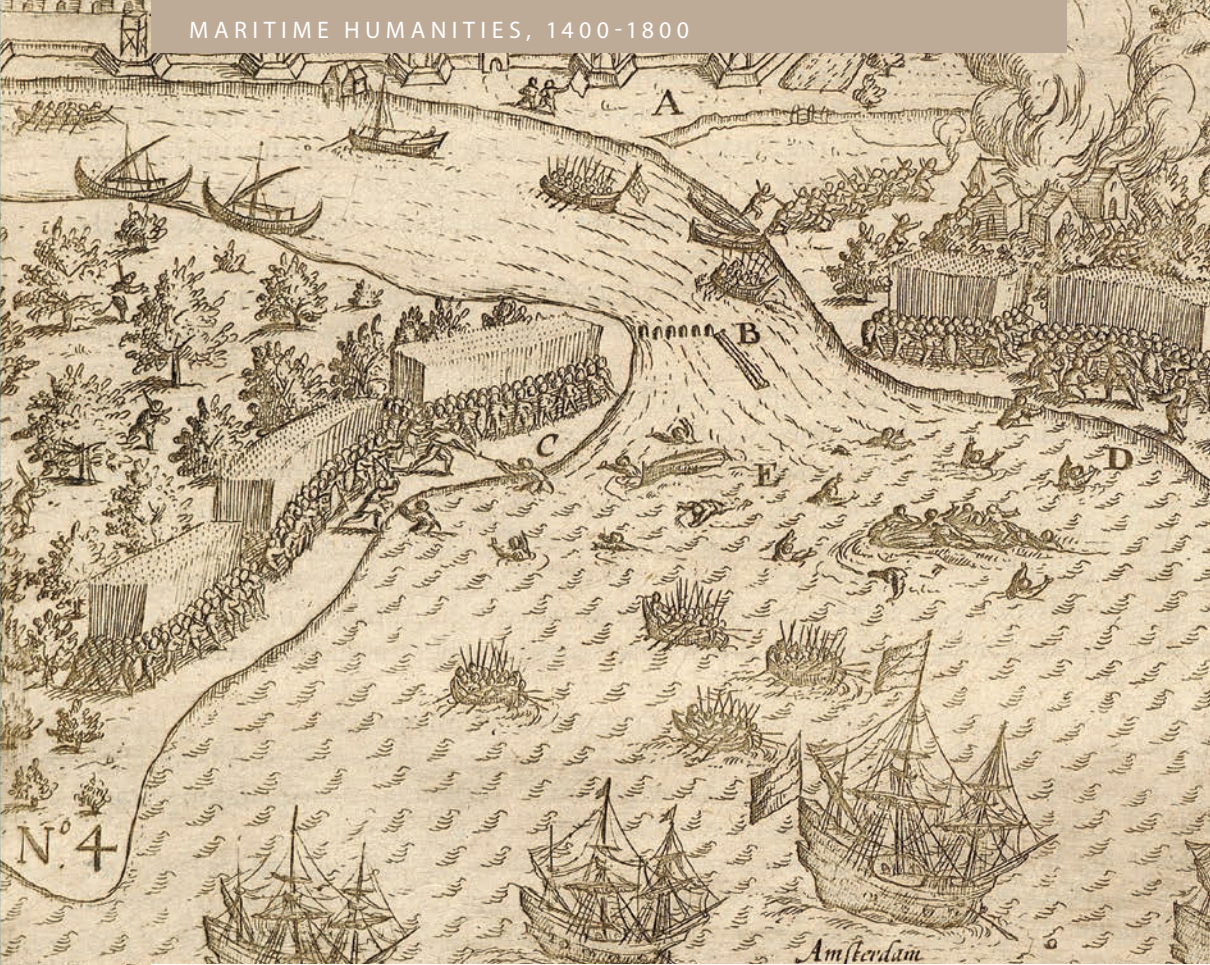


MARITIME HUMANITIES, 1400-1800



Edited by John Coakley, C. Nathan Kwan, and David Wilson

# The Problem of Piracy in the Early Modern World

## Maritime Predation, Empire, and the Construction of Authority at Sea

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# Maritime Humanities, 1400-1800

Early modern oceans not only provided temperate climates, resources, and opportunities for commercial exchange, they also played a central role in cultural life. Increased exploration, travel, and trade, marked this period of history, and early modern seascapes were cultural spaces and contact zones, where connections and circulations occurred outside established centres of control and the dictates of individual national histories. Likewise, coastlines, rivers, and ports were all key sites for commercial and cultural exchange.

