

MARITIME HUMANITIES, 1400-1800



Edited by Stefan Eklöf Amirell, Bruce Buchan, and Hans Hägerdal

Piracy in World History

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Maritime Humanities, 1400-1800: Cultures of the Sea

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. Interdisciplinary in its approach, *Maritime Humanities, 1400–1800: Cultures of the Sea* publishes books that conceptually engage with issues of globalization, post-colonialism, eco-criticism, environmentalism, and the histories of science and technology. The series puts maritime humanities at the centre of a transnational historiographical scholarship that seeks to transform traditional land-based histories of states and nations by focusing on the cultural meanings of the early modern ocean.

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Hans Hägerdal

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Växjö and Brisbane, 16 April 2021
The editors



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1 Introduction

Piracy in World History

Stefan Eklöf Amirell, Bruce Buchan, and Hans Hägerdal

Pirates, it is frequently claimed, have existed since the dawn of history, as long as there has been traffic and commerce at sea.¹ Presumably, the origins of piracy would thus be sometime in the pre-historic past, when people first took to the sea for commercial purposes, probably around eight thousand years ago, along the coast of the Persian Gulf.² Historical records over close to three and half millennia, from ancient Egypt to the present, seem to provide documentation of piratical activity from all around the world. Piracy would appear to be ubiquitous across a very *longue durée* in the history of humanity, and only with the projection of sea power by major states and empires, whether ancient (when Rome or Srivijaya controlled their adjacent seas) or modern (when Great Britain or the United States did so) was piracy efficiently suppressed, at least temporarily.

On closer examination, however, this grand narrative has several weaknesses. As for the allegedly pre-historic origins of piracy, it is not an activity that has left distinct traces in archaeological records – unlike, for example, farming, hunting, or fishing. It may be inferred from material remains and ancient depictions that maritime violence occurred. In the absence of written sources, however, it is generally not possible to determine whether such violence was piratical by modern definitions, or by those current at the time. As Philip de Souza put it, a history of piracy can “be written only on the basis of texts which mention pirates or piracy in explicit terms, or

1 E.g. John Philip Jenkins, “Piracy, International Law,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica online* (accessed 8 October 2020); John Zumerchik and Steven Laurence Danver, *Seas and Waterways of the World: An Encyclopedia of History, Uses, and Issues* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clio, 2010), 565.

2 R. Carter, “Boat Remains and Maritime Trade in the Persian Gulf During the Sixth and Fifth Millennia BC,” *Antiquity*, 80 (307) (2006): 52–63.

which can be shown to refer implicitly to pirates or piracy, according to the normal usage of these terms in the culture which produced the texts.”³

The alleged opposition between piracy and state power is often also much less straightforward than it may seem. Maritime raiding and violence were regularly central to the accumulation of power, wealth, and state building, whether we look to ancient Greece, medieval Scandinavia, Elizabethan England, pre-colonial Southeast Asia, or the Chinese coasts in late imperial times. As the capacity to project sea power and exercise maritime violence became institutionalized and linked to state building the need to draw a border between licit and illicit violence arose. From this perspective, the concept of piracy understood by definition as illicit violence, applies only in relation to a state or system of states (whether real or imagined).⁴

European overseas expansion during the Early Modern period is particularly illustrative with regard to the ambiguity between piracy and state power. From the turn of the sixteenth century, European navies and trading companies around the world excelled in maritime violence. Their competitive advantage in this field enabled them to harass and eliminate commercial and political rivals, Europeans as well non-Europeans. Maritime violence exercised by states and trading companies was seen in principle (at least in Europe) as legitimate, in contrast to the piratical violence exercised by non-state sponsored actors. At the same time, however, imperial rivalry at sea and on the coasts of the Americas, Africa, and Asia during the Early Modern period encouraged piratical activity and created a vast grey zone between licit and illicit maritime violence. To the non-Europeans who frequently were subject to the violence, extortion, and coercion of European navigators, moreover, the difference between, on the one hand, illicit piratical violence and, on the other hand, purportedly legitimate forms of maritime violence, such as naval warfare and patrols, punitive expeditions, blockades, or privateering, was often imperceptible and of little practical consequence.⁵

Our book bears on its cover a painting completed in 2006 by First Nations Australian artist, Daniel Boyd, entitled ‘We Call Them Pirates Out Here’. Boyd’s is a satirical reimagining of a familiar colonial trope of the benign

3 Philip De Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2.

4 See Stefan Eklöf Amirell & Leos Müller (eds), *Persistent Piracy: Maritime Violence and State-Formation in Global Historical Perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

5 E.g. Adam Clulow, “European Maritime Violence and Territorial States in Early Modern Asia, 1600–1650.” *Itinerario*, 33, no. 3 (2009): 72–94; Stefan Eklöf Amirell, *Pirates of Empire: Colonisation and Maritime Violence in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 27–31.



white coloniser, Captain Cook, as a pirate.⁶ By portraying the pretence of empire as an act of piracy, Boyd's image neatly aligns with our aim in this book to unsettle the conventional oppositions between piracy and sovereignty, toppling the *hostis humani generis* from its pillar of infamy. Pursuing this aim raises difficult questions about the concept of piracy and its definition in relation to global history. Is piracy an essentially European concept that is applied, often inappropriately, to world historical contexts in the wake of European overseas expansion from the late fifteenth century? What, in different historical and cultural contexts, sets piracy apart from purportedly legitimate uses of maritime violence, such as warfare at sea, reprisal, protection, and privateering? Is there a principal difference between piracy or armed robbery at sea and similar acts of plunder and violence on land? What are the meanings and connotations of the concept of piracy in different linguistic and cultural contexts? These are some of the key questions that this book sets out to explore. It does so by looking at the role that piracy played in different cross-cultural contexts during the period of European overseas expansion and imperialism from around 1500 until around 1900.

In posing these questions, our aim is to contribute to the global history of piracy and, in particular, to the global conceptual history of piracy, by highlighting both legal and theoretical perspectives and several empirical case studies involving colonial or imperial encounters in the maritime context. The cases include studies of piratical violence in Europe, the Philippines, Indonesia, India, the Ottoman Empire, China, and Vietnam across almost four hundred years. European overseas expansion is an important theme in many of the studies, but a significant feature of our chapters is that they also bring non-European – particularly Asian – perspectives to bear on the analysis of piracy. By confronting these competing, or concurrent, understandings of piracy as a historical, legal, and rhetorical concept, the book sets out to highlight how piratical violence and its suppression contributed to shaping imperial forms of domination, particularly in Asian, European, and Mediterranean waters and coastal areas, including several regions that have hitherto not been as extensively studied as the Atlantic with regard to piracy during the Early Modern period.

