

Pirates and Piracy

By the Dread Pirate

A **pirate** is one who robs or plunders at sea, or sometimes the shore, without a commission from a recognized sovereign nation. Pirates usually target other ships, but have also attacked targets on shore. These acts are known as *piracy*. Unlike the stereotypical pirate with cutlass and masted sailing ship, today most pirates get about in speedboats wearing balaclavas instead of bandannas, using AK-47s rather than cutlasses.

Very Brief History of Pirates and Piracy:

Because it is often the result of failure or laxity in patrolling sea routes, piracy flourished in times of unrest, or when navies ordinarily protecting commerce were engaged in war. Pirates found their most suitable base of operations in an archipelago that offered shelter together with proximity to trade routes. Pirates preyed upon Phoenician and Greek commerce and were so active in the 1st cent. BC that Rome itself was almost starved by their interception of the grain convoys.

Pompey swept piracy from the Mediterranean, but with the decline of the Roman empire it revived there and was prevalent until modern times. Muslim pirates infested the W Mediterranean; the Venetians, who ostensibly policed the Mediterranean, preyed upon the maritime trade of rival cities; and the Barbary States got much of their revenue from piracy. In the North, the Vikings harassed the commerce of the Baltic Sea and the English Channel. Emerging in the 13th cent., the Hanseatic League succeeded in curbing the piracy of its era.

New trade routes opened during the Renaissance, e.g., the shipment of precious metals from the Spanish colonies, the rich trade with the East, and the development of the slave trade, that made piracy especially lucrative. At this period no great stigma was attached to piracy because maritime law had not been systematized. This fact, together with the increasing colonial rivalry of the powers, led states to countenance those pirates who promoted the national cause by attacking the commerce of rival nations. With the tacit approval of the provincial authorities, the West Indies became a pirates' rendezvous, and the English buccaneers of the Spanish Main in the 17th and 18th cent., who despoiled the Spanish treasure armadas and pillaged Spanish-American coast settlements, returned to England to divide their spoils with the crown and to receive the royal pardon.

The development of national navies caused the decline of piracy. Beginning in 1803, the United States endeavored to crush the corsairs of Tripoli. In 1815 and 1816 the United States, the Netherlands, and Great Britain wiped out the Barbary pirates, who had exacted tribute under the threat of capturing ships and

imprisoning their crews. In 1816, Great Britain and the United States began operations against pirates in the West Indies, particularly those on the Cuban coast, and in 1824 the United States sent David Porter to complete the task. The power of the pirates along the Straits of Malacca and the China seas was broken after the Opium Wars in the late 19th cent. During the Spanish Civil War the major powers agreed (1937) at the Nyon Conference on an antipiracy pact after mysterious attacks on merchant ships in the Mediterranean. Generally small-scale piracy persists, particularly in Indonesia and SE and S Asia, in the Red Sea and off the Horn of Africa, on the Gulf Guinea coast, and off Ecuador. A privateer or corsair was similar in method but had a commission or a letter of marque from a government or king to capture merchant ships belonging to an enemy nation. The famous Barbary Corsairs of the Mediterranean were privateers, as were the Maltese Corsairs, who were authorized by the Knights of St. John. The letter of marque was recognized by convention and meant that a privateer could not be charged with piracy although this was often not enough to save them; whether one was considered a pirate or a legally operating business often depended on whether you were the commissioning country or the object of attack. Seven nations agreed to suspend the use of the letter of marque under the Declaration of Paris of 1854, and others followed in the Hague Conventions. The most famous privateer was Sir Francis Drake. His patron was England, and their relationship ultimately proved to be quite profitable.

In wartime, disguised warships called commerce raiders or merchant raiders attack enemy shipping commerce. They approach by stealth and then open fire. The Germans in World War II made use of these tactics, both in the Atlantic and Indian oceans, but since they used naval vessels, these commerce raiders were not even privateers, much less pirates. Many of these commerce raiders operated successfully during the American Revolution.

