

Those Vulgar Tubes: External Sanitary Accommodations aboard European Ships of the Fifteenth through Seventeenth Centuries (Studies in Nautical Archaeology)

Joe J. Simmons III

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The disposal of human waste is critical, especially where humans are in close quarters. As Joe J. Simmons III shows in this redesigned volume, information about this vital function on ships of the great era of sail is amazingly scarce. In Those Vulgar Tubes, Simmons has collected and interpreted the available archaeological and iconographical evidence, providing historians and anthropologists with a rich view of a historically censored subject.

In his introduction, Simmons discusses evidence of what methods early sailors used for relief. Subsequent chapters focus on each century of pre-modern exploration and the developments of ship design at bow and stern where sailors were accommodated. Officers had the luxury of enclosed, closetlike facilities; the book's title comes from a poem in which the ship's chaplain begs to be allowed to use the officers' luxurious facilities rather than the "vulgar tubes"—the downward-projecting trunking through which effluvia was directed into the sea.

With clear illustrations and a timeline that graphs the development of sanitary facilities, Those Vulgar Tubes fills a longstanding void in the history of maritime travel.



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