6 'We Call Them Pirates Out Here' is a satirical reworking of E. Philips Fox's painting 'Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770' from 1902. Boyd's painting is kept at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, Australia. A video of Daniel Boyd's description of the work and its context can be viewed at the MCA website here: <https://www.mca.com.au/artists-works/works/2006.25/>. We are grateful to Daniel Boyd and the Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery in Sydney for granting permission to reproduce this painting.

Global History and the Historiographical Context of the Book

Piracy has long been a prominent topic in world history and arguably preceded the current boom in global history by at least a century. C.R. Pennell, in a brief review of the academic (mainly anglophone) literature on piracy, sets the start of serious study of piracy based on documentary and archival sources to 1890, when Stanley Lane-Poole's book *The Barbary Corsairs* was published. This was followed, twenty years later, by C.H. Haring's *The Buccaneers in the West Indies in the Seventeenth Century*.⁷ There were, however, several studies published earlier in the nineteenth century in other languages, including French, Dutch, and Spanish, which were also (biases notwithstanding) based largely on documentary sources, such as: Ch. de Rotalier, *Histoire d'Alger et de la piraterie des Turcs dans la Méditerranée* (1841); J.H.P.E. Kniphorst, *Historische schets van den zeeroof in den Oost-Indischen Archipel* (1875); and J.M. Montero y Vidal, *Historia de la pirateria Malayo-Mahometana en Mindanao* (1888).

As these titles indicate, the historiography of piracy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was by no means confined to Europe or European pirates. Nevertheless, for most of the colonial period and the decades following World War II, the sources and perspectives were principally European. This remained so into the twentieth century, even when scholars in the late colonial and early postcolonial period began to write more balanced histories of piracy and its suppression, compared to earlier, generally salutary, and pro-colonial studies.⁸

Only from the late 1970s did scholars more consistently begin to explore what Europeans called piracy from non-European perspectives. Two monographs that focused on Southeast Asia were ground-breaking in this respect, Carl Trocki's *Prince of Pirates* (1979) and James Warren's *The Sulu Zone* (1983). In recent decades, piracy and maritime raiding in other parts of Asia have also attracted attention from scholars working with manuscript sources in Asian archives, including in Muhammad al-Qasimi in the Persian

7 C.R. Pennell, "Introduction," in C.R. Pennell, ed., *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 5. See also David J. Starkey, "Voluntaries and Sea Robbers: A Review of the Academic Literature on Privateering, Corsairing, Buccaneers and Piracy," *Mariner's Mirror*, 97, no. 1 (2011): 127–147.

8 E.g. Grace Fox, *British Admirals and Chinese Pirates* (London: K. Paul, 1940); Nicholas Tarling, *Piracy and Politics in the Malay World: A Study of British Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century South-East Asia*. Donald Moore Gallery, 1963).



Gulf, Robert J. Antony in China and Vietnam, Adam Clulow and Peter D. Shapinsky in Japan, and Lakshmi Subramanian in India.⁹

From around 1990, the rise of global (or world) history combined with a surge in contemporary piracy in some parts of the world (particularly in the Strait of Malacca, the South China Sea, the Gulf of Guinea, and the Gulf of Aden), to stimulate interest in piracy as a global historical phenomenon. Much of the scholarly attention has been directed towards the role of piracy in the European overseas expansion and imperialism and its role in the development of international law, with important contributions by, among others, Janice E. Thomson, Alfred P. Rubin, Lauren Benton, Peter Earle, and Daniel Heller-Roazen.¹⁰ Several articles, particularly in the *Journal of World History*, have also dealt explicitly with piracy in global historical contexts. A recent thirtieth anniversary special issue of the journal on the theme “Roads and Oceans” featured no less than three articles (out of ten) with the words pirates or piracy in the title.¹¹

Even so, the attempts to write a more balanced and genuinely global history of piracy has only just begun, and to date there have only been a few attempts to understand piracy from a cross-cultural point of view. A pioneering article by Patricia Risso in the *Journal of World History* in 2001 entitled “Cross-cultural Perceptions of Piracy,” attempted to analyse the different terms used in the Western Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to refer to what Europeans called piracy and privateering.¹² A few other scholars have followed suit with regard to East and Southeast Asia. Robert Antony

9 Muhammad Al-Qasimi, *The Myth of Arab Piracy in the Gulf* (London and Dover, NH: Croom Helm, 1986); Robert J. Antony, *Like Froth Floating on the Sea: The World of Pirates and Seafarers in Late Imperial South China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2003); Adam Clulow, “The Pirate and the Warlord,” *Journal of Early Modern History*, 16, no. 6(2012): 523–542; Peter D. Shapinsky, *Lords of the Sea: Pirates, Violence, and Commerce in Late Medieval Japan* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, 2014); Lakshmi Subramanian, *The Sovereign and the Pirate: Ordering Maritime Subjects in India’s Western Littoral* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016).

10 Janice E. Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Alfred P. Rubin, *The Law of Piracy* (Irvington-on-Hudson, NY: Transnational Publishers, 1998); Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Peter Earle, *The Pirate Wars* (London: Methuen, 2003); Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Enemy of All: Piracy and the Law of Nations* (New York: Zone Books, 2009).

11 Matthew P. Romaniello, ed., “Roads and Oceans: Rethinking Mobility and Migrations in World History,” A Thirtieth Anniversary Collection of the *Journal of World History*, 2001.

12 Patricia Risso, “Cross-Cultural Perceptions of Piracy: Maritime Violence in the Western Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Region During a Long Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of World History*, 12, no. 2(2001): 293–319. The article was also included in the “Roads and Oceans” collection of the journal cited above.



has briefly dealt with the problem of translating the concept of piracy to and from Chinese, and Jennifer L. Gaynor has discussed various ethnonyms associated with maritime raiding in the Malay Archipelago. Stefan Eklöf Amirell has highlighted the concepts used in East and Southeast Asia, arguing that illicit maritime violence was conceptualized in parts of Asia in ways that resembled the European understanding of piracy.¹³ All three are among the contributors to this book and develop these themes further in their contributions.

