historical research. It is hoped that this book will provide the resources necessary for sharpening analytical skills in defining and solving problems pertinent to today and to the past.

Robert J. Anthony, Pirates in the Age of Sail. W.W. Norton, 2007.

Pirates, Privateers, and Buccaneers of the West

The Age of Discovery, which began in the fifteenth century, was a watershed in world history. Columbus opened the door to the modern world and to an age of Western expansion and domination around the globe. Exploration and expansion also ushered in an age of bitter international rivalries and wars between the Western powers. As the explorers and traders sailed the globe, pirates, privateers, and buccaneers followed in their wake. Often, too, the explorers themselves did not hesitate to engage in maritime marauding. During his fourth voyage to the New World in 1502, Columbus' crew robbed a large native trading vessel off the coast of Honduras. Once the Spanish had firmly established themselves in the Americas, the Caribbean became an international battleground for maritime raiders. For several hundred years European governments actually supported piracy as an inexpensive and effective means of advancing trade and empire, a policy that one historian has called "piratical imperialism."[1]

The sixteenth to eighteenth centuries was a time when international rivalries were intense and wars common among the nations of Europe. Piracy, in one form or another, closely followed the ebb and flow of wars (see Table 2). In wartime, European governments justified piracy under the rubric of privateering and in peacetime they often turned a blind eye to piracy. Privateers were defined legally as vessels belonging to private individuals that received government-issued commissions, often called "letters of marque," authorizing them to attack and plunder enemy shipping during times of war (Doc. 1). The captured vessels and goods, called

[1] Peter Earle, *Pirate Wars* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003), p. xi.

Years	Pirate Activities	Wars and Key Events
1550s	LeClerc in the West Indies (1553–54)	
1560s	Drake & English Sea Dogs in the Caribbean	Wars of Religion (1562–98)
	Dutch Sea Beggars (1566–1648)	
1570s	Drake attacks Panama (1572)	Battle of Lepanto (1571)
	Drake in the Pacific (1579–80)	
1580s	Dutch Sea Beggars	Anglo-Spanish War (1585–1603)
	Drake in the Caribbean (1586)	(Spanish Armada, 1588)
		Dutch Wars of Independence (1581–1648)
1590s	Drake in the Caribbean (1595–96)	
1600s	Van Noot in the Pacific (1600)	Queen Elizabeth dies (1603)
		James I & peace with Spain (1604)
		Twelve-Years' Truce (1609–21)
1610s		Thirty Years' War (1618–48)
1620s	Piet Heyn in West Indies (1624–28)	
1630s	Buccaneers in Caribbean (1630–80)	
1640s		English Civil War (1642–49)
		Peace of Westphalia (1648)
1650s		English take Jamaica (1655)
1660s	L'Ollonais in the Caribbean	Anglo-Dutch War (1664–68)
	Morgan in the Caribbean	
1670s	Morgan pillages Panama (1671)	Anglo-Dutch War (1672–74)
		King Philip's War (1675–76)
1680s	South Sea Pirates Sharp, Ringrose, Davis, and others	Glorious Revolution in England (1688)
		Jacobite War (1689–97)
		King William's War (1689–97)
1690s	Red Sea Pirates Every, Kidd, and others	Earthquake destroys Port Royal (1692)
		Peace of Ryswick (1697)
1700s	Kidd executed (1701)	Queen Anne's War (1702–13)
1710s	Blackbeard (1716–18)	Jacobite Rebellions (1715 & 1719)
	Cocklyn in West Africa (1719)	Treaty of Utrecht (1713)
1720s	Roberts, Rackam, Bonny, and Read	Anglo-Spanish War (1727–29)

