

THE 2001 UNESCO CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE

WHY?

Submerged heritage has been less protected than cultural property on land due to the fact that the latter has been the object of research for a longer period. As underwater cultural heritage has only recently become accessible, since the 1940s in fact, comprehensive legal instruments for cooperation among states were missing. The 2001 Convention fills this gap.

HOW?

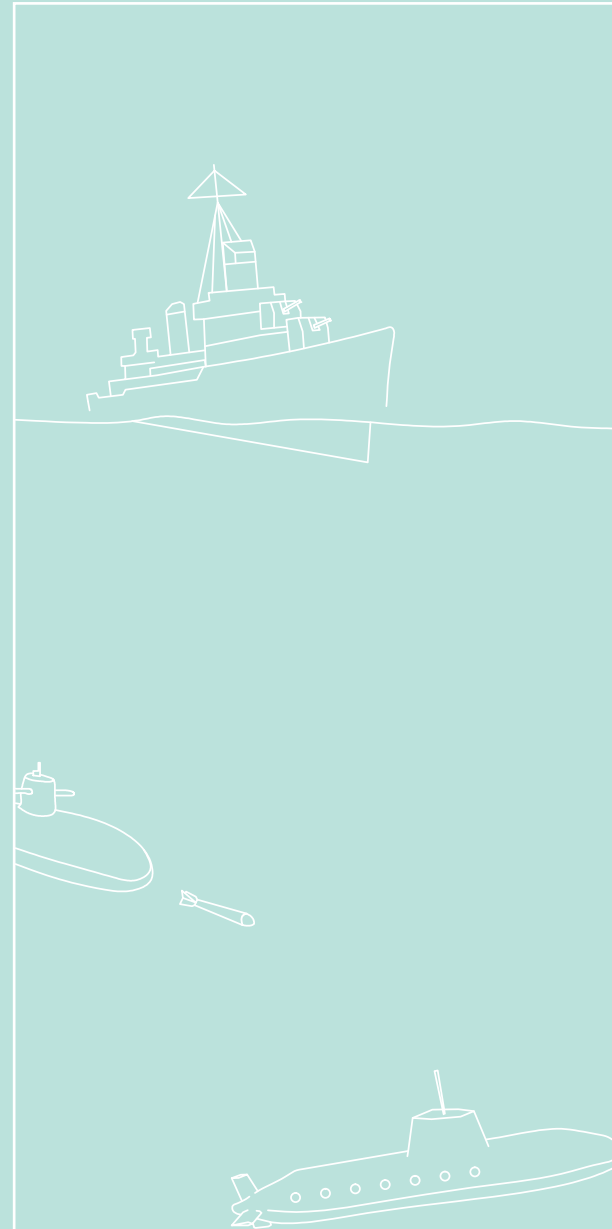
By means of a convention, adopted by an international body (i.e. UNESCO). It applies to the countries that ratify it, this means that they sign the convention and implement it in their legislation.

WHAT?

The 2001 Convention sets out basic principles for the protection of underwater cultural heritage. These basic principles include: the obligation to preserve underwater cultural heritage, the in situ preservation as a first option and finally that no commercial exploitation can be allowed. It also provides a State cooperation system for submerged heritage and widely recognised practical rules for the discipline of underwater archaeology.

WHO?

The convention was ratified by 47 States, including Cambodia.



exhibition supported by:



Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts

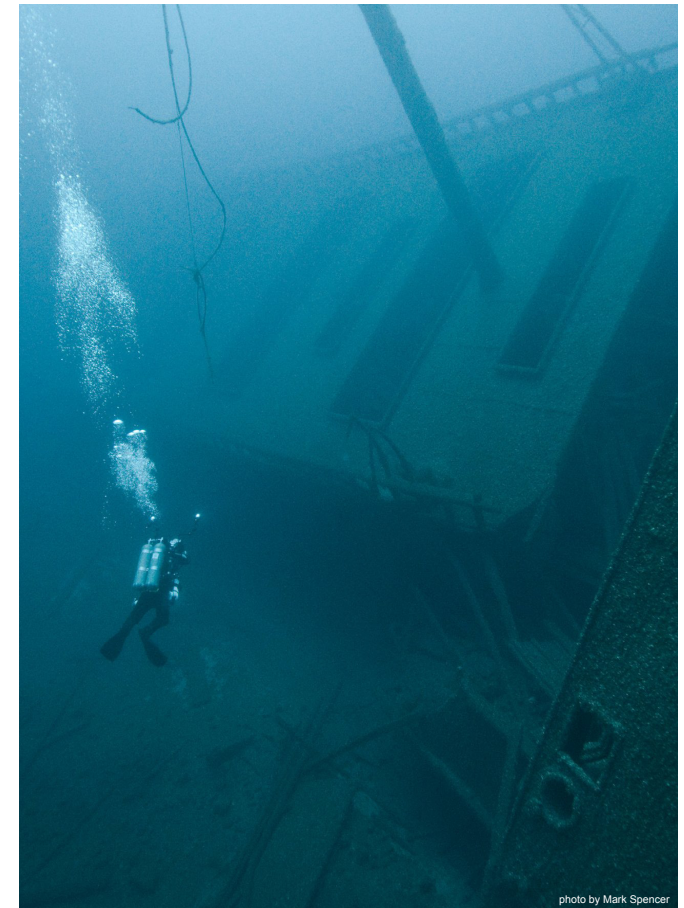


Flanders
State of the Art



LYCÉE FRANÇAIS RENÉ DESCARTES
PHNOM PENH - ROYAUME DU CAMBODGE

FIRST WORLD WAR REMNANTS OF WAR AT SEA



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

The Protection of
the Underwater Cultural
Heritage

WAR AT SEA



The First World War began on 28 July 1914 and ended on 11 November 1918. Over 70 million soldiers took part in the conflict, which became one of the most extensive wars in history. Eventually, 70 nations were involved, turning it into a truly worldwide conflict.

A major element of the First World War was naval combat between prestigious fleets. The battles between German U-Boats and Allied submarines also represented a step away from traditional surface-level

naval warfare towards modern submarine war. Thousands of ships sank in these battles and millions of people lost their lives. Many starved to death as a result of the sea blockades. The remnants of these battles can be found in abundance on the sea bed.

The colonies and protectorates, including Cambodia, participated largely in First World War by sending troops, labour and supplies to the European imperial powers.

LOST AT SEA, FROZEN IN TIME

Along coastlines worldwide, many ships have perished. They are laying there as links to the past. Each site is a time-capsule to the past, ready to be unlocked by marine archaeologists and discovered by future generations.

Although they work in a more hostile environment, underwater archaeologists follow the same principles as their counterparts on land. A site must first be surveyed in order to produce an analytical map so that the wreck can be assessed. Often this will provide enough information to interpret its significance without having to disturb it. Only exceptionally historic shipwrecks are excavated.



UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE



photo by Mark Spencer

Despite the huge naval participation in the First World War, the maritime component of the First World War archaeological heritage is at risk of being forgotten. As its vestiges are threatened. This is mainly the result of its location at the bottom of the ocean. Furthermore, in the pursuit of profit, this heritage is often treated carelessly. Shipwrecks are scrapped and

destroyed without registration or consultation with the concerned Flag State. Low-irradiation metals and supposed valuable cargoes attract treasure hunters who, in the process of obtaining the material, destroy not only archaeological contexts, but also war graves.

Underwater archaeologists must be the first to visit submerged historical sites in order to evaluate them and ensure their proper study and preservation.