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David Wilson*

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# List of Abbreviations Commonly Used in Notes

## Printed Sources

AFM	J. O'Donovan (ed.), <i>Annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the Four Masters</i>
AC	M. Freeman (ed.), <i>Annála Connacht: The Annals of Connacht</i>
AMisc	S. Ó hInnse (ed.), <i>Miscellaneous Irish Annals, AD 1114–1437</i>
AU	W. Hennessey and B. MacCarthy (eds.), <i>Annála Uladh (Annals of Ulster): A Chronicle of Irish Affairs, AD 431 to AD 1540</i>
CDI	H. S. Sweetman (ed.), <i>Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland, 1171–1307</i>
CPR	H. C. Maxwell Lyte (ed.), <i>Calendar of Patent Rolls: Henry IV, 1399–1413</i>
Cal. Carew MSS	J. S. Brewer (ed.), <i>Calendar of Carew Manuscripts Preserved in the Archiepiscopal Library at Lambeth, 6 vols.</i>
CSPC	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Colonial: America and the West Indies, 45 vols.</i>
ES	A. O. Anderson (ed.), <i>Early Sources of Scottish History, A.D. 500–1286</i>

## Manuscript Sources

A1895-78	New York Colonial Council Minutes, New York State Archives, Albany, NY.
ADM/L	Navy Board, Lieutenant's Logs, Caird Library National Maritime Museum, UK
ARA	Algemeen Rijksarchief Brussel
BL	British Library
Mass Arch.	Massachusetts Archives Collection, 328 vols.
MHS	Massachusetts Historical Society
MSA	Massachusetts State Archives



IOR	India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library, London
NRAS	National Register of Archives for Scotland
NYPL	New York Public Library
RB	Rijksarchief Brugge
SAA	Stadsarchief Antwerpen
SCSJCF	Suffolk County (Massachusetts) Supreme Judicial Court Files
TNA	The National Archives, UK
CO	Colonial Office Papers, The National Archives, UK
ADM	Admiralty Office Papers, The National Archives, UK
HCA	High Court Admiralty Papers, The National Archives, UK
SP	State Papers, The National Archives UK
UBG	Ghent University Library



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# Introduction

*John Coakley, C. Nathan Kwan, David Wilson*

Piracy and the historical study of it has brought many problems for states and scholars alike. In the early modern period, both legal and illegal maritime predation was a common occurrence in seas and oceans across the globe. Piracy in all its forms was, and still is, a worldwide phenomenon. As has been recently shown, too, it is persistent, ebbing and surging in response to political and economic pressures but never dying out completely.<sup>1</sup> Though piracy therefore reaches far beyond Europe historically and geographically, the expansion of European maritime empires in the early modern period exacerbated existing and created new problems of piracy, which states had to navigate and address. At times, European states addressed this problem in different ways according to their resources and interests. They might attempt to contain piracy to certain regions, co-opt maritime raiders for the state's benefit, deny maritime predation or their involvement in it, or suppress predation militarily and legally. As we have written elsewhere, contrary to the popularly held myth of pirates as the common enemies of all peoples, states only exercised power over pirates occasionally and for specific purposes.<sup>2</sup> This present volume extends that argument, deeply examining the relationship between European states and maritime predation, especially in Asian, Atlantic, and European waters between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries.

In the early modern period, there were many different forms of maritime predation. Most raids were deemed lawful, conducted by either public or private agents of widely recognised states, but a significant minority was considered unlawful and therefore branded “piracy” by some or all of the states. Hans Hägerdal points to the “porous line between state-condoned warfare and sheer piracy,” meaning that at times the

1 Amirell and Müller, *Persistent Piracy*.

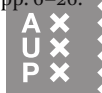
2 Coakley, Kwan, Wilson, “Piracy and Occasional State Power.”

only difference between the two was one of perception or interpretation. States therefore eagerly sought to draw clear lines to distinguish between them in law and popular perception in order to justify their own predation and vilify that which diminished their power.<sup>3</sup> Definitions of piracy abounded in early modern law, especially in the nascent field of international law that some European jurists tried to create. But due to competing interests between states, making a universal definition of piracy was easier said than done. Since there were so many ways to be a pirate, and no one could agree at the time what piracy was, one of the first problems scholars come across is a definitional one.<sup>4</sup> This book addresses this fundamental problem of piracy by looking at specific instances of maritime predation, privileging local case studies. Here we hope to find meaning in the detail.

This book presents three connected sections, each dealing with a different facet of the study of maritime predation: first, states' attempts to exercise *jurisdiction* over seafarers and their actions, whether pirates or not; second, the multiple predatory marine *practices* that were at various historical moments considered "piracy"; and finally, the many *representations*—in speech, print, or other means—made about piracy by states or the seafarers themselves. Through the early-modern case studies presented in these sections, the book seeks the meanings and motivations behind piracy in this period. Across the entire book, several themes emerge as common throughlines that are represented in all sections: the relationship between pirates and states; the numerous and overlapping motivations for maritime predation; and, finally, the ways in which certain sea raiders were rhetorically made into pirates. We see that pirates and their practices share similarities with each other, but they defy the broad definitions that states attempted to make. The reasons for individual acts arise from local or regional realities—the multi-imperial political economy of the Caribbean, for example—mixed with wider transoceanic issues often stemming from the metropole, like declarations of war. States and other victims of these acts of predation sometimes crafted media campaigns against raiders, helping to shape popular perceptions of pirates, and inadvertently leaving historians popular but unreliable primary sources. This book reveals, therefore, that while European states attempted to fashion piracy into a global and homogenous phenomenon, it was largely a local and often idiosyncratic issue.