Table 2. Piracy and War in the West, 1550–1730

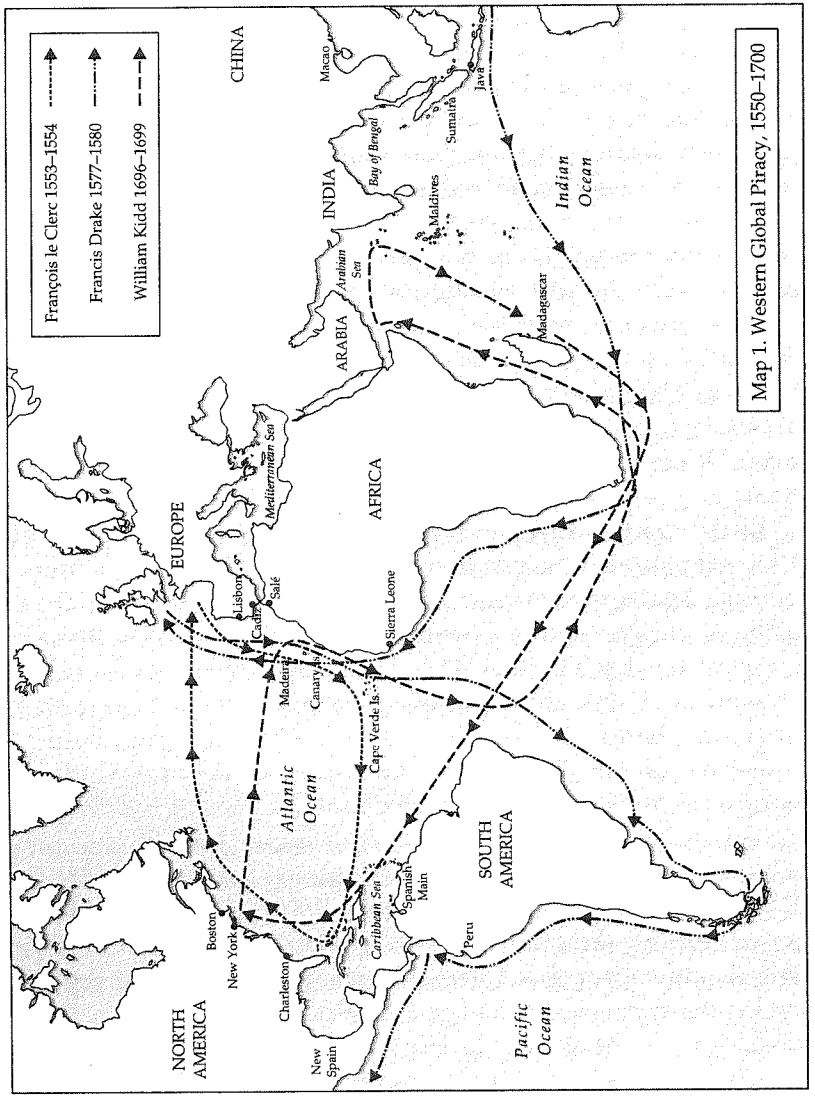
"prizes," were then divided between the sanctioning government, investors, captain, and crew. In contrast, piracy was an unauthorized act of violence and predation emanating from the sea against ships or settlements on shore. Pirates owed loyalty to no king, attacked the ships of all nations, and seized booty for personal gain. Although the legal distinctions were clear, actual practice was another matter. The captains and crews who served on privateers and on pirate ships were generally the same—during times of war pirates became privateersmen and in times of peace privateersmen resumed piracy. What one country viewed as legitimate privateering another country—usually the victim—regarded as outright piracy. Moreover, piracy proved to be an important component in state-building. Pirates and privateersmen were viewed as auxiliaries to the navy and a benefit to the national economy because they destroyed the commerce of rival countries. Relatively few pirates

were hanged before the eighteenth century. Many, in fact, became national heroes; some were even knighted.

Western piracy was a complicated phenomenon that went through several phases between the late fifteenth and early eighteenth centuries. What began chiefly as localized coastal marauding gradually escalated into a worldwide activity by the end of the seventeenth century. In the first phase, roughly between 1500 and 1600, once news reached Europe of New World Spanish treasures, maritime predators, such as Francis Drake, swarmed the Caribbean. The buccaneers followed between 1630 and 1680. Then in the 1680s to the 1730s, European pirates, having lost their bases in the Caribbean, moved into the Pacific, Indian Ocean, and North Atlantic. Exemplified by such notorious figures as Bartholomew Sharp, Henry Every, William Kidd, and Edward Teach, this last group of pirates became the most numerous and successful of them all. Unlike the other pirates we will discuss in this book, Western pirates were truly global in their activities. There were few areas where they did not venture (Map 1). Not only did the scope of piracy change but so too did the habits and customs of the pirates. Over those three hundred years piracy evolved from state policy to a criminal endeavor inimical to all states. By 1700 pirates were no longer viewed as patriots but as the enemies of mankind as well as of commercial expansion and capitalism.

The Rise of Western Piracy, 1500–1600

In the sixteenth century, because England, Holland, and France were latecomers to empire-building, the best they could hope for was to rob gold and silver from Spanish and Portuguese ships and settlements. Repeated failures to break the Iberian trade monopolies swayed the latecomers to adopt more violent, predatory methods. Two types of piracy developed during the sixteenth century in the West: short-distance piracy operating mainly along the coasts of England and the continent, and oceanic or long-distance piracy, epitomized by Francis Drake and other "gentlemen adventurers." Short-distance piracy had actually existed for centuries before 1500, preying mostly on foreign vessels in the English Channel and off the coasts of Ireland and the continent. Most of the pirates



were English and French. As long as the pirates did not attack native shipping, public opinion and state authority paid them little heed. Although piracy was an illegal activity, it was considered useful because it provided communities with cheap goods and employed local toughs who might otherwise have engaged in robbing their neighbors. For many men, however, piracy was a casual occupation entered upon when they could no longer make ends meet from their regular jobs. Many communities became entwined with piracy, as local notables formed syndicates to protect and aid pirates. These magnates usually did not take a direct part in piracy; rather, they put up the money, provided the ships and provisions, and arranged for port facilities by bribing officials. In return for their services the syndicates received the major share—normally four-fifths—of the profits. By the second half of the sixteenth century, however, piracy in northern European waters had greatly diminished, due in part to the growth of power of central governments at the expense of local notables who had been supporting pirates.