The present volume thus aims to contribute to the research effort that began around 2000 and that aims to unpack the rich and complex history of how the essentially European concept of “piracy” was translated and perceived when different cultures came increasingly into contact with one another from the sixteenth century onward. In doing so, the book can be said to be part of the effort to “capture maritime history’s still-unrealized potential as a vehicle for world history,” as Lauren Benton and Nathan Perl-Rosenthal recently put it, and to overcome the “ocean regionalism” that has shaped much research in maritime history to date.¹⁴

Piracy and other forms of maritime violence and coercion were a central theme in European overseas expansion from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century, as well as in the rhetoric and discourses that accompanied that expansion. European navigators were experts in maritime violence, and their capacity to exercise violence at sea was a decisive comparative advantage throughout the history of European expansion. They frequently used this advantage to threaten or destroy their commercial and political competitors, including both other Europeans and non-European rulers and merchants.¹⁵ Meanwhile, maritime violence and raiding was also perpetrated by non-European communities, who attacked both European and non-European seafarers and coastal settlements in search of booty and slaves. Some prominent examples of such non-European “pirates” (in the parlance of colonial sources) included the so-called Barbary states of North Africa,

13 Robert J. Antony, “Introduction,” in Robert J. Antony, ed., *Elusive Pirates, Pervasive Smugglers: Violence and Clandestine Trade in the Greater China Seas* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010), 7–8; Jennifer L. Gaynor, “Piracy in the Offing: the Law of Lands and the Limits of Sovereignty at Sea,” *Anthropological Quarterly*, 85, no. 3 (2012): 846–850; Jennifer L. Gaynor, *Intertidal History in Island Southeast Asia: Submerged Genealogy and the Legacy of Coastal Capture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2016); Amirell, *Pirates of Empire*, 34–40.

14 Nathan Perl-Rosenthal and Lauren Benton, “Introduction: Making Maritime history Global,” in Lauren Benton and Nathan Perl-Rosenthal (eds), *A World at Sea: Maritime Practices and Global History* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 5–6.

15 E.g. Earle, *Pirate Wars*; Subramanian, *The Sovereign and the Pirate*.



the coastal Malays, and other indigenous seafaring groups in Southeast Asia and the Arabs of the Oman coast in the Persian Gulf.¹⁶ Such practices were well-known and had designated terms in various non-European languages, including in the Ottoman Empire, China, India, and other parts of Asia and the Mediterranean. In these regions, maritime raiding was part of the social, economic, political, and cultural fabric, as it was in Europe, albeit in different ways and carrying different connotations and associations. This is discussed in several of the contributions to our book, particularly those by Robert J. Antony, Jennifer L. Gaynor, Hans Hägerdal, Lakshmi Subramanian, and Joshua White.

A major aim of this book is to explore the different meanings of piratical violence and the encounters between different concepts and cultural understandings of such violence during the period from 1500 to 1900. Our chosen time period is crucial in the global history of piracy. It witnessed the development of a legal and political discourse on piracy in Europe, triggered largely by the competition and anomalies that European overseas commercial and imperial expansion gave rise to. The period was also formative with regard to the development of international law, in the context of which laws pertaining to piracy and other forms of maritime violence and jurisdiction at sea played central roles.¹⁷ While the European experience of piracy in the context of expanding maritime commerce and empire in this period is well known, our volume also looks to non-European perspectives on piracy and related forms of maritime violence – not least the acts of violence and coercion perpetrated by European navigators – for example in the Ottoman Empire, China, India, Vietnam, and various parts of the Malay Archipelago.

However, the period 1500–1900 is also part of a much longer global history of piracy, which stretches from the formulation of the concept more than two thousand years ago up to the present. With regard to modern and contemporary history, it is frequently observed that piracy is an essentially European concept that has been, and in some cases still is, inappropriately applied to very different economic, social, political, and cultural contexts

16 E.g. Gillian Lee Weiss, *Captives and Corsairs: France and Slavery in the Early Modern Mediterranean* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); Stefan Eklöf Amirell, "The Making of the 'Malay Pirate' in Early Modern European Thought," *Humanities*, 9, no. 3 (2020): 91; Al-Qasimi, *Myth of Arab Piracy*.

17 E.g. Rubin, *Law of Piracy*; Peter Borschberg, *Hugo Grotius, the Portuguese, and Free Trade in the East Indies* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2012); Benton, *Search for Sovereignty*, ch. 3; Mark Chadwick, *Piracy and the Origins of Universal Jurisdiction: On Stranger Tides?* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

than those prevailing in Europe.¹⁸ In order to evaluate the relevance of such claims – which risk being tainted by cultural relativism as well as Orientalist biases and a troubling lack of source criticism¹⁹ – it is necessary first to turn briefly to the history of the concept of piracy as it developed in Europe from Antiquity to the eve of Europe’s overseas expansion.

The Ancient Origins of Piracy in Europe

The early historiography of piracy is overwhelmingly concentrated to the Mediterranean, where the concept itself first appeared in the final centuries BCE, although the term is often applied anachronistically to earlier historical periods as well. For example, the first documented instance of piracy is often associated with the Sumerians, who supposedly were attacked by pirates at the end of the third millennium BCE.²⁰ The cuneiform records from Ur, however, do not use the word piracy or any similar term, and the assertion seems to be based on a passage in the so-called Code of Ur-Nammu, who, in the twenty-first century BCE, boasted of having established freedom of trade, presumably in the Persian Gulf, from a certain “chief sea captain.”²¹

Similarly, the so-called Sea Peoples, who wreaked havoc in the eastern Mediterranean between the fourteenth and twelfth centuries BCE, are often identified as pirates. However, there is no reliable evidence that the Sea Peoples were pirates or were seen as such by their contemporaries, either explicitly or implicitly. Piracy began to be conceptualized in the writings of Homer and later Greek texts, but the word *peirates* (πειρατης) seems to have appeared only around the mid-third century BCE.²²

The etymology of the term points to a persistent and intriguing ambiguity between pirates and states or empires, because both the words pirate and empire have the same root, *per-* (περ-), which means to risk or attempt.²³

18 E.g. Joseph N. F. M. à Campo, “Discourse Without Discussion: Representations of Piracy in Colonial Indonesia 1816–25,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 34, no. 2 (2003): 199–214; Rubin, *Law of Piracy*, 2; Adam Young, *Contemporary Maritime Piracy in Southeast Asia: History, Causes and Remedies* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007), 6–8; Antony Reid, “Violence at Sea: Unpacking ‘Piracy’ in the Claims of States Over Asian Seas,” in Antony (ed.) *Evasive Pirates*, 15–26.

