

Rebecca Simon. *The Pirates' Code: Laws and Life Aboard Ship*. Chicago, IL: Reaktion Books, www.pressuchicago.edu, 2023. 300 pp., illustrations, glossary, notes, bibliography, index. US \$22.50, paper; ISBN 978-1-78914-711-7. (E-book available.)

Pirates hold their place in the sagas of the sea. *The Pirates' Code: Laws and Life Aboard Ship* sweeps away the fog of legend to uncover the life and structure of pirates' existence. The Golden Age of Piracy is defined as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and is a largely West Indian phenomenon, although it extended throughout the Western Hemisphere and beyond. Just as it is said there is honor even among thieves, so pirates had codes by which they lived. Cognizant of the maxim, "If you will steal for me, you will steal from me," *Northern Mariner* readers might be inclined to think piracy was an undisciplined industry and wonder why anyone would undertake it. Author Rebecca Simon devotes an introduction, eight chapters and a conclusion to refuting such presumptions.

Operations of pirate ships frequently were governed by "Articles" which were similar to a modern partnership agreement. The Articles of Captain Edward Low and his Company are offered as an example. The Articles set the distribution of loot: "The Captain shall have Two full Shares, the Master a Share and a half, the Doctor, Mate, Gunner, Carpenter and Boatswain a Share and a quarter." Presumably other crew members received one share. Infractions included "striking or taking up any unlawful Weapon"; "Cowardice in the Time of Engagement"; failure to deliver "any Jewels, Gold or Silver ... found on board a Prize to the Value of a Piece of Eight ... to the Quarter-Master in Twenty-four Hours Time"; "Gaming, or playing at Cards, or Defrauding or Cheating one another to the Value of a Royal of Plate"; "Drunkenness in the Time of an Engagement." Those found guilty were made to "suffer what Punishment the Captain and majority of the Company shall think fit." Provision was also made for compensation to pirates suffering serious injury while "working."

Why would anyone enlist in a pirate enterprise? Chapters are devoted to food and drink, safety, weapons and battle tactics, and entertainment and culture. Pirates were better paid, better fed, were healthier, received better medical treatment, and were offered more economic advancement than other available careers, including naval or commercial maritime ones. Captives were sometimes lured by promises of mercy and shares of the loot. Yes, it was a dangerous occupation and pirates were often hanged, but various wars did provide periodic opportunities for the granting of pardons. Think Andrew Jackson and Jean Lafite in New Orleans.

This work addresses many stereotypes of piracy. Condemned pirates did

walk the plank, but rarely, given the tight labor market for pirates. Contrary to legend, they distributed their treasure, rather than burying it. Tattoos were common, although more for identification of bodies than as works of art. Pirates were an ethnically diverse group, with French, Dutch, English, and Blacks mingling and fighting against each other. At their peak, the pool of pirates probably numbered in the low thousands.

I particularly enjoyed the discussion of legends known by name, but, to me at least, little understood. The *Flying Dutchman*, a ghost ship doomed to sail the seas for eternity, may have had its origins in a man-o'-war sunk off the Cape of Good Hope. The origins of "Davy Jones' Locker" are more obscure, but theories are advanced. Of particular value for students of the colonial era in general is the explanation of the distinguishing characteristics of the three types of colonies in British North America. Royal colonies, such as Virginia, were run by Crown-appointed governors with legal structures mimicking those of England. Proprietary colonies, such as Pennsylvania, were established by land grants to wealthy investors to attract settlement for the production of goods. And Charter colonies, such as Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island, had residents who were tied to English law while having the freedom to create their own governments.

The Select List of Pirates is a valuable aid in keeping individuals straight. Maps, drawings and paintings supplement the text. References are well footnoted. The index helps readers find specific topics, and the bibliography is a useful guide for future reading.

With just 300 pages, this is an easy but informative and entertaining read. It dispels some myths without stripping pirates of their mythical lore. The book makes its subjects real people, who lived real lives, without resorting to glamorization or condemnation. This work places pirates within their milieu, amidst the wars, colonies, and commerce of their age. I recommend *The Pirates' Code* to those seeking to understand the Golden Age of Piracy.

Jim Gallen
St. Louis, Missouri

William Smith. *Churchill's Arctic Convoys: Strength Triumphs over Adversity*. Barnsley, S. Yorks: Pen and Sword, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2022. 247 pp., illustrations, appendix, tables, notes, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, US \$42.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39907-229-8.

This history of the Arctic convoys from Britain and America to the northern ports of the Soviet Union during the Second World War is focused on the logistical effort to supply the Soviets within the context of political and