By the 1540s coastal piracy began to expand beyond the English Channel following the extension of merchant shipping operations into the Mediterranean and Atlantic. Well-organized pirate fleets followed regular cruising patterns, shadowing the richest trade routes of the day. They set sail from lairs in northern waters in late autumn to plunder the coasts of Spain and Portugal, taking their prizes to Morocco in the winter to sell. Then in the spring they would set sail for Madeira and the Azores, or they would return northward to pillage Newfoundland fisheries. One of the first successful deep-sea pirates was the Frenchman Jean Florin, who robbed Spanish treasure ships off the coast of Portugal in 1523. An English merchant and pirate named Robert Reneger, in 1545, seized Spanish ships and goods in the West Indies. In 1552, the French pirate François le Clerc, known as Jambe de Bois or Peg-leg, raided the Portuguese island of Madeira; a year later he pillaged Spanish Cuba (Map 1).

Whether at war or at peace, maritime raiding against the Spanish in the Caribbean escalated between 1568 and 1603. Motivated by a desire for loot as well as by an intense religious zeal, Protestant English seamen joined forces with Dutch sea-beggars and French

Huguenots in an unofficial sea war against the Spanish "papists." In the 1560s, John Hawkins and Francis Drake entered the Caribbean first as slave traders and later as pirates. They were interlopers who stole African slaves from the Portuguese to sell illegally to Spanish settlers in the Americas. Despite the illegalities and the protests from Spain, their undertakings were backed by Queen Elizabeth. During the two decades before the Anglo-Spanish War (1585–1603), dozens of unsanctioned English Sea Dogs entered the Caribbean with the sole purpose of piracy. The most famous among them was the militant Puritan and fervent nationalist Drake, who led several piratical expeditions in the West Indies between 1570 and 1572, returning home to England in the following year with a small fortune. Several years later, in 1577, when Drake embarked on his famous circumnavigation of the globe, one major objective had been to plunder the Spanish treasure ships and settlements in the Pacific (Doc. 2; Map 1). Regarded as a "heretic and pirate" by the Spaniards, Drake was a hero back home, and in 1581 the queen knighted him. Then during the war years with Spain, Drake and hundreds of privateers set off each year to harass Spanish shipping in the Caribbean. It was not uncommon for them also to seize neutral ships and cargoes, which they quickly and quietly disposed of in Irish or Barbary ports that were beyond the reach of the Admiralty Court in London.[2] Justifiably England became known as a "nation of pirates."

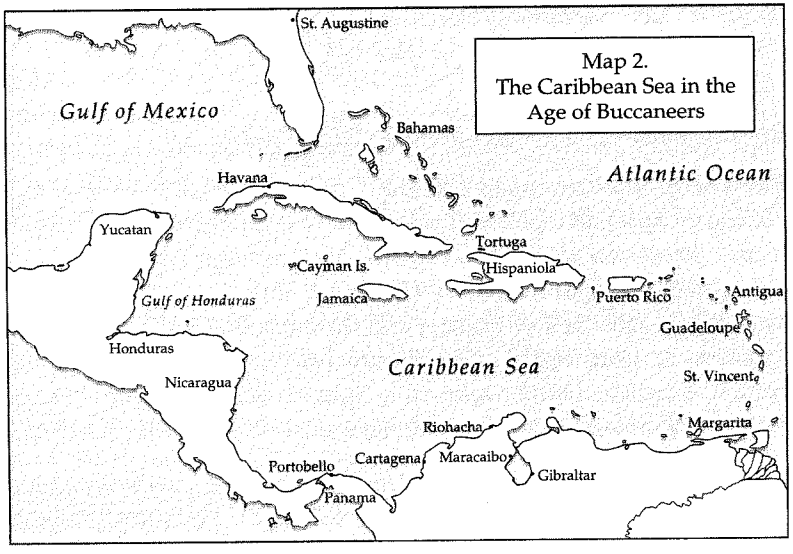
Buccaneers in the Caribbean, 1630–1680

The rise of the buccaneers in the Caribbean coincided with the decline of Spain as a political and economic superpower in Europe. It also coincided with the Cromwell dictatorship in England and the subsequent Restoration of Charles II and the Stuart Dynasty, the rise of Louis XIV in France, and the consolidation of Dutch independence from Spain. The buccaneers were a motley group of French, English, Dutch, and even Spanish and Portuguese renegades and misfits, whose prime targets were Spanish ships and