19 Amirell, *Pirates of Empire*, 11–13.

20 E.g. Robert Haywood and Roberta Spivak, *Maritime Piracy* (London: Routledge, 2012), 23–24.

21 Harriet Crawford, “Trade in the Sumerian World,” in *idem* (ed.) *The Sumerian World* (New York: Routledge 2013), 457.

22 De Souza, *Piracy*, 3.

23 Rubin, *Law of Piracy*, 345.



The well-known story of the pirate and the emperor, as told by St Augustine of Hippo, illustrates the relative quality of piracy in relation to empires and states:

Indeed, that was an apt and true reply which was given to Alexander the Great by a pirate who had been seized. For when that king had asked the man what he meant by keeping hostile possession of the sea, he answered with bold pride, “What do you mean by seizing the whole earth; but because I do it with a petty ship, I am called a robber, while you who do it with a great fleet are styled emperor.”²⁴

Empires and states during Antiquity projected themselves as the antithesis of pirates and the guarantors of maritime security. A major aim of the Roman Empire in the wake of the Punic Wars was to suppress piracy and uphold maritime security in the Roman *Mare nostrum*. Failure to do so could threaten the very foundations of the Roman Empire. When the Cilician sea raiders disrupted maritime traffic in the eastern Mediterranean during the Late Roman Republic, the statesman and general Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (Pompey) led a campaign in 67 BCE that supposedly cleared them from the sea in just three months. Speaking in the Senate in favour of Pompey and defending the decision to grant him extraordinary military powers, the orator and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE) represented the situation as one of unprecedented crisis that threatened the very existence of the Roman Republic.²⁵ In the view of Cicero, pirates were the antithesis of the state and of civilized society. Cicero was the first Roman Latin author to use the word *pirata*, which he borrowed from the Greek, although he also used other terms, particularly *praedo* (robber, thief), to refer to the Cilicians and other sea robbers.²⁶

Of particular importance in the present context is Cicero's brief discussion about pirates in a section on perjury in his last major philosophical work *De Officiis* (*On Duties*), in which he famously defined pirates as *communis hostis omnium*, that is, the “common enemy of all.” Cicero argued that pirates

24 St Augustine of Hippo, *City of God*, transl. by M. Dods (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publ., 2009), 101 [4:4]. Augustine calls Alexander king (*rex*) in the text but uses the word emperor (*imperator*) in the direct discourse allegedly delivered by the pirate (*pirata*).

25 Philip de Souza, “Piracy in Classical Antiquity: The Origins and Evolution of the Concept,” in S. Eklöf Amirell and L. Müller (eds), *Persistent Piracy: Maritime Violence and State-Formation in Global Historical Perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 39–40.

26 De Souza, “Piracy in Classical Antiquity,” 49, n. 67.

were not lawful enemies and thus outside the law of nations and not subject to any moral obligations. The entire passage reads:

Furthermore, we have laws regulating warfare, and fidelity to an oath must often be observed in dealings with an enemy: for an oath sworn with the clear understanding in one's own mind that it should be performed must be kept; but if there is no such understanding, it does not count as perjury if one does not perform the vow. For example, suppose that one does not deliver the amount agreed upon with pirates (*praedonibus*) as the price of one's life, that would be accounted no deception – not even if one should fail to deliver the ransom after having sworn to do so; for a pirate (*pirata*) is not included in the number of lawful enemies, but is the common foe of all the world (*communis hostis omnium*); and with him there ought not to be any pledged word nor any oath mutually binding.²⁷

Cicero's writings about pirates thus placed them outside the law and represented them as subversive enemies, not only of Rome but of all nations. He echoed the words of the Greek historian Polybius, who described the Illyrians from the West Balkans in the second century BCE as the enemies of all.²⁸ If unchecked, such persistent, large-scale piracies could pose existential threats to the state and society.²⁹ The perceived threat helped to establish the legal and moral discourse, which Cicero had pioneered, according to which pirates were defined as the generic enemies of humanity. Any measures were justified to deal with them.

At the same time, however, there was some ambivalence in the Roman practices in dealing with alleged pirates. Triumphs were regularly accorded to those who campaigned against the pirates, suggesting they were, after all, legal enemies to which the Roman laws of war applied, at least to some degree. Alleged pirates, moreover, could be useful for the accumulation of power, both imperial and personal. Pompey the Great was not the only Roman leader who built his career on fighting pirates. For example, according to Plutarch, Julius Caesar first made a name for himself as a war leader by raising a navy to defeat a band of Cilician pirates who had captured and subsequently released him for a ransom.³⁰

27 Cicero, *De Officiis* [On Duties], III:107. Transl. Walter Miller (London: Wiliam Heinemann & New York: Macmillan, 1913), 385–387.

28 Polybius, *Histories*, 2:12.4–6.

29 Cf. Amirell & Müller (eds), *Persistent Piracy*, esp. De Souza, “Piracy in Classical Antiquity.”

30 Plutarch, *The Life of Julius Caesar*, 1–2.



In all of these respects – the notion of pirates as the enemies of all, the threat posed by pirates to state and society, and the usefulness of pirates for the extension or accumulation of power – Roman notions of piracy were to reverberate in the history of Europe and, from the late fifteenth century, the world. From this time, the texts of Cicero and other classical authorities were rediscovered in Europe. *De officiis*, in particular, was one of the most read and secular books in Europe during the Renaissance, and it was translated to several vernacular European languages from the late fifteenth century.³¹ In this way, Cicero's writings on piracy and other topics came to exercise a great influence on the development during the Early Modern period, which eventually would lead to the establishment of international law and the law of the sea. Together with other salient features of the pirate image, such as the association with opulence and drunkenness, many elements of the European perception of the pirate thus had their origin in Roman times. They gained renewed currency as Europeans began to extend maritime trade and colonization in the fifteenth century.³²

Piracy and the European Overseas Expansion

Initially, with the onset of Iberian maritime expansion in the second half of the fifteenth century, Spain and Portugal tried to deal with the new challenges of governing the newly discovered oceans and overseas lands by dividing them into separate spheres of interest. A series of agreements sanctioned by the Pope were concluded during the second half of the fifteenth century, the most famous of which was the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1494. Spain and Portugal accordingly agreed on a meridian line through the Atlantic, which was said to mark the border between the two countries' spheres of influence. Portugal was to exercise sovereignty over all lands already or yet to be discovered to the east of the border and Spain the western part. In 1529, the agreement was supplemented by the Treaty of Zaragoza, which drew a corresponding antemeridian on the other side of the earth.

