

Introduction to the Forum on Pirates & Piracy in World History

The difficulty with defining piracy lies in which definition of piracy one uses. Piracy has been considered a perfectly reasonable way to make a living depending on social, economic, and political factors. Pirates can indeed be freelance marauders who used cruelty as a tool to get what they wanted and who most likely deserved their final stop at the gallows. Pirates can also be local heroes who bring prosperity to their struggling maritime communities, especially when the state's ability to do so was insufficient or useless altogether. In *Pirates & Piracy in World History*, a variety of scholars from multiple disciplines tackle the subject by examining different regions and historical eras. Whether dilettantes, seasoned experts, researchers, or instructors, most readers who have even a passing interest in maritime history will find something to pique their interest.

The forum begins with Adam Clulow and Xing Hang's timely work, "Maritime Asia: A Classroom Simulation Exercise for teaching about Global Piracy." Keeping students engaged and on task is challenging. The pandemic exacerbated the situation with the spike in chronic absenteeism, but Clulow and Hang propose many creative ways in which students can approach piracy. By implementing a "Maritime Asia" lesson plan at the high school and college levels, instructors can make students actors in an exercise that pits different polities and trading companies against each other. This challenges previously held views of pirates as lawless marauders. Instead, they learn how piracy often cloaks itself in legitimacy so trading companies can disguise hostile actions at sea as normal business activity. Having taught teenagers myself, I know how students can become invested in a competitive classroom activity long after the bell rings.

Alex Holowicki writes on Germany's U-boat campaign from the First World War, which seems far removed from piracy at first glance. However, "German Pirates and Hawaiian Patriots: The Sinking of the SS Aztec and the United States" delves into how

different cultures have defined piracy. Hawai'i, although not yet an American state, saw genuine outrage when several Native Hawaiians were killed in a U-boat attack in the Atlantic. The Hawaiian backlash against Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare coincided with Americanization efforts in Hawai'i and with anti-German sentiment that already existed on the Mainland. Instead of relying overmuch on United States government documents, Holowicki uses Hawaiian language sources to emphasize how Hawaiians reacted to the sinking. This shows what Hawaiians thought about their community's roles in the war effort and how they saw their home's strategic role in the Pacific as the United States entered a global war.

Helen Rodriguez contributes a new take on Anne Bonny and Mary Read in "To Memories Now I Can't Recall: The Origins of Anne Bonny and Mary Read." While the two pirate women have long held a conspicuous place in pirate lore, Rodriguez views it from a unique perspective in which pirate truth is always hypothetical. By starting with Captain Charles Johnson's *A General History of the Pirates*, Rodriguez outlines how difficult it is to fact-check documents that are based on hearsay and heavily embellished by rumor and artistic license. There is truth, however, that might yet be gleaned from forgotten documents such as baptismal records that might shed some light on what pirates' authentic lives were like, which parts were genuine and which were either distorted or fabricated.

Mervi Salo's work on Vikings, "Sailing Beyond the Saga: Women Warriors and Viking Piracy" merges their activities with piracy as a multi-faceted career that could run the gamut from exploration to commerce and finally to marauding. Centering her work on female Vikings makes it more unique and highlights the roles that women had in Norse culture. In popular culture, Vikings are hyper-masculinized but Salo presents the reality that shows how Viking women did not just fill supporting roles but were active participants and sometimes even leaders in Viking raids. Including archaeological evidence is one of the key strengths of this article as it supports Salo's assertions with hard data.

In "Trading-Raiding: A Family Business: Piratical Lineage in Early-Modern China," J. Travis Shutz contextualizes Ming piracy as an activity that operated within criminal syndicates that straddle the line between piracy and legitimate business. Family lineage was vitally important because it allowed syndicates to endure despite state efforts to take them down. Even after enduring setbacks, pirate groups could regroup and coalesce around accepted leadership, and that leadership was legitimized based on where one was on the family tree. Adoption also played a major role in determining who was legitimately related to leadership, and legitimate merchant houses often used the same practices when determining who would lead as well. This effectively turned individual boat crews and even flotillas into extended family units. Coastal officials were also involved with piracy to some degree, whether through directly

abetting pirates or at least accepting bribes from them. In this way Ming pirate groups were not much different from the triads that currently exist in China.

The forum ends with John Maunu's "Digital Resources on Teaching Piracy and Pirates in World History," which nicely bookends the project with another work on how to teach about piracy. Maunu provides a wealth of resources that cover piracy from the Bronze Age Sea Peoples and Homeric epics to the Golden Age pirates who roved about North American waters after the War of the Spanish Succession. His sources also go beyond the well-known pirates and buccaneers of the West Indies and incorporate non-Western pirates as well. Maunu's informative and accessible sources are a boon to any instructor regardless of grade level. The database is divided into different geographic areas, genres, lesson plans, and syllabi, which are germane to professors or teachers who want to create a single lesson plan and even to those who wish to create an entire university course on the subject.

To study pirates is to open a figurative treasure chest of history, economics, geography, and gender. Scraggly buccaneers certainly capture the imagination and are fascinating, but they are one part of a greater whole. The works published in this forum help to showcase how piracy and associated acts are relevant to their regions and wherever else people make a living from the sea.

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