[2] Before 1662, the Admiralty Court in London had the responsibility to adjudge prizes taken by privateers so they could be lawfully condemned, a process that was necessary before the prizes could be legally shared out.

towns in the Caribbean (Map 2). Buccaneers were the first maritime raiders in the Americas to be universally recognized as pirates. Yet they were distinct from other pirates in that they generally limited their attacks to the Spanish, whereas most pirates attacked everyone. Also unlike the earlier pirates who usually returned to Europe at the end of a raid, the buccaneers preferred to remain in the Caribbean. They consciously separated themselves from their own societies, becoming increasingly independent, and forming their own outlaw communities, calling themselves the Brethren of the Coast (Doc. 3).

Originally buccaneers were not pirates. They were rugged backwoodsmen who lived off the land by hunting feral cattle and pigs for survival; they acquired the name *boucaniers* or *buccaneers* from their method of roasting and preserving meat. They lived on sparsely settled islands on the fringes of the Spanish Empire, in such places as Hispaniola. Later escaped slaves, runaway indentured servants, marooned sailors, and other marginalized elements joined with them. About 1630, a number of buccaneers moved to the tiny island of Tortuga. From this base they began using canoes to harass passing Spanish vessels, gradually expanding their operations with the vessels they had captured. After Tortuga became



Map 2.
The Caribbean Sea in the Age of Buccaneers

firmly established as a pirate lair, French ships began calling there to trade, and by the 1660s the island had become a French colony.

Besides Tortuga, Jamaica also served as a major base for buccaneers. The English occupied Jamaica in 1655, and soon afterward its chief city, Port Royal, became a rendezvous for desperados from all parts of the West Indies, as well as from Europe. The city gained a reputation as one of the "wickedest towns" in the Americas, a veritable pirate port that rivaled the corsair city of Algiers. Port Royal grew rapidly as a commercial port specializing in stolen goods. Its governors regularly issued privateering commissions, allowing raiding against Spanish vessels, even after the home government had announced peace with Spain in May 1660. In war and peace, local officials and residents supported maritime raiding because it pumped badly needed capital and goods into the island's economy while also offering employment to indigent sailors and drifters. Furthermore, buccaneers provided a costless and effective naval defense against Spanish attacks.

In the sixteen years after the English occupied Jamaica, the buccaneers sacked eighteen Spanish cities, four towns, and over thirty-five villages; they also plundered countless Spanish vessels. Among these pirates was Henry Morgan, who was quickly developing a reputation as a successful buccaneer. During the troubled peace with Spain, in 1668, Morgan received the blessings of Governor Modyford to pillage Puerto Principe in Cuba and later that year Portobello in Panama. Two years later Morgan led over a thousand men to attack Spanish settlements at Santa Marta and Campeche, and then in 1671 he pillaged the great treasure city of Panama itself. Despite his successful campaigns, back in England a number of influential people were beginning to have second thoughts about the benefits of piracy to the realm. Modyford was recalled to London and imprisoned, and two years later Morgan too was called back to England to stand trial for his crimes. Instead of punishment, however, Morgan was rewarded with knighthood, and was soon on his way back to Jamaica as deputy governor. He died a popular hero in Jamaica in 1688.

Even so the winds of change were blowing. After 1677, for the first time, buccaneers were convicted and executed for piracy in the Vice-Admiralty Court in Jamaica. A few years later the Jamaican

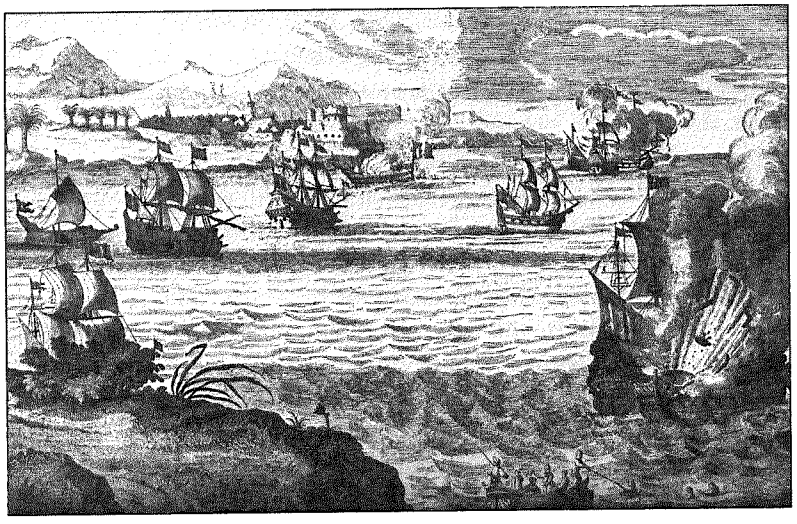


FIGURE 1
Morgan Defeats a Spanish Fleet (John Esquemeling, *The Buccaneers of America.* London: George Allen & Company, 1911.)

legislature officially outlawed piracy and the acting governor, Henry Morgan, actually sent out ships to pursue pirates. Jamaican piracy declined only after the island's landowners decided that growing sugar was more profitable than handling pirate booty. Then in 1692, Port Royal was devastated by an earthquake. By then Caribbean buccaneering was practically dead. The centuries of repeated raids on Spanish shipping and towns had so thoroughly ravaged the region that there was little left to pillage.