The treaties recognized Spain and Portugal as the only legitimate maritime powers, which in theory made all shipping that was not expressly sanctioned or permitted by the Iberian powers illegal. As discussed by Birgit Tremml-Werner in her contribution, Spain and Portugal tended to

31 David Marsh, "Cicero in the Renaissance," in Catherine Steel (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Cicero* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 313.

32 De Souza, "Piracy in Classical Antiquity," 43; cf. Heller-Roazen, *Enemy of All*.



define anyone who defied their self-proclaimed and papally sanctioned jurisdiction over oceans as pirates or corsairs, the two concepts being used largely interchangeably during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the Indian Ocean, the Portuguese tried to assert their presumed rights over the sea by forcing Arab, Indian, Malay, and other merchants to buy *cartazes* (licences) in order to avoid being plundered or sunk by Portuguese vessels. These and other violent or coercive acts on the part of Portuguese navigators gave rise to much resentment and resistance among merchants, rulers, and dispossessed coastal groups around the Indian Ocean, as Lakshmi Subramanian discusses in her chapter.

The controversy over jurisdiction and sovereignty at sea came to the fore when, from around the turn of the seventeenth century, the Dutch began to send commercial expeditions to Asian seas, that is to lands that the Portuguese considered to be under their sovereignty and in their maritime sphere of influence. Accusations of piracy, in this context, were a useful tool for the Portuguese (and other European powers) to assert their rights to, and control over, trade and maritime traffic in relation to other Europeans. In 1602, the Portuguese, on dubious grounds, accused six Dutchmen of piracy in Chinese waters, which led to their execution by Chinese authorities in Canton. By way of retaliation, the Dutch seized a Portuguese carrack, the *Santa Catarina*, in the Strait of Malacca the following year.³³ In order to justify the seizure, legally and morally, the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius wrote his famous tract *Mare liberum*, which argued for the right of any nation to use the sea for trade and marine transportation. Such activities, in Grotius's view, were legal by international law. Piracy, on the other hand, was illegal from the point of view of all nations.

The legal and intellectual discourse on piracy in Early Modern Europe was literally a world apart from the reality of maritime encounters overseas. Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English, French, and other European navigators all pursued ruthless policies to further their strategic and commercial interests in distant seas and on the coasts. With few goods to trade in exchange for the spices, textiles, porcelain, tea, and other Asian commodities that the Europeans craved, the main competitive advantage of the latter was their superior naval power. Europeans thus made frequent use of maritime violence and coercion in order to force their will on Asian sovereigns and

33 Peter Borschberg, "The Seizure of the Sta. Catarina Revisited: The Portuguese Empire in Asia, VOC Politics and the Origins of the Dutch-Johor Alliance (1602–c. 1616)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 33, no. 1 (2002): 31–62; Michael Kempe, "Beyond the Law. The Image of Piracy in the Legal Writings of Hugo Grotius," *Grotiana*, 26, no. 1 (2007): 379–395; see also Borschberg, *Hugo Grotius*.

communities and to eliminate any commercial competitors, European, Asian, or African. Historian Peter Earle has aptly called such practices “piratical imperialism”; that is, European governments supporting or condoning piracy committed by their own subjects as a cheap and effective way of furthering their commercial and political objectives overseas.³⁴ There was, in other words, a great difference between the rhetoric about pirates as the enemies of all and the reality of clandestine connections between pirates and other entrepreneurs of illicit maritime violence, and trading companies and empires.³⁵

Piratical imperialism did not go unnoticed at the time. European sources from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries are packed with accusations of piracy by the members of one nation against another or several other nations, particularly other Europeans.³⁶ Europeans also tried to convince Asian merchants and rulers that fellow Europeans were pirates, and the Dutch, in particular, worked hard to spread their view of the English as a “nation of pirates.”³⁷

This Hobbesian situation on the world’s oceans made it necessary to draw a line between legal and illegal maritime violence and to establish a legally enforceable distinction between pirates and privateers. On paper, the distinction may have seemed straightforward enough: pirates were essentially bandits at sea who operated without the permission or sanction of a recognized sovereign, whereas privateers held a commission from a recognized sovereign in the form a letter of marque and confined their raids to attacking enemy ships in wartime.³⁸ In practice, however, the policy of sanctioning privateers, which remained common on the part of European governments throughout the Early Modern era, created a vast grey zone between legal and illegal maritime violence. The practice thus gave rise to a number of problems and anomalies in the international maritime sphere. First, one nation’s pirates were another nation’s privateers or even just innocent navigators. The different perspectives gave rise to very different interpretations, for example in the case of the six Dutchmen who

34 Earle, *Pirate Wars*, xi.

35 Cf. Lauren Benton, “Toward a New Legal History of Piracy: Maritime Legalities and the Myth of Universal Jurisdiction,” *International Journal of Maritime History*, 23, no. 1 (2011): 225–240.

36 E.g. Amirell, “Making of the Malay Pirate.”

37 N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain 1649–1815* (London: Penguin, 2006), 162; Earle, *Pirate Wars*, 120.

38 David J. Starkey, “Introduction,” in *idem*, E.S. van Eyck van Hesling, J.A. de Moor (eds), *Pirates and Privateers: New Perspectives on the War on Trade in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997), 1–9.

were executed in Canton at the beginning of the seventeenth century or with regard to the raids of English privateers against the Spanish Main under Elizabeth I. As discussed in several of the chapters in this book, such discrepancies were not confined to inter-European politics and conflicts but were even more pertinent (if not always more visible in the sources, which tend to be written largely by Europeans) in intercultural contexts.