3 Hägerdal, "The Bugis-Makassar Seafarers," p. 119.

4 Coakley, "Little Privateers," pp. 6–26.



## Pirates and States

The question of the relationship between piracy and state power and the extent to which states could exercise jurisdiction over pirates dates back to antiquity. The Roman jurist Cicero famously considered pirates beyond lawful community and thus the “common enemy of all.” No agreement or obligations were to be made towards pirates.<sup>5</sup> His beliefs were never widely applied in Europe, however, until states began expanding further overseas in the early-modern period, at which point they enacted and enforced piracy laws to counter hostile sea raiding. However, issues of practicality, as well as cultural and political differences between imperial territories and their metropolises made it difficult to enforce laws against piracy or even determine whether a particular mariner was a pirate. The Treaties of Tordesillas (1494) and Zaragoza (1529), mediated by the pope, divided the world into spheres of influence under Spain and Portugal. Spain considered any foreign ship navigating on its side of the line as piratical.<sup>6</sup> It was in defiance of Portuguese claims over the waters of Southeast Asia that Hugo Grotius made his famed defence of the 1603 Dutch capture of the *Santa Catarina* by arguing for the right to free navigation of the open oceans that all states held. All states then had an obligation to take action against those who infringed on this right, such as pirates.<sup>7</sup> Different European powers thus had divergent understandings of the law in force in the various sea spaces where they were active.

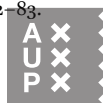
Though Grotius and others helped inaugurate a concept of international law, it was still in its infancy in the seventeenth century. In a misquoted paraphrase of Cicero, these international jurists gave pirates the label of *hostes humani generis*, “common enemies of all mankind.” By the late-seventeenth century, the criteria of *hostes humani generis* and *animo furandi* (“private motives”) became key components in defining forms of maritime depredation as piracy, but states and theorists alike still did not agree on a common definition of piracy.<sup>8</sup> Pirates were expected to be high seas robbers who did not act on behalf of any recognised sovereign power, but the lines between lawful and unlawful maritime predation remained blurred. Only at the turn of the eighteenth century did a “modern” vision of piracy begin

5 Heller-Roazen, *Enemy of All*, p. 16.

6 Benton, “Legal Spaces of Empire,” p. 702. See also Wilson, *Suppressing Piracy*, p. 4.

7 It was in this context that Grotius devised the principle of *mare liberum* (“free seas”). Anand, *Origin*, pp. 77–79.

8 Rubin, *Law of Piracy*, pp. 11, 82–83.



to emerge when apolitically motivated Atlantic pirates began attacking shipping indiscriminately in a region that international law designated as open to navigation by all nations. In doing so, these pirates violated international order and law as defined by Europeans and could thus be considered enemies of all members of the family of nations. Yet, even this was a relatively short-lived phenomenon.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the principle of universal jurisdiction, by which pirates as enemies of all could be tried in any competent tribunal, was popular with English legal theorists at the time, but as Lauren Benton points out, these cases were almost always punished by municipal criminal law and not under the less-reliable statutes of international law.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, despite attempts to universalise piracy in the early modern period, states continued to apply individual piracy laws on a case-by-case basis.

States dealt with piracy to such an extent because doing so aided their expansionist efforts. European imperial expansion extended the reach of European concepts of legality into new territories and their surrounding waters.<sup>11</sup> This gave states more opportunity to exert control over their own and foreign seafarers. As Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker emphasise, the “hydrarchy” of mariners active in the world’s oceans was both a potential engine of and a challenge to economic development and expansion in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. States made serious efforts to control the seafarers’ hydrarchy to harness their potential as agents of capitalism and imperialism.<sup>12</sup> Suppressing piracy was therefore a key part of the effort, because it threatened the imperial trade and order states sought to impose in colonial waters. As Janice Thomson makes clear, in searching for a monopoly on violence, states needed sovereignty over maritime predation, either by claiming it as their own under the rubric of privateering, or by labelling it piracy and violently rooting it out.<sup>13</sup> They came to control not just European seafarers abroad, too. In extra-European contexts, colonial authorities imposed European understandings of piracy on indigenous and non-European maritime activities and sought to suppress them as such. This tactic was consistently used to undermine the legitimacy of non-European competitors in order to facilitate aggressive campaigns that aimed to extend imperial control

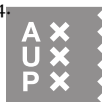
9 Benton, *Search for Sovereignty*, p. 131. See also Anand, *Origin*, pp. 77–89.

10 Rubin, *Law of Piracy*, p. 94; Benton, “New Legal History,” p. 231. Mark Chadwick has a somewhat different interpretation, see Chadwick, *Universal Jurisdiction*.

11 Kempe, “Globalized Piracy,” p. 354.

12 Linebaugh and Rediker, *Many-Headed Hydra*, pp. 144–45.

13 Thomson, *Mercenaries*, p. 54.



over certain coasts and seas.<sup>14</sup> In this volume, Martin Müller (chapter 2) discusses how the British state benefited by calling indigenous actors “pirates” in Southeast Asia in the early-nineteenth century while Anna Diamantouli (chapter 8) shows that the United States’ involvement in North Africa in the eighteenth century relied on claims of piracy and otherness against Muslim corsairs.