The Golden Age of Western Piracy, 1680–1730

Beginning in the 1680s those governments that had once supported, or at least tolerated, pirates now found no use for them and began to suppress their activities in the Caribbean and around the globe. The former "patriotic heroes" had become the "villains of all nations." In contrast to the Sea Dogs and buccaneers of earlier times, pirates now began attacking ships and towns regardless of nationality. Between the 1680s and 1730s, Western piracy became

global in scope and pirate crews more cosmopolitan in their composition. As suppression in the Caribbean intensified, pirates scattered elsewhere, seeking friendly ports in the Bahamas and in the North American colonies. Some pirates began raiding expeditions in the Pacific. Others, in the 1690s, ventured into the Indian Ocean. In the early decades of the eighteenth century another generation of pirates returned to the North Atlantic to plunder the lucrative colonial trade. Each new wave of piracy, however, was met with increasingly harsher and more determined extermination campaigns, so that by 1730 Western piracy had been virtually eliminated around the world.

One glaring problem in the suppression of pirates, however, was the support that they received from various colonial officials and merchants. The Bahamas remained a favorite pirate haunt until the English government finally sent Woods Rogers, himself once a privateersman, in 1718 to clear the islands of pirates. Armed with ships of the Royal Navy and the king's pardon, Rogers' two-pronged strategy eliminated the pirates within two years. The North American colonies, which were quite reluctant to give up the lucrative pirate trade, were more difficult to deal with. Pirates of all nations had little problem fitting out ships, selling loot, and recruiting crews in the friendly ports of New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and the Carolinas (Docs. 4 and 5). American colonists viewed the pirates, according to Patrick Pringle, as "free-traders running the blockade of the Navigation Acts."[3] Because the Navigation Acts, which required all colonial imports and exports to be carried on English vessels, greatly limited trade and profits, colonialists sought to evade the laws by doing business with smugglers and pirates.

Although ever since the time of Drake pirates had been combing the Pacific for the fabled Manila galleons, starting in the 1680s, with fewer opportunities in the West Indies for plunder, pirates stepped up their operations in the Pacific. One of those pirates was an experienced buccaneer named Bartholomew Sharp. He and his men sank twenty-five Spanish ships, killed over two hundred people, and made off with over 200,000 pesos worth of loot, including

[3] Patrick Pringle, *Jolly Roger: The Story of the Great Age of Piracy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1953), p. 137.

valuable maps he had stolen from the Spaniards. Afterward Sharp's gang dispersed; some went to the Bahamas while others went to the Carolinas, where they joined up with Edward Davis aboard the *Revenge.* They set out in August 1683 with a crew of seventy pirates, intending to plunder the Pacific. En route, off the coast of Sierra Leone, they first captured a slave ship, which had on board sixty African females; the pirates quickly exchanged ships and renamed their prize the *Bachelor's Delight.* For the next five years Davis cruised the Pacific coast of Spanish America, but never took anything of substantial value. Later, in 1689, after Davis had departed, the *Bachelor's Delight* (now commanded by Capt. Raynor) quit the Pacific for the Indian Ocean, and after a successful voyage—worth some £80,000 in booty—she sailed back for the Carolinas in 1692 (Doc. 4). The Pacific proved to be such a vast theater of operations for pirating that in the two centuries between 1550 and 1750, only four Manila galleons were ever captured.

If pirates had difficulties finding rich prizes in the Pacific, this was not the case in the Indian Ocean. The occasion for the rise of Western piracy in southwestern Asia was the decline of the Mogul Empire (1526–1761) in India and the concomitant increase in European trade in the region. Although at first the pirates chiefly attacked Muslim ships—"no sin for Christians to rob heathens"[4]—soon they also were robbing European merchant vessels. Each year Muslim fleets of twenty or more ships traveled from Surat to Mocha at the mouth of the Red Sea, carrying thousands of pilgrims on route to Mecca. On their return to India the ships were laden with rich cargoes of gold, silver, silks, and jewels. The large, poorly armed, and slow-moving Mogul ships fell easy prey to the well-armed and ravenous pirates. Once they filled their ships with plunder the pirates sought out friendly ports where they could easily dispose of their loot to eager buyers.