Second, many privateers stretched the limits of their commissions and attacked not only enemy ships, but also the vessels of neutral or even friendly nations. When their commissions expired many privateers turned pirates and piracy frequently surged following the end of major European wars, such as the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), the end of which inaugurated the last great wave of Atlantic Piracy, which lasted until around 1726. Further contributing to the grey zone between piracy and privateering was what Lauren Benton has called “legal posturing”; that is, the numerous and often creative strategies that pirates adopted to defend their actions and protect them from prosecution.³⁹

In view of the obviously chaotic and unregulated situation on the world's oceans, European jurists in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries strove to formulate a workable legal definition of piracy. The Italian jurist Alberico Gentili held that it was the sovereign who had the right to define who was a pirate, and as this doctrine gained currency throughout Europe, it provided the sovereign with an instrument of great power that extended far beyond his or her shores.⁴⁰ It also afforded European governments the right to define non-European actors as pirates simply by withholding recognition of sovereignty or statehood, as discussed by Östlund and Buchan in the context of the so-called Barbary states in the Mediterranean. This points to a third problem concerning the distinction between legal and illegal maritime violence, namely, the question of who was a sovereign. The answer was not always clear even in Europe, as demonstrated in the chapters by Buchan and Kempe, and the problem was even more pertinent in relation to non-European rulers. Were raiding fleets sponsored by North African or Southeast Asian rulers, for example, to be considered piratical or as part of the naval forces of the rulers in question?

European states continued to issue letters of marque to privateers and to nurture ambiguous relationships with these and other entrepreneurs of maritime violence throughout the seventeenth century. Whether the English,

39 Lauren Benton, “Legal Spaces of Empire: Piracy and the Origins of Ocean Regionalism,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 47, no. 4 (2005): 700–724.

40 Rubin, *Law of Piracy*, 20–21.



as Dutch propaganda in the East made out, were a “nation of pirates” is debatable, but it is certain that many of the most well-known pirates of the so-called Golden Age of Atlantic piracy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were English. Although the well-researched field of Atlantic piracy is not the main focus of this volume, English pirates inevitably appear in several of the contributions, particularly those by Kempe and Buchan, demonstrating the ambiguous attitude that European states and authorities had towards piracy.

A major sea change occurred at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Britain, then emerging as the major European naval power, began to take the lead in the global struggle against piracy. In 1700, Parliament passed a law that outlawed piracy more clearly than before and prescribed severe punishments for piratical activities. The law was passed against a background of outrage at the ravages of Henry Avery and William Kidd in India in the last years of the seventeenth century, jeopardizing English relations with the Mughal court, embarrassing the English East India Company and the Crown. The result was that the British began to take stern measures against pirates. Kidd and Avery, together with their crews, were tried and sentenced on charges of piracy and several of the perpetrators of the attacks on Mughal ships in the Indian Ocean were executed. Largely due to British suppression following the War of Spanish Succession, the Golden Age of Atlantic piracy as well as the ravages by European pirates in the Indian Ocean came to an end around 1730.⁴¹

Following this suppression of European piracy, attention turned increasingly to non-European entrepreneurs of violence who were identified as pirates, for example in North Africa and the Malay Archipelago, as discussed by Östlund and Buchan, Hägerdal, and Tremml-Werner. From the second half of the eighteenth century, piracy became a very useful instrument for asserting European sea power in Asian and African waters. Several indigenous nations, for example in North Africa, the Persian Gulf, and the Malay Archipelago, were identified by European imperial agents as piratical. Brutal attacks were launched on several occasions, particularly in the nineteenth century, in order to suppress “piracy” and assert imperial and commercial dominance on land and sea.⁴² Piracy continued to be invoked

41 Rubin, *Law of Piracy*, 100–104; Earle, *Pirate Wars*; Robert C. Ritchie, *Captain Kidd and the War against the Pirates* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1986); Michael Kempe, “Even in the Remotest Corners of the World’: Globalized Piracy and International Law, 1500–1900,” *Journal of Global History*, 5, no. 3 (2010): 353–72.

42 On North Africa, see Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005); on the Persian Gulf, see Al-Qasimi, *Myth of Arab Piracy*; on Southeast Asia, see Amirell, *Pirates of Empire*.



as a serious threat that necessitated harsh security measures in colonial contexts, sometimes even in areas far away from the sea, as discussed by Stefan Amirell in this volume.

Concurrent Concepts of Piracy

From an Asian point of view, European commercial and imperial expansion, both before and after the turn of the eighteenth century, looks very much like a massive wave of organized piracy, neatly captured by Peter Earle's phrase "piratical imperialism." This observation, however, raises the question of what terms were used in non-European languages to denote what Europeans called piracy. Were there established terms in the vernacular Asian and African languages or were European terms, such as piracy, corsair, and privateer, borrowed and introduced in these languages as a result of the interaction with European navigators? Patricia Risso's article showed that there were both indigenous and borrowed words for illicit maritime violence in Arabic and Persian, and the contributions of the present book extend and corroborate this conclusion. Although it is sometimes claimed that there was no indigenous Malay term for piracy, at least not before the mid-nineteenth century, illicit maritime violence was conceptualized much earlier.⁴³ Throughout the Malay Archipelago, a wide range of ethnonyms were used to refer to piratical activities or maritime raiding, as discussed by Jennifer Gaynor and Hans Hägerdal in their contributions. Sometimes, these ethnonyms became generic terms for piracy or maritime raiding, such as the Malay word *lanun*, derived from *Illanun* (or *Iranun*), an ethnic group originating from the southern Philippines and which, from around 1770, acquired a formidable reputation for maritime violence and coastal raiding throughout Southeast Asia.⁴⁴

Chinese and Japanese officials, meanwhile, often used established terms associated with plunder and illicit violence at sea, such as *wokou* in Mandarin or *bahan* in Japanese, to refer to the Dutch and other European navigators.⁴⁵ In India, meanwhile, both the Portuguese and the Dutch gave rise to generic

43 Reid, "Violence at Sea," 19, cites Crawford, *Descriptive Dictionary*, 353, as a basis for the claim that piracy was not conceptualized in Southeast Asia before the mid-nineteenth century. See Amirell, *Pirates of Empire*, 36–40, for a rebuttal of this and similar arguments.

44 James Francis Warren, *Iranun and Balangingi: Globalization, Maritime Raiding and the Birth of Ethnicity* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2002).

45 Paula Calanca, "Wokou. Un terme au long cours?" in Michèle Battesti (ed.), *La Piraterie au fil de l'histoire. Un défi pour l'État* (Paris: Presses de l'université Paris-Sorbonne, 2014), 77; Adam

terms in Bengal associated with piratical behaviour: *harmads*, derived from the Portuguese word *armada* (fleet), and *olandez* derived from the Dutch.⁴⁶ The Italian word for corsair, *corsale*, was absorbed by Arabic and became *qursan*, meaning a privateer licenced by the state.⁴⁷ These examples, several of which are further discussed in the empirical chapters of this volume, demonstrate that translating and conceptualizing piracy was a complex and multi-directional process. The term piracy was not unilaterally imposed by European colonialists in non-European waters and cultural contexts.