It is in this context that the label of piracy became a useful one for dealing with internal and external threats to state-building in imperial spaces. Prosecuting pirates could thus be a means towards an imperial end and sailors sought to avoid stigmatisation as pirates. Simon Layton notes, however, that by the eighteenth century, particularly in Asian waters, accusations of piracy began to be levelled at polities and sovereigns rather than individual seafarers. Suppressing piracy could then be employed to advance an “imperialism of free seas,” in which actions against alleged pirates could justify violence and appropriation of territory and maritime space.<sup>15</sup> In these ways, piracy was both a function of and a contributor to state expansion: expansion sparked predation, which resulted in increased piracy claims and suppression efforts, allowing states to take more. However, the long distances and limited capacities of states limited the authority that metropolises could impose on colonies and distant sea spaces, leaving room for much local initiative. Colonies hired sea raiders for defence and trade without state authorisation, individual raiders switched allegiances depending on the availability of raiding commissions, and local courts often failed to convict pirates because they continued to provide useful services the state could not.<sup>16</sup> Despite state ambitions, therefore, they could never prevent the stubbornly local persistent problem of piracy.

## Motivations for Piracy

State actions towards pirates comprises one major theme of this book, but the case studies do not approach the problem of piracy solely from the state perspective; most contributors opt instead to begin their analyses by looking at private seafarers and their actions. In the early modern period,

14 Wilson, “Indigenous Marine Dispossession.” On European (mis)understandings of piracy in Asia, see Rizzo, “Cross-Cultural Perceptions.”

15 Layton, “Hydras and Leviathans,” pp. 224–25. On pirates’ legal self-defence see Benton, *Search for Sovereignty*, p. 116.

16 For example, see John Coakley, “Jamaica’s Private Seafarers.” On local initiatives to suppress piracy see Wilson, *Suppressing Piracy*.





the word “piracy” was used to describe highly variable and diverse acts, which were intrinsically tied to and shaped by specific maritime contexts, traditions, and events. Practices could range from a single act committed by an individual crew, or several acts committed by several intermingling crews linked to the same communities. In contrast to modern definitions,<sup>17</sup> attacks described as piracy in the early modern period could occur not only on the high seas but also in nearshore waters and coastal expanses, crossing loosely defined and malleable jurisdictional zones. And piratical acts were not bound to the sea, but were borne by the sea, since pirates regularly left their vessels to commit attacks on land. As pirates cruised from one region to another or from one ocean to another, their practices changed and adapted to the maritime contexts in which they pursued their prey.<sup>18</sup> When committing these acts, pirates could be driven by diverse motivations ranging from opportunism to vengeance and from resistance to necessity. Such motivations were not mutually exclusive. As piracy was generally a collective act, there were also multiple overlapping and even contradictory motivations driving any one act.<sup>19</sup> Just as the motivations for one individual act of piracy could be multifaceted and contradictory, so too were the reasons driving regional surges in piracy, in which multiple crews committed several acts of piracy in a particular area.<sup>20</sup>

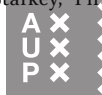
In their separate studies of the global history of piracy, John L. Anderson and David J. Starkey argue that the primary causal factors of piracy are episodic wars and fluctuating economies. Intermittent wars generate an unstable labour market that in turn causes the initial rise and sustenance of piracy through demand for black-market trading for provisions. These predatory societies are only suppressed when markets become stable, trade

17 The most prominent modern definition of piracy comes from the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which defines piracy as any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship and directed either (i) on the high seas, against another ship, or against persons or property on board such ship or (ii) against a ship, persons or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of any State. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, December 10, 1982, Part VII, Article 101.

18 See, for example, Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement*; Bialuschewski, *Raiders and Natives*; Galvin, *Patterns of Pillage*; Hanna, *Pirate Nests*; Lane, *Pillaging the Empire*; Starkey and McCarthy, “A Persistent Phenomenon.”

19 For examples on diverse motivations driving maritime predation see Bahar, “People of the Dawn”; Bromley, “Outlaws at Sea”; Cathcart, “Maritime Dimension”; Hahn, “Atlantic Odyssey”; Jowitt, “Shadow States”; Rediker, “Seaman as Pirate”; Rediker, *Deep Blue Sea*.

20 See Anderson, “Piracy and World History”; Hanna, *Pirate Nests*; Kempe, “Pirate Round”; McDonald, *Pirates, Merchants*; Starkey, “Pirates and Markets.”



increases, and piracy becomes a hindrance rather than an advantage to maritime communities.<sup>21</sup> Here, it is the connection between markets, traders, and pirates that explains when, where, and why there are significant surges in piracy. Unemployed and displaced mariners turn to piracy so long as there is market demand for plundered goods, whether to sustain developing or declining markets. Pirates needed ready markets that they could access to sell plundered goods, which they could exchange for supplies that would enable them to continue their activities. Traders provided these supplies at inflated prices in exchange for plundered commodities that they otherwise had little or no access to. With episodic wars and volatile employment, and where ready markets for plunder could be found within local or regional economies, sustained acts of piracy continued.<sup>22</sup> In the early modern period, maritime conflict and trade cannot be separated from colonial expansion and mercantilism, which both created and exacerbated the conditions for maritime predation between competing powers.<sup>23</sup>