Henry Every (or Avery) and William Kidd were two of the most famous Red Sea pirates. The two men were transitional figures whose outlaw careers occurred right at the time when attitudes

[4] The quote comes from Philip Gosse's *The History of Piracy* (Glorieta, N.M.: Rio Grande Press, 1995), p. 177, paraphrasing the words of Darby Mullins, who sailed with Captain Kidd to the Indian Ocean in 1697.

toward pirates were changing not only in Europe but also in the colonies. Every, who probably began his outlaw career as a South Sea buccaneer, plundered two rich Muslim pilgrim ships in 1695 near the Red Sea, which allotted to each crewman a fortune of £1,000. While several of his men were eventually apprehended, tried, and hanged, Every slipped away and vanished from the pages of history (Doc. 5). Kidd was not so fortunate. At the time that Every was pillaging the Orient, Kidd was in London obtaining commissions from the king to hunt down enemy French vessels and Red Sea pirates (Doc. 6). Outfitted in England with a new vessel, the *Adventure Galley*, Kidd set sail for the Indian Ocean in 1696, reaching Madagascar in January 1697. Soon afterward, Kidd apparently crossed the thin line separating privateer and pirate. In the Indian Ocean he attacked several European vessels and in January 1698 he robbed the Mogul ship, the *Quedah Merchant.* By the time he returned to New York in the following spring, much of the booty had already been distributed and he found himself a wanted man (Map 1). Kidd had set off on his long voyage as a privateersman but returned home a pirate. He was arrested and sent to England, and in a showcase trial found guilty of piracy and murder and hanged in May 1701.

Following Kidd's execution there was a temporary lull in piracy that coincided with Queen Anne's War (1702–1713). Privateering, as expected, rose during hostilities. Once the war ended, however, piracy surged as thousands of sailors were thrown out of work. During this last great pirate cycle, that lasted through the 1720s, there were over 5,000 pirates, many made famous in Captain Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Pyrates*, first published in 1724. This was the age of Edward Teach, the infamous Blackbeard, who terrorized the American coast in 1716–1717, and went into battle with a sling of pistols over his shoulder and "lighted matches under his hat." Perhaps less famous, but equally colorful and a lot more successful, was Bartholomew Roberts—Black Bart—who wore gaudy silk garments and captured over four hundred ships before his death in 1722. There was also the pirate Thomas Cocklyn, who received a royal pardon in 1717 in the Bahamas, but soon afterwards was back at his old trade. Off the

FIGURE 2
Blackbeard the Pirate (Charles Johnson, *A General History of the Lives and Adventures of the Most Famous Highwaymen, Murderers, Street Robbers, &c.* London: Printed for and sold by O. Payne, 1736. New York Public Library, Rare Books Division.)

coast of West Africa, in 1719, he captured a slave ship commanded by William Snelgrave, who described the pirate as a villainous captain chosen "on account of his Brutality and Ignorance" (Doc. 7).

Among the thousands of male pirates of the early eighteenth century, we have information on only two female pirates, Anne Bonny and Mary Read, and what little information we have on them comes chiefly from Johnson's *History of the Pyrates* mentioned above. There were certainly other women pirates, but because they dressed and acted as men aboard ship we know very little about

them. We know about Bonny and Read because in 1720 they were apprehended, put on trial in Jamaica, and, having been found guilty of piracy, sentenced to death (though both were reprieved because they were "quick with child"). These two feisty women, who served with John Rackam (alias Calico Jack) in the Atlantic and West Indies for several years, cussed and fought with the toughest of the men pirates (Doc. 8; also Stanley's essay in Part 3). Given the scarcity of women at sea, historian B. R. Burg has argued that homosexuality was common aboard pirate ships.[5] The evidence, however, neither proves nor disproves his argument. Undoubtedly some sailors and pirates engaged in sodomy, or what was then called "buggery," because of sexual orientation, while others—particularly young cabin boys—did so because of coercion from ship's officers. Nevertheless, homosexual activities aboard ship did not preclude heterosexual activities on shore, as seamen worldwide had reputations for their lusty habits.

Over the course of the centuries the social composition and nature of piracy changed dramatically. During the first phase, pirates were led mostly by petty nobles and "gentlemen adventurers" and gangs were organized along rigid hierarchical lines. They were neither democratic in the manning of ships nor the distribution of booty. Gangs too were divided chiefly along national lines. Later, in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, nearly all pirates had been born into the lowest social classes and many were in fact "desperate Rogues." The great majority were single men in their mid-twenties. Most crews were a veritable mix of Europeans, Africans, and native Americans. The pirates of this later age were decidedly opposed to established political and religious authorities and conventional society. As Marcus Rediker has argued, pirates created a democratic and egalitarian social order that stood in "defiant contradistinction to the ways of the world they left behind."[6] They bonded themselves together in social compacts, normally as written articles agreed upon by all crewmen at the outset of a voyage. These articles, which defined gangs as cohesive,

[5] B. R. Burg, *Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition: English Sea Rovers in the Seventeenth-Century Caribbean* (New York: New York University Press, 1984).