Proper Pirate Titles:

Pirates who operated in the West Indies during the 17th century were known as buccaneers. The word comes from *boucan*, a wooden frame used for cooking meat (called a *barbacoa* elsewhere). These were used by French hunters called *boucaniers*. These hunters became pirates and took their name with them. The most famous person associated with buccaneers in the West Indies at that time was Henry Morgan. Dutch pirates were known as **kapers** or **vrijbuiters** ("plunderers"), the latter combining the words *vrij* meaning free, *buit* meaning loot, and the ending *-er* meaning agent. The word *vrijbuiters* was corrupted into the English **freebooters** and French **flibustiers**. It came back into English as **filibusters**, who were not pirates, but adventurers involving themselves in Latin American revolutions and coups and then finally came to mean the disruptive parliamentary maneuver of talking without stopping. Pirates are called **Lanun** by both the Indonesians and the Malaysians who form the nations bracketing the Straits of Malacca. Originally a culture of seafaring people, their name became synonymous with piracy in the 15th century. Pirates with commissions from a government are called privateers or **corsairs**.

The great era of **piracy in the Caribbean** extends from around 1560 up until the 1720s. The period during which pirates were most successful was from the 1640s until the 1680s

Pirate Organization:

Pirates are a popular modern representation of rebellious, clever teams who operate outside the restricting bureaucracy of modern life. In reality, many pirates ate poorly, did not become fabulously wealthy, and died young. Unlike traditional Western societies of the time, many pirate clans operated as limited democracies, demanding the right to elect and replace their leaders. The captain of a pirate ship was often a fierce fighter in whom the men could place their trust, rather than a more traditional authority figure sanctioned by an elite. However, when not in battlestations, the ship's quartermaster usually had the real authority. Many groups of pirates shared in whatever booty they seized, according to a complicated scheme where each man received his allotted share of the prize. Pirates injured in battle might be afforded special compensation. Often all of these terms were agreed upon and written down by the pirate. But these articles could also be used as incriminating proof that they were outlaws. Pirates readily accepted outcasts from traditional societies, perhaps easily recognizing kindred spirits, and they were known to free slaves from slave ships and welcome them into the pirate fold.

Pirates of Note:

Awilda, Scandinavian Princess who became a pirate.

Black Bart (Bartholomew Roberts)

Black Bellamy (Samuel Bellamy)

Edward Teach or Thatch, known as Blackbeard

Major Stede Bonnet

Anne Bonny Co-Captain Charity Bonney Singh

Francois le Clerc(Jambe de Bois)

Khair ad Din Pirata Cofresi (Roberto Cofresí Ramirez de Arellano)

Chris Condent

Rahmah bin Jabir al-Jalahimah from Qatar

Jasim bin Jabir from Abu Dhabi

Calico Jack (Jack Rackham)

Captain William Kidd

Sextus Pompeius, a Roman general who became a pirate.

Limahon, Chinese Pirate

Henry Morgan

François l'Ollonais

Grace O'Malley, **Irish female pirate.**

Mary Read

Woodes Rogers

Ching Shih (aka Cheng I Sao) Chinese female pirate.

Cheung Po Tsai around Hong Kong waters.

Hippolyte de Bouchard
Uluj Ali
Emanuel Wynne

High Profile Privateers:

Kanhoji Angria

William Dampier

Sir Francis Drake, also British admiral; regarded by the Spanish as a pirate.

Sir Walter Raleigh, who spent little time at sea but organised many pirate expeditions. See Derek Parker, 'The Queen's Pirates', a dual biography of Drake and Raleigh. London, Scholastic, 2004.

Jean Bart

Piet Hein

Sir Andrew Barton, Scots privateer, regarded by the English as a pirate.

Robert Surcouf

Jean Laffite New Orleans privateer, helped America in the War of 1812.

Source Documents:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pirate>

http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/section/piracy_history.asp

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The Dread Pirate is a seafaring fellow that sails the oceans of life. Needing to motivate himself and the Crew, he began to scribe motivational musings years ago. Upon realizing that his nautical writing style and motivating nature afforded shipmates insight to their own lives, he chose to share a little of his experiences, philosophies and revelations via his motivational web log, [The Imperial Dread Sea Scrolls](#).

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