SHIPS TO STORE THE PEPPER, TAKING UP MOST OF THE SPACE AVAILABLE ON THE LOWER DECKS.

WHEN THE NAU SANK, THE PEPPER BOXES BUILT INTO THE HOLD RUPTURED, AND THE SPILLED PEPPER FORMED A **BLACK TIDE** THAT EXTENDED FOR LEAGUES ALONG THE COAST. THE BEACHES ON THE TAGUS MOUTH WERE FULL OF PEPPER FOR YEARS. THIS IS WHERE THE NAME PEPPER WRECK CAME FROM [1,2].



IN 1996 AND 1997, EXCAVATIONS WERE CONDUCTED ON THE WRECK SITE UNDER THE DIRECTION OF DR. CASTRO AND DR. FRANCISCO ALVES, WHO WAS THEN DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEU NACIONAL DE ARQUEOLOGIA (NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ARCHAEOLOGY) IN LISBON.



THE REMAINS OF THE NAU STAYED UNDISTURBED UNDER TAGUS RIVER FOR 350 YEARS.



THE PEPPER WRECK IS THE ONLY PORTUGUESE NAU OF THE PERIOD TO HAVE BEEN EXCAVATED BY ARCHAEOLOGISTS.



VERY LITTLE HAS BEEN KNOWN ABOUT INDIA NAUS. THEY WERE BUILT IN A PRE-INDUSTRIAL ERA THERE WERE NO DRAWN PLANS. ONLY FEW RECORDS EXIST FROM THAT PERIOD. IN SPITE OF BEING COMPLEX MACHINES, THE CONSTRUCTION OF NAUS RELIED MOSTLY ON PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE AND TRADITION AND THEY BELONGED TO A SPHERE OF KNOWLEDGE THAT DID NOT ATTRACT MANY SCHOLARS.

ARTWORKS OF INDIA NAUS EXIST, BUT ARTIST INTERPRETATIONS TEND TO BE LOOSE.



BECAUSE THEY WERE AN INCONSPICUOUS PART OF THE LANDSCAPE, NOBODY BOTHERED TO PAINT THEM IN DETAIL.

PEPPER WRECK IS CURRENTLY OUR ONLY INFORMATION FROM SUCH AN IMPORTANT ERA OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE.



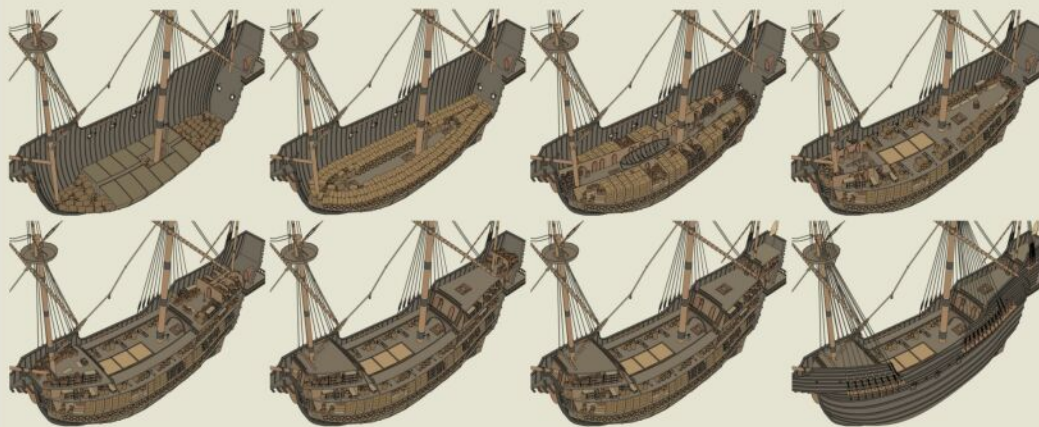
ONLY SOME OF THE ITEMS THAT REMAIN OF PEPPER WRECK TODAY ARE ON DISPLAY AT THE LISBON NAVAL MUSEUM. THE COLLECTION OF ARTIFACTS INCLUDES A SMALL PORTION OF THE HULL, ALONG WITH MANY ARTIFACTS INCLUDING GUNS, ANCHORS, ASTROLABES, PORCELAIN DISHES, PEWTER PLATES, TRINKETS AND CERAMIC POTS.

GRÂNDOLA, VILA MORENA



THIS PANEL IS A VISUAL HOMAGE TO HERGE, TINTIN AND BROKEN EAR.

TRADITIONAL PHYSICAL MUSEUMS ARE NOT SUITABLE FOR PUBLIC DISSEMINATION OF RICH HISTORY OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE. THERE IS, THEREFORE, A STRONG NEED FOR ALTERNATIVE PRESENTATIONS.



AS AN ALTERNATIVE, WE MAKE COMPUTER RECONSTRUCTIONS OF HISTORICAL ARTIFACTS. OUR VISUALIZATION OF THE 8TH LEVELS OF PEPPER WRECK NAU, SHOWN HERE, DEMONSTRATES HOW COMPLEX THESE MACHINES WERE. VIRTUAL RECONSTRUCTIONS ALLOWS US TO RECREATE THE ENVIRONMENT THAT DEMONSTRATE HOW THE PEOPLE LIVED IN ANCIENT PAST. TO UNDERSTAND THE PAST, IT IS CRUCIAL TO GO BEYOND TRADITIONAL MUSEUM ENVIRONMENT AND CREATE VIRTUAL RECONSTRUCTIONS THAT DEMONSTRATES THE COMPLEXITIES OF OUR ANCIENT PAST.

## REFERENCES

[1] DE CASTRO, FILIPE VIEIRA. THE PEPPER WRECK: A PORTUGUESE INDIAMAN AT THE MOUTH OF THE TAGUS RIVER. TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2005.

[2] CASTRO, FILIPE. "THE PEPPER WRECK, AN EARLY 17TH-CENTURY PORTUGUESE INDIAMAN AT THE MOUTH OF THE TAGUS RIVER, PORTUGAL." INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF NAUTICAL ARCHAEOLOGY 32, NO. 1 (2003): 6-23.