The complex conceptual history of piracy from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century thus contains both competition and entanglement. In order to study these processes, we have been inspired by the theoretical and methodological framework pioneered by Gunlög Fur and colleagues centring on the study of concurrences.⁴⁸ The point of departure for the framework are the multiple meanings of the word “concurrency.” The word obviously means “simultaneous”; that is, the temporal property of two things happening at the same time. In addition, “concurrent” can also mean “having equal authority or jurisdiction” and “tending to or intersecting at the same point.” Third, in an archaic noun-form, “concurrent” can also mean “a rival or competitor,” a meaning that is still common in many European languages, including French, German, and Scandinavian languages. While the English verb “concur” (at the root of both the noun “concurrency” and the adjective “concurrent”) thus has the connotation of agreement and acceptance, in other European languages it has retained its earlier meaning of competition. As a theoretical and methodological concept, concurrences contains in its reservoir of meanings both agreement and competition, entanglement and incompatibility as it slides uneasily across time and space and between different languages. It signals contestations over interpretations and harbours

Clulow, “European Maritime Violence and Territorial States in Early Modern Asia,” 1600–1650. *Itinerario*, 33.3 (2009): 91, n. 2.

46 Lakshmi Subramanian, “Of Pirates and Potentates: Maritime Jurisdiction and the Construction of Piracy in the Indian Ocean,” in D. Ghosh and S. Muecke (eds), *Cultures of Trade: Indian Ocean Exchanges* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 28–29; W. van Schendel, “Asian Studies in Amsterdam,” in L. Douw (ed.), *Unsettled Frontiers and Transnational Linkages* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1997), 1; see further Amirell, *Pirates of Empire*, 28–29; K. Yazdani, *India, Modernity and the Great Divergence: Mysore and Gujarat (17th to 19th c.)* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 532–534.

47 M. Pelner Cosman & L.G. Jones, *Handbook to Life in the Medieval World*, 1 (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), 216; see further Risso, “Cross-Cultural Concepts.”

48 See Diana Brydon, Peter Forsgren, and Gunlög Fur (eds), *Concurrent Imaginaries, Postcolonial Worlds* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), esp. Fur’s contribution, “Concurrences as a Methodology for Discerning Concurrent Histories,” 41–68.



different, diverging and, at times, competing claims that affect studies of the definition of concepts such as sovereignty, authority, jurisdiction, piracy, and the legitimate use of maritime and terrestrial violence.

We believe that the framework is useful because it indicates a way of avoiding one of the major pitfalls in the writing of global history: the tendency to overemphasize connectivity and convergence, resulting in a deterministic and sometimes celebratory grand narrative of modern globalization.⁴⁹ Concurrences instead recognizes both confluence and competition and insists that any understanding of the world take into account both entanglements and tension between equally weighty jurisdictions. Concurrences suggests, on the one hand, that different perspectives and locations are always and inescapably entangled; on the other hand, it acknowledges that historical actors constantly negotiate the different and sometimes incompatible demands arising from these concurrent conditions. By adopting concurrences as a heuristic point of departure, we are forced to grapple with the universalizing perspectives contained in colonialist claims, and to pay attention to how such claims and imperatives attempt to subsume or co-opt alternatives. By moving beyond an understanding of encounters and concurrences in terms of simplistic binaries between active agents and passive victims, historical developments can be fruitfully studied as a series of simultaneous and competing stories of exchange, cooperation, transculturation, and appropriation, where non-Europeans always retain a measure of agency. The historian can thereby challenge established historical narratives while remaining alive to the significance of alternative voices and understandings of the world.

These points of departure, we believe, are conducive for studying how the concept of piracy was defined, translated, and used in various contexts marked by global interaction and imperial encounters from the sixteenth to the early twentieth century. By highlighting these complex global historical processes, we hope that the present volume will contribute to the current efforts to understand the role that piracy and, more broadly, maritime violence have played in world history.

Summary of the Contributions

The ten contributions in this book are organized in three sections, each of which deals with a central aspect of piracy in world history during the period

49 E.g. Franz L. Fillafer, "A World Connecting?," *History and Theory*, 56, no. 1 (2017): 3–37.



between 1500 and 1900. The first of these is piracy in international law and politics. The origins of modern international law are frequently sought in the Early Modern period, and piracy has often been accorded a major role in this development, as well as in the emergence of an international system of states. In his contribution to this section, Michael Kempe highlights how international law developed through a process that he calls “integration by exclusion.” Specifically, he focuses on the piratical exploits and subsequent trial of John Cusack, an Irish privateer-turned-pirate who was sentenced to death by the Admiralty in England and executed in 1675. The case illustrates how accusations of piracy as a crime against all nations was a central element in the emergence of international law in Europe and in the establishment of England’s claim to be an effective global sea power. Kempe also argues that the sentence was meant to demonstrate to other European nations that England was willing and able to project its jurisdiction at sea far beyond the country’s shorelines.

The idea of pirates as *hostes humani generis* is also in focus in Bruce Buchan’s chapter. Although the concept may appear to be so entrenched as to be axiomatic, Buchan argues that piracy also elicited ambiguous responses from philosophers and lawyers. Pirates were merely one among a pantheon of archetypal enemies of good order, and there was at least some doubt about whether they deserved the worst opprobrium. By examining references to piracy in the work of the English political philosopher John Locke in particular, Buchan argues that pirates vied with tyrants for the title of “common enemy of all humankind.” While Locke’s prevarication certainly did not amount to a rehabilitation of either figure, the British intellectual and legal context in the last years of the seventeenth and early years of the eighteenth centuries provides some evidence of continuing doubt about who the *hostis humani generis* really was.

Contemporary views of piracy often associate it with state failure. However, as Jennifer Gaynor shows, this view may be traced to nineteenth-century debates about Southeast Asia, and in particular, the writings of Raffles for whom it became a pretext for intervention. Prior to this, European observers tended either to naturalize piracy as a part of Southeast Asian life, or to label foes as pirates. Both nineteenth-century colonial debates and earlier stereotypes disconnected from maritime settings do not provide reliable evidence of piracy. Instead, they offer evidence of colonial ideology and statecraft. Gaynor historicizes piracy’s association with failed states and offers another way to theorize piracy without adopting either statist or relativist points of view.