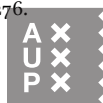
The rise and perpetuation of sustained episodes of piracy (or so-called piracy) cannot be separated from these tangled geopolitical and market conditions, as they played out in individual locales. While metropolitan issues, such as European declarations of war or sudden trade declines, created the conditions that could *encourage* a surge in piracy, this was not inevitable and did not lead to widespread piracy from all ports and places impacted by these issues as they reverberated across the oceans. As Benton remarks, “all piracy politics is local *and* regional.”<sup>24</sup> Several of the case studies in this volume demonstrate these local motivations, showing that spikes in maritime predations occurred when broader geopolitical and market fluctuations mixed with highly localised contexts and conflicts. Simon Egan (chapter 3) reveals a constellation of regional issues combined with climate and political changes driving maritime predation in the late medieval Irish Sea. As Coakley shows in chapter 1, Henry Morgan’s raids from Jamaica in the 1660s resulted from concerns over nearby Spanish depredations and the popularity of plundered goods in island markets. Similarly, Steven J. Pitt demonstrates in chapter 4 that Boston’s turn toward piracy suppression was tied to the local logwood market and the actions of specific raiders. It was how metropolitan events played out in distinctive

21 Anderson, “Piracy”; Starkey, “Markets.”

22 Bialuschewski, “Pirates, Markets and Imperial Authority”; Zahedieh, “Trade, Plunder, and Economic Development”; Zahedieh, “Merchants of Port Royal.”

23 Benton, “Legal Spaces of Empire”; Benton, *Search for Sovereignty*; Hanna, *Pirate Nests*; Stein and Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War*; Steinberg, *Social Construction*, ch. 3.

24 Benton, “Pirate Passages,” p. 276.



localities that stimulated the fluctuation in mariners committing acts of piracy in those colonial spaces, often as a reaction to broader factors like displacement, opportunity, or reprisal.

## Making Pirates

Local material conditions form a consistent throughline in this volume, but equally important are the more diffuse cultural issues surrounding the stories told about pirates. To their benefit or detriment, maritime predators could not escape their reputations; at times, some were lauded as heroes, but they could also find themselves rhetorically made into pirates, regardless of the legality of their actions. Just as piracy as a crime defies neat legal definitions and as piracy as a practice defies simple description, representations of “the pirate” as both an individual and a collective defies consistent categorisation. When an individual, group, or community is labelled as being piratical, this cannot be detached from the underlying motives of those who apply the label.<sup>25</sup> For example, beyond just legally prosecuting pirates, state actors sometimes crafted media campaigns against individuals, such as Henry Every or William Kidd. These stories competed in a saturated market with laudatory tales. The tone and content of narratives spread about them could be important to the raiders themselves; Henry Morgan successfully sued for libel against the publisher of a negative account of the sack of Panama.<sup>26</sup>

Untold numbers of seafarers have committed diverse acts of maritime predation and yet only certain individuals and groups dominate the popular imagination as pirates. Public campaigns and popular media have both deliberately and inadvertently constructed dominant piratical myths. Such representations blend fact with fiction by mixing historical events with false suppositions or by simplifying real life figures to fit contemporary desires. Such distorted representations of pirates and piracy also appear when reading the first-hand accounts of maritime predation across diverse historical records not intended for public consumption. In these documents, singular piratical acts are represented in strikingly different ways depending

25 See Bahar, *Indians and Empires*; Elliot, “Pirates, Politics and Companies”; Elliot, “The Politics of Capture”; Kwan, “Piracy and Occasional Interstate Power”; Kwan, “Barbarian Ships”; Layton, “Moghul’s Admiral”; Lipman, *Saltwater Frontier*; Risso, “Cross-Cultural Perceptions”; Sicking, “Pirate and the Admiral.”

26 Lincoln, “Henry Every”; Ritchie, *Captain Kidd*; Gibbs, “A Certain False.”



on the author's perspective. Certain ideas then circulate in the contemporary media, depending on cultural desires for particular stories, often salacious, adventurous, heroic, or damning. Regardless of accuracy, these stories are then refashioned and repurposed across different popular forums over subsequent decades and centuries, coming to shape present-day popular images of pirates. Dominant representations of "piracy" and especially particular "pirates" are also determined by local and regional connections to distinctive individuals and groups and the local histories and myths that have emerged therein.<sup>27</sup> Across these representations, the ways that those dubbed pirates represent themselves is often lost as individual crewmembers rarely had the chance to shape the dominant narrative and, instead, were reduced to the nameless, heterogenous, and largely unheard followers of leading figures or communities.<sup>28</sup> In this volume, Wim de Winter (chapter 5) shows groups of Southern-Netherlandish sailors traversing the globe committing acts of piracy, yet always perceiving and portraying themselves as legitimate traders and privateers. James Rankine (chapter 7) also discusses raiders' self-perception, focusing on a single crew member forced to join a pirate vessel and never committed to the lifestyle.

Often relying on the same limited source material as popular representations of piracy, the historical scholarship has also been guilty of homogenising representations of pirates. This has further added to our simplification of who was a pirate and what a pirate was. This has led most predominantly to representations of pirates as groups existing outside of society, whether as a result of their isolation from landed society and the proactive pursuit of pirates by monolithic state forces or, alternatively, as a choice made by individual pirates to escape societal norms and create alternative social orders on board vessels or in island and coastal outposts.<sup>29</sup> While such perspectives have provided important insights into shipboard life and labour conditions in the maritime world more generally, the similarities between distinctive crews, crewmembers, and contexts are often exaggerated using limited and often problematic evidence while differences are either smoothed over cursorily or left largely unexplored. This has changed in the past two decades as historians have delved into the complexities of

27 See Burwick and Powell, *British Pirates*; Eastman, "Blood and Lust"; Jowitt, *Culture of Piracy*; Lincoln, "Henry Every"; Lincoln, *British Pirates*; Macfarlane, "Pirates and Publicity"; Rennie, *Treasure Neverland*.