[6] Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700–1750* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 267.

self-governing bodies, detailed the allocation of authority, enforcement of discipline, and distribution of loot (Doc. 9). Aboard pirate ships the majority ruled. Captains were elected and were answerable to their crews, who also voted on all important matters. Booty was pooled into a "common chest" and equitably distributed among officers and men (Docs. 7 and 9; also Rediker's essay in Part 3). Pirates created an alternative society that "presented a threat not only to property but to the developing national state and its way of organizing politics and society."[7]

Pirate antisocial behavior was matched by a brutal war on piracy. Pirates found themselves increasingly isolated in a hostile world. Their former colonial supporters abandoned the pirates when they started robbing ships carrying exports from the colonies. While few pirates had been executed before 1700, scores would be hanged each year thereafter. Piratical imperialism was replaced by mercantile imperialism, whereby states condemned piracy and promoted trade. There was no longer a place for free-thinking, individualistic maritime marauders on the periphery of empire. The state would demand its monopoly of violence at sea. A combination of relentless suppression campaigns, swift trials, mass executions, and royal pardons soon brought an end to the great age of piracy in the West, but not elsewhere in the world.

Corsairs, Renegades, and Slaves in the Mediterranean

With the rise of the Atlantic world the ancient Mediterranean world slipped slowly into decline. By the early sixteenth century the Mediterranean Sea was no longer the chief waterway for international commerce or for the distribution of Oriental goods to Europe. The Portuguese had opened a southern route to Asia via the Indian Ocean and the Spanish had discovered a New World in

[7] Janice E. Thomson, *Mercenaries, Pirates, and Sovereigns: State-Building and Extraterritorial Violence in Early Modern Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 46.

the Americas. Nevertheless, for the next century or so old Mediterranean trade routes continued to compete fairly well with the new oceanic routes. Ships from all over Europe continued to call at Mediterranean ports. For Ottoman and other Muslim merchants the Mediterranean Sea remained vital to trade and prosperity. Earlier in the fifteenth century, as the two great superpowers of the age, the Ottoman and Spanish Empires, expanded further into the Mediterranean, rivalry exploded into war. In 1492, as Columbus made his way to America, the Spanish rulers expelled the Moors[8] from their soil and soon afterward began seizing footholds in North Africa, including Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. Although Ottoman expansion in western Europe came to an end with the failure to seize Vienna in 1529, and with the defeat of the Turkish fleet at Lepanto in 1571, the Ottoman sultans had managed to recover their losses in North Africa by 1574.

The Battle of Lepanto, however, proved to be a watershed in Mediterranean history. Afterward both Turkish and Spanish rulers turned their attention elsewhere and disengaged themselves from overt warfare in the Mediterranean. Spain under Philip II became increasingly concerned with rivalries inside Europe while Turkish rulers became concerned with Persia and internal dissentions within their own empire. The great naval wars between the two adversaries devolved into proxy wars of piracy, which reached a peak in the seventeenth century. With the weakening of the sultanate, the Barbary city-states of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli became virtually independent corsair regimes. Christian religious orders, such as the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, carried on maritime crusades from strongholds on the island of Malta and elsewhere. In the meantime, Protestant England and Holland, through a combination of trade and piracy, began to challenge the predominance of Catholic Spain in the Mediterranean and around the globe. From the seventeenth century onward for the next two hundred years, various complex forms of maritime predation were facts of everyday life in the Mediterranean (Map 3). The conflict in the Mediterranean had become as much about religion as it was about trade and politics.

[8] Moors were Muslim conquerors that had occupied Spain since the eighth century.

legitimate pursuits of agriculture and trade. By 1860 their campaigns had become so successful that piracy ceased being a serious problem in Southeast Asia for the next century.

In Southeast Asia, as elsewhere, men became pirates and raiders for many reasons—poverty, debt, hunger, and greed. Although many of the raiders themselves were poor, their leaders were normally men of wealth and power. As with Mediterranean corsairing and Elizabethan piracy, sea raiding in Southeast Asia was regarded as a legitimate and honorable pursuit. Here too raiding was a state-sponsored enterprise and deeply entwined with trade, war, and slavery. Only gradually and grudgingly did indigenous states come to accept Western notions that "piracy" was a crime that needed to be eliminated. As a legal concept and a cultural construct imposed by Western colonialists, piracy in any form became a stigma of backwardness and savagery; its suppression therefore became an important and necessary component of modernization.