The second section of the book deals primarily with piracy in the context of imperial expansion. Hans Hägerdal's contribution focuses on the Bugis and Makassar peoples of South Sulawesi, who, along with several other ethnic groups in maritime Southeast Asia, were frequently associated with piracy in colonial discourses and representations. Hägerdal asks how raiding correlated with other types of activities, such as commerce or service as auxiliaries, through two cases. The first is Lombok and Sumbawa in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, where landless Makassarese aristocrats fought or allied with various groups to create a political platform. The second case is the seascape around Timor, further to the east, where a socially different type of maritime enterprise evolved, entailing both commercial activities and raiding of vulnerable small-scale island societies. While Dutch writers termed all these seafarers "pirates," this fails to capture the range of their socio-political roles. Moreover, Hägerdal demonstrates how the Dutch East India Company contributed to the rise of piratical activity through colonial advances on Sulawesi in the 1660s.

Lakshmi Subramanian's chapter also sets out to counter Eurocentric bias in depictions of maritime power and violence along India's western littoral during the period of British East India Company expansion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. She adapts recent analyses of legal pluralism in maritime spaces to explore the role of piracy in Indian conceptions of power and jurisdiction at sea. Piracy, she argues, was a matter of contention among Indian and British governing authorities that drew both of them into efforts to understand the phenomenon as part of local histories and traditions. Despite the efforts of some to understand piracy in this context, the British ultimately portrayed maritime predation as an ethnographic marker of a "savagery" over and against which their sovereignty could be asserted. Like Subramanian, Joshua White takes a non-Eurocentric point of view and aims to highlight the concurrent concepts of piracy and other forms of maritime violence in the early modern Mediterranean. He shows that a wide range of concepts were used in the early modern Ottoman Empire to conceptualize what Europeans termed piracy or privateering. As in Europe, there was considerable ambiguity in the use and interpretation of these terms, and the practices that they described. In contrast to the emphasis that contemporary Europeans put on the distinction between piracy and privateering, in theory if not always in practice, Ottoman Islamic law did not differentiate between foreign Christian pirates and foreign Christian corsairs or privateers.

A further reminder of the hazards of a Eurocentric approach to the phenomenon of piracy is provided by Robert Antony in his study of interactions



between the Qing regime and pirates. Late imperial China saw the development of three overlapping maritime “regimes” along its coasts, namely, the imperial dynastic power, the European overseas enterprise, and the “pirates” themselves. Notably, the latter two regimes challenged the first in various ways. A reassessment of the Qing imperial claims of sovereignty in the face of activities labelled as piracy provides crucial understanding of the way empire was constructed. Here, Antony points at both parallels and dissimilarities between East Asian and Western forms of piracy and shows how the various players off China’s coasts contended with each other over maritime space.

The third and last section of the book deals primarily with discourses of piracy and highlights how representations of piracy emerged in different international and colonial contexts from the late sixteenth to the early nineteenth century. Birgit Tremml-Werner focuses on how piracy was rendered in Spanish records from the Philippine Islands from around 1570 to 1800. She demonstrates that the label “pirate” was used to denote a wide range of hostile elements or peoples, including other Europeans, Chinese, Japanese, and indigenous Philippine groups. Several of these alleged pirates have been largely overshadowed by later, mainly nineteenth-century, accounts that focused exclusively or overwhelmingly on the maritime raiding of indigenous Muslim “Moro piracy.” Her chapter thus demonstrates the complex nature of piracy and the multiplicity of actors, practices, and representations of the phenomenon during the long period under study.

Östlund and Buchan consider how piracy intersected both scholarly discourse and state policy in a period of acute political crisis in Sweden in the early years of the eighteenth century. By focusing on one student dissertation presented and printed at Uppsala University in 1716, they contend that Sweden’s precarious position necessitated a delicate navigation of piracy in both the Baltic and the Mediterranean. Effectively, Sweden’s weakness dictated a policy of partial recognition of Barbary pirate states along the North coast of Africa, and even led to offers of employment for former pirates as a substitute navy closer to home. While the scholarly traditions of natural law provided ample resources to condemn pirates as mere sea robbers, this one dissertation illustrates how moral, philosophical, and historical arguments could be marshalled in defence of a more equivocal attitude to piracy, which also reflected the delicate balancing act performed by the Swedish state.

In the last chapter, Stefan Eklöf Amirell turns to the prominent role of “piracy” in French colonial expansion in Vietnam in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He demonstrates how the long-standing European



fascination with pirates in popular culture made it expedient for French colonial officials to label anyone who resisted French colonial expansion in Vietnam as pirates, even if this meant that the concept was stretched to its limit and applied to bandits as well as Vietnamese court officials who had never set foot on a sea-going vessel. Amirell also juxtaposes the French and Vietnamese concepts associated with piracy, banditry, and subversion and shows how the Vietnamese king Tu Duc, not unreasonably, accused the French navy of piracy.

Finally, we are much obliged to Lauren Benton, who has written the afterword. She sums up the main conclusions of the book and its implications for further research, and also provides some well-deserved criticism along the way. The themes Benton highlights will continue to engage scholars of piracy and world history into the future. Together with Benton's Afterword, the essays in this book are a testament to the enormous potential of piracy to push scholarly research in world history, intellectual and colonial history into productive conversation. It is our hope as editors that this book will act as a prompt to other researchers to pursue the suggestions and unfinished leads our contributors have generously provided herein. Our thanks go to each of them.

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About the Authors

Stefan Eklöf Amirell is a Professor of Global History at Linnaeus University, Sweden, and the Director of the Linnaeus University Centre for Concurrences in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies. His publications include *Pirates in Paradise: A Modern History of Southeast Asia's Maritime Marauders* (2006) and *Pirates of Empire: Colonisation and Maritime Violence in Southeast Asia* (2019).

Bruce Buchan is an Associate Professor in the School of Humanities, Languages, and Social Sciences at Griffith University. His research explores intersections between colonization and the history of ideas, and his publications include *The Empire of Political Thought: Indigenous Australians and the Language of Colonial Government* (2008), *An Intellectual History of Political Corruption* (with Lisa Hill, 2014), and the co-edited volume *Sound, Space and Civility in the British World, 1700-1850* (2019).

Hans Hägerdal is Professor of History at Linnaeus University, Sweden. His major fields are East and Southeast Asian history, in particular focusing on early-modern colonial encounters and enslavement. His publications include *Held's History of Sumbawa* (2017) and *Savu: History and Oral Tradition on an Island of Indonesia* (with Geneviève Duggan, 2017)