28 Hanna, "Well Behaved Pirates."

29 Examples include Bromley "Outlaws"; Kinkor, "Black Men"; Rediker, "Hydrachy and Libertalia"; Rediker, "Seaman as Pirate"; Rediker, *Deep Blue Sea*; Rediker, "Under the Banner"; Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*.



piracy as a label as well as the sustained connections of pirates to landed societies.<sup>30</sup> In chapter 6, Rebecca James critically analyses one of the most popular primary sources, Charles Johnson's *General History of the Pyrates*; James surveys different versions of the text for the ways they discuss or elide the fellowship of pirate groups in the narrative.

## Chapter Summaries

This collection is divided into three thematic sections, each containing chapters covering different chronological and geographical contexts. In the first section of this collection, *Jurisdiction*, the authors discuss the limits of states in exercising jurisdiction over “piracy.” Each case study suggests that colonial regimes often struggled to impose European understandings on and exercise control over the problems that maritime predation posed to state control in the seventeenth-century Caribbean and nineteenth-century insular Southeast Asia.

John Coakley (chapter 1) discusses the limits of metropolitan authority over the newly established English colony of Jamaica from the 1650s to 1670s. He argues that England's jurisdictional claims over its far-flung empire were tenuous and limited. London nominally administered Jamaica but lacked the capacity and resources to support the colonial project there. Instead, Coakley shows that the island's affairs were in fact largely in the hands of governors and local authorities who could often act independently of the metropole. Equipped with vaguely worded commissions, governors of Jamaica harnessed the island's seafaring power, employing it against Spanish targets. Mariners with such commissions became known as “privateers.” While acting on geopolitical motives, the privateers were principally driven by local concerns. Thus, they continued to attack Spanish shipping and territory despite the negative impacts this might have on England's treaty negotiations with Spain. That maritime predation continued in defiance of restrictions from London revealed the limits of English control over Jamaica. As the example of Henry Morgan's expeditions reveal, maritime and military activity sometimes served imperial interests but were run locally and executed by private individuals. Even after the Treaty of Madrid of 1670 rendered maritime reprisals illegal, English authorities in Jamaica still relied on private seafarers to engage in illicit trade with Spanish territories

30 Appleby, *Women and English Piracy*; Hanna, *Pirate Nests*; Wilson, “Caribbean to Craignish”; Wilson, *Suppressing Piracy*.



in violation of the treaty. Transgressions against metropolitan decrees and international treaties during the first two decades of the English presence in Jamaica reveal the limits of England's control over the island and the extent to which local authorities held *de facto* jurisdiction over Jamaica's private seafarers and maritime affairs.

Moving beyond the Caribbean and the seventeenth century, Martin Müller (chapter 2) examines the piratical label that British and other colonial regimes applied to the activities of "sea nomads" in Southeast Asia in the first half of the nineteenth century and how this characterisation was used as a means of exerting control and jurisdiction over the literal floating population of the region. European observers considered the transient seaborne peoples of insular Southeast Asia to be less advanced and hence prone to activities that approximated piracy in European understandings. Through various, often problematic, explanations, piracy came to be seen as a characteristic of the sea nomads. While the sea nomads were considered piratical, their activities, which often took place close to shore, in rivers, on land, or otherwise outside of the realm of the high seas, did not necessarily fit the definition of piracy in international law. Suppressing piratical peoples, however, helped justify violence in areas outside of the jurisdiction of international maritime law. In the process, maritime groups were de-politicised and de-legitimised, their sphere of activity reterritorialised as imperially controlled space. Colonial regimes sought to assimilate them into sedentary society or to channel their activity away from predation and towards gathering marine products and thus integrating them into a capitalist economy, activities that would inform policies in the seventeenth-century Caribbean as well as nineteenth-century Southeast Asia.

In the different contexts discussed in this section, state authority dealt with piracy in a variety of ways: relying on local authorities and actors, and seeking to convert seafarers into economic agents in the capitalist system of global trade. In each case, exercising, or at least claiming, jurisdiction over seafarers, often by using the label "pirate" helped states extend control, but in all cases, such measures were only partly successful. One of the principal reasons why imposing legal control over pirates around the world was such a challenge was that the practices of piracy, discussed in the next section, were diverse and localised, not conforming to legal definitions and expectations.

In the second section of the volume, *Practices*, each chapter charts the complex and often deeply localised surges of piracy, providing multiple reasons why individuals turned to piracy, how they operated, and where they concentrated. They demonstrate that piracy regularly transcended the localities in which such practices initially emerged, both over the short- and

long-term, whether by following the same prey to new localities, by adapting practices to new circumstances and waters, or by positioning their practices as lawful and legitimate compared to equivalent practices being committed by competitors.