Global Piracy Today

Piracy is as old as the first ships. While maritime raiding reached a zenith during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in the West, its heyday in the South China Sea extended into the next century. By the 1860s, however, piracy apparently had disappeared from most areas of the world. After a long lull there has been a resurgence in recent years. Today piracy appears in many of the same areas where it had been rampant a hundred or two hundred years ago: along the coasts of Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines; on the Sino-Vietnamese border; on the west coast of South America and in parts of the Caribbean; at the mouth of the Red Sea; and along the coasts of East and West Africa. The struggle to eliminate piracy remains a persistent problem. According to data collected by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), in 1998 there were over two hundred reported cases of piracy worldwide, and in the following year there were over three hundred incidents. In 2003 the IMB reported that pirate attacks on ships had tripled

over the previous decade, with over a hundred attacks in just the first three months of the year. Today piracy and marine fraud is a $16-billion business.

Piracy has always thrived in areas where the rewards were great and the risks were slight, and where pirates could find protection and support. Predators like Drake and Morgan found the heavily laden Spanish treasure galleons easy targets, and today small speedboats easily overtake slow-moving and unarmed tankers. Today, as in the past, many of the best hunting grounds are those areas where governments are weak or are handicapped by international rivalries. Thus piracy has usually flourished in developing areas where the authorities were unable or unwilling to intervene, or where governments offered raiders protection and support. Currently one of the most dangerous areas is the Straits of Malacca, traversed by over 50,000 ships each year. The nearby islands of the Malay Archipelago provide ideal hiding places and friendly ports for pirates just as they have for centuries.

While many of the favorite pirate haunts are the same as in the past, pirate *modi operandi* have changed. Sailing vessels have given

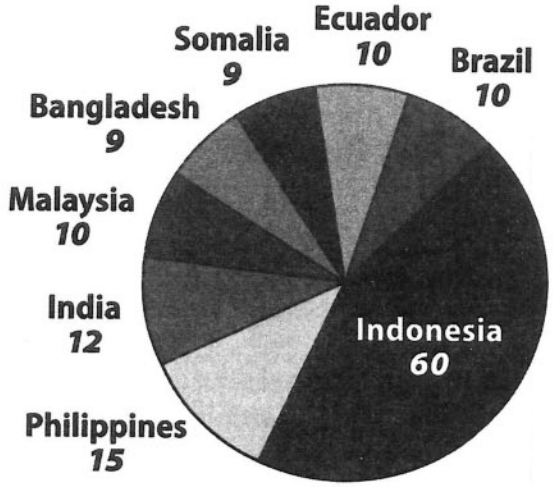


FIGURE 7
Worldwide Pirate Attacks, 1998 (www.cargolaw.com/presentations_pirates.html. Accessed March 2006.)

way to motorized craft and speedboats and crews are armed with automatic weapons and modern navigational equipment. Today's petty pirates engage in mostly short-distance, hit-and-run attacks inside congested harbors where they sneak aboard anchored vessels to steal whatever they can get their hands on. Their attacks are generally random and disorganized, and heists consist chiefly of cash, personal belongings, and sundry other items valued at no more than several thousand dollars. Professional pirates operate on a long-term basis and are well organized, sometimes having links to larger criminal and drug syndicates. They bribe local officials for protection and access to markets. In some cases they have connections to political insurgents and terrorists, providing them with financial support in exchange for aid. After seizing ships, they dispose of the crews, sell the cargo, and use the vessels to commit further crimes. In November 1998, pirates dressed as Chinese officials seized the *Cheung Son* near Hong Kong and threw the 23-man crew overboard to drown. Later Chinese police arrested 38 men, sentencing thirteen to death for piracy. In June 2002, pirates boarded an oil tanker in Thai waters, threw the crew overboard and sailed away. The crew members were rescued by Indonesian fishermen, and the vessel was later found—with a new paint job and a new name—docked in the area with its cargo missing.

While piracy today seems clear-cut and well-defined in international law, in fact it is as murky as ever. Governments that decry piracy as a serious crime in some cases turn a blind eye to the perpetrators or refuse to prosecute them. Those people labeled as pirates often perceive themselves and their actions differently. Some see themselves as modern-day Robin Hoods and others as freedom fighters, not as pirates or terrorists. What the eighteenth-century pirate Samuel Bellamy supposedly told to his prisoner Captain Beer still holds true today: ". . . *damn ye, you are a sneaking Puppy, and so are all those who will submit to be governed by Laws which rich Men have made for their own Security. . . . They villify us, the Scoundrels do, when there is only this Difference, they rob the Poor under the Cover of Law, forsooth, and we plunder the Rich under the Protection of our own Courage. . . .*"[18]

[18] Charles Johnson, *The History of the Pyrates*, 2 vols. (London, 1728), II, p. 220.