Simon Egan (chapter 3) investigates this process in the late medieval Irish Sea, demonstrating that episodes of piracy (loosely defined) cannot be disentangled from the geopolitical and commercial competition surrounding Ireland and the resources of the Irish Sea. For example, increased herring stocks off Ireland's western coast, prompted by lowered ocean temperatures during the Little Ice Age, led to greater fishing and commercial traffic in Irish waters. Increased fishing opportunities and the resulting commercialisation then enabled and encouraged Irish lords to grow their own fleets to protect their control of these resources while also undercutting the economic base of their Irish and non-Irish rivals. These localised projections of power also paired with intermittent archipelagic and European warfare, in which maritime predation was intrinsically connected to the conflicts between the Irish, Scottish, Welsh, Manx, and English as well as their European rivals, particularly the Norse, French, and Spanish. Multiple groups committed various acts of piracy for varying complex reasons throughout the late medieval period, and such motivations cannot be easily disentangled from the backdrop of warfare, colonisation, and commercialisation over the long term.

Focusing on a shorter fifteen-year period, Steven J. Pitt (chapter 4) examines the role of Boston and the logwood trade in the rise and decline of piracy in the early eighteenth century. Pitt demonstrates the centrality of competition and conflict over the logwood trade in the surge in piracy that occurred in the western Atlantic following the Peace of Utrecht in 1713. This surge is traditionally considered to have resulted from the significant unemployment of mariners following the end of the War of the Spanish Succession, but Pitt offers a more nuanced evaluation of the process through which mariners were driven to piracy instead of other alternatives. Increased British participation in the logwood trade, particularly from Boston, centred on Laguna de Terminos following the declaration of peace, provided alternative employment for seafarers as both sailors and logwood cutters. The sheer volume of participation quickly left the market oversaturated and led to a severe drop in prices alongside famine amongst logwood cutters. The logwood cutters then turned to piracy, prompting retaliation by the Spanish who were already frustrated at the presence of traders and cutters in a region that they claimed fell under their possession. A Spanish assault on Laguna de Terminos ended the British trade and displaced the logwood

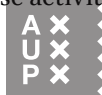




cutters who turned to piracy once again and provided a significant boost to a population of pirates already gathering at the Bahamas. As Pitt shows, this was not the end of the intrinsic relationship between piracy, logwood, and Boston, as the decline of piracy was also shaped by the re-establishment of a logwood trade centred on the Bay of Honduras, which coincided with renewed employment opportunities for mariners and also to greater policing of these waters by British Royal Navy vessels in the mid-1720s at a time when pirates were operating there in a much reduced capacity.

Wim de Winter (chapter 5), meanwhile, focuses his examination of the practices of piracy on the shipboard perspectives of Southern-Netherlandish Sailors who traversed the North Sea, Indian Ocean, and Pacific Ocean in the eighteenth century. In his examination, De Winter demonstrates that Ostend sailors often engaged in maritime predation but did not consider themselves as pirates or these acts as piracy. Such terms were instead reserved for European and non-European competitors who were portrayed as “heathens,” “moors,” or “outlaws.” In this way those who committed piracy were positioned as “others” whose actions were unlawful and unjustified compared to the actions of Ostenders, who legitimised their own practices as lawful privateering on dubious grounds. Crucially, De Winter discusses that the tactics that Ostenders used were similar to those whom they deemed pirates, especially as Ostenders adapted their practices to regional contexts and geographies. This included operating from bases on islands, small creeks, sand banks, or river deltas and employing a system of passes to justify predation. Likewise, the same local and regional issues that encouraged surges in predation of those groups and communities they deemed pirates, such as famine and market fluctuations, also encouraged Ostenders to turn to piracy as the impact of such issues led to declining opportunities in regional trade. Such similarities in practices did not diminish shipboard perspectives of the legitimacy of their actions compared to other groups who were deemed as illegitimate. Similar to the legal posturing of pirates and the legal ambiguities surrounding piracy, mariners could perceive and portray the same actions concentrated on the same regions using the same tactics as both piratical and not piratical practices.

By focusing on specific case studies covering different seas and groups, the three chapters in this section align with sentiments that geopolitical and market fluctuations shaped piratical practices while emphasising the importance of specific regional and local realities. At the same time, each of these chapters demonstrates the problems of representing predatory practices on the sea as outright piracy. This depended on whose perspectives were emphasised and whose activities were questioned.





It is to these issues that we turn in the third and final section of the book, *Representations*. In spite of the more nuanced representations of piracy that have emerged across the historiography, the representations of pirates as outlaws operating beyond society continues to influence both popular and academic perceptions of piracy. The three chapters in this section each tackle these issues from different perspectives, collectively demonstrating the problems of accepting and advancing the one-dimensional representations of pirates that have been constructed through testimonies, reports, newspapers, literature, plays, film, and historical scholarship.

Focusing on *A General History of the Pyrates* by the pseudonymous Captain Charles Johnson, Rebecca James (chapter 6) provides a closer reading of this infamous text than the countless others who have mined its pages for insights into a pirate world that was often more fantastical than factual. James compares five of the twelve versions of the text produced between 1724 and 1734 to observe the representations of pirates across different editions of the same text. James investigates how descriptions of fellowship amongst pirates alters from edition to edition with varying emphasis on the communality of pirates and individual protagonists. James argues that there is not a stable representation of piracy across the different editions but instead varied portrayals of piracy that were nonetheless simplified and narrativised to meet the needs and expectations of intended audiences. The text takes the complex motivations and feelings of pirates and distils these into erratic depictions of fellowship, community, and treachery that removes most individuals while also elevating certain individuals as archetypes. By focusing on different editions of this famous text, James offers a nuanced and critical reading of a text that has significantly influenced popular representations of piracy over the past three centuries.

Where James focuses on variable representations within different versions of the same text, James Rankine (chapter 7) instead investigates the variable experiences of crewmembers on board the same pirate vessel. Through a close examination of the experiences of Henry Glasby, a member of Bartholomew Roberts' crew between 1720 and 1722, Rankine argues against the representations of individual crewmembers as "monolithic extensions of their commanders" that Johnson and others have constructed. Rankine demonstrates that, in order to survive, Glasby had to assume different roles on board the pirate vessel on which he had been forcibly recruited. After being forced to sign the crew's articles following violent intimidation, Glasby worked as a pirate while actively resisting his reduction to compliant crewmember through attempts to escape and, later as ship's master, by exerting his influence over collective decisions. By focusing on Glasby's



experience and the interpersonal networks that he navigated, Rankine convincingly demonstrates that the crew held highly variable attitudes and levels of involvement in piracy, in which the vast majority of the crew were those who were “neither fully committed to lives as criminals nor completely innocent.” At the same time, there were a core of hardened veterans committed to piracy who had to carefully manage the internal tensions of a larger crew through violence, intimidation, and surveillance but also by granting privileges, security, and influence. Rankine argues that the representations of piracy that are provided through the rare accounts of rank-and-file crewmembers provides a fuller understanding of the historical realities of piracy than the myths and legends of figures who have dominated the narrative ever since they emerged in print.

Rather than concentrating on a specific text or crew, Anna Diamantouli (chapter 8) instead examines the representation of entire states as “piratical” to reveal how such descriptions were employed in politically and culturally charged attacks that have endured over the long term. Focusing on the “Barbary crisis” (1784–1797), Diamantouli charts the process by which diplomatic correspondence and newspaper articles in the United States began depicting North African corsairing sponsored from Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, and Morocco as piracy being conducted on behalf of piratical states. This occurred within the context of the larger anxieties felt within the newly established United States, where diplomatic decision-makers struggled to communicate and negotiate effectively with the North African Ottoman states following the loss of protection via British treaties. The inability of the United States to effectively repel corsairing led to attempts to delegitimise the North African states in print, perpetuating a racially charged binary “between evil and good, Muslim and Christian, African and European.” Having demonstrated the context in which this binary emerged, Diamantouli argues that this is a narrative that continues today, in which a line is drawn between the actions of “Barbary pirates” and modern-day fundamentalist groups, in order to continue the narrative of a conflict between the United States and a monolithic “Islamic World” as imagined in print. The purposeful and persistent reduction of North African corsairing to “Barbary piracy” demonstrates the intent of the US to delegitimise those Muslim states, and reveals a long history of racial and religious othering.

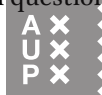
By interrogating representations of piracy across popular print, newspapers, and shipboard views, these chapters collectively emphasise that the designations of “pirate,” “piracy,” and “piratical” speaks more profoundly of the perspectives of those who deploy the terms than it does of the actions



of those accused or characterised as such. The dominant representations that each of the chapters argue against not only indicate the ways that “pirates” have been simplified and romanticised but also demonstrate that the designation of “piracy” has been employed in targeted campaigns to deride, delegitimise, and propagandise. It is only by closely examining the sources and contexts of these representations—such as on board pirate vessels, during diplomatic crises, or in dominant literary texts—that we can begin to understand why particular representations of piracy emerged and recognise the complex power relations that fed into their construction. Uncritical engagement with such representations will only continue to undermine our understanding of pirates and piracy in the past. Perhaps more importantly, this will also continue to impact our perceptions of and approaches towards those who are deemed “pirates” and “piratical” in the present and future.

## Conclusion

Early modern states did not solve the multiple and intersecting problems of piracy that they largely created. Modern scholars may never fully untangle them either, but the authors collected here address the problems of piracy by carefully analysing the local contexts behind individual cases of maritime predation. They reveal that piracy was a label as much as anything else. States were most concerned with using this label against certain maritime practices that threatened state expansion or complicated their jurisdictional claims to territory and sea space. Legal manoeuvres to make pirates the “enemies of all”—and the crafting of international law in this period—had to do with states seeking control not just of seafarers but of the labels used to describe them. Military campaigns to suppress piracy furthered state’s expansionist efforts, and media campaigns against certain individuals were assertions of primacy in a losing battle. Despite claims to the contrary, states did not win these many wars against the pirates, but rather they exerted their power occasionally in attempts to co-opt some seafarers and root out others. The motivations and practices of maritime predation proved too diverse to control entirely. As such, states perhaps never achieved a complete monopoly on violence, but they made significant strides towards a monopoly on *representing* violence by strategically utilising the pirate label. In doing so, persistent popular images of pirates emerged alongside dominant and flawed legal constructions of piracy, giving rise to cultural fascination, ongoing legal questions, and an entire field of study.

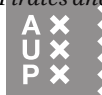


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